

TIP NO. 6 Looking for an internship? Start early! Competition is tougher than ever.

CHOOSING THE RIGHT INTERNSHIP

Narrow your career interests. Target possible fields through informational interviews and research. Use resources at the SCAD career services office.

Target internships within a particular geographic region. Target a realistic number of companies (25–50) and call or go online to find out about the internship application process.

Network by contacting friends and family in the industry or professional associations that may know of internship opportunities.

Contact companies that offer internship programs and ask to receive more information.

Approach a familiar company and see if the company is willing to create an internship opportunity for you.

CREATING A LEARNING CONTRACT

A learning contract clarifies expectations and enables employers to understand how they can nurture your professional growth. Defining goals can guarantee that you gain the most from the internship. A learning contract must be used if you plan to earn credit for your internship. It includes a list of responsibilities, expected daily duties and long-term project plans.

Cite your learning objectives: What exposure and knowledge are you interested in gaining? What skills are you seeking to refine? What classroom knowledge are you seeking to apply in a work environment?

Outline specifics: Will you earn academic credit? How many hours per week will you work? Is it a paid internship? Is housing provided? Include the name of the on-site supervisor, faculty adviser (if internship is for credit) and dates of the internship. Signatures of each party are required if the internship is for credit.

Cite the criteria for evaluation: How/when will you be evaluated? Who is your supervisor? Who will evaluate your work? What aspects of the internship are evaluated?

Most internships for undergraduate students are not paid and many are offered for academic credit only. This means you enroll in an internship course where you pay tuition, are overseen by an instructor, complete projects and receive a grade and credit toward graduation. There is an agreement between the student, SCAD and the company to make sure the activities the intern performs are professionally valid. Students sometimes ask, “Why should I work for someone for free?” The opportunities an intern receives, including professional experience, networking opportunities and possible job offers, are invaluable.

Paid internships are more readily available for new graduates. They often last six months or more and routinely result in employment at that company.

SECRETS TO A SUCCESSFUL INTERNSHIP

Set up regular meetings with your supervisor to discuss your progress. If a scheduled meeting is not feasible, check in periodically with your supervisor to ask questions and solicit feedback.

Keep a detailed record of the projects you worked on during your internship. Note statistics like, “I designed a promotional card to be mailed to 2,000 clients across the country.”

If you feel your supervisor is inaccessible, look for a mentor on your own. Seek out someone who works in an area that interests you and set up an informational interview. Stay in touch with your mentor after your internship.

When your internship is complete, ask your supervisor to serve as a reference for you. Don't hesitate to ask for help with your job search.

Stay in touch with the people you met during your internship. Networking is an important aspect of your job search and your supervisor and co-workers are essential in helping you find a professional position in your field.