

## Key elements in planning successful externships\*

*\*from sponsor and student evaluations*

- #1 Review essays for student input concerning career goals and interests.
- #2 Prepare a written agenda of potential activities to provide structure and clarify time commitments (i.e. tour).
- #3 Consider informational interviews with colleagues to learn about other areas of the organization and to obtain a variety of career perspectives.
- #4 Plan activities, which help the student gain a better understanding of the career field; assign a short-term project for visits lasting longer than two days.
- #5 Provide ideas (materials, web sites, etc.) for resources students may use to do research in advance re: your organization, field specialty or division.
- #6 Introduce yourself (interests, background, Cornell student or alumni activities).

Thank you again for agreeing to sponsor a Cornell student in an externship. While you have a great deal of latitude in tailoring the externship to fit your needs and workload, the following suggestions might help to make the experience meaningful to all participants.

### How to Structure An Externship (see sample extern descriptions on the reverse side)

Please keep in mind that most students participate in the Extern program to learn more about a specific career and the options available within a career field. They want to know what your workday and work environment are actually like. Many students are also seeking advice on strategies for obtaining a job in the field or information about background and experience needed to enter the field.

### **Four approaches to structuring externships which have worked for past sponsors:**

#### **Shadowing**

In some professions, e.g. medicine or journalism, having the student observe a typical day of work provides a great deal of information. Meeting with the student at the beginning and/or end of the day to discuss the field and answer questions and providing commentary throughout the day can be sufficient.

#### **Observing Activities and Meeting with Colleagues**

In many fields, particularly those in which the sponsor deals with confidential information or spends most of the day doing research or writing, successful sponsors have developed an agenda of activities for the student. It is helpful to find out the student's interests in advance and then arrange an appropriate schedule. The schedule can include: 1) meeting with the sponsor to gain an overview of the organization and the career field; 2) a tour of the facility, if appropriate; 3) individual appointments with colleagues at different levels and/or performing different functions in the organization; and 4) observing activities, such as a commercial shoot, an editorial meeting, a public hearing or meeting of a government agency, a sales call, court proceedings, or meetings of any kind.

#### **Involving Colleagues in Hosting**

If hosting the student is delegated to other staff it is helpful if the sponsor can meet with the student at some point—at lunch, for example—and ensures that a schedule of appointments and activities is planned and an opportunity for the student to ask questions or discuss your organization and career path decisions.

#### **Hands-On Experience**

Even a small amount of career-related, hands-on experience, when combined with the observation and activities described above, can be valuable to a student. A small project, in which the student gathers or analyzes information, often helps the student learn something about the organization or field. Students have critiqued manuscript submissions for an editor, compiled market research information, drafted or edited letters to constituents, and have taught a high school science lab. Sometimes reading the mail or answering the phone for a short time can be enlightening to a student.

**Questions?** Please call or email Nancy Law '84, Cornell Career Services, 607/255-9046, NFL1@cornell.edu.

## **Sample Externship Descriptions (For more sample schedules and descriptions, see the Extern Sponsor website.)**

**One day:** The sponsor's organization is a regulated natural gas distribution company serving the Washington, DC, metropolitan area. As Director of Cash Management, the sponsor is responsible for policy formation and implementation in the areas of treasury operations, cash management, financial institution relationships, and corporate debt and investments. The sponsor is also responsible for investment management decisions related to 401K and other funded-benefit plans. The extern will learn about the basic areas of treasury operations, including processing of customer payments, disbursing of corporate funds, and managing of the daily debt and investment positions. The externship will include individual meetings with professionals who work in several areas under treasury.

**Two to three days:** The sponsor is a staff member in the cardiac ultrasound laboratory, a division of cardiology, at Massachusetts General Hospital. The sponsor is involved in performing and interpreting echocardiograms and other specialized cardiac procedures. In addition, the sponsor is actively involved in clinical research. The extern will have the opportunity to learn about academic clinical medicine by spending time in an internationally recognized cardiac ultrasound laboratory. During the externship, the student will meet other cardiologists, physicians-in-training, and technologists. The student can attend weekly clinical conferences, research conferences, and observe the performance and interpretation of cardiac procedures. The student will also have an opportunity to observe remedial care of hospitalized patients, and be exposed to "cutting edge" cardiac research.

**Three to five days:** The sponsor edits a monthly shelter magazine with a circulation of one million readers. The topics covered include decorating, remodeling, architecture, design, kitchens, baths, and technology. The extern will get an introduction to consumer magazine editing. The extern will work with several editors in researching a product story, assisting in the editing process of manuscripts, and compiling information for a front-of-book column. The sponsor will explain functions of various departments, such as marketing, subsidiary rights, and contracts, and the extern will attend staff meetings to further understand the interlocked mechanism of an editorial staff.

**Other considerations to consider in advance:** Student externs are expected to abide by all required organization policies and procedures, and be willing to sign liability and confidentiality agreements prior to the visit.

**Insurance Coverage:** *Some sponsor's organizations will have liability provisions for visitors or volunteers with the organization, others may not. We publish the following statement for student participants:*

I understand that Cornell does not provide liability insurance for me as a participant in the Cornell Extern Program and that I should discuss with my sponsor what insurance coverage the sponsor provides for me, if any. I understand that I participate in the Cornell Extern Program voluntarily and separate from Cornell University, and that the University is not responsible in the event I suffer personal injury, accident or personal loss or for claims against me resulting from my participation in the program or with the sponsor.

**Hold Harmless Agreement: Feel free to ask the student to sign a release form created by your organization. (The following statement is also included in each student's signed statement of participation; they also sign a more extensive hold harmless agreement. We are happy to provide a copy upon request.):**

In exchange for my participation in the externship program, I, the undersigned, agree on behalf of myself, my assigns, executors, and heirs, to release, indemnify, and hold harmless Cornell University, its trustees, officers, agents and employees for any and all liability, damage, claim of any nature whatsoever arising out of or in any way related to my participation in the externship program, including any act or omission of any third party (Rescue Squad, Hospital, etc,...), other than those arising out of the sole negligence of Cornell University.

**It is Cornell Career Service's policy to publish this non-discrimination statement in programs involving students:**

Cornell University's policy prohibits discrimination or harassment on the basis of race, color, national or ethnic origin, religion, sex, sexual orientation, age, handicap, or veteran status in the recruitment and employment of faculty and staff or the operation of any of its programs and activities as specified by federal, state, and city laws and regulations.