

Simpson Career Services (SCS)

Experiential Learning: The Internship

Co-op 319: The internship is an opportunity for a Sophomore, Junior or Senior student to participate in professional training, assume initial decision making responsibilities, or engage in project based research and development with an off-campus organization in the private or public sector. The internship may consist of from one to twelve credit hours. Students must work 30 hours for each semester hour of credit.

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The Opportunity

Simpson College promotes experiential learning that enables students to develop intellectual and practical skills. The Internship is an opportunity for supervised practical experience in a career field of interest. Internships are available and a valuable experience in all career areas. Guided by a faculty supervisor and SCS, an internship experience helps to bridge the gap between theoretical and practical knowledge by applying what was learned in the classroom to real life situations. Internships are always temporary and may be from a few weeks to a semester long.

An internship may be . . .

- Completed for academic credit or non-credit, paid or non-paid;
- An on-the-job learning experience in a campus or off campus public or private organization
- Directly related to your personal interests, career aspirations, and major field of study;
- A planned, structured, and supervised field-based experience where you learn about the demands and needs of a particular profession and/or industry.

The Internship Advantage

In today's economy, the internship experience can give Simpson graduates a distinct edge as they enter the increasingly competitive job market. Employers not only check students' academic records to verify learning potential, but also their relevant work and volunteer experiences and acquired skills. Internships are now offered in almost every career area by employers who recognize the importance of on-the-job training. In fact, many employers recruit their most promising interns for full-time positions after graduation. There is no better way to get started in your career than by participating in an internship. Many graduate school programs require students to have some internship experience for admission consideration.

Why should I consider doing an internship?

- Gain valuable work experience – a prerequisite for many types of jobs today.
- Develop marketable job skills which are transferable to other jobs.
- Examine, explore and clarify career goals and options.
- Test your personal aptitudes, abilities, and skills in relation to your career choice.
- Build confidence and improve interpersonal, communication, and decision making skills.
- Develop your job search, interviewing skills and resume preparation.
- Establish credibility with a potential full-time employer.
- Create a network of professional contacts, mentors, and references.
- Enhance classroom knowledge and learning – in some cases, earn academic credit.
- Receive financial compensation (many internships are paid).
- Gain an advantage over the competition.

Even if you discover that you don't like a particular career area after doing an internship, that information is extremely valuable. The internship is an opportunity for you to discover possible, new career paths, as well.

Frequently Asked Questions

Who is eligible for internships?

Currently enrolled Simpson students in any major, at the sophomore, junior, or senior level. Each employer and/or academic department may request a student meet certain requirements before applying for the internship. Some departments or majors require at least one internship for graduation.

When can I do an internship?

Any academic term or summer following your freshman year. Some recent graduates do internships as a way into the career field. Internships during the academic year should only be part-time. May Term and summer internships might be either full-time or part-time. **A student might also consider Fall, Winter and Spring Breaks to complete an internship.** Be sure to plan ahead to allow yourself time to meet employer and program application deadlines.

Are internships paid?

Often, the answer is yes. The organization providing the internship determines whether or not an intern will be paid. Internships are also frequently done on a purely volunteer basis; volunteer work can lead to paid internship opportunities.

What are the requirements to earn credit?

Earning course credit for internship experience is just like taking any other course for credit. The only difference is that your classroom is in the work environment. Upon submission of the internship approval form, you are registered for an internship for credit. After you have successfully completed your internship, the course is listed on your transcript, informing employers that you have had practical experience in addition to your classroom learning. Generally, internships are graded on a pass/ fail basis. The number of course credits is determined by the number of hours on the job. You may receive one credit for each 30 hours of internship work, and you can earn up to 12 credit hours total through internships (see Co-op 319 course description in the college catalog).

