



**Office of Career Services**

**Internship  
Orientation  
Guide**

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*Dear Student,*

*Congratulations on deciding to pursue an internship opportunity to help you advance your career interests. You have made a good decision. An internship is a beneficial way to assist your professional journey. In the GSU Internship Guide, we will discuss topics such as the benefits of an internship, how to pursue an internship, and what to do if you land an interview.*

*We encourage you to use the Office of Career Services (OCS) website to prepare you to meet with potential employers. Our office will help you to understand the resources you have available to be successful. So, let's get started!*

*Joanne Rodriguez*

*Employer Relations/Internship Specialist, Office of Career Services*

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## **Why pursue an internship?**

### ***Experience***

Even with a degree, many employers are looking for some type of experience to show that you have applied what you learned in your training. An internship is a good way for an employer to test out a future, potential job candidate without the commitment. As an intern, you can also try out different types of environments to really determine where you think your best fit would be and if this is the right career choice for you.

### ***Academic Credit***

Although internships may be completed for either academic credit or non-academic credit, an internship is also a great idea to combine anywhere from one to six credit hours (usually three) in your program with real life experience on your resume at the same time. Always make sure that your academic advisor is also aware that you are interested in obtaining an internship experience for credit, as every department has their own unique application requirements. There are usually department deadlines to apply for academic credit and register for classes that you may need to have already taken beforehand. You must also remember to officially register ahead for the class and find out what professor will be supervising you (you may have to ask a professor if one is not readily provided), in order to gain the academic credit. Clinical internships are a little bit different and are arranged solely through your academic area as there are usually very specific requirements that are needed, such as in a 600 hour counseling experience or a teaching internship. These types of internships are tied to state guidelines that must be rigorously followed.

### ***Financial Rewards***

Although internships are available for experience and/or credit only, there are opportunities that arise for students to be paid for their internship experience. An internship will usually last about sixteen weeks, or a semester, but some internship opportunities have been known to roll over for additional semesters. There are many ways that students can look for paid internships and the Office of Career Services will be happy to guide you with internship seeking strategies. OCS also participates in a grant funded program, known as the Illinois Cooperative Work Study Grant, or

STEP for student training experience program, which is our in-house name for this initiative. STEP brings together employers and students in a paid internship experience. While both undergraduate and graduate students can seek out internships, only undergraduates will qualify for this particular grant.

## **Where to Begin**

So now that you are sold on the idea that you really would like an internship, what are the steps that you need to take to get an internship?

### ***First Steps***

**Fill out any necessary applications AHEAD OF TIME!** Your academic advisor can give you the appropriate departmental request form needed for your particular college. Also, a general internship application is available in the OCS and your resume can be reviewed to help you put your best foot forward. The OCS application keeps you on file should the recruitment coordinator find a position that she thinks would be a fit for your major.

Also, the OCS will make an appointment for you at your request to see a career specialist, who will sit down with you to help determine your individual career goals. The OCS staff can help you determine what type of internship that you should be pursuing. After passing a review, your resume will be attached to your internship application and put into a live status file, where you may be called should your resume match the requirements of an employer. You will have to remember, though, that the Career Services requirements are in addition to the specific academic department's requirements. For example, you will need to have completed Tax I and at least being concurrently taking Tax II and have the permission of your advisor to pursue an accounting internship. You will also need to complete these applications *before* the beginning of the semester of your internship.

### ***Second Step***

**Check out all the sources for internship leads.** The buck doesn't stop here and filling out an application is only one way to get a potential internship. You can also go through the portal, if you are a student or alumni, to search our jobs/internship database website, Experience. In addition, we post jobs and internships in our office binders for review and on our bulletin boards. Several times a year we also host career and internship fairs that can be very helpful in your search.

**Be sure to launch your own search** by targeting employers in your area who have careers that you would like to grow into for possible leads. There are many jobs websites, such as Career Builder, Indeed.com, SimplyHired.com, and others, as well as our website resource guides listed on the Career Services website. Our staff will also be happy to see you for an appointment to discuss internship search strategies and on occasion, e-mails will be sent out to notify students about directly marketed opportunities.

