INTERNSHIPS: OPPORTUNITIES FOR EXPLORATION AND EXPERIENCE

An Internship is a form of experiential education – learning by doing. An internship can also be described as a short-term opportunity in which students receive training and gain experience in a specific field or career area. An internship can be paid or unpaid, be for credit or not for credit and can vary in the hours or duration.

Experience prior to graduation helps Binghamton students to:

- Develop skills
- Explore careers
- Network
- Enhance a resume
- Test interests
- Enhance marketability

Getting Experience as a Student is VITAL!

Employers want to hire students who:

- Have had an internship
- Have a strong academic record
- Are involved in extracurricular activities
- Acquire computer skills
- Have oral and written communications skills

What are your Internship Goals?

Students may consider a variety of learning goals for their internship:

- Academic learning – apply knowledge learned in the classroom;
- Career development – learn about qualifications and duties and explore interest in a career field;
- Skill development – gain awareness of and develop skills and competencies required in the workplace;
- Personal development – increase confidence and self-esteem. (from the National Society of Experiential Education)

Before starting a search, you must have a good idea of your career interests and goals. **Looking for an internship needs to begin here!**

1. **Think about what kind of experience you want. Ask yourself:**
   - Do I want to test a career field?
   - What kind of skills do I want to acquire?
   - What kind of experience would interest me?
   - What kind of experience will strengthen my candidacy?
   - What kind of organization/environment would I like to explore?

2. **Background research:**
   - Use the resources in the Career Development Center to research fields of interest. To identify resources go the CDC’s website at [http://cdc.binghamton.edu](http://cdc.binghamton.edu), choose Career Library Resources. Do a keyword search on your career field of interest.
   - Explore career possibilities through informational interviews. See the CDC handout on [Networking and Informational Interviewing](http://cdc.binghamton.edu) (64.5 kb pdf).

3. **Think about your needs and wants:**
   - Can I afford to do an unpaid internship? Combining an unpaid internship with a summer job may be an option for getting experience and earning money. If you are initiating your own unpaid internship, it would be helpful for your sponsoring organization to be aware of the Fair Labor Standards Act.
   - Do I have geographic limitations?
   - Do I need to take an internship for credit? Some employers require students to receive credit. You will need to plan and allow time to put the pieces together. You must make arrangements with the CDC Internship Program (CDCI) or with a faculty member in your academic department in advance of doing an internship to identify options for receiving credit.
4. Think about what you have to offer a prospective employer. What personal traits, skills, and experience do you hope to “market”? Examples include:

- learn quickly
- get along well with others/team player
- write well
- public speaking
- speak/read another language
- web design/software expertise
- critical and analytical skills developed while writing research papers

Have confidence in yourself and your accomplishments. If you communicate that you can do a job well and show interest, your potential internship site will have more incentive to give you the opportunity to do so.

Where to Look for an Internship

1) Career Development Center

a) Career Development Center Internship (CDCI) Program

The Career Development Center Internship (CDCI) Program is the largest credit-bearing internship program at Binghamton University. The CDCI Program partners with local, regional, national and international agencies to provide Binghamton undergraduates with endless opportunities in experiential education. Students who wish to intern at a site unfamiliar to Binghamton University must have the prospective site supervisor complete and submit a detailed agency description form for review and approval. Students are required to attend an information session the semester prior to interning. Dates are provided on the CDC calendar. Suggested timelines for the application process are posted on the CDC website.

**CDC Internship Program options:**

- **Fall /Spring - 4 credits**
  Students complete 120 hours in one semester (about 10 hours a week) plus their weekly one hour seminar class. Journaling, assignments, career planning, networking, resumes, presentations and final research papers are examples of how students will earn their upper level academic credit in the seminar class. Agency site supervisors are responsible for completing a midterm and final evaluation and reviewing them with their interns. Seminar leaders have final say in final grades.

- **Full time Internship 8 credits - 12 credits**
  Students are off-campus and intern full-time at an approved agency. Students will participate in an online academic component in order to maintain their credit worthy internship.

- **Summer and Winter Internship Programs - 2 or 4 credits**
  Summer and Winter Session students can intern just about anywhere in the world at an approved agency. Students will participate in an online academic component in order to maintain their credit-worthy internship.

b) CDC’s website: [http://cdc.binghamton.edu](http://cdc.binghamton.edu). Read the general information and tips and check out the links and on-line resources available in the Internship section of the Undergraduate and Graduate students sections.

c) eRecruiting – all matriculated (undergraduate and graduate) students have unrestricted access to the site which lists hundreds of internship and job postings. Access eRecruiting from the CDC website.

d) Career Library Resources in the CDC. Search the library database for titles. Do a keyword search “internships”. Get more specific with an advanced searches

2) Networking. Many jobs and internships (as many as 60% by some counts!) are found through networking so it is important to utilize this technique in your internship search. Begin by making a list of the people you know – friends, family, professors, supervisors, etc. Do any of them work in your field of interest? If so, contact them. If not, ask if they know anyone who does. Use the Alumni Association Professional Network, on LinkedIn to tap an expansive group of Binghamton alumni for networking. If you’re looking to learn about career fields, expand your professional network, and or improve your internship search strategy, we encourage you to join the LinkedIn subgroup specifically for student-to-alumni professional networking. More about networking follows in the next section.
3) **Academic Departments**
   Many departments at Binghamton will give credit for internships. Speak with a faculty member and check bulletin boards and homepages of departments for other opportunities.

