

STUDENT'S GUIDE TO DEVELOPING AN INTERNSHIP

c-11



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You may feel overwhelmed as you begin exploring internship opportunities. How do I find an internship? Can I get academic credit? What kinds of organizations are willing to take me on as an intern? Can I expect to be paid? To support you, the Career Services Center offers services to assist students in developing internship experiences. Hopefully, this guide will answer many of your questions.

The basic steps in developing an internship are outlined in this guide:

1. Identify your basic needs in an internship
2. Establish professional, personal and academic goals for the internship
3. Identify skills and experience that you can offer as an intern
4. Consider ways in which you can contribute to an organization as an intern
5. Research potential employers
6. Use job search techniques to get the internship
7. Establish your role and fit into a professional environment



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WHAT IS AN INTERNSHIP?

WHY CONSIDER AN INTERNSHIP?

Gain work experience in a professional environment
Develop relevant experience to include on a resume
Establish a professional network of contacts & references
Test tentative career choices
Receive mentoring
Make your academic studies more relevant

Interns make a short-term, time-limited commitment to work for an employer in order to gain valuable experience and exposure to the work environment in their field of interest. The employer in turn, commits to providing a learning experience and specific work assignments related to a student's studies and/or career goals.

You will encounter a variety of titles used to describe internship opportunities. These include field experience, cooperative learning, internship, and experiential learning. Although the titles vary, these terms refer to some type of on-the-job training undertaken by students on a temporary basis at some point during their college education.

Depending on the situation, internships may be highly structured or, alternatively, they may be quite flexible. Academic credit may be available for an internship, depending on your major and department. An internship can be part-time or full-time, paid or unpaid. Pay for internships, if available, is usually minimal. The major payoff is considered to be the experience gained.

EXAMPLES OF INTERNSHIPS

Biology Researcher, Northwest Trek
Business Intern, Boeing
Case Aide, WA Dept. of Social & Health Services
Environmental Educator, North Cascades Institute
Human Resource Assistant, Sterling Insurance
Management Information Systems, Expeditors International
Public Policy Intern, Planned Parenthood

DETAILS: Bureaucratic but Important (Leave of Absence, Financial Aid, Credit)

Some internships last only one quarter, some are as long as a year. Internships can be done on a part-time basis (10-20 hours per week) during the school year. You can also consider a summer internship if you do not have time to work during the academic year. Students may even take a quarter off from classes in order to do a full-time internship. There are some very important details to consider when you are pondering your options.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE. Students pursuing internships which require signed documentation from the university stating that they will return to WWU should meet with the Office of Admissions and let them know that they are going to take time off to do an internship. The Office of Admissions will send a signed letter to the student's permanent address, informing him/her that he/she is eligible to return to WWU within a year.

Students who take a quarter off (other than summer) from classes to do a full-time, non-credited internship must submit to the Admissions Office a “Former Student Returning Application” to assure their appointment to register for the subsequent quarter. Please be aware that there is a fee to apply for this letter and that you have to meet certain deadlines to qualify – so don’t put this off until the last minute!

If you are receiving financial aid it is very important to meet with a counselor at the Office of Student Financial Resources before you take a quarter off (other than summer). A non-credited leave of absence may impact your financial aid.

ACADEMIC CREDIT FOR INTERNSHIPS. Generally, only students who have declared a major are eligible for internship credits. If you wish to receive credit, it is very important that you consult with your departmental advisor prior to the internship. If approved, the department will assign a faculty member to work with you to establish learning objectives to be met during the internship. After the internship is complete, you might meet with the professor to determine if the objectives have been met. The employer may also be asked to provide a written evaluation at the end of the internship.

Students who wish to earn credits for an internship must register (and pay for the credits) just as they would for any class. Therefore, some (but not all) students actually prefer not to earn credits because they don’t want to pay for them.

