

# ALL ABOUT INTERNSHIPS

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## Why Do an Internship?

- **Learn firsthand about a career field.**

"I walked into the job knowing almost nothing about the TV business—just that I wanted to be in it. I walked out knowing script formats, lighting techniques, how filming is done, the value of editors, and even the role of office politics." Smith intern, Cold Squad IV Productions, Inc., Vancouver

- **Expand your view of the world.**

"My internship could not have been more eye-opening or incredible. Operation Crossroads really wants volunteers to experience what it is like to live in a rural African village and confront cultural, social, and economic differences." Smith intern, Operation Crossroads Africa, Ghana

- **Gain contacts and recommendations.**

"Should Sarah ever wish my help in obtaining a full-time job in publishing, I would be more than happy to assist her in any way possible." Editorial Director, W.W. Norton & Company, NYC

- **Receive job offers.**

"I would happily welcome her back as a full-time member of our staff." Membership Coordinator, Conservation Law Foundation, Boston

- **Develop the skills employers seek.**

According to a recent survey of the National Association of Colleges and Employers, the top five skills most sought in college grads are: communication skills; professional etiquette; work ethic; interpersonal skills; and teamwork. An internship is a great opportunity to cultivate these traits.

## Before Your Search

√ **Assess.** What fields and issues interest you? What skills would you like to use or develop? Where would you like to live? Where have you dreamed about working? CDO advisors and faculty members can help you set internship goals.

√ **Research housing options in your target location.** Can you stay with family or friends? Have you explored college or temporary housing? Check the resources and links on our online housing board.

√ **Consider your finances.** You might intern part-time and also find a part-time paid job.

√ **Clean up your Facebook profile, online photos, and information on similar sites.** Google yourself and see what you find. Employers do this, and may make hiring decisions based on what they see.

## CDO Resources for Your Internship Search

- *The CDO website* has many internship links in the Internship Center and field-specific links in Career Field Research. Use *CareerSearch* on that page to find organizations in your target field and location. If you find any that interest you, check their websites for posted internships. If you don't see internships mentioned, email or phone to propose the possibility for J-term, the semester, or summer.
- *E-Access* lists internships received by the CDO. Search by career field, keyword, and location.
- *The CDO resource library* has internship directories and reports written by Smith Praxis interns over past summers. Each notes where the student worked, what the experience was like, and the contact person. Use these reports for leads and ideas even if you're not using Praxis funding.
- *The Praxis program.* If you're an Ada with at least 64 credits, a rising junior, or a rising senior and haven't already had Praxis funding, you're eligible for a \$2,000 stipend to help you finance a qualified unpaid or low-paying summer internship. See the Praxis section of our website for details.

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## Additional Resources

- **Search online.** Find out what organizations are making news and why. Check the websites of those that interest you, and follow them on Facebook or Twitter. Use LexisNexis to research industry trends and target interesting organizations to contact.
- **Professional association websites** often post internships (ex: American Society of Magazine Editors). Search for associations online or in *CareerSearch*.
- **Network with Smith alums and others in your field.** Ask them about their career paths and get their advice on your internship search. Use LinkedIn to make professional connections. Always send a thank you note or email after speaking with anyone who aids your search. Consult *Informational Interviewing and the Art of Networking* for networking guidelines.
- **Friends, former supervisors, and faculty,** may be helpful in your search. Ask for their ideas.

## Applying for Internships

- ✓ **Start early.** Some internship programs have early application deadlines—even in the fall. A suggested timetable to adapt to your needs is on page 9.
- ✓ **Use a variety of resources and approaches, and don't rely on just a few applications.** Browse internship databases and directories, especially field-specific sources. Search the websites of any organizations that interest you. Develop your network. Try a Google search (ex: “arts internships Boston”). Keep at it!
- ✓ **You can propose an internship** by directly contacting organizations that match your interests and geographic target, even if no internships are posted. A sample proposal letter is on page 8.
- ✓ **Many internship applications require a resume and cover letter.** Others may use an online application system or require an essay, transcripts, and references. For help with your resume and cover letters, consult *Resumes and Cover Letters* and bring your drafts to drop-in hours.
- ✓ **Organizations often require a phone or in-person interview.** Consult *Interviews* and feel free to arrange a practice interview with a CDO advisor.
- ✓ **Send your application or inquiry to the person for whom you'd want to work.** If you can't get a name by phoning or emailing, use “Dear Director,” “Dear Internship Coordinator,” “Dear Research Director,” and so forth. Once applying, follow up by email or phone (unless calls are discouraged).
- ✓ **If phoning, rehearse what you're going to say beforehand.** Introduce yourself and summarize your interest in the organization. Say you're interested in an internship and mention the Praxis program, if applicable. You can also apply by email or postal mail.
- ✓ **If your qualifications don't exactly match an internship's requirements,** you may be able to persuade the organization to consider you anyway. Emphasize what you offer, not what you lack.

