Employer Red Flags

Job and internship listings accessed via the Magner Career Center are for the convenience of students. We have no affiliation with these employers and can make no representation or guarantees concerning positions listed. Although the vast majority of internships and job postings are legitimate, it is important for students to know the signs to look for and notify the career center if they have any concerns (718 951 5696 or careernews@brooklyn.cuny.edu) before they respond, apply, send information or go on the interview. Being notified by students about negative internship/job experiences allows us to prevent other students from applying and assist students with handling the situation.

Look for the following red flags and do a little more digging for you apply or go on an interview:

- The internship is unpaid but does not comply with DOL's guidelines on unpaid internships
- Very vague description of the company and/or what the intern/employee will do
- Very limited details about the organization is available outside of the posting (can't find a website or other information online)
- Personal email account used to communicate
- Asks for social security number or other personal information (before being hired). BIG FLAG
- Home office or residence versus business office setting
- Contacts you via linkedin, social media or other means without you having applied for anything. (While this can be legitimate, you should always try to call or email the company's Human Resources department, to find out if they really have such a job opening and, if the name of a recruiter is given, ask if that person really works for them.)
- Asks you to send money, deposit money/check or to pay for "training" BIG FLAG
- Startups (can be unorganized and not in compliance with DOL guidelines)
- Posting internships after mid-semester when it is too late to make arrangements for academic credit
- Promoting on the street or other nonlegitimate sites
- Several customer complaints or complaints on better business bureau
- Employment agencies that charge a fee (some legitimate agencies do charge but it is best to do a lot of research before paying)
- Offers the position over the phone without interviewing student BIG FLAG
- Contacted for an interview immediately after you apply BIG FLAG
- Request for interviews during non-business hours BIG FLAG
- Opportunity sounds too good to be true (such as a very high pay rate) BIG FLAG
- Internship/job is virtual (you work from home) BIG FLAG
- Inappropriate comments or unprofessional behavior during the interview or after BIG FLAG
- Ask you to sign an employment contract (get advice before doing so)
- Ask illegal interview questions
- Has you involved in illegal or inappropriate activity BIG FLAG
- Is commission based

The above does not necessarily mean that the employer is up to no good, these should be signs for you to get more information and proceed with extreme caution.

When in doubt please reach out to us to receive some guidance prior to applying, sending information or money, interviewing or at any point. If you do encounter an employer you are concerned about let us know. Luckily, it is not likely that you will encounter an illegitimate employer but it is best to know some of the signs to look for.

Make sure to review our internships 101 webinar for more information on how to find an internship.