

# INTERNSHIPS: OPPORTUNITIES FOR EXPLORATION AND EXPERIENCE

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**An Internship is a form of experiential education** – learning by doing. An internship can also be described as a short-term opportunity in which students receive training and gain experience in a specific field or career area. An internship can be paid or unpaid, be for credit or not for credit and can vary in the hours or duration.

Experience prior to graduation helps Binghamton students to:

- Develop skills
- Enhance a résumé
- Explore careers
- Test interests
- Network
- Enhance marketability

Students may consider a variety of learning goals for their internship:

- Academic learning – apply knowledge learned in the classroom;
- Career development – learn about qualifications and duties and explore interest in a career field;
- Skill development – gain awareness of and develop skills and competencies required in the workplace;
- Personal development – increase confidence and self-esteem.

(from the *National Society of Experiential Education*)

## GETTING EXPERIENCE AS A STUDENT IS VITAL!

**Employers want to hire students who:**

- Have had an internship
- Have a strong academic record
- Are involved in extracurricular activities
- Acquire computer skills
- Have oral and written communications skills

## What are your internship goals?

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### Looking for an internship needs to begin here!

Before starting a search, you must have a good idea about your career interests and goals.

#### 1. Think about what kind of experience you want. Ask yourself:

- Do I want to test a career field?
- What kind of skills do I want to acquire?
- What kind of experience would interest me?
- What kind of experience will strengthen my candidacy?
- What kind of organization do I want to work for?

#### 2. Background research:

- Use the resources in the Career Development Center to research fields of interest. To identify resources go the CDC's website at <http://cdc.binghamton.edu>, choose Library Resources. Do a keyword search on your career field of interest.
- Explore career possibilities through informational interviews. See the CDC handout on Networking and Informational Interviewing.

#### 3. Think about your needs and wants:

- Can I afford to do an unpaid internship? Combining an unpaid internship with a summer job may be an option for getting experience and earning money.
- Do I have geographic limitations?
- Do I need to take an internship for credit? Some employers require students to receive credit. You will need to plan in advance and allow for time to put the pieces together. You must make arrangements with a faculty member in your major department or through the Academic Internship Program at CDC (formerly the OCC Internship Program) to identify options for receiving credit.

**4. Think about what you have to offer a prospective employer. What personal traits, skills, and experience do you hope to “market”? Examples include:**

- learn quickly
- get along well with others
- write well
- public speaking
- speak/read another language
- web design
- critical and analytical skills developed while writing research papers

Have confidence in yourself and your accomplishments. If you communicate that you can do a job well and show interest, your potential internship site will have more incentive to give you the opportunity to do so.

## **Where to Look for an Internship**

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### **1) Career Development Center**

- a) **CDC’s website:** <http://cdc.binghamton.edu>. Read the general information and tips and check out the links and on-line resources available under the Internships and Other Ways to Gain Career Related Experience in the Undergraduate section.
- b) **eRecruiting** – all matriculated (undergraduate and graduate) students have unrestricted access to the site which lists hundreds of internship and job postings. Access eRecruiting from the CDC website at <http://cdc.binghamton.edu>
- c) **Academic Internship Program** (formerly the Off Campus College, Academic Internship Program) - Visit <http://occ.binghamton.edu>. Click “internships” for information on credit-bearing internships in winter, spring, summer and fall semesters.
- d) **Career Library Resources** in the CDC. Search the library database for titles
- e) Do a keyword search “internships”.
- f) Get more specific with an advanced search for “political science” or “political internship” or “business” or “business internship”. This will point you to materials such as:

*Getting Your Ideal Internship*

*The Intern Files: How to Get, Keep, & Make the Most of Your Internship*

*Peterson’s Internships*

*The Sports Internship Book*

### **2) Alumni Career Network**

Contact alumni who are willing to speak with you about career related issues including internships. The Alumni Career Network is co-sponsored by CDC and the Office of Alumni and Parent Relations and is accessed through the BUSI website <http://busi.binghamton.edu>.

