

# ST. LAWRENCE UNIVERSITY CAREER SERVICES INTERNSHIP GUIDEBOOK

Part 1: What is an Internship? p. 1  
Part 2: Finding an Internship p. 7  
Part 3: Correspondence Samples p. 13

## **Internship Guidebook Part 1: What Is An Internship?**

*What is an internship?*

An internship is a short-term, structured experience with an employer in a career field of interest to you. This placement provides an opportunity outside the classroom to actively explore your interests, to gain practical experience, and to assess if you like a chosen field.

*Why is an internship important?*

There are a number of reasons: In today's job market, actual experience can make a significant difference in your career prospects. An internship is one critical way you can demonstrate to prospective employers just how talented you are. The contacts you make during your internship can be useful networks during your future job search. An internship is also a great opportunity to learn more and explore a possible career path. Even if you end up deciding that it's NOT the career for you, it can be helpful. And of course, an internship will help build your resume.

*When are internships offered?*

Internships are offered throughout the year by thousands of different organizations. However, Career Services emphasizes two specific time periods for internship placements: January break (up to 5 weeks) and Summer (up to 12 weeks). These two sessions will allow you to make the most of your time when classes are not in session.

*Are all internships unpaid?*

Although some organizations believe the valuable experience you gain is compensation enough for the internship experience, many offer competitive wages, professional development

opportunities, or other benefits to their interns. Remember, the true value of an internship lies in the quality and diversity of experience you gain. Because of their different methods of compensation, there are 3 primary types of internships: An academic internship allows you to receive academic credit for the work accomplished during the internship. This may be the only form of compensation you will receive, or you may receive academic credit and compensation as well. You can obtain academic credit either through an independent study or by enrolling in the Internship Course offered through the Career Connections office. Receiving academic credit means you will complete additional projects (such as a journal, research paper, or presentation) along with the projects outlined by your site supervisor. \*\* If you would like to pursue independent study, you must make arrangements through your faculty sponsor and the Registrar before you begin your internship.

A paid internship will provide you with monetary compensation for your work. This is typically negotiated during your application process and may be either one lump sum or an hourly stipend. Alternative compensation may include reimbursements for travel, housing, or other living expenses.

Unpaid internships are not different from other internships, with the exception of compensation. These opportunities emphasize your commitment and dedication to the field more than financial gain. Researching financial alternatives such as grants, scholarships, part-time work, or housing assistance may enable you to pursue this type of learning experience.

#### *What will I do in an internship?*

It is impossible to give a definite list of internship projects because each organization has different needs and opportunities to offer. Because an internship is designed to provide you with practical hands-on experience as well as exposure to a particular career field, many placements try to include the following opportunities:

- keep a daily journal to record observations, questions, and accomplishments
- project management
- research or database management
- informal interviews with staff
- customer contact

#### *What are the benefits of participating in an internship?*

Besides the on-site practical training obtained during an internship, there are a variety of reasons students seek internships:

- Explore a new career path
- Test classroom theories in the "real world"

- Network and make contacts
- Possible academic credit
- Increase knowledge and skills
- Develop and enhance marketable skills
- Possibly earn money
- Meet and learn from professionals in the field
- Contribute to an organization or company
- Build confidence in your skills and talents
- Increase community involvement

*What are the requirements for an internship?*

Because most employers understand that an internship is an opportunity for students to gain valuable experience, very few placements will require actual experience. Please note however that each internship has different requirements and expectations for its interns. Career Services recommends that anyone who is considering an internship meet at least the following basic eligibility requirements:

- Full time matriculation at a university
- Basic communication and organizational skills
- Availability for a specific time period

*Are internships only for Juniors or Seniors?*

NO! Typically students pursue an internship during the sophomore or junior year but opportunities do exist for first-year and seniors as well. There are also experiences designed for recent graduates or students enrolling in graduate school. If you have the desire and determination to pursue an internship, then be sure to have the Career Services staff assist you with your search.

*Don't I have to know what I want to do with my life before I have an internship?*

Internships do not lock you into a particular career field. Rather, consider internships as a valuable, hands-on way to test those areas you are considering for a future career. I would like to do an internship and get some experience but I don't have a clue about what organizations would be a good sponsor.

