

## The Healthcare Management Program at Northwell Health: How To Develop an Elite Internship

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### Objective:

True entry level healthcare management jobs are scarce and often the most junior of positions require several years of experience. Furthermore, these entry level positions are in areas that are siloed to one specialty of healthcare management (quality, finance, patient experience, data coordination) with little opportunity for mentorship, guidance, career progression or growth. Compounding this issue is the need to fill lower level management positions, as openings in one area often lead to the “poaching” of good talent from another area in the organization. If these lower level managerial positions can’t be filled internally, the organization has to go to the external labor market where the risk is significantly higher the company will overpay for an unknown resource. The need for new talent is further emphasized by an aging workforce within Northwell Health, with 60% of executive leadership and 40% of senior leadership set to retire in the next 5 years. To address this need, our team developed an elite internship, the Healthcare Management Program (HMP) and an entry level leadership track opportunity, the Management Associate Program (MAP). These programs have positioned our organization to competitively acquire talent in an innovative way.

### Planning/Research Methods:

With low commitment and high turnover, as well as a lack of entry level positions, we turned to the experts. We researched recruiting strategies of top banks for their elite internship programs, as well as spoke to leaders from Price Waterhouse Coopers and several University Career Services teams about the most effective way to recruit on campuses in order to garner a more active recruiting strategy. Our findings resulted in new approaches to recruiting young talent.

### Implementation Methods:

Our preliminary attempt at pipeline planning took place in 2010. It began as an unpaid, 8 week, part time program for undergraduate college students interested in healthcare administration. Interns would have the opportunity to work consistently with the executive team, receive feedback from an identified manager, and have strong mentorship opportunity for the duration of the program. Despite these opportunities, the program was only able to attract 5 or 6 applications for two open positions. Additionally, there were no retention opportunities for students to come back as full time employees upon graduation. As a result, these interns looked to other companies for employment upon graduation.

In 2013 the program experienced huge changes aimed at improved recruiting and retention. Some of these changes included movement to electronic applications, which ultimately led to new avenues for communication with college advisors and career services. The application was posted at 30 top university campuses. The team also visit 4 campuses to provide informational education sessions to interested university applicants. In addition to on-campus recruiting, the team also signed up for “career consortiums” in which 500+ students from 15+ schools participated to look for available internships and jobs.

Alongside new recruiting methods, the internship also evolved in terms of the kinds of projects interns were tasked with. Rather than creating unnecessary work or asking for simplistic work, HMP interns were being asked to do real work that was being funneled down by our executive teams. This work was required for executive decision making, strategic planning, and improved operational efficiency within the hospital; all projects were related to true needs of the hospital. Projects have included process mapping, financial reporting, scorecard creation, hospital performance dashboards, venture capital planning, fundraising, throughput initiatives, etc. Rather than strictly holding interns in siloed areas, the different variety of projects allow interns to gain experience in all of the different areas of healthcare administration: finance, operations, quality, and patient experience.

### Results:

Through these new recruiting tactics, alongside a unique internship experience strengthened by high level executive involvement, the HMP internship began to grow. 2014 saw 120 applicants. Following this year, HMP partnered with the corporate Human Resource Talent and Acquisition, which ultimately resulted in 516 applicants for the newly enhanced process. One year later, the pool grew again with over 680 applicants. With this increasingly large pool, the internship has continued to expand. It now exists across 12 hospitals and service lines for a total of 25 Summer Associates.

Additionally, Northwell Health’s Management Associate Program (MAP) which is a full time, two-year entry level program in Healthcare Finance and Operations, has grown out of the Healthcare Management Program. This ability to offer Summer Associates a full time position upon completion of the HMP is a unique way to retain talent and top performers. Ultimately, Northwell saves time, energy, and money by training future employees for 8 weeks in the HMP program, and then retaining the successful participants at the end of the program. The MAP sites will no longer need to recruit for their entry level positions, and will have properly trained talent “graduating” every year to fill management level roles, without having to poach employees from other parts of the organization or from external sources. In 2016, 6 out of 13 interns were offered full time positions and 5 accepted. This growth continued in 2017 where 12 out of 26 interns were offered full time employment, with all 12 accepting their offers.

Former interns now hold high leadership roles the hospital, such as administrative director, financial/operational managers, and program coordinators. This program is truly innovative, and the market currently hosts no legitimate competitors for healthcare management internships.