If you are receiving financial aid plan to take a quarter off (other than summer) or plan to carry less than a full load of credits, it is very important that you meet with a counselor at the Office of Student Financial Resources before your internship. It may impact your financial aid!

Students who have not declared a major will probably not be able to earn credit for an internship. Bear in mind that whether or not you receive academic credit, an internship is still extremely valuable and you will receive credit in the form of a great resume! A non-credit internship can be just as meaningful to a future employer – they are more interested in skills and experience than they are about credits.

IDENTIFY YOUR BASIC NEEDS

Before you look for an internship, determine what you want. You’ll need to answer a few basic questions to help you define and focus your internship goals. Your answers to these questions will help you narrow your options. You might decide you can afford an internship with no pay in Seattle because you could live with your parents. On the other hand, perhaps only a paid internship would be acceptable if you have to live on your own.

THE BASICS QUESTIONS

Money?

- Can I afford to do an internship without pay?
- Can I manage one with a small stipend? How small?

Time?

- When do I want to do an internship? During the summer?
- Part time (10-20 hrs. per week) during a quarter?
- Full-time?

Location?

- Do I want to find an internship on campus? In Whatcom County? Elsewhere?
- Can I live at home during my internship?
- Do I want to go to another state or even to another country?

DEVELOP YOUR INTERNSHIP GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Once you have an idea of where and when you want your intern experience, the next step is to do some self-assessment and establish your objectives. Students have been disappointed with internships that did not measure up to their expectations. This may have been because they failed to define their objectives or they did not articulate their needs and goals to the employer.

There are three areas to consider when identifying an internship: professional, personal, and academic needs. Examine each by brainstorming a list of what you would like to gain. Then, prioritize and narrow the list down to two or three needs per area, selecting ones that complement each other and seem to be reasonable expectations.

<u>NEEDS</u>	<u>SUGGESTED QUESTIONS TO ASK WHEN SETTING INTERNSHIP GOALS</u>
Professional	Which skills do I want to develop in an internship? What experience will enhance my resume? What types of people do I want to network with? Are there activities I want to see done in a professional setting?
Personal	What experiences would help me clarify my goals? What would develop my self-confidence? What would help me work in a professional environment in the future?
Academic	What kind of internship could help me make better course/major choices? What courses would be easier if I understood their relevance? What new technologies/equipment/techniques do I want to be exposed to?

WHAT CAN YOU OFFER TO AN EMPLOYER?

Often, students wonder why an employer would want someone with limited experience. In fact, students have a number of skills that employers find extremely desirable. Reflect on your summer work experience, part-time jobs, volunteer responsibilities, academic achievements, etc., and you will probably find at least several of the skills employers seek. Keep these in mind as you develop your resume and/or approach employers about potential internships.

Competencies and characteristics that employers want

Written and oral communication skills & interpersonal abilities
Flexibility, adaptability
Initiative and motivation
Leadership, teamwork & collaboration abilities
Customer service skills
Analytical thinking and problem-solving skills
Computer/ technical aptitudes

Hint: you should highlight your experience in the above areas on your resume!

In addition to the skills listed above, reflect on other skills and experiences you might have to offer. The next step is to identify general ways in which you might be able to contribute your skills as an intern. For example, you might use your skills in one or more of the following ways as an intern:

- Assist on special projects
- Provide help during peak business periods
- Contribute experience with research techniques, valuable computer skills, and current theoretical knowledge
- Serve as additional staff
- Offer fresh, creative perspectives and energy to solve specific problems

FINDING THE RIGHT ORGANIZATION: Network & Research

After you clarify your needs and goals, identify your skills, and begin to consider how you can contribute to an organization, then you are ready to start targeting potential internships. The objectives of this step in developing an internship are to:

- Gather information from professionals in your career field which will help guide you in securing an appropriate internship
- Refine a proposal of what you can do as an intern
- Identify appropriate organizations where you could work as an intern
- Identify contacts in organizations where you might serve as an intern

