Preparing for Your Internship

Internship experiences can play a significant role in planning for a future career trajectory and are an incredibly valuable way to gain professional experience while you are still a college student. Internships can consist of full-time work during the summer or part-time work during the school year, and they can occur locally, out-of-state, or abroad. In the best circumstances, internships can also lead to full-time employment after graduation. More than 80% of SICE students have held an internship of some kind, and that professional experience can give those students an edge over those who have not held an internship. However, in order to make the most of the internship and to enjoy a successful and positive experience, you will need to prepare yourself to take advantage of as many opportunities as possible.

Research the Company

Just as you conducted research on a company prior to interviewing with them, the research continues after you have secured an internship. The more information you have ahead of time, the more prepared you will be.

Review Your Original Research

Now that you have gone through the interview process and likely gained a lot more information about the company from your interviewers and even from an on-site visit, return to your original research. Review the company's mission, vision, history, and values. Re-read information about their clients, products, and deliverables. Having the additional information from your interview experience will put this website information in context and will give you a much more concrete picture of what your internship might entail.

Familiarize Yourself with the Executive Team

You may or may not meet the executives when you start the internship. Regardless, knowing a little more about who is around you and who is running the company can be helpful as you become acclimated to the internship. This research may be accomplished by browsing LinkedIn profiles or possibly through the company website.
**Brush Up on Your Tech Skills**

As you’re preparing, browse through the job description and take note of the skills you are expected to have for your position. If there are any in which you do not feel confident, spend some time reviewing those skills—there are several online resources that may help you build on your existing knowledge.

**uits.iu.edu/training**
IU’s University Information Technology Services offers many free technology trainings, workshops, seminars, tutorials, and certifications for students.

**www.codecademy.com**
Code Academy is an online platform providing free coding classes in 10 different programming languages, including Python, Java, PHP, and SQL.

**www.teamtreehouse.com**
Treehouse is an online technology school that offers courses on web design, coding, web and mobile development, and more. The site offers a free trial and features affordable monthly plans that provide extensive videos, quizzes, and content for users.

**www.freecodecamp.com**
Free Code Camp is a free coding boot camp that allows users to learn to code with online courses, as well as to build projects and develop a portfolio of skills and experiences.

**Finalize Paperwork**

Prior to beginning your internship, you’ll also want to communicate with your supervisor about finalizing any paperwork as well as any steps you may need to take to complete the onboarding process. Typical employment paperwork may require you to provide original copies of official documents, such as your Social Security card, birth certificate, or passport. Make sure you know where these documents are and whether you can provide them if requested.
Receiving Academic Credit

Internships for Credit

Many undergraduate SICE students elect to receive academic credit for their internship experiences in order to fulfill elective credit (INFO-I391: Internship in Informatics Professional Practice for 1-3 credits), an advanced course requirement (CSCI-Y399: Project in Professional Practice for 3 credits), or the capstone course requirement (INFO-I491: Capstone Project Internship for 6 credits). These credit and course substitutions require that a student designs, executes, and documents project assignment(s) selected in consultation with his or her employer.

Apply for Credit

In order to receive course credit, a student must first secure an internship by receiving and accepting an offer from an employer. Once a student has an internship, he or she will need to complete the application process. Applications can be accessed through SICE Careers by logging into their account. Underneath the “My Account” tab, select “Internships for Credit,” and select the internship course desired. The application requires some basic information about the employer as well as details about your internship dates, hours, and position title. Students will also need to include their project proposal as well as learning objectives.

Applications must be submitted through SICE Careers no later than the second week of the semester during which the internship will begin. Students should wait to complete the application until they know in detail the work that they are to complete during the internship; this may not be determined until they actually begin their internship. If a student submits an application too early without enough information, the application will be denied. The student must then request to have their application re-opened in order to submit a revised project proposal document to be reviewed by the course instructor.

Students have until the end of their second week of the internship to submit the revised project proposal.

