

A Student's Guide to Establishing an Internship

WHAT ARE THE MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS TO APPLY:

- You must be enrolled at SUNY Potsdam and have Junior or Senior standing (60 or more credit hours earned toward graduation).
- You must have completed at least 12 semester hours at SUNY Potsdam.
- You must have a minimum grade point average of 2.5.
- Students must complete the attached "Learning Agreement" prior to beginning the internship.
- Some departments may have additional specifications and higher GPA requirements.

THE MOST FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT AN INTERNSHIP:

WHAT IS AN INTERNSHIP AT SUNY POTSDAM:

- Internships are a structured educational work experience, a form of experiential education. The work is conducted in a specific organization setting, may be part-time or full-time, paid or unpaid, and may consist of special activities or is part of a regular job. It is planned in cooperation with the Internship Coordinator from the Internship Program Office, a SUNY Potsdam faculty member and an on-site work supervisor. It receives academic credit and it is graded by the faculty supervisor.

WHAT AN INTERNSHIP IS NOT:

- "Time-Out" - An internship should not be viewed as "time-out" from school to go to work. An internship is a learning experience. Remember, a grade and credit for an internship is based on your

academic component, not solely on the evaluation of your work performance.

- **An Easy Grade** - Most students report working just as hard, if not harder, on their internships as they do for classes. Pursuing an off-campus internship along with several other classes creates a demanding schedule.
- **Resident Expert** - Interns bring special skills, knowledge, and fresh ideas to an organization. It is not appropriate, however, for an organization to expect an intern to be the "resident expert. You should be supervised by a professional staff person with some expertise in the area in which you are working.
- **Go-Fer** - An intern is not supposed to perform all the routine or uninteresting work within an organization. An internship should be a meaningful learning experience. Most positions and projects will involve some routine work; however, it is recommended that it be limited to twenty percent of your time as an intern.
- **Guarantee of a Job Offer** - Sometimes interns are offered part-time or full-time employment as a result of contacts made during their internships but there is no guarantee that an internship will get you a job.

WHY SHOULD I CONSIDER AN INTERNSHIP:

- An internship will provide a unique opportunity to learn while working in a specific career field and allow you to test your skills and interests in that field.
- It can help you see, while you are still a student, the value of your liberal arts studies and how classroom theory applies in a work setting.
- An internship will tell you a lot about your own personal aptitudes and preferences. It will give you that hard-to-come-by prerequisite for many kinds of employment: documented experience.
- An internship will also give you practice in some valuable job-hunting

and interpersonal skills, like setting up an interview and cooperating with your work supervisor and fellow workers.

- Through this experience you will make some useful contacts and possibly a reference for future employment.
- Studies show that future employers are more likely to hire students who have completed internships. (Over 35% of all entry level jobs go to students with experience).

HOW EARLY SHOULD I BEGIN PLANNING AN INTERNSHIP:

- As soon as possible but no later than the beginning of the semester preceding the term in which you would like to do the internship. Some of the best internships require early application procedures, so research on internship opportunities is best begun two semesters in advance. In short, you can't begin planning an internship too early.

HOW MANY CREDITS CAN I RECEIVE FOR AN INTERNSHIP:

- Internships vary in the amount of credit that is awarded. Credit is approved and granted by the department awarding you academic credit. It is the department's decision whether or not you will receive credit and if so, how much. Decisions will be guided by individual department policy. The maximum amount of credit that may be earned for all internship placements combined is 12 credit hours toward your 120 hours to graduate. A minimum of 40 hours of working time is needed for each academic credit requested. Example: 120 hours @ 8 hrs/week = 3 credits; 160 total hours @ 10.5 hrs/week = 4 credits, etc.

CAN ANY INTERNSHIP BE COUNTED TOWARD MY MAJOR OR MINOR:

- The number of credits and whether credits can be counted toward your major must be determined by individual academic department policy.

ARE INTERNSHIPS PAID:

- Most internships are not paid. The organization providing the internship determines whether or not an intern will be paid. In some cases you will be allowed to acquire credit and be compensated at the same time.

IS THERE A TUITION CHARGE FOR INTERNSHIPS:

- Since an internship earns academic credit, you must pay tuition. If registered as a full-time student, internships undertaken during the academic year are included in regular full-time tuition fees. Internships undertaken in the summer will be charged regular credit hour prices. NOTE: If your internship takes you out of commuting distance to Potsdam, you are exempt from several fees. Check with the Bursar to see if you qualify.

SECURING AN INTERNSHIP:

LOCATING A SITE:

- Arranging an internship is similar to a professional job search. Stop by the Internship Program Office to pick up a copy of the Job Search Guide and to view the internship videotape. One of the many benefits of pursuing an internship is learning and applying all the tools and techniques of a true job search. The Internship search is intentionally designed to provide a low risk-high reward opportunity to develop all the critical job search skills. You will soon be depending on these skills as you enter the job market. As with full-time employment, the key to a successful internship experience is knowing and matching professional goals, job skills, and personality with the needs and style of the organization hosting the internship.

