

STEPS TO SECURING AN INTERNSHIP



Step I: Self-Examination

Take stock of your interests, abilities, and values. Set academic and career goals by exploring careers and researching literature. It is important to know how the internship fits in with your career planning. **Many students believe the internship will determine their major, career choice, etc. This is partially true; however, the internship should be considered as only a part of your career planning process.**

Before researching internship opportunities, you should be able to answer these questions: *What do I expect from this internship?; What do I hope to gain or learn from my experience?; What type of organization/work environment am I seeking?*

Also, establish your limits. *Are there geographical constraints? If the internship is not paid, can I still participate in this experience?* By answering questions such as those mentioned, you will gain a clearer understanding of what you want and begin to **target your internship search.**

The best method of answering these questions is to get some assistance. UCS offers an on-line computer guidance system (FOCUS http://careers.unc.edu/oth_empj.html) that can help identify some areas of interest. Also, don't forget to schedule a meeting with Dara Wilson-Grant or Vergie Taylor, UCS' Career Planning Coordinators.

Step II: Research

The initial steps are to attend a HOW TO FIND AN INTERNSHIP workshop (see program dates on UCS website or visit Hanes Hall), get registered with UCS, and schedule an individual appointment with the Internship Coordinator. You will then have the knowledge and confidence to explore the many possibilities that exist!

The UCS website (<http://careers.unc.edu>) is the best place to begin your search. The UCS site contains an internship database with over 1,000 opportunities in a variety of fields. If you cannot find what you want there, review UCS' Helpful Web Resources. These are links to comprehensive and specific internship sites.

In addition, remember to use the UCS Resource Room and begin the process of networking. The Resource Room contains sections on career exploration, company directories/geographic guides, and an entire section devoted just to internships! There are general internship guides, such as Peterson's, as well as directories for specific areas (media internship guide, legal internships, policy/political positions, local jobs, and many more). Begin by reviewing as many guides as you can in order to familiarize yourself with the types of internships that exist. Focus on what looks appealing, rather than trying to only review sources that "fit" your major. You may find that you meet the qualifications for an assortment of internships.

Also, it is a good idea to attend a Networking Night or Career Panel to begin meeting with professionals in a relaxed setting and to learn about specific careers. Remember to consult with faculty, club advisors, fellow students, family, Carolina Connection (alumni database on UCS website), and visit Campus Y's Volunteer Action Center to uncover internship leads and possibilities. If you are unsure how to network or with whom, then let UCS help you master this valuable skill!

Mark your calendar with UCS workshops and events, such as the **Internship Fair** and on-campus employer presentations. Many students feel that such events are for upperclassmen only. This is not true! Finally, don't forget to meet with a UCS counselor to begin career planning or to review what you have done so far.

Step III: Creating Your Own Internship

Although the Internship Program has many resources, including many of the most recent editions of internship search guides, **many internships are not found via such resources (including the web!).**

Most students do not land an internship in a nationally listed program. Instead, many internships are more individualized for a specific organization or business. In fact, most agencies do not even list their internship in a directory. For example, there are over 50,000 internships listed in various guides and over 2 million college students annually completing internships.

With that fact in mind, you should also consider creating your own internship. There are lots of opportunities in your hometown or here in the Triangle. You must take initiative in finding these possibilities. Conduct an informational interview with a local professional to find out what “hidden” opportunities exist. The key to creating your own internship is to target certain places. Do not just send resumes at random. Some places that students forget to check are newspapers, radio stations, hospitals, local businesses, and non-profit agencies. Each one of these organizations has people from a variety of backgrounds. Refer to step 1 to ensure that you have covered all pertinent questions and variables.

Step IV: Get Organized

Now that you have generated all of this information, what do you do with it? Which internships fit your goals? Which can you afford?

Once you have targeted a manageable number of organizations (depends on the individual but 15-35+ is a good start), you will need to write a letter or inquiry (for those opportunities that you want to create) or begin the application process (for listed positions). If you are targeting places in your hometown, an initial phone call may provide the answers that you need. To apply for an internship, most organizations will require a resume and cover letter. Other common materials include transcripts, writing samples, references, and formal applications.

If you do not have a resume, it is a good idea to attend a Resume Writing workshop and/or meet with a UCS counselor (if you have one, get a counselor to critique it). Finally, do not forget to register with the Internship Program. This allows you to have your resume forwarded to those organizations that request it. To learn how to register, pick up the instructions in our Resource Room or refer to the next part of this section.

Step V: The Waiting Game

Complete all application materials; mail them out and then.....wait. It can take up to a month before you hear anything (if you hear anything at all). Be sure to take note of all deadlines. Once the deadline has passed, follow up with a phone call if you have not already done so. Ask if they have received all application materials, offer to provide them with more information, and find out when interviews will be conducted. Also, be prepared to explain your interest over the phone. You must be persistent but not an annoyance to the organization.

Step VI: Interviewing

Try to arrange a personal interview whenever possible. Some companies even interview right at UCS! There is a list of those organizations who have scheduled on-campus interviews and/or who will be conducting information sessions about their company on the bulletin board at UCS and on our website (<http://careers.unc.edu>). Even if a recruiter is coming to discuss full-time jobs, it is a good idea to attend their information session. Not only will the recruiter have a chance to meet you, but also you can ask about internships.

Do not forget to use Career Fairs as an opportunity to meet potential internship “employers.” **UCS also offers practice interviews (videotaped upon student request) and interview workshops to help you get prepared.**

Step VII: Offers & Rejection

It is a good idea to consider which internship best suits your needs (remember section 1?) before making your final decision. Once you have decided that the internship coincides with your personal needs and interests, send a typed acceptance letter. Before sending your letter it is recommended that you get the offer in writing, including any reimbursement or pay arrangements and/or job duties.

If, on the other hand, you are faced with no offers, do not despair. Evaluate the rejection as a piece of information. If you are still interested in the internship, ask to remain on file for further consideration as a prospective intern (someone else may withdraw). You may also want to ask what additional skills would have resulted in an offer. Above all, don't take rejection personally!! Apply for other positions and continue your internship search.