Each department has certain academic requirements which you must complete in order to receive credit. Your Faculty Sponsor will provide on-going monitoring of the internship and will require academic work related to the internship which may include readings, keeping a journal, doing an oral presentation, writing a paper, or other assignments. Whatever the work, it should enable the faculty sponsor to review and assess your learning and performance.

The Career Services office is available to work with you to prepare for your internship search and experience. You must attend one **CVIL Conversations Reflection** session during the time of your internship. **You must also complete a Self Evaluation using Career Paths and follow up with your site supervisor to ensure the completion of the Employer Evaluation.**

Is there a tuition charge for internships?

Internships which are taken for academic credit are subject to regular tuition fees. Tuition covers the cost of having your faculty advisor supervise, monitor, evaluate and grade your work performance, and transcript notation. There is no charge for internships which are NOT taken for academic credit.

What kind of an internship should I look for?

Explore internship opportunities that match your skills and career interests. Remember, an internship that is great for one person might not be right for another. Search for an experience that will complement your academic program, help you explore a new direction, or challenge you to grow in new ways. Internships are not restricted geographically and may be set up in a location convenient to your hometown, in another state or country.

Determine your priorities: Do you primarily want career-related experience, the opportunity to travel, or funds to support tuition costs? If you have thought about these questions in advance, you will be better prepared to make a decision that is best for you. Depending upon your career interests, you may be limited to a non-paid experience or to a certain geographical area.

Can I develop an internship on my own?

Yes! You may arrange your own internship placement related to your field of study. But before you proceed with specific plans for any internship, consult your faculty advisors and the SCS staff to determine what type of internship is best for you and your academic program. When doing an internship for credit, any internship opportunity you are considering needs to be fully discussed with your faculty sponsor. To earn credit the internship must be approved by the faculty sponsor and the Career Services office. If your internship is not for credit, SCS can help you prepare and ensure that your internship will be a worthwhile experience.

Finding an Internship

It is recommended that you begin the internship search process at least six months before you plan to work, as some industries have application deadlines many months prior to the intended start date. The earlier you start your search, the more opportunities you will find available. Internships can be found through Internet search engines, company websites, professional associations, personal networking, etc. Contact Career Services in BSC to discuss steps in order to begin your search. This checklist as a general guide of what you should do to search and prepare for an internship.

Preparing for the Search

- Determine the field, industry and/or geographic region in which you would like to work.
- Consider the type of position you would like to pursue:
 - part-time during fall or spring semester
 - full-time during may term or summer
 - credit or non-credit; and paid or unpaid
(A decision can be made after looking at specific opportunities and depending on your field.)

- Talk to professors/advisors and ask for their suggestions.
- Attend Career Services presentations about internships and/or make an appointment to discuss internships at careers@simpson.edu.
- Attend the Simpson College Career Fair and other Des Moines area career fairs (such as those sponsored by SHRM, the Greater Des Moines Partnership, etc.).
- Identify and evaluate multiple internship, co-op and part-time career-related opportunities on Career Service's:
 - CareerPaths site@ <http://simpson-csm.symplicity.com/students/index.php>
 - JoBulletin and Internship website: <http://www.simpson.edu/career/career/internshipsearches.html> or <http://www.simpson.edu/career/jobbulletin/internships.html>.
 - You may also check out the Internship Bulletin Board in Career Services.
- Identify and join a professional association and/or club associated with your intended career. You can identify associations by using The Directory of Business Information Resources available in the Career Services office.
- Research companies in which you are interested. Look at their websites to see if they have internship programs. Check with Career Services to learn if Simpson students have worked there previously.
- Contact organizations via email or telephone to inquire about opportunities.
- Arrange for an informational interview or job shadow within a career or industry of interest to learn more about the field, get an inside look at an organization you may want to work for, and identify potential contacts and opportunities.
 - An informational interview is an opportunity for you to ask the professional about his/her background, skills, education, and job responsibilities.
 - A job shadow gives you a chance to observe a professional performing day-to-day tasks in his/her work environment.
- Inform everyone in your personal network, including family, friends, neighbors, advisors, mentors, previous employers, and faculty members, that you are seeking career-related work.

