



Internships

Find Additional
Resources at
bit.ly/niRTTC



123 Murray-Herrick Campus Center – Saint Paul, Minnesota • (651) 962-6761 • career@stthomas.edu • www.stthomas.edu/careerdevelopment

What is an internship?

An internship is different from a job in that this experience should be deeper and richer than simply completing tasks, as you would in a job. Internships involve higher levels of responsibility and independence usually. They are also characterized by in-depth training and supervision.

In the best of internship experiences, true career mentoring, observation and informational interview opportunities may be a part. Ultimately, your goal is to learn what people do in those careers and work settings, so that you can decide if you want to pursue that kind of work after you graduate.

Internships may be paid, or unpaid. They may be part-time or full-time. They may last for one semester, or longer. Some academic programs will require you to intern for a minimum number of hours. Know what you need and what fits your life.

Potential outcomes from internship experience

- Gain hands-on work experience in a professional setting.
- Develop and practice marketable skills.
- See the connection between academics and the work-world.
- Draw conclusions about careers and/or organizations of interest.
- Develop a network of professional contacts.
- Great resume-builder.
- A job offer!

First steps

What do you want to learn and experience?

Before embarking on the internship search, you first need to determine what you are looking for.

Some students will try to find an experience related to their academic major or minor.

Others know they have an interest in a particular industry.

- Can you identify fields of interest to you? e.g. management, communications, human resources, psychology, information technology
- Can you identify industries/sectors of interest to you? e.g. non-profit social services, insurance, banking, software development, manufacturing

If you cannot articulate what kind of work you want to experience, then you are not ready to write a convincing letter, or ask people for leads.

Too many ideas will make the task seem overwhelming. So, the trick is to narrow your options.

Please **make an appointment to see one of the Career Specialists** in the Career Development Center; they can help you better narrow down what kind of internship you would like to pursue.

What do you need to apply?

- A **resume** reviewing your past academic, work, and volunteer experiences.
- A **letter of interest** describing the reason you are applying, your career interests, and the skills you offer an employer.

The Career Development Center offers seminars on writing letters and resumes, handouts and samples are available in the Career Resource Library, and information is on the website as well.

How to locate an internship site

Here are a few of many search strategies available:

- Search the positions posted to the University of St. Thomas Career Development Center Job and Internship Listings website www.stthomas.edu/careerdevelopment/joblistings
- Talk to faculty, family, friends, friends of friends, people you meet on the bus, anyone you meet and let them know what kind of internship you seek. Very often, you will get the best leads this way.
- Identify organizations of interest, research their website, get a contact name and call them to ask about internship opportunities.
- Develop your own internship. Many organizations may have not had an intern, but would be interested. It is your offer to help the employer, to take care of projects that no one seems to have time for that will be appealing.
- Undergraduates can check out positions posted through the On-Campus Interview Program. Resumes are due two times a year, September and October, and again February and March. www.stthomas.edu/careerdevelopment/oci

Career Development Center Services

- Attend seminars: Job & Internship Search Strategies, Interviewing Skills, Resume & Cover Letters www.stthomas.edu/careerdevelopment/events
- Schedule an appointment with a career specialist, call 651-962-6761.
- Use Pop-in Hours to get a quick question answered, or a resume reviewed. Call the front desk for specific hours available.
- Do a mock interview and role play an interview experience to polish your presentation and calm your nerves. Call (651) 962-6761 to set up.

Sample thank you & acceptance letter

Internships are pre-professional experiences, so why not begin the experience in a professional manner? If you have not been provided with an "offer letter" by your internship site, then you should write your supervisor your version in the form of an acceptance letter. Below is a sample.

Date

Supervisor Name

Title

Company

Address

City, State Zip code

Dear _____,

Thank you for your call yesterday. I am very happy to accept your offer to be an intern in the _____ department, with you as my supervisor. It is my understanding that my duties will include supporting you with _____ projects, creating _____, and doing research on _____. In addition, you have been very generous in offering to let me shadow other staff in their roles and attend management meetings. I know that I will have a great learning experience as a result of my intern responsibilities.

As we discussed, I will begin my internship on *[date]* and it will conclude on *[date]*. My wage will be \$10.00 per hour and you have indicated my parking will be complimentary.

Again, my sincerest thanks for the opportunity to work with you and your staff. I look forward to making great contributions and adding value to your organization.

Sincerely,

Your Name

Your address

Your Phone

Your Email

Clarifying details such as the above in writing helps prevent misunderstandings, and clarifies expectations. It is good professional practice.

