When some people think about taking an internship, they believe that it is just answering phones and filing papers. Nowadays, certain majors require students to partake in an academic internship. Depending on the major, students can go out and sample the type of work they will be doing in the future. Taking an internship helps a person discover what they like and dislike about the field and it also helps a person find their hidden talent.

Students are aware of the two different types of internships-paid and unpaid. With these two types, the concept of getting a paycheck is not the only difference. With unpaid internships, students’ schedules are more flexible. They are treated like students, not like employees. In an unpaid internship, students are more comfortable with saying no to employers if there is something they don’t want to do.

For paid internships, employers offer either salaries or stipends. Sometimes colleges offer funding for students to partake in an internship. According to NACE (National Association of Colleges and Employers), 50-70% of employers are paying their interns. For interns taking a paid internship, they are treated more like employees than students. Forty-six percent of students completing paid internships spend more of their time on professional tasks than students with unpaid internships, and, because they are getting a paycheck, they are often held to a higher standard. Further, they also have the opportunity to learn about money management and the value of a paycheck.

In the end, even though a paid internship seems more beneficial, both opportunities help students obtain extra experience to put on their resume. Both also help build influential connections and can provide a mentor or professional guide for a student with whom to connect to when trying to find a job.

One piece of advice for students within an internship: STAY ALERT AND BE AWARE OF WHAT POSITIONS MAY NEED TO BE FILLED AFTER THE INTERNSHIP IS COMPLETED.
Experiential Education

For the Homeland Security Internship, Dr. Bugg was the “go to” professor in order to obtain a complete description. This is a new internship that started Fall of 2011. The students, who do not necessarily have to be a criminal justice major, have juniors and senior class standing. These students have to have an overall GPA of 3.5. So far, there have been three students who have taken part in this internship. Students get to work with Department of Homeland Security agents, Border Patrol, local police departments and County Sheriff’s Department. They have the ability to see how the jobs work, what goes on in the agents daily lives and how they fit in with each different case. Some of the activities in which students participated in were helping with collecting information that would go to courts as well as accompanying agents to local schools to talk to students about a possible career in law enforcement. They also have the ability to go to area crime labs to see how various aspects work within the department. Students had hands-on experience with mock cases and report write ups. With the mock cases, students take the lead on a fictitious case that is set up for them and assign each agent a different task. They also participate in debriefings and the interview/questioning process.

This program takes 3-4 students per semester. For any students who think they want to take part in this amazing internship, early—preferably the semester prior to the one in which you wish to begin. If anyone is interested, please contact Dr. Bugg about the paperwork and other information. Since this is a very security sensitive internship, there is a good deal of paperwork.

Homeland Security Site

The department of Homeland Security has a mission- “ensure a homeland that is safe, secure and resilient against terrorism and other hazards. More than 240,000 men and women contribute their skills and experiences to that mission each day. They work to: prevent terrorism, secure borders, enforce and administer immigration laws, safeguard cyberspace and ensure resilience to disasters.

There are numerous opportunities for students to make a difference in the United States. No matter if a student is still in school or has already graduated, there is a chance to work in fields such as accounting, law enforcement and cyber security. With the internship program at DHS, students could possibly have a permanent position based on the needs of the agency.

If you’re about making a difference in the world and wanting to help many people, this could be the program for you.

Sociology: Dr. Bugg

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“Be open to whatever comes your way- take any opportunity you can,” is one piece of advice Shane Shaffer gave in an interview about the newest academic internship. This semester, he participated in the new internship program at the Department of Homeland Security. For him, this internship allowed him to see many aspects of law enforcement as a career, aspects to which he would not normally have access to. “It let me see just how much will be demanded of me. I cannot wait for the time when I will be able to stand up and show that I am ready for the challenges that this career has to offer”.

With this internship, Shane was able to run mock cases with the agents which allowed him to learn investigative techniques as well as the organizational structure of the departments within DHS. Throughout this internship, Shane took a few “field trips.” One of these was to Albany to observe a court trial. Because of these various trips, Shane learn to “expect the unexpected,” leading him to always keep a suit in his car, just in case. “If you don’t understand something at the moment, that’s okay; everyone else does,” was one thing Shane learned while working with the agents.

Just like students in other academic internships, he gained contacts that one would otherwise be not able to get. He worked with other agents on both the federal and state levels. This also gave him a realistic look at the field. A couple of lessons that Shane took away from this internship were the value of hard work and the importance of having a positive attitude. He learned how critical it is to be confident in your work and in yourself. In the end, this internship showed him without a doubt, that this field is where he wants to make his career.

Partaking in this internship, in the Experiential Education Office, for my last year of college really allowed my creative side to take over when it came to these newsletters as well as the email for summer internships. After all the classes that I took for my creative writing major and all the stories and essays that I had to write, this internship gave me a real opportunity to use everything that I learned to complete what has been assigned to me for both semesters.

When it comes to thinking about my future career, this internship provided me with the reassurance I needed to know that writing is what I love to do. To be able to utilize my creative skills to do more than just write stories is something that I know I will be able to use once I graduate and get out into the world. Part of me wishes that I started this before this year. It would have given me extra opportunities to do more. Because of this internship, I was able to meet interesting people from different majors who have taken part in internships in different locations. The differences between what students learn by being taught and what they learn by doing becomes clear when the internship was finally completed. Not only did I gain the upper division credit that I needed to graduate, but I also gained references when I apply for jobs in the future.

For those of you who are thinking about whether you should take an internship or not, I would say to go ahead and take one because honestly, you don’t have anything to lose, but...you do have something to gain that you can’t get in a classroom.
It has been a busy spring semester in the Experiential Education Office! Currently, there are 203 students completing academic internships for the spring 2012 semester. My schedule has been full of meetings with students who are preparing for an academic internship for the summer 2012 and fall 2012 semesters. Speaking of summer 2012 internships, we have a total of 8 Internship Scholarships available for qualified students. These Internship Scholarships are supported by our SUNY Potsdam alumni and help defer the financial costs associated with completing an academic internship in the summer term. During the summer of 2011, we awarded $9,500 to 11 students completing academic internships. New this summer 2012 is the Whelly Internship Scholarship for Women Leaders! This $1,000 Internship Scholarship will be awarded annually to a female student who exhibited leadership qualities during the freshman or sophomore year.

Tanasia Betts has been awarded this Internship Scholarship for the summer 2012 and is interning at Parson Child & Family Center in Schenectady, NY. For more information about the summer internship scholarships go to: http://www.potsdam.edu/support/ eeo/internships/forms.cfm

I am looking forward to working with faculty, students, and site supervisors in the semesters to come! If you are a student looking for career related experience, stop by and see Toby White, a.k.a. “The Internship Guy”.