Essential Components for Internship Approval

In order for students to use an internship in place of the capstone course, internships must be composed of a significant technical component. This essentially means that the internship should build upon the informatics curriculum by focusing on programming and database skills. The technical skills that a student develops throughout the course of the internship should include significant, intensive work in one of the following areas, or a combination of the following:

- **Coding**—doing actual coding combined with data components (Not: only using CSS or HTML)
- **Data Analysis**—large-scale data analysis with massive amounts of data used for true business intelligence (Not: manipulating datasets only in Excel)
- **Project Management**—working with professional PMs and using true SCRUM or acting as the SCRUM Master (Not: “I’ll be managing five interns”)
- **User Testing/Software Testing**—in-depth user testing that is used to identify issues (Not: “Hey, what did you think about this app?”)

There are a number of different roles and positions that will not be approved for credit, which is something to keep in mind as you proceed through the internship search process. These include roles in basic IT and tech support, positions focusing solely on social media or graphic design (without additional technical components), and those that are strictly marketing or business internships.

If you find an internship in one of these areas, you may find that you need more components or more intensive skills in order to receive approval. In these situations, you should talk with the HR representative or supervisor to see if the company would be willing to give you more responsibility. Typically, they are willing to help but will require that you ask and provide examples or ideas in order to meet those technical components.
Additionally, you will want to ensure that the employer/supervisor is willing to complete an evaluation of your performance during the internship at the end of the semester. This is a crucial component of the experience and is required to obtain academic credit for the internship.

**Wait for Approval**

Once you have submitted an application, you will have to wait for the Internship Team Manager, your internship supervisor, and the course instructor to review and approve your application. You will also be expected to meet the various internship requirements, including course prerequisites, class standing, and the obtainment of a minimum GPA. One of the major considerations for approval includes whether the internship experience involves a substantial technological component that will provide you with learning opportunities and applicable use of your prior technical knowledge. Often, internships will involve a large project component, but this is not always the case nor necessary to fulfill the capstone requirement. After the internship is approved, staff will give students permission to enroll into the appropriate internship course.

Once a student has secured an internship, he or she should consult with their internship supervisor before completing the internship for credit application to make sure that the supervisor is willing and able to provide meaningful feedback regarding the intern’s performance at the conclusion of the internship. The student should also get enough details about the project(s) he or she will work on so that they can fully complete the internship for credit application.

After a student has completed the internship for credit application (in SICE Careers), it goes to Karen Wright for “Manager Approval.” Karen will check to see if the student has completed the necessary prerequisites, if they have applied for the correct internship for credit course, etc. Karen will fill in manager fields regarding prerequisites and will approve or reject the application.

If “Manager Approval” is given, the application is routed to the internship supervisor for Employer Approval. The employer will review the application to be sure that the student has accurately outlined the internship (the project(s), hours, dates, etc.). Before they can approve the application, the internship supervisor must agree to the statement below about providing meaningful feedback at the conclusion of the internship:

“As the designated supervisor for this internship, I affirm that I will complete the end-of-semester evaluation of the intern’s performance as requested by the Indiana University School of Informatics, Computing, and Engineering. I will provide meaningful feedback regarding the intern’s performance during their internship.”

The employer is informed (in the email request to review the student’s application) that theirs is not the final step in the process and that it will still need to be approved by a SICE faculty member.

If Employer Approval is given, the internship for credit application will go to the faculty of record for the course (as of now, that is Matt Hottell for I391 and I491 and Adeel Bhutta for Y399) for final approval (Faculty Approval). Please note that Y399 students must also schedule a meeting (after they have submitted the initial application) with Adeel to discuss the proposed project and the expectations and requirements for the internship. Y399 applications will NOT be approved without that faculty meeting (see the Y399 website, where this is stated clearly).

At this point, the faculty instructor will either approve or reject the internship for credit application. Students approved will receive an email with the details to enroll. If the faculty instructor “rejects” the application, the student will receive an email with the subject line “Important information about your Internship for Credit Application.” The email will explain that their application has “not been approved at this time,” and that it is likely for one of two reasons: either they have not yet submitted a detailed enough description of the work they will do; or, their internship does not fulfill the necessary requirements.

