



# Campus "Unpaid Intern" Opposition Growing

Insights

3.24.14

We have already reported that a group calling itself the "Fair Pay Campaign" aims to pressure colleges and universities not to facilitate unpaid internships or even post notices about them. This initiative appears to be gaining momentum.

Companies and other organizations thinking about participating in internships sponsored by educational institutions will be wise to consider what impact this "Fair Pay Campaign" might have upon the potential for intern-related wage disputes.

## A Glimpse Into The Mindset

The intentions and attitudes of this initiative's proponents are exemplified by a recent Fair Pay recruiting e-mail:

Hey \_\_\_\_\_ –

Let me introduce myself.

My name is Christina Isnardi and I'm a senior at New York University. Last year, I worked with the Fair Pay Campaign to organize a campaign against unpaid internships on my campus. We organised online and offline, bringing together over 1000 students and supporters to demand that NYU's Career Center stop posting ads for illegal unpaid internships.

And here's the crazy thing: **We won.**

As a result of our campaign, NYU made unprecedented changes to their internship policy, and more than doubled the number of paid internship postings. They've tightened up their posting criteria, and they're even providing interns with advice about their rights in the workplace. We made national headlines and now other colleges are following suit, but we're not done yet.

We're going to bring our fight to campuses across America, but we can't do it without you. Click [here](#) to sign up to organise a campaign in your community.

The Fair Pay Campaign team will work with you every step of the way. They'll give you resources, training, and advice, including cutting-edge digital organising tools. They'll help you to craft a grassroots campaign – online and offline – that will make an impact in the fight against unpaid

internships.

Make a change at your college. Sign up to organise and fight back.

Too many of us are having doors slammed in our face if we can't afford to work for free. Too many of us aren't getting the pay we've earned, because employers still think interns are just employees that they don't have to pay.

But it doesn't have to be like this, and with your help, it won't be for much longer.

In Solidarity,

Christina

P.S. We all deserve fair pay for a fair shot at our dreams. Fight with us, and help make it happen.

### **The Bottom Line**

It is entirely possible that the Campaign's efforts to "bring [the] fight to campuses across America" will:

- Significantly complicate the process of arranging internships or even communicating with candidates about them;
- Provoke a further rise in the number of wage-hour complaints brought by unpaid interns under the federal Fair Labor Standards Act and the analogous laws of other jurisdictions; and
- Spill-over to include allegations that individuals who were involved in "paid" internships were nevertheless not paid amounts that complied with wage-hour laws.

And to the extent that students decide to take the advice offered by the *New York Times* awhile back, it is conceivable that at least some such claims will be sparked by individuals who participated in the internships *knowing* that they would seek back wages allegedly due after the relationship's conclusion.

Remember that even a successful defense against claims by one or more interns will be expensive, disruptive, and distracting.