



**A Guide for Nonprofit/Social Sector Employers Seeking to Hire MBAs**  
Developed by the Center for the Advancement of Social Entrepreneurship at  
Duke University's Fuqua School of Business  
[www.fuqua.duke.edu/case](http://www.fuqua.duke.edu/case)

February 2003

Following are resources for nonprofits and other social sector organizations looking to recruit Fuqua MBAs. The materials presented are applicable when hiring both summer interns and full-time employees. Where applicable, the two are discussed separately. The content that follows was largely provided by the [MBA-Nonprofit Connection](#) (MNC), with significant additions from CASE MBA at Fuqua. Our sincere thanks to Ali Davis at MNC for her valuable input.

This guide briefly addresses the following topics:

- *How to think about your potential employee*
- *How to recruit your employee*
- *How to design the work, including how to think about compensation*

***How to think about your potential employee:***

Fuqua students will be looking for internships for the summer between their first and second year of business school and full-time employment upon graduation. Keep in mind that first-year students do not match the usual intern profile (20 or 21 years old, energetic but inexperienced), and graduates are significantly different from entry-level graduates from college. They are older and usually have at least four years of professional work experience. For some general statistics on Fuqua students, see the [Class of 2004 profile](#). These students can handle, and are looking for, assignments that would more typically be given to consultants and mid to senior staff than to interns and entry-level staff.

If you are a social sector organization looking to recruit MBAs, then you most likely already have relevant positions within your organizations dealing with marketing, accounting, finances, operations, or some other aspect of your business activity. In recruiting Fuqua students, realize that they are interested in this type of employment for the “double bottom-line.” That is, they hope to have the opportunity to use their MBA skill set, but they also want opportunities to be directly engaged in the social mission of your organization.

For nonprofit employers, the biggest challenge may be defining the specifics around how a Fuqua student can be useful to your organization. Here are some examples of work interns have done in the past for nonprofit employers:

- Developed a marketing plan for the consulting group of a nonprofit management support organization
- Provided financial management, marketing, and operations assistance to organizations starting charter schools
- Prepared and presented a strategic plan for the finance department of a large environmental organization
- Provided consulting services to inner-city businesses
- Analyzed a nonprofit's fee-for-service work and made recommendations for managing costs, setting prices, and tracking projects.

In addition, here are examples of full-time positions for graduates, although most positions are in reality customized to the needs of the organization over time:

- Providing resource allocation, financial, and accounting supervision to the organization, either as a CFO or other position
- Managing relationships with a portfolio of grantees for a philanthropic organization
- Consulting to nonprofits on a variety of business issues, both strategic and practical
- Helping Community Economic Development groups (CDCs and CDFIs) to analyze their investments at a financial and social level
- Developing and managing revenue generating activities for a nonprofit

It is important to keep in mind that during their time at Fuqua, students learn the core principles of how to run businesses along with advanced strategy. In many cases, this expertise can be translated to the social sector in an incredibly useful way, including in the areas of marketing, accounting, operations, and general consulting and management. However, there may be functions for which an MBA may be less suited. A primary example is development. Most MBAs will be dedicated and capable enough to learn the skills necessary to do the work and contribute, but employers should not assume that MBA hires will arrive with an understanding of the specifics of fundraising in the nonprofit sector.

### ***How to recruit your employee:***

This section discusses two major steps in the recruitment process:

- Recruiting timetable and coordination with Fuqua
- Interviewing and resume review

## *Recruiting timetable and coordination with Fuqua*

### Summer internships

The Fuqua recruiting season for summer jobs, during which many companies interview students on campus, extends roughly from mid-January to mid-March. While some students continue their job searches into April, the majority of job offers are made and accepted in February and March. You should try to make an offer during that period as well, while the pool of applicants is still large. That way there is still time to follow up with other candidates if your first job offer is turned down.

Interns are available to start summer jobs between mid-May and early-June, and generally expect to work full-time for 10-12 weeks.

