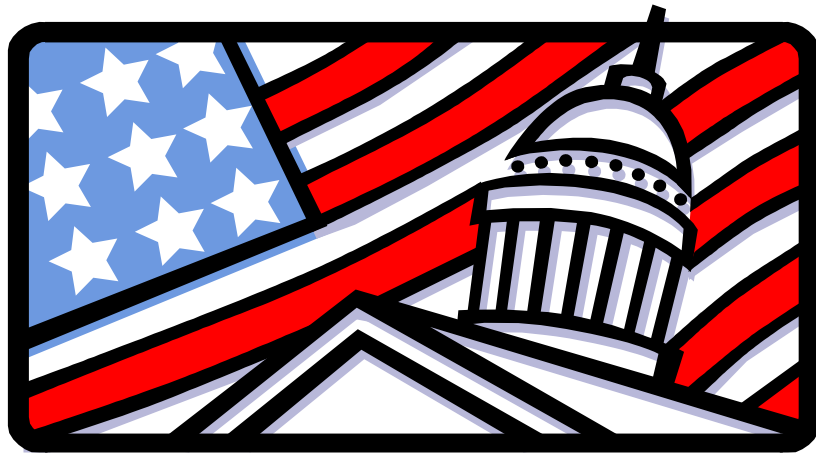




THE WASHINGTON SEMESTER PROGRAM



Washington, DC Internship Guide



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THE WASHINGTON SEMESTER PROGRAM

Internship Overview

Introduction

The internship experience has become an integral element of the Washington Semester Program since its inception into the core curriculum in the late 1960s. While internships vary in form and content, each will:

- provide needed on-the-job experience
- allow you to test career interests
- integrate classroom learning into real world situations
- develop individual and interpersonal work skills
- provide practical knowledge/exposure to the real world

Above all, the internship presents you with an exciting challenge and will require a great deal of adjustment. A typical internship will expose you to commuting in a metropolis, require you to be flexible with diverse office routines and co-workers, allow you to learn by being involved in the political process or private work force, and provide you with a valuable network of practitioners in the field which you may find useful when you begin pursuing future career goals.

Remember, however, that your internship is what you make it— it can be as rewarding as you allow it to be. Although your experience may prove demanding at times, the practical experience an internship provides can be one of the most valuable skill enhancing components of the semester.

The internship experience has an academic element as well, representing one-fourth of the program curriculum. You will be paired with an internship faculty advisor in the Washington Semester Program who will meet with small groups of analogous interns for several class sessions during the semester. Your internship advisor will assign analytical written assignments and projects designed to complement your internship experience and help you understand how your work objectives relate to the larger context of your field and the experiences of your peers. Completion of the course requirements, along with a formal evaluation submitted by your workplace internship supervisor, are the elements factored into your final grade for the internship course. You will receive the formal internship syllabus from your internship faculty advisor once you arrive in Washington.

In the Washington Semester Program, each student is required to intern two full days a week. Specific days vary, depending upon your program and unit assignment. Specific unit internship days are listed on *page 14*. Please understand that interns do not traditionally receive monetary compensation for their work, as you are exchanging your services for the opportunity to gain valuable experience and training with an organization in your field.

The remaining portions of the internship guide will prepare you in-depth for the internship component of your Washington Semester experience.

The Process of Selecting an Internship

The Washington Semester Program will not place you in an internship. Rather, the program acts as an information clearinghouse, providing you with a variety of resources to help guide you in your own selection process. The underlying rationale for this type of approach is twofold. First, it allows you the opportunity to choose an experience that most closely conforms to your personal and career interests; and second, the process of securing your own interview is an important professional skill that you must develop. The rest of this section describes the resources available to you and discusses the process of how to attain a position.

Before You Arrive

Prior to your arrival in Washington, you will be given access to our extensive database of internship opportunities associated with the specific program for which you have been accepted. As much as possible, the Internship Web contains the names, addresses, phone numbers, e-mail/Internet addresses, and contact persons for the organizations that wish to host a Washington Semester intern. The Internship Web also includes a brief description of intern responsibilities at each site. This list will serve as an important guide to the range of experiences available to you.

Remember that the internship database, which Washington Semester program provides, is by no means definitive. If you have an office in mind that is not listed, you should feel free to contact a hiring manager and seek an internship position. For example, most congressional offices take interns, yet our database includes only those who have specifically requested a Washington Semester intern. Please also remember that the database list changes constantly. Your search results will reflect information on those organizations wishing to sponsor a Washington Semester intern at the time you did your search.

Before searching the database, begin thinking about the internship experience that is right for you. For many students, these considerations are clouded by a variety of myths. For example, choosing an internship with a senator who has graduated from Harvard Law School will not guarantee you admission to Harvard Law School. Similarly, the most prestigious organizations will not necessarily provide you with the most substantive experiences. Often, it is the smaller, lesser-known organization that will allow you to work and to reach your full potential. The point is to expand your consciousness and consider the full range of experiences available to you.