A listing of web sites to help in the search for internships can be found at:

<http://www.simpson.edu/career/career/internshipsearches.html>

Iowa employers know you have a lot to offer. The Iowa Department of Economic Development has established the Iowa Student Internship Program to enable more small and medium sized employers in the biosciences, advanced manufacturing and information technology industries to offer exciting internship opportunities. If you are a student within two years of graduation and are attending an Iowa community college, independent college or regent university, check out the internships available through the Iowa Student Internship Program at http://www.iowalifechanging.com/business/ic/internship_program.aspx

Gathering Application Materials

Companies may require a variety of application materials including:

- Resume
- Cover letter
- List of references

- Official or unofficial transcripts
- Letters of recommendation
- Writing samples

To prepare your materials:

- Create a draft of a resume using Career Services' resume-writing resources available at the Career Services office, BSC, or at www.simpson.edu/career.
 - Bring or email your resume to Career Services (careers@simpson.edu) for an initial review and subsequent critiques.
- Review the basics of creating an effective cover letter at www.simpson.edu/career, and create a draft for the position you are interested in.
 - Have it reviewed by Career Services.
- Identify and ask individuals to serve as positive references. References should be faculty/teachers, supervisors, etc. who can speak to your learning and working skills and aptitude.

Applying for the Position

- Create a spreadsheet to organize your search.
 - Record application deadlines and requirements, and establish a timeline for each organization.
 - Keep detailed notes on where you applied, with whom you spoke, when you sent your application, and when you followed up. A sample spreadsheet can be found at: <http://www.simpson.edu/career/career/InternshipSearchLog.pdf>
- Apply for positions and companies of interest by sending all application materials requested.
 - Be sure to customize your cover letter and resume to fit the position which you are applying for.
- Follow up with organizations via email or telephone no later than two weeks after applying.
- Update your resume whenever needed to reflect new experiences, activities and current coursework.
- Prepare for interviews by researching interviewing strategies and participating in a mock interview at Career Services. Make an appointment: 961-1667 or careers@simpson.edu.
- Always, always send a thank you letter to the company within 48 hours following an interview. For a sample thank you letter, go to www.simpson.edu/career/

Making a Decision

- Meet with your Faculty Sponsor prior to making your decision.
- Continue sending out application materials until you have actually accepted a position.
- Continue following up with employers and organizations in your areas of interest.

- Stay in contact with your professional network and references and keep them informed of your job search.
- Evaluate positions and negotiate start dates and work hours when you receive an offer. The amount of time you have to accept or refuse an offer varies by company, industry and start date.
- Send acceptance and refusal letters to the respective companies. Contact Career Services if you need help with these letters.
- Begin searching for housing options if the accepted internship is not local.

How to Register for Your Internship

Samples of all internship forms can be found at <http://www.simpson.edu/career/career/internshipsearches.html>. Forms are also available at the SCS office.

Before starting your internship, download and complete the following forms:

1. Steps for Credit – this is an instruction sheet for receiving internship credit (for your information only).
2. Checklist – this is easy way for you to understand the expectations of completing an internship for credit. This document will be used to communicate Career Services requirements with your Faculty Sponsor before a Pass/No Pass/Honors grade is assigned.
3. Internship Registration Form – complete this form and meet with your Site Supervisor to finalize your job responsibilities and hours.
 - a. Identify primary Internship responsibilities
 - b. Meet with your Faculty Supervisor to decide how your internship experience will be evaluated.
 - c. Discuss your academic requirements with your Faculty Supervisor.
 - d. Obtain approval and signature of the Faculty Supervisor, and submit to the Internship Coordinator or Career Services Director for approval.
4. Career Services will forward the approved registration form to the Registrar for processing.
5. Experiential Activity Agreement (Release Form) – Please make sure you read and understand agreement at time of registration.
6. Learning Plan – This is an individualized plan that acts as the syllabus for the course and is to be filled out with the assistance of the site supervisor and the faculty sponsor.
7. Employer Evaluation & Student Feedback forms – electronic survey will be emailed to Site Supervisor in the final weeks of your internship. You are responsible for following up on this as well as discussing the results. You are also required to fill out a feedback survey on Career Paths (<https://simpson-csm.symplicity.com/>).

