

Preparing for Internships and Co-ops

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Most people are familiar with the paradox, that you can't get a job without experience and you can't get experience without a job. One way of solving this dilemma is to intern or participate in a co-op. Internships are usually defined as one-time work experiences where students are supervised by a practicing professional. Co-ops are paid, multi-semester work/study programs which enable students to combine classroom learning with practical, on-the-job experience. Both of these opportunities are available throughout the year, although more opportunities are available during the summer semester. Depending on the internship, it may be paid or unpaid, full- or part-time, involve observing or hands-on experiences, and you may or may not obtain academic credit. However, all co-op positions are paid and provide more progressive responsibilities.

Benefits Of An Internship Or Co-op

When deciding whether you would like to intern or participate in a co-op, it may be useful to consider some of the advantages. This experience may allow you to:

- Obtain exposure to fields of interest.
- Make contacts and expand your network.
- Learn what it is like in an organizational environment.
- Gain a sense of self-confidence and professionalism.
- Bring classroom learning to life.
- Increase your marketability by expanding your portfolio and resume.
- Narrow your focus and clarify career goals.
- Learn and understand the jargon of a profession.
- Learn what is expected of someone in this type of work.
- Earn an income to support your education (if a paid position).



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General Recommendations

The following list of activities regarding what to do before, during, and after an internship/co-op is drawn from professionals and literature in this area.

1. Start your search early, ideally one semester prior to the semester you would like to intern.
2. Identify what you want from the experience.
3. Talk with peers and professionals to identify suitable environments for learning. If possible, do not limit yourself to one type of employer or geographical location.
4. Identify target organizations and make them aware of your interest and enthusiasm by providing all the information they require.
5. Prepare a resume geared toward seeking an internship or co-op.
6. Turn to family, friends, teachers, and previous employers for advice about where to apply and what openings are available.
7. Find out if the organization requires a certain GPA.
8. During the interview, articulate your past accomplishments and relate them to your future contributions to the organization. You may want to participate in a mock interview to practice interview techniques.
9. Before accepting an offer, review how well the internship/co-op matches your goals.
10. During your internship/co-op, monitor your activities closely to get a feel for where you fit in the organization.
11. Throughout your internship/co-op, work to establish contacts and develop a personal file or portfolio of all your significant experiences. Be sure to gather artifacts (samples of your work) for your Career Portfolio, www.portfolio.fsu.edu.
12. Obtain recommendation letters from your supervisors.
13. Once the internship/co-op is completed, send a thank you note to your employer.
14. Last of all, compare your internship/co-op expectations to the realities of your experience.

Internship/Co-op Dos and Don'ts

DO

- Network.
- Be honest and ethical.
- Display energy and enthusiasm.
- Maintain professionalism (both in your actions and your attire).
- Take initiative and assert yourself.
- Take your position seriously, whether paid or unpaid.
- Complete menial tasks quickly and ask for more challenging work.
- Ensure that all work assignments are accurate and completed in a timely manner.

DON'T

- Say no to assignments.
- Be late or absent. If you must, call in prior to reporting time.
- Do homework on the job.
- Make personal telephone calls.
- Wait for someone to give you assignments. Take the initiative to create your own assignments or ask your supervisor for additional tasks.
- Gossip.

Ways to Begin

There are several ways you can pursue an internship or co-op. The following list is not mutually exclusive. In fact, you may find combining these to be very beneficial.

- Visit the co-op/internship office at the Career Center.
- Search SeminoleLink for internship and co-op openings.
- Use information resources available in the FSU Career Center Library.
- Contact organizations directly.
- Network. Use your contacts (professors, friends, and relatives) or browse Professionle, a network of professionals, on SeminoleLink.
- Research employers online.

- Check with your academic department about potential opportunities.
- Attend various Career Center sponsored expos (Seminole Futures, Engineering Day, etc.).

