



Practera

Powering experiential learning



CASE STUDY



**Practera supports
Northeastern University in
delivering virtual internships
during Covid-19**



THE CHALLENGE



HOW DO WE PROVIDE INTERNSHIPS AND EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES DURING COVID 19?

During Summer 2020, internships and experiential learning opportunities were severely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. In particular, students from community colleges and unrepresented populations were hardest hit as opportunities were cancelled.

With its 110-year history of being at the forefront of experiential learning, Northeastern University saw an opportunity to support these students and colleges by leveraging funding from a National Science Foundation grant and offering access to their virtual internship model.

To ensure success at scale, this model required a flexible, easily accessible technology which could be quickly deployed across multiple geographic and institutional settings.

Having previously partnered with Northeastern, Practera was a natural fit and provided a best-in-class, proven solution to the challenges Northeastern was trying to solve.



“When Covid hit, what we quickly realized was that our virtual internship model was ideally positioned to respond to this crisis – so we quickly leaned into it, pivoted, and said – let’s use this model to support as many undergraduate student internships as we can migrate in a short period of time.”

- Dr Kemi Jona, Assistant Vice Chancellor, Digital Innovation and Enterprise Learning at Northeastern University

THE SOLUTION



VIRTUAL INTERNSHIP MODELS

The Northeastern team used Practera to design and deploy a library of structured virtual internship models of varying lengths from 3-6 weeks, with projects covering numerous fields from Marketing to Public Health.

Each virtual internship provided students with opportunities to complete real-world deliverables and get feedback from industry mentors while developing important professional skills including communication, collaboration, self-directed learning, time management, and team leadership.

To ensure the solution was easily deployable by participating colleges, a comprehensive implementation toolkit and professional development was also provided.

BRINGING THE PLAN TO LIFE

Northeastern recruited participating community colleges and worked closely with Practera to ensure seamless onboarding and training.

College faculty and students were provided with ongoing support to ensure all participants were set up for success. This included both technical and programmatic support.

College faculty were also empowered to drive their programs and student outcomes by leveraging Practera's reporting capacities and user dashboards

The Practera platform was key to enabling a fast delivery of Northeastern's virtual internship model at scale across numerous institutions



"We deployed our platform to allow students to undertake real world internships online, structuring workflow and the really valuable feedback that students love, between interns and supervisors around project based work."

- Dr Kemi Jona, Assistant Vice Chancellor, Digital Innovation and Enterprise Learning at Northeastern University

RESULT

To date, more than 400 students and a dozen two- and four-year colleges have been supported by Practera's partnership with Northeastern University, providing access to virtual internships and experiential learning opportunities at such a crucial and challenging time.

Due to the success of the current partnership, Practera will continue to serve as Northeastern's technology partner in 2021, when the program will extend to two statewide pilots across both Massachusetts and Illinois.



"I was introduced to the Virtual Internships Program on Practera in my first weeks as the Department Head of Programming and Information Sciences at Wake Technical Community College. I knew immediately that it needed to be implemented in our Computer Programming and Development and Data Science Programming and Support Services Capstone courses. I am so excited to be able to bring real world projects and expert feedback to my students. The experience the students get to take away is far better now than in the past. I'm proud to see the collaboration between the team members, and the Industry Partner, and look forward to many more semesters of great collaboration."

- Norene Kemp, Department Head – Programming and Information Sciences at Wake Tech Community College





"I considered my role as an industry partner to be a huge privilege – what a gift to get to work with talented students. I was blown away by the thought the students put into their projects, and the deliverable provided valuable insights into 'new user' perspectives of our product. It was fun to share the presentations with my team and celebrate the results of the students' hard work – I felt like a proud Mom! I found the half-hour or so per week that I spend chatting with the students to be an energizing and gratifying addition to my usual responsibilities, especially because it was a great opportunity for me to hone the mentorship skills that I hope to use throughout my career. I'm proud to have played a role in the students' growth and hope to have the chance to work with another class soon!"

– Katie Sievers, Customer Success Manager at Credly



"You might say that virtual internships aren't as good as in person – and in some respects that can be true, but in other respects, they're better. When work is facilitated through Practera, you can collect data on how students are developing their professional skills like communication, collaboration, leadership. This is great for the students but also for the educator in the sense of providing a tool for quality assurance, which is particularly important in a virtual environment. Practera provides a really great 'air traffic control dashboard' that allows a coordinator to monitor and provides alerts around common success factors such as mentor engagement, team conflict and activity completion."

- Dr Kemi Jona, Assistant Vice Chancellor, Digital Innovation and Enterprise Learning at Northeastern University



“Practera as an experiential learning platform matches really perfectly our mission as an institution. With Practera, we’ve been able to run remote internships with a range of Community Colleges. Practera provides a powerful experiential learning platform for this type of application. We’re really pleased with what we’ve been able to achieve in under a year, and we see a bright future for this partnership with Practera moving forward.”

– Dr Kenneth Henderson, Chancellor and Senior Vice Present of Learning at Northeastern University

Let's Connect

Practera is committed to creating a world where every person, regardless of their age, race, background or geographic location, has access to quality, timely education that develops the skills they need to succeed – by allowing them to experience the application of their knowledge in real-world environments.

Key to this commitment is our desire to partner with likeminded organisations and institutions to drive equity and accessibility to experiential learning through our programs and technology.

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