With this in mind, ask yourself several questions. What type of experience am I most interested in? Do I want to research/write as part of my internship? What skills do I want to enhance? What types of issues in my field of study intrigue me most? What are my long term career goals? Your initial query may be ambiguous and you may find that few internships will satisfy all of your needs or interests. However, the idea is to begin to narrow the scope of your choices so that you have a manageable list of organizations to investigate further.

After completing the “soul-searching” exercise and establishing the parameters of the experience you are after, the next step is to begin to scrutinize the list of positions you find. Several resources available on the Internet and in most public libraries will help you to gain additional and specific information about the offices that interest you. These include The Congressional Staff Directory, The Washington Information Directory, The Federal Yellow Book, www.idealists.org, www.monstertrak.com, and numerous guides to internships published commercially. All of these provide mission statements and contact information on agencies and organizations.

In addition, you should feel free to write, e-mail, or call those organizations that interest you, either to express your interest or to gather information about the organization. Identify yourself as a Washington Semester student, indicate the period of time you will be in Washington, and explain your interests. It never hurts to enclose a one-page resume listing your work experience, interests, relevant course work, and so forth (*see the Résumé Writing attachment*). Don't worry if you haven't had a professional job; you just need to demonstrate that you are bright, hard-working, dependable, and interested in the type of work done by the organization. Also, don't be alarmed if you do not receive a reply, since some offices are simply too busy to respond. You can follow up your inquiry with a telephone call when you arrive in Washington.

Finally, unless you are *absolutely* certain about an office, do not commit yourself to an internship with an organization until you arrive. You will have the first two weeks to secure your internship in Washington, and experience shows that a visit to the actual office is important in making your final choice. We also strongly recommend that you interview with at least three different organizations.

Once You Arrive in Washington, DC

Much of the first two weeks of your Washington Semester experience will be devoted to seeking an internship. During this period, you will have access to several resources. First, program faculty and staff are available to discuss various possibilities with you. Second, the program maintains binders filled with former student evaluations of the offices in which they worked. These evaluations provide valuable insights into the past experiences of others.

The program also sponsors an Internship Bazaar at the beginning of each term. Approximately 80-100 supervisors from various offices around Washington participate in this relaxed forum at American University, where representatives are personally available to answer questions about their organization and discuss opportunities.

All the resources that Washington Semester offers are designed to expose students to a range of prospective jobs, but also minimize the scope of each individual's decision-making process. In the past, most students have been able to use these resources in order to help them secure three to five interviews once they arrive in Washington. These resources will also help you decide on an internship that will be mutually beneficial to both you and the organization for which you intern.

Interviewing

Please remember that the impression you leave with a prospective employer is a function of what you say, how you present yourself, and the general level of self-confidence you exude. Your success in landing a particular internship is a direct result of these factors. Therefore, it is wise to prepare for your interviews beforehand so that you can make a remarkable first impression.

First, complete background research on each prospective office by utilizing the various resources identified in the previous sections. More knowledge of the organization's mission will help you be able to ask more relevant questions in an interview. It is also important to be able to demonstrate how your interests are aligned with the organization, as prospective employers want interns who they feel represent them appropriately.

Second, be prepared for your interview. Bring a résumé, a writing sample, a transcript, and a letter of recommendation from a former employer or faculty member with you to each interview. Even if these are not required, they can prove useful for demonstrating your professional skills and experiences.

Third, practice for your interview. You might wish to role play with friends to help you feel more comfortable in the interview setting. Consider the interview as a conversation rather than as a confrontation. Try to be articulate and confident concerning your experience without being arrogant. Please remember that the interview is a two-way street—you need to gather information about your prospective employer's expectations for an intern in order to enable you to make a good internship decision. When you leave the office, also be certain about who will get back to whom and when.

It is essential for the reputation of the program that you follow through on your commitments. **Never skip an interview you have arranged;** people have set aside valuable time to meet with you, and you don't want to give the program—or yourself—bad repute. Rather, politely call and cancel interviews that you do not plan on attending at least 24 hours prior to the scheduled time. When you have decided to accept an internship, always contact all of the other organizations with which you had planned to interview. Thank them for their interview offer and inform them that you have taken another position. These courtesies are not only professional, but sensible. You never know when you may encounter another office or individual again, whether it is for inter-organizational assistance or applying for a job in the future.

Final Comments on the Process

Remember the following as you go through the process:

