INTERNSHIP GUIDE FOR STUDENTS
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Revised 4/21/14
THE BASICS OF AN INTERNSHIP

WHAT IS AN INTERNSHIP AND WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

An internship is an opportunity to enhance classroom learning through practical career-related work experience. Internships can be found in corporate and private businesses, government agencies and nonprofit organizations. All internships should have the primary goal of providing students a chance to learn while contributing to the company or organization’s needs.

The difference between a part-time job and an internship is the educational component. The position should be more than just getting coffee and making copies (although those tasks might be incorporated into an overall experience). An internship should be directly connected to a student’s academic field or major and include some type of training or project that relates. Another important part of an internship in dedicated reflection of how classroom learning applies to professional experience.

Internships are important to a student’s career because they offer real-world experience. They provide an introduction to employment opportunities in the student’s chosen field and the professional world. In a competitive market, the more experience you can obtain prior to graduation, the more competitive you become after graduation. In 2013, the National Association for Colleges and Employers found that almost 50% of internships converted into full-time jobs for graduates. Overall if a student has an internship experience they are more likely to receive any job offer. According to the NACE 2013 Student Survey, the job offer rate differential was 51% for interns compared with 34% for non-interns. According to the NACE 2014 Job Outlook, close to 60% of employers favor experience gained through an internship.

At USF St. Petersburg Career Center, we are available to assist students in preparing for a successful internship. Whether by phone or in-person, our office staff can answer career-related questions.

WHY DO COMPANIES HIRE STUDENT INTERNS?

There are many benefits to hiring student interns. To name a few:

- Interns can assist employers with special events and/or short-term projects.
- Interns may offer new ideas and innovative approaches.
- Interns are typically self-motivated. They’re eager to get experience!
- Mentoring an intern provides company and organization employees with an opportunity to develop supervisory skills.
- An intern can be evaluated and trained for possible future employment.
- Providing internships can be a cost-effective solution for short-term projects.
- An employer’s visibility on campus is increased when promoting internships.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF COMPLETING AN INTERNSHIP?

An internship experience has many benefits for students. First and foremost, is the chance for an intern to have a meaningful learning experience by applying academic knowledge into a practical work setting through involvement and reflection.

Here is a list of additional benefits of an internship experience:

- A chance to reality check your career choice, by testing out a professional position in your industry or field of work
- Build your network and increase the number of professional connections in your field
- Develop confidence, maturity, professionalism, communication, and other transferable skills
- Improve job specific skills and knowledge of an industry or field
- Increase the chances and occurrences of full-time job offers following graduation
What Is a Meaningful Learning Experience?

Meaningful learning experiences provide genuine opportunities for students to learn about their desired career path outside of a classroom environment. The main components identified for USF St. Petersburg are as follows:

- The internship must be aligned with the student’s chosen major.
- The internship must include specific measurable learning objectives/outcomes. Some examples of learning objectives/outcomes include:
  - The intern will develop a thorough understanding of the employer’s online personality and preferred use of marketing tools.
  - The intern will learn transaction tax laws and regulations.
  - The intern will observe ten family therapy sessions and provide a written summary of each session.
  - The intern will write and submit two grant applications.
  - The intern will attend five media events such as press launches, court sessions, council meetings, etc.
- The intern must be closely supervised to ensure they are receiving guidance and feedback regarding their performance.
- The intern should have time to reflect on the learning objectives and summarize their experience.

What Are the Different Types of Internships?

There are two primary categories of internships dealing with compensation and academic credit. The details of each are listed below.

Paid Internships vs. Unpaid Internships

- Paid Internships are opportunities offered primarily by private companies or large organizations designed to pay students while they learn. Employers that offer paid internships are often for-profit, are evaluating interns as potential full-time employees upon graduation, and/or have short-term large projects. The rate of compensation can be determined by the employer. Compensation could vary from hourly wages, stipends, licensing, and/or tuition reimbursement.

- Unpaid internships are opportunities that do not offer any form of monetary compensation for the student. The decision to offer an unpaid internship is largely determined by the employer or the area of discipline. Although unpaid some of these internship offer a great opportunity to students for experience and other benefits. Unpaid internships are generally reserved for not-for-profit organizations including religious institutions, charities, universities, state and local government agencies, and various hospitals.

It should be noted that unpaid internships are scrutinized heavily by the U.S. Department of Labor and, as such, have a minimum set of criteria that must be met for the internship to be considered legal. At USF St. Petersburg, a statement of employer compliance to these criteria is required to post a position on Recruit-A-Bull. The U.S. Department of Labor has outlined six criteria for determining that unpaid internships are legal:

1. Interns work under close supervision and do not displace regular employees.
2. Interns are not guaranteed a job at the end of the internship.
3. Interns understand they are not entitled to wages during the internship.
4. Training takes precedent over any benefits employers may receive.
5. Interns' training must primarily benefit them, not the company or organization.
6. Interns must obtain hands-on experience similar to that in a vocational setting.

