

American University
BIOL/ENVS INTERNSHIPS
Fall 2005 – Spring 2006

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You've made a very wise decision by choosing to do an internship while you are a student at American University. Many of the offices with which you could work are very difficult to get into as a new graduate without experience. By working as an intern, you will add work experience, and perhaps a relevant publication, to your resume. Your internship will complement your coursework and help launch you into your aspired career.

This experience can be as rewarding as you make it. You should aim to use your internship to extend your classroom knowledge by applying what you've learned in school to an actual work setting. For you, the coming months can also be a time of self-reflection. You have the advantage of exploring a viable work option and validating or repudiating your ideas about a particular career path or work environment.

An internship stems from the collective effort of you, the university, and your employer. Unlike the cozy environs of the classroom, however, when you check into your work site don't expect an atmosphere that focuses attention on you. Even while you are on the job, you may not be at the top of your supervisor's agenda. In the worst case scenario, you might even be viewed as a nuisance by an employer who doesn't have the time to give you the guidance you may need.

One of your first challenges, then, is to determine who at your work site knows what you need to know and has the patience and personality to be your mentor. Anticipate various situations and problems you might encounter and compile a list of pertinent questions. Don't be afraid to ask them.

Remember, the person most responsible for maximizing your experience is you.

Take the lead in this learning process by asking, observing, analyzing, and doing things you may have never done before. It will help you to have a more productive and enjoyable experience.

Who's Who for you at AU:

Marie Spaulding (x1799) is your contact at the Career Center. The center has a number of programs designed to help you. You are encouraged to take full advantage of them. Ms. Spaulding has steered many students through the internship process, and is probably familiar with any situation you might encounter. She will be the main interface between you and your internship employer. Should a discrepancy occur between your job description and your actual duties, should an intolerable personality conflict arise, or should communications break down, etc., it is important that you bring it to Ms. Spaulding's attention at once. Addressing issues early may prevent major problems from developing and can salvage otherwise disastrous situations.

Kiho Kim (2181). I can help you to choose an internship that will best help you to reach your career goals, tailor your resume to the positions you select and groom you for the interview process. Those students interested in an internship that focuses on policy, environmental science or medical research

should especially talk with me about identifying the right place to work. Also, if you have any questions relating to the academic or professional components of the internship, please see me.

David Carlini (x2184). Students enrolling in internships for academic credit (BIO-491) need to see me for permission to register for the course. I also provide guidance for those students interested in biotechnology internships. In addition, you will need the permission of the department chair, **Cathy Schaeff (x2175)**, to register for the academic credit.

Finding an internship:

During the semester, take advantage of the events the Career Center sponsors by checking the calendar of the Career Center: <http://www.american.edu/careercenter/events/eventscalendar.htm>. At the very least, make an appointment at the Career Center for a resume critique and create an account in AU CareerWeb. To create an account, go to the Career Center web site. Under AU CareerWeb, click on 'create a new account.' Please be sure to have your resume critiqued by a Career Center advisor *before* uploading it onto AU CareerWeb. Then search the Jobs and Internships listed in CareerWeb!

Both Dr. Kim and Dr. Carlini are also good resources for brainstorming about how to match your interests with the right employer. Often times, we know of specific opportunities that are new and are not yet posted in AU CareerWeb. Set up a time to meet with one of us.

Course Objectives: To enhance your experience in a working environment through:

- increased understanding of the organization and of the factors influencing organizational behavior;
- completion of a work product that contributes significantly to the internship organization or to the field in which you would like to work and to your own resume;
- developing the personal, interpersonal, and technical skills you need to succeed in the career you choose.

Requirements:

- 1) You may enroll for 1 – 6 credit hours. One credit hour requires that you work for 8 hours/week for 12 weeks; two credits hours require 10 hours/week for 12 weeks; 3 credit hours require 15 hours/week for 12 weeks and 6 credit hours require 20 – 24 hours/week for 12 weeks.
- 2) You need to meet with one of us at least one week before you begin the internship to discuss what you plan to accomplish in the time you have at the site. We will also review the assignments described below. Please email or telephone us to set up a time.
- 3) Three written assignments. As this course has no exams, submitting your papers/projects on time becomes even more important. Each week an assignment is late will cost you one letter grade.

We are requiring you to keep photocopies of all papers submitted to me. Should the need arise be ready to submit a second copy of your paper.

This is where you'll begin to develop your definition of professionalism. This word means different things at different work sites. To make the most of your internship, WE suggest that at a minimum, your concept include punctuality, performance and resourcefulness. In order to perform effectively make sure you understand your assignments before tackling them. If you need clarification, do not hesitate to ask your supervisor. Make every effort to complete tasks ahead of schedule. This way you will be giving your supervisor an opportunity to check your work and allowing yourself enough time for last minute

revisions. This pacing will be greatly appreciated by your workmates. Once you start a task, and realize you have a question, try a few simple ideas for finding the answer on your own before you return to your supervisor. This will highlight your independence and focus and it will minimize the labor involved for the staff at your site office.

