

# PLANNING YOUR INTERNSHIP

**LUTHER COLLEGE**  

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**THE CAREER CENTER**

## ***What Is An Internship?***

An internship is an exchange in which you agree to undertake a work project which will benefit the host organization, give you the opportunity to learn new skills, expand your knowledge of a particular field, explore career options, and apply or test out academic learning while gaining hands-on experience in a professional work setting. Your work responsibilities may include completing a special project or performing a variety of regular staff functions. Internships offer you the chance to extend learning opportunities beyond the traditional classroom into professional work environments.

## ***An Intern Is Not. . .***

### **A Volunteer**

Regardless of the financial arrangements, an intern is not the same as a volunteer. As an intern you should expect to receive supervision whereby you are challenged to learn and grow, provided support and encouragement, included in the work team, and given the chance to reflect on your experience. Volunteers may perform the same tasks equally well but may or may not be deliberate about their learning.

### **A Resident Expert**

Student interns bring special skills, knowledge, and fresh ideas to an organization. It is not appropriate, however, for an organization to expect an intern to be the “resident expert” or to

fill a gap in an area in which the staff lacks basic skills or knowledge. You should be supervised by a professional staff person who has some expertise in the area in which you are working.

### **A Gopher**

An intern should not be expected to perform all the routine or uninteresting work within an organization. An internship should be a meaningful learning experience; one you have planned and adapted as needed with your supervisor(s). Most positions and projects will involve some routine work; however, it is recommended that it be limited to twenty percent of your time as an intern.

### **Guaranteed a Job**

Sometimes interns are offered part- or full-time employment as a result of contacts made during their internships but there is no guarantee that an internship will lead to a job. Many employers value hiring someone who has had internship experience. Therefore, when you are competing for a particular position in a given field, your internship may prove beneficial. The best way to gain career and job advantages from your internship is to get to know the people with whom you are working. Build an information and referral network for yourself.

## ***How Will I Benefit From an Internship?***

*Internships provide concrete benefits that prepare you for the future and increase the quality of your current education at Luther. An internship includes:*

- ◆ *A chance to bridge theory and practice with a work site as your classroom.*
- ◆ *An opportunity to learn while working in a specific career field of interest.*
- ◆ *Practice in skills assessment and job hunting.*
- ◆ *An opportunity to test your skills in an area of interest.*
- ◆ *A way to develop your self-confidence as you solve problems in a new environment.*
- ◆ *Useful contacts and possibly a reference for future career networking.*
- ◆ *That hard-to-come-by prerequisite for many kinds of employment: EXPERIENCE!*

## *Are You Ready For An Internship?*

To determine whether an internship would be right for you, you may want to ask yourself the following questions.

*Rate each statement using the following scale:*

Strongly Agree-5, Agree-4, Uncertain-3, Disagree-2, Strongly Disagree-1

- \_\_\_ I would like to extend what I am learning beyond what is possible on campus and in the classroom.
- \_\_\_ I sometimes wonder how what I have been learning in the classroom applies to the world of work.
- \_\_\_ I have taken courses relevant to my career interests, or I plan to next semester.
- \_\_\_ As I observe other students who seemingly have more extensive work experience, I wish there were some way to get experience related to my future career plans.
- \_\_\_ It would be possible to adjust my courses for next semester so that I would have at least ten hours of open time per week to work at an internship off campus.
- \_\_\_ It would not be necessary for me to earn money if I were to consider an internship.
- \_\_\_ I really have no idea whether I will attend graduate school because I don't know what I would study.
- \_\_\_ I am experiencing some boredom with my classes and want to pursue other extracurricular activities.
- \_\_\_ My parents ask me, "What are you going to do after you graduate?" and I don't know.
- \_\_\_ This coming summer, I would consider working part-time and interning part-time without pay.