If the student’s application was not initially approved due to lack of details, the student should email sice+internships@indiana.edu to request that their internship for credit application be reopened. It is important that the student do this (request that their application be reopened) and not simply start a new application, since a new application would require their employer to have to give approval a second time.
Complete Paperwork During and After the Internship

All interns are required to complete bi-weekly status reports during their internship consisting of an overview of feedback, concerns, difficulties, and changes. At the end of the internship, students will also be expected to submit the following:

- Final report summarizing experiences as an intern
- Supervisor’s evaluation form of performance
- Student evaluation of the internship experience
- Time log to demonstrate the total hours worked
- Learning outcome report detailing substantial technology-based tasks completed during the internship

Learn More

For additional information or questions pertaining to the internship for credit process, contact Karen Wright, Career Services Specialist, at kswright@indiana.edu or sice+internships@indiana.edu.
First Days

Understand Your Role

After you secure an internship, you will need to be prepared to adjust to and make the most of your first days of work. Your role as an intern should include relevant project work that you enjoy doing; however, be aware that it may not always consist of the most glamorous of tasks. Although your internship should not be comprised of making photocopies and getting coffee, those may be tasks you are expected to perform on occasion. These minor duties allow employers to see if you are competent and diligent in even the smallest responsibilities. Regardless of the task or project, you should take the work seriously and use each opportunity to prove your competence and your willingness to do your job well. Completing your projects, even the ones you do not like or that you consider “grunt work,” with a positive attitude will earn the respect of your coworkers and supervisor. Doing early projects well will also give you greater flexibility in choosing projects that may interest you in the future.

Learn the Organizational Culture

Each organization has its own culture, values, structures and behaviors; often, new employees and interns are hired partially because they are viewed as a good “fit” with that organizational culture. Take time to watch, listen, ask questions, and implement what you learn about the organizational culture, which will include spoken and unspoken codes of conduct, behavior, and work style. The answers to these questions will give you an idea about what the company culture is like:

- What is the company’s mission and vision?
- What are standard work habits and hours?
- How do employees typically communicate: face-to-face, over the phone, or over email?
- Does the physical office space indicate an atmosphere of collaboration or of individual work?
- Are expectations of interns and employees reasonable and clearly defined?

Adjust Your Expectations

As you begin to understand your role as an intern, you may need to adjust your expectations. Prior to starting the internship, you probably made assumptions about different aspects of the company, the internship, your coworkers, or life as a paraprofessional. However, you may notice a gap exists between what you have anticipated and the reality of your internship experience. Take some time to reevaluate your goals and reset your expectations. Remember:

- Everyone starts somewhere.
- Everything is a learning experience.
- Be proactive.
- Be positive.
- Work hard and do a good job.
- Be patient with yourself and with those around you.

As you adjust your expectations to conform to the reality of your internship, your confidence and sense of accomplishment will increase. Remember that your feelings of disappointment or anxiety are normal—feeling this way now doesn’t mean that you’ll feel that way over the entirety of your internship!
Set Internship Goals

Whether your internship is unstructured and without specific learning outcomes, or is highly structured with a good deal of supervisor feedback, plan to set reasonable and attainable learning outcomes for yourself. Think about the types of things you hope to gain from your internship experience. Explore and decide upon areas of this particular field where you want to develop a measure of expertise, such as specializing in a specific area, learning new skills, or networking with a certain department. Ask if there are ways to get involved in areas of interest that may not be a direct part of your internship.

Be Resourceful

Much of your first few days will be watching, listening, learning, and understanding how the organization works, as well as what your role is and responsibilities are. Here is how to make the most of the brief window of time when people expect you to know the least:

Take Copious Notes

A lot of information will be sent your way during the first few days. Carry a pen and pad of paper with you wherever you go so you can make note of tasks, projects, names, and other need-to-know items.

Ask a Lot of Questions

Projects and tasks that are assigned to you may not have the clearest directions, and you won’t necessarily have all the answers. Don’t be afraid to ask for clarification. An internship is an opportunity for you to learn as much as you can about a company, organization, and career field—so set up meetings with supervisors and executives to find out more about what they do and what they have learned in this job.

Get to Know the Other Interns

Internships can be competitive, especially if there are many interns and few projects. Remember that these individuals are also new to this organization and this professional experience—take the time to learn about them, learn from them, and make it a shared experience.

Build a Strong Network

Build Positive Relationships with your Colleagues

Your internship is a prime opportunity for networking, and building positive relationships with your new colleagues will help you expand your network. You may not be friends with everyone, but you can still build a positive, professionally beneficial relationship.

