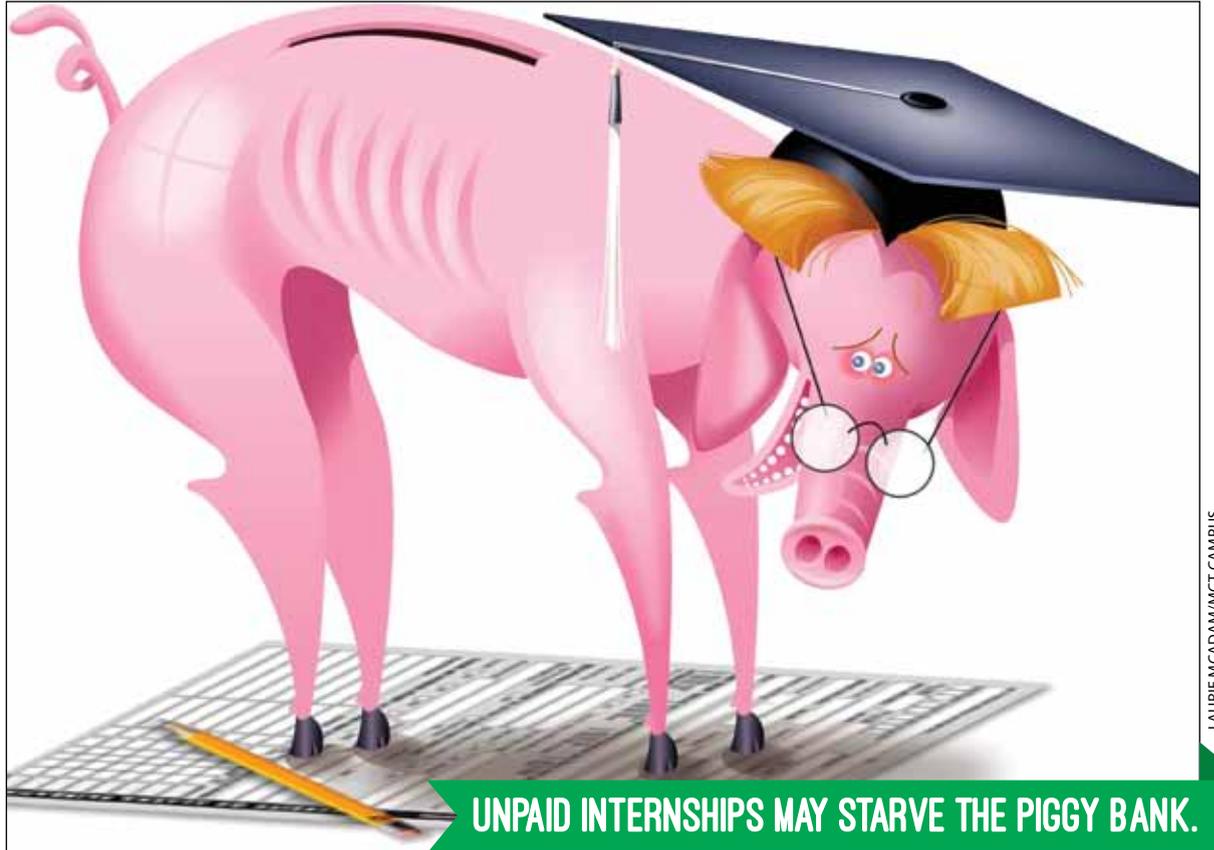


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Unpaid internships can cause misleading experiences

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Staff Writer

Unpaid internships are a growing phenomenon amongst college students eager to gain an edge in a competitive job market, but legal worries are on the rise regarding the value of these internships and companies' uses of intern labor.

Nancy J. Leppink, deputy administrator of U.S. Department of Labor's Wage and Hour Division in 2012, addressed this in an interview with *The New York Times*.

"If you're a for-profit employer, there aren't going to be many circumstances where you can have an un-

paid intern and still be in compliance with the (minimum wage) law," she said.

Federal officials like Leppink at the U.S. Department of Labor have set up criteria for companies to follow to ensure that internships do not violate minimum wage laws and illegally exploit free labor. Amongst these criteria are that the internship experience is purposed for the benefit of the intern, the intern does not replace regular employees, the employer providing the training receives no immediate advantage from the activities of the intern and that the internship is similar to training that would be given in an educational environment.

Internships that fail to meet all of these criteria are exploitations of labor and against the law.

On the other hand, when companies are in compliance with the law, they can benefit from an intern's "up-to-date skills and fresh perspectives of interns," said Martin Orr, chair and internship coordinator of the sociology department.

According to Orr, the ideal purpose of unpaid internships, is a symbiotic relationship but that isn't the situation in every case.

"I was hoping to learn about my future career and make connections but instead learned how to change ink in the copier and (get

people's coffee orders. I was promised by my boss that I would be taught Internet marketing and given projects to do, but it never happened," said Sarah Stone, a junior speech-language pathology major who was formerly a marketing intern. "I was basically a free office assistant. I made no connections and in the end decided to change my major."

In some cases like Stone's, the benefits of an unpaid internship are near nonexistent. Students at Boise State with unpaid internship credit aren't even working for free—they're paying to be there. Students pay around \$240 for each internship credit received.

A primary objective with unpaid internships is creating a valuable advantage in a world where the doors to opportunity are only getting harder to open.

However, according to the National Association of Colleges and Employers, in 2013 only 37 percent of graduating students with unpaid internships received job offers within a year of graduation, standing a minuscule 1.8 percent above the students who had no internships at all.

"I made no connections," Stone said. "I decided I didn't want to be part of that (unpaid internships) and do not see experiences like that helping me in the future."

Additional Info

Percentage 2013 college graduates who received job offers, grouped by internship experience:

Paid internship:

63.1%

Unpaid internship:

37.0%

No internship:

35.2%

NACE 2013 Student Survey