Scale:

30+	Ready for an internship
25-29	Need to consider potential obstacles before starting an internship
20-24	It will take careful planning and rethinking of priorities
under 20	It may be best to consider other options

### ***Steps To Obtaining An Internship***

#### **1. Clarify your goals and objectives.**

Start with a self-assessment by asking yourself these questions:

- ◆ Why do I want an internship?

- ◆ What kinds of things do I want to be doing?
- ◆ What skills do I want to use or learn?
- ◆ What skills do I already have that may be helpful in a particular type of internship?
- ◆ What do I hope to accomplish by the end of the internship?

Talk to faculty, The Career Center staff, family, and mentors to assist you in clarifying your academic and professional interests. Read about fields of interest in order to refine your internship goals. Information on a myriad of career fields is available in The Career Center.

If you find you are still unsure about the focus of your internship, set up an appointment to discuss your interest with the Internship Coordinator in The Career Center.

#### **2. Register your interest.**

Register your interest at The Career Center. You will receive an information packet explaining the Internship Program along with all of the necessary forms required for the internship when you register your interest.

#### **3. Talk with your academic adviser or department internship coordinator.**

Discuss the relationship between your internship and your academic studies, and the way in which your internship may develop desired skills and extend your Luther education. Since an internship for academic credit (should you choose that option) must have faculty sponsorship, the discussion with your adviser is an important step. Faculty can often help you brainstorm organizations to target in your internship search.

#### 4. Prepare materials.

If you have not already done so, you will need to develop a resume. A cover letter accompanies each resume. Cover letters must be individually tailored to describe your qualifications and reasons for contacting each specific organization. References may be required by some organizations, especially those with formalized internship programs.

The Career Center offers information, handouts, workshops, and individual appointments to help you with your resume, cover letters, and reference seeking.

#### 5. Identify organizations in which you can meet your objectives.

Develop a list of ten to twenty organizations you think might match your objectives. Here are some ideas to help you get started:

- ◆ Consult faculty members in your area of interest and talk to friends, family members, and acquaintances about your leads. Ask for advice, information, and the names of organizations and people to contact.
  - ◆ Talk with other students who have experienced an internship.
  - ◆ Use the LutherLink in The Career Center to locate Luther alumni within your field of interest or geographic target.
  - ◆ Look through The Career Center's internship listings (InternCenter) and other resources.
- ◆ Use resources such as the Yellow Pages, Chamber of Commerce, or specialty directories available in The Career Center.
  - ◆ Contact professional associations using the *Encyclopedia of Associations* or *National Trade and Professional Associations of the United States*, both available in The Career Center.
  - ◆ Target organizations in which you feel you could meet your objectives. For example, if you are interested in helping people with psychological problems, local hospitals, chemical dependency treatment centers, or social service agencies might interest you. If you are interested in museum work, how about the local historical society museum or a restoration project?
  - ◆ Think creatively: Brainstorm the many different ways of fulfilling your objectives. If you are interested in computer

Luther College, SPO 100  
Decorah, IA 52101  
(319) 387-0000

September 30, 1999

Mr. Robert Smith  
Director of Public Relations  
ABC Center  
765 Third Avenue West  
St. Paul, MN 55000

Dear Mr. Smith:

My interest in an internship in the communication field has prompted me to forward my resume for your review and consideration. Your internship in public relations, as advertised through Luther College's CareerConnection, is an opportunity for me to apply my educational background and skills in oral and written communications. At the same time, the internship affords me the opportunity to learn a great deal about my field of interest.

My liberal arts education has allowed me to develop a wide range of analytical and communication skills. In addition, working as a writing tutor has given me great insight into not only writing, but also into the processes and struggles that must come before the finished product. The extracurricular activities I have been involved with at Luther College have enhanced my leadership, organizational, and problem-solving skills. I believe my qualifications coupled with my eagerness to learn make me a strong candidate for an internship position with ABC Center.

