

Workshop To Go

INTERNSHIPS



Helping you take the next step

*Framingham State College
Career Services and Employer Relations
College Center Room 412
508-626-4625
www.framingham.edu/careerservices*

INTERNSHIPS

This **Workshop To Go** will give you all the information you need to understand the nature of internships and to find the internship that's right for you. If you have questions after you read this material, call Career Services and Employer Relations at 508-626-4625 to schedule an appointment with a Career Counselor.

What is an internship?

An internship is a learning experience that occurs *outside* the classroom and enables you to develop skills related to your academic or career interest.

If your schedule allows, plan to do more than one internship. You'll get a chance to try out different work settings and responsibilities, which can give you a better understanding of the type of work that will be right for you. Both experiences can be listed on your resume. The additional experience will help you stand out when you're looking for a job after graduation.

Internships:

- Are hands-on professional training in your field of interest.
- Complement your career-related academic interests.
- Can be either paid or non-paid.
- Can be arranged on your own or through your department.
- Can be non-credit or credit bearing.
- Are offered by a wide range of corporate, government, and non-profit organizations.
- Are usually part-time, between 10 and 20 hours per week.
- Are available during both the school year and summers.

Do I get academic credit for an internship?

Many academic departments require and give credit to students in their majors to complete an internship. Some departments will grant academic credit even if an internship is not required. Talk to your academic department to find out about receiving credit. (The Office of Career Services and Employer Relations cannot grant academic credit of any kind.)

We strongly encourage all students to complete at least one internship, regardless of whether academic credit is granted.

Why should I do an internship?

An internship can:

- Help you explore potential career fields, learn about different work environments, or spark interests in other occupations.
- Help you develop work-related skills and gain practical experience.
- Expose you to the latest technology.
- Help you build contacts in your field, who can provide references and news of other opportunities.
- Make finding employment easier after graduation because you'll be an *experienced* candidate!

What do employers think about internships?

Many employers recognize the value that internships bring to the student *and* to the company. According to the *2006 Experiential Education Survey* conducted by the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE), employers say:

- They consider their own internship programs as the most effective method for recruiting new college graduates for full-time, permanent positions.
- On average, they get nearly 30% of their new college hires from their own internship program. (That means almost 1 out of every 3 employees they hire started in their internship program.)
- More than 62% of their new college hires had internship experience gained either with their organization or through another company. (That means that more than half of their hires had done an internship somewhere.)

How do I prepare for an internship?

- First, assess your interests, values, and strengths (skills).
- Use this information to target professional settings you would like to investigate for internship opportunities.
- Research those industries and careers you've identified. If you need help with this research, Career Services and Employer Relations can show you how to get started.
- Talk to people who have jobs in industries that interest you (this is called "informational interviewing").

Internships usually require some type of formal application process. This can mean a resume, cover letter, personal interview, and occasionally, an essay, transcript, or letter(s) of recommendation. Be aware of application procedures and deadlines. Some deadlines can be *months* before the internship actually starts.

Where do I look for internships?

- Information about specific internships for FSC students can be found online at College Central (CCN). Visit the Career Services and Employer Relations website, www.framingham.edu/careerservices, and click on “Internships.”
- Professors can be a valuable source of information. Some departments have their own internship listings.
- Many companies list their own internship programs through their Human Resources departments. If you’re interested in a particular organization, call them directly or visit their website to inquire about opportunities.

How do I get an internship?

- **Go for the Best Fit**
What kind of skills are you looking for? Larger companies might be able to offer you their name recognition, but smaller companies can usually give you more experience since they have less people to do all the work. Consider what will get you farther in your quest for a job, and target the employers that offer the best fit.
- **Research, Research, Research**
Use the Internet and employer directories to find the companies you want to approach. Check with relevant professional associations to see if they have listings as well. Call the employer and ask who coordinates internships; if no one does, just ask to speak with the manager of the department you are interested in. Sell yourself!!!
- **Start Early**
Although there are internships available throughout the semester, internship slots can fill up quickly, so apply early. For a summer internship, plan to contact the employer as early as possible in the spring semester to find out if there is a deadline for applying. Some of the more competitive summer opportunities have deadlines as early as January.
- **Get Your Resume Ready**
Put together a professional resume and cover letter. Even if you have limited work experience, Career Services and Employer Relations can help you create a resume that highlights your qualifications. Call us at 508-626-4625.
- **Network**
Networking is simply the process of contacting people who can help you in planning your career or looking for internships. Networking does not require that you know dozens of influential or powerful people. Anyone from your everyday life – friends, family, even your stylist and mechanic-can directly or indirectly guide you to the right people. Talk with everyone about what you are doing and the type of position in which you are interested.

How do I prepare for my internship interview?

If you have been invited to an interview, the employer is interested in learning more about your background and skills, and in determining your “fit” with the internship and the company.

Interviewers will assess your personality, your interpersonal skills, your problem solving ability and your experience as it relates to the internship. At the same time, you will be assessing the internship and the company.

