

What is an “internship”?

Definition: *An internship is an opportunity to integrate career related experience into an undergraduate education by participating in planned, supervised work.*

Characteristics of internships:

- contributes to the student’s personal and professional development through challenging work assignments
- is completed before the student graduates from the university although in some cases internships can be completed the summer between the student completing the undergraduate degree and before beginning a graduate degree program
- is planned and scheduled through consultation with the department or college so as to fit into the undergraduate experience
- involves a supervision component that is mentoring and educational
- includes career related experiences that complement what is learned in the classroom
- will have a reflection and evaluation process at the conclusion of the internship
- builds upon the relationship the department/college/university has with employers
- is most successful when the student, the department/college, and the employer all share responsibility in making it a valuable experience

Career related experience has many names in the university.* In addition to “internship,” names include:

- cooperative education
- practicum
- externship
- apprenticeship

Across the university, these opportunities to gain career related experience can vary in many ways. They:

- May be paid or unpaid
- May be required as part of the curriculum or optional
- Earn academic credit or no credit is associated with the experience
- Can be from 5 hours a week to 40 hours a week: fulltime or part-time
- Can take place during the summer or during other quarters of the year
- Can last for one quarter or part of one quarter or extend over several quarters
- May be off campus or can take place on campus

These experiences are win-win situations for all involved.

Benefits to students:

- Opportunity to work in career related or professional environment
- Provide career awareness for the students
- Give the students the chance to evaluate, reflect upon and try a career field

- Provide valuable experience that helps secure future employment
- Can earn money or credit
- Provide professional networking contacts
- Make classroom learning more interesting
- Help the student develop job search skills
- Develop self-confidence as they identify skills, abilities and talents

Benefits to the employer

- Can evaluate the student for potential full time employment
- Give the employer access to quality candidates
- Students contribute new energy and ideas to the work place
- Scheduling can be flexible to meet the employer's needs
- Cost effective

Benefits to the department/college/university

- Strengthen ties to alumni and the community
- Make the transfer out process easier for students
- Curriculum can benefit through feedback from employers
- Help with retention and graduation
- Strengthen the students' ties to the university when the experience is facilitated by the department/college

* Please note that in addition to internship related work experience, there are many other activities and experiences undergraduates have while in college that build their skills and contribute to their future career success. These experiences are also important to academic, personal, and career development and include:

- Research Experience
- Service Learning
- Volunteer Experience
- Student Organization Involvement

Objectives of internships in Political Science:

The following is a list of some objectives which the internship might fulfill for both the student and the organization (agency, candidate, interest group, etc.):

1. provide students the opportunity to relate theory to practice
2. give students in-service orientation to a career area they may wish to pursue
3. allow students the opportunity to work in their area of intended specialization
4. enhance student's understanding of organizational and group processes
5. enhance student's awareness of public service obligations
6. develop an ongoing relationship between the academic and practitioner community
7. provide "apprentice" expertise and a new perspective for organizational operations

Characteristics of internships in Political Science:

Internships vary greatly in terms of what the employer requires of the student. The Department of Political Science recognizes this diversity and makes every effort to accommodate the needs of employers *and* the academic interests of the students.

General Classifications of internships in Political Science:

The Department of Political Science is committed to providing students with opportunities to gain experience in a variety of internships in the private and public sectors as well as with not-for-profit organizations. Internships tend to be classified based upon the primary responsibilities of the employer and can be broken down into the following (though not inclusive) fields: legal; legislative; federal government; municipal government; public administration; public interest; public law; public policy; and state government. Additionally, opportunities arise for students to expand their knowledge of political communication, political psychology, and political sociology.

For more information on the types of internships that are recognized by the Department of Political Science, please contact the department's internship coordinator at 614-292-2880.