

# Making the Most of Experiential Learning Opportunities

## Objectives

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1. Explore benefits of experiential learning opportunities.
2. Develop strategies for locating experiential learning opportunities and navigating the application process.
3. Review ways to get the most out of an experiential learning opportunity.

## What is “Experiential Learning”?

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Experiential learning opportunities are hands-on, real world experiences that give individuals a chance to learn by doing. Your experience may be paid or unpaid, and you may or may not receive academic credit. Experiential learning opportunities include (but are not limited to):

- Internships
- Part-time jobs
- Co-ops
- Research experiences
- Volunteer opportunities

## Benefits of Experiential Learning

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Gaining real-world experience through experiential learning will not only help you stand out in the job market but will also prepare you for life after graduation. Below are just some of the ways participating in these experiences can be beneficial:

- Experience a professional environment.
- Expand your résumé, FSU Career Portfolio, and LinkedIn profile.
- Apply what you have learned in the classroom to real-world situations.
- Expand your professional network.
- Familiarize yourself with industry lingo.
- Narrow and clarify your career focus and goals.
- Gain a sense of self-confidence in your abilities.

## Activities to Help You Prepare for Experiential Learning Opportunities

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### Consider Your Options for Experiential Learning

There are many things to consider when deciding on an experiential learning opportunity, such as the type of opportunity (internship? co-op? something else?), when to participate in the experience, the kind



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of organization you would like to work for, what you would like to gain from the experience, etc. Use the exercise on page 5 of this guide to help you start thinking about your options. If you need additional help, visit The Career Center and speak to a career advisor.

### Conduct an Information Interview

Information interviews are meetings initiated by a candidate with a professional in their desired field. Information interviews are a great way to learn more about the field you are interested in while developing new contacts. Below are some quick tips for information interviewing. You can also refer to the “Conducting an Information Interview” guide in The Career Center or online at: [www.career.fsu.edu/Resources/Career-Guides](http://www.career.fsu.edu/Resources/Career-Guides).

### Visit The Career Center

Drop in to The Career Center Library to speak with a career advisor about preparing application materials, interviewing strategies, or planning your search. The Career Center Library also has a variety

of resources and information on experiential learning opportunities including books, databases, employer files, and more. Visit [www.career.fsu.edu/Students/Plan-Your-Career/Career-Advising](http://www.career.fsu.edu/Students/Plan-Your-Career/Career-Advising) for information on hours of operation and office hours for embedded career liaisons.

## Executing Your Search

### Top 10 Tips for Finding an Experiential Learning Opportunity

1. **Start your search early**, ideally one to two semesters before you would like to intern.
2. **Develop a winning résumé.** Get help from The Career Center and upload your resume to your Handshake profile.
3. **Enhance your interview skills** through a mock interview during fall and spring semesters.
4. **Utilize your Handshake account.** Handshake is the FSU Career Center's online opportunity database linking students and alumni directly with employers. With Handshake, you can:
  - Search, view, and apply to internships, co-ops, and other job postings. Receive email notifications for jobs that match your qualifications.
  - View and sign up for on-campus and mock interviews.
  - Upload your résumé and other professional documents for safe-keeping and easy application submission.
  - Connect with professionals in your field through ProfessoNole Mentors, FSU's alumni/community database.
  - Report your previous and future experiences.
  - Learn about upcoming Career Center events.
5. **Browse search engines** for links to experiential learning opportunities or employer sites and browse professional association pages in your field of interest.
6. **Visit The Career Center** to search through available print/online resources to research organizations and experiential learning opportunities.
7. **Attend career fairs** sponsored by The Career Center, and connect with employers at company/agency information sessions.
8. **Network.** Use the contacts you already know (professors, friends, and relatives) to find a position that's the right fit for you.
9. **Search ProfessoNole Mentors** for contacts

in your field of interest (accessible through Handshake or myFSU).

10. **Develop good record-keeping habits and send thank you letters** after an interview or networking contact.