- Utilize our resources to locate a position in which you will be content for the duration of the semester.
- Use the interview to gather information about the office and your role in it.
- Interview with several offices for an internship to build a basis for comparing opportunities.
- Bring a sample of your writing with you when you arrive for the program. Some offices ask to examine a term paper or an analytical piece that you have completed to be certain that you can write well. It can also be useful to bring a personal letter from a professor or former employer and a transcript.
- The vast majority of student internships are unpaid. *You should not expect to be paid*, but if pay is offered, you may accept a nominal salary or stipend.
- Honesty is always the best policy. Never promise an employer more than you can deliver.
- Follow up on all commitments, and always inform every office of your decision.
- The most important relationship is the one between you and your direct supervisor. Remember that it is your *office supervisor*, not the organization, the representative, or the senator, who determine assignments.
- Clerical work is normally part of any internship. The program tells office supervisors that this should not exceed 40% of your work. Although responsibilities vary with each office, you should not expect to attend an internship for two days a week in which you are actively involved in policy making.
- Look for an internship with an organization whose mission statement is compatible with your goals.
- If you want to work on Capitol Hill, please note that a House Representative's office or a committee office has a smaller staff than a Senator's office and can potentially offer more variety of tasks. However, responsibilities always vary with each office, and you should still check out the Senate if you are extremely interested in working there. Your own representative or senator's office is normally a good place to begin when seeking to arrange an internship on Capitol Hill. Also note that new representatives and senators may not be on our lists.
- The most common duties of a new intern on Capitol Hill are answering constituent mail and running messages. Other assignments may include research, speech writing, and casework (assisting a constituent who has a problem with one of the bureaucracies).
- Other internship opportunities are also common on the Hill, such as conducting meaningful work for interests groups, local governments, research groups, and smaller organizations.
- A number of students who hope to enter law school attempt to locate an internship with the Supreme Court. Our experience indicates that such a placement is very difficult to obtain unless you have a personal contact. On this same basis, security clearance issues normally preclude internships in such organizations as the CIA and FBI... or they may take a significant amount of time to procure.
- You must be a U.S. citizen to work for most federal agencies.
- *Don't worry if you arrive in Washington without an internship already!* We cannot emphasize this enough. No student in the Washington Semester Program has ever failed to find an internship.
- The majority of Washington Semester students in the past evaluated their internships positively and found them to be highly rewarding experiences.

Student Obligations

Even though you are offering your services voluntarily, it is important to remember that you are demanding a great deal of attention from people in the organizations you visit. Please keep the following rules of behavior in mind.

- Keep the appointments you make.
- Allow sufficient travel time between appointments.
- Phone the prospective employer if you will be late or have a conflict.
- Once you accept a position, immediately notify other offices with which you have interviewed, as they may be keeping positions from other prospective interns on hold until they hear from you.
- Be clear with each prospective employer regarding the offer and when you need to respond.

The Final Step

Once you accept a position, you must have your supervisor complete the Description of Internship Duties. You then need to return this contract to your faculty supervisor as soon as possible, but no later than **3 weeks after the semester begins**. You are now ready to begin your internship experience.

The Internship Experience

There are certain things that you should and should not expect from your internship experience. The first few weeks in the job are normally spent getting acquainted with your co-workers and familiarizing yourself with office procedures and practices. During this introductory period, you should not expect to be given a great deal of responsibility. The nature of assignments change and the level of responsibility usually become greater as time matures. Please note that most interns (and most staff members) are expected to perform a certain amount of clerical work. Program standards state that clerical work should not exceed 40% of your responsibilities. Remember, **do not expect monetary compensation for your work**— the experience, knowledge, and contacts you acquire at your internship will be the greatest reward. Finally, expect to have both good and bad days.

Making the Most of Your Internship

As with any job, you are bound to encounter some difficulties in your internship. A very common complaint is that two days per week is not enough time. Often, a project you begin will be completed by someone else. You may find this frustrating to a degree, but it may be unavoidable.

Another difficulty is the lack of office space, as many offices are cramped prior to your arrival. Therefore, you should not expect your own desk. You must learn to adjust and make the most of the arrangements available.

In some situations, you may feel as though you are being exploited. If the impression continues, first discuss your sentiments with both your office and faculty internship supervisors. If the problem persists, and you act swiftly enough, it may be possible for our office to help you switch to a more rewarding internship.

You may also encounter personality conflicts in the office. Try to work out the conflicts as you would in any other situation using your best judgment. If the situation becomes unbearable, discuss the problem with your faculty and office supervisors. Please note that not all students encounter problems in their internships. Be aware that problems may arise and that the key to dealing with them will require flexibility and communication. Remember that it is up to you to make the most of your internship.

It is also important that you establish a good work ethic from the very beginning. Follow the policies, rules and regulations of the office within which you are working. If you need to make a personal call, be sure to ask your supervisor if it is okay to use the phone for a personal call. Don't use the computer (or internet) for personal

reasons. Treat your internship experience like a real job and take nothing for granted. Always be on time, don't take extended lunches and don't leave early unless you are asked to do so. You are expected to be at work at least two days each and every week of the semester. If you need a day off for illness or personal reasons, be sure to contact your supervisor in a timely manner. You can offer to make up missed work, and plan to follow through on your commitment. Remember that your supervisor will be recommending a grade for your internship experience. How you conduct yourself on the job could have a major impact on your final grade!

Summary

You should now have a good idea about the internship selection process and about the professional expectations of interns. Again, our office stresses that much of the success of an internship rests with you. You ultimately decide where you will intern, and you will learn to adapt to circumstances within which you find yourself. If you are willing to make the necessary level of commitment, other experiences show that the benefits of your efforts will be worthwhile and gratifying.

