FINDING AN INTERNSHIP

There are a number of important things you should do to find a good internship opportunity. In addition to discussing your plans for internship with your academic advisor, attending the departmental internship fair and internship informational meetings, you should develop a strong resume to showcase your skills and find an organization that is a good match for your interests and expertise.

Developing Your Résumé
Your résumé should be considered a communication document intended to represent you to an organization. Therefore, it is important that it contain appropriate information about your professional experience and educational background that will demonstrate your potential to be a successful intern. Many models for résumé development are available, and you should create a résumé in the standard format that best meets your needs. Have your faculty internship director review the résumé with you.

Matching You with an Organization
Internship openings are advertised in a number of ways, including those posted at Cistern Online. As you consider a specific internship opportunity, there are a number of questions you will want to ask about yourself and the prospective organization. A good way to structure this process is to answer the following questions. They are designed to give you insight into your own skills and the prospective organization’s needs.

- How adequate is your overall academic performance?
- How adequate is your academic performance in the specific area in which you are seeking employment?
- What extracurricular activities have you participated in that might relate to your internship?
- What do you want to learn, do, or contribute in your internship?
- What, specifically, does the organization need from you?
- How well do your needs and expectations match the organization’s needs and expectations?
- How would you evaluate your ability to assume responsibility?
- What are your expectations regarding an internship?

These questions should help you focus on how your needs match those of the prospective internship organization.
Making Initial Contact
At some point in the internship application process, you may be expected to participate in a formal interview with organizational representatives. This interview is extremely important because it allows both parties to evaluate potential, develop rapport, and clarify expectations. The following suggestions and recommended guidelines are designed to help you with the interview process.

Preparation Suggestions:
- Prepare for the interview as though you were applying for a permanent career-oriented job.
- Be sure to have your résumé in proper order.
- Conduct a self analysis
  - What are my strengths and weaknesses?
  - What are my accomplishments?
  - What can I offer the organization?
  - What relevant course work have I had that lends itself to a particular internship?
  - What activities give me the greatest satisfaction?
  - What do I want from the internship?
  - What are my career goals?
- Determine whether you need to bring samples of your work with you to the interview for perusal (i.e., writing samples, photographs, computer graphic design work, etc…).
- Conduct a background study of the organization. Your ability to express familiarity with the organization can be beneficial to you.
- Dress for the interview in conservative clothing. First impressions are often lasting ones.
- Be sure to give yourself enough time so that you arrive a few minutes early.

Interviewing Guidelines:
The interview can be helpful in clarifying expectations and developing rapport. It’s worthwhile preparing for the interview in advance. Here are some guidelines that may prove helpful:
- Express interest both verbally and nonverbally during the interview.
- Listen carefully to each question.
- If you need to clarify something, do not interrupt the interviewer. Wait until the question or comment is fully made.
- Be genuine. Trying too hard to make a good impression can make you appear insincere or phony.
- Don’t prepare for questions by developing “canned” responses.
- Interviewers notice how motivated and achievement oriented you seem to be.
- Be sure to ask for the specific expectations of the organization regarding the internship – in particular, the job requirements, work hours, final products or objectives. This is especially important in determining whether the internship merits credit.

Remember: The interview is your opportunity to make a good first impression. It also provides you with an opportunity to clarify the expectations. Clear expectations before the start of the internship can dramatically help in making the experience more enriching and worthwhile for both you and the organization.