Find a Mentor

A mentor is someone at a higher level in the organization who can provide you with guidance about how you can be a successful intern. Some organizations will have a formalized mentorship program built into the internship; however, even without a formal program, you can find a mentor on your own. As you begin networking and getting to know who the influential members of the organization are, take note of who you respect, who is respected by others, and whose behavior you want to emulate. Seek out someone who will be willing to take an interest in your career development and success, and who can share with you their knowledge, perspectives, and insights on career pathways, job-hunting, and other aspects of the job search. Plan to develop this relationship and keep in contact with this person even after you leave your internship.
Professional Behavior

If you are like many other students, this internship will be your first professional experience, but it certainly will not be your last. Use this internship to begin informing and developing your professionalism by observing the behaviors of those around you. Keep in mind that creating and sustaining an air of professionalism can be challenging if you are not used to it. Eventually, the professional demeanor and behavior will become second nature.

Make a Good First Impression

You never get a second chance to make a first impression. As an intern, it is important for you to put forth your most professional self, especially because your behavior plays a large role in your professional reputation.

Understand the Company Dress Code and Abide By It

Tech companies often have a more relaxed dress code, but you should check with your supervisor or the internship coordinator about the company dress policy. If you are still unsure, observe what others are wearing and “dress for the job you want, not the job you have.”

Keep Your Workspace Neat

As an intern, you may be sharing a workspace with other interns, and your workspace may be in a public area of the office. By keeping your space tidy, you will give the impression of being organized, and it will be a courtesy to the other interns who need to work in the same space.

Office Politics and Organizational Savvy

Politics are present in any work environment. Formal power structures, defined by positions and hierarchy, are detailed in the organizational chart of the company, but informal power structures involve those who are influential regardless of their actual title. It is important to be aware of both the formal and informal structures of your work environment in order to develop organizational savvy.

Although office politics are certainly a reality in every organization, negative aspects of politics that should be avoided usually involve office gossip. As an intern, don’t get involved in politics. Avoid participating in talk or behaviors that disrespect your coworkers or fellow interns. Although gossiping about a coworker may seem like an easy “in” with a group, it may also backfire on you. Use your internship as a time to learn about the ins and outs of the organization without getting tangled in the drama.

Professional Communication and Etiquette

Written Communication

Most of your communication will occur via email rather than face-to-face or over the phone; therefore, it is important to be concise, grammatically correct, and professional in your written communication. This holds true for sending emails from your smartphone—although you may be tempted to use texting shorthand, you should make every effort to use proper English. If you find that it is too challenging to communicate with others from your phone, wait until you are in front of a computer to respond to emails. Make a concerted effort to respond to emails within 24 hours.
**Verbal Communication**

Just as you need to be professional in your written communication, you also need to be professional in your verbal communication. This includes both what you say and how you say it. Be aware of your communication style—how fast or slow do you speak? Do you speak clearly or do you mumble? Do you say “um,” “like,” or use other interjections frequently? If this is the case, try to take a breath instead; this will help you sound more professional and as though you are considering what you are saying. Think also about the content of what you are saying—do you use the same casual language and slang with the CEO as you do with your fellow interns? If there is any one truism you should abide by, it is this: avoid foul language and off-color humor in the workplace. Neither will leave a positive impression.

**Be Aware of Your Body Language**

Non-verbal cues comprise a significant amount of what we communicate. You may be unconsciously demonstrating boredom, anger, or frustration with your body language, and those emotions will not help you seem like an eager and engaged intern. Adjust your body language to emit signals of a confident, enthusiastic professional: sit up straight, nod your head, and smile.

**Work Ethic**

One of the best ways to have a successful internship is to establish yourself as a diligent and dependable worker. Even though you may make mistakes in the beginning, learn from them, and let your accomplishments outweigh your errors.

**Be Positive, Enthusiastic, and Ready to Work Hard**

Be positive about the work that you are doing and the opportunities provided by your internship. Approach everything with enthusiasm and build your reputation as someone who has a “can-do” attitude—work hard, do what needs to be done, and seek out ways to take on extra projects or be helpful to those around you. Not only does this demonstrate a willingness to take initiative, but it also shows that you know the value of being a team-player and are able to jump in wherever needed.

