

WHAT IS AN INTERNSHIP?

An internship is a short-term work experience in a professional setting which provides you with a combination of training, supervision, and evaluation. It may be through an established internship program or something that you and the employer create together to fit your skills and interests and the employer's specific needs. Internships may be paid or unpaid.

WHY SHOULD I DO AN INTERNSHIP?

In today's competitive job market, an internship is just one more step in creating a well-rounded portfolio of experiences that will give you a competitive edge in the job market. Internships or other relevant work experience have the following benefits:

- Gaining new skills and professional contacts in the "real world."
- Exploring career interests without making a long-term commitment to a position or field.
- Clarifying your interests, skills, and career goals.
- Establishing a relationship with your supervisor who may serve as an important professional reference when you begin a job search or who may be inclined to hire you at that company after a successful internship experience.
- Applying classroom knowledge to the workplace which may in turn shape your course of study.

WHEN SHOULD I DO AN INTERNSHIP?

At any point in your career! As a student at Amherst, you should start considering internships right away. They are an excellent opportunity for all students, those who are undecided on their major and exploring many career options and those who have a clear sense of their interests and career path. Internships may involve a full-time commitment over the summer or may consist of a few hours of work each week during the academic year.

HOW DO I DECIDE WHAT KIND OF INTERNSHIP TO PURSUE?

Before you begin the process of looking for an internship, answer the following questions:

- What fields interest you?
- Where do you want to be located geographically?
- What are your financial considerations?
- What kind of mentoring or supervision would you like/need?
- What other opportunities might stem from this experience?

HOW CAN I FIND AN INTERNSHIP?

There are many ways to find an internship. Amherst College offers access to many opportunities through our alumni and local, national, and international partnerships. You may also search for internships through online resources on the Career Center website. Keep in mind that almost 70 percent of internships are not posted anywhere and can only be found or created through networking.

INTERNSHIPS

Amherst Select Internship Program (ASIP)

This is an exciting program that features over 400 internship opportunities in the U.S. and around the world. These opportunities are offered by alumni, parents, and friends of Amherst College. Amherst College students must meet a number of requirements, including attending certain workshops and getting your resume approved, to be eligible to apply for these summer internships. All class years are eligible though most participants selected are sophomores and juniors.

Vela Summer Scholars

A team of Amherst interns support and facilitate a five week intensive enrichment program for incoming seventh and eighth graders.

Career Center Online Resources

Online internship resources can be accessed through the Career Center homepage.

Quest: The Career Center posts jobs and internships that we receive from recruiters, alumni, and many other sources who are particularly interested in Amherst College students. You can use Quest just like you would any other search engine and also track career-specific panels, fairs, and informational sessions.

Liberal Arts Career Network (LACN) and Nationwide Internships Consortium (NIC): Selective liberal arts colleges collaborate to post a range of internships and share them with students from other schools in the network/consortium.

Other: The Career Center also holds memberships to national internship databases like InternshipsUSA and Career Shift. Idealist.org is another great resource, in particular for internships in the nonprofit sector.

Network and design your own internship!

Use the Amherst College Alumni Network and your own contacts to connect with an organization that interests you. For more information about how to create these connections, contact the Career Center to set up a meeting with a Career Advisor.

WHERE CAN I GET FUNDING FOR AN UNPAID INTERNSHIP?

There are several sources of funding for summer internships. For more information, see the Summer Funding webpage.

INTERNSHIPS

HOW CAN I MAKE THE MOST OF MY INTERNSHIP?

BE ENTHUSIASTIC AND PROFESSIONAL

- Show a sincere interest in the organization.
- Approach an internship as professionally as you would a “real” job.
- Maintain a positive attitude no matter what your duties - never complain.
- If possible, be there first - if you arrive a week before other interns, you may get your pick of assignments, as well as getting more individualized attention.
- Expect to work hard, even though you may not be receiving pay.
- Show that you are a team player (e.g. offer to help your colleagues if/when appropriate).

CLARIFY YOUR GOALS FOR THE INTERNSHIP

- An ideal internship should include a training/mentoring component and the opportunity to do substantive work, in addition to the necessary administrative tasks.
- You should expect to gain transferable skills, professional contacts, and more knowledge about that particular field.
- To avoid disappointment, get as much clarity about the position as possible before you begin. Write down explicit goals with your supervisor and review them regularly.
- Make sure that you accomplish at least a few tasks that will look impressive on your résumé.
- Do not be shy to ask for what you want in order to make it a worthwhile experience. They are trying to please you as much as you are trying to please them. In fact, many companies use internship programs to help them identify and recruit top talent before another company does.
- Make sure that you are both learning and contributing as well.

LEARN AS MUCH AS YOU CAN

- Oftentimes, just paying attention and being inquisitive can be your best teacher.
- Keep notes of what you are learning, what you are accomplishing, and any contacts you make.
- If you feel up to the challenge, ask for more responsibility. Express an interest in doing more substantive work and be as specific as possible. Specificity shows thoughtfulness.
- Don't be afraid to admit when you are in over your head and ask for help.
- Don't be limited by the department or supervisor you are working for. Think about what you would most like to do in the organization and get to know the person who does it. Invite them to lunch and tell them you are trying to absorb as much information as you can and that what they do is of particular interest to you.
- Take every opportunity to talk to/impress the senior people without being obnoxious about it. Express your opinion, ask questions, talk about other things besides work. Just don't be so zealous in your schmoozing that you ignore your co-workers or turn them off. (Supervisors may ask your co-workers' opinions about your performance and demeanor.)
- Once your internship is over, stay on the radar screen. Continue your relationship with the employer and stay in touch for future job possibilities, networking, or references.