*Can I do more than one internship?*

ABSOLUTELY. The more experience you have to offer an employer, the more you strengthen your position as a job candidate. Additionally, having a variety of placements to evaluate will help you to understand the type(s) of work and career areas that are most interesting for you.

*Can you help me?*

Career Services has many resources available to help you clarify your objectives for an internship. Keep in mind there are many different reasons why people pursue an internship and each person chooses the opportunity which best fits their goals. Make an appointment to talk with a Career Advisor about your questions and goals.

*How can I find an internship that is right for me?*

To fully understand the internship search process, it is helpful to review the Five Steps to Career Planning. This will provide you with a valuable outline to build your search process.

## **FIVE STEPS TO CAREER PLANNING**

*Step One: Self Assessment - Know Yourself!*

What you want, what your strengths are, what you value, and what you are interested in are all aspects of self-assessment. Why is this important? Quite simply, as you explore internship opportunities, this assessment will become your checklist for defining the ideal internship. Without it, you might make decisions that are incomplete. There are a variety of formal and informal ways to begin the self-assessment process:

The Career Services office provides counseling appointments in conjunction with two formal self-assessment inventories, the Campbell Skill and Interest Inventory and the Do What You Are (a form of the Myers Briggs Type Indicator.)

If you are not able to come over to the office for some reason, there are still ways for you to engage in some informal self-assessment techniques. For example, think of the activities you enjoy most. What is it about those activities that makes them enjoyable for you? What about them interests you? Try thinking about why your favorite classes were your favorites--was it the subject matter? The professor? The other students in the class? Thinking about what you enjoy, as well as what will help you in your future career, will guide you toward your best internship.

### *Step Two: Exploration*

Exploration helps you to identify and explore internships that relate to your skills, interests, values, and needs. Information can also be obtained through the many online resources on the Career Services website. Using our alumni network, you can locate a St. Lawrence alumnus/ae who can talk to you about specific careers.

You may also want to speak with students who have completed internships to learn how they began selecting possible internships. The staff in Career Services will be happy to help direct you if you have any questions about where to look to find the information you need.

### *Step Three: Developing Necessary Tools*

There are certain tools that are needed to gain an internship, regardless of what internship you choose to pursue. For example, you will need a well written resume to send to each internship site. You will also need to create letters to accompany your resume, to thank the interviewers, and to accept or decline internships. Learning to network and interview effectively will also increase your chances of successful internship hunting.

### *Step Four: Decision Making*

As with any process, there comes the time that a decision needs to be made. The information you gained in steps one through three will combine to give you a strong knowledge base about the different issues involved. Using this information, you can evaluate and define your objectives and goals for your interning experience. You need to explore the rewards, alternatives, and opportunities, and outcomes associated with each internship, and match those with your goals. Above all, you need to make a decision that is the right one for you.

### *Step Five: Implementing Skills and Techniques*

In this final step, you will seek interviews with specific organizations. This will require writing letters to various employers, and following up with additional correspondence over the telephone or by mail. Scheduling interviews, actual interviewing, and interview follow up contact also would fall into this step. Does an internship have to be in my major? Not necessarily. A liberal arts education provides you with a solid foundation of skills and knowledge that prepare you for a variety of work environments. An internship is one direct way to test those interests and skills and to assess how prepared you are for life after graduation.

## **APPLICATION PROCESS**

### *When do I apply for an internship?*

The sooner the better! Summer internships especially can be very competitive and may have deadlines as early as October or November. Generally, for a January placement, it is recommended that you begin researching possible placements as soon as you begin your fall term classes. Summer opportunities can be researched as early as October. A large number of summer internships typically have application deadlines early in the spring semester. Plan on February being a busy month for completing applications!

### *How long will it take to get an internship?*

Like a job search, applying for an internship will require a clear sense of goals, quality application materials, positive references, and commitment and enthusiasm from you, the applicant. It is advisable that you leave yourself at least 6 weeks to review the vast array of internship opportunities and to contact those organizations in which you are interested. Consider applying to at least 10-20 different organizations. Don't forget it may also be necessary for you to develop a targeted resume and cover letter, to collect references, to prepare supporting materials (such as an essay) or to prepare for interviews. Thus, it is recommended that you begin your search process as early as possible.