### ***Third Step***

**Prepare for your interview when you are contacted.** If you have received an opportunity to have an interview, odds are that you did your homework and had an OCS Career Specialist review both your resume and cover letter sample. Now it is time to prepare for the interview. Be prepared to

tell short stories about yourself, talk about your strengths and your challenges, and how you have worked to overcome those challenges. The OCS can help you prepare for the interview process with a mock interview. We also offer an annual professional image/etiquette luncheon to help students know how to mingle and dress in professional settings. These events are posted ahead on our website. Also, our online interview guide will prompt you with helpful information that you need to know before actually having that interview. The entire guide is available as a hard copy and on our website.

Below is a brief excerpt with some of the most commonly asked interview questions:

- Tell me about yourself.
- Why are you interested in this position/organization?
- What makes you qualified (or the best candidate) for this position?
- What were your best courses in school?
- Tell me about a time when you were a leader, and what was that like for you?
- Give me an example of a problem you solved and how you went about solving it.

**Congratulations!** If you are selected for the internship, you are at the end of our preparatory steps here, but only at the beginning of ensuring that you gain the maximum benefits from your internship experience. Read on to find out how to be successful at having your learning efforts continue to work for you long after the experience is over.

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## Internship Policies and Expectations

### *What can you expect from your employer?*

If you are fortunate enough to be selected to fill an internship position, there are some things that you will be able to expect from your employer. Among these include:

**A safe, professional environment that contributes to your knowledge base about your chosen field** Although you may have some general administrative tasks, what you are doing for your internship should be directly related to your major and would include on your resume. Training should be provided to expand upon the skills that you have learned in the classroom.

### **Clear, concise information of your job duties**

You will need to be flexible, and an employer's obligations may vary; you should walk into the internship with a general idea of the types of things that you will be doing.

### **Identified chain of command to approach when you have a question or a problem**

When there is a problem, you should attempt to calmly discuss the issue with your immediate supervisor. You also can confide in your academic advisor, your professor, or the recruitment coordinator throughout the experience.

**In addition, you can expect:**

- A timely pay schedule (if pay is involved)
- An agreed upon work schedule and clear explanations of requirements
- Ongoing feedback of your performance, including a final evaluation of your experience

### ***What resources are available to you during your internship?***

Your academic advisor will assist you in getting through the paperwork process and will also advise you of what you will need in order to get academic credit. Your professor will advise you on what specific classroom requirements you will need to meet in order to gain your credit hours. They will also steer you in the right direction if you have questions about the work experiences that you are receiving. Your recruitment coordinator and the Office of Career Services will help to assist you in gaining an internship where opportunities are available and be there every step of the way to answer questions that you may have! The employer, of course, will be your most valuable resource as they have been practicing the ins and outs of their particular craft on a daily basis. There's no better teacher than one who has had the actual experience.

### ***What will be expected from you?***

You will be expected to display professional behavior throughout your experience. Some of the most common concerns for employers who we have surveyed include:

#### **Wear professional attire.**

This includes conservative dress or casual clothing, jewelry, accessories. Please see our interview guide for a full explanation of what would be considered professional if you have questions. If you have an initial doubt if something is appropriate, you probably should not wear it. Clothes should be clean and fit appropriately and not distract others from seeing your true potential. Remember, the first few seconds, especially during an interview, make a lasting impression.

#### **Show up to work consistently and on time.**

Even as an intern, employers are depending on you to get a job done and nothing is worse than having an employee consistently call off work. Treat your internship the same way you would treat any other professional job. If you are going to be unable to work and have a valid reason, notify the employer as soon as possible of your intended absence.

