

How to find Internships for college students

Congratulations! By reading this article you are taking the necessary steps for achieving greater career and job-search success upon graduation from college. Internships are great learning experiences for college students -- and almost a necessity for any college graduate. Employers are demanding that college grads have "real world" experience, and internships or summer employment related to your major are some of the best ways for college students to get that experience.

So how do you find your ideal internship? It's a three-step process:

- 1) Determine Your Internship Goals and Requirements
- 2) Prepare/Polish Your Job Search Skills
- 3) Find/Track down Internship Sources

1. **Determine Your Internship Goals and Requirements**

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 majoring in history, but have an eye on a political career, you might consider an internship with a local or state politician. Or, an internship can help further refine your career goals. For example, if you're marketing major but not sure whether you want to go into advertising or public relations, you should consider getting internships in both areas to help you decide which 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 resume, and as an entry point that you hope leads to a full-time position with the employer when you graduate.
- **What type of organizations are you interested in?** Organizations come in all sizes and shapes, from Fortune 500 companies to not-for-profit organizations. What are you looking for? Things to consider include size, ownership, corporate culture, etc.
- **What are your skills, attributes, and knowledge background that you have to offer employers.** In today's competitive job market, employers prefer hiring students who know what they want and what skills they can offer. Present your interest to employers by talking about your skills (i.e. specific computer proficiency, languages), attributes (i.e. takes initiative, organized), and expertise/knowledge gained from your classes.
- **What industry would be best for your needs?** Even when you know exactly what you want to do, you can still be uncertain about the type of industry that best suits you. For example, if you are a natural-born salesperson, you really have the option of working in any industry, but pharmaceutical sales are quite different from selling insurance.
- **Where do you want to have your internship?** If your internship is during the regular semester, you obviously need an internship close to your college campus, but during the summer months you may wish to have an internship near home so you can save on expenses (and enjoy mom or dad's cooking/laundry service/etc.) or in a location 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.
- **Will you consider both paid and nonpaid internships?** It would be great if all internships paid, but in reality a large number do not - especially in certain industries. So, you need to decide whether you can afford to not get paid during your internship. One more thing: while it is not always the case, paid internships tend to be more professional (and you do less grunt work) because the employer wants to get its money worth from you.
- **Do you want college credit for the internship?** Many colleges offer at least some college credit for internships. The plus side (besides earning the credits) is that there is usually an internship program with an established list of employers and internships available to you. The down side is that there may be more restrictions on the type and amount of work you can do based on the program guidelines.

2. 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. To help you stand out from the competition, it is highly recommended that you polish your **cover letter**, **résumé**, and practice your **interviewing strategies** - see your career services office for assistance.

3. Resources for finding internships

- **NMHU Career Services Office.** This office is a great place to start your search. There are several resources to using including our online job board, online intern resources and books/directories available in our office. Our staff can also help you to locate other possible resources. We encourage students to check our online job board on a regular basis as we receive numerous postings on a daily basis. Each job posting contain internship descriptions, qualifications, application procedures and deadline dates.
- **Major/Minor Department.** Many internship employers contact faculty directly for student recommendations. Get to know your professors very well.
- **Networking Sources.** Tell everyone you know that you are looking for a specific type of Internship; these people should include your family, your friends (at school and at home), your family's friends, your professors, past employers, alumni, etc. Just as with job-hunting, networking may be one of your best sources for internships -- especially for competitive internships.
- **Career Fairs.** Colleges and community organizations hosts career fairs that also serve as great resources to finding out about potential internships in addition to career opportunities. Even if you are looking for an internship in a different geographic location, go to the fairs and network with the recruiters. NMHU hosts 2 career fairs during the academic year to help students meet and network with employers and agencies including graduate school programs. Bring your résumé and remember to dress appropriately.
- **Company Websites.** If you have already identified a specific set of companies where you would like to intern, you should consider going straight to the source by visiting the career/employment section of each company's Website.
- **Internship Websites.** There are a few general internship Websites, as well as a number of industry-specific Websites. A good resource, but internship sites have lagged behind the development of job sites, so don't depend too much on these resources. Where do you find the best internship sites? Search [Internship Resources for College Students](#).
- **Books/Directories.** Career Services and Libraries have some great print sources of internships. The other print source is trade magazines and newspapers published for your major or career field. If you are a member of a student organization, you may already have a subscription to at least one of them. Your college library should also have subscriptions to these publications -- as should some of your professors. These publications often publish information about internship programs.
- **Cold Contact.** If you have a specific geographic location you want to target for your internship, consider using the cold calling method to find your internship. This process involves identifying a list of companies and writing them asking for an internship. Where can you get information about companies in a specific geographic location? Consider contacting that region's chamber of commerce for a list of member companies -- or just get your hands on a phone book for that area.