When you have completed your internship, to receive credit, you must:

1. Turn in all required academic assessment work to your Faculty Supervisor.
2. Follow up on electronic Employer Evaluation survey.
3. Completed Student Feedback (<https://simpson-csm.symplicity.com/>).
4. Attend at least one CVIL Conversation Reflection Session (website).

Upon completion of the reflection session and submission of all paperwork, your faculty supervisor will be notified that all requirements of Career Services have been met. This should be completed prior to end of the term the internship is registered for. Your faculty member will submit your grade to the Registrar's Office so that credit can be granted.

Maximizing the Experience

Once you have accepted a position, you will want to be prepared in order to have a successful experience. As an intern, you will have many opportunities to learn about a potential career and industry. To make your experience as positive and useful as possible, consider the following recommendations:

Use Learning Plan to Facilitate Ongoing Communication

To maximize the benefits of your experience, take an active role by identifying challenging career-related goals using a Learning Plan. The Learning Plan is a formal document created by you and your Site Supervisor and Faculty Sponsor in which you establish learning objectives. Learning objectives clarify the knowledge and skills you hope to gain and guide your activities to ensure a rewarding internship. The Learning Plan should also identify how you will accomplish your objectives and the evaluation process that will determine if you have met your goals.

Although your Site Supervisor will have identified some tasks for you to complete, discussing the objectives in your Learning Plan will initiate open communication. Throughout your experience, refer to your Learning Plan on your own and with your supervisor. If your goals are not met, discuss it with your supervisor. You may need to revise your goals, as work demands may change your assigned projects.

Make the Most of Company Connections

Internship participants have access to a variety of helpful company resources and connections. In order to take advantage of these available assets, consider the following suggests:

- **Network** – As you meet people from the organization, keep a list of names, contact information, and items you discussed. After your internship has ended, you may want to stay in touch with some of these people or ask them to serve as future job references.
- **Find a Mentor** – Determine who in the organization is someone you aspire to learn from or believe would offer you guidance and support. After discussing it with your supervisor, you may be able to approach that person about mentoring you with career advice and ideas.
- **Participate in Job Shadowing or an Informational Interview.** If possible, and with your supervisor's approval, arrange to job shadow someone who has a position about which you would like to learn more. Consider asking someone in an interesting position

for an Informational Interview. An Informational Interview is a 20-30 minute meeting when you ask specific questions about the work they do.

Document the Experience

While you are participating in your internship, it is important to document your work activities, thoughts, and difficulties for future reference. This can occur in several ways:

- **Journals.** Use a journal to write down your experiences so that you have a record of your projects and accomplishments when updating your resume. Journaling also allows you to reflect on what you like and dislike about the experience and enables you to make adjustments to fit your goals.
- **Informal Evaluation.** Determine a time you will regularly meet with your Site Supervisor for feedback, both positive and constructive, regarding your work performance. Revisit your Learning Plan at least once during your internship to ascertain your progress in meeting your goals.
- **Formal Evaluation.** At the end of the experience, follow up with your supervisor for a formal evaluation.

How can I develop a professional reputation?