RESOURCES: Where to Find the Good Stuff

CAREER SERVICES CENTER

- [Viking CareerLink](http://www.careers.wvu.edu/viking_careerlink.shtml) on-line internship and job listings (http://www.careers.wvu.edu/viking_careerlink.shtml)
- [Special events](http://www.careers.wvu.edu/careerfair_specialevents.shtml) including Community Internship & Volunteer Fair, Career & Internship Fair for the Environment, International Opportunities Fair, career fairs, and more! (http://www.careers.wvu.edu/careerfair_specialevents.shtml)
- Individual [appointments](#) with a career counselor & [assessments](#)
- [Workshops](http://www.careers.wvu.edu/workshops4.asp?step_number=0) (http://www.careers.wvu.edu/workshops4.asp?step_number=0)
- Resource Library
- [On-Campus Recruiting](http://www.careers.wvu.edu/students_findaninternship_onsampusinterviews.shtml) (http://www.careers.wvu.edu/students_findaninternship_onsampusinterviews.shtml)
- [Career Services Center](http://www.careers.wvu.edu) web site: www.careers.wvu.edu

PERSONAL NETWORK AND CONTACTS

- Faculty
- [Alumni Association Mentor \(ASK!\)](http://www.alumniconnections.com/olc/pub/WWH/wvu_page_53.jsp) (http://www.alumniconnections.com/olc/pub/WWH/wvu_page_53.jsp)
- Friends, family,
- Business, volunteer contacts

PROFESSIONAL & TRADE ORGANIZATIONS

- Conferences
- Publications
- Local chapters

STUDENT CLUBS & ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

MEDIA

- Newspaper, radio, tv
- Websites (internship, company, other universities)



NETWORKING. By talking to people and discussing various opportunities, you can develop valuable ideas and leads. In fact, most students find internships through personal, academic or work/volunteer-related contacts. Advisors and instructors can be helpful in providing you with names of organizations and contacts. Let your friends and family know what you are pursuing. Career counselors, university staff, and alumni may also be good resources. Likewise, make sure you connect with co-workers and supervisors from both current and past jobs that you've held. Network with organizations where you've volunteered. Any of these resources may provide the lead you need to find the opportunity you are seeking.

Sometimes students feel awkward about networking. However, once they begin the process, they usually find that their contacts are very receptive and flattered to be asked for advice. Remember that a key value of these contacts will be to help you clarify your goals and identify your broadest possible range of options.

PROFESSIONAL & TRADE ORGANIZATIONS are a great "insider's" resource to finding internships. When you discuss internships with your network of contacts, ask them what organizations exist and find out how you can get in touch with them. You can also search the internet or scan meeting calendars of newspapers to find out how to connect with professional organizations. Many organizations welcome student members and will be eager to have you attend their meetings or subscribe to their publications.

STUDENT CLUBS & ORGANIZATIONS are another good "insider's" way of identifying possible internships. Fellow students are a great resource for hearing about internships that may not be advertised. Some student clubs invite potential employers to speak at their meetings. Get involved!

MEDIA. Make a point of reading the newspaper and business journals, listening to the radio and/or watching local news and community service broadcasts. If you read about an organization, business, or project that sounds like it has potential for an internship, don't feel shy about contacting them.

INTERNET. There is a wealth of internship information available on the internet (see our website for links). If you know of companies and organizations that you'd like to explore, check their web sites, also. Larger organizations often have a section dedicated to college students. If you are seeking an internship in a particular geographic region, visit internship sites and/or career services offices' sites at nearby universities.

MAKE CONTACT

You should be able to develop a "short list" of internship possibilities after you identify your needs, goals and skills; discussed options with your contacts; and researched potential employers. Now you are ready to make contact. Since your internship search will be much like a job search, it should be handled in a professional manner. You will need to:

- Develop a resume
- Polish your letter-writing skills
- Sharpen your interview techniques

You may not realize it now but a key benefit of an internship is the way it will help you refine your job search skills. This will serve you well after graduation. To assist you in this process, the Career Services Center offers a variety of workshops on resumes, cover letters, interview techniques, and general job search skills.