Below are some comments from former Washington Semester students.

“Working on Capitol Hill and being exposed to the political atmosphere which is so omnipresent in Washington was an absolutely fabulous experience.”

“As an economics major, I had a fantastic experience working at the Department of Commerce. The people are extremely friendly and made a big effort to make my internship worthwhile. I gained an overall picture of the federal bureaucracy—its politics and inner workings. I also had an opportunity to meet many important officials and gain valuable knowledge concerning international trade.”

“Working for a noted public interest organization gave me the opportunity to work with an enthusiastic group of people. I talked to people all over the country and played a role in getting them involved in lobbying. I really found out how a lobby group works and what lobbying can do.”

“I had a fantastic experience in working with some of the best and most committed attorneys in the country. It gave me a chance to participate in the inside workings of the justice system.”

“The experience I gained in interning at one of the leading museums in the country should aid me considerably in my future career in arts management.”

“The care and interest of my supervisor, as well as the excitement of working as part of a congressional committee staff, made my internship an invaluable experience.”



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Internship Web Access

Instructions for logging onto the Washington Semester Program Internship Web:

- Step 1:** The Internship Web can be found under the “*Accepted Students*” link on The Washington Semester Program homepage. The middle column includes all internships links, and click on the link “*Search Internship Database.*”
www.washingtonsemester.com OR www.american.edu/washingtonsemester OR
<https://washingtonsemester-csm.symplicity.com/students>
- Step 2:** When signing into the database, your username will be the primary email you provided to Washington Semester when you applied to the program. Your password is preset and has been emailed to your username account. After your initial log-in, you may reset your username and/or your password. If you forget your password, then click “forgot my password” and a new password will be emailed to your username account. If you continue to have trouble, please contact Kourtnei Brown (kbrown@american.edu) or intern@american.edu.
- Step 3:** You can now browse the WSP Internship Web. If you would like to research organizations in more depth, follow the links to each specific homepage. This database is a wealth of information! Also, feel free to search for substantive internships outside the WSP Internship Web. While students may accept informal offers earlier, internships are typically confirmed in writing with the WSP Internship Duties Form, two weeks after the semester begins.

Note: The Internship Web is owned by American University’s Washington Semester Program and is to be used solely by registered Washington Semester students. Any student who is found sharing the password or whose account shows unusual usage activity may be fined or dismissed from the program. The Washington Semester Program also reserves the right to pursue future legal action for any cases of software misuse.

Give yourself plenty of time to search the database thoroughly before you arrive in Washington, D.C. The earlier you start your web search, the greater your chances of narrowing down your choices and ultimately identifying your ideal internship. We know you’ll be pleased with the extra advantages this database provides to undergraduate students seeking their preferred internship opportunity in a large, international metropolis.

If you have any questions or problems with your access to the database, please e-mail Kourtnei Brown (kbrown@american.edu). Please send any comments and suggestions about the internship database to Amy Morrill Bijeau (Morrill@american.edu), Assistant Dean for Experiential Learning.

IMPORTANT NOTE: Access to the internship database is made available to accepted students who have paid the \$200 program deposit. Access will be granted as soon as you have paid the deposit. Once your account has been activated, it will remain valid until one month after you begin The Washington Semester Program, by which time you will have secured an internship in Washington, D.C.



Reflections and Suggestions by former Washington Semester Students

Editor-In-Chief: Richard R. Holley III (Bates College)

Editors: Jenny Little (University of Alabama) and Dan Weigel (Tufts University)

Editor's Foreword

The following is a compilation of thoughts, reflections, and suggestions, written by the students of Professor Christian Maisch's Foreign Policy class, on the internship component of the Washington Semester Program. This guide is an effort to pass on our bits and pieces of wisdom on how to find and keep the right internship. We hope that you will find this both helpful and useful, preparing you for what you're about to experience in the coming semester. Remember that this is a collection of our personal experience and advice that may not be universally applicable. In fact, you will find that in some cases, depending on other people's goals and personalities, some recommendations may seem contradictory.

Before You Arrive- Preparatory Work

Despite the tendency to procrastinate, we strongly urge you to begin the process early. The most important thing you can do before you arrive is to work on and polish your résumé. If your home school has a career workshop/counseling center, go and get advice on how to set up your résumé. If you arrive in DC with a finished résumé, you will find that things go a lot easier since having your résumé out of the way is one less thing to worry about. Furthermore, some places may ask for letter of recommendation, a transcript, and a writing sample. It would be a good idea to get these lined up before you come. This section will outline how to make your résumé shine and how to mentally prepare for your internship search.

