

Internships

What is an internship?

An internship is a supervised practical learning experience in which students perform work that complements their formal course of study. In most cases, with approval from appropriate academic authorities, the work is rewarded with college credit. Cooperative education is another method of obtaining "real world" experience. A "coop" is an education-related part-time position that is compensated at a reasonable monetary level.

The rationale for a company or organization to develop an internship or coop role is to retain a capable and skilled worker for specific tasks at minimal expense. They also may "test drive" an individual to assess their potential as a full-time employee upon graduation. Summer positions that relate to one's field of study can provide similar hands-on experience, whether or not they are formally called internships. An amazing number and variety of potential experiential learning opportunities exist with organizations ranging from banks to schools to laboratories to not-for-profit agencies. An interesting fact is that the exact timing, duration, compensation and weekly schedules for these are seldom identical. Internships and coops truly come in all "shapes & sizes".

Why Should I seek out an internship or coop?

Employers and graduate schools seek out the most capable people available when considering candidates for employment or admission. They generally agree that students who have put classroom concepts and skills to work in a "real world" environment are more realistic and productive than those who have not. They also may assume that the motivation to seek out an internship is a characteristic that will be applied on the job. A bonus of experiential learning and earning opportunities is that students are exposed to professionals in their field of interest who may one day serve as part of their professional network, a source of job referrals, and as powerful employment references.

How do I secure an internship or coop position?

Many students assume that internships and/or coops are formal and well-established programs for most organizations. In some cases this is true. However, there is an enormous number of potential positions that have not yet been clearly formulated or communicated to interested candidates. Most formal internships are passed along to suitable and interested students by Career Services and by faculty. A vast number of

internships/coops, though, are originated from scratch when energetic opportunity seekers approach organizations of interest and present a well-defined proposal for a formal relationship of this nature. In other words, students go out and find or create them.

What should I do to prepare myself to obtain an internship/coop?

Decide what type of work you are capable of performing, interested in performing, and that will develop skills in line with your career goals. This exercise will steer you toward organizations likely to have people engaged in such work who may consider the merits of employing an intern.

Prepare your resume and polish your letter writing and interview skills. These will be expected to be at a professional level when applying for most internships and/or coops. Communicate your interests to faculty in your academic major(s) and Career Services. Maintain contact with each and be alert to announcements on bulletin boards as well as published vacancies. All internships we learn about are published on-line in eRecruiting. Work with your academic department's internship coordinator to make sure you meet their guidelines or requirements.

Start pursuing opportunities at least one full semester before you desire an internship. Be honest with yourself about the time commitment involved and consider your academic demands before seeking out internships.

Consult the Self-Directed Search. Strategies to locate and create interesting internships are detailed. Communicate questions to Career Services, (816) 415 - 5938, Ext. 5238.