Making the most of internships

Having realistic expectations about an internship will bring you the best attitude throughout your experience.

Expect to be Confused.

When everything is new and lots of information is being thrown at you as you train in, it may seem a little overwhelming. It will take awhile to learn your role, your responsibilities, the organization and area you will work in.

TIP: Carry a notebook/paper with you at all times to jot down people's names, their jobs, instructions, anything you could forget.

Expect to be Bored.

You may be given smaller tasks at the beginning that may not be of much interest to you. This is normal and will help get your feet wet; things will pick up. You are bright and you may complete projects faster than your supervisor expected. If this happens when your supervisor is not around, what will you have to do?

TIP: Fill time by reading as much as you can about the industry, the organization, the career area you are in. Find out who else you can offer assistance to when you have nothing to do. Be self-motivated and see other things to do—be creative!

Expect to be Busy & Independent.

Once you are up and running and they know they can trust you with responsibility, don't be surprised when you are given a lot to do and then given independence. Busy professionals will not have time to hover over you.

TIP: Make sure you are clear about the details of each task, the supervisor's expectations, any deadlines. Practice good time management! Ask questions.

Maximize your learning

There are many things you can do to maximize your learning and what you take away from any internship experience.

Ask 'Why?'

Make sure you understand the overall function of your area and how your individual responsibilities fit into the bigger picture of the operation.

Ask for More.

- More responsibility if and when you are ready for it.
- More information, e.g. can your supervisor recommend a professional publication/journal on that industry or field?
- More contacts, e.g. conduct informational interviews with professionals in the organization.

Be Observant.

- What are the communication channels like? Flat? Hierarchical?
- Who has the power? Why do they have the power?
- How do customers/clients perceive the organization?
- How are decisions made?
- Is the atmosphere relaxed? Frenetic? Pressure-filled? Fun?
- Do staff laugh and have a good time while being productive?

Check in with yourself.

As you observe what the people and culture are like, check in with yourself. How does all of this feel to you? Comfortable?

The ultimate outcome of any internship is for you to decide if you enjoyed the work, and meshed well with that kind of work environment. If this one was not a good fit, then plan another internship.

Ending the internship

Be sure to have a final review meeting with your supervisor. Learn from the experience as much as you can; feedback is invaluable. Ask for specifics, "to what extent did I demonstrate skills x,y, and z? What contributions do you think I made? Areas I need to work on?"

Also offer your assessment of the internship experience. What did you learn? What did you value? Areas for development?

If you want to work there after graduation, tell them you are interested. If there are no openings, ask for referrals. Do they know other organizations?

Always ask for a Job Reference from your supervisor. "Would you feel comfortable if I listed you as one of my references for future job applications?"

Finally, always send a thank you note to your supervisor(s)!

Frequently Asked Questions Regarding Internships

What do I do if I am not sure what kind of work I can/want to do?

Make an appointment to see a career specialist in the Career Development Center. They can help you identify your interests and strengths, provide information about common careers associated with your major and help you brainstorm ideas. Call (651) 962-6761.

Where do I look for advertised internships?

The Career Development Center maintains a website where organizations post internships: www.stthomas.edu/careerdevelopment/joblistings

It is recommended that you use the Advanced Search feature to isolate Internships only, do this by logging in to Tommie Careers at tommiecareers.stthomas.edu. You can also set up email notification if you want the system to email you when new internships connected to your interest areas are posted.

Can I make up my own internship?

Sometimes it is possible to work with a family friend or an individual working in a place of interest to offer your internship services. Preparing your approach would be important, so meeting with a career specialist first could help.

What do I need to apply for an internship?

Most employers require a resume and a letter of interest (aka 'cover letter'). Career professionals recommend that you are prepared to explain why you want that type of internship, what you hope to gain, and how you can be of assistance (skills you offer). In addition, researching the organization before submitting a letter and resume will be helpful.

When would be an ideal time for me to start looking for summer internships?

On the one hand, it's never too early to get a head start. On the other hand, many employers do not really know what their plans will be until early – mid spring semester.

Many internships are developed through networking. So, between now and next summer, it's a good idea to make some contacts and gather information. Let people know what you are interested in doing, and stay in touch with them over the months as summer draws closer. To apply to internships that are advertised, plan to get really active by February.

Note: Some large corporations may advertise, interview and hire their summer interns the fall before. Many employers interview through the Career Center's On-Campus Interviewing Program. Common career fields for fall internship recruiting include: finance, accounting, actuary, information technology, to name a few.