Approach this stage of developing an internship with confidence. Many employers are extremely receptive to the idea of hosting an intern, they just haven't had the time to actively develop or pursue the option. By doing some research and having an understanding of what you can contribute to the organization, you've done a lot of work for them. If nothing else, they will appreciate your initiative!

LETTERS & PHONE CALLS. The first step of your intern search will be to send letters and make phone contacts. In most cases it is best to send a letter and follow up with a phone call. An example letter is provided later in this guide to assist you in developing your own letters. Be sure to include:

- Dates and approximate amount of time you are able to commit to an internship
- Summary of skills you can offer and how you might be able to contribute to the organization
- Brief description of your objectives
- How you heard about the internship and/or organization

Remember to express your enthusiasm and interest in the organization! Close your letter by requesting an informational interview to find out more about the company.

RESEARCH. Before meeting with an employer, do your homework. Be prepared with ideas for projects you could undertake and outline some basic learning objectives. This will help the employer think concretely about the possibility of having an intern. Be prepared to be flexible in order to establish goals and objectives that will also benefit the employer. Some employers have never had interns or have had a bad experience with one due to unclear expectations. It is important for you to be prepared to take the initiative in organizing and clarifying the role you would like to assume as an intern.

DEFINING YOUR ROLE AS AN INTERN

Congratulations! All your hard work paid off and you've landed the internship of your dreams! Now you should develop specific work-related objectives dealing with the particular activities in which you would like to be involved. We highly recommend developing a learning contract to ensure that there is a clear understanding of your expectations as well as those of your internship supervisor and faculty sponsor, if applicable. A sample learning contract is included in this guide. If the organization where you will be doing your internship has not developed such a contract, you may wish to adapt this sample for your own use.

If you want to receive academic credit for your internship you will need to discuss your options with a faculty advisor. Be prepared to outline your learning objectives and possible projects. This will assist the faculty member in determining if the experience will qualify for academic credit. Individual departments have developed standards to determine the validity and appropriateness of an internship for credit, and these standards vary widely.

In addition to signing a learning contract, it is advisable to provide the organization with your work schedule (an example form is included in this guide). Also pre-arrange a midterm and final evaluation utilizing criteria developed with your learning objectives. Another suggestion to help clarify your internship experience is to develop a job description. You may be able to adapt the job description and evaluation forms from those utilized by the company for regular employees. Ask about the possibility of an orientation to the company and arrange a regular meeting time with a specified supervisor in order to monitor what objectives are being met, handle problems and keep communication channels open.

In closing, here are some final tips to help ensure that your internship will be a rewarding experience:

- Attempt to blend into the work environment as well as possible
- Communicate with your supervisor and co-workers
- Keep to your work schedule
- Follow the standards on dress, time allotted for lunch and breaks, signing in and out
- Do not consider yourself an exception to the rules merely because you are a student with special temporary employment status
- Avoid office gossip sessions

The organization may be judging you as a potential employee. Your supervisor can serve as a valuable professional work reference in the future. Your new-found colleagues can help get you started in your career. Don't forget that you are now a professional -- make the most of this opportunity by being cooperative, responsible, and productive. Good luck!