### *Am I required to interview for an internship?*

Mostly likely yes. Because the process of securing an internship is similar to a traditional job search, you may need to provide a prospective site sponsor with more than just a tailored resume and cover letter. An interview will enable the organization to meet you and to assess how well your goals and experiences match their needs and internship opportunities.

Telephone and skype interviews are one possibility and are often the first conversation you will have with a prospective internship sponsor. An employer will contact you to set-up the phone/skype interview. At that time, ask the employer the number of individuals participating in the interview. This information will help you to prepare for the interview and anticipate the dynamics of speaking with one person or to many persons over a speaker phone. Make arrangements to be alone in your room or apartment for the interview. Also, have readily available a copy of your resume and questions to ask the employer. (Be careful not to rustle paper needlessly and convey to the employer that you are unprepared). Evaluation of this type is based on response, tone of voice, enthusiasm, ease of conversation, and adaptability to the circumstances. Keep in mind the purpose of this interview is to "screen" or to reduce the number of candidates to a manageable number. In doing so, the sponsor selects individuals best qualified to meet their organization's needs. S/he is also looking for reasons to eliminate people. The

internship application process may also require an interview for final candidate screening. The interview experience ultimately decides which candidate will receive the internship offer. Therefore it is essential that you are prepared to "sell" yourself in a professional setting.

Preparation requires thorough self-assessment of your skills, interests, values, and past/present experiences that may relate to the internship you are seeking. In addition, you must conduct extensive research of the organization prior to the interview. Career Services can help you prepare for your interview through a mock interview in our office or through use of our virtual mock interview program, InterviewStream. Call or stop by to schedule your mock interview in advance.

## **Internship Guidebook Part 2: Finding an Internship**

### **THE ACTION PLAN: How to Find an Internship**

- Complete your profile on SAINTSLink. This will allow you to receive notifications when internships in your field(s) of interest are posted.
- Prioritize. Determining what will make your internship experience meaningful. Because there are thousands of available opportunities, your priority list will help you focus upon those internships that best meet your career goals.
- Attend a “How to Find an Internship” workshop. This session will introduce you to many of the internship resources available through Career Services. Check out our calendar to find a workshop that fits in your schedule – they are offered several times each semester.
- Research possible internships. Career Services recommends that you target at least 10-20 different organizations to apply to. This guidebook offers a comprehensive list of resources for you to explore.

- Prepare a resume and cover letter and have a professional staff member critique them both. If you have never written one before, be sure to check out our online guidebooks on Resume Writing and Professional Correspondence. Be sure to leave yourself enough time for revisions.
- Begin contacting organizations to verify internship information. There is nothing worse than preparing an application only to find out later it went to the wrong person or you need additional information. Verify availability of the internship, the application deadline, required materials, and obtain the appropriate contact person's name, title, and complete mailing address.
- Apply to those internships! Often this will mean drafting a specific cover letter and tailoring your resume to fit the opportunity available. Some organizations may ask for additional information such as: academic transcript, reference list, writing sample, etc. Make sure your application is complete before sending it.
- Explore housing options, if needed.
- Be proactive in your search: Follow up 10 days to 2 weeks after you send in your application. Contact the employer directly to make sure s/he has received your materials, to express your interest in the position, and to "check on the status of the search". Caution: Have your homework done first! This conversation could easily turn into a phone interview, so be prepared to answer questions about your skills and talents as well as to market yourself and your interest in this opportunity.
- Clarify the application process if possible. Find out from the contact person: the anticipated timeline of the search, the appropriate person to contact if you have questions, and the remaining steps to the search.
- Begin to define your plan of action for each application. How often will you call? What other information is needed? What is your next step?



- After every interview, send a thank you note. This is an excellent way to reconfirm your interest in the summer internship position and to address any questions that came up during your visit
- Always have a Plan B. Internships are real world experience and help you figure out what it is you want to do. Have alternate plans for the summer where you could volunteer part-time if that dream internship does not come through.
- Write a letter of confirmation to the opportunity you select for your summer internship. Be sure to reference the position you have accepted, the agreed upon salary, and your starting date.
- Write a letter of refusal to any organization that offered you an internship that you did not accept.
- Notify Career Services of your internship placement.