### General Recommendations

- **Identify what you want to gain from the experience.** Talk with peers, faculty, professionals, and Career Center staff to identify suitable environments for learning. Talk with professors and other members of your academic department about past student experiences.
- **Try not to limit yourself** to one type of employer or geographical location.
- **Identify and connect with target organizations** to make them aware of your interest and enthusiasm.
- **Reach out** to family, friends, teachers, and previous employers for advice about where to

### How to access Handshake

- Go to [www.career.fsu.edu/handshake](http://www.career.fsu.edu/handshake).
- Click on "Student Login."
- Log in with your FSU ID and password.
- Complete "My Profile" found on the drop-down menu by your name
- Review "For You" and "Events" for announcements.
- Upload your résumé under the "Documents" tab after having it critiqued by Career Center staff.
- Locate "Career Center" and use the "Experiences" tab to register for internship recognition through the Career Center (more info page 4.)

apply and what openings are available.

## **Tips for Success While Completing an Experiential Learning Opportunity**

Experiential learning opportunities are real-work experiences and should be treated as such. Your presence at the work site is meaningful to employers and with this privilege comes certain expectations.

To ensure you make the best impression and get the most benefit out of your experience, consider the following:

**Observe your new environment.** As a new student team member, you may be unfamiliar with the systems, norms, and culture of your workplace. Make mental notes regarding the office culture in terms of how people address each other, how they dress, and the interactions both between co-workers and between supervisors and employees. What is your supervisor's management style? Will you be working with other interns or be assigned a mentor?

**Immerse yourself.** Learn as much as you can about the industry or organization. Read training manuals, contracts, letters, memos, press releases, trade publications, business newspapers, and the company's website. Follow the company on social media. Interact with people in different departments as time permits. Absorb yourself into your assignments.

**Network! Network! Network!** This is an excellent opportunity to develop a professional network. You are in a prime position to meet people at all levels of your organization and to learn about their experiences and career paths. Focus on quality rather than quantity of people you meet. As a young professional, your primary interest at this point is to meet people who can teach you about your future profession or career area.

**Build your online FSU Career Portfolio.** The online FSU Career Portfolio system is a shareable web platform that allows you to document and showcase your skills and achievements using the FSU brand. Get permission from your supervisor to collect any relevant projects, papers, presentations, and other supportive tasks/assignments in which you were involved to become part of your online FSU Career Portfolio. You may also want to include any positive performance reviews, supervisor feedback, new skills acquired, and letters of recommendation. Building your Career Portfolio now can offer great advantages

## **Experiential Learning Do's and Don't's**

### **Do**

- Demonstrate professionalism.** Dress professionally and appropriately for the position. Be on time and come to work ready to work and take ownership of assigned projects!
- Define and clarify job expectations.** Make sure that you fully understand assigned tasks and ask questions!
- Be friendly, considerate and respectful of others.**
- Pay attention to detail.** Follow through on all projects and assignments.
- Take initiative!** Work hard and efficiently.
- Communicate positivity, enthusiasm, and willingness to collaborate.**
- Find a mentor!** Not only can this person help you to learn and grow professionally, but they may be a great networking asset later on!

### **Don't**

- ...**Be late.** If you must be late or are not able to come in for any reason, communicate with your supervisor prior to your reporting time. Do not take extended lunches or breaks.
- ...**Be afraid to ask questions** or get clarification when you are unsure about something.
- ...**Complain** about "grunt" work. There is always something to learn.
- ...**Overstep boundaries** or tell people what to do.
- ...**Gossip.** Keep personal information to yourself.
- ...**Be lazy** in your work.
- ...**Terminate your position without officially notifying** your work supervisor and your university's Career Center.

during your future job search. To start your FSU Career Portfolio, go to [www.portfolio.fsu.edu](http://www.portfolio.fsu.edu).

## **Get Recognition for Your Experience**

At FSU, you have **five** options for earning recognition for your experience.