### Full-time jobs

The Fuqua on-campus recruiting season for full-time jobs begins in September and extends through December, though many students continue their job search well into April and beyond. Students looking for non-traditional and social sector jobs are more likely to find their positions between January-March, though to be competitive and attract the broadest range of students, it is beneficial to post your job and reach out to Fuqua second years as early as possible for your organization.

Full-time positions may start as early as mid-May after graduation, but many students prefer to start later in the summer or even in the early fall to allow time for vacation and any relocation that is necessary.

In coordinating with Fuqua for either summer internships or full-time jobs, there are two important parties with which you should be familiar: the [Career Management Center \(CMC\)](#), and the [Center for the Advancement of Social Entrepreneurship \(CASE\)](#). The CMC is the office through which all Fuqua jobs are posted, social sector or not. If you contact the CMC, they will be able to provide you with information on how to reach students and post a job. In addition, if you have a summer or full-time job description that you would like to publicize at Fuqua, you may complete this [Job Posting Form](#) and your job will be distributed to Fuqua Daytime students and/or alumni as appropriate. Finally, while the most likely candidates for full-time job postings are second-year MBA students who graduate in May, Fuqua's CMC does also offer a number of services to alumni who are actively looking for a new position. If you are interested in posting a position for which more experience is required or there is a more immediate need for candidates, then posting for our Fuqua Alumni may be an option to consider. In addition, we do have requests from Alumni who are interested in changing careers and they may also be potential candidates. Please complete the [Job Posting Form](#) and make sure you indicate Alumni as your target audience.

In addition to the services provided by the CMC, CASE works directly with students to help them understand their social sector career opportunities and find appropriate summer and full-time positions. If you have questions on how to design work for a Fuqua MBA or want help reaching out to specific students, contact [CASE](#). You can also email job descriptions to CASE and they will be passed onto the CMC. Finally, if you are interested in expanding the

distribution of your nonprofit job posting to MBAs beyond Fuqua, please contact the [MBA-Nonprofit Connection](#), a nonprofit organization that facilitates the placement of business school students and alumni in nonprofit jobs.

### *Interviewing and resume review*

When posting a job, you will most likely ask for a resume and cover letter, in which the student describes their interest in the position you are offering. Once you receive those materials, you can begin narrowing your applicants down to those you would like to interview.

It would, of course, be advantageous to interview students in person, either at Fuqua or your offices. However, if you are not located in the Triangle area, in person interviews may not be realistic. In these cases, the best thing to do is to contact those applicants whom you wish to interview via phone or email to schedule telephone interviews.

Your organization's specific culture, needs, and activities will determine your priorities in reviewing application materials. However, there are some general guidelines that can help inform this process:

- Make sure that the candidate has an understanding, either through their prior work experience or through school, of the business concepts applicable to the work you will need them to do
- In the candidate's cover letter, make sure they understand your organization and what you do
- Be sure that the candidate has specific and applicable reasons for their interest in the position you are offering
- For experience the candidate lacks, look for evidence of analytical skills and commitment to ensure that they can learn how to do the work
- Look for volunteer or other experience that show an alignment with your mission and values

When interviewing students, it is again up to you and your organization what to ask, but there are some common areas of inquiry that may help guide you. One is to test an alignment of the student with your organization and mission by asking them directly about it - why they believe in it, why it is relevant to them, etc. You should also use the interview to help determine the applicant's fit with your organizational culture. Some ways of doing this are by having them interview with more than one person in your organization, ideally representing a range of programmatic, administrative, and development functions; asking them questions about how they would respond in particular situations that might arise in your organization; and asking them about their decision-making style and the roles they typically play in collaborative environments. Also, keep in mind that many Fuqua candidates are used to "case interviews". In presenting a case, you walk a candidate through a potential real-world challenge or situation they will encounter in the job and ask how they would proceed. This process will often help you assess their analytical skills and understand their approach to problem-solving. It is customary in cases to disguise any specific people or groups with which you work by using a hypothetical but closely analogous situation.