Appendix I: LEARNING CONTRACT

Adapted by:
Career Services Center
Old Main 280
Western Washington University

A. Name _____ Social Security No.: _____

Current Address & Contact Information:

(Street)

(City) (State) (Zip)

(Email Address)

(Home phone) (Cell phone)

Address while on internship (if different from above):

(Street)

(City) (State) (Zip)

(Email Address)

(Home phone) (Cell phone)

B. Internship Organization: _____
Address: _____
Telephone: _____
Name of Supervisor: _____
Position: _____

C. Faculty Sponsor/Advisor _____
Department: _____
Address: _____
Telephone: _____

D. Credits to be awarded for internship: _____
Department Course No. Credits

Part II. THE INTERNSHIP

- JOB DESCRIPTION:** Describe in as much detail as possible your role and responsibilities while on your internship. List duties, projects to be completed, deadlines, etc., if relevant.
- SUPERVISION:** Describe in as much detail as possible the supervision to be provided. What kind of instruction, assistance, consultation, etc., you will receive and from whom.
- EVALUATION:** How will your work performance be evaluated? By whom? When?
- LEARNING OBJECTIVES:** What do you intend to learn through this experience? Be specific. Try to use concrete measurable terms.

E. LEARNING ACTIVITIES:

- (1) **On-the-Job:** Describe how your internship activities will enable you to meet your learning objectives. Include projects, research, report writing, conversations, etc., which you will do while working, relating them to what you intend to learn.
- (2) **Off-the Job:** List reading, writing, contact with faculty sponsor, peer group, discussion, field trips, observations, etc., you will make and carry out which will help you meet your learning objectives.

F. **EVALUATION:** How will you know what you have learned, or that you have achieved your learning objectives? How do you wish to evaluate your progress toward meeting these objectives? Who will evaluate? When?

G. INTERNSHIP AND CLASS SCHEDULE

Class Name/Internship	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat

Part IV. AGREEMENT

This contract may be terminated or amended by student, faculty sponsor or internship supervisor at any time upon written notice, which is received and agreed to by the other two parties.

Student Signature: _____ Date: _____

Faculty Sponsor: _____ Date: _____

Internship Supervisor: _____ Date: _____

Copies of this contract will be distributed to all parties.

Appendix II: SAMPLE LEARNING CONTRACT

(Part II. The Internship)

- A. **JOB DESCRIPTION:** Describe in as much detail as possible your role and responsibilities while on your internship. List duties, projects to be completed, deadlines, etc., if relevant.

Acting as legislative aide, I understand that I will be responsible for doing background research on legislative issues under consideration in the State Assembly. This research will involve library work, telephone inquiries, and field visits to constituent agencies and organizations. I will be required to write background papers on my findings by deadlines to be determined by my supervisor. I will provide general assistance in the office - to be determined by my supervisor. I will provide clerical assistance in the office--telephone answering, reception, messenger service--on an occasional basis, as needed. I will work 40 hours per week and overtime as needed.

- B. **SUPERVISION:** Describe in as much detail as possible the supervision to be provided. What kind of instruction, assistance, consultation, etc., you will receive and from whom, etc.

I will meet weekly with my supervisor to monitor the progress of my research and learn about the use of the State Library from other research staff in the office. I will visit the district office. Bradley Smith, Office Manager will give me a general orientation and assist me as needed in performing general office tasks.

- C. **EVALUATION:** How will your work performance be evaluated? By whom? When?

My work will be evaluated by my supervisor and myself in a final consultation session. We will use a standard state employee evaluation form as well.

- D. **LEARNING OBJECTIVES:** What do you intend to learn through this experience? Be specific. Try to use concrete, measurable terms.

(1) *I will be able to describe how public policy is developed and enacted in the state legislature.*

(2) *I will understand the role and activities of an assemblyperson.*

(3) *I will examine and develop an in-depth understanding of the involvement of racial minorities in the development of at least two major pieces of social policy legislation in the state and the consequences as a result of its enactment or lack of enactment in the legislature.*

(4) *I will develop and practice legislative research and report writing.*

(5) *I will improve communication skills - writing, conversing, etc.*

- E. **LEARNING ACTIVITIES:**

(1) **On-the Job:** Describe how your internship activities will enable you to meet your learning objectives. Include projects, research, report writing, conversations, etc., which you will do while working, relating them to what you intend to learn.