The Résumé

- Keep the résumé to one page but make sure it's not congested. The purpose of the résumé is to outline your most significant attributes/achievements. If you run out of room, feel free to mention other achievements in your cover letter. Remember, "Brevity, clarity, and consistency are the three pillars to an excellent résumé." *Joe Longobardo (Lycoming College)*
- "List interesting or exceptional things that distinguish you from other applicants—interesting tidbits will stand out in an employer's mind and give you an excellent conversation piece during the interview." Focus on what makes you unique and what makes you a good employee. *Richard Holley III (Bates College)*
- "Don't worry about whether you're qualified for the job or not. These employers don't expect you to have an amazing résumé with a ton of important substantial work experience. They know your main objective is to learn and gain experience. This is why it is important to look carefully at your options to find the internship that will best benefit you." *Kalee Villemure (Gonzaga University)*
- Along with your résumé you might want to consider including your transcript, several letters of recommendation, and a writing sample. This is optional but strongly encouraged.
- Writing Sample—don't just take a few pages from your last term paper. Write something personal, perhaps pick an issue of interest to you and talk about it. Your writing sample should be between 3 and 5 pages. Remember, if it's interesting it will be memorable.

First Contact/Setting Goals

- "When selecting an internship, BE BOLD. Don't be timid about gathering information on organizations of which you know little about, but are interested." *Jenny Little (University of Alabama)*
- Think about what type of internship you'd be interested in—public or private, the Hill or a think tank, etc. "This part of the search should rely on what the student hopes to achieve from the job that he or she might be interested in." *John Dickerson (Skidmore College)*
- "Call various organizations that interest you and tell them that you are interested in an internship and let them know what your areas of interest are. Ask them to send any information possible, not only on the agency itself, but also on the role you would play as an intern." *Betsy LeFeaux (Spring Hill College)*
- Many internships fill up fast, especially those on the Hill. So send out résumés, ask for applications, or just show an organization you're interested—this can give you an important leg up.
- "The more preparation done prior to arrival, the more time there will be to focus on interviews and securing an internship." *Beth Geller (Connecticut College)*

Types of Internships

There are various types of internships in the DC area. The range is everything from working for a Senator or in a museum, to working in the courts or for a stock broker. Furthermore, there are differences between public and private sectors as well as large and small organizations. We've broken them down according to small and large. A small organization is considered anything with approximately five to fifteen people working in the office. Government internships include the Hill and all branches of federal, state, or local government. Private internships include law offices and many profit organizations. Non-governmental internships include think tanks and other advocacy groups. This section will provide some thoughts on what's available.

Small vs. Large

- "I strongly recommend working in a small organization...there is always work to do and the interns, believe it or not, have some input in what types of projects need to be done." *Elizabeth Farrel (Gettysburg College)*
- "The best way to get the most out of your internship experience is to work with a small staffed organization that relies on interns for a majority of their work. Yet, one still has to realize that a majority of the work is legalized slave labor—copies, faxes, phone calls, stuffing envelopes, and on occasion you may have to write a few memos. Further, if one works for a small organization they will have a better opportunity to get to know the people they are working for and the purpose of the work they are doing." *Jess McCluer (Texas A&M University)* Government, Private, and Non-Governmental Organizations
- "If you plan to have a political career, apply to a member of Congress...making contacts in the office combined with a letter of recommendation from a well known politician adds up in the long run." *Chad Brand (Hartwick College)*
- "Many people complain they don't get enough real work or are basically used as slaves in the office. The best way to avoid this is to not get a job on Capitol Hill. The private sector is generally more organized and demanding, making for more work." *Dan Weigel (Tufts University)*

Arriving in Washington

When you arrive in DC you'll want to hit the ground running. But even if you still don't have any idea of what you want to do, relax -- many people don't. But by now you must start making a list of internships that interest you, send out your résumés and materials, and start setting up interviews. Below are some tips on how to survive this process. Remember -- you will find an internship, of that there's no question. It's just a matter of finding the *right* internship to meet *your needs*.

- Thumb through all the lists of available internships. It's overwhelming but useful. Remember, not everything listed is necessarily available. These listings are also not always sufficiently informative—they're only a few sentences long. So use them as a guideline.
- Use the evaluations of former students conveniently located in the reserve reading room (though remember that these are subjective accounts). "You should create a list of ten to twenty from the booklet of internships issued to you, but you can only really separate the good from the bad and the ugly by reading about the experiences of others." *Rob Collier (University of Salford)*
- Talk to your internship professor. They usually have a bunch of contacts in the area and are familiar with the working environments of various organizations. Tell your professor your interests and they may be able to help you find a good match.
- Be organized. "Make a list of all the places you are applying, the names of the contact person (spelled properly), the phone numbers, directions on how to get there via Metro, and (once you have it) the interview time." It's tough to juggle 10 to 20 applications at once—staying organized will be a godsend. *Richard Holley III (Bates College)*

Set Up Interviews & Send Résumés

If you have not already done so, send out the résumés and cover letters (along with letters of recommendation and transcripts if you wish). You can email, fax, mail, or deliver them in person. Mailing is more professional than faxing, and delivering them in person shows the employer that you're truly interested and can often leave a good first impression. It's usually a good idea to send them your résumé and other papers before your interview, that way they have an idea of who they're dealing with.

