



DEPARTMENT OF
**AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION
& COMMUNICATIONS**

TEXAS TECH
Davis College

**Agricultural Communications
Internship Supervisors' Guide**

Updated June 2025

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Introduction

Thank you for supervising, or even considering supervising, a Texas Tech University Agricultural Communications Intern. Internships are one of the most valuable learning experiences a student can have in his or collegiate career. Your investment in their learning is highly appreciated.

Your contribution to your intern's growth experience is necessary to allow them to gain real-world experience. An internship allows a student to make decisions, think critically, act professionally, and develop into a communicator that will contribute to the agricultural industry.

If you are *contemplating* hiring an intern, or you have a *wealth of experience* hosting agricultural communications students, this guide will help you contribute to the student's learning and development. It will also help you stay updated in current practices to help you establish an effective experience for you, your team, and your intern.

Please review this content carefully. Within the agricultural communications discipline, there are many diverse internship opportunities, and it is not our intent to mandate a standardized experience. However, each ACOM student enrolled in internship credit hours is expected to adhere to the same rules and complete the same assignments.

Considering an Intern

Texas Tech University (TTU) agricultural communications faculty are here to help you. If you ever need assistance in refining job descriptions, developing a program for your intern, or completing paperwork, please reach out. Any agricultural communications faculty member can assist; however, Dr. Erica Irlbeck is the director of the internship program. She can be reached at erica.irlbeck@ttu.edu.

Why hire an intern?

Interns can develop your current employees' leadership and management skills, increase your visibility with current students that will look for jobs in the coming years; partner with the university; provide additional support to your employees; or bring youthful energy and ideas to your company.

Many employers create student internship programs to develop a future employee. It is a great way to train, assess, and onboard an employee as opposed to an employee that you have never worked with before. Texas Tech ag communications interns are regularly hired full time in the office they interned.

What is an internship?

An internship is a hands-on learning experience to enhance what a student has learned in the classroom. Students are placed in real situations and are expected to perform as an employee of the hosting organization while improving upon their professional and communications skills.

Internships benefit students by allowing them to work in a relevant industry, develop a mentor, learn by doing with supervision, expand their career readiness, and establish a professional network.

An internship is...	An internship is not...
A professional experience with a mentor or supervisor.	Free help or cheap labor for the company.
A work experience with clear goals and outcomes.	Replacing employees who are out of the office for any reason.
An opportunity for students to expand and utilize the skills learned in the classroom.	Busy work, such as filing, answering phones, or running errands.

Finding and Hiring an Intern

Each Texas Tech agricultural communications student must complete at least one, semester-long internship to graduate. Therefore, the TTU ag comm program always has students looking for an opportunity.

Some internship supervisors find the student and create an internship with the person in mind. Other employers send out a position announcement and find the best person for their needs. Both scenarios are acceptable.

If you would like to hire an intern, the first step is to write a position announcement. Position announcements usually contain the following essential information:

- Descriptive Job Title – “Summer intern” could mean anything; “Content Creation Intern,” “Photography Intern,” or “Trade Show Intern,” are some ideas that provide the student with some ideas of the primary responsibilities.
- Description – overview of what the internship will entail. Again, be as descriptive as possible.
- Qualifications – list the communications and/or essential skills you would like the applicant to possess.
- Responsibilities – create a list of the intern’s probable responsibilities.
- Details – this can include the location of the internship, estimated hours of work a week, compensation, and more.
- Contact information – provide a name, phone number, and email address where interested students can direct questions. Also, explain how to apply.
- Needed application materials – it is standard to request a cover letter, resumé, online portfolio, and/or writing samples from applicants.

See Appendix A for sample internship position announcements.

As you write the announcement, be thinking of the skills and abilities of what you would consider to be the perfect person for this internship, then write the description with these qualities in mind. You will rarely get the perfect intern, but you might come close. Please keep in mind, although internships are most effective when the intern is treated like an employee, in the end, the experience is for the growth and development of a college student.

Once the description is finished, send it to Dr. Erica Irlbeck to distribute to the Texas Tech ag communications student listserv. Know that all internship position announcements go to all TTU agricultural communications students. The faculty do not select certain students to share

the internship announcements with. Sending internship position announcements to the entire student listserv is the fairest way to ensure all students receive the information.

When to Send the Announcement

Although the ag comm program does not have deadlines for sending position announcements, it does have suggestions:

- For spring interns: send by September 15
- For summer interns: send by February 1
- For fall interns: send by April 1

Students like to plan early for the upcoming semester, so getting the announcements to them with plenty of time to consider and apply for the position is optimal to ensure you reach the largest number of students who do not yet have internship or employment plans for the next semester.

