

A man in a white polo shirt and dark trousers is using a surveying instrument on a paved surface. The instrument has a red wheel and a black handle. The background shows a paved area and a cloudy sky.

# Utilizing Interns in Facilities Management

By Clarissa Judkins,  
John P. Morris, and  
Chuck Molocznik

Facilities management is rapidly changing and developing from a position you stumble into—or work your way up through—to a discipline and vocation all of its own. There is a need for a collaborative strategy among leaders in practice, education, and research to share knowledge and experience and to establish professional and ethical standards. In organizations, this involves developing systems and developing people – to nurture leaders, improve quality, and develop the knowledge and skills base – to secure the future (Alexander 2003).

According to the most recent U.S. Census Bureau report, there were 77 million baby boomers either retiring or getting ready to retire. The baby boomer generation (people born from 1946 to 1965) accounts for approximately 26 percent of the total U.S. population. More than one-third of the baby boomers are over age 50, and many of them will be retiring in the next 10 to 15 years. The retirement of baby boomers is of particular concern because they represent a large percentage of the workforce and a large proportion of an organizations' leadership. When this group of workers begins to retire in earnest, there will be a work-force crisis in terms of having the right talent to perform needed work unless proactive workforce planning begins immediately.

As the number of retirees continues to increase and budgets continue to decrease, many facility managers are looking for ways to optimize their staff without losing quality or production. One recommended solution is to hire an intern. While hiring an

intern offers many benefits to a company, it also brings responsibility and a commitment on the part of the organization.

Student internships provide the student with significant professional opportunities to hone skills and to develop an understanding and appreciation for organizational culture. Interns can also provide a temporary solution for an extra time-consuming project or necessary research. Although all interns expect to perform clerical work in support of their jobs, an intern's job responsibilities should consist of pre-professional or professional level activities. As with any professional position, it is recommended that supervisors create and monitor goals, coach and train, evaluate the intern's work performance and provide feedback (Baltimore 2011).

In 2008, the National Association of Colleges and Employers found that 50 percent of graduating students had held internships (Greenhouse 2010), a percentage that has increased in the past few years and remains even higher in hands-on fields such as engineering. As young professionals begin to perceive facilities management as a professional opportunity, the number of internships should increase due to the mutual benefits they provide (see Figure 1).

Aramark, an international professional services business, has been quick to catch on to the intern benefits. They travel to colleges and career fairs giving information sessions and interviews and end with employing more than 130 interns for a period of 8 to 12 weeks every summer. During that time, the interns are involved with engineering or operation-based internships and



become familiar with Aramark's culture and processes. Aramark prefers to promote internally, and because of the invaluable training the interns receive, it is Aramark's goal to convert talented students into full-time positions. In 2010, 55 percent of their new hires had previous intern experience with the company (Lewis 2011).

There is an opportunity for APPA members to capitalize on this concept as well. One of APPA's recently developed Five Leading Strategies is to "Develop Future Leaders," and offering an internship is one means of accomplishing this goal. Internship opportunities can be posted on the APPA website at <http://www.appa.org/JobExpress/internships.cfm>.

## THE PROCESS

### CREATING AN APPLICATION

Coauthor John Morris, director of facilities operations at the University of Colorado Boulder, decided to hire an intern for the summer of 2011 to analyze the university's warranty process after

Figure 1

Benefits to the Employer	Benefits to the Intern
Inexpensive semi-professional labor	Gain work experience
Receive fresh perspective on operations	Apply classroom knowledge
Introduced to new technology and best practices	Receive networking opportunities
Possible easy transition to full-time employee	Possible easy transition to full-time employee

complaints from staff of its ineffectiveness. With that, Morris created an internship application stating necessary information such as:

- Facility information and background
- Specific project description
- Expectations and project outcomes
- Time period and location
- Requirements and qualifications
- Available hours
- Pay rate and housing options

#### ADVERTISING INTERNSHIP AVAILABILITY

There are several ways to advertise an internship opening, and Morris chose one of the most effective: utilizing his contact with APPA Student Chapter representative Allen Merrell at Brigham Young University to contact all interested students within BYU's undergraduate Facilities Management program. In addition to BYU, there are four other accredited Facilities Management undergraduate programs in North America:

- Conestoga College, Kitchener, Ontario
- Cornell University, Ithaca, New York
- Ferris State University, Big Rapids, Michigan
- Wentworth Institute of Technology, Boston, Massachusetts

All of the above programs require at least one internship of 400 hours or more and are eager to find more internship opportunities for their students. Contacts can be found at <http://www.ifmafoundation.org/scholarships/degree.cfm>.

#### INTERVIEWING AND CANDIDATE SELECTION

Interviewing interns is much like hiring any other applicant. It is essential to develop thoughtful, behavioral-based questions that identify the qualities you are looking for in a successful candidate. The interview questions ranged from "Tell us about something you have completed that you thought was a very innovative or creative solution to a problem," to "It is your first day on your new job and your supervisor is pulled away for two to three hours on an emergency. You have been left alone to acquaint yourself with your new job and department. What would you do? What kind of information would you seek to better understand your new job?"

