

LEARN AND EARN INTERNSHIP

Opportunity College

The Learn and Earn Internship program accelerates students' college and career readiness through paid internships and aligned professional skills seminars.

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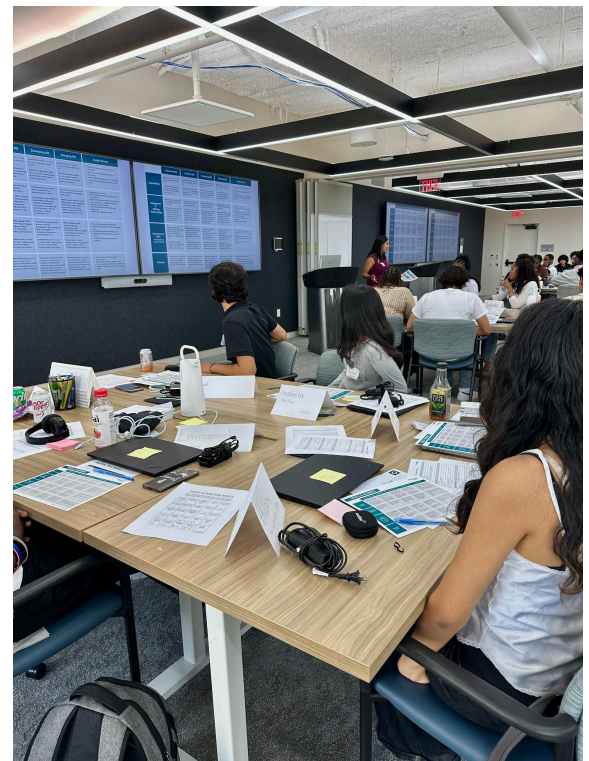


OVERVIEW

The Learn and Earn Internship program from Opportunity College is a transformative initiative designed to empower high school students on their journey toward professional success. Through this program, students gain meaningful work experience and accelerate their mastery of essential professional skills. The program is structured to enable students to build both professional skills and social capital, providing them with a solid foundation for their future careers.

Students participate in a paid internship with a local employer where they gain real-world work experience. Through structured and developmentally appropriate work-based learning experiences, participants accelerate their career readiness and professional trajectory toward upward economic mobility. In alignment with the internship, students attend an Intern Seminar Course, a comprehensive professional skills curriculum that guides them through four key learning stages—Theory, Application, Feedback, and Reflection. The program elements help students to develop and master durable 21st-century skills and competencies that are vital for short-term success in their internships and long-term success in college, career, and life.

Opportunity College provides comprehensive support, including forming employer and school partnerships, and lends technical assistance to implement work-based learning programs for 16–24 year old students. It currently operates in six schools and has demonstrated impact, with many students developing durable skills and reflecting positively on real-world engagement. [▶ A Day in the Life of an Opportunity College Intern](#)



What Makes This Model Innovative?



Relevance

Students explore their career interests and aspirations and develop career-ready skills to tackle real problems in work-based contexts.



Rigorous Learning

Learners apply critical thinking skills to real-world projects in the workplace while developing and demonstrating durable skills across work and school-based contexts.



Connection & Community

Learners develop strong relationships with their managers and teams, and build social capital and networks that can connect them to future opportunities.

DESIGN

Goals

The Learn and Earn Internship program focuses on preparing students for their future careers. Students develop professional skills and build strong networks while gaining work experience to support them on their career journey.

Gain Valuable Work Experience

Students gain valuable work experience through internships that enhance their understanding of industry dynamics and prepare them for future career challenges.

Explore Career Interests

By engaging with various departments and professional paths, students make informed decisions about their future, aligning their skills and passions with potential career opportunities.

Develop Professional Skills

Students master and grow 21st-century durable success skills that are essential for success in college and career, such as dependability, time management, problem solving, and interpersonal skills.

Build Social Capital

By cultivating meaningful relationships with their managers and colleagues, students build social capital that can provide students with recommendations, mentorship, and potential returning offers for employment.

Experience

Participants in the Learn and Earn Internship program complete paid internships up to 10 hours per week on-site at a local company. Interns simultaneously take an academic Intern Seminar Course for school transcript credit that helps students maximize both their professional skills learning and internship experience outcomes. The internship program is a collaborative effort between schools and employers. It begins with an onboarding process and culminates with end-of-semester presentations. The program is cohort-based and while projects and roles at the internship may vary, students in a cohort attend the Intern Seminar and employer worksite together as a way to develop better problem-solving and social skills through a shared collaborative learning experience.

