

TRAINING PROGRAM INTERNSHIP

Preservation Trades and Workforce Development

CASE STUDY

PRESERVATION PRIORITIES TASK FORCE



SUMMARY

This case study demonstrates how students with an interest in the skilled trades can expand their knowledge, interest, and appreciation for historic preservation as a career path. The Newport Restoration Foundation in Newport, Rhode Island works with several post-secondary training institutions to offer three-month internships for students to learn more about the preservation trades and the variety of roles open to them.

DESCRIPTION

For five decades, the Newport Restoration Foundation (NRF) has preserved more than eighty 18th- and 19th-century buildings on Aquidneck Island, representing one of the largest portfolios of historic architecture owned by a single organization in the United States. Most of these buildings are currently rented as private residences to tenant stewards and maintained by a full-time crew of carpenters and painters. With an in-house staff of experienced tradesmen and an abundance of sites, NRF offers students real-world experience in the preservation and maintenance of historic properties.

In 2021, NRF launched the Historic Trades Initiative to develop a multi-layered approach to increase and diversify interest and expertise in the preservation trades. The trades internship program focuses on exposing and training students to a broad cross-section of preservation disciplines.

Internship Model

- 1) NRF works with regional trades programs to discuss career opportunities in the preservation trades.
- 2) Two students from participating schools are selected for summer internships.
- 3) Students train both at the NRF mill and in the field on a rotating schedule, gaining experience in fine mill work, painting, building repair, and client relations (working with tenants).
- 4) Students keep a journal to capture new terminology, crew names, project locations, and general thoughts on their work to take back to school and reference.



(left-right) NRF Mill Supervisor Pete Raposa and Ophelia Keenan, a student at IYRS School of Technology & Trades. Photo courtesy Newport Restoration Foundation.

“Sharing our expertise with students is the only way we can keep preservation alive.”

Pete Raposa,
NRF Mill Supervisor
(craftsman 30+ years)

NUTS & BOLTS

- Eligible students are at least eighteen years old with at least one year of formal training in a trade.
- Interns work full time for twelve weeks and are paid an hourly rate. Funding is provided by a private workforce development grant.
- Students assist NRF tradesmen in executing the projects at hand, and are also required to complete an individual project that showcases their project management and milling skills.

KEY LESSONS

- Close collaboration with regional training programs is imperative. Begin outreach to partners six to nine months before the internship starts, and offer to speak in class during the term to increase student interest.
- Establish a clear set of competencies students will acquire through the internship.
- Identify a supervisor for student day-to-day interaction. This creates a clear set of daily expectations and a single point of communication between students and the organization.
- Affordable housing can increase the number of students who can participate. Consider alternative housing at nearby universities, host families, or room-rental services.
- Offer flexibility in start dates and hours. Students may have more than one job or a school schedule to coordinate.
- Conduct pre- and post-internship surveys of both supervisors and students.
- Students need to be paid for their work. If funding is limited, consider a shorter internship, fewer hours per week, a flat stipend, and/or free housing.

IMPACT/ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- **Positive Image**—Students and staff alike have a positive learning experience, and they share their enthusiasm for the organization with the greater community.
- **Clarity of Career Options**—Interns come away with an appreciation for the preservation trades and where their future career may lay.
- **Increased Staffing**—Having more staff during the busiest season of the year increases workload capacity.
- **Recruiting**—Creating relationships with trades programs is an excellent recruiting tool for full-time employees.

“The internship was physically demanding but worth every minute, because I learned techniques you can only learn on the job.”

Summer '22 intern



(left-right) NRF Carpenter Mike Plumer and G. James, a student at North Bennet Street School. Photo courtesy Newport Restoration Foundation.

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