

Internships



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Access this handout online!

Internships are a form of experiential learning where you learn about a career that interests you through direct experience in that field. Internships are similar to a summer or part-time job, but are more focused on the learning that takes place as a result of the work you're doing. Participating in an internship can help develop your knowledge, skills, and connections, and can make you a more desirable candidate when you apply for jobs or graduate programs. Not sure about your career direction? An internship could help to inform your next steps.

BEFORE SEARCHING FOR AN INTERNSHIP, CLARIFY YOUR GOALS

Be clear about what you hope to gain from your internship. There are many possibilities:

- Increase your knowledge and develop specific skills in your field of interest
- Take a break from academic study to learn by practical application, in a new setting
- Have an experience that becomes a significant part of your Division II or Division III
- Try working in a field that you might pursue in the future
- Earn money and/or gain experience

Talk with your advisors or committee members about your ideas and discuss how an internship might fit in with your studies or meet some of your Divisional requirements.

RESEARCH AND IDENTIFY POTENTIAL PLACES TO DO AN INTERNSHIP

There are two initial ways to find an internship:

1. **Find an already established internship program.**
2. **Propose and create your own internship.**

WHERE TO FIND INTERNSHIP LEADS

Research Online

- The SPARC website has a great list of “staff picks” job and internship databases that are focused on various interest areas.

Personal Connections

- Word of mouth is an efficient and powerful way to find opportunities that would be difficult or impossible to find online. Talk to faculty, staff, students, alumni, family, friends, and anyone else you can think of. Let everyone know what you are looking for. You might be surprised at the connections you make.

The Hampshire Community

- Use **LinkedIn** and the **Hampshire Alumni Network** (hampshirenetwork.com) to research alumni in your field. Check out the SPARC **Networking** guide for more advice on how to use these tools effectively.

APPLYING FOR ESTABLISHED INTERNSHIP PROGRAMS

Similar to applying for jobs, internships will ask for certain application materials. The most common materials requested are a **resume** and a **cover letter**. Check out the SPARC how-to guides for instructions on how to create those materials. It is very helpful to prepare your resume in advance so you are ready to apply when you find an exciting position. Because a cover letter is tailored specifically for each position, you can't write your cover letter in advance. However, if you are applying for many similar positions, you can write a draft that you can adjust as needed for each position. It is highly recommended that you get feedback from a SPARC counselor, professor, or writing tutor before submitting your application. Start this process early! In addition to a resume and cover letter, you may also be asked for some or all of the following materials:

- Online application that may include essays
- Transcript
- Writing sample
- Film reel, online portfolio, or samples of your work (for creative positions)
- Recommendations—either written letters or contact information only

Some established internship programs are very easy to apply for, and others are very involved. Because of this, you should start your internship research process early and apply well ahead of the deadline. **For summer internships**, deadlines are typically in **February and March** but of course there are always exceptions!

Similar to when applying for jobs, you should expect to be **interviewed** before you are hired. Not everyone who applies will get an interview, and not everyone who is interviewed will be hired, so don't assume you have the position until you get a formal offer. Make sure you prepare for your interview by learning everything you can about the organization and the position, and reviewing your experiences and skills you want to highlight. Check out SPARC's **Interviewing** guide for more details on how to prepare.

PROPOSING AND CREATING YOUR OWN INTERNSHIP

If you find a company, organization, or individual you would like to work with that doesn't offer a formal internship, you can get in touch with them to propose one. It is not guaranteed that they will work with you or even respond to your inquiry, however you have nothing to lose by trying. Many Hampshire students have had great success with this! This approach is especially effective if you have a contact person with whom you share a connection, for example a Hampshire alum, family friend, or a recommendation from a professor. However, if you don't have a personal connection you can still successfully propose an internship by being proactive and having a clear idea of what you can offer and what you hope to learn.

How to propose an internship:

Step 1 – Research the Organization

Learn all you can about the organization or individual, including their current projects and how they are organized. It helps to have an idea of how you would like to be involved before making contact, while remaining open to other possibilities.

Step 2 – Make initial contact

Obtain the **name, title, phone number** and/or **email** of the person most likely to supervise an intern. For example: a volunteer coordinator, a director or department manager, or the president of a small company. Search for this information on the organization's web page, or call/email and ask. **Call or email to** briefly introduce yourself, state why you are interested in the organization, and ask if the contact person would be willing to talk to you about the possibility of an internship. Give some times when you would be available to meet.

Step 3 – Discuss the possibility of an internship

When you meet with a potential internship contact, explain more about why you are interested in working with the organization, what type of work you'd like to do, and what you are hoping to learn. You can make suggestions, and also ask for ideas. You should also discuss logistics such as when you are available and how many hours you are hoping to work. At the end of this conversation you should have answers to these questions:

- Is an internship possible or likely?
- What kind of work would you do?
- What follow-up steps are needed?

Step 4 – Follow up

Once you have had an initial conversation, there will likely be some follow up that needs to happen. Your contact might need to consult with their colleagues to see if they can take you on as an intern. You might be asked to send a resume or other materials. **It's very important to be prompt** with your follow-up, since this shows your seriousness. If your contact doesn't get back to you, follow up with them periodically. Keep following up until you know:

- Is the organization offering you an internship?
- Who is your contact person?
- What type of work are they offering you?
- Who would train and supervise you?
- How many hours per week would you work?
- When would you start, and how long would your internship last?

EVALUATING OFFERS

If you have one or more internship offers, congratulations! Now it's time to **think critically, ask questions, and evaluate your offers** before accepting an internship. Putting in the time to make sure your internship is a good match will save you many headaches in the end. Here are some things to consider:

- Is this the type of work you want to be doing?
- Are there opportunities to learn and grow?

- Are there opportunities to make career-related connections?
- Will you receive training and supervision?
- Is the work environment a good fit for your work style and personality?
- Are you being offered enough hours? Too many?
- Do you have consistent and helpful communication with your internship contact?
- Will you realistically be able to do this internship without too much stress or strain, given other factors in your life?

No internship will be 100% perfect, and you will have to weigh the different factors and decide what will work for you. It's great to stretch your comfort zone as long as you are learning and growing in positive ways. If you're not sure about an offer, talk to someone! The staff at SPARC are always willing to help with this type of decision.

MAKING AN INTERNSHIP AFFORDABLE

As part of your internship planning, it's wise to think about the practical side of things. Where will you live? How will you support yourself? Here are some tips for making an internship affordable:

- If possible, find an internship close to home or where you have housing with a friend or relative.
- Seek out paid internships.
- Check out options for internship grant funding, which you can find on the SPARC website.
- Do a remote internship.
- Do an internship near Hampshire during the semester. Some internships can be paid through work study, or can be used as an independent study.
- Do an internship as part of a study abroad program, which is included in your tuition.

SET GOALS FOR YOUR INTERNSHIP

Once you have accepted an internship offer, it's very helpful to reflect on the goals you had in mind when seeking an internship, and articulate those goals with your specific internship in mind. Here are some questions you might ask yourself, and discuss with your internship supervisor:

- What are three specific skills you could develop in this internship? (for example: software such as Adobe Premiere or Microsoft Excel, professional use of social media, specific lab techniques, script coverage, etc.)
- What are 2-3 areas you would like to gain experience in? (for example: event planning, marketing, editing, photography, research, teaching, lab work, etc.)
- List 2-3 people at the organization you will connect with to have a conversation about your career interests.