DESIGNING A LEARN & EARN POSITION

A Learn & Earn job is not a typical student job. In this program, departments commit to helping students to gain professional and technical skills that will prepare them for careers after graduation.

Departments that employ Learn & Earn students agree to take on the responsibility of setting achievable goals for students and mentoring them in the workplace. These students have career interests related to the work they do in your department. Learn & Earn positions should provide the opportunity to accomplish tasks and projects that help them demonstrate their capabilities in a résumé, portfolio, or interview.

To plan a Learn & Earn job, follow these steps.

1. **Define the Accomplishment** – This process involves getting detailed answers to several questions:

   a. What is it in your office that needs to be done?
   b. Does it relate to a career path that a student might be pursuing?
   c. Will your student end the semester with a tangible result that could be part of a résumé or portfolio?
   d. Will the student be working on tasks or projects that can be completed within the school year?

**Example**

*Rebecca’s college is in desperate need of a new website. The content has not been updated in three years, and it doesn’t look nearly as appealing as websites from similar colleges at different universities. Rebecca decided Learn & Earn sounds like a good opportunity to bring in a student with some talent and interest in web design to give their site a makeover. From looking at other college websites, she sets out a detailed list of features the website needs, including pictures and videos for prospective students, and instructions and documents for existing students.*

When you’re finished with this process, you should have list of specific tasks the student can accomplish in their time with you.
2. **Define the Skills** – This process involves looking at the accomplishment through an expert’s eyes and determining which skills or knowledge are necessary to accomplish the tasks and projects. If it is not within your area of expertise, don’t be afraid to talk to an expert within your department.

These students are attending the university to learn critical knowledge and skills for their careers, but some things can’t be learned well in the classroom. Identify specific skills your student employees should learn in their time with you. This could include technology skills, business processes, soft skills like communication and collaboration, or creative problem solving.

**Example**

*Part of the reason the college’s website is behind is that there is no one in the department with web design skills. Rebecca calls another department with a nice-looking website and spends some time speaking with their web designer. The designer describes what kind of skills he has had to use in his job. Rebecca lists these, along with several other skills that her department values.*

When you’re finished with this process, you should have a specific list of skills and knowledge the student should be learning and using during their time in your position.

3. **Plan the Accomplishment** – Once you have a good idea of what the student will do and what they will learn, make a plan for what they will do and when. If possible, try to set details week by week. Break down the accomplishment into the parts that need to be done.

An ideal Learn & Earn student job will be divided into three phases. In Phase 1, the student will spend time with a staff person who will act as a mentor or guide. By spending time together, the student will get to know the project and observe how the staff person works. The staff person may set some small tasks for the student to accomplish. This phase may last 1-2 weeks, depending on the student’s ability.

In Phase 2, the student will take a more active role, working alongside the staff person, accomplishing projects together. In Phase 3, the student begins working independently, with minimal assistance from the staff person. Phases 2 and 3 will last as long as necessary, with the goal of letting the student grow enough to work independently.
At the end of Phases 1 and 2, and three or four times in Phase 3, plan a conversation (30 minutes or more) where the staff person and student check about the student’s progress. The mentor will track the student’s growth in each of the skills that were identified in the second step of creating a Learn & Earn job, as well as the progress on the accomplishment.

In early conversations, make a note of the student's development in each of the skills. In later conversations, find ways to see whether they have grown in those skills.

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<tr>
<th>Example Weekly Accomplishments</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Dates</strong></td>
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<td>Sep. 12-16</td>
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<td>Sep. 19-23</td>
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When you are finished with this planning process, you should have a weekly outline of how your student will accomplish their tasks and what they will have to show for it.