Before the interview

- Preparation is the key to having a successful interview experience.
- Wear a business suit to the interview unless you are told otherwise.
- Make sure you know how to get there. Make a trial run beforehand.
- Arrive 10 to 15 minutes early. Use the time to check your appearance (not in the lobby!) and compose yourself.
- Introduce yourself in a courteous manner to the person who greets you. That person’s impression of you may be factored into the hiring decision.
- Read employer information or review your notes while you wait.

During the interview

- Make eye contact and shake the interviewer’s hand firmly. Studies show that the first two minutes of an interview can be critical to making a good first impression.
- Be prepared for the interviewer’s questions. Usually, the interviewer will state the purpose and format of the interview, and ask you a series of questions about your background and experience. Have your answers for commonly asked questions ready. You may want to practice with a friend or with a career counselor before the interview.
- Be prepared with your own questions. (See “How do I know if this is the right internship for me?”) If your questions are answered throughout the interview then form related questions. After you have asked your questions, summarize your skills and qualifications briefly for the interviewer.
- Use body language to show your interest. Maintain good eye contact and stay actively involved in the conversation.
- Listen carefully. Good listening skills show your interest. If you’d like to take *brief* notes, ask permission first, and be sure to keep your focus on what the interviewer is saying. Wait until after the interview to evaluate the information.
- At the end of the interview, ask about the next step in the interview process. Be sure to follow-up.

After the interview

- Write a thank-you letter to the interviewer for his or her time and consideration. It can be typed, handwritten, or e-mailed. Take a business card to confirm the interviewer’s name and title.

For more information about interviewing, visit www.framingham.edu/careerservices.

How do I know if this is the right internship for me?

During the interview, ask questions that will help you decide if the internship seems like a good opportunity. You may want to consider these sample questions:

- What kind of supervision will I have? How often will I meet with my supervisor to review my work?
- What will my responsibilities and duties be? What tasks and projects will I be able to get involved in?
- What are you (the employer) looking for in an intern? What would you like me to contribute to your organization?
- I am very interested in working on/gaining experience with..... Will I get a chance to do that here?
- Will I be assigned to one department or will I work in various departments?
- What has been your experience with past interns? What made them successful?

Advice from FSC Alumni & Students

How did you locate your internship?

- I called to ask if there was one available in the line of work I was interested in.
- I searched the websites of local media companies.
- ...through a friend...
- ...at a job fair...
- ...through my current job....
- ...through my major's department...

What tip or advice would you give an FSC student who is entering the world of internships (considering whether to do one, looking for one, or starting one)?

- Research, research, research!!!! And don't be afraid to call a particular company you are interested in and ask. (Sometimes internships aren't posted.)
- Use your professors! I was selected as one out of a pool of 70 applicants in part because my professor was well known where I interned. Professors often know of opportunities that may not be published. If you are starting an internship, my advice is this:
 1. Be prepared to do grunt work...as you will often be assigned work that the professionals dread doing.
 2. Keep an open mind and take advantage of all possible opportunities.
 3. Begin to establish a professional network.
 4. After your internship ends, keep in contact with the people you worked with – this will aid you in finding a job.
 5. Work hard. Not only is your professional reputation on the line, but you have an obligation to open doors for future students of Framingham State.

I would encourage all students to do an internship of some kind. It really helped me to see what I wanted to do and avoid doing after graduation. Plus, with any luck, you will have a great time and you will benefit educationally.

- In my opinion, an internship is the most important step in landing a job post-college. Whether or not a specific major requires an internship, all students should try to find internships or volunteer work in their desired fields. Don't rule out the "second-tier" or "smaller" organizations. I remember being closed-minded about companies (I wanted to intern at a specific Boston-based communications firm and would not even consider a firm in MetroWest). I've learned, since then, that while smaller companies may lack in name recognition, they often offer the chance to learn more and try more.

- ...internships are the best way to apply what you're learning in college to a real-world environment... The internship gives you a sense of connection with what you're learning and how it fits into the grand scheme of things outside of school. My internship has done two things ... It has enhanced my college classes because I learn things at my internship that I can apply in class, making connections between the real-world and the world of my classroom. And it also helps my professional prospects after I graduate...
- Find one doing what you like and do it well. Do above and beyond and make all the contacts you can.

What's the most important thing you learned from your internship?

- I got a glimpse of a different area of my major than the one I was really focusing on in my education so it opened my eyes to some other ways I could implement my degree once I graduated.
- Give your all to every task that you are given (even if you are only making copies, make the best copies you can.) Your attention to detail on small mundane tasks will give your supervisor the confidence to give you more challenging tasks. Also, always ask if there is more that you can do or assist with. Lastly, one month before your internship concludes talk with your supervisor about a written letter of recommendation and future references. It's important to have these details sewn up while you are still working there and fresh in the employer's mind-set.
- The most important thing I learned from my internship is all the skills I acquired. I learned a lot of new things as well as putting the skills I already know into use. I also learned how to cooperate with people who have been in that field for a long time. They can give you tips and tell you what the job is really like.
- How to manage myself in the real world. I treated my internship like a job and wound up getting hired by the same company.
- I am ahead of those in my field who do not have an internship. You learn whether or not the particular aspect of your field you are interning in is the one you want to pursue in life.
- The most important thing that came out of my internship was the skills that I will use in my full-time career. I had a chance to learn the day-to-day activities of my career choice.