The dates above are just guidelines. All internship announcements will be emailed to the student population within a few days of you sending it to Dr. Irlbeck. Know that it is never too late to seek an intern; however, you will have more selection when you are early.

Advertising Internships

The department forwards every internship it receives to the ag communications student listserv. However, internship employers have had success in diversifying the applicant pool with some simple promotions, such as speaking to classes, utilizing current interns to make class announcements, and asking students to share internship announcements on their social media.

Employers are welcome to come to campus to speak to our classes and/or make Zoom announcements directly into a class. When the students put a face with the employer, hear about the opportunity directly from the source, and can ask questions, they are much more likely to apply. Typically, there are more ag communications classes on Tuesday and Thursday. Many supervisors plan a morning to come to campus and speak to several classes.

If you currently have a Texas Tech intern or know a student fairly well, ask them to help you share the opportunity. Students who have worked for you, or know you, provide excellent word-of-mouth advertising for your internship. Students are also welcome to make the announcements for internships in our classes. There are several occasions of us not having to advertise an open internship position because the current intern found the new intern.

Paid Versus Unpaid Internships

The Department of Agricultural Education & Communications strongly recommends compensating interns an hourly wage. The reasons are as follows:

- Most internships are paid.
- Paid internships yield a stronger applicant pool.
- Many students simply cannot forego a paycheck to participate in an internship.
- Unpaid internships deny basic labor rights. Unpaid interns are not considered employees; therefore, they are not legally protected against harassment and discrimination.

- Not paying interns communicates to them and their co-workers that their contributions are less valuable than paid employees.
- Unpaid interns might perceive themselves as below the workplace rules and standards.
 - i.e. It can encourage the attitude of “not my job” or “workplace hours are flexible because I’m not getting paid.”

Paying interns is also endorsed by the Texas Tech University Career Center, National Association of Colleges and Employers, and the U.S. Department of Labor.

How much to pay an intern depends on the organization’s budget and amount of work expected. For reference, on campus, undergraduate student employees are paid \$10 an hour, which is slightly higher than minimum wage. Some supervisors will compensate interns for working overtime or going beyond the normal expectations of the internship. For example, helping with multi-day events, working late to meet a deadline, or using the intern’s personal computer may be a reason to pay overtime or a bonus.

Relocation

Some internships require students to relocate for the semester. However, many students are financially unable to manage this expense, even though they are highly qualified for the position. Students usually have a lease in Lubbock, so paying rent in two locations is burdensome.

Offering housing or relocation assistance is not typical for most internships; however, we have seen a few organizations offer this option. It depends on the type of internship program you want to build; some organizations want a blend of students from various universities, and if that’s the case, assisting the students is necessary. The most important factors are that the student is comfortable with the arrangement and the housing is in a safe location.

There are lots of options to help a student relocate, and it is very case specific. If you would like to discuss possibilities for your situation, please contact the internship coordinator.

Texas Tech Agricultural Communications Internship Requirements

The Department of Agricultural Education & Communications values the individualized learning experience an internship provides. For the most part, the department allows the interns and supervisors to work together with minimal interference; however, there is a set of standardized requirements:

- Internships must be communications focused, which means most of the student’s time should be dedicated to communications work.
- Internships cannot be with a member of the student’s family.
 - Family is defined by the Texas Tech Operating Policy as a spouse, parents, siblings, grandparents, great-grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, and/or in-laws.
- To receive internship credit, students must enroll in ACOM 4000.
 - Students are permitted to do an internship without enrolling in internship credit hours.
- If the student receives course credit, students must work at the internship in the semester they are receiving credit.

- For example, a student cannot do the work in the summer, then enroll in the credit hours in the fall.
- Internships can occur in any semester; it does not have to be during the summer.
- Remote internships are allowed; however, communications between the student and supervisor must be consistent, regular, and intentional. See p. 7 for additional details regarding remote work.
- Students should not miss class to perform internship responsibilities, unless it is an exceptional activity (i.e., a national convention, event with a renowned speaker). If a supervisor would like their intern to miss class, the supervisor must provide a note on letterhead and explain the reason for missing class, educational value, uniqueness of the situation, dates the student will be working, and supervisor's contact information.
- Even though paid internships are encouraged, both paid and unpaid internships are acceptable for ACOM 4000 credit.
- To receive credit, internships must be at least eight weeks long and the student must work a minimum of 10 hours per week. More weeks and hours can be worked.
- Students must complete the online internship contract prior to starting the internship.
- Supervisors need to complete the supervisor's form. It is an online form that will be emailed prior to the first day of class.
 - There is a separate, paired-down form for supervisors that have hosted agricultural communications interns within the past 24 months.
- Supervisors must complete an internship evaluation before the end of the semester.
 - This evaluation is a web-based survey sent to supervisors by the internship instructor. **Students will not receive course credit until the supervisor completes the survey.** The evaluation is a major part of the students' grade.
- Students also must complete a (video) presentation or a written reflection AND an online portfolio of their work.
 - Please help them identify pieces they can include in their portfolio.