I am available after 3:00 p.m. on Wednesday, Thursday, or Friday afternoons to discuss an internship opportunity with ABC Center. Your time and consideration are very much appreciated and I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

**Katie Luther**

Katie Luther

Enclosure: Resume

work, consider organizations that may use computers in their work--small companies, nonprofit organizations, state agencies, etc. If you're interested in writing, do not overlook the possibilities that are likely to exist with social service agencies and associations that publish newsletters or brochures.

List some of the organizations you can think of where you could meet your objectives.

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## 6. Research the organizations you've identified.

Once you have generated a list of organizations, research them to decide which organizations best meet your objectives. Call and request literature from the employer, ask around to see if you can be connected to anyone who already works there, search the world wide web, use the library resources to search for relevant newspaper/journal articles, etc. Consider why and how they may be able to use interns. Narrow your list to five to ten organizations to which you will apply.

## 7. Identify the person who has the power to hire you in each organization.

Once you have a manageable list of organizations, you will need to identify the appropriate persons to contact. You may need to call the organization to get the name of the person who has the power

to hire you. Some organizations with centralized internship programs are likely to have internship coordinators in the college relations, human resources, or personnel office who handle the internship program. Other organizations assign this responsibility to individuals within the various departments. Be prepared to identify the department in which you hope to intern, introduce yourself, explain your interest and ask for the name, correct spelling, title, and mailing address of the person to contact.

## 8. Make your application.

Contact the person(s) you have identified, either by telephone or letter, to express your interest, to learn the application process, and to obtain application materials if required.

## 9. Practice your interviewing skills.

If interviews are required, be sure that you have done your homework--that you are able to clearly discuss your objectives and expectations, why you chose

<b>Katie Luther</b>	
<b>Present Address</b> Luther College, SPO 100 Decorah, IA 52101 (563) 387-0000 lutherka@luther.edu	<b>Permanent Address</b> 100 Main Street Anywhere, IA 53762 (123) 456-7890
<b>Objective</b> Seeking a summer internship with opportunities to utilize writing skills for the American Red Cross	
<b>EDUCATION</b>	
Luther College, Decorah, IA Major: English G.P.A. 3.8	August 2002- Present
<b>RELATED COURSES</b>	
Effective Writing, Origins of English Grammar (analyzing grammar), Shakespeare, Poetry, Literature and Expression	
<b>JOB-RELATED SKILLS</b>	
<i>Leadership</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Designed and implemented menu for fifty people during their seven-week training course</li> <li>• Co-led and planned weekly Bible Study</li> <li>• Served as co-Vice President of choir</li> </ul>
<i>Organization</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planned and established an accountability partners program on college campus for over forty women</li> <li>• Advertised weekend retreat; organized finances and transportation in order for thirty students from campus to attend</li> </ul>
<i>Writing/Editing</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tutored five to twenty college students monthly on their college papers.</li> <li>• Served on the selection and editorial committee for the <i>Oneota Review</i>, a college literary publication</li> </ul>
<b>WORK HISTORY</b>	
<i>Tutor</i> , Luther College Writing Center, Decorah, IA 2003-Present <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assisted students with writing and organization of papers</li> </ul>	
<i>Counselor and Kitchen Support Staff</i> , Lutherworks Bible Camp, Anywhere, IA 2003 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ministered to and built relationships with youth weekly</li> <li>• Handled responsibilities in kitchen, such as food preparation, and clean-up</li> </ul>	
<i>Head Cook</i> , Tentmaker's Youth Ministry, Denver, CO 2002 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Designed menu and cooked meals for seven-week training course.</li> <li>• Budgeted and recorded finances for position.</li> <li>• Delegated responsibilities to and worked with support staff.</li> </ul>	
<b>ACTIVITIES AND HONORS</b>	
Dean's list (three semesters), Member of Sigma Tau Delta (International English Honors Fraternity), Member of Cathedral Choir	
<b>References Available Upon Request</b>	

their organization, how you can help them, and what they can do for you.