## Some Key Components of a Successful Internship

- Work that feels meaningful, useful, and challenging.
- Supervisor/staff who make you feel a part of the work team, are accessible, and willing to guide you and answer your questions.
- Opportunities to learn about the field, through your day-to-day activities, informal conversations with staff, participation in meetings, site visits, or staff trainings.

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## Evaluating an Internship Offer

√ **You won't know for sure the pros and cons of an internship until you're actually on the job.**

By asking some of the following questions you may learn a lot about the position:

- What are some of the projects or assignments I would be involved in, and what would my role be?
- How are interns supervised? Do interns meet with supervisors regularly? How do interns get feedback on their work?
- How would you describe the work culture?
- What are the most important qualities you look for in an intern?
- Are interns included in staff meetings, seminars, or training sessions?
- How do you see the breakdown between time spent on clerical work and career-related projects? (All employees do their share of routine work. Show that you're eager to pitch in but be sure you'll have career-related work as well.)

√ **Reflect on the responses.** Do they make you enthusiastic? Uncertain? If you're offered the internship and aren't sure whether you want to accept it, speak with your potential supervisor for further details. You're also welcome to discuss your choices with a CDO advisor.

## Succeeding at Your Internship

The following will help smooth your school-to-work transition. Contact the CDO if you have questions.

### Before the Internship

√ **Contact your supervisor to confirm your starting date and hours.** Get directions, and if you have a car, find out where to park. Ask about the dress code, and if you'll need an ID for security.

√ **Observe your new environment.** How do people address each other? What are the interactions between co-workers, supervisors, and employees? What's your supervisor's management style? The more you observe and understand, the more you'll learn what is expected and how to conduct yourself to feel comfortable and be productive.

√ **Go over details.** Speak to your supervisor in the first day or so to confirm your hours, lunch break, and length of your internship. If you haven't already, discuss any prior commitments for which you'll need time off. Keep such requests to a minimum.

√ **Clarify expectations.** Find out what projects you will work on and what results are expected. Discuss what you hope to learn, and ask if your goals are realistic. Ask how interns are evaluated, as regular, substantive feedback is essential to your learning process. Routine tasks (copying, faxing, getting coffee) are often part of an intern's duties. Give your best effort to everything you're asked to do, and you'll be more likely to secure a strong reference and be given more responsibility.

√ **Create a learning contract.** A written learning contract will help clarify what is expected and give you the chance to tell your supervisor what you hope to learn. A sample is on page 7.

### During Your Internship

√ **Pitch in where needed and perform all assignments with care.** You can learn a lot by being part of the environment, even if you're not working on a major project. Work efficiently and you'll have more time to volunteer for new projects.

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√ **Arrive on time and resist the temptation to leave early**, even if others do so. Developing a sense of professional etiquette is an important part of your internship experience.

√ **Don't conduct personal business at your internship.** This includes phone conversations, emailing, texting, or making after-work plans. You may observe permanent staff doing so, but it's not wise behavior for interns. If something urgent arises, let your supervisor know as soon as you can.

√ **Communication, planning, and consideration** are critical to maintaining good working relationships. Show that you're trying to minimize any inconvenience to the organization.

√ **Be friendly, but keep conversations professional**, especially at first when you're getting to know people. Avoid office gossip and never talk negatively about others. When meeting people, maintain eye contact and make sure your handshake is firm. If you're sitting, stand up. Good manners matter!

√ **Try to meet people at all levels of your organization and learn about their experience.** They may offer advice and ideas informally, or you may arrange more formal informational interviews. Ask for the business cards of those you meet and follow any advice or leads they offer. Write a thank you note after an informational meeting and stay in touch, perhaps by sending a link to an interesting article, news of an upcoming conference, and the like.

### **When Your Internship Isn't Working Out...**

**Even with the best of planning, problems can arise**—conflicts with co-workers or supervisors, lack of supervision, or incessant administrative tasks instead substantial project work. If you're faced with such challenges, consider the following:

- Think about your learning goals. Is the difficulty you're facing making it impossible for you to progress towards those goals? If not, it may be something you can ignore.
- Discuss your situation with a CDO advisor to pinpoint where the problem lies and brainstorm ways to improve the situation, including ways you can be flexible.
- If there are serious problems, speak with your supervisor. Avoid accusations. Ask your supervisor for her or his perception of the situation and try to achieve consensus. It's essential to behave as professionally as possible when resolving a problem of this nature. If you're uncertain about discussing an issue or unable to reach a solution, the CDO can help guide you to your next step.

