

INTERNSHIP GUIDE

WHAT IS AN INTERNSHIP?

An internship is usually a temporary arrangement in which you gain experience in a particular field or job function under the guidance of an employer. It can be paid or unpaid, during the semester or summer, and can range anywhere from a few weeks to a year. **Summer internship application deadlines commonly occur between November and March.** For college students it is never too early and never too late to participate in internship opportunities. With internships, students reap the benefits of work experience while also playing an important role in the functioning of organizations in the real world.



WHY DO AN INTERNSHIP?

- **internship experience is consistently ranked as the #1 factor employers seek in FT job candidates**
- build your resume and explore career options
- develop skills and make contacts in your field of interest
- apply your academic background to “real world” problems and issues
- employers often hire their interns as full-time employees

INTERNSHIP SEARCH RESOURCES

InternHelpMe.com

InternHelpMe.com is managed by the Maine State Chamber of Commerce, and connects college students with employers in Maine.

Career Rookie

CareerRookie is an internship site with a highly developed search engine.

USAJobs

USAJobs offers internships by the federal government across all fields and majors. A great place to start exploring federal internships is by searching under the categories of Student Career Experience, Student Temporary Employment and Summer.

Internships.com

Internships.com is devoted solely to internships and provides excellent services and resources. Internships.com maintains the largest database of internship opportunities in the world.

APPLYING FOR INTERNSHIPS

- 1) **Assess the opportunities you’ve identified.** Find out the specifics of the internship to see if it’s right for you. Consider time commitment, required qualifications, location, training, and compensation.
- 2) **Apply to a range of internships.** There is no exact number of internships that you need to apply for, but most students apply to 8-10 organizations. In determining how many internships to apply for, try to

assess how competitive the internship program might be. Some organizations give preference to juniors and seniors seeking internships, so first year students and sophomores may need to apply to more organizations. All students should meet with a Career Peer Advisor or Career Counselor who will help you develop a strong application and prepare you for interviews.

3) Begin gathering application materials. Make sure you have all the components the employer is requesting (essays, recommendations, resumes, cover letters, transcripts, writing samples, etc.). Get your resume and cover letters critiqued at your local center and schedule a mock interview. If asking former instructors to write letters of recommendation for you, give them sufficient time to do so.

4) Contact the employer outside of submitting your application. Let them know just how interested you are. Be sure to follow up your inquiries, submissions and interviews with adequate “thank you” notes.

ANALYZING OPTIONS: DO THEY FIT YOUR GOALS?

Once you have established your goals and have identified a list of potential internships, consider the internship itself, what it offers you, and how it fits with your goals. When weighing your options, consider the following:

- Is this internship during the academic semester or during the summer?
- Is the size of the organization conducive to the kind of experience I want?
- What type of organization is it and what is the culture of its workplace?
- Is the location compatible with my living arrangements?
- How long is the internship, and how many hours am I expected to work each week?
- How will I fund this experience? Is there a wage or stipend provided?

CREATING YOUR OWN INTERNSHIP

While thousands of internships are listed through books and databases, perhaps you’re not seeing what you want. Don’t let this stop you! Taking a proactive approach to the internship search can lead you to positions that are not widely advertised. You may even create opportunities where they did not exist before, particularly if you are willing to forgo a few perks. This is an especially attractive option for students interested in non-profit organizations and community-oriented services that may not have the funding to establish internship programs, but that will appreciate the energy and passion that an interested student can bring to their projects. In general, employers welcome applicants who demonstrate initiative, enthusiasm, and a willingness to work. Follow these steps to create your own internship:

1) Research

Identify the interests and needs of the organization of your choice. Visit the organization’s website and look at their mission statement and other stated goals. Investigate their major work and familiarize yourself with some of their greater achievements. If there is not an employment ad from the organization available for you to look at, try to find some indication of what the employer expects from their employees. Consider how you are able to meet their goals and needs. Also, identify the person who would be most effective for you to contact.

