HOW TO FIND AND COMPLETE
A VALUABLE INTERNSHIP

In today’s job market, the importance of internships has increased for both students and employers. Employers now expect students to have engaged in some sort of career-related work before graduation. The internship experience is ready-made for doing just that. An internship allows college students to take their planned career out for a “test drive”—to find out first hand what they like and, potentially, what they don’t like about their chosen field.

Meanwhile, employers give students a chance to work in their field (possibly for the first time) and gauge their work performance and aptitude for the job. Organizations benefit from having interns, too! Employers can attract talent to their door, mentoring, training, developing, and possibly even hiring interns and solidifying a foundation for the intern’s future within their organization.

BENEFITS OF AN INTERNSHIP

• Gain career-related work experience in a chosen industry or related field of study.
• Enhance relevance to course of study by putting theory to practice.
• Realistically test career objectives.
• Identify strengths and weaknesses.
• Develop interpersonal skills and teamwork.
• Develop professional work habits.
• Improve communication and networking skills.
• Establish a network of professional contacts, mentors, and references for after graduation.
• Increase marketability; gain a competitive edge and insight into the industry.
• Potentially transition smoothly into full-time employment with possibility of a post-graduation job.

STEPS TO PURSUING AN INTERNSHIP

• Assess your inventory of skills and interests. Use SIGI 3 in Career Services or at home. Check with our office staff for more details.
• Make an appointment with a Career Counselor in Career Services, LRJSC 5-7.1, by calling 512.245.2645.
• Create your profile and upload your resume in the Jobs4Cats database.
• Develop a cover letter and resume specific to the position to which you’re applying. Have one of our Career Counselors critique it for you.
• Investigate prospective organizations’ websites and check for current internship vacancies.
• Prepare for interviewing. Do a mock interview in Career Services.
• Research, research, research the organization before the interview. This is an absolute must!
• Present a professional image via your attire when interviewing. Make sure you are on time and prepared.

HINTS FOR RESEARCHING INTERNSHIPS

• The ideal time to pursue an internship is the second semester of your sophomore year or early junior year, leaving you the option of doing a second internship during your senior year.
• Attend the Fall Job & Internship Fair (October), Mass Comm. Career Fair (October), EXPO (February), and other job fairs held at Texas State during the fall and spring semesters. This will allow you to network with employers who may be seeking interns.
• Check Jobs4Cats on the Career Services website at www.careerservices.txstate.edu for a list of current internship postings and list of job fairs.
• Search the Internet for companies, government agencies or non-profits that offer internships.
• Research specific internship websites under the “Recommended Internet Resources” link on the Career Services homepage.
• Look for companies coming to campus to interview prospective interns. You can locate these companies in Jobs4Cats through the on-campus recruiting link.
• Attend a workshop facilitated by employers. Career Services offers a large number of programs and special events during the regular semesters.
• Don’t forget—your department internship coordinator must approve internships for credit.
EVALUATING AN INTERNSHIP OFFER

Internships, especially those that are unpaid, work on the barter system. You are bartering your time, energy and skills for training, hands-on experience, contacts and increased marketability. Think carefully about the internship offers that you receive. Make sure that you are getting what you need from this exchange. Some key components that lead to a successful internship are:

- Work that feels meaningful and useful.
- Work that challenges you to grow.
- Supervisor/staff who make you feel like a part of the work group.
- Supervisor/staff who are accessible to you (on-site and available) and are willing to guide you and answer your questions.
- Opportunities to learn about the career field. This might be done through your day-to-day activities, through informal conversations with staff, or through participation in staff meetings, site visits or staff trainings.

You won’t know the benefits or disadvantages of an internship until you are actually on the job. By asking some of the following questions during the interview process, you can learn a lot about the position you for which you are applying:

- Could you describe some of the projects or assignments I would be involved in and my role in each?
- What type of supervision do interns receive? Do interns meet with supervisors routinely? How do interns get feedback on their work?
- Could you describe the work culture at this organization?
- What are the most important qualities you look for in an intern?
- Have you ever had an outstanding intern? What qualities made him/her outstanding?
- Are interns included in staff programs such as meetings, seminars or training sessions? Do interns observe site visits or meetings with clients?
- How much time is spent on daily administrative work compared to time spent on career-related projects?

(WARNING: This is a tricky question to ask. You don’t want to give the impression that you would be unhappy doing administrative work! It’s important, however, for you to find out how much of your time will be given to projects or assignments that will help you meet your learning goals. Try prefacing this question. You might say, “I’m fully aware that every internship involves administrative work, and I am more than happy to photocopy, answer phones, etc.; however, I would like to know how much time is spent on administrative work compared to time spent on career-related projects?”)