- "Set up as many interviews as you can even for those positions that you don't really want because the interviewing practice is extremely valuable." *Nicole Varnes (Gonzaga University)*
- "It's phone tag. Deal with it. Set up an interview time that is good for you. List several alternatives that are good for you and then let your employer choose which one is best for them." *Matt Heller (Trinity College)*

The Interview Process

Don't view the interview process as a burden; it's actually a good experience. You'll want to schedule as many interviews as possible because it exposes you to a big cross-section of DC. Don't be nervous during the interview, just be you. Most importantly, the interview is as much for you as it is for your potential employer. Use this as a chance to "sniff out" the office environment and see if you "fit in." This is in many ways the most important consideration when choosing the right internship.

Dress Nicely

"Play it safe," for the traditional look is very much preferred in this city. Good grooming does count. "Clean-cut"

and "professional" are adjectives that go a long way. *Matt Heller (Trinity College)*

Posture, Smile, and Handshake

You've heard it a thousand times from mom and dad, and they're right. Stand up straight, with an air of confidence. Give a warm smile and use mild humor when appropriate. Be pleasant. Shake hands firmly and look your interviewer directly in the eyes. You'll leave a great first impression!

“Try Before You Buy”

- “Beware of internship offers that don't require interviews. Make sure you visit the office and meet the people you will be working with before you accept an internship.” *Kara Brault (Cedar Crest College)*
- “Scrutinize your supervisors before you accept the position...if you disregard this you may end up working under miserable, angry people.” *Scott Tumpak (Occidental College)*
- “You should be prepared to conduct yourself in a professional manner during your interview. Thus, I would strongly advise against the following during your interview: (1) profanity, (2) assault and battery, (3) the use of illegal narcotics, (4) theft.” *Jason Berman (University of New Hampshire)*
- “The most important thing I learned through my interviews is to be yourself. I went into a couple of interviews thinking that I had to be businesslike and stern when in reality the people who interviewed me were laid back. Of course, I needed to remain professional, but at the same time I could relax my guard. They were much more interested in getting to know my personality and interests than hearing about my past work experience.” *Laura Milazzo (Whitman College)*

Ask Questions

- Here are some questions to ask:
 - 1) As specifically as you can, please elaborate on what my duties would be as an intern.
 - 2) How long have you had an internship program?
 - 3) Will I have a semester-long project to work on?
 - 4) Will there be other interns working with me during my office days?
 - 5) What would a typical day be like? “Make sure they give you a satisfactory answer—if they don't, push the question until you are satisfied.” *Betsy LeFeaux (Spring Hill College)*
- “Know a little background information about the place to which you are applying. Giving the impression that you are knowledgeable about the organization lets them know you are interested in working there.” *Jessica Heflin (Gettysburg College)*
- “Emphasize particular skills you would have, such as doing research, or having considerable knowledge in a particular subject.” *Chad Brand (Hartwick College)*
- “You must feel comfortable at the place you are applying—if you don't feel comfortable then it's just not going to work out.” *Jessica Heflin (Gettysburg College)*
- “If your interviewer concentrates on the word ‘filing’ you might want to shop around.” *John Dickerson (Skidmore College)*

Once You Have the Internship

- “The most important project is your first. The quality and thoroughness of your first project will be a big determinant of future assignments you will have. The best advice is to always do more than you are asked. If your supervisor tells you to do some research and highlight the pertinent information, take it

another step by creating an outline of all the information you gathered and write a summary. Go the extra mile because it will help in the long run.” *Nicole Varnes (Gonzaga University)*

- “Eavesdrop on your supervisor every once in a while to see if there is something that needs to be done. If you know that you can do it then mention it. (I ended up networking the office computer system and saved them \$200 in computer consultant fees.)” *Joey Herzog (Illinois Wesleyan University)*
- “I recommend working with different people in the office at least once to gain exposure and network within the office. Communicating and working with other people in the office helps to develop a good rapport that leads to a good working environment and, potentially, future jobs. It also gives you the chance to see a selection of different working styles and opinions within a working environment.” *Elizabeth Geller (Connecticut College)*
- “Washington DC runs because of the work of unpaid interns. Therefore, always keep in mind that you are just as valuable to the place you intern as the internship experience is to you.” *Kara Brault (Cedar Crest College)*

Dealing with Difficulties

- “If the situation does occur where the internship is not what your contract stated nor what you expected, be calm and handle the situation professionally. Give your job time, but be wary of giving it too much time before you receive substantive work. If a problem does arise, talk with your employer, it is imperative to develop an open line of communication. You may want to suggest a possible project, for in proposing a project you exhibit initiative while gaining some more responsibility. It is also best to inform your advisor immediately to make them aware of your situation.” *April Adams (Drew University)*
- “Many offices don’t trust interns with greater responsibilities because they’ve had bad experiences in the past. Prove to them that you are hard working and want more... Overall, employers like to see interns who are efficient, productive and eager. Usually, they will recognize these traits and increase their dependence on you. If not, it comes down to a matter of showing or telling them about your abilities.” *Dan Weigel (Tufts University)*



THE WASHINGTON SEMESTER PROGRAM

Preparing for Your Internship

For many of you, your internship experience will be the high point of your semester in Washington. This experience will help you define career goals and network with renowned professionals, and may even put you in contact with individuals that can directly benefit your future endeavors. Keep in mind, however, that you should mainly focus ONLY on background research and interview appointments before you arrive in Washington, D.C.

