

2019

Department of Human  
Services, City of San  
Antonio

SA2020 Commission  
on Education

# **[POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INTERNSHIP PROGRAMS FUNDED BY THE CITY OF SAN ANTONIO]**

## **Introduction Letter from the Chair**

In the summer of 2018, the Commission conducted a brainstorming session, after which the Commission identified college and career readiness as an important part of developing San Antonio's future workforce and the need to develop and retain a strong, capable and educated workforce within the city from its current residents. With the exception of Pre-K 4 SA, the majority of city funds focused on education are used to fund internship programs. The Commission saw a need to review the current internships programs funded by the city to identify strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities for enhanced efficiency and impact.

The Commission reviewed the current programs operated and funded by the City and benchmarked them against other large city internship programs across Texas and other states. Based on this review, the Commission endeavored to formulate recommendations that would improve the impact of the City's estimated \$1 million annual investment in summer internships. The objective was to establish desired outcomes for the program, to establish indicators of the program's success, identify the current success of the programs, expand access to more of San Antonio's residents, and improve services for both students and employers participating in the programs.

Once internship programs were identified as the Commission's focus for this year, an in-depth study was conducted of the four programs funded by the City of San Antonio and the gaps in services and comparisons to other internship programs within other seven other major cities. After reviewing the findings of the study, the Commission developed three policy recommendations to be considered for funding by the Mayor and City Council in the next City budget.

In compliance with ordinance 2013-02-14-0114 to advise Mayor and City Council on issues related to the education of San Antonio Residents, the SA2020 Commission Education is requesting the approval of the policy recommendations outlined in this document, to enhance the City's internship programs. As we move forward, we further seek to identify other areas that necessitate our support. We are committed to supporting the Mayor and the City Council's efforts in providing the best educational opportunities for San Antonio's student population.

Sincerely,

Sonya Hernandez  
Chair  
SA2020 Commission on Education

**SA2020 Commission on Education**

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## Overview of SA2020 Commission on Education

The SA2020 Commission on Education was created in 2013. Comprised of eleven members appointed by the mayor and each council district, the SA2020 Commission on Education (Commission) “serves in an advisory capacity to the Mayor and City Council on matters affecting the education of San Antonio residents in line with the SA2020 vision of orchestrating one of the greatest turnarounds in education in the United States.”[1] Although the committee is not actively involved nor coordinates its activities with SA2020, members still assert the importance of the Commission to support the SA2020 vision particularly within the area of education.

## Internships Programs Funded by the City of San Antonio

The City of San Antonio currently funds four primary programs providing over 1,000 internship opportunities. Three of the programs receive 100% of funding from the City: The City of San Antonio Ambassador Program (managed by the Department of Human Services), Family Service Association (FSA) and JOVEN. The fourth, SA Works, receives funds from the City of San Antonio Economic Development Department while its interns are paid by the hosting organization. In fact, each of the City of San Antonio’s Human Resource Department’s high school interns are also SA Works interns, essentially co-enrolled in both programs. In addition to these programs, City departments, like the City Attorney’s Office, hire interns independent of these programs.

## Overview of Internship Programs Funded by the COSA

The **Ambassador Program**, administered by the City of San Antonio’s Department of Human Services, offers summer internships and professional development sessions to students currently enrolled in college of ages 18 and older. The purpose of the Ambassador Program is to attract the City’s college graduates toward career opportunities within San Antonio upon graduation by offering internship opportunities in private, public and non-profit organizations.

**Family Services of San Antonio** offers a college and career readiness program and services that are targeted toward economically disadvantaged and at-risk high school students. Ages of participants range from 14 to 17. Family Service provides initial training and internship matching opportunities within San Antonio companies and organizations. Internships are offered during the summer months from June through August for an average of 20 hours per week.

**JOVEN** aims to provide work experience for teens to develop and articulate their career aspirations through internships. They offer job readiness skills, workplace expectations and financial literacy seminars to high school students. Ages of participants range from 14 to 17.

**SA Works** seeks to promote economic mobility among San Antonio youth between the ages of 16 through 20. The program seeks to recruit and retain high school students within the City. The program seeks to function as a talent-pipeline, helping employers to train the City’s future workforce.

## Challenges in Internship Programs

- Issue of transportation: All four programs cite transportation to the jobsite as a major challenge for interns. This leaves interns-many of them high school students-without access to a car out of the running for internships in parts of the City lacking frequent and reliable bus services. All programs felt that the lack of transportation limited their ability to recruit students who were the most in need of paid internships.
- Lack of internships for specific groups: The Commission also identified other gaps in serving all young adults in San Antonio with internships. Specifically, none of the City-funded programs offer internships to people who graduated high school but are not yet enrolled in college (i.e., the summer between high school graduation and freshman year) or to residents who are in trade or certification programs not associated with an institute of higher education.
- Further concerns: The Commission was also interested in further exploring whether internship opportunities were accessible for all students throughout the City and identifying additional factors that discouraged prospective interns from applying. Unfortunately, due to time constraints and limited resources, the committee did not further delve into these two areas.