- Reflect on the responses that are given to you. Do these responses make you enthusiastic or doubtful about the internship?
- If you are offered the internship and are not sure whether you want to accept, make an appointment to meet with your prospective supervisor or speak with her/him over the phone in order to clarify the points about which you are uncertain.
PRINCIPLES FOR A GOOD INTERNSHIP EXPERIENCE

What are the qualities that are possessed by the kind of intern who really shines? As we asked former interns this question, we came up with a variety of answers. Below is a compilation of advice offered by previous interns at the end of their internship experiences.

**Take initiative.** Be a problem solver. Look for ways to improve the effectiveness of the agency and volunteer to initiate them. Ask for opportunities to do more. Make sure that your responsibilities are always fulfilled.

**Have a sense of direction.** Know what you want to accomplish and find out how you can make it happen.

**Let your supervisor know your career goals.** Your supervisor may have the inside scoop on available jobs. If he/she knows what kind of job you will be looking for, he/she can tell you about vacancies. When your supervisor knows your career interests, he/she can offer you experiences that will be relevant to them.

**Network.** Get to know the other interns and employees. Getting to know other people at the agency (and at Texas State) can provide you with a valuable resource. Networking is one of the best ways to learn about potential job opportunities.

**Learn what career you want to pursue.** Use your internship to gather ideas about the kind of work you would like to go into when you graduate.

**Take advantage of training.** Your internship can provide you with valuable professional experiences. If your agency offers a specific training course, take advantage of it. You will become more marketable in the job world if you do.

**Have no fear.** At the beginning of your internship, it is natural to feel like you are in over your head. Because your experiences are new, you may be afraid to make a mistake. Realize, however, that even if you do make a mistake, the consequences are not likely to be catastrophic, and you will have gained a learning opportunity.

**Be consistent, responsible and dependable.** Make sure that your coworkers see you as someone they can depend on to get the job done, and done well. Show up on time. Complete your assignments on time.

**Learn from your challenges.** Almost every good internship will provide challenges that allow the intern to grow. As you experience challenges, ask yourself, “What can I learn from this experience?”

**Learn from others around you.** Watch what the people around you are doing to make the most of their internships. Doing so will give you ideas about how you can make the most of yours.

**Be flexible.** You may not end up learning and doing the things you expected to at the beginning of your internship. Be willing to do whatever needs to be done, and to learn whatever you can.

**Maintain confidentiality.** Use pseudonyms when writing reports about your internship. When you go home, do not tell stories about your clients to family and friends. By taking these measures, you respect the privacy of your clients and your employer.

**Be aware of future job opportunities.** Some internship experiences can lead directly to part-time or full-time jobs. If you are interested in working at the place of your internship, start the conversation early on.
PREPARE YOURSELF TO FIND AN INTERNSHIP BY ATTENDING THESE SPECIAL EVENTS

Health Professions & Social Services Job Fair
in September or October in LBJS Ballroom, 3rd floor

Fall Job & Internship Fair
in October in Strahan Coliseum

Government & Social Services Job Fair
in October in LBJS Ballroom, 3rd floor

Mass Comm Career Fair
in October in LBJS Ballroom, 3rd floor

Construction Job Fair
in October and February in LBJS Ballroom, 3rd floor

Environmental Job & Internship Fair
in November in LBJS Ballroom, 3rd floor

Teacher Job Fair
in November and April in Strahan Coliseum

Summer Job Fair
in February in the LBJS Ballroom, 3rd floor

Spring Job & Internship EXPO
in February or March in Strahan Coliseum

Science, Technology and Engineering and Math Job & Internship Fair
in February in LBJS Ballroom, 3rd floor

Non-Profit Career Fair
in April in LBJS Ballroom, 3rd floor

JOB SHADOWING

For the past ten years, Career Services has offered this unique externship experience to provide Texas State students with firsthand knowledge about career fields. Job shadowing promotes career exploration, helps confirm career direction, and develops networking and mentoring relationships. This past year, Career Services confirmed over 250 Texas State students to shadow organizations during winter break.

Students shadow in Dallas, Houston, Austin, San Antonio, San Marcos and the Central Texas corridor. Employers invite Texas State students to spend a day, several days or one week in their offices to get an insider’s view into what they do. For students, job shadowing can become the link between academics and a career.

A typical shadow experience includes an itinerary for the day, a company overview, a tour and possibly meetings with employees. During job shadowing you will engage in the daily job duties and activities of the employer host, sometimes assisting on special projects. In addition, your host may take you to lunch, where you can engage in casual conversations and demonstrate business etiquette.

Students can view registration deadlines on the Career Services website. Job shadowing opportunities are available to all students, freshmen through senior, except seniors graduating in December. Before applying, participating students should give some thought to possible career fields. Undecided students are also invited to participate. For more information, contact Karen Julian, Assistant Director and Liaison to the College of Liberal Arts or Chris Jones, Career Advisor in Career Services at 512.245.2645.