

A Guide to Professional Journalism Internships (427) Department of Journalism, UW-Oshkosh

The Professional Journalism Internship is a three-credit elective course in the journalism program. The content is determined by the Department of Journalism. It involves on-the-job experience performing communications tasks and an examination of insights gained by the intern as a result of the experience.

The Department of Journalism recognizes that internships are of great value and encourages its students to participate in such real-world experiences. Our interns in the past have held jobs with newspapers, magazines, hospitals, radio and television stations, professional and semi-professional sports teams, credit unions, chambers of commerce, public relations and advertising agencies, and other businesses and agencies. As more of our department's students hold successful internships, a greater demand for them is created, and other potential intern employers inquire about the possibility of hiring them. Students should be selective and arrange for internships that will meet their professional needs.

A list of internships is posted on the bulletin boards outside the main Journalism Office (Clow 106) and the Journalism Computer Lab (C128). More detailed information on these internships is found in the internship binder in C106E on the bookshelf, and lists of internships are available on the internet in the Journalism computer labs (C128, 148, 150 & 126C). Students are also encouraged to work with the **internship coordinator, Barb Benish**, in creating other internships at appropriate businesses and organizations.

GUIDELINES

National guidelines adopted by the Accrediting Council on Education for Journalism and Mass Communications (ACEJMC) governs our program. The department has established these guidelines:

Eligibility for internships

1. The department will screen students for internships. The prospective intern must present evidence to the internship program coordinator of adequate preparation through course work and/or other related experience to justify an internship. In presenting that evidence, the student must complete and submit the "Internship Application" form included with this information.
2. Students earning internship credits must be department majors or minors.
3. Student interns will be expected to have completed coursework in journalism appropriate to the internship sought. For instance, those seeking a reporting position should have completed the reporting course by the start of the internship.
4. Interns must have at least a 2.5 GPA overall and in their major or minor.
5. Students will not get academic credit for the internship unless it is approved prior to the start of employment.

How to accept an internship and get academic credit for it

1. Arrange for a potential internship and submit an application form for its approval to the internship coordinator. The department may accept or reject the proposal for academic credit, and suggestions for the internship may be offered.
2. If the coordinator approves the course for credit, register for Journal 427, the internship class, by having the coordinator sign the application form.
3. During the internship keep a log of tasks performed and collect work samples.
4. Have the employer send an evaluation of job performance to the internship coordinator at the completion of the internship.
5. Attend designated classes and complete requirements described in those classes.
6. Meet individually with the internship coordinator.

Other guidelines

1. The department will grant no more than three credits for internships.
2. The internship will take one of two forms, either of which must total at least about 200 hours.
 - a. A full-time job for a summer or other extended time when the student is not enrolled in class.
 - b. A job held part-time with a minimum of 10 hours weekly while the student is attending classes.
3. Supervision of the intern must be provided by a mass communications professional.
4. The department strongly encourages employers to pay interns.
5. The department will collect information from employers interested in hiring interns and make that information available to students in the journalism area.
6. After the internship is completed, the coordinator will grade the student on a pass/fail basis.
7. Students should not take both the public relations practicum course and the internship.
8. Generally the internship should be completed before the classroom hours scheduled for the course. In unusual cases students may file a request with the internship coordinator for a waiver of this rule.

PREPARATION FOR AN INTERNSHIP

The department will assist in locating potential internships, but students must realize that they have the responsibility of convincing an employer that an internship would be mutually beneficial. The process of preparing for and seeking an internship should begin early. Resumes must be updated and portfolios compiled. Past interns can offer information on what to include in resumes and portfolios and provide tips on how to prepare for the interview. Names of students who have held recent internships are at the front of the binder containing information on available internships. Files on some businesses that have offered internships in the past are available for perusal in C106E on the bookshelf.

Resume and cover letter

A clear, simple and brief approach is advised. Include information on past work experience and educational background. Examples of resumes are available in the Career Planning and Placement Office and through the Department of Journalism.

Remember that your application is likely to be one of many your prospective employer will receive. Make your letter and resume neat, free of error and easy to read.

The resume should be accompanied by a one-page cover letter that:

1. Is typed individually (no form letters) and directed to a specific individual.
2. Conveys a positive attitude about your ability and desire to do the job for that company or organization.
3. Offers information on your availability for an interview.

For some jobs, such as reporting positions, it is a good idea to include samples of your work. A follow-up call about a week after the letter is received is an effective way to show your interest in the job and arrange for an interview.

Where to look

Search everywhere for internships. Use the postings and directories of available positions in the Department of Journalism office. Be aware of internships held previously by University of Wisconsin Oshkosh students. Names of communication employers are listed in various directories available at the department office or Polk Library. Consider looking for opportunities in your hometown, where you are apt to be more familiar with what is available. But also explore possibilities in other states. Internships are a good way to expand your horizons. Job hunting is no time to be shy. Resumes should be sent to as many employers as you are seriously interested in.

The Interview

The employer wants to learn about you. Be prepared to tell him or her about your experience and skills. Standard rules of interviewing apply--be alert and courteous and speak directly to the interviewer, looking him or her in the eye. Be familiar with the company or organization where you are interviewing. Read the company's newspaper or public relations newsletter, study an advertising agency's work. Be able to discuss the product or service and ask intelligent questions.

The interview is an ideal time to show your portfolio. Include neatly arranged by-lined articles or other items that reflect the range of your past work.

Be prepared to take tests. Many newspaper editors, for example, give an applicant a writing test under deadline pressure.

After the interview

Allow about two weeks after the interview for the potential employer to respond. If no word is received, call to inquire about your status. Keep in touch with prospective employers. Your call or letter may come at just the right time. Frequently, luck does play a role in finding a job.

CONSIDERATIONS IN THE INTERN'S EVALUATION

1. Documentation of work accomplished.
Interns should build a portfolio of work completed appropriate to the job. The format of documentation will vary with the job.
2. Student's self-evaluation of internship.
Assigned reports (to be described during the class period) examining the internship experience will be submitted to the coordinator. Keep a log during the internship experience to help in preparing the reports.
3. Professional supervisor's evaluation.
Your supervisor on the job must provide the internship coordinator with a written evaluation of your performance on the job. The format will vary from one employer to another, but we urge them to evaluate interns as they would any other employee, especially an entry-level or probationary employee.
4. Attendance of classes specified in the timetable.
5. Faculty evaluation.
The materials above must be submitted to the internship coordinator and an exit interview conducted with that instructor after the job and class have ended.

If you have any questions regarding the internship procedure, please see the internship coordinator, **Barb Benish, 920-424-7145, benish@uwosh.edu, Clow 106L**

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