Induction and Onboarding

The application process for the Learn and Earn Internship program occurs 2–4 months before the internship begins, aligned to when students finalize their class schedules. It's competitive, typically with twice as many applicants per slot available. Employer partners are responsible for selecting the intern cohort and issuing offer letters. Following acceptance into the program, students attend a two-week induction and onboarding, which can start at different points during the year to meet the school's needs. During this time, students engage in HR training, office tours, and professional skill-building sessions, such as creating a professional brand and fostering relationships with colleagues. Employers provide interns with all work equipment, including computers, during this time, and interns practice professional skills such as writing effective emails, sending calendar invites, and using messaging platforms (e.g., Slack, Teams) to ensure they are ready for their internships. At the end of the two weeks, students are assigned to a team within that company (e.g., Legal, Operations, HR, Tech, Marketing), where they will spend their internship.



The induction and onboarding period emphasizes the immediate application of acquired skills. For instance, after a session on building relationships, students engage in coffee chats with employees, providing an opportunity for employers to connect with interns. [📅 Induction and Onboarding Sample Schedule](#)

Intern Seminar Course

The Intern Seminar is a professional skills course for which students earn transcript credit from their school. The career-oriented curriculum helps students develop durable character skills, knowledge, agency, and professional competencies required for success as lifelong learners and career professionals. In the Intern Seminar, usually held during one period per week, students actively develop professional skills through a learning cycle of theory, application, feedback, and reflection. Students develop self-awareness and set career



exploration goals to foster personal and professional growth. They also practice communication, problem solving, and interpersonal skills in class and apply them in their internships. The instructional approach is designed to help young people become self-directed, self-determined learners who are empowered to reflect and make decisions to guide their career trajectory and aligned continuing education. [📄 Intern Seminar Overview](#)

Opportunity College Instructors teach the Intern Seminar synchronously via Zoom and assign asynchronous work for independent work time, with a school-based teacher managing the classroom and supporting when necessary. Opportunity College provides all course content on a learning management system and conducts all grading of student work. The curriculum aligns with the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) Career Readiness Competencies and addresses six key areas: [📄 National Association of Colleges and Employers \(NACE\) Career Readiness Competencies](#)

- **Becoming a Professional** – students learn to craft and cultivate their professional brand
- **Workplace Skills** – students learn how to write effective emails and manage a calendar, and practice receiving feedback
- **Personal Development** – students set goals, build resilience, and increase awareness about their strengths and growth areas
- **Communication** – students identify their own and others' preferred communication styles
- **Interpersonal Skills** – students practice strategies for working with others on a team
- **Critical Thinking** – students refine their approach to problem solving using a critical thinking framework

Internship

During the school year, students commit 6–10 hours per week to their internships. Interns are matched with a manager on a team across the company, in departments from Marketing to Legal to Operations, HR, and Tech. Managers assign interns meaningful projects, ranging from creating research-based deliverables to building new productivity tools and planning community engagement events.

To facilitate meaningful work, students have 2–3 days of early school dismissal a week, traveling to their employer site for work. Occasionally, internships offer a "work from home" option, allowing students to work from their school, while attending work remotely. Specific roles — for example, software engineering interns — may require completion of certain courses, such as computer science, limiting eligibility. Students remain in their internship placements for the entire year, with the possibility of moving between departments.

End-of-Semester Presentations

Students conclude each semester with a formal presentation where they showcase their internship experiences. These presentations are attended by managers, other employees, and members of the school community. The presentations offer insight into the students' overall internship experiences, including the challenges faced by the company or team, the actions taken, and the lessons learned. The reflective component includes an examination of a student's evaluations from their teacher and manager, providing a comprehensive overview of the skills and knowledge students have acquired during their internships. [▶ Internship Presentation](#)



Supporting Structures

The Learn and Earn Internship program can be integrated into any school design but may require shifts in curriculum, adult roles, schedules, and community partnerships, among others. The following supporting structures are essential to making the model work in your community.



CURRICULUM, INSTRUCTION, & ASSESSMENT

Schools must ensure that students attend the Intern Seminar and receive quarterly feedback on their professional skills.

The Intern Seminar has a designated curriculum, provided by Opportunity College, to teach students the durable 21st-century skills needed to succeed in their internships and beyond. Each quarter, students are assessed and receive feedback from their Intern Seminar instructor and intern managers using a dedicated skills rubric to measure students' proficiency in developing durable skills. The quarterly feedback focuses on 2–3 professional skills at a time, so that students can reflect and further develop each skill using feedback. [Skills Rubric](#)



ADULT ROLES, HIRING, & LEARNING

Schools must designate a site coordinator to liaise with employers and Opportunity College staff and oversee the seminar course.