## **INTERNSHIP RESOURCES**

Career Services has a wealth of internship resources available to you. Some of these include:

### *Alumni-Sponsored Internships*

Each year, a number of SLU alumni post internship opportunities for current students. While some are specifically for SLU applicants, other placements are competitive and SLU students will be evaluated against all other applicants. Applications for these opportunities are coordinated through Career Services and are open to any currently matriculated student who meets the specified internship requirements as outlined by the alumni sponsor. These internships are posted on SAINTSLink.

### *Alumni Network*

The St. Lawrence alumni mentor network can be found on LinkedIn by joining the St. Lawrence Group. This group has thousands of alumni who can be searched based on location, industry, or many other criteria. To learn more about creating your LinkedIn profile and the best uses of LinkedIn, refer to the presentation on our “media room” on our website.

### *Other Online Resources*

Several other resources exist on the Career Services website, including the Liberal Arts Career Network database of internships and jobs. Career Search, Going Global, Vault, and Spotlight on Careers all provide internships postings or valuable information relating to the internships search process. Many corporations have home pages that include information about company size and focus, internship and employment opportunities, and special projects. Career Services also has information on good web sites to check out relating to specific internship fields.

### *Career Library*

Career Services has a career library in our office, with a section devoted completely to internship hunting. The internship section contains resources from across the USA and also internationally. Directories of internships in specific career fields are also available, as well as directories for specific geographic areas.

### *Faculty, Staff, and Personal Contacts*

Speaking to professors and staff members at SLU may open up opportunities for an internship in an ideal location. Keep in mind that family members, friends, past employers, and other people could be excellent resources of internship opportunities. The more people that know you are looking for an internship, the more likely you are to hear of an opening that fits your interest area(s).

### *Workshops*

Each semester, a number of “How to Find an Internship” workshops are offered by the Career Services staff. This is a wonderful way to learn more about resources, steps required to develop an internship action plan, and to have your questions answered. Be sure to check the calendar of events for dates and times of upcoming workshops. “Internship Crash Course” is available once

per semester for Juniors, and other internship-related workshops are offered throughout the year as well.

### *Career Counseling*

As always, professional advisors are available to assist you in beginning your search, exploring your interests, locating possible internships, securing financial resources, or answering any other internship question you might have.

### **Will there be resources available to me during an internship?**

#### *On-Site Supervisor*

Your on-site supervisor is the person your report to during your internship experience. S/he may or may not be the person who hired you originally. On-site supervisors give you assignments and projects, introduce you to the organization and fellow employees, teach you about the career field, and evaluate your performance.

#### *The Faculty Sponsor*

If you are pursuing an internship for academic credit, you must secure a Faculty Sponsor to work with you during your internship experience. (If you are not pursuing academic credit, you will probably not have a Faculty Sponsor.) A faculty sponsor acts as your internship advisor. He or she approves your learning agreement, which may include requirements such as writing a paper, completing a special project, etc. In addition, your faculty sponsor may visit the internship site, communicates with your on-site supervisor, evaluates your performance, and determines your final grade for the internship. An Internship Learning Agreement may be required. This document is created by the faculty sponsor and the student and outlines the goals of the intern experience. It has several purposes: providing a framework for the internship, assisting with measuring progress, reminding the student, on-site supervisor and faculty sponsor of the purposes and activities of the internship, and providing a means of planning the activities involved in the internship.

### *The Career Services Staff*

Once you begin your internship, you are still encouraged to contact Career Services staff for assistance as needed. We are happy to serve as your sounding board and to offer support when needed.

### *What financial resources are available to me as an internship candidate?*

Career Services offers competitive internship fellowship awards to help offset cost of living, travel, and other expenses incurred during an internship experience. Awards are made available through alumni gifts and are available to students who have secured an internship placement. The Internship Fellowship award is available for the Summer breaks for students of all class years. Applications are submitted online through the Career Services website. Appointments are available to help you with the application process, and a workshop is held each spring semester to help students prepare for the application process. Check our calendar or contact our office for more information.

