



All About Internships

Ready Reference ♦ C-1

♦ OSU Career Services

Internship--As a college student, you've heard or seen the word a million times. Is doing an internship, or gaining experience in your desired career field, really that important? **YES!**

The *Washington Post* reported in May 2000 that in the early 1980s, only 1 in 36 students completed an internship or other experiential learning program; however, recent trends suggest that approximately 86% of college students had completed an internship. Moreover, 69% of students report having had two or more internships. As a result, gaining hands-on experience through one or more internships is more important than ever before. Two internships will help you be even more marketable to future employers. Below are frequently asked questions related to internships and career-related experiences. For more information, talk to your academic advisor or your College Career Consultant.

What is an internship?

Any position that allows you to gain "meaningful" experience can be called an internship. Look for internships in fields where you already have interest as well as those you are considering. Additionally, remember that you can become more knowledgeable by working in related areas, not just in the specific area related to your major.

Cooperative Education (Co-op) is an excellent form of internship for some majors. Many Co-ops provide up to one year of work experience prior to graduation while at the same time earning college credit hours. Check with your College Career Consultant to see if Co-ops exist in your chosen field.

Where should I look for an internship?

You would be amazed at the creative ways used to acquire internships. First, tell everyone you know that you're looking for an internship, the type of internship you desire, and then get busy! Internet searches, the HIRE System, newspapers, classmates, family members, *The Internship Bible*, and many other places are good places to start. Talk to your College Career Consultant and your advisor for other resources.

What can I gain as an intern?

Not only do you gain meaningful experiences that give strength to your résumé, but you also make significant relationships that could prove invaluable when searching for a full-time job in the future. Participating in an internship in your field of interest, even for a short time, allows you to gain first-hand experience. You can see if the field meets your expectations or if you might want to branch out in another direction. Consider it an audition for a career. You have not yet dedicated your entire life to this

field, and, in most cases, there is time to make adjustments. It may also help you decide to charge ahead. Additionally, you have the opportunity to impress your supervisor with your skills. If you're a good match for the organization, you may land a future job offer. Some employers consider an internship as an extended interview. Others treat it as part of your training period. This could shorten the length of time before you are eligible for benefits once employed full-time. In another vein, you may make networking connections which might open doors for other internships in a different area or with a different organization. ***Most of all, you gather "real world" experience to take back to the classroom.***

How many internships should I do?

As many as you can! Remember, ***everyone*** does one (ok, maybe not everyone!). So be exceptional! Take advantage of as many experiences as you can. Multiple internships will provide you with invaluable experience, allow you to explore more than one field or industry, and could increase your starting salary!

Where can I do an internship?

Anywhere you want! From Washington to Oklahoma to Washington, D.C., there are experiences available everywhere. Don't limit yourself to familiar opportunities listed in books, newspapers, or the Internet. This is your opportunity to do some exploring and discover not only what it is that you want to do in your future, but also, what sort of environment suits you best. You should also pursue the types of organizations and industries in which you dream of working upon graduation.

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How long does an internship last?

Traditionally, students participate in internships during the summer; however, internships can take place during the academic year or even during a specific season. While a valuable and meaningful internship doesn't have to meet specific time requirements, it should allow you adequate time to understand a process or acquire additional knowledge related to a particular career.

What if the organization I want to work with has never had an intern?

Help them understand the benefits an intern can offer their organization. Are you able to outline what you would be able to contribute to the organization through an internship? What are your strongest selling points? Employers without previous experience with interns may be intimidated by the term and may not understand how valuable interns can be. If you would be able to contribute to the organization and would have a meaningful internship at that location, convince them that you're just what the organization needs! Your College Career Consultant has resources for the employer and will be happy to help the employer develop an internship program.

What about money?

Students are often paid a competitive salary for internships. You may, however, locate a special internship offering a unique experience but at a lower salary. Some internships may even be unpaid, but, nevertheless, offer excellent work experience. Remember, just because you don't receive a large paycheck doesn't mean the internship is not worth doing. Do you believe that the opportunity will benefit you in the long run? Will it benefit you enough to live with a lower-than-average salary for a short while? What will be your return on the time you

invest? Research your options before declining an offer. Sometimes an outstanding internship location, or a terrific experience with a special organization, will more than offset a lesser salary. You have to be the judge.

How do I act once I've landed the internship?

Like a sponge! Learn everything you can. Learn the names of everyone you meet. Circulate your OSU student business cards. This is your opportunity to show the entire organization your capabilities. Go above and beyond expectations. Show them why they can't live without you! Most importantly, respect the fact that you've been selected for this position. Many others probably applied, but you were selected. Don't abuse that privilege. In addition, you are representing OSU students, both present and future. Your performance may affect the employer's choice of a future intern. Refer to *Ready Reference G13 Reducing Employer Fears* to gain further understanding of how you can prove to your employer that hiring you was the best decision that could have been made!

What "tools" do I need to land an internship?

The tools you need to land a full-time job are the same tools you need in your internship search.

- Well-written, professional résumé
- Attention-getting cover letter
- Examples of your capabilities
- Strong interviewing skills
- Knowledge of the organization
- Initiative and persistence to make it happen

Will an internship really make a difference in my career path?

Yes!

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