Job Shadowing

By hosting students in your workplace, you provide them with an opportunity to see their academic interests applied in a professional setting. In the long term, these experiences help students clarify goals and build connections in their field. Though hosting requires you to commit to share candid information and feedback, it need not be stressful or lengthy. Use the following list to help structure the student’s visit.

Identify the Student’s Interests
• What are the student’s goals for spending time at your organization?
• Encourage him/her to be confident in asking questions, even difficult ones.

Discuss Professional Boundaries
• Discuss professional boundaries and behavior in the work setting. Consider topics such as appropriate dress and cell phone etiquette.
• Encourage the student to take note of questions and observations during the work day, and reserve time to discuss their experience and address questions.

Describe Your Job & Organization
• Give an overview of the career or field: how has it evolved and where is it headed?
• Explain how your job fits into the company and how it relates to other departments. How does the company affect the local or regional community?
• Review your own career path. How did you get here? What experiences, education, and decisions led to you being where you are today? Where might you go in the future?

Introduce Your Organization
• Give a tour of your office and describe the position and responsibilities of other employees. Try to interact with co-workers on all levels to give students a good overview.
• Identify individuals willing to speak with the student talking about their position, particularly if it is relevant to his/her interests or is unique from yours.

Give an Overview for Short Stays—Less than Three Days
• Demonstrate daily responsibilities such as making calls, reviewing work, and using special computer programs. Help the student learn as you go along and avoid using technical jargon.
• If possible, allow the participant to attend “typical” meetings so he/she can watch you interact with colleagues, observe informal behaviors, assess meeting outcomes, etc.
• Arrange for the student to participate in a hands-on task while you supervise, for this helps them be more engaged with your work.

Added Responsibility for Longer Stays—Three Days or More
• Give him/her a small project that builds and exercises skills relevant to your field.
• Provide constructive feedback on what you have observed in your time together, especially behaviors/attitudes that might negatively impact the student’s job application process.