Narrowing Your Prospective Internship Search

One of the principle vehicles for facilitating your internship search is our Internship Database. Take time to review the internship listings and select some that you would like to pursue when you arrive in Washington. Make a list of your goals and objectives you would like to get from the internship and attempt to match them with specific offerings in the database. Don't just focus on just large, prominent organizations. Also consider smaller, less well-known organizations that may provide you with greater responsibility and learning opportunities. Once you have identified 8 or 10 organizations that interest you, do some more in-depth research. Most organizations in D.C. have websites that give details on the organization's mission and achievements. Other excellent reference sources include Lexis/Nexis, annual reports, and other databases available at your local or university library.

Some of you may wish to contact potential internship employers by phone, email or letter before you arrive in Washington. If you elect to do so, you should indicate that (1) you are a participant in American University's Washington Semester Program and will be available to intern two days a week (*see internship days on next page*); (2) you are interested in interning at the organization you are contacting; and (3) you would like to arrange an interview upon your arrival in Washington during the first week of the semester. You should send a short (one-page) resume and be prepared to follow-up with a writing sample and copy of your transcript.

You will be more prepared if you begin making inquiries before you arrive, and will be in a better position to evaluate options and secure the internship that best fits your interests. On this same basis, such organizations as the CIA and FBI require security clearances that take a significant amount of time to procure. Please begin the internship application process extremely early if you have decided you would like to intern in a place with high security clearances.

Hit the Ground Running in Washington, D.C.

During orientation to your program, you will likely spend the first two weeks interviewing and securing your internship. There are a number of things you can do in advance to make sure you are ready to interview right away.

- 1) Arrive with a polished one-page (no more!) resume on a disk. Make sure to include a phone number and address where you can be easily reached. You should have a parent, counselor or working professional edit your resume for style, content, and presentation.
- 2) Bring a short writing sample (no more than 10 double-spaced pages), as well as a copy of your transcript(s).
- 3) Bring any other materials, such as letters of recommendation that would support your application.

Academic Components of the Internship

Keep in mind that the internship experience includes an academic component. You will have an internship faculty advisor who will have you discuss and reflect on your internship experience, prepare papers and/or a journal, and make short presentations to share your experiences with your classmates. This is an important part of the entire Washington Semester Program experience and you should be prepared to take it as seriously as the seminar, your internship work, and the research project or elective course.



THE WASHINGTON SEMESTER PROGRAM

Sample Internship Days

Program

American Politics - Unit II
American Politics - Unit III
American Politics/Public Law - Unit IV
Contemporary Islam
Economic Policy
Foreign Policy - Unit I
Foreign Policy - Unit II
International Business and Trade - Unit I (Travel)
International Business and Trade - Unit II
International Business and Trade – Unit III
International Environment & Development
International Law & Organization- Unit I
International Law & Organization- Unit II
Journalism - Unit I
Journalism - Unit II
Justice
Peace & Conflict Resolution
Transforming Communities

Week Days

Thursday & Friday
Wednesday & Friday
Thursday & Friday
Monday & Tuesday
Thursday & Friday
Monday & Tuesday
Monday & Tuesday
Monday & Tuesday
Thursday & Friday
Monday & Tuesday
Thursday & Friday
Monday & Tuesday
Wednesday & Thurs
Monday & Tuesday
Thursday & Friday
Monday & Tuesday
Monday & Tuesday
Monday & Tuesday
Monday & Tuesday
Monday & Tuesday

While Internship Days will likely remain the same, they are subject to change prior to the start of the semester. Please be sure to verify the days for your program/unit with your internship professor before committing to specific days with your internship. Our office will notify you in the event the internship days of your program/unit change.



THE WASHINGTON SEMESTER PROGRAM

Sample Prospective Supervisor Letter

A professional copy of this internship letter will be enclosed in your orientation packet when you arrive in Washington, D.C. You may provide your prospective internship supervisor(s) with this information if they request background about the Washington Semester Program.

To Whom It May Concern:

The person bearing this letter is one of over 400 students in the Washington Semester Program at American University. The student is enrolled full-time and is seeking to arrange an internship in your office for which academic credit will be granted.

The conditions stated for the Internship are as follow:

1. The student will work in the office two days a week for a total of 16-20 hours per week, depending upon the individual student's schedule. No more time should be requested from the student. The internship is only a part of an intense program of study in which there are many other academic obligations to fulfill.
2. The value of having the intern do varied tasks, including routine clerical procedures, is recognized as helping him/her understand the full range of office activities. For the fullest possible experience, however, he/she must be given an opportunity to show his/her abilities in responsible work – research, casework, and the like. Therefore, to receive academic credit for the internship, routine clerical tasks must not exceed 40% of the work time.
3. The intern must not begin working until a completed and signed internship contract is on file with the American University Internship Supervisor.
4. The intern's immediate supervisor will be called upon, either by telephone or in person, at the beginning of each month and at the end of the semester for a discussion of his/her progress and performance. Where not infringing upon confidential office matters, he/she may ask to see examples of work done for you by the student.