The Career Center offers mock interviews to allow you to practice an interview with a trained career assistant. Mock interviews are videotaped so you can assess your own skills along with the feedback of the career assistant. Interview information,

handouts, and workshops on interviewing skills are also available through The Career Center.

### **10. Make follow-up contact.**

A couple of weeks after sending your application materials, follow up with a phone call to reaffirm

your interest and check on your status (unless, of course, they have already contacted you). Always send a thank-you letter following interviews.

### **11. Make a decision.**

Before accepting, make sure that the organization will provide a worthwhile internship that will allow you to fulfill your learning objectives.

### **12. Accept or reject the offer.**

Once you have made a commitment, a lot of people are depending on you to follow through. Be careful, thoughtful, and diplomatic in making your decision and notifying the organization. If you find yourself having to accept or reject an internship before you hear about another, be open and honest. Tell the site with the deadline your dilemma and ask for an extension.

In an acceptance letter, be sure to be clear about your understanding of the pay arrangements, work schedule, duties, and who your work supervisor will be.

If you are rejected, you never know when another opportunity with that organization will emerge, so send a brief thank-you letter anyway. Do not hesitate to ask why you were turned down. If you do not ask, you will have missed a chance for important feedback on your skills, your self-presentation, or the way the application process worked. You may wish to ask for the names of other organizations that might have similar opportunities.

## ***The Phone Call***

For some students making that first contact by phone can be a little overwhelming. Below you will find an outline to assist you in making a telephone contact with a prospective internship site.

- ◆ First introduce yourself as a Luther College student (include your class standing and your major) and explain that you are looking for internship opportunities in the field of \_\_\_\_ for \_\_\_\_ semester.
- ◆ Then explain how you found out about their organization or internship, for instance:
- ◆ “I would like to know more about the internship you have publicized through the Luther College Career Center.”  
-or-
- ◆ “Your name is listed in the LutherLink as someone who may be willing to sponsor an intern.”  
-or-
- ◆ “I am looking for an internship in (name of career field) within (name of setting: nonprofit, corporate setting, etc.), and I was impressed by your program information in the internship files at Luther College.”
- ◆ Ask if you may arrange a meeting with the site supervisor to talk about an internship in greater detail. Suggest several dates and times which would be convenient for you.
- ◆ Finally, confirm the date, time, name of the person who will interview you, and ask for specific directions to the office before you hang up.
- ◆ Keep a log of all contacts: write down the name and title of the site supervisor (get correct spelling); note if you have been asked to send or bring a résumé, letter, transcript, or references.

If the person you need to reach is not available when you call, explain to the receptionist or voice mail why you are calling, leave a good time of day to reach you at home, or ask for a time that would be good for you to call back.

### **13. Clarify your expectations with your site supervisor.**

Once you have secured an internship, contact your work supervisor and discuss your expectations of the organization and the organization's expectations of you. It is important that you clearly understand your responsibilities and the nature of the organization in order to develop learning objectives which maximize learning and experience. If the organization is new to internships, make sure they will use your skills purposefully and know what you expect.

### **14. Complete paperwork to arrange for credit, audit, or field experience recognition.**

Please see the Internship Coordinator for further details on the different registering options available.

## *Ensuring a Successful Internship*

### **Setting Learning Objectives**

Possibly the most common problem in an internship is conflicting expectations among the student, site supervisor, and faculty supervisor. Defining learning objectives and goals will provide you with a sense of direction and purpose and serve as a standard against which to measure your progress.

The following categories represent broad types of learning objectives:

#### *Applying Classroom Theory*

What have you been learning in the classroom which relates to the world? How are the concepts which you've been reading about in textbooks applied in practice? Ask your professors to suggest theories, ideas, or concepts which might be applied in the career area you are targeting.

#### *Skill Development*

Have you identified some skills that you would like to learn or improve during your internship? In many organizations for example, you may have the chance to develop skills involving the following: operating office or computer equipment; handling a variety of situations simultaneously; organizing or analyzing data, records, or budgets; or improving your teamwork, writing, and speaking abilities.