Although students can complete an internship at any time during their college career, it is recommended they take the basic agricultural communications courses, so they have acquired some of the skills needed to be an effective intern.

Competencies Expected

The greatest expectation of an agricultural communications intern is they grow in their communications competencies. Each internship is different, but this is a communications degree, and communications growth is a critical component of each internship. For example, if a student interned at a television station, the student would be expected to demonstrate significant growth in video shooting and editing, writing for broadcast, and speed of writing. In another example, if a student participated in a government internship, demonstrated growth in interpersonal communications skills, business communications skills, and legislative knowledge would be expected.

Additionally, we expect our interns to develop into productive professionals. Please understand that many students have not previously worked in an office-type setting. The internship program is to help students understand the various nuances of a workplace, professional expectations, and the organization's culture.

Students are allowed and encouraged to apply for internships at any point during their college career. However, some internships require more advanced skills, such as writing, photography, videography, or use of various Adobe products. Those skills are usually taught when the student is in his or her late sophomore or junior year; however, every student is different and may be highly talented early in their schoolwork. See Appendix B for the Texas Tech Agricultural Communications Pathway to Graduation document for a better understanding of the courses required in the degree program.

Defining a For-Credit Internship

Texas Tech University and the agricultural communications program have clearly defined criteria for an internship to be acceptable for course credit. If the basis of the internship is not communications, it will not count for course credit. This table below identifies what is and what is not an internship for credit.

Internship for Credit	Short Term Experience
At least eight weeks long, probably a full semester	Less than eight weeks
Minimum of 10 hours per week	A few hours a week
Communications focused, such as writing, videography, or public relations	Communications are a small part of the responsibilities
Responsibilities enhance and compliment classwork	Student misses a significant amount of class for work
Plans, creates, and manages communications	Posts to social a few times a week, takes a few photos, helps edit one video
Includes a contract, expectations, portfolio, supervisors' evaluation, and other assignments	No class assignments; no paperwork.

Often, employers label a part time job, freelance work, volunteerism, or a short-term experience as an internship. Although these are usually great résumé, confidence, and skill builders, they may not all be eligible for course credit.

Remote Internships

Remote internships are becoming more popular with every semester. However, they have some additional needs and a different style of management as compared to an in-person internship.

With remote interns, we recommend over-communicating, especially in the first few weeks of the internship. Daily check-ins, regular instant messenger communications, and lots of telephone and email conversations are highly recommended.

Create a set of rules and expectations as you onboard your intern. Working hours, deadlines, routines, communications style, and project management tips are a few suggestions to communicate to your intern. The student needs to have clear, written guidelines of what is acceptable behavior as a remote employee, then have them sign an agreement indicating they understand the expectations. Keep in mind, this may be one of the student's first jobs, and working from home may not come naturally. Help them learn how to manage projects and their

time. Set firm dates for progress toward completed projects, and hold interns accountable to deadlines. If the position requires any specialized equipment, please ship that to the student.

Finally, look for ways to help your intern feel supported. When they feel as if they are part of the team, they will have more buy in to your organization.

Traveling for an Internship

Students are permitted to travel for internships. Traveling can be a great way to enhance a student's experience and growth. However, we need to know about it. In the student's online materials, they have a form that is required. We need a form for the following reasons:

- The intern needs to attend an event in another city.
- The intern is required drive to another town as part of his/her internship responsibilities
- The intern has occasional travel away from the office, no matter how far.

We do not need a form for normal commutes to work, even if the student lives in another community. The student has been encouraged to ask for clarification if he or she is unsure if the form would be required in his or her specific situation.

Recommendations for a Higher Impact Learning Experience

Internships are a unique learning experience for each student; therefore, there are no set requirements or methods for managing an intern. However, through the years, we have collected some recommendations and best practices for making your intern's experience beneficial for you and the student.

Onboarding Interns

Treat your new intern like a new employee. Create an onboarding process for your intern's first few days on the job. Provide an office tour, introduce the intern to all other employees, show them how to use any machines specific to your office, provide a workspace complete with office supplies, explain the rules of the office, and generally help them feel welcome.

