

Points to Consider when Looking for an Internship, Externship or Field Experience

Internships, externships and field experiences can provide a depth of knowledge regarding your particular major or area of study. You can gain valuable skills and knowledge in a work environment which will better prepare you for future employment. Opportunities such as these can be paid or voluntary depending on the particular organization and your own personal needs.

The following information will help provide you with some guidance in things to consider when looking for an opportunity. It is a guideline and by no means guarantees your success. Locating an internship, externship or field experience is much like attending class. Each class session builds on the information learned in the previous session. So, when looking, you should strongly consider each of the following points prior to jumping into the search process. You will need to make a commitment each day or week to locating an opportunity as it takes time and sometimes a lot of patience.

- 1. Write down your reasons for wanting an internship opportunity.** Are you looking for this opportunity to gain valuable work experience and knowledge or are you looking for this opportunity to fulfill an academic requirement? What part of the city, state, country or world are you willing to relocate to? How many hours per week are you looking to work? Do you want to get paid or are you willing to volunteer? What length of time are you willing to commit to (week, semester, year)? Are you seeking departmental credit?
- 2. Define your skills and goals.** What skills do you see to be your strengths? What skills would you like to develop? What do you hope to achieve in this opportunity? How will you know if you have achieved success? What things are you willing or not willing to do? How will you relay this information to a prospective employer?

3. Put together a proposal. You will need this if you are seeking departmental credit. Please contact the appropriate department as each department may have their own guidelines. Your proposal may contain information from the previous two points. Once you secure an opportunity, you may need to include additional information like where you will be working, who you will be reporting to, and how many hours a week you will be working to name a few. A proposal is a good tool to use when talking with your departmental advisor as he/she may also be able to offer some possible opportunities or suggestions for you to consider.

4. Think about your resources. How can you go about locating possible internship opportunities?

A. Register with BroncoJobs at <https://www.broncojobs.wmich.edu>.

Through this site, you will be able to search for many opportunities throughout the world. Remember part-time, seasonal and volunteer opportunities are also great ways to gain experience. Be sure to keep your contact information up to date.

B. Network – Talk with family, friends, former supervisors or church members. Let them know what you are looking for. Career & Student Employment Services will also have semester campus network sessions with employers.

C. Mentor Programs – Does your school or college have a mentor program? What about your parents or other family members place of employment? Mentors are a great way to learn about how to get into a certain field. They may not be able to hire but could be a valuable asset for career information, informational interviews, or resume review. You can also search for WMU Alumni Mentors in BroncoJobs at www.broncojobs.wmich.edu.

D. Conferences and Professional Associations – Attend conferences or become a member of a professional association as a graduate or undergraduate student. You will be able to meet people who are in your field of interest from across the city, state, country or world. Present a paper or conduct a workshop at a conference. Check with your department or various faculty members for ideas and options. Many professional organizations offer discounted rates to student members.

- E. Student Volunteer Services** – Look for volunteer opportunities to enhance or develop your skills. Contact Student Volunteer Services at 387-2476 or check out their web site at <http://volunteerservices.wmich.edu/>. You can also find volunteer opportunities on BroncoJobs.
- F. Faculty Members/Instructors** – These people work in your field of study. Many of them have attended other institutions of higher learning or have worked in other parts of the state, country or world. They can be a wealth of information. Ask them for suggestions, ideas, and input. You may also need a faculty mentor if seeking departmental credit. A faculty member can be a great resource and support in your efforts to secure an internship, field experience, externship, research opportunity or full-time employment.
- G. Department Literature and Bulletin Boards** – Stop by your department office to see if they have any information. Many departments maintain either a web site or bulletin board filled with not only internship opportunities but also research or scholarship opportunities.
- H. Trade Journals or Publications** – Again, check with your department to see if they have a library of resource information. Many journals or professional publications will advertise possible opportunities throughout the world. Also, with a paid membership to many professional associations, you may receive a copy of association publications and newsletters.
- I. Career Fairs** – Attend campus career fairs for ideas to make connections with employers. Talk with them about your plans. They may be able to offer you some suggestions. Look for opportunities within the local community or even your own hometown or surrounding area.
- J. Internet Sites** – Use the web to locate geographical information, organizations which focus on your area of interest, or to research a particular company or organization. [Click here](#) for a link for a list of useful internship web sites.