### **Experiential Recognition Program (ERP)**

ERP is a virtual, non-credit bearing (-0-) course that allows eligible FSU degree-seeking students to earn transcript notation for engaging in experiential learning opportunities. FSU students must register for the ERP course during open registration windows. The ERP course is graded on the S/U system through Canvas. Visit [www.career.fsu.edu/erp](http://www.career.fsu.edu/erp).

### **Experiential Certificate Program (ECP)**

ECP gives all FSU degree-seeking students the opportunity to earn recognition for engaging in experiential learning opportunities. Students must participate in ECP in the same semester they complete an experiential learning engagement (internship, research, leadership, or significant community engagement). In order to participate, students must enroll prior to their first day of work. Visit [www.career.fsu.edu/ecp](http://www.career.fsu.edu/ecp).

### **Garnet & Gold Scholar Society**

Document your experiences by participating in the Garnet & Gold Scholar Society! Visit [garnetandgoldscholar.fsu.edu](http://garnetandgoldscholar.fsu.edu) to learn more.

### **Academic Course Credit**

Contact your FSU academic advisor to determine if academic credit is available for completing an internship. Note that academic credit is granted at the discretion of the department, so it may not be an option available to you.

### **Directed Individual Study (DIS)**

A DIS is independent or group work you complete outside of a regular classroom and course context. A DIS can be field research, lab work with a research

group, library research, or an internship. Contact your FSU academic advisor to determine if academic credit through a DIS is available for your major.

## **Leave on a Positive Note!**

A week or so before you leave your experiential learning position, meet with your supervisor to personally thank him or her for the opportunity to be part of the organization. Discuss any pending projects that need additional attention and complete any exit paperwork required by the employer. The day you leave, return any company property that was issued to you (e.g., keys, security identification, laptops, cell phones, etc.), and be sure to leave your contact information. Send a formal thank you letter reiterating important concepts you learned and expressing your appreciation for the experience.

## **Summary**

In order to get the most out of an experiential learning opportunity, individuals must approach the opportunity like the real-world work experience it is. These kinds of experiences provide employers with valuable talent to enhance their business and provide candidates with opportunities to grow, learn, and leverage the experience in future job or graduate school campaigns. Intentional preparation and attention to professionalism can help to ensure individuals are able to acquire the skills, professional contacts, and recognition available to achieve experiential learning success.

## **Additional Resources**

### **Select Career Center Library Print Resources**

Looking for more information on finding an internship or experiential learning opportunity? Visit The Career Center Library for books and other resources on this topic.

## Exercise: Are You Ready for Experiential Learning?

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### STEP 1: REFLECT

- Identify *your* motivation for obtaining experiential learning**
    - Why do you want an internship? What do you hope to gain from the experience?
  - Evaluate *your* readiness to pursue experiential learning**
    - Which type of experiential learning opportunity is best for me, and how many should I or can I do?
    - What types of employers hire students in my area of interest?
    - Do I want an experience that is paid? Am I open to an experience that is unpaid?
    - What do I have to offer? (knowledge, skills, abilities)
  - Assess the benefits of an experiential learning opportunity to *your* future**
    - Identify specific benefits or outcomes for participating in an internship or experiential learning opportunity.
    - How will it complement your academic studies and future career goals?
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### STEP 2: PLAN

- Define your short-term goals**
  - What would you like to accomplish by completing this opportunity?
- Create your action plan**
  - What specific actions (objectives) will you take to meet your goal(s)?
  - What resources (print, online, or individuals) will you use to help you accomplish your objectives? Be specific!
  - When will you complete each objective? Set specific dates to accomplish objectives.

Goal(s): 1. \_\_\_\_\_  
2. \_\_\_\_\_

Action (Objective)	Resources Needed	Goal #	Priority	Due Date

### STEP 3: EVALUATE

- Evaluate your progress**
    - Check in with yourself periodically as you execute your action plan. Do you need to revisit your goal or readjust your plan of action? How are things going so far?
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## Start Your Internship Search!