Remember the first days at your first job? You probably felt lost. Think of things that your employer or co-workers did to help you get acquainted and start working, then do those things for your intern. You or a group of peers could take the intern to lunch on their first day. It is normal for a young person to feel shy and slightly intimidated at a new workplace; they may be afraid to ask questions. Anticipate the things they'll need and the questions they will ask, then provide the necessary information to help them feel comfortable.

Some internship supervisors provide a mentor or buddy system for their new hires. This is a simple system where the intern is intentionally partnered with an employee or a "veteran" intern (someone that has been there three months or longer) that has agreed to guide and mentor the new person for a few weeks. This system helps the new intern settle in, gives others in the office buy-in for the intern's success, and it takes a few of the onboarding tasks off the supervisor.

During the Internship

There are lots of ways to create a good learning experience for your intern. Below is a list of suggestions for you to consider. Read the list, then think of ways you could adapt some of these ideas to fit your unique situation.

- Offer an orientation for your intern to establish expectations.
 - Dress code, office culture, working hours, expected responsibilities, formality in addressing other employees, preferred inner-office communications (text, phone, email), your working habits, lunch norms, absentee policy, use of property, sexual harassment, safety practices, specific policies, or interns' goals.
- Have the intern sign a code of conduct / list of expectations / office rules.
- Teach your intern about your company, such as your history, mission, and vision.
- Make a point to introduce your intern to everyone in the office or department.
- Allow your intern to attend staff or committee meetings.
- If your office offers professional development opportunities, invite the intern to attend.
- Give the intern the responsibility of a project or assign tasks that must be completed regularly; expect high quality work from them.
- Clearly state expectations with each project.
 - Remember, college students are accustomed to assignment deadlines, and often that means procrastinating on a project until the last minute.
 - Introduce the intern to project timelines with regular progress checks so they start thinking more like a professional.
- Invite the intern to participate in social functions, such as office lunches or celebrations.
- Offer interns the opportunity to cross train.
 - For example, if the intern is primarily part of the magazine production team, allow him or her to spend a few days with the sales department.
 - Allow a flex day, where the intern can take an occasional day to shadow someone that isn't in their normal department.
- Treat your intern as you would prefer to be treated.
- Remember, some interns are shy. Encourage them to jump in and be involved if they seem timid.
- Have extra work available for the days that your intern finishes his or her work earlier than expected.
- Ask the intern to come up with a project that he or she thinks would benefit your company.
- Provide a midterm evaluation for your intern. Texas Tech will check in halfway through the semester; use this opportunity to visit with the intern about things going well and things needing improvement.

Standard Expectations of Interns

Through our courses, internship manuals, and faculty/student mentoring, we have had conversations with students on workplace behavior. Although each student's skill level, knowledge, and experiences will be different, you can expect the following of a Texas Tech agricultural communications intern:

- Punctuality.
- Notification of illness or any other reason to not attend work.
- Reliability.

- Communication about progress.
- Safety around equipment.
- Communications about problems or questions.
- Respectfulness toward supervisors and other employees.

Frequently Asked Questions

I would like to hire an intern. What do I do?

Write a position description, then send it to Dr. Irlbeck to distribute. Ensure you have planned out a good learning experience for the student you decide to hire.

What do you need from me?

The agricultural communications internship program asks supervisors to complete a form at the beginning of the semester and an evaluation of the intern's performance at the end of the semester. We will check in midway through the semester to ensure all is going well with your intern, but this does not require a form.

I have a good applicant, but the student is in their first year. Is this too early?

Not always. A student can apply to an internship any time they feel ready. Students are encouraged to apply for any internship that interests them. We leave it to the supervisor to determine if the applicant does not have the skills or maturity to work their office.

We really like our intern. Can he or she stay another semester?

Absolutely! Many students continue to work at the business/organization where they were completing their internship. They do not have to continue enrolling in credit hours if they do not wish to do so. If they enroll for a second semester, their experience needs to be significantly different from the first.

We do not allow students to share work items outside our office, yet they are asking for portfolio materials. How should we help them?

We do require a portfolio; however, we understand your need to not share proprietary information. Have a conversation with the intern at the beginning of their internship about the items they can keep for your portfolio. Photos of them doing work, interviews with other employees, or any other tangible items can be acceptable for the portfolio.

Does everyone enrolled in internship credit hours get an "A"?

No. Students' grades depend on their level of performance both in the internship and on the required assignments associated with the ACOM 4000 course. It is possible to fail the internship course if students do not turn in assignments or if there is evidence of academic dishonesty.

Is it possible to fail the ACOM 4000 internship course?