### **Concluding Your Internship**

√ **Complete all your responsibilities and tie up any loose ends.** Leave your workspace in order.

√ **Ask your supervisor or someone who knows your work well for a letter of reference.** Make this request while still on-site and your performance is fresh in mind.

√ **If you're a junior interested in working for the organization after graduation**, bring up the subject of employment before you leave. Assert your interest and qualifications and inquire about the next step to be considered for a full-time job.

√ **After you leave, send a thank you letter to your supervisor** and to any other employees who served as mentors. Convey your appreciation for the experience and any references written on your behalf. Stay in touch with the people you met. An occasional email, phone call, or visit during school breaks will enable you to nurture your relationships with these members of your professional network.

√ **Complete the CDO's online Summer Activity Report form.**

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## Reflect on What You Learned About...

- **Your preferred work setting.** What made your internship setting comfortable? Uncomfortable? What would you change if you could?
- **Your preferred relationship to colleagues and clients.** Do you like to go to colleagues or have them come to you? Would you rather be on a team or working independently? Would you prefer to seek out clients or have them come to you?
- **Your preferred work pace.** Did you feel stressed? Bored? Are you comfortable with frequent deadlines, or would you prefer a setting that allows for project work over time?
- **Your preferred balance of tasks.** Was it more fun to have a mix of tasks every day? Did you look forward to the days you were working on the same task?
- **Your preferred way of being supervised.** Do you prefer close supervision or more independence? Do you prefer to meet formally with your supervisor or catch her or him “on the run”?
- **Yourself.** Did this experience make you aware of talents you didn't know you had? Did you like what you saw of the field? Any particular part of it? None of it? Why?

**It's always helpful to talk over your experience with another person.** If you'd like to debrief and consider how your findings relate to your future, please feel free to meet with a CDO advisor.

Have a great internship!

## Sample Internship Learning Contract

**Name:** Angela Smith

**Address, phone, email while interning:**

The Museum of Contemporary Art, Office of Development  
27 Rufus Avenue, Rollindale, MA 01094  
Email: Asmith@smith.edu Telephone: (617) 783-9624

**Supervisor's Name and Title:** Miriam Sanson, Director of Foundation Gifts

**Internship Description:**

*(Describe in as much detail as possible your role and responsibilities. List duties, hours, projects to be completed, deadlines, etc., if relevant.)*

I will be interning at the Office of Development at The Museum of Contemporary Art in Rollindale, MA. I will work with Miriam Sanson, Director of Foundation Gifts, helping her to develop proposals to send to large foundations with a history of giving to art museums. I will work from June 1—July 27, 2010, from 9 am to 5 pm, Mondays through Fridays.

**Supervision and Evaluation:**

*(Describe in as much detail as you can the supervision to be provided. Include what kind of instruction, assistance, consultation, etc., you will receive, and from whom you expect to get it. Note when and how you will be evaluated and who will do it.)*

I will meet with Ms. Sanson once a week for the first three weeks, and then once every two weeks for the remainder of the internship. Ms. Sanson will also arrange for me to meet one-on-one with other members of the department so I can learn about the various roles and responsibilities within a development office. At the end of the internship, Ms. Sanson has agreed to write a letter of evaluation for me, if my performance is satisfactory.

**Learning Objectives:**

*(List what you intend to learn through this experience. Include the specific internship goals you established. Include projects, research, report writing, seminars, interviews, etc., that you'll do while working, relating them to what you intend to learn and what you've learned in the classroom.)*

- 1) Compile lists of grant requirements for a variety of foundation sources.
- 2) Attend departmental meetings.
- 3) Conduct informational meetings with professionals of each department to discuss their work.
- 4) Assist foundation officers in writing proposals to foundations to fund the Women Artists in the 21<sup>st</sup> century exhibit slated to be compiled and shown at the museum in June of 2010.
- 5) Complete one foundation proposal from start to finish, with advice and input from professionals within the department.

**Agreement:** This contract may be terminated or amended by intern or internship supervisor at any time upon written notice, which is received and agreed to by the other party.