The designated school-based adult serves as a link between the school and Opportunity College. The role requires a point person who coordinates school logistics (e.g. providing space and supervision for the once-a-week Intern Seminar course) and collaborates regularly with the employer partner and Opportunity College around program implementation and student support.

An intern manager, a full-time employee at the employer site, oversees the intern's work and provides feedback using the durable skills rubric. Managers attend training sessions led by Opportunity College throughout the year. [Manager Trainings](#)

An Opportunity College Instructor leads the Intern Seminar course and manages the employer partnership.



SCHEDULE & USE OF TIME

Student schedules must allow time for the weekly seminar course and early dismissal for internships.

Schools coordinate with Opportunity College to determine scheduling of the seminar course and early dismissal days for students to attend their internship. Students attend their work site 2–3 days a week for 6–10 hours of work. While not required, early dismissal is strongly recommended over after-school sessions, as early dismissal allows for more time at the worksite to engage in work. After-school internships, typically starting around 4 pm,

do not provide sufficient time for students to engage in substantial work, considering that many companies conclude their operations around 5 pm.

The seminar course is scheduled weekly for 45–60 minutes and can be built into the schedule at a time designated by the school (e.g. an elective period). There are approximately 25 hours of learning content that students engage with per semester. All students participating in the program must attend the seminar at the same time, as a cohort.



FAMILY & COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Schools are matched with Employer Partners that host cohorts of high school students for the internship.

Employer partners are an integral part of the experience. Opportunity College collaborates with employer partners to host cohorts of high school students (ideally 15–30), connecting them with good-match school partners. Opportunity College typically leads the employer engagement, incorporating the school leaders at key moments of program design, student recruitment, and implementation.



SPACE & FACILITIES

Schools must provide space for the Intern Seminar Course.

The school provides space for the students to convene for the Intern Seminar course one class period per week. The space should be arranged so that students can work individually on their computers.

Additionally, schools provide venues for informational sessions offering insights into the program's opportunities and requirements.



TECHNOLOGY & INFRASTRUCTURE

Employers provide technology for students to use during their internship and seminar course.

Employers provide necessary technology and equipment for students at their worksite. Students use their employer-issued computers for Intern Seminar coursework. The only technological requirement at the school site is Wi-Fi.



BUDGET & OPERATIONS

Employer partners cover most costs, and schools coordinate the logistics of programming.

Employer partners pay intern wages and typically cover Opportunity College's program design, management, and instructional resources. Schools work with the employer partner to arrange transportation to the worksite (e.g., via school buses, company shuttles, or public transit). Beyond

a school-based point of contact, limited resources are required from the school to implement the program.

Schools and employer partners work together to cultivate a competitive pool of applicants.



COMMUNICATIONS

Employer partners collaborate with schools to host on-campus informational sessions, generate awareness about the Learn and Earn Internship program and encourage potential applicants to apply. Schools play a role in marketing the program and encouraging right-fit students to apply. The collaborative efforts ensure a seamless process, with the employer setting timelines and application procedures, conducting engaging informational sessions, and schools actively spreading the word and ensuring a robust applicant pool.



CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

School partners and students provide ongoing feedback about the program to inform improvement cycles.

Opportunity College collects feedback from all stakeholders (students, school partners, intern managers, employer partnership managers) and regularly reviews student outcomes to inform a cycle of continuous improvement.

IMPLEMENTATION

Supports Offered

[Opportunity College](#) offers the following supports to help you implement their approach.

School Partnership

Funding Available



Opportunity College works with high schools to launch work-based learning programs. They aim to form long-term, trusting partnerships, with the goal that this internship becomes a flagship program that the school, students, and teachers participate in proudly. They help to establish and/or grow partnerships with local employers and provide hybrid instruction for the Intern Seminar course. The partnership is typically funded by employers.

[Get in Touch](#)

Pathway Design

Funding Available



Opportunity College partners with communities that want to build robust education-to-employment pathways for 16–24 year old students. Opportunity College facilitates high schools, employer partners, and community colleges to co-design grade 11–14 pathway programs. In these programs, students earn postsecondary credentials and work experiences that lead to in-demand jobs that pay a living wage and offer upward career mobility. Programs are typically funded by employers.