It is. Failure to turn in the required assignments, a grade of F from the internship supervisor, academic dishonesty, or failure to respond to communication from the internship instructor or academic adviser about internship course-related items can result in a failure from the ACOM 4000 course.

We are having trouble with our intern. What should we do?

If problems or disagreements arise during the internship, first try to resolve the issue by speaking to the intern in person. It's always best to work out issues face to face. However,

sometimes situations become more complicated and prove difficult to resolve. If that happens, contact the internship instructor as soon as possible so that a resolution can be achieved.

Communication with Internship Instructor

If you have questions or issues regarding your intern, please contact the internship course instructor via email for further assistance.

Internship Instructor Contact Information

Dr. Erica Irlbeck
Professor of Agricultural Communications
Texas Tech University
Department of Agricultural Education & Communications
Room 207B
Box 42131, Lubbock, Texas 79404-2131
806-834-6708
Erica.irlbeck@ttu.edu

Appendix A: Sample Internship Announcements

United Sorghum Checkoff Program Communications Paid Internship Announcement

Description:

The United Sorghum Checkoff Program (USCP) is accepting applications from talented individuals to serve as a communications intern for the Fall 2023 semester. This position is ideal for students pursuing a degree in agricultural communications or a related field. Interns will gain valuable hands-on experience under the guidance of a mentor or supervisor, collaborating with professionals in a leading national agricultural organization. This role provides students with a platform to apply and enhance the skills acquired in their academic studies.

Responsibilities:

- Contribute to the USCP e-newsletters.
- Monitor daily media coverage, provide summaries, archive, and disseminate as needed.
- Participate in planning, researching, and drafting copy for media and industry communications.
- Aid in social media content planning and development.
- Assist in crafting press releases and media advisories related to agricultural initiatives, product launches, or research findings.
- Write for USCP producer and consumer blogs, e-newsletters, and print newsletters.
- Create and update content for the USCP website regularly.
- Support the design and creation of communication materials for meetings and events.
- Assist in print and promotional item inventories and reorder as necessary.
- Capture photos/videos and assist with the Sorghum Smart Talk podcast scheduling and production.
- Carry out other related duties as designated by USCP communications staff.

Qualifications:

- Demonstrates a professional demeanor and initiative.
- Possesses superior writing capabilities.
- Displays acute attention to detail.
- Strong organizational prowess.
- Proven ability to manage multiple tasks, prioritize, and meet set deadlines.
- An inherent sense of creativity and innovation.
- Proficiency in Adobe Creative Cloud, WordPress or other CMS, and Microsoft Office.

Application Process:

Candidates are asked to submit a comprehensive résumé outlining their work and academic experiences, a detailed cover letter specifying their interests and qualifications, and a portfolio demonstrating design competency.

Forward all materials to USCP Director of Communications, Clint White, at clint@sorghumcheckoff.com.

Following the review of applications, selected candidates will be invited for interviews. The commencement of the internship will be finalized based on a mutually beneficial date after the conclusion of the semester.

iCEV Content Developer Internship

Description:

The curriculum team at iCEV brings careers to the classroom through engaging educational videos featuring some of the most unique workplaces in the nation as well as lessons, projects and activities that develop high school students' career preparedness in a variety of areas.

We are seeking a Content Developer to join our team of instructional content developers, videographers, and graphic designers to develop educational content for career and technical education classrooms across the nation.

Job Duties:

- Write educational video scripts and slide presentations to meet state/national educational and industry standards, align to iCEV's curriculum framework, and to appeal to learners in a variety of settings
- Create assessment questions based on written scripts and slide presentations
- Collaborate with subject-matter experts in video interviews and review processes as needed
- Work with video editors, graphic designers and brand management team to develop captivating graphic ideas for both slide presentations and videos
- Collaborate with management to set deadlines for work and deliverables

Requirements:

- Excellent research and writing skills
 - Ability to write for a variety of audiences, including high school students, teachers, collaborators, and co-workers
 - Passion for education with the ability to grasp and effectively communicate difficult concepts
 - Proficient in grammar, spelling, punctuation and other written English skills
 - Ability to positively receive and respond to constructive feedback to improve the quality of work
 - Must be able to work effectively both as part of a team and independently
 - Must enjoy a work environment requiring flexibility, self-direction, creativity, strong communication and organizational skills
 - Proficient in Microsoft® Word and PowerPoint®
- Preferred but not required:
- Familiar with Adobe Creative Suite and graphically-minded
 - Experience with tutoring or teaching

E-mail résumés to:

brandmanagement@cevmultimedia.com

Appendix B: Agricultural Communications Pathway to Graduation