DATABASES	ABOUT THIS RESOURCE	LINK
<b>CEI Internships</b>	Internships or summer jobs by location and area of interest, including community and social service agencies, international Affairs, women's rights, advertising, America's top companies, media, sports, and more. Password-protected sites: Contact The Career Center at 850-644-6431 for guidelines on obtaining access.	<a href="http://cei-internship.squarespace.com/law-students/?SSLoginOk=true%20">cei-internship.squarespace.com/law-students/?SSLoginOk=true%20</a>
<b>Dream Careers</b>	FSU's partnership with Dream Careers allows FSU students to apply for free and receive other benefits. FSU students apply for free using promo code: 2015ER.	<a href="http://www.summerinternships.com">www.summerinternships.com</a>
<b>GoinGlobal</b>	Find job/internship listings in English or other languages. Search criteria include location, job title, skills or keywords, industry, academic degree, company name, and job type. Access via link or through Secure Apps.	<a href="https://online.goinglobal.com/default.aspx">https://online.goinglobal.com/default.aspx</a>
<b>Vault</b>	Find an internship by name, location, industry or compensation. Vault ranks the best overall internships and consulting, accounting, and financial services internships. Access from FSU Career Center Library page, (Section IV).	<a href="https://access.vault.com/career-insider-login.aspx">https://access.vault.com/career-insider-login.aspx</a>
<b>GENERAL</b>		
<b>Camp Jobs</b>	Domestic and international camp jobs as camp directors, kitchen staff, counselors, nurses, lifeguards, activity specialists and all summer camp staff positions.	<a href="http://www.campjobs.com/">http://www.campjobs.com/</a>
<b>Chegg</b>	U.S. internships searchable by city, state, or major. Website also includes an internship predictor to help you evaluate your personal preferences.	<a href="https://www.chegg.com/app/internships">https://www.chegg.com/app/internships</a>
<b>InternMatch</b>	Browse thousands of internships by different categories and majors! Use the save position feature to keep track of internships and deadlines in your dashboard. U.S. positions only.	<a href="https://id.looksharp.com/">https://id.looksharp.com/</a>
<b>ENVIRONMENTAL</b>		
<b>Net Impact</b>	Net Impact is the go-to resource for jobs and internships for seekers looking to build careers with positive social and environmental impact. Search by area of impact as well as experience level.	<a href="https://netimpact.org/">https://netimpact.org/</a>
<b>The Student Conservation Association</b>	Spring break opportunities as well as summer internships. SCA's mission is to build the next generation of conservation leaders and inspire lifelong stewardship of the environment.	<a href="https://www.thesca.org/serve">https://www.thesca.org/serve</a>
<b>GOVERNMENT</b>		
<b>Corporation for National &amp; Community Service</b>	Three summer internships: external affairs, government relations, and research and evaluation. Go to the website and from the bottom of the page, select 'About' and then 'Careers.'	<a href="http://www.nationalservice.gov/about/careers">http://www.nationalservice.gov/about/careers</a>
<b>U.S. Office of Personnel Management</b>	The federal government's official website. The internship program allows students to be exposed to the work of the government through federal internships while pursuing their degree.	<a href="https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/hiring-authorities/students-recent-graduates/#url=intern">https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/hiring-authorities/students-recent-graduates/#url=intern</a>
<b>Washington Internship Institute</b>	Semester-long academic internship programs provided to college sophomores, juniors, seniors, recent graduates, and graduate students in D.C. area. Possible to earn academic credit.	<a href="http://wiidc.org/academicinternships/">http://wiidc.org/academicinternships/</a>

