

Ways to Prepare for Your Career

Experiential Education: Internship, Co-op and Externship/Job Shadow Programs

Experiential education enables students to gain real life experience tied to what is learned in the classroom. These programs provide an avenue for gaining work experience and can help with your job search after college.

What is an internship?

Internships are temporary work experiences related to your field of study or career interest. They can be paid or unpaid, and may or may not be integrated into your college program for college credit. An internship generally lasts a couple of months. For an internship to be unpaid, it must be for the benefit of the student, not the employer, and is similar to training that could be provided in an educational environment. [Learn more at www.dol.gov](http://www.dol.gov).

What is a co-op?

Co-op stands for cooperative education. It is a program through your college that integrates classroom study and work in your field. Co-op positions are usually paid, can be either full- or part-time, and can often extend the amount of time you spend in college.

What is an externship/job shadow program?

Externships vary in length, but usually last one or two days. They generally involve shadowing a professional and may include informational interviews, a tour of the facility, and participation in actual office projects.

What are the benefits of experiential education?

It allows you to:

- “Test drive” a career field with little risk
- Apply what you learn in the classroom to the “real world”
- In a co-op and some internship opportunities, you receive compensation for the hours you work
- Gain practical experience that you can use when interviewing for jobs after graduation.
- Make valuable contacts in your field, which may help you land a job after graduation.

How do I get started?

- Ask your academic (or department) advisor or career center about co-op or internship opportunities.
- Network with friends and relatives for available internship positions.
- Contact a prospective company or alumni for opportunities.
- Find internship information at your college’s career office and online at www.monstercollege.com

Outside the Classroom: Research Projects

Why Do a Research Project?

- Learn more about your area of interest.
- Get to know what that area of research entails.
- Expand your skill set by gaining hands-on experience.
- Publish a paper in a peer-reviewed journal

Types of Research:

Independent research. Ask your college if it offers the opportunity to design and execute your own research project. If they do, pick a subject, explore what’s been done in the past and discuss potential projects with a professor, academic advisor or faculty member.

Assist professors and university staff. Working alongside a professor, students and staff can provide valuable experience and networking contacts. Duties given to undergraduate research assistants vary by project.

To find the best mentor: identify, learn and contact:

1. Identify potential mentors: Seek information and advice from teachers whose courses you’ve enjoyed. Which teachers have supervised research in the past or have research groups?
2. Learn about your mentor’s background, interests, past research and publications.
3. Contact your best prospects: Be persistent. Check with an academic department or dean in that area.

Career by Association: Learn About Your Career

How can joining an industry association help you?

- Attend association-sponsored events, like academic conferences, to distribute your resume or network with prospective employers.
- Stay up-to-date with changes and breakthroughs in your career field. Changes in your chosen industry could mean a new, unexpected career path.
- Learn about specific companies for whom you may (or may not) want to work for upon graduation.
- Find out if your association has a mentor program. If it doesn’t, ask if you can be referred to someone that will tell you honestly about the industry.
- Get access to specific job-related courses not offered at your school that can give you a targeted knowledge in your specific field.
- Learn about research developments in your field
- Add membership in an association to your resume.

Where can you find information on an industry association? Visit your campus career office, library, alumni or search the Web!