For further details regarding these standards, visit http://www.dol.gov/whd/regs/compliance/whdfs71.htm.
FOR-CREDIT VS. NOT-FOR-CREDIT

In addition to determining the amount of monetary compensation (if any), employers must also decide whether internships should be offered on a for-credit or not-for-credit basis.

- For-Credit Internships – Students earn university credits that count as an academic or extracurricular semester course. They are often strongly related to a student’s academic discipline and must be approved by the university/academic department. Generally, they also require the completion of various forms of documentation throughout the duration of the academic semester or year. Examples of documentation include: journals, essays, presentations, mid-term/final evaluations, etc. At USF St. Petersburg, students are expected to take initiative to find a faculty sponsor for the internship.

  Note: If you are interested in obtaining internship credit, please contact your academic department. See the Appendix for a list of contact information for each department.

- Not-for-Credit Internships – Students do not earn university credits for their internship experience. Students may choose to not receive academic credit for internships that they obtain on their own or if their degree does not require and internship experience. Students are encouraged to report their internship through the “Report a Hire” function in their Recruit-A-Bull account. This helps the university to track where our students are getting internship experiences.

HOW LONG IS THE AVERAGE INTERNSHIP?

The length of an internship can vary based on an employer’s needs and student’s availability, whether the internship is being offered on a for-credit or not-for-credit basis, and/or what the discipline is. Generally speaking, for-credit internships fall in line with the start and end of an academic semester/year and not-for-credit internships can last any length of time, but generally at least 10 hours a week for 10 weeks.

FINDING YOUR INTERNSHIP

HOW DO I FIND AN INTERNSHIP?

Searching for a meaningful internship can be intimidating for many students. To assist in the process, the USF St. Petersburg Career Center has created this resource guide and our career center staff members are eager to assist you at any stage of your internship search.

The following 9 steps offer an outline for preparing yourself, searching for, and selecting your internship. Part 3: Appendix provides sample documents for students to reference as needed.

1. START WITH THE CAREER CENTER AND START EARLY

Researching the basics before beginning your search can save you substantial time and energy later. Often, students wait until the last minute to begin preparing for the internship and then find themselves scrambling to secure one. The Career Center is available beginning your freshman year to assist you in all phases of your search. Our trained career peer advisors and professional staff can help you explore the following:

- Are you choosing the right career path for your skills, personality and interests?
- What type of internship opportunities are available that relate to your selected major?
- When should you plan to complete your first internship and begin the search?
- Is an internship a general requirement for graduation?
2. **CREATE A RESUME**

A resume is an individually designed summary of your personal educational and experiential qualifications as they relate to the type of employment you are seeking. The purpose of a resume is to get you the interview; the purpose of the interview is to get you the job. Pick up a Resume Writing Guide from the Career Center or Career Center website. Our career center staff is available to assist you in creating your first resume or editing your current one.

3. **ACCESS YOUR RECRUIT-A-BULL ACCOUNT**

All currently enrolled students are granted access to Recruit-a-Bull, a FREE one-stop resource for USFSP students and alumni within one year of graduation to:

- Post your resume online
- Allow your profile and resume to be viewable by employers
- Search available openings for off-campus employment and internships
- Research contact information for local and national employers who have accounts in the system
- Submit your resume to employers advertising positions in Recruit-A-Bull

You should have received an email with instructions for how to access the website and log in to your account. To make the most out of Recruit-a-Bull, you are encouraged to explore the website and become familiar with the various features listed above. Positions are uploaded daily and staying abreast of new opportunities can help when you are ready to begin your search.

4. **UTILIZE YOUR EXISTING RESOURCES**

Throughout the academic career, students naturally learn about various resources that may help during internship searches. Several are listed below:

- Faculty and staff - It is pivotal to build good relationships with faculty and staff. These relationships can come in handy when searching for internships or employment opportunities. Ask faculty members and department heads if they are familiar with any available for-credit or not-for-credit internship opportunities. They are often approached by employers directly.
- Student and professional organizations – Participating in student and professional organizations will allow you to develop networking skills, build relationships with students and professionals and learn more about your chosen career path. Many of these organizations have job boards or make announcements regarding position openings.
- Social media – Students are encouraged to embrace the social media realm of recruiting. Employers now recruit online as well as through traditional recruiting methods. If you are interested in a company, like their Facebook page and/or follow them on Twitter. It is also recommended that you create a LinkedIn account. LinkedIn is a professional social networking site. Employers often utilize LinkedIn to search for and contact candidates directly.
- Job & Internship Fairs – The Career Center hosts a fair in the spring semester, but watch for other opportunities for job fairs locally and virtually.
- Other online resources – You may also search other online resources such as:
  - Internships.com – Serves as the link between internships and students, higher education and employers
  - Profession organization websites related to your field. Many professional organizations will have online job and internship boards.
  - Youtern.com – Internship postings and The Savvy Intern blog powered by other interns.
  - The Washington Center – Provides internships, seminars, and internship placements in major professional fields in Washington, D.C., London, and Sydney