**Take Your Assignments Seriously**

Each task has been given to you for a reason—maybe it is crucial to the company's operations or maybe it will help your supervisor gauge how you approach projects. Listen carefully to instructions and ask questions so you can turn in high-quality work. By taking each of these projects seriously, you will build your reputation as a hard-working employee.

**Time Management**

Your time, and your employer’s time, is valuable, and it is your responsibility to make the most of this time while you are an intern. If you have slow days, be proactive and seek out new projects and tasks. On days when you do not have a moment to spare, plan your time wisely to ensure that all of the work that is expected of you gets done. If you are unsure of the timeline or a deadline for an assignment, ask! Knowing the deadline will help you prioritize all of your tasks and responsibilities. If you are unable to meet a deadline, let your supervisor know as soon as possible so that they are not surprised by a late project. This is a great time to get in the habit of using a personal calendar or planner.

**Be Flexible**

Your daily responsibilities may be stable or change frequently—regardless, it always helps to be able to adapt to new situations, accept unexpected changes, and demonstrate open-mindedness to new ideas.
Challenges

Conflicts and Mistakes
Internships can be an incredibly positive experience, but they can also consist of challenging or frustrating situations. Learning how to handle these challenges or frustrations, and even your own mistakes, are all part of the professional experience.

Conflicts
It is unlikely that you will get along with everybody at your internship, but learning to work with people who you consider “problematic” will help you in future jobs which you will be at for years rather than a few weeks. If the problem is bigger than a small interpersonal conflict (e.g., if it involves your personal safety or ethical integrity), seek advice from your mentor or a supervisor.

Mistakes
You will make some mistakes during your internship, and it is how you deal with a mistake, rather than the mistake itself, that will contribute to your growth and your reputation at the company. Own up to your errors, figure out what went wrong, and learn what the correct method should have been. If you ignore the mistake or pass it on as someone else’s responsibility, you may never learn what went wrong.

Terminating the Internship
Although this is not a very common scenario, you may reach a point where you wish to or need to leave your internship before it is over. Keep in mind that an internship, paid or unpaid, is a professional commitment, and you should make every effort to continue working for the full duration of the internship. However, if you are so compelled to end the internship early, be sure to do so in a professional manner. It is advised that you reach out to Career Services in order to discuss next steps before taking any action.
Career Development

Networking
Networking is often viewed as talking to someone in order to pass on your resume or giving your card to someone. In reality, it’s about building and maintaining professional relationships. As a result of networking, you will have a strong base of contacts who can be a resource to you when you are job searching. These individuals can share job-hunting advice or tips, inside information about job openings and hiring processes, or even provide recommendations. Make an effort to meet everyone that you work for and work with, and leave a positive impression. Even if your overall internship is not the best experience, never burn bridges—you may need those relationships in the future. Plan to keep in touch!

Informational Interviews
One way to begin building your network is by conducting informational interviews. Informational interviews are brief meetings with those who are established in a particular career field, and the interviews are an opportunity for you to discover their perspective on their job, the company, the future of the field, and how they got to where they are today. You may also consider speaking to those who are only a few years into their current position at a company that you would be interested in working for (keep in mind, year one can look quite different from year three). Could you see yourself in their position?

Set up informational interviews in the same way that you seek out a mentor—look for those who are influential in the company and who you want to meet. After you successfully set up a meeting, have an agenda with specific questions you want to ask. For example:
• How did you get started at this company or in this field?
• What kinds of schooling and/or experiences are necessary to be successful?
• What do you find most rewarding about this work?
• What advice do you have for making the most of my internship?
• Is there anyone else that you recommend I should meet with to gain more perspective?

Things to remember:
• They are doing you a favor, so work around what is convenient for them.
• This is about getting information, not about getting job leads.
• It can help you build a professional relationship, so be polite and courteous.
• Conduct some research on the industry before the interview.
• Remember to remain respectful of their time—they are taking time out of their day to talk to you.
• Send a thank you email 24-48 hours after the interview.

Educational Opportunities
Educational opportunities are often built into an internship experience and are designed for your professional development. These may include weekly brown bag lunches with company executives, research projects, or reading assignments that will help you learn more about your career field. Take advantage of these opportunities and events; they are often developed intentionally for you to learn things beyond the scope of your internship.
Internship Wrap-up

Tools of the Trade
For your internship, you probably had to submit a resume and cover letter and, hopefully, you submitted thank you notes following your interview. These documents are all “tools of the trade” when you are employed, and over time, you will develop a distinctive resume and cover letter style. Your internship experience and those you work with can help you develop this style.