### *How to design the work:*

Designing the summer internship or full-time position includes the following topics:

- The job itself
- Writing a job description
- Compensation

### *The job itself*

Some of the characteristics that make a job attractive to a Fuqua student favor private companies (e.g., high salary), but others can tip the balance in favor of social sector organizations (e.g., the opportunity to have an impact). Factors to keep in mind when creating a position for a Fuqua student include:

- Challenging work: MBA students are highly motivated, used to heavy workloads, and eager to make the most of their time working. Summer interns usually emphasize summer job accomplishments on their resumes when they start looking for career jobs, and for many it may be important that the level and content of their summer internship not limit their opportunities in the future.
- The opportunity to use MBA skills: Students are eager to use skills they've developed or improved during business school, particularly skills in marketing, strategic planning, finance, and operations.
- Clearly defined projects: To quote one employer, "before taking on an MBA student, you have to really think through your project. Focus is the key word-the project needs it, the student needs it, the employer needs it."
- The opportunity to work with senior management: When students who have taken nonprofit summer jobs are asked what they liked best about the jobs, they typically mention "interaction with top managers" and, through those managers, "exposure to some of the most pressing strategic issues that the nonprofit faced" and "exposure to the workings of the organization." Expect that MBA graduates will want the same opportunities.
- Availability of facilities: In order to be as useful as possible to the employer, a student will generally need a desk, access to a computer, and access to a telephone.
- The chance to have an impact: Because students do not seek out nonprofit jobs for financial reasons, they are far more likely to be motivated by the desire to "make a difference." They want to use their skills on projects that an organization might not otherwise be able to undertake, and, where appropriate, to strengthen the overall management of the organization.

Full-time employees will also be interested in the following aspects of a job:

- Job security: Students looking for full-time work will want to know that there is not a high risk of funding for their position evaporating in the first year or two of their employment. It is a good idea to indicate the financial health of your organization.
- Career growth: MBAs will most likely be interested in prospects for career growth in their jobs. They will ask about opportunities to advance to more senior positions with greater

responsibility. If you have a relatively small organization, be able to discuss into what jobs people working for you often move. Also, be prepared to answer questions about opportunities for professional development, training, continuing education, or mentoring.

- **Salary:** It is true that MBAs are not pursuing employment in the social sector for financial reasons. However, they are aware that their market value in the private sector is much higher, and they are making a significant financial sacrifice. Keep in mind in making offers that many are in a place in their life where they will be looking into buying homes and beginning to support families.

### *Writing a job description*

When writing a job description, it is very important to convey to the candidate as clear a picture as possible of what it would be like to work for your organization. The necessary information generally includes your high-level mission, but also some information on the “nuts and bolts” of your organization, i.e. specifically what activities you engage in regularly. The candidate will also want to know similar information about the specific job itself: what high-level role would they be expected to play in the organization, and what would that mean on a day-to-day basis.

Most likely, the job description will be clear if this information is presented in outline form with headers for each section rather than as a lengthy letter of prose. In writing a job description, make sure it includes the following components.

- Basic information about your organization, including name, location, and website
- A description of the organization’s mission and regular activities, as well as history where applicable
- The name of the position’s direct supervisor and their professional and educational background
- The official job title
- The description of the actual position. This should include a detailed description of the duties required, the personnel with which the employee will be working, and the significance of the role to the organization and its mission.
- A specific list of required (or desired) qualifications and experiences. This can include general points on skills you would like the candidate to possess as well as specifics on educational or work experience.
- Salary information
- Deadlines for the application process
- Information on how to apply and where to direct further questions

It may help to use the [template](#) at the end of this guide to begin writing your job description.

### *Compensation*

One of the biggest questions many social sector employers have regarding hiring Fuqua MBAs surrounds compensation. The following advice is intended as a rough guide and specifics will vary greatly. Furthermore, if your organization is a for-profit social venture, Fuqua students will not be eligible for certain summer scholarship awards or the loan forgiveness program and will

likely have difficulty accessing any other sources of financial aid. Thus, their salary expectations may be higher than those working for nonprofit organizations.