- K. Newspapers** – Read local newspapers for possible ideas. Most can be accessed via the internet either free or for a small fee. Perhaps an employer is looking for a full-time employee in something of interest to you. Write that employer. Let them know that while you may not be ready for full-time employment you would have an interest in an internship.
- L. Employment Agencies or Staffing Services** – This can be a great way to get your foot in the door with a particular organization and learn the ropes.
- M. Cold Calls** – Make a phone call or send a letter of inquiry to prospective employers. Be sure to research the organization before making contact. They will want to know what you know about them and why you think you would fit into their organization.
- N. Registered Student Organizations** – Get involved on campus. Take up a leadership position within the organization. This is a great way to develop skills and meet others with your same interests. If you decide not to get involved in an organization, you may still be able to attend events sponsored on campus and throughout the community. Many organizations sponsor local, state, national and international speakers. Attending sponsored programs can be a great way to learn more about your particular field of study or avenues of ways to get involved.
- 5. Put together your search tools** – In order to be successful in the search process, you will need to be able to provide or do the following.
- A. Create Your Resume** - This is a necessary tool when working with prospective employers. Contact Career & Student Employment Services for a review of your resume. You can reach the office at 387-2745 to learn more about appointment times or drop in hours. Resume information is also available on the web at <http://www.broncojobs.wmich.edu/> and click on Career Services Manual.

- B. Write a Cover Letter** – Develop two or three options to use when contacting employers via mail. The letter should accompany your resume and contain information about who you are, what you are looking for, and what you can bring to the organization. Again, you can get assistance with cover letters through Career & Student Employment Services at 387-2745. You may also wish to visit the web at <http://www.broncojobs.wmich.edu/> and click on the Career Services Manual for some examples.
- C. Get a List of References** – Talk to people who you can rely on to give you a good job or character reference. People to consider include former or current supervisors, professors and/or instructors, advisors, and anyone else that can support your work ethic, skills and abilities. Family members should not be used as a reference.
- D. Conduct Practice Interviews** – Prior to a real or practice interview, you will want to have researched the organization/company and have extra copies of your resume and references on hand. You may also wish to conduct an information interview with someone within an organization that relates to your field of interest. To learn more about informational interviews and Practice Interview Days, contact Career & Student Employment Services at 387-2745 or visit www.broncojobs.wmich.edu.
- E. Produce a Portfolio** – Create a notebook or computer disc of information that will support your resume, cover letter and personal interview. Included letters of reference, certificates of accomplishment, project outlines, and flyers.

Resources to Volunteer, Seasonal, Internship and Full-time Employment Opportunities

* The College of Arts and Sciences and Western Michigan University are not responsible for the contents, operation, and upkeep of the following sites. This list is not comprehensive by any means. It is a small sample of resource information available to students who are seeking various employment related opportunities utilizing the internet.

<http://www.collegegrad.com> – This site is not just for students who have a degree. The site contains a job search engine for full-time, internship, volunteer, and study abroad opportunities throughout the United States and the world.

<http://www.coolworks.com> – A listing of seasonal employment and summer jobs in camps, resorts, parks, and ranches nationwide.

<http://www.eco.org> – The Environmental Careers Organization is the country's leading environmental career development organization.

<http://www.ecoemploy.com> – Posting of environmental jobs and careers in the United States and Canada.

<http://www.house.gov/lowey/federalinterns.html> – A listing of internship opportunities available to undergraduate, graduate, and law students within the federal government.

<http://www.jobs.lawinfo.com/> - A connection to legal professionals on the web and a comprehensive employment site for individuals seeking employment in the legal community.

<http://www.monster.com> – Contains many links and resources for individuals seeking various employment opportunities including

national relocation directory, job search techniques, available job opportunities, and resume posting and notification services.

<http://www.nassembly.org/nassembly> – The National Association of Health and Human Service Organizations provides a listing of opportunities for individuals seeking positions with non-profit human services organizations nationwide.

<http://www.nationjob.com/media/> - A site for individuals interested in various advertising and media related positions.

<http://www.nonprofitcareer.com> – This site is dedicated to individuals seeking volunteer and employment opportunities in nonprofit organizations.

<http://www.onlinesports.com> – This site contains a link for individuals interested in sports related careers including internships and full-time employment.

<http://www.statejobs.com> – A search engine for government and private employers by geographical area.

<http://www.summerjobs.com> – A listing of summer positions across North America and the world for individuals seeking internships, summer jobs, resort and hospitality employment and overseas work.

<http://www.theSCA.org> – A national listing of SCA Conservation Internships. Contains information regarding expense-paid positions throughout the U.S. for service in national parks, forests and cultural sites. Seasonal and long-term positions.

<http://www.tvjobs.com/intern.htm> – A site developed to help individuals locate opportunities in broadcasting. Scroll down to the Education heading for the link of available internship opportunities.

<http://www.westwords.com> – A resource site for job search information for college students and full-time employees. Includes links to job opportunities, job search techniques, and financial aid and scholarship resources.

<http://www.wetfeet.com> – Provides an internship search engine.

<http://www.studentjobs.gov> – Federal employment opportunities for undergraduates.