As an intern, you are expected to behave in an appropriate manner and take advantage of the numerous resources and opportunities provided. In order to accomplish your learning objectives and develop a professional reputation, keep the following in mind:

- **Wear professional attire.** Dressing for the culture where you work sends a strong and appropriate message of respect to the position and organization. Check with your supervisor before your first day about dress codes and dress accordingly.
- **Understand and respect company policies.** Be aware of and respect company policies about when and where you can use personal devices, and other access and confidentiality related matters. Until you are clear about the rules, turn off your cell phone and music, and use the Internet only as allowed.
- **Define your role.** You may be invited to attend staff meetings, decision-making discussions, client negotiations, or other gatherings. Clarify your role prior to going to these meetings so you behave in the expected manner.
- **Ask questions and request feedback.** Don't hesitate to ask questions if you need clarification. Meet regularly with your supervisor for feedback about your efforts, to learn more about the company, and to learn more about her or his opinion.
- **Attend events.** When invited to company-sponsored events, it is in your best interest to attend and behave in a professional manner. If you choose to go out after work with other interns or full-time staff, use discretion and common sense.
- **Be punctual and dependable.** Be early to work and meetings, and finish projects ahead of schedule. Get the names and phone numbers of people you must call if you are ill or will be late.
- **Do quality work and take initiative.** It is important to demonstrate your abilities in the best possible light. Do quality work and ask for more tasks when you are finished with your other responsibilities. Your work ethic is critical as employers see internships as extended interviews.

- **Display a positive attitude.** You could be asked to complete a task you do not like. Avoid expressing your frustration, speaking negatively about other employees, or bragging about your weekend activities. You may be rewarded for your positive attitude with more responsibility.

Remember that you are representing Simpson College, and *The Simpson Code* extends to your role as an intern with an outside employer or organization. Any inappropriate behavior will be subject to the policies and procedures of your employer or organization, state or federal mandates, and *The Simpson Code*. To review *The Simpson Code*, go to the student handbook under student life on the Simpson website.

What are my rights & responsibilities as an Internship Participant?

Internship participants, both paid and unpaid, have many of the same rights and responsibilities as employees. Consider these guidelines:

- **Communication** – Keep your supervisor informed of your progress. Talk honestly and professionally with your supervisor if you are experiencing any difficulties.
- **Confidentiality** – Maintain confidentiality regarding your employer, customers, clients and co-workers. Disclose such information only on a “need-to-know” basis for the purpose of completing work assignments. You may be asked by your employer to sign a confidentiality agreement. Read this form carefully before signing.
- **Liability** – Understand legal liability issues related to your work site and activities. Simpson College does not insure students during periods of temporary internship employment off-campus. It is recommended that you not sign any waiver without speaking to the Career Services Internship Coordinator or legal counsel.
- **Accommodations** - Inform your employer of the accommodations you might need to successfully complete your work assignments. Employers must provide reasonable, but not the exact, accommodations requested.
- **Harassment** – Treat all co-workers, including other interns, clients, vendors, and others encountered on the job, politely and professionally. Unwelcomed, uninvited behavior and language with sexual overtones occurring in the workplace is sexual harassment and is illegal. Alert your supervisor if you are subjected to such behavior.
- **Discrimination** – Act professionally and respectfully when interacting with all persons you meet on the job. Unequal treatment or harassment may be against company policy and/or illegal. Review the company’s discrimination policy, which can be obtained from Human Resources or in the employee handbook, and notify your supervisor or Human Resources if you are subjected to such behavior.

If you are uncomfortable or unsure how to address a particular issue in your internship, contact Career Services or a trusted faculty member to explore options and possible measures.

How can Career Services help?

Simpson College is committed to making your internship an outstanding experience! Count on Career Services to help you discover internship opportunities related to your career interests, prepare you for the search process, and assist you in evaluating quality internship experiences. Our staff provides assistance through the following services:

- One-on-one career coaching
- Resume and cover letter critiques
- Internship search help, resources & listings
- Career fairs and workshops
- Mock interviews and interview preparation
- Internship evaluation guidance & reflection

Contact us at careers@simpson.edu or call 515-961-1667. Visit our website at <http://www.simpson.edu/career/career/internshipsearches.html>.