

# Preparing for Internships and Co-ops

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Most people are familiar with the paradox, you can't get a job without experience and you can't get experience without a job. One way of solving this dilemma is by doing an internship or co-op. Internships are typically defined as one-time work experiences where students with a certain amount of academic preparation (typically 30+ semester hours) work under the supervision of a practicing professional. Co-ops are paid, multise­mester 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 there tend to be more during the summer semester. Depending on the specific internship, it may be paid or unpaid, full-time or part-time, involve more observing or more "hands-on" experiences, and you may or may not obtain academic credit.

## **Benefits Of An Internship / Cooperative Education**

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When deciding whether you would like to do an internship or co-op, it may be useful to consider some of the advantages of such an experience. For instance, it may allow you to:

- obtain exposure to fields of interest
- make contacts (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
- potential to earn an income to support your education



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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 the professional literature in this area:

1. Start your search early (ideally one semester prior to the semester you would like to start your work experience).
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 interests 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 what GPA the organization requires (as a rule, you should not make below a C in your coursework).
8. During the interview, articulate your past accomplishments and relate them to your future contributions to the organization. (You may want to register with the Career Center and participate in a Mock Interview to practice your interview skills.)
9. Before accepting an offer, review how well the internship/co-op matches your goals.
10. Once you have secured your position, read *Making the Most of Your Internship/Co-op Experience* at [career.fsu.edu/ccis/guides/making\\_most\\_experience.html](http://career.fsu.edu/ccis/guides/making_most_experience.html).
11. During your internship/co-op, monitor your activities closely to get a feel for where you fit in the "big picture."
12. Throughout your internship/co-op you can establish numerous contacts and develop a personal file or portfolio of all your significant work experiences. Gather artifacts for your Career Portfolio, [www.portfolio.fsu.edu](http://www.portfolio.fsu.edu).
13. Obtain recommendation letters from your supervisors.
14. Once the internship/co-op is completed, send a thank you note to your employer.

15. Last of all, compare your internship/co-op expectations to the realities of your experience.

### Internship/Co-op Do's and Don'ts

#### DO

- Network
- Be honest and ethical
- Display energy and enthusiasm
- Maintain professionalism
- Take initiative
- Assert yourself
- Take your position seriously, whether paid or non-paid
- 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 from work
- Do homework on the job
- Make personal telephone calls
- Wait for someone to give you assignments
- Gossip

### Ways to Get Started

There are several ways one can go about pursuing an internship/co-op. The following ways need not be mutually exclusive. In fact, you may find combining these to be very beneficial.

Visit the Career Center and speak with an advisor about internship or co-op opportunities.

Use the various resources available in the FSU Career Center Library, DSC 1200.

Contact organizations directly.

Utilize your networking contacts (professors, friends, and relatives).

Research employers and do keyword searches (e.g. engineering internships) through the Internet.

Check with your academic department about potential opportunities.

Attend various career fairs sponsored by the Career Center (Seminole Futures, Engineering Day, and Communication Career Awareness Day).

Create your own experience here by networking.

## 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.

Participate in a Mock Interview to help you practice your interviewing skills.

To upgrade to SeminoleLink *Plus!*

Go to [career.fsu.edu](http://career.fsu.edu).

Click on [SeminoleLink](#).

Log in with your Blackboard FSU ID and password.

Upload your resume under the "Documents" tab and complete your profile.

View the online orientation on the "Home" tab under "Announcements."

Submit the *Plus!* authorization request located on the SeminoleLink home page. Within 48 hours, our staff will check your account and add *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

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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

<http://www.aftercollege.com/>

BackdoorJobs.com

<http://www.backdoorjobs.com/>

CampusAccess

<http://www.campusaccess.com/>

CampusCareerCenter.com

<http://www.campuscareercenter.com>

The Carter Center

<http://www.cartercenter.org/>

College Marketplace

<http://www.collegemarketplace.com/>

Cool Works

<http://www.coolworks.com/>

Idealist.org

<http://idealist.org>

INROADS

<http://www.inroads.org/>

Institute for Experiential Learning

<http://www.ielnet.org/>

Intern Abroad

<http://www.internabroad.com/search.cfm>

InternJobs.com

<http://www.internjobs.com/>

Internships.com

<http://internships.com/>

Internships4You

<http://www.internships4you.com/>

InternshipPrograms.com

<http://www.internshipprograms.com>

Internweb.com

<http://www.internweb.com/>

Jobs.net

<http://jobs.net>

Job Postings Magazine & Online Network

<http://www.jobpostings.net>

Job Web

<http://www.jobweb.com/>

Making the Difference

<http://www.makeadifference.org/>

Monstertrak

<http://www.monstertrak.com>

National Internship Directory

<http://www.internsearch.com/>

PlanetEdu

<http://www.planetedu.com/>

Resort Intern Connection

<http://www.resortinternconnection.com/>

Rising Star Internships

<http://rinternships.com>

Southern Newspaper Publishers Association

<http://www.snpa.org/>

Sponsor for Educational Opportunity

<http://www.seo-usa.org/>

The Student Conservation Association

<http://www.thesca.org/>

The Student Search System

<http://www.studentsearch.com/>

Summer Jobs

<http://www.summerjobs.com/>

Walt Disney College Program

<http://wdwcollegeprogram.com/>

The Washington Center for Internships

<http://www.twc.edu/>

Yahoo! Hot Jobs

<http://www.hotjobs.com>

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## 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 “do’s” 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 CEO staff are ready and eager to help you in your pursuit of an internship or co-op position.



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850.644.6431 • [career.fsu.edu](http://career.fsu.edu)

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