As you take on new tasks and projects during your internship, take time to update your resume to reflect your work and accomplishments. Ask your supervisor to look at your resume and provide feedback before you end your internship—he or she will be the best person to assess whether your resume reflects the experience and skills needed to be successful in your chosen field.

Secure Recommendations and References
As you network with your colleagues, develop mentoring relationships, and conduct informational interviews, you are laying the groundwork to ask for positive recommendations and glowing references. Before you leave your internship, ask for written recommendations from your supervisors or ask permission to add them to your list of references. These individuals will be able to speak to what you have accomplished during your internship, and they may be able to open doors for you into opportunities in your career field. Once you have secured a recommendation, continue to maintain contact with those individuals. You can reach out to them every once in a while and keep them updated on your current stage in the job search process. Keep in mind that references must be upheld like any other relationship, so in order for them to provide strong feedback for future recommendations, it is up to you to help these individuals remain current on your personal and professional development.

Be Self-Reflective
You may have a fantastic summer internship experience that confirms for you that this is the job you want to have after you graduate. On the other hand, you may have a challenging and frustrating internship experience that affirms that you do not want to work in this type of setting. Be deliberate as you reflect on your internship experience. Take time to assess what you have learned, how you have grown, and whether you have met your goals. Consider keeping a journal or private blog throughout the internship and document a daily or weekly reflection about your experience. With this record, you can review how your thoughts and feelings about the experience changed and developed over the course of the internship.

Job Offers
Many internship experiences can lead to full-time job offers. Some offers may even occur on the last day of your internship—the key is to be prepared! If you are considering accepting the offer but need some time to think about the terms or are planning on participating in the upcoming recruiting season, make sure to wait. You will NOT be able to negotiate or apply for additional jobs once you have accepted the initial offer. The Career Search Guide contains additional information about types of job offers you may encounter as well as steps for navigating the negotiation process. If you have additional questions, it is advised that you reach out to Career Services in order to discuss next steps.
Events Calendar 2018–2019

Visit sice-indiana-csm.symphlicity.com for additional events and more information.

**Fall 2018**

Career Services Open House
Sunday, Aug. 19

Resume Workshops
Tuesday, Aug. 21, 4–5 p.m.
Wednesday, Aug. 22, 4–5 p.m.

Prepare for the Career Fair Workshops
Tuesday, Aug. 28, 4–5 p.m.
Wednesday, Aug. 30, 4–5 p.m.

Career Services Resource Fair
Tuesday, Sept. 4, 2–6 p.m.

Resume Review Blitz with Employers
Wednesday, Sept. 5, 10 a.m.–1 p.m.

FALL CAREER FAIR
Thursday, Sept. 6, 11 a.m.–4 p.m.

Next Day Interviews
Friday, Sept. 7, 8 a.m.–5 p.m.

Cover Letter Workshops
Tuesday, Sept. 18, 4–5 p.m.
Wednesday, Sept. 19, 4–5 p.m.

Mock Interview Day with Employers
Friday, Sept. 14, 8 a.m.–5 p.m.

On Campus Interviews
September 10–December 7

Beat the Tracker Workshops
Tuesday, Oct. 2, 4–5 p.m.
Wednesday, Oct. 3, 4–5 p.m.

Employment Strategies for International Students Workshops
Tuesday, Oct. 16, 4–5 p.m.
Wednesday, Oct. 17, 4–5 p.m.

**Spring 2019**

Mock Career Fair
Tuesday, Jan. 22, 7–9 p.m.

Resume Review Blitz with Employers
Wednesday, Jan. 23, 10 a.m.–1 p.m.

Women in IT Networking Reception
Thursday, Jan. 24, 9–10:45 a.m.

SPRING CAREER FAIR
Thursday, Jan. 24, 11 a.m.–4 p.m.

Next Day Interviews
Friday, Jan. 25, 8 a.m.–5 p.m.

Mock Interview Day with Employers
Friday, Feb. 1, 8 a.m.–5 p.m.

On Campus Interviews
February 4–April 26