### Summer interns

Salaries for private sector interns vary significantly, but most will earn around \$15,000 in one summer. For more information on Fuqua summer salaries, see the CMC's [Recruiting Guide and Placement Statistics](#). These salary levels are not feasible for many social sector organizations, but it is important to provide at least enough for an intern to live, commute, and have a social life for the summer. This standard implies paying \$500-\$700 a week, depending on where you are located. Offering a little more to help the student save money for the summer is a large plus.

It will also be helpful to help candidates think about other potential funding sources. Encourage them to research any financial aid opportunities with CASE at Fuqua and to pursue grants and scholarships elsewhere. Keep in mind, however, that these sources of funds are limited and competitive, and many of them require matching on behalf of the employer. Grants may be available elsewhere to find funding for your organization to hire an MBA intern. However, in times when funds are limited, it is best to think of the intern as a "reduced-rate consultant" whose pay will come from the organization's operating budget.

In addition to considering salary, you may be able to make an internship with your organization more attractive if you can provide other substitutes for compensation that will either reduce the intern's summer expenses or provide a unique or valuable learning experience at no cost to the intern. Examples include subsidized or free housing, transportation, meals, travel to conferences, events, or other sites where your organization has operations, etc.

### Full-time employees

On the lowest end, salaries for Fuqua MBAs in the social sector will range from \$40,000-\$50,000 in low-cost areas and \$60,000-\$75,000 in major cities. Even these figures will present challenges for an MBA hire, as their classmates will often be finding employment for \$85,000-\$110,000 in the private sector. For more information on Fuqua graduate's salaries, see the CMC's [Recruiting Guide and Placement Statistics](#). It is true that their interests and beliefs motivate MBAs who pursue social sector employment, but they are faced with financial realities as well.

If your organization lacks the appropriate budget, helping find alternate sources of funding will help make employment feasible. Many recent graduates are burdened by student loans, and assisting with those payments can make a large difference. Encourage candidates to learn about the [Loan Forgiveness Program](#). If possible, try to secure some outside funding or a grant specifically to support their position. In doing so, however, it is important to establish a funding stream that will maintain the position over time or to establish the position as a short-term, prestigious opportunity. For example, City Year established [The Paul and Phyllis Fireman Public Service Fellowship](#) to provide an opportunity for a highly talented and committed member of the business, civic or governmental sectors, including recent graduates of MBA, MPP, MPA or other graduate programs that would allow them to apply their talents to the social sector

In addition to exploring financial options for making your position more appealing, you should also consider creative ways of structuring the position and offering additional benefits that might offset some of the sacrifices an MBA will be making in terms of salary. You may want to consider positioning the job opportunity as a fellowship, giving it some prestige and credibility as a valuable educational as well as employment experience. Think about ways to ensure interaction with high-level board members and community leaders; consider opportunities for offering educational credit or coursework; include concrete commitments to covering expenses for relevant travel, conferences, trainings, and other activities. There is no simple solution to the compensation challenge in hiring MBAs, but a somewhat competitive salary combined with some resourcefulness and creative job design should help your organization attract appropriate MBA talent.

## Template for Writing a Job Description

Content provided by the [MBA-Nonprofit Connection](#)

### **Organization Name**

#### **Address**

This information is required on most school websites, even if the organization wants applications sent by e-mail.

#### **Industry**

Most schools request an industry designation. Often "nonprofit" is sufficient, but you could add something more specific, such as "education" or "environment," for sites that can handle more detail.

#### **Function**

Most schools request a function designation (marketing, operations, general management, etc.)

#### **Brief Description of Organization**

Could include: mission, capsule description of programs, annual budget, staff size. Provide web address.

#### **Job Title**

#### **Job Description**

#### **Desired Qualifications and Experience**

A carefully thought-out list of qualifications will encourage applicants with the most appropriate backgrounds to apply and also help them write meaningful, focused cover letters.

#### **Compensation**

#### **Application Deadline (if desired)**

#### **Preferred Start Date**

This lets second-year students know if it is appropriate for them to apply. (If no start date is given, second-years may assume that employers can wait till summer to fill the positions, when in fact most nonprofits are hoping to fill jobs within a month or two of the posting date.)

#### **Application Instructions**

Specify if you want a cover letter, as applicants might otherwise assume that a resume is sufficient.