Other important characteristics include a good sense of humor, a willingness to be flexible, to be cooperative and to go above and beyond the basics of an assignment, and to be as self-reliant as possible.

Grades

Employer Evaluation 45%

Your supervisor will be asked to evaluate your performance on the job. Also, I will be conferring with this person from time to time.

Research paper/project 25%

Objectives paper/timeline 15%

Photo and typical day description 15%

Assignment descriptions and due dates.

ASSIGNMENT 1. Due on Monday of your second week on site. Must be in my box in 101 Hurst by 5 pm.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES/ORGANIZATIONAL ANALYSIS

This paper should be three to five pages in length (double-spaced). At the top put your name, home, work, and cell numbers, and best times to reach you at each. Also list the name, title, email address and telephone number of your immediate supervisor.

This paper may be informal, yet must be well thought out and realistic. Begin the paper by discussing why you chose to undertake this internship and what you hope to gain from your experience. Include a brief timeline describing each of your goals and when you expect to accomplish them.

The next section should be descriptive and will require you to become thoroughly familiar with your internship employer. Make sure your paper includes:

- 1) a brief history of the organization -- why, when, how it began;
- 2) the organization's goals and major policy or science efforts;
- 3) the internal structure of the organization – by diagram and description;
- 4) descriptions of the clientele or constituents and explanations of their relationships with the organization;
- 5) the organization's relationship with relevant agencies, congressional committees, and other pertinent governmental entities;
- 6) a discussion of your relationship with the office, i.e. duties, responsibilities, opportunities.

ASSIGNMENT 2. Due on the Monday of your last full week at the work site. DO you really want this to come in so late? In the internship syllabus template it is due in the first two weeks. That way, if the student is encountering problems or has other issues you will know earlier in the semester. Please email to me a digital photo of you and your direct supervisor, working at one of your favorite tasks and describe in 50 words or so what a typical day at work was like for you; include a description of your favorite part of the job.

In a separate paragraph write three compelling sentences that describe your internship. These sentences are for you to put in your resume or in a cover letter for a job. The idea is to tout both the organization and your responsibilities in it. Remember, the rhetorical goal for this exercise is to show that you have gained valuable experience working for an impressive organization. EMAIL THE PHOTO AND DESCRIPTIONS TO ME by the due date.

ASSIGNMENT 3A. PAPER DUE in my box in room 101 Hurst by 5 pm on the Friday of your last week on site. SUBSTANTIVE RESEARCH PAPER (8-10 pages)

This paper, about 8 to 10 pages, will be the result of your productivity from the moment you get on the job. It should reflect the timeline you handed in as your first assignment. I recommend that you discuss it with your supervisor within your first full week on the job.

This paper will relate directly to some aspect of your work. It may include research done on the job, but must include outside research as well— sit down with your supervisor and analyze a major need of the organization. You will function as a consultant. Your paper will describe a resolution for the need that you will identify through your conversations with your supervisor. The topic selected must be narrow enough to be covered with a small research effort. The assignment must be approved by me. This can be done in person or over the phone. Call to make an appointment.

Examples of suitable projects are developing a public education campaign, preparing a plan for coordinating a campaign or program, writing an article for an internal newsletter, or conducting experiments for a research laboratory.

OR

ASSIGNMENT 3B. PAPER DUE on the same schedule as 3A. PUBLISHABLE PAPER (of any length)

To maximize your internship experience, to benefit your internship organization, and to provide you with a special work product for your resume, consider writing a paper or article that you will publish in some venue. Examples of projects you might undertake include writing a grant proposal, drafting an issue statement or policy position, or an article for a newspaper or journal. Be realistic. Whereas this is certainly the paper option which will most help you to get the most benefit for the time you spend on the internship, you need to ensure that your work site is conducive to producing such a product and that you can accomplish the goal you've set for yourself.

To complete any of these assignments successfully requires a thorough understanding of the organization, its publics, policies, and problems. You should work closely with your internship organization's staff and with me. This is an excellent opportunity to improve your writing and research methods. By sharpening your problem-solving skills and applying your creativity you will be taking full advantage of your work experience while producing something of merit that will benefit your employer.

EMPLOYER-EVALUATION

(I would urge YOU to email or phone or visit the work place supervisor. You can use the Career Center's evaluation and site visit forms. I will email them to you as attachments.

Your supervisor will email or phone me with an evaluation of your performance. Aspects that I will encourage him/her to consider are:

- 1) Was the student responsible (i.e., punctual, focused and resourceful)?
- 2) Was it your impression that this student takes seriously his professional responsibilities?
- 3) Did the student contribute to the organization in a meaningful way?
- 4) Did the student craft and execute a project that was challenging yet realistic?
- 5) On a scale of one to 10, how would you rate the value of the student's final paper?