4) **Internet**
   Surf the web for internship information. Simply typing "internship opportunities" into a search engine can provide a number of leads. Also, visit the websites of organizations in which you have an interest as many provide information on internships as well as job listings. If an organization does not have an ‘internship program’ you can still ask them about doing an internship.

5) **Other Ideas**
   Visit career centers at colleges and universities near the location where you wish to intern and look at postings or check their website, contact and attend meetings of professional associations to network to make contacts, review job postings that sound interesting and contact the employer about an internship, etc. Call or send your resume and cover letter to organizations of interest and set up an informational interview. **It’s possible to create your own internship opportunity just by asking.**

**Networking**

Once you have identified people to contact, network through the following steps:

1. **Think about how you will introduce yourself.**
   Will you make initial contact through phone or email? If you plan to call, practice introducing yourself aloud over the telephone. Speak slowly and clearly, say who you are and why you are calling. Do not ask for an internship. Instead, you ask for advice and guidance. If you are emailing, practice writing out a professional email letter (this means using capitalization and punctuation!).

2. **Develop a list of career related questions to ask to learn more about the field and potential internship opportunities.** Examples:
   - What classes or experiences helped prepare you for your current position?
   - Did you do an internship? Where? Was it a helpful career-related experience?
   - What was the most valuable experience that prepared you for your current work?
   - I am interested in doing _________; can you think of steps that could help me achieve this goal?
   - How did you get into this kind of work?
   - I would like to do an internship in your field; do you have any suggestions for me on how to proceed?
   - As you look back on your experiences, is there anything you wish you’d known or would do differently?

3. **Gathering other contacts**
   Ask the people you know for names of other people with whom you could speak about this career path or about doing an internship in this field. Follow-up on these contacts. Networking is a skill that you will use throughout your career.

4. **When you make contact by phone, email or in person:**
   - Be an active listener
   - Ask follow-up questions if you need more information
   - Take notes for future reference
   - Consider asking for additional contacts
   - Remember to say thank you
   - Follow-up with a resume and a thank you letter

5. **Keep your contact(s) updated on your progress.** For more information refer to CDC’s [Networking and Informational Interviewing](http://cdc.binghamton.edu) (64.5 kb pdf) Quick Reference Guide.

**Develop Tools for Your Internship Search**

To conduct a successful internship search, you will also need to develop a resume, cover letter, and learn how to interview effectively. Information and programs on these topics and more are available at the Career Development Center. CDC also offers services for resume and cover letter review. Check our calendar for times: [http://cdc.binghamton.edu](http://cdc.binghamton.edu).
Translating Your Experience

In order to impress a future employer you will need to articulate what you learned and the skills you developed during your internship. Use the following tips to make the most of your experience:

- **Keep a record of what you did and observed during your internship.** Consider keeping a journal.
  - What skills did you develop?
  - What projects did you accomplish?
  - What impressed you?

- **Update your resume** with these new experiences
- **Send a thank you letter** to your internship supervisor when the internship is complete
- **Maintain contact with the people and organization**
  - There may be future job opportunities
  - Perhaps they could write a reference letter for you

What Binghamton Students Say About Their Internship

- "Once you do get an internship, definitely take initiative. Your experience is what you make of it. It has given me access to very good contacts and has better acquainted me with what I will eventually be doing on an every day basis."

- "I have been able to 'try out' a future career possibility without having to jump into the career with both feet. I have been able to observe not only the positive parts, but the negative as well. Without this internship, I would be less aware of what really happens behind the scenes."

- "The internship really comes down to what you make of it. My site had the strongest representatives and management that I've ever had the privilege of meeting and were by far the most goal oriented and motivated people. I believe that working for a company that allows you to network and learn so many crucial important work ethic attributes will be a major benefit to me going forward in my professional career."

- "Since starting at this internship over a year ago, I've seen the launch of a company from every side of the operation. I've learned things I never would have in my classes, I've met incredible people who support and depend on me, I think everyone should start early - no matter what year you are in school, don't let anyone tell you you're too young. There are too many opportunities out there."

- "I took a position in a car company; unpaid and in an industry I've never even considered working in. I had great supervisors who let me sample many parts of the business and allowed me to further explore my interests based on those experiences. Once I proved myself and did well with the tasks assigned, I felt comfortable enough to suggest projects and tasks that I felt I was ready for/ that would interest me. With their flexibility and my enthusiasm, the internship was a great experience, and in the end I have professional contacts in a great corporation with even more connections than I can imagine who are all willing to help me in the future.

- "The best thing I've gained from this internship was networking with great people, learning so much about the corporate world that you can only understand through experience, testing my abilities/ interests and exploring things I know little about. We all have an idea of what we'd like to pursue as a career after school, but that's a very narrow minded approach; we can't possible know all that's out there for us to choose from. By taking a position like this, I went completely out of my comfort zone and found different things about the corporate world that I liked and disliked and now better understand what a job in that field would entail and how well I think I would fare if I choose to work there. At the very least, it broadened my horizons and helped to affirm my career path."

Transform Yourself Through EXPERIENCE!

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