Student's Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Supervisor's Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Sample Internship Proposal Letter

Smith College, Box 1894  
Northampton, MA 01063  
413.585.2111  
mquinn@smith.edu

November 12, 2010

Evelyn Doe  
Volunteer Coordinator  
Easter Seals Disability Services  
167 Carew Street  
Springfield, MA 01875

Dear Ms. Doe:

I am a sophomore English major at Smith College interested in interning with Easter Seals Disability Services this January. Although there is no formal internship program posted on your website, I would welcome the opportunity to talk with you about the skills and experience I could offer Easter Seals as an intern.

I first became aware of Easter Seals' impact in Western Massachusetts last summer when I was a counselor at Easter Seals' Camp Friendly's in Goshen. Several of our campers had never experienced being away from home, much less living in a cabin in the woods. While my day-to-day responsibilities were teaching and living with the campers— children ages 5-12 living with physical and cognitive disabilities—I soon realized that by helping the children set and meet weekly goals tailored to their unique abilities, they would gain self-esteem that would influence their lives well beyond their stay at camp. For example, one child I worked with felt more confident about moving from home-schooling to his local public school this year.

When I returned to Smith this fall, I knew I wanted to find a way to contribute my time and energy to the fundraising initiatives and behind-the-scenes operations that make a national non-profit organization function so meaningfully at the local level. In addition to my experience at Camp Friendly's, I offer research, writing, word processing, and communication skills gained as a work-study student assistant in the Smith College Office of International Study.

The attached resume will give you additional information about my background. I will call you next week to discuss the possibility of my interning with Easter Seals on a flexible basis this January, and I look forward to speaking with you.

Sincerely,

Madison Quinn

← **Note:** If postal mailing, skip four spaces and sign in dark ink.  
If emailing, double-space between closing and name.

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## Suggested Summer Internship Planning Timetable

The following is a **possible** timetable for making summer plans. Deadlines for highly competitive summer internships and fellowships may be in the fall. On the other hand, an internship you create yourself has no set deadline. Keep in mind that many organizations hire summer interns and employees closer to the summer, while others make decisions much earlier.

Go at your own pace and feel free to discuss your summer plans with a CDO advisor at any time.

### September – October

- It's not too early to start thinking about your goals for next summer. Do you want to gain experience to test out a career interest? Earn a certain amount of money? Live in a particular location? Work in a more relaxed setting than during the school year? Build your network? Some combination?
- Consider the skills you offer a potential employer and any issues or organizations that interest you.
- Become familiar with CDO resources: our website, E-Access database, handouts, Internship Center, and library resources such as Smith students' Summer Activity Reports.
- Get into the habit of reading our weekly e-news, "What's Happening @ the CDO." It lists some of the positions received that week, our workshops, and employer information sessions.
- No resume? No problem! Read our resume guide and bring a draft to a drop-in. Keep tweaking it.

### November – December

- Begin to narrow down what you want to do and where. Consult our online field-specific resources.
- A small number of internships/fellowships and summer job programs have deadlines during this period. Examples: some journalism/media internships, summer science fellowships, finance programs. The majority of positions have later deadlines.
- Networking is an important part of any search. Ask Smith faculty to suggest people and organizations. Consult our AlumNet binders for alums to contact. Re-connect with past supervisors. Develop contacts at organizations that interest you. Try to arrange informational interviews over a school break or during J-term. Connections developed over J-term may position you for the summer.
- The CDO offers programs over J-term having December deadlines. Read our e-news.

### J-Term

- Many students return to their previous summer jobs to earn money. In addition, you can...
- Try to create an internship. It can be one week to the entire month in length.
- Shadow someone for a day to get a feel for their work and work environment.
- Arrange informational interviews with alums and others. (Be sure to keep in touch with them.)
- Just starting to think about the summer? Haven't started your resume? We can help!

### February – March

- Many established internship programs have deadlines now. Get help from the CDO on your resume, cover letters, and (for some fields) application essays.
- The summer jobs and internships coming to the CDO increase now, as employers firm up their needs. Browse our e-news and E-Access regularly. Follow other ideas in this guide.
- Just starting your planning and networking? That's OK! Many do this over spring break.
- Apply for several positions, not just one or two. Use a variety of resources and techniques. Follow up!

### April – May

- Applying for Praxis? Remember, the deadline is the last day of the semester.
- Many organizations now know their needs for the summer. If you've made prior contact, you'll be in a better position to secure an opportunity. Keep at it and follow up on previous leads and contacts.
- As the semester ends, consider phoning organizations to propose an internship. Some students may even land internships and summer jobs once they get to their target location.