RESOURCES AVAILABLE TO STUDENTS FOR INTERNSHIP DEVELOPMENT:

THE INTERNSHIP PROGRAM OFFICE:

- The Internship Coordinator will assist you with establishing alumni and company contacts. NOTE: Although you are ultimately responsible for researching and securing your own internship, the campus Internship Coordinator, located in the Internship Program office, is your personal resource from start to finish if you have any questions or are experiencing difficulties locating an internship site, drafting a cover letter and resume, negotiating a position, or completing the Learning Agreement.

THE INTERNSHIP PROGRAM INTERNSHIP BULLETIN BOARD:

- Has a range of internship postings received from employers. When you find one that interests you, simply check the corresponding file for more information. The file may contain a descriptive brochure, annual report and other company/organization information.

ACADEMIC FACULTY:

- Ask faculty members about contacts they might have with established internship programs or organizations and companies interested in establishing a program. They may know of alumni who will set up an internship program.

DIRECTORIES:

- The Yellow Pages. Yellow Page directories are simply lists of employers arranged alphabetically by type of service. If a company employs, it is a potential candidate for establishing an internship.
- Chamber of Commerce lists. Chambers are links to a communities employers. A Chamber can provide valuable, detailed information on local businesses.
- Association Publications. Trade and Association journals may also provide lists from which you can search. Look for articles featuring your companies. These articles can help you prepare for informational interviewing or cover letter/resume writing.

- Popular Magazines and Scholarly Journals. Not only can these yield articles on companies or career fields but they are great resources when you are just looking for ideas and avenues.
- Employment Agencies. Many of these agencies only provide employer information and employment opportunities to the job seeker for a fee. Some agencies do not charge the job seeker a fee. Try your local Department of Labor employment office.
- Part-time/Summer Jobs Listing. Many employers may be willing to incorporate an internship with their normal work schedules.

NETWORKING:

- Networking has long been the single most effective method of job searching. Use the same technique when searching for an internship site. Networking is simply using every personal contact you have. These contacts include former employers, relatives, neighbors, or friends who may know of, or be employed by, organizations, which may have an established internship program or could be persuaded to start a program. NOTE: Students are not permitted to develop internships in organizations where they would be working under the direct supervision of, or in close proximity to, a member of their immediate family or a close relative.

USING THE TELEPHONE IN YOUR SEARCH:

- The telephone will be a key tool in your search. Be aware that an employer's time is valuable. Be concise, polite, and professional.
- Here are two sample scripts for you to customize and use as you call:
- AT AN ESTABLISHED INTERNSHIP SITE:
- Introduce yourself as a SUNY Potsdam student (mention your class year and standing) exploring internship possibilities for _____ (semester or summer).

- Explain how you found out about this internship: " I would like to know more about the internship you have listed in Peterson's Guide" or "I am looking for an internship in the area of _____ and was impressed by your program information in the internship files at our Internship Program Office."
- Ask if you may arrange a meeting with the site supervisor to talk more in detail about the internship. Remember, this person is doing you the favor, be as accommodating as possible when setting appointments.

APPLYING FOR AN INTERNSHIP:

- After obtaining the name of a contact person within the organization, you should send a letter of inquiry and a resume indicating your desire to be considered for an internship.)
- It is best to apply to at least six organizations. Be sure to tailor your resume and cover letter to each internship.

Follow up about a week later with a phone call to inquire if your materials were received and to discuss details about the internship and/or arrange an interview if necessary.

Occasionally an employer asks that an administrator from the college verify a student's request for an internship or provide additional information on the internship program. The Internship Program Staff will support a student's effort to locate an internship in any way possible. Please stop by or make an appointment.

THE INTERVIEW:

- Once you have identified several internship possibilities, you may be ready to set up interviews with site supervisors. If granted an interview, confirm the date and time and ask for specific directions to the office.
- Before the interview, prepare. Carefully study the Interview Guide available at the Internship Program Office. It provides sample questions. If you are not comfortable with interviewing, not uncommon for most people, Internship Program staff will help you rehearse using mock interviews. These rehearsals are the most effective method of

easing pre-interview jitters.

THE INTERVIEW WILL SERVE TWO MAIN PURPOSES:

- It allows you to collect enough information about the organization, site supervisor, potential co-workers, and working conditions so you can make a reasonable judgment about whether or not the internship will meet your needs. It is essential that, during your interview, you are made aware of what your rights and responsibilities will be as an intern.

It allows the site supervisor to learn about you, your background, qualifications, goals and personality to determine whether or not to accept you as an intern. The site supervisor will provide a detailed description of your responsibilities, and will clarify who will be responsible for supervising and training you.

SELECT A FACULTY SPONSOR:

It is the responsibility of the student to recruit a faculty sponsor. You are required to have a sponsor within the department from which you will receive academic credit. This person does not have to be your advisor. Bring all information regarding the internship with you to the prospective faculty sponsor including the cover letter and resume you sent to apply for the position, a job description and a blank learning agreement. Be prepared to discuss the learning objectives and all expectations that the faculty sponsor will have of you.