# Internship Guidebook Part 3: Correspondence

## Samples

As described in Developing Necessary Tools, Step 3 of the Career Planning process, you will need to have an effective resume, along with other types of job correspondence. Each piece of communication you may need is described below: On the next few pages you will find examples of letters and resumes used by other students in the internship search process. Keep in mind that each letter and resume will be tailored to the specific internship being sought, so there would be definite differences for you when writing your letters and resume. The samples are designed to only assist you in getting started; Make an appointment with the counselors at Career Services for in-depth critiquing and assistance.

Remember: Always keep a copy of any correspondence you send. This will be useful to refer to as you advance through the internship search process.

### *Cover Letter*

A cover letter is always mailed with the resume to the internship site. It informs the employer why you are sending the resume, expresses your interest and excitement for the position, and highlights your most outstanding qualifications. The cover letter can be a great place to sell yourself to the internship supervisor, and to show why your skills match well with the responsibilities of the intern position. For assistance in developing your cover letters, make an appointment with a peer advisor or use the guidebook on Professional Correspondence.

## Sample Cover Letter

CMR 5555 {do NOT include your name}  
St. Lawrence University  
Canton, NY 13617

January 3, 2009 {hit return key twice}

Mr. R.F. Furton  
President  
American Magazine  
1356 Michigan Drive  
Boston, MA 20356 {hit return key twice}

Dear Mr. Furton: {hit return key twice}

I am writing in response to your internship opportunity posted Career Services website at St. Lawrence University. American Magazine is a leading publication in the political industry and is well known for its comprehensive articles and talented writers. The Editorial Assistant internship is of great interest to me, and matches my qualifications and abilities.

I am currently enrolled in the English program at St. Lawrence, and will graduate in the spring of 2011. Serving as an assistant editor of Sidewaves, a student-run magazine here at SLU, has given me the skills needed to perform basic editorial functions, as well as has strengthened my desire to work in the publishing field. I have developed my communication and organization skills through my volunteer work with the Big Brother/Big Sister program, and am ready to apply these skills in the magazine industry.

I would greatly appreciate the opportunity to discuss the Editorial Assistant internship. I can be reached at (315) 555-1212 to arrange a mutually convenient time to discuss the internship, or via e-mail at xxx@xxx.xxx.xxx. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely, {hit the return key FOUR times}

Mary Smith

Enc. (if your ONLY enclosure is your resume, list Resume; if you add anything else, list Enc.)

### *Follow-up letter or Telephone Call*

This letter should follow the initial contact of the cover letter. With a follow-up letter, you are reiterating your interest in the internship, and politely reminding the employer of your qualifications. Many times you will not need to send a follow-up letter, as employers tend to respond in a timely fashion to internship requests. You may also consider using the telephone to follow-up with your resume instead of a letter.

Caution: This conversation could easily turn into a phone interview, so be prepared to answer questions about your skills and talents as well as to market yourself and your interest in this opportunity. Have your homework done first!

*Thank you letter*

This letter is written to thank an employer for an interview, or for consideration in the internship process. After each interview, a thank you letter should be sent within the week. As with all previous correspondence, this letter must be typed in a business letter format and sent using the same paper and envelopes you used for your resume.

**Sample Thank You Letter**

CMR 5555 {do NOT include your name}  
St. Lawrence University  
Canton, NY 13617

March 15, 2010 {hit return key twice}

Mr. R.F. Furton  
President  
American Magazine  
1356 Michigan Drive  
Boston, MA 20356 {hit return key twice}

Dear Mr. Furton: {hit return key twice}

I would like to thank you and your staff for the opportunity to get to know more about you and American Magazine. I enjoyed learning about the new projects you are undertaking, and feel more confident than ever that an internship with American Magazine would be a wonderful fit for us both.

As we discussed in our interview, I have performed editorial functions through Sidewaves Magazine. I was enthused to learn that American Magazine uses the same publishing software, which would enable me to begin projects immediately without spending time learning the software. I also feel that my background in volunteerism will assist me in coordinating sections of American Magazine's "Volunteers in America" special issue.

