Internship Basics: Getting Started

What is an internship?
An internship is a supervised, pre-professional learning experience. The intern provides services to an employer in exchange for experience, academic credit, money or some combination thereof.

Why should I get an internship?
Ideally, an internship provides experience that enhances what you learn in the classroom. It can give you a big advantage in your job search and your professional development by providing “real world” experience, connecting you with a network of people who can help you find a job, giving you work samples for your clip file or portfolio and providing you with professional references.

How do I get started?
Based on the skills you wish to build, identify what type of internship you would like. Consider all your options. You should begin your search a full term before you want to do an internship if you want a position in Eugene/Springfield or two terms beforehand if you are looking outside the area. Take time to research and initiate contact with potential employers/sponsors. The Career & Academic Advisers in SOJC Student Services can help you prepare for the application process by helping you fine-tune cover letters and resumes. Appointments and walk-in hours are available most weekdays. Also remember that your faculty can be invaluable resources for advice and feedback in this area.

Where do I look?
The SOJC has a job/internship database that grows nearly every day. You can find the database at http://journalism.uoregon.edu/opportunities and be sure to check out the postings on twitter @SOJCCareers. Other places to check include the UO Career Center’s internship database, professional organizations and nationwide databases like internships.com. Also, talk to everyone you know about internships: your instructors, current/past internship coordinators, friends and family. Find out what internships your friends or classmates have done. The more people you talk to, the more options you will have because the vast majority of available internships are never posted online.

It is possible to develop your own internship with your faculty adviser’s help. In cases where students have been interested in a particular organization or company but no opportunities were advertised, many students have had success approaching these employers on their own and persuading them that arranging an internship would benefit both parties.

How do I recognize a good opportunity?
Find out what training or feedback the sponsor provides. Whether an internship is worth your time and worth University credit depends on whether it will be a learning experience that supplements and enriches your course work and provides insights into potential careers. Seek a situation in which you will get frequent feedback and thoughtful direction from the professional staff.

An internship is often what you make of it. The SOJC recommends drafting a written agreement with your faculty adviser’s help at the beginning of the internship. It can ensure that both your and your employers’ expectations are met. Such agreements might include: hours, specific goals, training or shadowing opportunities and timelines. The more communication that occurs up front, the better the experience will be.

Are there any paid internships?
Although most internships are unpaid, some employers offer an hourly wage, stipend, tuition, or travel assistance. In some cases, it may be possible to be paid and to receive academic credit. See other side of this handout for more information on getting credit for internships by enrolling J 404.

Contact your Career and Academic Advisers in SOJC Student Services for further questions or help with application materials.