



High School and College Internships

Of all the activities a student can do, high GPA, good school, athletics, club involvement, competitions, and others, the one activity that has the most impact on a student's ability to get a job and increase their starting salary is for them to participate in internships. Internships are opportunities for students to gain work experience while still in school. They are different than after schools jobs which provide pocket money, they provide target experience in the field in which the student is considering to make a career.

Most students, after doing just a little research, soon realize that the most important thing that employers look for is applicable work experience. They complain, "How do I get experience if no one will hire me?" So let's discuss what internships are all about.

Why should I get an internship?

The main reason to get an internship should be that it will give a student firsthand knowledge and experience on what the is involved in actually working the field. Internships typically have students doing work that they will be doing if they choose that field as a career. But internships give them the opportunity to try it out first. I have met several students that have changed their major once they found out what actually working in the field is like. By experiencing it before graduation they were able to change their majors to something that they would like better. Remember, once you graduate you will be working 8 – 10 hours a day, 5 days a week, 50 weeks a year. You better be sure you enjoy what you are doing if you are going to spend that much time doing it.

Another reason to get an internship is because it teaches you what you really need to know and can have a marked impact on your academic success. Several students that I have helped get internships have told me afterwards how they wish they had paid attention more in some previous classes. Additionally they became much better students in their remaining classes because they now knew what they would need to be able to do once they graduated.

Another reason for getting an internship, paid or even unpaid, is because employers understand and value the impact of internships. One employer I talked with said they will not hire a student unless they have had internship experience. Another employer said that unpaid internships are often viewed better than paid internships because they require additional motivation and responsibility on the part of the student. And yet another employer told me that internships are the single best way for them to evaluate prospective employees. They attempt to only hire new entry level employees that have been interns at their company.

Finally, but not the most important reason for getting an internship is money. It has been shown that having an internship can increase a student's starting salary by \$5,000. When you

McCoy College of Business Administration – Department of Computer Information Systems &
Quantitative Methods

601 University Drive | San Marcos, Texas 78666-4616 | *phone:* 512.245.2291 | *fax:* 512.245.1452 | WWW.TXSTATE.EDU

This letter is an electronic communication from Texas State University-San Marcos, a member of The Texas State University System.

look at that not as just \$5,000 but \$5,000 for every year for which the student works it adds up. If the student works 30 years that adds up to \$150,000! Not bad for one or two semesters of work, paid or unpaid.

What are the costs of getting an internship?

You know what they say, nothing is free and the same is true for internships. Internships can have a cost especially if they are unpaid internships. The biggest cost is the time it takes to do them. While most internships take place during the summer months they can also be done during the long Fall and Spring terms. If a student is working at an internship that is time that they can't be at school taking a class. In some situations, especially for those seniors that waited to even consider getting an internship earlier, it could delay graduation. That can get into big costs based on additional fees, tuition and living expenses. However, they will still pale in comparison to the increased income over the life of the increased starting salary.

Another cost of getting an internship is the actual search for the position. Most schools offer some coordinated opportunities for students to obtain internships. They work with prospective employers and local companies to create opportunities for students to gain experience and for the companies to get projects done that may not otherwise get done.

For those situations where schools don't have coordinated services to find internships the student must create their own opportunities. The web provides the easiest way to find internships as many companies advertise their internship positions. However, students who can sell themselves and their skills to companies have the most success and also reap the most benefit from acquiring internships. Employers are able to clearly see the advantages of prospective employees with such skills.

It is clear that the advantages of having an internship far outweigh the costs. However, in today's world it seems that the costs can be insurmountable. But if a student plans well, works with their advisor and is motivated to get experience, even if they don't know what they want to do, they can be successful. Internships provide the experience necessary to make better decisions for your future. If at all possible start as soon as you can and get as many internship positions as possible. You will never regret doing them, but you could regret not doing them.

If you have any questions about internships please feel free to contact me.

Dr. David Wierschem
Chair - Department of CIS & QMST
McCoy College of Business Administration
Texas State University-San Marcos
601 University Drive
San Marcos, Texas 78666
512-245-3223
512-245-1452 (fax)
dw50@txstate.edu
www.mccoy.txstate.edu