2) Introduce Yourself

Communicate your ability to meet the needs of the organization. Let employers know exactly why they want you! This can be accomplished by sending a resume along with a cover letter expressing your interest in the organization and their work, indicating what you can bring to the organization. Be clear about your willingness to work with whatever opportunity they make available to you.

3) Follow Up

Follow up your resume submission with a phone call or e-mail. Make sure the employer has received your materials, and has given it consideration or processed it in some way. Calling is also a good way to ensure that employers remember your name, and for you to convey some of your passion and interest in a more direct fashion. Remember that all forms of contact with an organization can affect your chances of getting an internship opportunity with them. So, be sure to observe rules of etiquette, and leave a positive impression with whomever you speak. Be persistent, but not overbearing!

4) Make Use of Connections

Consider the connections you have through personal, school, and previous employment networks. Discuss your goals with professors and other contacts. You never know who might have an “in” with a potential employer. People you know and work with, especially in your career field of interest, might have some suggestions for how you can further your chances with the organization of your choice, or find some alternative opportunities.

FUNDING YOUR INTERNSHIP

Begin considering ways to fund your summer experience as early as possible, even while you are still engaged in the internship search itself. For instance, if you are pursuing an opportunity in a location where you do not have housing, your expected costs of housing, food, and transportation should be addressed well before the experience begins. Options available to you include:

1) Paid Internships

While some internships provide a salary, many do not have the resources available to fund your experience. Internships in the fields of business and finance, technology support, and the sciences generally do provide compensation, although internships in the arts and with non-profit organizations typically do not. In such cases, try to find out whether some partial form of compensation can be provided, like a weekly transportation or lunch stipend. Your employer also might be able to guide you in locating other potential funding resources.

2) Concurrent Employment

Many interns seek part-time, temporary employment as a way of ensuring income during an unpaid internship. You might find it useful to begin by estimating what your costs will be and setting a budget to determine how much you’ll need to earn. Students often support themselves through waiting tables, working at a bookshop or other retail position, providing private instruction or tutoring, performing childcare, or securing part-time office work. To manage, some flexibility with your internship may be necessary. When setting up a schedule with your supervisor, inform him or her of your needs, which might include leaving an hour early, or working Monday through Thursday.

MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR INTERNSHIP

Once you are set to begin your internship, how can you maximize your experience? Here are a few tips on how to make your internship the best it can be.

Before you arrive...

Goals and Expectations. It is helpful to begin your internship with a clear set of goals and expectations in mind. Re-evaluate your initial internship goals in light of the specific position you've been offered, as well as what you hope to contribute to the organization. Ideally, you should aim for a good understanding about what you can realistically expect from the experience before you accept the position. On your first day it is a great idea to sit down with your supervisor to clarify mutual goals and expectations.

Background Knowledge. Before beginning your internship, try to ensure that you have a strong sense of your organization's mission and how it works. Take the time to perform any additional background research on the organization and its industry. The more knowledge you possess going into the experience, the more quickly you will be able to acclimate to the environment and put into perspective the new bits of knowledge you gain.

While you're there...

Professionalism. Make a point of demonstrating standards of professionalism throughout your internship experience. Ascertain the appropriate workplace attire, and be consistent with punctuality and meeting your deadlines. This not only ensures your effectiveness as an intern, but also demonstrates your commitment and dedication to the experience as well as your reliability as a valuable member of the organization.

Attitude. Maintaining a positive attitude is key to a successful internship experience. Be enthusiastic and do your best on every task you are assigned, even if at first it seems rather mundane and not as challenging as you might like. Demonstrating a cheerful and energetic attitude toward all of your work will prove impressive to your supervisors and potentially lead to more challenging tasks. Simply observing and soaking up your organization's environment is, in and of itself, an incredibly effective way to learn. Ask your supervisor if you might sit in on a few inter-departmental meetings and seek out opportunities to observe various members of your organization.

Initiative. Another way to facilitate an enriching experience is to be a proactive intern. There may be times when your supervisor does not have anything pressing for you to do. In such cases, offer to expand on a small project you have already been assigned, or suggest another project you think might benefit the organization. On especially slow work days, tactfully check with other co-workers around your department to see if you can lend a hand.