## The City's Direct Investment

The City of San Antonio annually invests approximately \$1.1 million in intern wages with hourly wages ranging from \$7.25 to \$10.60. Last year, total program budgets for all four programs amounted to \$1,363,482 with an average of \$1,445 spent on each intern. Between programmatic and wage costs, the Ambassador program spends over \$2,300 on each of the interns it enrolls per year. This is the highest amount spent by any of the four programs.

2018 Internship Program Costs by Program				
Ambassador	FSA	JOVEN	SA Works	TOTAL
City Funding for Intern Wages*				
\$350,000	\$234,027	\$155,730	\$400,320*	\$1,140,077
Overall Program Costs				
\$477,000	\$254,762	\$186,400	\$445,320*	\$1,363,482
Number of Interns				
200	316	189	278	983
Overall Cost per Intern				
\$2,385	\$806	\$986	\$1,602*	AVG \$1,445

*\*Additional funding is allocated toward internships which are offered by San Antonio's Human Resources department.*

## Best Practices of Internship Programs in Other Large Cities

To ensure the Commission understood the full landscape of city-funded internships, the Commission researched internship programs with seven comparable cities to San Antonio: Austin, Dallas, Houston, Phoenix, San Diego and San Jose.

The Commission identified the following best practices for the City of San Antonio to consider adopting as it improves the quality of its internship programs:

- *The City of Houston* offers its residents a website that connects young people seeking internship opportunities with companies from all sectors who are seeking interns. The website [www.HireHoustonYouth.org](http://www.HireHoustonYouth.org) is managed by a non-profit that lists an almost comprehensive list of all internships available in Houston. Each year, the mayor launches a media campaign and sets a goal of the number of interns Houston businesses and nonprofits should hire.
- *The City of Austin* hosts the Youth Career Fest, which is an annual job fair hosted by the Austin Youth Council exclusively for high school students. Students network with potential employers while learning interviewing skills.
- *The City of Dallas*, as part of the Mayor's Intern Fellows program, incorporates a two-day training/leadership session and a one-hour work readiness webinar into the program requirements. These highly structured sessions ensure that program participants are gaining soft-skills they can use in their future job searches as well as within the internship program.
- *The City of San Diego* offers work readiness programs, which include summer mentoring programs, classes in financial literacy and intern/supervisor networking events. They also offer the Bridge to Employment seminar that recruits interns to work within the City of San Diego once they graduate. The city's Human Resources Department hosts the seminar for interns on an annual basis.

## Policy Recommendations

1. **Internship programs shall make reasonable effort to be more equitable and take action towards addressing gaps in service.**
  - a. Make reasonable efforts to recruit and advertise internship opportunities and program requirements to minorities, at-risk youth, students with disabilities or special needs, and students in underserved communities regardless of students' age, gender identification, sexual orientation or preference into internship programs. Wait lists for the internship programs also should prioritize these areas.
  - b. Create or identify apprenticeship opportunities and/or experiential learning opportunities for students who have graduated high school and are enrolled in a certification program or in transition to their first year in college.
  - c. Consider transportation concerns from program participants and offer resources or make reasonable accommodations for students seeking internship opportunities.
  - d. Take a trauma-informed care approach to identify barriers and provide access to resources for students prior to dismissing students from a program.



- e. Evaluate internship program process and operations regularly to identify opportunities to be more equitable, work towards resolving gaps in service for all City of San Antonio residents and provide updates as needed to the SA2020 Commission on Education.
- 2. The City of San Antonio shall develop program standards and expected outcomes for all internship programs receiving funding from The City of San Antonio.**
- a. Develop program standards to outline the expectations and quality of programming related, but not limited to, professional development, soft skills and student development provided by internship programs.
  - b. Require each program to include standardized pre-and post-survey questions measuring standards related, but not limited to, experience, impact and benefit of the programs for both students and employers.
  - c. Create a standard process on how to identify need among applicants and prioritize students on waitlists to ensure that applicants who would benefit most from paid internships receive priority.
- 3. Improve the infrastructure to supporting internship programs.**
- a. Develop a City-funded and managed website with a database and user portal capabilities available for all internship programs in the City of San Antonio to improve access to information for students and employers seeking internship opportunities.
  - b. Offer networking opportunities for both students and employers to improve and build professional relationships.
  - c. Provide technical support, resources, and professional development opportunities for employers who are interested in hosting interns. Support areas may be related, but not limited to, writing intern job descriptions, outlining intern project expectations, preparing workspaces for interns, providing mentorship for interns, managing conflict-resolution, and teaching onboarding skills.

## Next Steps

With the support of the Mayor and the City Council, the Commission is committed to implementing the changes outlined in this policy recommendation in order to ensure that the City of San Antonio offers the best internship opportunities for young students. We appreciate feedback on potential areas of improvement within this document, and we will diligently incorporate such feedback. Upon approval from the Mayor and the City Council, we hope to immediately begin developing a City-wide website to promote the internship programs and provide information for applications in one consolidated virtual space.

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[1] Commission on Education By-Laws, 2014.

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[i] After conducting a salary study in February 2018, the Ambassador Program's hourly rate will be \$11.30 starting in June 2019.