If you are willing to accept this intern under these stated conditions, kindly signify your approval on the contract the student will provide.

Thank you for your kind attention. I am confident that you will find this student diligent and helpful.

Cordially,

David C. Brown, Dean
Washington Semester Program
American University

Washington Semester Program
American University, Tenley Campus
Washington, DC 20016-8083
Telephone Numbers: Voice (202) 895-4900 / Fax (202) 895-4960

DESCRIPTION OF INTERNSHIP DUTIES

“Sample Form”

This form **MUST** be returned to the internship professor by: (date subject to change with semester).

Please type or print clearly

To be filled out by the student:

Name: _____ AU ID#: _____ F-1 or J-1 Visa? _____

Program & Unit: _____ Internship Days: _____

Student's AU Internship Professor: _____ Professor's Telephone #: _____

Student's Washington Area Address: _____

Student's Local Telephone #: _____ Local e-mail: _____@american.edu

To be filled out by the student's office supervisor: Students attend classes three days a week and are available to work on a regular basis two days a week.

Student's Direct Office Supervisor's Name: _____

Office Supervisor's Position Title _____

Office or Agency's Name _____

Office or Agency's Address: _____

Tel. #s: Voice _____ Fax _____ E-mail: _____

Type of Agency: _____ Government _____ Profit _____ Non-Profit

Proposed Intern Duties and Responsibilities--Please describe briefly the specific tasks that the student-intern will be expected to perform in your office. Please do not attach general brochures or internship descriptions. (In filling this section out, please note that to ensure academic credit no more than 40% of the student's work time may be spent on routine clerical tasks):

A form requesting a written evaluation of the student's performance will be given to the office supervisor near the end of the semester. The office supervisor should feel free to call the student's internship professor at any time during the semester.

Office Supervisor's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Student's Signature: _____ Date: _____

AU Internship Professor's Signature: _____ Date: _____

WASHINGTON SEMESTER PROGRAM

**American University
Washington, D.C. 20016-8083
Phone: 202/895-4900
Fax: 202/895-4960**

INTERNSHIP EVALUATION

Dear Intern Supervisor:

Thank you very much for accepting one of our students as an intern in your office. You have the gratitude of our Program for providing a rewarding and educational experience for the student; and we trust that this has been beneficial to your office as well. We certainly hope that we will be able to maintain this mutually beneficial relationship with your organization and that you will continue to employ our Program participants.

This form is designed to evaluate the intern working in your office. Your comments will aid us in evaluating the student's overall internship experience. Please bear in mind that your comments will be used to arrive at the final grade. We hope that you schedule an evaluation meeting with the intern to discuss candidly the quality of his/her performance. As part of the learning experience, we also strongly encourage you to share this evaluation with the student in a face-to-face meeting. If you wish, you may provide the intern with a copy of the completed evaluation before returning it to the internship professor in a sealed, signed envelope.

This evaluation form will become a very important part of the student's file as he/she returns to his/her home school and/or begins to seek full-time employment after graduation. Please take the time to be as thorough as possible in your comments.

In addition to this evaluation, you may want to consider writing a letter of recommendation, which the student may take with him/her before the semester ends. If you do write such a letter, please feel free to include a copy with this evaluation for the student's program file.

Please return the completed evaluation to the intern in a sealed envelope. Please sign over the seal to insure confidentiality. Again, many thanks for your support!

INTERNSHIP EVALUATION

Intern Name: _____

Program/Unit: _____

Organization: _____

Site Supervisor: _____

Academic Supervisor/Professor: _____

Please write a short narrative with respect to the following items:

1. Briefly, what are the types of work assigned to the student during the semester?

2. Was the student able to complete a suitable portion of the assignments? Were you satisfied with them? (If not, please explain.)
 3. How would you rate the following skills as demonstrated in the assignments that the intern performed?
 - (a) Research skills (ability to gather relevant information in a systematic manner):
 - (b) Analytical skills (analysis and application in a problem-solving situation):
 - (c) Written expression:
 - (d) Initiative:
 - (e) Personal organization:
 - (f) Dependability:
 - g) Promptness:
 4. Did the intern have a good personal relationship with his/her fellow workers?
 5. What traits may be of particular help in his/her future work experience?
 6. What traits may hinder the intern in his/her future work experience?
 7. What is your overall evaluation of the intern (in terms of adaptability, competence, personality, general skills)?
 8. Would you like to employ another Washington Semester intern in the future?
Yes No Other (explain):
 9. If you feel comfortable assigning a letter grade for this intern, please do so here by using the A-F rating scale:
 10. Overall/additional comments which we may use in writing recommendation letters for this student in the future:
-

Your Signature _____

Date _____

(Please use the back of this form for additional space.)



AMERICAN UNIVERSITY

W A S H I N G T O N , D C

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