<b>INTERNATIONAL</b>		
<b>BUNAC</b>	International intern opportunities in professional careers, teaching, marine, wildlife and conservation, and hospitality. Volunteer and internship opportunities in wildlife conservation, sport coaching, working with children and multi-projects.	<a href="http://www.bunac.org/usa">www.bunac.org/usa</a>
<b>European Union</b>	Information on working abroad. Assistance with traineeships, grants, and jobs for researchers and volunteer opportunities. Search engine for job vacancies in Europe. Search under 'Your life in the EU.'	<a href="http://europa.eu/index_en.htm">http://europa.eu/index_en.htm</a>
<b>globalEDGE</b>	The globalEDGE International Internship Directory helps match students with international internship opportunities offered by two- and four-year colleges and universities, governmental agencies, non-profit groups, private organizations, and corporations. To search for an internship, select a type of organization, country, or subject of study.	<a href="http://globaledge.msu.edu/international-internships">http://globaledge.msu.edu/international-internships</a>
<b>International Volunteer Program Association</b>	The International Volunteer Programs Association (IVPA) is an association of non-governmental organizations involved in international volunteer work and internship exchanges.	<a href="http://volunteerinternational.org/">volunteerinternational.org/</a>
<b>NON-PROFIT</b>		
<b>Idealist</b>	Jobs, internships, and volunteer opportunities for not-for-profit organizations across the U.S. and abroad.	<a href="http://www.idealist.org/">http://www.idealist.org/</a>
<b>Partners of the Americas</b>	Partners is a non-profit, non-partisan organization with international offices in Washington, DC. Partners offers both a President's Internship Program and general internship program covering multiple majors and interests.	<a href="http://www.partners.net/general-internships">http://www.partners.net/general-internships</a>
<b>SPECIAL POPULATIONS</b>		
<b>4A's</b>	To be eligible to apply for Multicultural Advertising Intern Program (MAIP), a student must be: Asian/Asian American, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, Hispanic/Latino, Black/African American, American Indian or Alaska Native, or Multiracial or Multiethnic (e.g., Hispanic and Black). Go to the website and select 'Talent Development.'	<a href="http://www.aaaa.org/Pages/default.aspx">http://www.aaaa.org/Pages/default.aspx</a>
<b>INROADS</b>	The mission of INROADS is to develop and place talented, underserved, ethnically diverse youth in business and industry and prepare them for corporate and community leadership.	<a href="http://www.inroads.org/apply">http://www.inroads.org/apply</a>
<b>National Business &amp; Disability Council at The Viscardi Center</b>	The Emerging Leaders Summer Internship Program for College Students with Disabilities provides leadership development and networking opportunities to undergraduate and graduate college students with disabilities nationwide.	<a href="http://www.viscardicenter.org/services/nbdc/">http://www.viscardicenter.org/services/nbdc/</a>
<b>Southern Education Foundation</b>	Southern Education Foundation's mission is to advance equity and excellence in education for all students in the South, particularly low-income students and students of color. For upperclassmen and graduate students.	<a href="http://www.southerneducation.org/Our-Strategies/Leadership-Development-Efforts.aspx">http://www.southerneducation.org/Our-Strategies/Leadership-Development-Efforts.aspx</a>
<b>Sponsors for Educational Opportunity</b>	SEO provides underrepresented students of color with paid summer internships in banking and private equity, corporate leadership, finance/accounting, consulting, marketing, sales, human resources, and law.	<a href="http://seocareer.org/for-applicants/apply-now/">http://seocareer.org/for-applicants/apply-now/</a>

**SPECIAL POPULATIONS**

<b>UNCF</b>	UNCF is the nation's largest and most effective minority education organization. Scholarships, fellowships, and internships for students from low- and moderate-income families.	<a href="https://scholarships.uncf.org/">https://scholarships.uncf.org/</a>
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**TALLAHASSEE**

Center for Leadership & Social Change	For opportunities on campus or in Tallahassee, mostly volunteer. Use the 'Get Involved' link and open their newsletter for current listings of opportunities.	<a href="http://www.thecenter.fsu.edu/">http://www.thecenter.fsu.edu/</a>
Nole Central	Opportunities to join campus organizations and participate in volunteer activities and events.	<a href="https://nolecentral.dsa.fsu.edu/">https://nolecentral.dsa.fsu.edu/</a>

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The **Career Center**

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