The interview team was pleased to find that the three interested candidates were all qualified and interviewed well, making the final decision difficult. After a lengthy discussion, the interview team selected Clarissa Judkins as the final candidate. Morris then assigned Judkins to the Work Management Services group, under Chuck Moloznik, work management services manager.

#### PREPARATION

After selection of the intern, it is important to maintain open communication as the start date approaches because, as Mor-



ris and Judkins learned, there is a lot of information and arrangements to transfer back and forth, including:

- Official arrival, start, and end dates
- All necessary information and arrangements to set up housing, if applicable
- Information for payroll and system access
- Exact office location, work space, and expected report time
- Dress code requirements and other office standards

#### START OF THE INTERNSHIP

The first few days of the internship are extremely important for both the employer and the intern. First impres-

sions have an influence and help to set the tone for the whole internship experience. To help things go smoothly, the employer needs to complete a few things within the first few days:

- Set up with workspace, passwords, company ID, and keys
- Introductions to the supervisor and coworkers
- Discuss expectations and assigned project
- Familiarize with location – bathroom, food, office supplies, and the campus
- Supply with maps and directories

#### EVALUATION AND CLOSE-OUT PROCESS

Keep an eye on the intern. This does not mean to watch their every move, but do make certain to know what is happening with their daily tasks. Watch for signs that the intern is confused or bored. Silence may mean that an intern is busy; however, it could also mean that they are confused and shy or uncertain about how to address this issue. As with all employees, monitor their work and provide regular feedback.

Finally, to complete the internship, most interns are required to complete a final report on their work and receive an employee evaluation to receive credit for their time. It is also advantageous to perform a formal exit interview. Through this process it can be determined if the intern had a good experience, and it provides valuable feedback to managers for program planning in the following year.

#### THE EXPERIENCE FROM A SUPERVISOR'S PERSPECTIVE

The Educational Facilities Management internship program can provide a great opportunity for supervisors or managers with limited time or resources to research and develop work processes and associated procedures needed by the organization. Besides the ability to assist with specific projects, interns provide insight and an opportunity to capitalize on a fresh perspective of the organization. Utilizing the intern's strengths and providing a

clear and concise blueprint of the desired results play a key factor in a positive outcome for the internship and the project.

It is important to work with the intern to get feedback, provide course correction and brainstorming while sidestepping the tendency to “micro-manage” or “baby-sit” the intern. Putting aside preconceived ideas and a “doomed to failure” outlook is required. It is essential to give the intern “room to run” with their ideas, while providing necessary resources and removing any roadblocks to their success. Using these guidelines will allow the intern to provide a quality product, as well as challenge your personal preconceived notions of what your department can accomplish.

## THE PROJECT

Often, one of the most difficult portions of any construction project is the final closeout including the delivery and hand-off of O&M manuals and warranty information. Warranty information is not simply limited to construction projects; it is also essential to track and record warranty information for routine R&R of building components and building systems.

The facilities department at the University of Colorado Boulder recognized that tracking warranty information is a cumbersome task and often overlooked, resulting in replacement or major repairs on equipment that may still be under warranty. There was a desire to develop a process that tracked and recorded warranty information into the work order management system as opposed to paper files that are seldom accessed. Recognizing the need to develop a process, Morris felt this would be the perfect project to assign to an intern.

Initially Judkins set out to understand the current operating process pertaining to warranties. Judkins found that approximately 95 percent of warranties last for one year, and that contractors working with the university were required to guarantee their work for that period. The difficulty was not in obtaining warranty paperwork, but rather making technicians aware that a piece of equipment was still under warranty.

Judkins developed a two-fold process to alert technicians that an item may still be under warranty:

1. A redesigned equipment label including the installation date



2. Modification to the CMMS system to alert the user if a piece of equipment referenced on a service request or work order is still under warranty

While developing the latter process it was found that warranty information was rarely entered into the work order management system, leaving no indication that a piece of equipment may still be under warranty. This discovery led to a

reexamination of the process for collecting all original equipment information and a redefinition of Judkins’ task. The new emphasis was to gather new equipment information, enter it into the work management system, and post warranty information along with the equipment data.

After creating a new process with accompanying data collection forms, Judkins provided training to the maintenance shops and service center on the new processes and procedures. In order to manage these new processes, Judkins and Molocznic implemented as many changes as possible by shifting and adding to responsibilities of already existing positions within the department.

## CONCLUSION

By the end of the internship, the facilities department had a new equipment information process and a potential job candidate. Judkins gained work experience, an understanding of educational institutions and valuable professional contacts. The experience was rewarding for both the intern and the Facilities Management department at the University of Colorado Boulder. APPA institutions are encouraged to develop and advertise similar internship opportunities. ☺

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Photos by Mark A. Philbrick/BYU

Clarissa Judkins ([clarissa.judkins@gmail.com](mailto:clarissa.judkins@gmail.com)) is a senior in facility property management at Brigham Young University, Provo, UT, and will graduate in April, 2012. APPA Board member John Morris ([john.morris@colorado.edu](mailto:john.morris@colorado.edu)) is director of facilities operations at the University of Colorado Boulder. Chuck Molocznic ([charles.molocznic@colorado.edu](mailto:charles.molocznic@colorado.edu)) is CU’s manager, work management. This is Judkins and Molocznic’s first article for *Facilities Manager*.