

## POLITICAL SCIENCE DEPARTMENT INFORMATION ON INTERNSHIPS

The CSUSM Political Science Department offers internships with many non-government organizations (NGOs) that address community development and global issues such as diplomacy, adequate housing, fair wages, refugee settlement, and migrant education, as well as with federal, state and local public agencies.

- Political Science majors can currently take up to 9 units of internships and/or independent study toward graduation requirements; PSCI minors can currently take up to 6 units.
- Depending on what the internship entails, the units count toward PSCI electives in Comparative Politics, International Relations, USGP, or general.
- Internships are graded credit/no credit.
- Each 3 unit internship requires students to work approximately 120 hours over the course of the semester at their agency, and complete a number of career readiness assignments.
- You must be a sophomore, junior or senior in academic *good standing* and have a positive recommendation from a CSUSM Political Science Professor.
- Internship credit cannot be earned retroactively; in other words, you must be approved for an internship before you complete the internship.

### INTERNSHIP STRATEGIES

How do you find your ideal internship? There is a three-step process: Determine Your Internship Goals, Prepare/Polish Your Job Search Skills, and Find/Track Down Internship Sources.

#### **Determine Your Internship Goals**

Before you can even start thinking about finding an internship, you need to spend time reflecting on your goals for obtaining an internship. Consider these questions:

- *What are your specific career interests?* An internship is a great tool to help you define your career goals. For example, if you're a PSCI Global Concentration major, you might consider an internship with an agency that has a political refugee resettlement. On the other hand, an internship can help further refine your career goals. For example, if you're not sure if you're interested in working with a public agency, an internship might help you decide what career path is best for you.
- *Why do you want an internship -- and what do you hope to gain from it?* There are multiple reasons for obtaining an internship, including answering the question above. Other possible reasons include learning new skills, gaining networking connections, adding work experience to your résumé, and as an entry point that you hope leads to a full-time Position with the employer when you graduate.

Internships also offer flexibility since you and your site supervisor determine your work schedule.

- *What type of organization are you interested in?* Organizations come in all sizes and shapes, from public agencies to not-for-profit organizations. What are you looking for? Issues to consider include size, ownership, mission/objective, etc.
- *Where do you want to have your internship?* If your internship is during the regular semester, you might need an internship close to campus, but during the summer months you may wish to have an internship out-of-state where you hope to land a full-time position when you graduate -- or just to experience a place in which you have never lived before.
- *Are internships paid?* It would be great if all internships paid, but in reality most are not. So, you need to decide whether you can afford to not get paid during your internship.

### **Prepare/Polish Your Job Search Skills**

As internships become more and more competitive, it becomes even more important for you to have a strong set of job-search skills from the below list.

- Cover letter writing
  - Résumé preparation
  - Interviewing strategies
- *Do I get credit/grade for the internship?* The first 3-unit internship requires you to invest approximately 105 hours at the internship site + 15 hours of assignments over the course of the semester. Internships are credit/no credit and will satisfy one upper-division elective in CP, IP, or USGP, depending on the agency and content of your work. Additional credits earned beyond the first 3 units require hours per unit invested in the internship experience.

### **STEPS FOR GETTING AN INTERNSHIP**

1. Attend an internship forum meeting or contact the Internship Coordinator during the registration period to discuss your interests and fill out the [Registration Interest Form](#).
2. Once the Internship Coordinator gives you a permission code to register, go to the university [Internship database](#) to see the list of internship organizations. If there isn't one that matches your interests, it might be possible to create a new community partnership with an agency that does suit your interests. Discuss this with the Internship Coordinator.
3. Contact the agency/office that you are interested in to set up an interview. Identify yourself as a Political Science major (or student) at CSUSM. Intern sponsors only know what you tell them about yourself. It is important to express your qualifications in the most positive, albeit realistic, light.

4. Remember, first impressions are important. Have a letter of introduction that includes the following:

A. A brief statement of interest in working in their office with some background rationale if possible. (The rationale could include the connection between the internship setting and your career plans, your interest in the issues handled by the office, your unique skills which could be put to use, etc.).

B. A specific set of dates outlining the duration of the internship and the time commitment within that set of dates.

C. A brief statement of one's qualifications that highlight key elements of your formal résumé. Specific examples of one's abilities and skills are important. Since words are the currency of politics, many offices request a writing sample. It is appropriate to include this in the initial package.

D. A request for further guidance as to what other information the sponsor needs to make a decision.

5. A formal résumé is the traditional business method for presenting oneself. Although the résumé may be prepared for mass distribution, it is best when it is tailored to the specific application at hand. The more you know about the needs of a particular office, the more you can highlight what you have to offer. For a college student with limited work experience, the résumé is somewhat different than for a person in the working world. Target your résumé to a particular position, and highlight the relevant experiences and skills for that job. The résumé should include:

- Biographical and contact information, e.g., current address, telephone number, email, etc.
- An outline of specific skills, e.g. letter writing, research, statistics, computer work, public polling, computer skills, etc.
- Previous employment
- Education record
- Academic experiences that indicate skills and the ability to work independently
- References (choose references from those who are most likely to tell something about your ability to do the job and from those who are likely to carry some weight with the potential sponsor)
- Career plans

Make sure the cover letter and résumé are error free and professional. Don't rely solely on your spell checker or your own eyes. Have someone else proofread for you.

6. Arrange an interview: Many internship partners require either an in-person or phone interview. Prepare for the interview by finding out as much as possible about the interviewer and their office operation and anticipating their questions, i.e., tell me about yourself, why you want to work here, what skills would you bring to the job, what are

your most important strengths/weaknesses. Also, have some questions of your own, i.e., what kinds of assignments can I expect to get, what did your last (current) intern do, what do you expect of interns, etc. Questions not only allow you to gather important information, but also indicate your interest. At a minimum, ask the timetable for making a decision. Immediately send a follow-up thank you letter to the interviewer. This serves as a subtle reminder that they need to take action and signals to the interviewer your professionalism and commitment to following through.

Be **flexible** about your work schedules and assignments.

Be **specific** about your interests.

Be **realistic** about possible placements.

7. Once you land an internship, complete the learning plan (in consultation with Dr. Chavez Metoyer and your site supervisor), fill out all required forms online and watch the internship orientation and workplace safety video online using the [Internship database](#). If you're not sure how to navigate the internship placement process, check out the [Office of Internship](#) webpage for a tutorial (see #4 under "steps for securing an internship").

8. Begin working toward fulfilling your hours and complete your assignments in our course container.

9. During the last week of the semester, submit your completed [hour log](#) thru the course container.

If at any point in the semester you have questions or concerns about your internship, contact the Internship Coordinator.

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