



COVE
centre for ocean
ventures & entrepreneurship

INTERNSHIP 2021

"AS AN EMPLOYER,
THE COVE INTERNSHIP
WAS SUPER, BOTH
THE STUDENTS AND
EMPLOYERS GOT A LOT
OUT OF THE EXPERIENCE!"

*CANDACE SMITH
RBR INTERN SUPERVISOR*

OVERVIEW

Following the success of the COVE Internship Pilot in 2020, the Centre for Ocean Ventures and Entrepreneurship (COVE) ran an expanded program in 2021. The number of students have doubled from the pilot period while maintaining a high degree of satisfaction, quality, and diversity.

INTERNSHIP BY THE NUMBERS

Number of interns	20
Number of companies	8
Number of mentors	8
Number of graduated students	6
Employment rate 1 month from completion	83%
Participants from underrepresented groups	65%

BENEFITS TO EMPLOYERS

Hosting internships is a solid return on investment for companies in regards to building a talent pipeline with short term to immediate results. Interns become embedded in company culture and are inclined to stay or return to the host company post-graduation. Interns also bring value with regards to innovative and new approaches to projects and work, their fresh ideas can inject a fresh view into the company. The focus on equity, diversity and inclusion in COVE Internships also supports companies growth trajectories when looking to hire and tap into recruitment opportunities to attract and retain underrepresented talent.

BENEFITS TO INDUSTRY

The COVE internship was developed following a thorough [review of co-op placements in the marine industry in 2018](#). That report recognized two major concerns from small and medium enterprises (SMEs) relating to hiring co-op students. The first was that co-op funding often mis-aligned with hiring periods preventing organisations from having the financial security to take on the placement. With COVE managing the funding for host organisations we are able to mitigate the risk for smaller companies. Similarly smaller companies are concerned with their capacity to host internships with regards to structure and support. COVE's Internship model supports the recruitment and hiring of a considerable number of interns across many host companies; this structure provides in-depth training, mentoring and administrative support as well as networking opportunities. SMEs would be stretched in attempting to support a robust model of hosting internships.

COVID-19 IMPACT

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, a province-wide lockdown went into effect several days before the launch of the 2021 COVE Internship Program on May 3rd 2021. Due to this, the program underwent a quick pivot to online delivery for all on-boarding and Professional Development offerings. In addition, the placements began as remote with all companies successfully adapting to the changing circumstances. With the relaxation of regulations later in the summer, most placements moved to in-person allowing for additional networking and collaboration between interns.



ONBOARDING

A robust onboarding package was offered to interns, including 3.5 days of training and 7 professional development sessions over the first two months of internships. Onboarding covered a range of topics including human resources, work culture, workplace skills, health and safety, risk management and design thinking.

The professional development sessions included agile methodology, technology economics, company demos, introduction to consulting and project management. These sessions were presented from a range of experts within and external to the COVE ecosystem.

THE COMPANIES

Eight companies participated in the COVE internship this year: Kraken Robotics, Tidal Flyer, LeeWay Marine, RBR, Centre for Marine Applied Research, Impactful Health Research & Development, DeepSense and COVE. Each company submitted a proposal and was paired with students who matched the skillsets and requirements of the individual project.

THE INTERNS

The twenty interns who participated in the 2021 program represented a wide range of backgrounds and skills. Students from four post-secondary institutions were recruited: NSCC, Dalhousie University, Mount Saint Vincent University and the University of British Columbia. The cohort was very interdisciplinary with degree subjects including: Business, Environmental Sustainability, Oceans Technology, Computer Science, Public Relations and, Mechanical, Chemical and Industrial Engineering.

COVE has a strong commitment to improving the equity, diversity and inclusion within the ocean sector workforce. As part of the recruitment process there was an emphasis on attracting students from a wide diversity of underrepresented groups in the ocean sector. In the 2021 cohort, we were successful in hiring 13 of 20 students from under-represented groups.

THE MENTORS

During the onboarding process, interns were paired with one of eight industry mentors. These individuals were successful professionals from a range of organisations within the COVE ecosystem. The mentoring relationship provides a support structure for students at the beginning of their career path to discuss and gain advice on workplace culture, their work, placements and future career options. Students met with their mentor on a regular basis throughout the placement.

OUTCOMES

Of the twenty students who participated in the 2021 program, six had graduated and were ready to enter the workforce with the remaining 14 returning to complete their post-secondary courses. Of the six that graduated, five had been hired into full-time positions within one month of their placement ending indicating a high graduate employment rate post internship.

FEEDBACK

Throughout the program ongoing feedback was collected from host companies, mentors and students to inform improvements and support required. This took the form of monthly check-in sessions with companies, regular interactions with students and formal feedback requests. Results of the end of program surveys are available below:

Hosts: [Host End of Program Survey Results](#)

Interns: [Intern End of Program Survey Results](#)

Mentors: [Mentor End of Program Survey Results](#)

PROGRAM FUTURE

The COVE internship program has proved to be a successful and an engaging route to encourage young people to choose careers in the ocean sector. In the 2022 program, COVE is aiming to double its intake of interns to 40, and doubling the companies and mentors to 16. There has been ample interest in the program, therefore we are expecting significant interest in the expanded program.

2022 IMPROVEMENTS



Mentorship

Several stakeholders have requested additional guidance and structure to the mentoring sessions. To address this the 2022 program will include revised mentoring structure, training and support.



Remote Participants

Working with a group of Masters of Technology, Entrepreneurship and Innovation students from Saint Mary's University, we are currently exploring how to improve community and support structures for the internship with a focus on remote and off-site placements.



Placement Process

A number of companies have expressed interest in being more involved in the final selection of their candidates prior to placement. Therefore in 2022 we will be looking to improve the balance of company involvement in that process.

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