SeminoleLink

Register with the Career Center and receive authorization for *Plus!* services through SeminoleLink, an online jobs database. Once registered, you will have the ability to:

- Search, view, and apply to co-op, internship, and other job postings.
- View and sign-up for on-campus interviewing.
- Add/remove your resume into FSU Resume Books for employers to search.
- Receive e-mail notification of jobs that match your qualifications.
- Report your internship or co-op placement through your SeminoleLink account.
- Participate in a Mock Interview to help you practice your interviewing skills.

Register for SeminoleLink *Plus!* services.

- Go to www.career.fsu.edu.
- Click on [SeminoleLink](#).
- Log in with your Blackboard FSU ID and password.
- Complete Profile under the Profile Tab.
- Upload your resume under the “Documents” tab.
- Submit the *Plus!* authorization request located on the under the Announcement. Within 48 hours, our staff will check your account and authorize *Plus!* services.

Career Expositions

The Career Center hosts several expos each semester, such as Seminole Futures and Engineering Day. These expos allow students to talk with employers about career-related internships, co-ops, volunteer and summer employment opportunities, as well as permanent, full-time employment. Many of these employers return later in the semester to conduct

information sessions and on-campus interviews for co-op and internship positions, as well as full-time jobs.

Career Center Library

The Career Center Library has a variety of resources and information on internships and co-ops. Two ways of obtaining an overview of these resources are through the use of our Career Key computer and/ or *Module XII, Get Experience*. Career Key generates a list of resources containing internship or co-op information. Career Center Library resources, including files, directories, and books, provide general information about the benefits of doing an internship or co-op, suggestions about the selection of a site, and individuals’ personal reflections on their experiences. These resources may be used to find out more about what an internship or co-op is, to learn more about each of these opportunities, and to provide assistance in developing a list of organizations to contact. In addition to including a list of resources, *Module XII, Get Experience*, provides information on other activities that will assist you in finding out about internships.

Helpful Web Sites

The FSU Career Center maintains listings of links to external web sites that have information about intern, co-op, volunteer, summer employment, and other experiential learning opportunities. These web pages are outside of FSU; therefore, they are not under our control. We take no responsibility for the accuracy of content or availability of these sites.

AfterCollege Internships

www.aftercollege.com

BackdoorJobs.com

www.backdoorjobs.com

CampusAccess

www.campusaccess.com

CampusCareerCenter.com

www.campuscareercenter.com

The Carter Center

www.cartercenter.org

Cool Works

www.coolworks.com

GoAbroad.com
www.internabroad.com

Idealist.org
www.idealist.org

INROADS
www.inroads.org

InternJobs.com
www.internjobs.com

Intersearch.com
www.intersearch.com

Internships4You
www.internships4you.com

InternshipPrograms.com
www.internshipprograms.com

Internweb.com
www.internweb.com

Jobs.net
www.jobs.net

Jobpostings.ca
www.jobpostings.net

Job Web
www.jobweb.com

Monster College
www.college.monster.com

PlanetEdu
www.planetedu.com

Rinternships.com
www.rinternships.com

Resort Intern Connection
www.resortinternconnection.com

Southern Newspaper Publishers Association
www.snpa.org

Sponsor for Educational Opportunity
www.seo-usa.org/career

Student Conservation Association
www.thesca.org

Student Search System, Inc.
www.studentsearch.com

SummerJobs.com
www.summerjobs.com

Walt Disney College Program
www.wdwcollegeprogram.com

The Washington Center
www.twc.edu

Conclusion

This guide has provided some general information about internships and co-ops. Given the variability of what these experiences may entail (e.g., academic credit, “hands-on” experience), it is important to investigate what the particular internship/co-op you are pursuing provides, to see if it will meet your needs. By having an awareness of the benefits of doing an internship/co-op, you can really focus in on what you want to gain from the experience and seek out activities that relate to this goal. The information on general recommendations and “dos” and “don’ts,” can serve as a guide to keep in mind throughout the internship/co-op process. Now is the time to get started. Our Career Advisors and Career Experience Opportunities (CEO) staff are ready and eager to help you in your pursuit of an internship or co-op position.



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