THE INTERNSHIP LEARNING AGREEMENT:

A Learning Agreement serves several purposes:

- It outlines what you intend to learn and accomplish during your internship.
- It acts as a legal binding contract between you, your internship site supervisor and the College. It details mutual intentions and expectations.

- It specifies educational and work-related expectations as well as outlining criteria and techniques for mid-term evaluation and grading at the internship's conclusion.
- It provides a reference against which progress can be measured.
- The Learning Agreement represents a description of learning goals and specific strategies for achieving those goals. You are not an employee or a "free agent." In return for your experiential opportunity, you carry out agreed upon activities and projects. You are negotiating what you want to learn, what the supervisor needs done and what your faculty sponsor wants you to demonstrate you have learned.

ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES STIPULATED IN THE LEARNING AGREEMENT:

- Faculty sponsors will require you to undertake learning activities that will supplement or enhance the on-site work. You should work together to develop the specific assignments and duties. You may be required to have supplemental readings, write a paper and/or keep a journal of your work. Be sure your faculty advisor states up front what percentage of your grade each assignment will be worth.

TIPS FOR COMPILING A LEARNING AGREEMENT:

- The Learning Agreement includes statements of your goals, strategies for accomplishing the goals, methods for evaluating their accomplishment and closing activities to finalize the internship. Remember, the evaluation methods should be realistic, appropriate, meaningful, and measurable. You may want to write a first draft of the contract and then share it with your site supervisor and faculty sponsor for suggestions and approval before producing the final version. It is the student's responsibility to write and complete the agreement. In writing the agreement the student will, in effect, create the syllabus for the "course"/internship.

THE JOB DESCRIPTION:

- The work supervisor will provide you with written information detailing your activities during the internship. However, you are encouraged to be very active in the process. If you have a special interest in an area of the organization, which is not mentioned by the work supervisor, we encourage you to verbalize this to the supervisor so it may be included in the Learning Agreement.
- Training and On-site Supervision: You need to work this out with your on-site supervisor and faculty advisor so everyone has a clear understanding of their roles. Also, you need to know ahead of time what type of training you will receive during the internship. Will you ask people to observe you at work and give feedback and suggestions? How often will you communicate your progress with your site supervisor and faculty advisor?

THE LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

- Learning Objectives describe what you intend to learn through your internship. Be specific about the skills and knowledge you are looking to improve and obtain. Are you also seeking to test a career interest and your own suitability in a particular field? You should consult with the faculty supervisor to outline objectives for the internship. These should be specific, measurable statements of what you hope to accomplish at the internship.
- Examples of learning objectives:
 - To develop skills in teaching within a multi-aged classroom using cooperative learning techniques.
 - To gain knowledge about how computers are used in the banking industry.
 - To develop counseling and interpersonal skills through the conducting of interviews with clients.

LIST OF RESPONSIBLE BEHAVIORS FOR INTERNS:

- Dress appropriately -- What is the dress code of the organization?
- Act professionally. Your co-workers will be depending on you and will expect you to adhere to the same rules and regulations as other employees.
- If you cannot make it into the office, make certain that you phone your supervisor and explain your circumstance.
- Ask if there is any information you may review to learn more about the organization
- Know workers compensation laws and your legal rights as an intern.
- Keep a note pad handy to write down important information and assignments.
- Display enthusiasm for the internship position and remember that the more dedicated you are to a position, the more recognized you will be.
- Get to know other employees and become familiar with their work functions.

CHECKLIST FOR STUDENTS:

MAKE SURE YOU KNOW:

- Exactly what is required and expected of you by the internship site.
- What academic assignments will be expected of you by your faculty sponsor in order for you to receive a final grade.
- To whom you will report at the work site if you should be injured, and whether or not your insurance covers such injuries.

CHECKLIST FOR ARRANGING AN INTERNSHIP:

___ Step 1 Research internship opportunities. Review the resources available to you for finding an internship. Write down contacts and addresses that interest you.

___ Step 2 Prepare a resume and cover letter to apply for the internships

you selected in step 1.

___ Step 3 Apply for the internship by sending your letter and resume.

___ Step 4 Set up and complete an interview with the prospective internship supervisor.

___ Step 5 Seek a faculty sponsor in the department giving credit for the internship once you have been accepted by an organization. (This does not have to be your academic advisor)

___ Step 6 Complete an Internship Learning Agreement. Using the tips on "Writing an Internship Learning Agreement", write a draft of your Learning Agreement. The final copy should be typed or reproduced on a computer so it is neat and professional in appearance. (Complete Internship Proposal).

___ Step 7 Write a letter of acceptance for the internship you have decided to accept. This letter should summarize the internship terms you agreed upon.

___ Step 8 Write a letter of refusal to any organization that offered you an internship, which you did not accept.

___ Step 9 Submit the completed, TYPED Internship Learning Agreement

which has been signed by all appropriate parties. Example: 120 hours @ 8 hrs/week = 3 credits; 160 total hours @ 10.5 hrs/week = 4 credits, etc.

____ Step 10 Complete the Internship Site Evaluation Form□This form will give you the opportunity to express your feelings regarding your internship site. This form will be returned to the Internship Program Office to assist the College in placing and referring future interns at selected internship sites.