

The Importance of Internships

Internships are critical components of your educational experience and professional development. They allow you to test-drive a field before choosing a career direction, and to experience the inner workings of a specific career. They also provide experiences related to your major or career interests, and open doors for future employment opportunities, both within and outside the company where the internship was completed.

Internship Search Tips

Start early. Begin learning about opportunities within your career field during your first year of college.

Perfect your professional documents. Create an outstanding résumé. Learn how to write a strong cover letter. Gather a variety of references related to academics, work, student organizations, and leadership activities.

Network. Talk with professionals, recruiters, fellow students, professors, and family members. Contact students and alumni in your major to see where they interned in the past, or where they currently work.

Be proactive! Approach organizations directly; they may have internships that they are not advertising right now, or you may be able to develop your own opportunity.

Other factors to consider when looking for an internship:

- What do I want to do or learn or accomplish in an internship?
- How long is the program?
- Will I earn graduation credit for this internship or not?
- Geographically, where would I like to complete an internship?

Identify Opportunities

Consider your interests, strengths/weaknesses, and career goals to determine the type of internship experience you would most benefit from.

Tailor Your Presentation

Develop your résumé, prepare a cover letter, gather references, and perfect your pitch!

Review the Career Center handbook: [Resumes, References, & Cover Letters](#)

Meet with a Career Counselor for feedback!

Contact Possible Employers

Be prepared to apply for more than one internship! Don't assume the first company you consider will be interested and take you. Calling is a great first step; however, you want to try to secure a face-to-face interview. Have a list of points and questions you want to cover.

Interviews

Practice! The Career Center can help with mock interviews.

After any interview, send a thank you within 24 hours.

Review the Career Center handbook: [Preparing for Interviews](#)

Getting an Offer

Always accept an offer in writing, even if you have accepted it orally.

Have more than one offer? Consider all of your options carefully before making a choice.

If you are not offered an internship, still write and thank them for their time and consideration.

Where to Look for Internships

Talk to faculty and those you already know who may be able to help connect you. Research companies and organizations and check out their websites. Identify specific companies where you would like to intern and then contact them directly, rather than only responding to posted positions. Many of the best jobs and internships are never publicly posted! Create a list of at least 5 to 10 organizations that catch your eye and that you want to learn more about.

Here are some places to start looking for internship opportunities:

- Handshake (nebrwesleyan.joinhandshake.com)
- Career Assistance Network
- Intern Nebraska (<http://www.internne.com>)
- Indeed
- Networking (e.g. career fairs, information interviews)
- LinkedIn

When to Start Looking for Internships

Start the internship search early. For summer internships, begin looking in the fall. If you are looking for an academic year internship, begin researching and contacting companies at least one semester in advance. Allow plenty of time to look for an internship; most programs interview and notify applicants months before they actually start the position.

Internship recruitment and enrollment takes place at different times of the year for different majors/career fields.

- **Accounting/Business**- Recruitment occurs heavily in the fall, particularly September. These interviews can be for summer positions as well as year-long positions.
- **HHP**- For summer positions, internship recruitment typically starts right after winter break and continues into the spring. Interviews for internships during the school year occur year-round.
- **Humanities**- Interviews for the school year take place year-round, but are especially focused in the spring.

Evaluate Offers

Not all internships are created equal. Assess the following information to ensure a good experience:

- ☐ Will the work challenge you in new ways?
- ☐ Are you assigned a direct supervisor who is accessible?
- ☐ Will you be given opportunities to learn about the career field?
- ☐ Is this an opportunity for you to apply what you have learned in your academic courses?

Ask key questions at the interview to learn more about the position before accepting an internship offer:

- ☐ Can you offer examples of the type of work an intern will be doing, such as day-to-day activities and key assignments?
- ☐ Will I be supervised? How will my supervisor evaluate me? Will I meet with my supervisor regularly?
- ☐ Does this internship offer any training? If so, what type of training?
- ☐ What do you see as the key benefits of this internship?
- ☐ What are the most important qualities you look for in an intern?

During the Internship

- Communicate professionally at all times
- Talk and connect with everyone, not just immediate coworkers
- Check in often with your supervisor and ask for additional work, as appropriate
- Ask your supervisor if they will serve as a positive reference for you in the future
- For credit-bearing internships, be sure you are completing your department's specific requirements

After the Internship

- Use your supervisor's feedback to assess both strengths as well as areas for improvement
- Update your résumé to include the new experience
- Stay in touch with your supervisors and mentors. Maintain strong networking connections!

Other Ways to Gain Relevant Experience

Remember that there are multiple experiential learning opportunities that help you develop skills relevant to your career goals. Consider these additional strategies:

- Volunteer
- Part-time Job
- Study Abroad
- Undergraduate Research
- Field Study
- Shadowing
- Fellowships
- Leadership/Involvement in Student and Community Organizations