



Internship Host Handbook

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Washington Internship Institute
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About the Washington Internship Institute

The Washington Internship Institute is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that provides an academic internship program in Washington, DC for undergraduate students, graduate students, and recent graduates from the U.S. and abroad.

Objective

Our objective is to create a mutually beneficial situation for the intern and the internship site. The Washington Internship Institute seeks internship hosts that can provide a substantive learning experience for students. At the same time, the organization can expect to benefit from the skills and enthusiasm of the intern.

About Our Students

Since 1990 the Institute has worked with thousands of students from more than 450 schools ranging from small, liberal arts colleges to large state universities.

The students have a wide variety of majors and interests. Most of the students are juniors and seniors, although we also work with recent graduates and the occasional sophomore or graduate student. Most students receive college credit for the internships.

Program Format

The Washington Internship Institute offers a 15-week internship program each fall and spring. The summer session is 10 weeks long.

Students spend four full days per week (approximately 32 hours per week) at the internship site.

One day per week, students take two classes. Although the class day varies, it is consistent within a given semester.

The Washington Internship Institute also provides orientation, advising, activities, and optional housing. In addition, the Washington Internship Institute guides students through the placement process.

Internship Criteria

- **Substantive responsibilities** are essential, since most students receive college credit. No more than 20% of the intern's time should be spent on clerical work.
- Locations that are **easily accessible via public transportation** are strongly preferred.
- **Workspace** in your office, i.e. no telecommuting internships

Timeline

| | Busiest Months for Placement | Internships Begin | Internships End |
|-----------------|------------------------------|------------------------|-----------------|
| Spring Semester | October through December | Mid-January | Early May |
| Summer Term | February through May | Day after Memorial Day | Early August |
| Fall Semester | June through early August | Day after Labor Day | Mid-December |

Placement Process

In most cases, the internship placement process takes place prior to the students' arrival in the Washington area.

We try to give the students a choice of internships with different organizations to give them an active role in the process and expose them to different opportunities.

1. **Announce your internship(s)** by emailing the description(s) to info@wiidc.org. When our internship program coordinator has a good candidate, he/she will forward the student's resume and any application materials you require.
2. **Review the candidate's materials** and let the internship program coordinator know how you would like to proceed.
3. **Conduct a phone interview.** The internship program coordinator will happily assist you in scheduling the interview.
4. Notify the internship program coordinator of your decision.
5. The internship program coordinator will be in touch with the student's decision.

Responsibilities of the Internship Host

Note: The Washington Internship Institute does not charge organizations a fee for hosting an intern. Your organization decides whether the internship will be paid or unpaid. (Information about the Fair Labor Standards Act and paid versus unpaid internships can be found on the Department of Labor's [website](#).)

- Provide an orientation to the internship site
- Review the student's learning goals
- Assign responsibilities
- Provide day-to-day supervision
- Complete online midterm and final evaluations of the student's performance via WII Link; instructions will be emailed to you.

Courses

Internship Seminar: Reflections on Personal and Professional Development

- Academic course that puts the internship experience in the context of the student's discipline and the liberal arts skills;
- Seeks to differentiate what the student is learning in the internship from what the student is doing;
- Includes professional development assignments

Core Course

- Policy-oriented course focused on domestic policy, international relations, or special topics
- Features site visits and guest speakers in addition to reading and writing assignments

Announce an Internship

Email a position description (or a link to the internship description) to info@wiidc.org.

Pre-arrival Checklist

- Email staff to introduce the intern
- Confirm starting day and time
- Set up computer account
- Set up email account
- Plan orientation
- Identify the intern's first tasks and projects

Orientation Checklist

- Introduce intern to staff
- Give a tour of the office
- Share office policies, procedures, practices, emergency plan, guidelines for kitchen usage and recycling, etc.
- Discuss confidentiality issues
- Obtain ID badge
- Show intern where to find intranet, shared files, etc.
- Provide copies of organizational materials
 - organizational chart
 - staff phone list / directory
 - brochures
 - publications
- Provide any other relevant reading material for background information
- Train intern on office equipment
 - phone
 - voice mail
 - copier
 - scanner

Tips for a Successful Internship

- Assign substantive projects as soon as possible.
- Take advantage of teachable moments.
- Mentor the intern.
- Invest time in the intern...and reap the rewards!
- Model the professional behavior you expect the intern to show.
- Include intern in meetings and other work-related events whenever possible.
- Provide regular feedback instead of saving it for the evaluation forms.
- Discuss the completed midterm and final evaluations with the intern.

Jobs vs. Internships

| A job... | An internship... |
|---|---|
| ...may be a learning experience. | ...is always a learning experience. |
| ...is always paid. | ...may be unpaid in certain circumstances. |
| ...may be 100% clerical / administrative. | ...is no more than 20% clerical / administrative. |
| ...may be unrelated to one's studies. | ...complements one's academic background. |
| ...pays the bills. | ...launches a career. |