

An internship benefits both the company and the intern

JACKSONVILLE BUSINESS JOURNAL - BY [Caitlin O'Conner](#) CORRESPONDENT

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That's the reason Julia McClure, a 20-year-old public relations junior at the University of Florida, chose to intern this summer at [The Hoffman Agency](#), a Jacksonville marketing and public relations firm, rather than choose a big company with an in-house PR department and less diversity.

Interning for an agency that downsized during the recession, McClure said she sees "fewer people doing more people's work." That includes herself and fellow intern Kim Lewis, who got their own fair share of the overflow. "I've seen the way to stick around in a downsizing is having the skills to do more people's work," she said. "It's a business; they have to do what works for them, so if they can eliminate paying some salaries but still get the work done, they will."

The amount of work even lead to McClure being hired part time for two additional weeks at the end of her 13-week unpaid internship.

Lewis, a 19-year-old visual communications design sophomore at [Washington State University](#), likes the atmosphere of a small, hurried agency, because it means more hands-on work — and a better portfolio.

"If the agency was full, there'd be less work for us to do," she said. "It would be less hands-on experience. You can have a degree, but if you've never been out practicing, it's worthless."

Although UNF doesn't require internships for many of its majors, it increasingly encourages them.

"More and more, schools are realizing the value of doing an internship," Borg said. "I'm the director of honors, and I'm really pushing it for my honors students who are in competitive areas."

Joining that bandwagon is [Florida State College at Jacksonville](#), which next fall will add a bachelor's degree program in converged communications with a requirement that students complete an extended, three-term paid internship.

FSCJ President Steven Wallace said all of the school's career/technical programs require some form of work-based learning, but the communications internship will be unique because of its structure, length and salary.

"We want the internships to have real résumé value," he said. "They'll add more responsibility each term like a real job and show that on a résumé to differentiate themselves from other applicants who have nothing but a degree."

Borg recommends students take on at least one substantial, three-month or longer internship after their junior year and at least two smaller internships or job-shadowing positions.

"I tell my interns to interview their boss to find out how their boss got to that position," she said. "Then they can see, in their own field, what kind of education, what kind of experience, led up to this job so they can see, 'This is the path I need to be on.'"

Internship Law Tightened

New statutes issued this April by the [U.S. Department of Labor](#)'s Wage and Hour Division tightened the restrictions on unpaid interns. Bob McKenzie, president of McKenzie HR, said the new rules have made it nearly illegal to have unpaid interns.

The new law lays out a test for whether or not interns should be paid under The Fair Labor Standards Act, stating, "Internships in the 'for-profit' private sector will most often be viewed as employment, unless the test described below relating to trainees is met."

- The internship is similar to training, which would be given in an educational environment.
- The internship experience is for the benefit of the intern.
- The intern does not displace regular employees, but works under supervision of existing staff.
- The employer derives no immediate advantage from the activities of the intern.
- The intern is not necessarily entitled to a job at the conclusion of the internship.
- An understanding exists that the intern is not entitled to wages for the term of the internship.

For companies taking on unpaid interns, McKenzie recommends that interns don't directly interact with clients, a hallmark of employee status under FLSA. The easiest way to keep in compliance, he said, is to show an intern the internal processes of the company, let them familiarize themselves with things like software, but to stay clear of clients.



James Crichlow

Julia McClure, left and Kim Lewis interned at The Hoffman Agency over the summer. Both girls felt they got more hands-on experience by taking an internship at a smaller organization

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