[Get in Touch](#)

Reach

6

Schools

90+

Students

4

Employer
Partner Sites

93%

Underrepresented
Talent

Impact

The Learn and Earn Internship program has demonstrated an impact on developing students' durable skills and future internship opportunities.

- Learn and Earn students have achieved proficiency or better in five of the eight 21st-century durable success skills:
 - 96% of students were proficient or better in dependability, as well as engagement and building relationships.
 - 93% were proficient or better in time management, communication and advocacy, and growth and development (reflection).
- 100% of students were offered an invitation to return to paid internships over the summer.
- 100% of students left the internship more confident about their career goals.
- 100% of students build a professional relationship that will endure after the internship.
- 85% of managers wanted to continue working with their interns for another semester.

Students reflect positively about their experiences, often highlighting the opportunity to engage in real-world work.

- *"It's been really rewarding for me to learn how to take initiative. In school, we were taught to do things exactly how we were told. At Audible and in the Real World, there's not going to be someone to tell me what to do every step of the way. I've learned how to work on a project*

myself before I ask for help. The lightbulb moment is that much more rewarding.” – Data Science Intern

- “Participating in this program provided invaluable real-world experience and helped me develop essential skills like communication, teamwork, and time management. It offered an opportunity to build a professional network and gain mentorship, opening doors for future career prospects. Moreover, the program has fostered self-confidence and a strong work ethic, preparing me for success in my future endeavors.” – Tech Intern

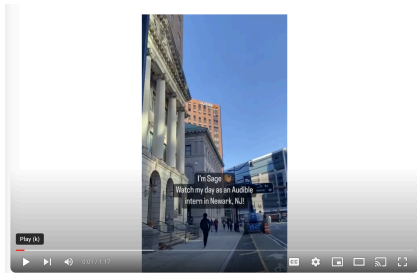
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RESOURCES



A Day in the Life of a High School Intern

[▶ A Day in the Life of an Opportunity College Intern](#)

A day-in-the-life video of an Opportunity College Intern at Audible.

[▶ Induction and Onboarding Sample Schedule](#)

Example schedule and topics covered during intern onboarding.

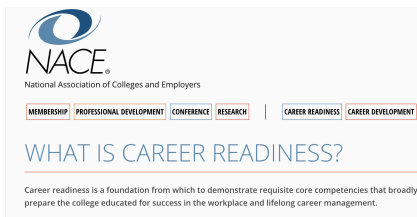
[Opportunity College](#)

About Opportunity College
Opportunity College designs and operates innovative “Learn and Earn” education-to-employment pathway programs. We work to accelerate students—who are typically 16-26 year-old, first-generation college students from low-income households—into good jobs where they can continue their education toward a college degree. We are especially focused on designing pathways with stackable credentials that students can complete part-time, online, and in alignment with their full-time job. Opportunity College offers an affordable way for students to train for in-demand jobs (e.g., entry level roles in the tech sector), gain immersive work-based learning experiences, and earn credentials and degrees to thrive in an upwardly mobile career.

Employer-Embedded Internship & Intern Seminar Course
Opportunity College works with nonprofit educational partners to support young adults to access high-impact, paid internship experiences at local employer partners. In this work-based learning

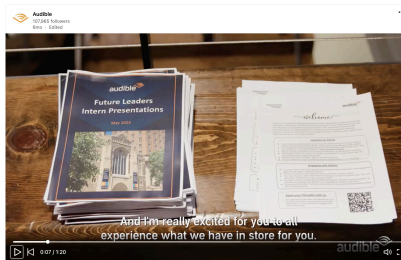
[▶ Intern Seminar Overview](#)

Overview of the Intern Seminar course including approach and topics.



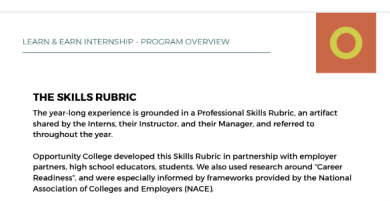
[▶ National Association of Colleges and Employers \(NACE\) Career Readiness Competencies](#)

NACE’s eight career-readiness competencies used by Opportunity College.



[▶ Internship Presentation](#)

The end-of-year presentations by Opportunity College interns at Audible.



[▶ Skills Rubric](#)

Overview of how the Skills Rubric is used and the eight professional skills covered.



[Manager Trainings](#)

A summary of trainings for Intern Managers.



[Opportunity College](#)

Opportunity College's website.