5. **RESEARCH THE ORGANIZATIONS OF INTEREST**

Researching companies and/or organizations prior to submitting your resume or applying for an internship is an important component of the application process. Students can learn a lot about the business' culture, area of expertise, recent news, etc. It's also a good idea to thoroughly review the internship description. Knowing this information in advance can help you personalize your resume and cover letter, which will increase your chances of landing an interview.
6. **APPLY FOR THE INTERNSHIPS**

Students should pay close attention to application instructions and follow the directions provided. Employers often use this as a technique to identify qualified candidates in the screening process. Not completing applications correctly and/or not following employer directions might cause a recruiter to question a candidate’s ability to follow instructions.

7. **PREPARE FOR THE INTERVIEW**

The interview is often the first time students are introduced to the recruiter or hiring manager for the company or organization of interest. Practicing for the interview will help prepare you for questions that might arise and increase your confidence during the interview. Students should participate in mock interviews if offered by the Career Center and/or seek the counsel of a trusted professional mentor.

Since first impressions are critical in the interviewing process, it is important that students dress in standard business attire. For men and women, suits are the appropriate attire and special attention should be given to respect the traditional dress standard. Students should keep in mind that it is better to be over dressed than under dressed. For help with interview attire, students are encouraged to visit the Career Center.

8. **EVALUATE THE OFFERS**

Evaluating internship offers are necessary, regardless of how many you receive. Some key questions to consider are as follows:

- What projects will you be working on and how do they align with your selected major?
- Are you able to manage the hours anticipated and your class load simultaneously?
- What is the salary for the position? If unpaid, is the experience you will gain worth it?
- Is the employer offering a for-credit internship and, if so, is there enough time to find a sponsoring faculty member?
- How does your total compensation package, including benefits and extras, compare to the other offers you received, if applicable?
- What is the culture of the company or organization and is it a good fit for your personality?
- What is the size of the company or organization and is there a potential for future employment?
- How long has the company or organization been operating?
- How has the current state of the economy impacted the company or organization?

9. **ACCEPT THE POSITION**

When you formally accept an internship offer, keep your commitment and discontinue your job search. If you have received other offers, make sure you notify the other employers that you have accepted another internship. You should attempt to contact them via phone first. Do not leave a voice mail declining your offer. If the contact is unable to be reached, follow up with a voicemail requesting a return call or send them a declination letter via email or regular mail. It is important to maintain your professionalism throughout the entire process. This leaves the recruiter/hiring manager with a positive final impression, as well as keeps you in the running for future internship or full-time positions.

After you accept a position, log into Recruit-A-Bull and click on the link along the right side titled “Report a Hire”. Just providing the Career Center with the company name and your internship title is helpful in tracking the internships of USFSP students.

**For-Credit Internships Only**

If accepting a for-credit internship offer, it is the student’s responsibility to obtain a faculty sponsor and complete all necessary paperwork. Ultimately, a for-credit internship must be approved by the university and often requires the completion of mid-term and/or end-of-term evaluations. Typically, it is also expected that employers provide student feedback, an organized program of work, and an atmosphere that teaches the student about the employer’s practices, policies, and procedures. Please note that individual academic departments determine what is required of all for-credit internships.
COMPLETING AN INTERNSHIP

PREPARING FOR THE INTERNSHIP

In preparing for the Internship it can be helpful to make a list of things you want to learn and ways you to learn these things. Use the Learning Plan in Appendix A to begin your planning. This form can be helpful in planning your learning objectives for the internship experience. Take it with you to your meeting with your supervisor.

Employers are expected to provide work experiences for interns that are both challenging and educational. You should receive an offer letter and position description that ensures all parties involved have a clear understanding of your expectations. Many offer letters and position descriptions vary, depending on the employers. This following list provides general information of what each should contain but is not all inclusive or definitive:

OFFER LETTER
- Position title/corresponding department
- Salary/benefits, if applicable
- Beginning/end date
- Number of hours expected
- First day instructions/next steps
- Contact information

POSITION DESCRIPTION
- Position title
- Description of the company or organization and work environment
- Clear description of the position, general responsibilities, and learning objectives
- Necessary knowledge, skills, and abilities needed to be successful in the position
- Minimum education and experience requirements

BE THE INTERN

Employers should provide an adequate orientation during your first few days. Generally speaking, they might include:
- Team introductions
- Learning objectives, initial job assignments and training plans
- Performance expectations and standards
- Supervision plan and/or mentor introductions
- Position schedule and hours
- Payroll information and time cards (if applicable)
- Review of policies and procedures

Internships are often viewed by employers as a lengthy interview to assess the student’s candidacy for full-time employment. At minimum, internships are an opportunity to obtain professional references and viable contacts for future employment. It is for this reason that students are expected to behave professionally throughout the duration of the internship.