Your assignments and work environment will determine the types of skills you may develop. For example, in a public relations internship you may gain skill in developing press releases, in a medical internship you may learn to read a medical chart, in a psychology internship you may learn to administer assessment instruments.

#### *Personal Development*

How do you hope to benefit personally from your internship experience? Make a special effort to observe the personal style of supervisors and colleagues. Try to identify clear examples of leadership styles that either promote good working relationships or hinder a productive work environment. Pay attention to how you deal with pressure, tension, and praise in work relationships. How do you communicate what you know to strangers, supervisors, and peers? Learn to recognize when to speak and when to listen.

Part of your personal development will relate to your career planning. Try to understand the employer's organizational chart (formal or informal). What is a typical career path? What sort of education and experience is normally required in each line of work? What can you learn about laws, taxes, and fringe benefits that are important to employees in this field? What grievances are there? What are the personal satisfactions and rewards? Try to obtain knowledge of job opportunities available in this field. Become familiar with occupational literature and professional organizations.

## Developing Your Learning Objectives

When developing your learning objectives, use specific rather than vague phrases to give your site and faculty supervisors an understanding of your needs or direction.

<p><i>Vague</i> I want to learn all about working in a senator's office.</p>	<p><i>Specific</i> I will learn the methods involved in researching legislation for committee assignments. I want to develop communication skills needed to respond to constituents' letters. I will analyze political theories used in campaign planning.</p>
<p><i>Vague</i> I will learn about personnel work.</p>	<p><i>Specific</i> I will study wage and hour laws. I will learn to develop appropriate test items for employment tests. I hope to receive an overall perspective on insurance and benefits provided by employees.</p>
<p><i>Vague</i> This internship will give me experience in the accounting field.</p>	<p><i>Specific</i> I plan to study the methods of cost accounting used by this firm. I will learn to apply the principles of accounting to tax preparation. I want to determine if working for an accounting firm is an appropriate career goal for me.</p>
<p><i>Vague</i> I am very interested in counseling troubled teenagers.</p>	<p><i>Specific</i> I will learn to administer and interpret personality inventories. I hope to develop my potential as a facilitator in group counseling. I plan to research teenage alcoholism and identify at least five factors that contribute to the problem.</p>

Samples of learning objectives have been included in the Internship Packet to assist you.

If you are having difficulty defining or establishing clear work or learning objectives, arrange to meet with your faculty supervisor or a career counselor to refine your written draft.

## **Internship Directories**

AAF (American Advertising Federation) Internship Directory  
The Backdoor Guidebook  
The Big Green Internship Book  
The Broadcasting Internship Guide for College Students  
The Complete Guide to Washington Internships  
Directory of International Internships  
Directory of Internships in Youth Development  
The History Internship Book  
The Human Rights Internships Book  
International Internships and Volunteer Programs  
The Internship Bible  
Internship Opportunities at the Smithsonian  
Internships (4 vols.)  
The Journalism Internship Guide for College Students  
National Directory of Arts Internships  
The National Directory of Internships  
New Careers Directory, The – Internships and Professional Opportunities in Technology and Social Change  
Oak Ridge Institute for Science and Education – Resources Guide (Internships)  
Peterson's Internships  
The Sports Internship Book  
The Student Guide to Mass Media Internships  
The Urban Life Center Internship Guide  
Washington DC Internships in Law and Public Policy  
Yale Daily News Guide to Internships (Kaplan)

## **The Career Center Web Site: <http://career.luther.edu>**

Our web site offers internship listings along with a plethora of other information. CareerConnection is our comprehensive database of internship listings as well as other career opportunities. The internship postings come to the Career Center from various organizations and industries throughout the country. Also, look to our web site for links to additional sites offering internships. As you search, keep in mind that additional vacancy listings, internship directories, and internship search materials are available in the Career Resource Library in the Career Center. Be sure to take full advantage of the resources available to you!