#### **Document everything!**

You will want to remember what you have learned so take good notes. If your professor requires a paper at the end of the semester, this is a good way to refresh your memory. You will also reinforce what you have learned. Also, keep track of your hours and how often you worked so that you stay up to date when asked for a timesheet summary at the end of the internship (required for STEP) or can show your professor that you have completed the necessary requirements.

#### **Don't ask, "What can you do for me? Rather, "What can I do for you?"**

Frequently, employers state that an intern's demeanor is not professional enough or focused on the experience. There is no quicker way to send this message than to be texting, emailing or talking

on the phone. If you must take a call, keep it brief and wait until your break or after work to chat with friends and family.

**Exhibit professional behavior.**

It is okay to ask questions about what you don't understand, but if an employer has a reasonable demand for you, your job is to work to complete it, rather than question established company policies. Remember, you are not there to change the system, but to learn from it.

**Keep your conversations professional.**

This is important. Although you may become relaxed around your employer, always remember your environment. A good rule of thumb is to only say what you feel would be appropriate in front of a clergy person or your grandparents. At the end of the day, all of these little things add up. The best way to proceed when making a choice about what to do or say is to ask yourself if this action is courteous and/or beneficial to the environment. Remember, this internship could potentially turn into a job, or at least a good recommendation for another job in the future.

**Enjoy your experience!**

This is a great time to find out if this career path is really right for you and to begin to put into practice what you have learned in theory. By choosing an internship, you have already given yourself a professional head start to the beginnings of experiencing your new, professional identity and more confidence to pursue your career dream.

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## **Special Opportunities/STEP Program**

***What is the STEP Program?***

The Student Training Experience Program (STEP) is made possible by a grant from the Illinois Cooperative Work Study Program funded by the State of Illinois Board of Higher Education. The program strives to keep Illinois graduates in Illinois by creating opportunities for internships which can lead to permanent positions. STEP targets businesses and organizations which have not previously worked with interns to create internship opportunities and it encourages employers with successful programs to expand them. STEP is coordinated solely through the Office of Career Services.

***Requirements of the STEP Program***

The Office of Career Services offers a limited number of paid internship experiences through our STEP program. Participating employers are reimbursed a portion of your salary in order to encourage utilizing the wonderful and talented students right in their own back yard! In order to find out more about these opportunities, check with the OCS staff and the Recruitment Coordinator to see what is currently available.

**In order to participate in the STEP Program, there are three requirements:**

- You must be an undergraduate student
- You must be from the State of Illinois
- You must be a registered student at the time of the internship

### ***Necessary Documentation***

If you are selected for a STEP internship, you must:

- Have prior permission from your academic advisor and have registered for class.
- Complete the internship application with an updated resume.
- Complete the interview process through reference from the Recruitment Coordinator.
- Fill out the necessary STEP forms, such as the “Acknowledgement of Employment” form at the beginning of the internship, your timesheet summary, and an evaluation of the employer at the end of the semester. (Copies of these documents are available in the OCS)
- Always check in with your professor and your coordinator, as well as your employer.

### ***Past Participating Employers***

**Caterpillar**-Accounting/Human Resources  
**CSL Behring** - Biology/Chemistry/Informational Technology  
**Elim Christian School** - Special Education  
**Family Development Center** - Early Childhood Education  
**Friedman & Huey** - Accounting/Taxes/Informational Technology  
**Glick & Associates** - Accounting/Taxes  
**National Tube Supply Company** - Accounting/Human Resources  
**Relativity Resources** - Accounting/Taxes  
**Sharn Enterprises, Inc.** - Marketing/Graphics/Media  
**Village of Bradley** - Public Administration  
**Village of Park Forest**-Criminal Justice  
**Village of Tinley Park**-Public Administration

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### ***Questions?***

You can contact the Office of Career Services by calling our main number at 708.235.3974 or by stopping in to see us in Room C3311. For specific internship requirements, especially relating to the STEP program, you can contact Joanne Rodriguez at 708.235.7355 or at [jrodriguez4@govst.edu](mailto:jrodriguez4@govst.edu).

**Good luck and have a great semester!**