TIPS FOR COMPLETING A SUCCESSFUL INTERNSHIP
- Follow the rules at all times – respect the dress code, be punctual to work and company or organization events, etc. Do so even if others do not.
- Avoid things like texting during meetings, overindulging in alcohol at company or organization events (if applicable), violating personal conduct standards, gossip, long chats with other interns or employees, making personal calls on your cell phone, etc.
- Take notes, keep a journal and ask questions.
- Be positive and prepared to work daily.
● Develop healthy outlets for stress (i.e., exercise, good eating and sleeping habits, positive friendships, etc.).
● Keep a record of your successes and accomplishments.
● Keep the lines of communication open with your supervisor/mentor. Share your satisfaction with assigned projects as well as your concerns if the demands are proving too much to handle.

Though the university and Career Center reviews companies and organizations to ensure that internships are legal and appropriate, we cannot guarantee that all employers will adhere to labor laws or university policy. We strongly encourage you to visit the Career Center, a sponsoring faculty member, or your department head if you have any concerns regarding your treatment and/or responsibilities. Below is a list of tips that can help you determine if your internship is legitimate.

● Some administrative responsibilities can be expected; however, you should not serve as a personal assistant, filing clerk or receptionist.
● Supervision should be provided by a professional with expertise or appropriate credentials. Examples include:
  ▪ A graphic design intern should be supervised by a graphic designer.
  ▪ An information systems intern should be supervised by an experience IS professional.
  ▪ A journalism major should be supervised by a journalist, editor or writer.
● Clearly defined goals and/or assigned projects should be given and should relate to your major.
● The internship should benefit you more than it does the employer.

**CONCLUDE THE INTERNSHIP**

There are various ways to conclude an internship. Some ideas for the final days are as follows:

● Thank your immediate supervisor/mentor. You may also thank others you developed a relationship with during your internship. Ways to thank them include:
  ▪ Write a thank you card that includes a personal note.
  ▪ Write a letter/email to the department manager regarding your experience with your supervisor or mentor.
  ▪ Bring in a snack for your team and/or a small professional gift for your supervisor/mentor.
  ▪ Take your supervisor/mentor out to lunch.
● Discuss possible future employment offers.
● Ask for personal references and/or contact information of employees you connected with.

In the event that you are dissatisfied with your internship experience, consider the following:

● You may still need a reference letter. Be careful not to burn bridges or engage in gossip. Be professional, even if you are disappointed. You should share the experience with the Career Center or university personnel.
● Focus on the positives. What did you learn during the internship that is relevant to your major or that you can use later in your professional career?
● If you are feeling uncomfortable or uncertain about how to handle a particular situation, reach out to the Career Center, faculty member or other trusted professional.
# APPENDIX A:
## Internship Learning Plan

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## Internship Duties & Expectations:

## Learning Goals:

## Learning Goal Action Plan:

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## Signatures:

| Student: | |
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| Supervisor: | |
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APPENDIX B: RESOURCES

The following resources provide information regarding internships and internship opportunities.

Internships.com
Website: http://www.internships.com
About: Internships.com serves as the leading nexus between internships and students, higher education and employees.

Youtern.com
Website: http://www.youtern.com
About: YouTern enables young talent to become highly employable by connecting them to high-impact internships and mentors – and through contemporary career advice found on our blog, The Savvy Intern.

InternQueen.com
Website: http://www.InternQueen.com
About: Lauren Berger started internqueen.com in 2009 and it includes a blog with interning tips and an internship posting board.

OneDayOneIntership.com
Website: http://www.OneDayOneIntership.com
About: Every day we’ll introduce you to an awesome new company or non-profit. We’ll tell you what they do, who they are, why they’re interesting, and what kind of entry level jobs and internships they offer.

Indeed.com
Website: http://www.indeed.com
About: Indeed is the #1 job site worldwide.

The Washington Center
Website: http://www.twc.edu
About: The Washington Center for Internships and Academic Seminars is an independent, nonprofit organization serving hundreds of colleges and universities in the United States and other countries by providing selected students challenging opportunities to work and learn in Washington, DC for academic credit.
Address: The Washington Center
1331 16th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20036-2205
Phone: (202) 238-7900