

Meijer Shifts Robust Internship Program to Provide Virtual Experience to 78 College Students in Face of COVID-19

Retailer shipped laptops, enhanced digital platforms to promote connectivity all summer long

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich., July 29, 2020 /PRNewswire/ -- Despite the closures COVID-19 caused on so many programs and events this summer, Midwest retailer Meijer didn't want to add its robust college internship program to the growing list. Instead, Meijer adapted its program to support a 100 percent virtual model, benefiting 78 students from 30 colleges and universities across the country.

"Meijer has always been a nimble company, willing and able to adapt in the face of change. The coronavirus forced us to alter the way we do our jobs, but we rose to the challenge once again for these students," said Michael Rotelle, Senior Vice President of Human Resources. "While nothing can replace the in-person learning and collaboration these students would have received from our team members, I'm proud of the Meijer team for adapting our program to ensure a valuable – and safe – virtual summer experience."

The 10-week internship program began June 1. It was originally scheduled to begin mid-May; however, it took time to transition to an all-virtual setting, including the need to ship each student a laptop computer. Once students were onboarded, they began their specific work assignments, which required them to be virtually embedded with the specific teams they were assigned to. This allowed them to gain experience through hands-on project work in the business areas they supported. In fact, one of the key elements of the internship program at Meijer is the requirement that each intern work on a specific project with a deliverable that has a direct impact on the business.

Meijer enhanced the program's digital platform to better support connectivity and streamline communications among students. Meijer added weekly virtual chats to give the interns an opportunity to connect and learn about numerous business areas like sustainability, diversity and inclusion, leadership and an executive speaker series. The in-person training sessions were also adapted for virtual learning and projects were rescoped to allow for group projects to provide even more networking opportunities. The program also includes bi-weekly meetings among interns to talk about challenges, share successes and have fun.

Originally, Meijer expected to employ 121 interns this summer. However, 43 internships that primarily focused on store operations and supply chain were cancelled due to the pandemic. For those students, Meijer provided the following benefits:


- Guaranteed internships for 2021 for incoming juniors and seniors.
- Guaranteed interviews for graduating seniors to discuss full-time employment opportunities.
- Partnered with the National Retail Federation (NRF) Foundation to provide a summer learning experience surrounding the retail industry.
- A stipend to help offset a portion of the financial impact the cancellation may have caused.

"Many of my friends from college were unable to participate in their original plan for this summer due to the pandemic. I am grateful that Meijer adapted to the current situation and created an adjusted program for us to participate in," said Bonnie McCall, an intern on the Meijer Community Partnerships & Giving Team from Michigan State University. "Their persistence speaks volumes to the care they have for team members."

About Meijer: Meijer is a Grand Rapids, Mich.-based retailer that operates 253 supercenters and grocery stores throughout Michigan, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Kentucky and Wisconsin. A privately-owned and family-operated company since 1934, Meijer pioneered the "one-stop shopping" concept and has evolved through the years to include expanded fresh produce and meat departments, as well as pharmacies, comprehensive apparel departments, pet departments, garden centers, toys and electronics. For additional information on Meijer, please visit www.meijer.com. Follow Meijer on Twitter [@twitter.com/Meijer](https://twitter.com/Meijer) and [@twitter.com/MeijerPR](https://twitter.com/MeijerPR) or become a fan at www.facebook.com/meijer.

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