### **3) Academic Departments**

Visit [www.binghamton.edu/home/academic/interns/internships.html](http://www.binghamton.edu/home/academic/interns/internships.html) Many departments in Binghamton's schools/colleges offer internships for credit. Speak with a faculty member and check bulletin boards and homepages of departments for other opportunities.

### **4) Internet**

Surf the web for internship information. Simply typing “internship opportunities” into a search engine can provide a number of leads. Also, visit the websites of organizations in which you have an interest as many provide information on internships as well as job listings.

### **5) Other Ideas**

Use Career Search available through CDC’s website to identify potential employers, visit career centers at colleges and universities near the location where you wish to intern and look at postings or check their website, contact and attend meetings of professional associations to network to make contacts, review classified ads that sound interesting and contact the employer about an internship, etc. Call or send your résumé and cover letter to organizations of interest and set up an informational interview.

**THIS IS YOUR CHANCE TO BE CREATIVE!**

## Networking

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Many jobs and internships (as many as 60% by some counts!) are found through networking so it is important to utilize this technique in your internship search. Begin by making a list of the people you know – friends, family, professors, supervisors, etc. Do any of them work in your field of interest? If so, contact them. If not, ask if they know anyone who does. Also, use the Alumni Career Network available from the BUSI website to identify alums who work in your field of interest.

**Once you have identified people to contact, network through the following steps:**

**1. Think about how you will introduce yourself.**

Will you make initial contact through phone or email? If you plan to call, practice aloud introducing yourself on the telephone. Speak slowly and clearly, say who you are and why you are calling. Do not ask for an internship. Instead, you ask for advice and guidance. If you are emailing, practice writing out a professional email letter (this means using capitalization and punctuation!).

**2. Develop a list of career related questions to ask.**

Examples:

- What classes or experiences helped prepare you for your current position?
- Did you do an internship? Where? Was it a helpful career-related experience?
- What was the most valuable experience that prepared you for your current work?
- I am interested in doing \_\_\_\_\_; can you think of steps that could help me achieve this goal?
- How did you get into this kind of work?
- I would like to do an internship in your field; do you have any suggestions for me on how to proceed?
- As you look back on your experiences, is there anything you wish you'd known? Anything you would do differently?

**3. Gathering other contacts**

Ask the people you know for names of other people with whom you could speak about this career path or about doing an internship in this field. Follow-up on these contacts. Networking is a skill that you will use throughout your career.

**4. When you make contact by phone, email or in person:**

- Be an active listener
- Ask follow-up questions if you need more information
- Take notes for future reference
- Consider asking for additional contacts
- Remember to say thank you
- Follow-up with a résumé and a thank you letter
- Keep your contact(s) updated on your progress

For more information refer to CDC's "Networking and Informational Interviewing" Quick Reference Guide.

## You Will Need to Develop Some Tools for Your Internship Search

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To conduct a successful internship search, you will also need to develop a résumé, cover letter, and learn how to interview effectively. Information and programs on these topics and more are available at the Career Development Center. CDC also offers services for résumé and cover letter review. Check our calendar for times: <http://cdc.binghamton.edu>.

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## Translating Your Experience

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In order to impress an employer you will need to articulate what you learned and the skills you developed during your internship. Use the following tips to make the most of your experience:

- **Keep a record of what you did and observed during your internship.** Consider keeping a journal.
  - What skills did you develop?
  - What projects did you accomplish?
  - What impressed you?
- **Update your résumé** with these new experiences
- **Send a thank you letter** to your internship supervisor when the internship is complete
- **Maintain contact with the people and organization**
  - There may be future job opportunities
  - Perhaps they could write a reference letter for your Credentials File in CDC

## What Binghamton Students Say About Their Internship

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“Once you do get an internship, definitely take initiative. Your experience is what you make of it. It has given me access to very good contacts and has better acquainted me with what I will eventually be doing on an every day basis.”

“I have been able to 'try out' a future career possibility without having to jump into the career with both feet. I have been able to observe not only the positive parts, but the negative as well. Without this internship, I would be less aware of what really happens behind the scenes.”

**Transform yourself  
through  
EXPERIENCE!**