Be an active learner. Begin your internship with the intention of learning as much as you can during your time with your organization. Be inquisitive: ask questions and generally cultivate your curiosity about the organization and industry. Demonstrate your interest by seeking to learn as much as possible about the role of your department in the organization as a whole and how your company figures into the industry at large. Keeping up with industry news during the course of your internship is also a good

strategy for building knowledge about the field and making sense of the environment within which you are working.

Network. Introduce yourself and be friendly with colleagues and co-workers. Invite your supervisor and fellow interns and staff members to join you for lunch periodically. Be curious about the people you work with, and ask questions about their specialty areas, interests, motivations for entering the field, and how they started out. You might indeed find a mentor willing to share experiences, perspectives, and offer career advice.

Investigate. There may be UMS alumni employed within your organization. If you find any, feel free to send a brief email explaining that you are a student interning at their organization. Mention that you would appreciate the opportunity to stop by and introduce yourself, or even invite them to a conversation over lunch.

Be flexible. Recognize that it takes time to adjust to every new environment, so give yourself time to get oriented to the pace and rhythm of your workplace and colleagues. Remember to keep an open mind during the course of your internship, and to try to take something positive from every experience. In the case that your internship proves more challenging than you anticipated, or you encounter difficulties in communicating with your supervisor, feel free to contact the center with any questions or concerns.

Reflect. Check in with your supervisor periodically to review progress on your tasks and projects, receive feedback on your performance, and even to share your own insights and learning. On your own, reflect regularly on your experience by keeping a journal or notebook of your experiences, tasks, and observations.

When it's over...

On your last day be sure to **thank your supervisor** and co-workers and ask for their business cards. Follow up immediately in the next few days with an e-mail thank-you or a hand-written card in the mail. Stay in touch

afterwards to maintain networking connections and good rapport for possible references and letters of recommendation. Remember that many organizations hire permanent employees from their intern pool.

A WORD ABOUT SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES

Social networking sites are an incredibly popular way for students to communicate with one another. They are also increasingly being used by prospective employers to learn about potential employees. Remember that your virtual self – your facebook profile, website and blog – is available for prospective employers to see. As many as 75% of employers use the Internet to research candidates and "Googling" applicants is often taking the place of reference checks. Here are a few tips to ensure your safety and confidentiality:

- Be safe! Never post personal information (i.e. phone number, address, daily schedule)
- Make your Facebook/MySpace profiles private and don't add friends you don't know
- Remove any questionable photos or exchanges between you and your friends and ask your friends

to remove these types of references to you from their profiles

- Remember what you post on your blog and website is open for public view – review them from an employer’s perspective

INTERNSHIPS IN A NUTSHELL

1) Identify Internship Goals

- Clarify whether you are interested in exploring a new potential career field or building experience and contacts within an industry you have already chosen.
- Be definitive but open-minded about what type of organization you would like to work with and what type of duties and responsibilities you would most like to perform.
- Think about any geographical restrictions you might have.

2) Search

- Utilize the Internships Opportunities webpage to access our online internship resources.
- Stop by your center to have an exploratory meeting with an advisor
- Call UC Learning Services for more information (1-800-868-7000)

3) Apply

- Prepare your application materials. Make sure to highlight how you and the internship would be a great fit: how the opportunity will further your career goals and what you can contribute to the organization.
- Have your resume and cover letter critiqued by a center advisor (it is best to schedule an appointment).
- Brush up on interviewing techniques by browsing online or at the Library and schedule a Mock Interview with an advisor.

4) Follow Up

- Follow up after you apply to confirm the receipt of your application materials.
- Be sure to send thank you notes/e-mails after every interview.
- Evaluate your internship offers in light of your original goals.
- Send thank you notes to other employers whose offers you choose to decline.
- Prepare to make the most of your internship. Discuss mutual expectations with your employer, and approach the experience with a professional, proactive attitude.

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