Again, thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to hearing from you in the near future.

Sincerely, {hit the return key FOUR times}

Mary Smith



### *Acceptance letter*

These letters are used to accept an internship and are sent after a formal offer from an internship site. It is customary to send a letter even after a telephone conversation stating your decision. Again, follow traditional business letter format and use the same paper as you used for your resume.

### **Sample Acceptance Letter**

CMR 5555 {do NOT include your name}  
St. Lawrence University  
Canton, NY 13617

April 10, 2010 {hit return key twice}

Mr. R.F. Furton  
President  
American Magazine  
1356 Michigan Drive  
Boston, MA 20356 {hit return key twice}

Dear Mr. Furton: {hit return key twice}

I would like to officially accept the intern position with American Magazine for the summer of 2010. I am very excited to begin the position, and look forward to beginning what is sure to be a very rewarding experience.

As we discussed by phone, the internship position will run from May 15th through August 15th of this year, with a compensation rate of \$8.00/hr, 30 hrs. per week. I welcome the opportunity to learn about the publishing field from the group of very talented professionals at American Magazine.

Feel free to contact me if there is any additional information I can provide.

Sincerely, {hit the return key FOUR times}

Mary Smith

### *Decline Letter*

These letters are used to decline an internship and are sent after a formal offer from an internship site. It is customary to send a letter even after a telephone conversation stating your decision. For every internship you have applied to but will not be pursuing, it is necessary to send a decline letter. This will not only confirm your decision for the organization but will also demonstrate your knowledge of professional courtesy and respect for other candidates who may be applying for the same opportunity. Again, follow traditional business letter format and use the same paper as you used for your resume.

### **Sample Decline Letter**

CMR 5555 {do NOT include your name}  
St. Lawrence University  
Canton, NY 13617

April 15, 2010 {hit return key twice}

Mr. John Smith  
Internship Coordinator  
Looking Up Magazine  
1000 Anystreet  
Boston, MA 20356 {hit return key twice}

Dear Mr. Smith: {hit return key twice}

I am writing to decline your offer for a summer internship for the summer 2010 season. Recently, I accepted an Editorial Assistant internship with American Magazine and look forward to the opportunity to further develop my editorial abilities within the publishing industry. Looking Up Magazine is a tremendous publication for young people and I look forward to reading your future issues.

I wish you much success with your company's internship search.

Sincerely, {hit the return key FOUR times }

Mary Smith

## **RESUMES AND INTERVIEWS**

### *Resume*

Your resume is your strongest marketing tool in the search process. It will contain valuable information about your skills and experiences, formatted in a clear and concise fashion. Career Services has Peer Advisors who will help you design your own personal resume, and you can use the online Resume Worksheet and Resume Guidebook as well as the online program Optimal Resume. Keep in mind it will take more than one hour to craft a resume that is an effective presentation of all that you have to offer and many students see Career Services staff for two or more visits before they produce a version they are happy with. Also, you will probably need to revise your resume a bit for each application that you send out in order to promote your best strengths. Leave plenty of time for all of these revisions before you need to send out your first resume.

### *Interviews*

Successful interviewing will also require practice and the utilization of strong communication skills. Career Services encourages you to participate in a video taped mock interview prior to the actual interview. Call Career Services at x5906 to schedule your mock interview. For additional information on preparing for interviews, check out the online guidebook on Interviewing.

When preparing for on-site interviews, don't forget to also consider the expenses involved. Along with an interview outfit, it may be necessary for you to pay for your travel and lodging expenses. Typically these are paid upfront by you, the candidate. Do not assume you will be reimbursed by the company. Be clear with your internship site what their policies are before you finalize your search arrangements.

## **CONCLUSION**

Pursuing an internship is one of the most important steps you can take in your career development. Though the search for quality learning experiences has become quite competitive, Career Services is prepared to assist you at every step of the process. Whether beginning your self-assessment or evaluating several offers, we welcome the opportunity to help you put the pieces together.

We hope this guidebook has provided you with a solid introduction to your internship search process. If you have further questions about your individual search, please feel free to make an appointment with a professional staff member.