

## Answers to Frequently Asked Questions

### 1. What is an internship?

An internship is a real-world working experience, supervised by a professional, where you learn more about a career and the types of jobs in the field of communication. At the same time, an internship is a college course (COMM 0305) that comes with academic expectations and a faculty sponsor who guides you through a process of applying your course work to your professional experience. An internship may be paid or unpaid but students who complete an internship through the university receive academic credit and a grade for the course.

### 2. What is the value of an internship?

More than ever, employers are looking for candidates with both a college degree and professional experience. In addition to offering a path to a job, internships offer:

- an opportunity to apply the knowledge and skills you have learned in your classes and to develop new marketable skills
- an opportunity to explore different professions and gain a better sense of what you do and don't like in a job
- an opportunity to learn how a professional workplace operates and to develop the "soft" professional skills needed in the workplace
- an opportunity to build your professional network and find both mentors and references
- an opportunity to build your resume and develop your portfolio

### 3. How do internship credits work?

- Westfield State students may apply up to 15 credits of internship, practicum, or field placement coursework toward the 120 credits needed for graduation. These 15 credits may be taken in a single semester or spread out over several internships.
- Internship credits do not satisfy any specific department or university requirement. They are counted as general elective credits.
- During the regular school year, an internship is part of the regular tuition for full-time students. During summer sessions you must register and pay for the credits through Graduate and Continuing Education.
- Students are expected to accumulate 40 contact hours for each internship credit or 120 hours for 3 credits.

#### In a typical semester:

3 credits	8 hours/week for 15 weeks	120 hours
6 credits	16 hours/week for 15 weeks	240 hours
9 credits	24 hours/week for 15 weeks	360 hours
12 credits	32 hours/week for 15 weeks	480 hours
15 credits	40 hours/week for 15 weeks	600 hours

#### **4. Can any communication major do an internship?**

We value our relationship to the professional communication community and we want our students to have a positive internship experience, so we work to ensure that students are well-prepared for the internship experience. All full-time communication majors who have attained at least junior status are eligible to apply. However, the following qualifying criteria are in place:

- be at junior or senior status
- have completed the Common Core
- have a minimum overall WSU GPA of 2.5
- have a communication major GPA of 3.0 or higher
- have completed 30 credits of communication courses
- have demonstrated maturity and professionalism in classes and other interactions

If a student does not meet one or more of the above requirements, there is room on the application form to explain why the requirement(s) should be waived.

#### **5. When is the best time to do an internship?**

- Communication majors are encouraged to consider seeking multiple internships during their junior and senior years. You can complete an internship during the fall or spring semester or during summer sessions.
- Students in their last semester of the senior year find the best potential to be hired at their internship site, because they can start the job right away after graduation.

Many of our sites are very competitive: they want the best students and have many colleges that send them potential interns. It is important, therefore, to be thinking about internships as early as your first year at Westfield. Work hard to maintain a strong GPA. Get involved in campus organizations. For example, if you want an internship at a newspaper and you spent four years at Westfield and didn't write for the college paper, the site supervisor will wonder why.

#### **6. Where can I do my internship?**

Westfield State University Communication students have interned at hundreds of sites around the country, and we are adding new sites all the time. These include opportunities to work in public relations and marketing, media production, social media management, journalism, event planning, and organizational communication for major media outlets, sports organizations, not-for-profits, advertising and marketing firms, government agencies, and small businesses including the Basketball Hall of Fame, New England Sports Network (NESN), New England Public Media (NEPM), Cloud 9 Marketing, WWLP-TV22, the Make-A-Wish Foundation, Lego Systems, MassLive, City Stage/Symphony Hall, and many other desirable locations.

Securing an internship is your responsibility; however, we can give you lots of help:

- The department has an extensive list of sites where our students have previously interned, and additional listings are available through Career Services.
- The department's Internship Coordinator receives information about new internship sites on a regular basis, which are passed on to students and their faculty advisors.
- Students find new sites all the time. The Internship Coordinator will work with you if a site is suitable and meets the university's criteria.
- Online resources include the Career Center's Handshake listing, which has sites all over the state and even the country, as well as sites like Indeed.com.

### **7. Can I get paid for my internship experience?**

Yes, but that is totally up to the site. Some sites offer a small stipend or hourly wage, some don't. It makes no difference to your internship status with WSU.

### **8. Are there assignments?**

Each Faculty Sponsor will have their own requirements. However, all interns must submit the following documents to their Faculty Sponsor:

- Internship Contract to your sponsor (by the end of the first two weeks of work)
- Intern's midterm report
- Site Supervisor's midterm report
- Intern's final report
- Site Supervisor's final report
- A Site Report

### **9. How will I be graded?**

The Internship Coordinator will assign you a Faculty Sponsor during the first week of your internship, and that person will award your final letter grade. The grade will be determined by the site supervisor's evaluation, your progress in achieving your learning objectives, and success in completing additional work (such as a bi-weekly log) as assigned by your sponsor.

### **10. That all sounds great. How do I get started?**

**Step One:** Talk to your advisor about whether (and when) it makes sense for you to do an internship. You may also want to speak with the department's Internship Coordinator about the internship program.

**Step Two:** Fill out an application, which you can get from your advisor or the department's Internship Coordinator.

You should register for a full course load even if you are planning to do an internship. Once you have secured an internship, the Internship Coordinator will register you for internship credits and have you withdrawn from the appropriate classes.

You can (and should) submit an application even if you're not entirely sure that you are going to do an internship. There is no penalty for changing your mind or not finding an internship. You simply take a normal load of courses.

**Step Three:** The Communication faculty meets to approve applicants on a rolling basis. Our goal is to give you an approval or rejection within one week of your application being posted.

**Step Four:** Find an internship site.

If you meet the basic requirements outlined earlier, you may assume you are going to be approved and start looking for a site before you receive formal approval. Getting an internship can be competitive and there is no penalty for being an early applicant.

**Step Five:** After you have secured a site, you should submit an Internship Registration Form to the Internship Coordinator. You can't register for an internship on your own: only the Internship Coordinator can register you. You will be assigned a Faculty Sponsor once you are registered.

**Summer exceptions:**

- There is a cost for CGCE summer classes (financial aid may be available).
- When you locate an internship site, there is a CGCE form that needs to be submitted, requiring signatures from the faculty sponsor, and the chair. The completed CGCE form is given to CGCE, which notifies you when you can register.
- You still must submit the Internship Registration form to the Internship Coordinator once you have found a position.
- You can register for either Summer I or II.