By writing in assemblyman Dinardo's office, consulting with my supervisor and co-workers, by following legislation from initiation to enactment, by researching its need and impact, by visiting constituents, by writing reports, by having to communicate clearly by telephone, memo, etc., I will be able to attain my learning objectives.

- (2) **Off-the Job:** List reading, writing, contact with faculty sponsor, peer group, discussion, field trips, observations, etc., you will make and carry out which will help you meet your learning objectives.

At the conclusion of my internship, I will write two papers. One will be a self-evaluation of my progress made toward meeting learning objectives. The other will be a term paper (10-15 pages) following the legislative history of a major social policy issue in this year's legislative session and focusing on the involvement of Hispanic Americans in its development and enactment and its probable impact on their lives.

F. EVALUATION: How will you know what you have learned, or that you have achieved your learning objectives? How do you wish to evaluate your learning objectives? Who will evaluate? When? How will a grade be determined? By whom? When?

Evaluation of my progress made toward my learning objective through this internship will be done in the following ways: Objectives 1,2,3, and 5 through my term paper, my self-evaluation report, and through conversations with my faculty sponsor. Objective 4 by feedback from my internship supervisor and faculty advisor on reports that I write on my legislative research.

My grade will be determined by my faculty sponsor who will take into account my self-evaluation and evaluation of my internship supervisor of my work performance.

G. CLASS AND WORK SCHEDULE

Class Name/Internship	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
Geology 101	8 – 10		8 – 10		8 - 10	
Modern Africa		9 – 11am		9 – 11 a.m		
Arabic	12 – 1	12 – 1	12 – 1	12 - 1	12 – 1	
State Assembly Internship	3 – 5 pm		3 – 5 pm			9 - 12

Appendix III: SAMPLE COVER LETTER

Date

Carlos Brown
5000 College Parkway, #810
Bellingham, WA 98225
(360) 723-1234
Email: cbrown@hotmail.com

Ms. Jane Takayanagi, Outreach Coordinator
Main Street Youth Services
3110 North Main Street
Bellingham, WA 98225

Dear Ms. Takayanagi:

I am writing to inquire about possible summer internship opportunities with Main Street Youth Services. Currently I am a junior at Western Washington University and expect to graduate in June 2003 with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Sociology. I recently spoke with Dr. Joe Stuart, a former colleague of yours, and he thought that there might be a good match between my skills and interests and your organization.

My academic and volunteer background have prepared me well for an internship as an Outreach Assistant. Introductory courses in community services, corrections, the sociology of youth, and public policy have provided me with skills to use with at-risk youth. I have also taken two communications courses and volunteered for three summers as a YMCA camp counselor. These experiences have strengthened my counseling and interpersonal skills. Furthermore, I have a strong desire to learn and flexibility to work with many different people--assets that would be valuable to any organization.

If you are looking for someone who has the ambition to learn, is hardworking, and who takes pride in contributing to a community services organization, then you may want to consider me as a potential intern in your agency. I am able to start an internship in mid-June and can work up to 20 hours a week. I will be contacting you within two weeks, should you not contact me before that time, to determine when I may set up an appointment to talk with you. I look forward to meeting with you to discuss an internship. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Carlos Brown

Enclosure

Appendix IV: INTERNSHIP WORK SCHEDULE

Instructions: To be completed by the student in accordance with (company name) internship supervisor. A copy should be provided for student and (company name) supervisor. Any changes to this schedule must be approved by both parties in advance.

Name: _____ Date: _____

University: _____

Current Address: _____

Phone: () _____ e-mail: _____

Internship Dates:

Starting Date: _____

Ending Date: _____

Working Hours:

Monday: _____

Friday: _____

Tuesday: _____

Saturday: _____

Wednesday: _____

Sunday: _____

Thursday: _____

Hours Per Week: _____

Intern Supervisor: _____

Title: _____

Department: _____

Phone: () _____ e-mail: _____