

VOLUNTEER WORK AND EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

With a full course load, a job and your social life you may not think you have the time for volunteer work or extracurricular activities. Try to make the time; volunteerism can be one of the most rewarding parts of your life, and extracurricular activities let you focus on your interests and gifts and share them with the like-minded people who can quickly become new friends.

Prospective employers also look at the activities you list on your resume for keys to the qualities they seek in an employee – teamwork, commitment, responsibility and leadership. It says a great deal if you edited the sports page of the school newspaper for three years, participated in student government or were on the swim team, or if you visited the elderly once a week since your sophomore year. Don't, however, think to pad your resume with a list of 32 activities in which you were only marginally involved. It's pretty easy to guess you weren't the star athlete if you were involved in swimming, gymnastics, track, football, tennis, golf, archery, horseback riding, judo and baseball. Oh yes and don't forget those three weeks you tried out wrestling... But if you were the manager for the mountain biking club and organized the end of the season picnic, your prospective employer sees that you have managerial, organizational and networking skills and that you work well as part of a team. Working on the school newspaper or the Homecoming Ball committee, organizing the annual Walk for Charity



or acting as treasurer for your sorority; such activities show off the talents every boss is looking for.

rounding out your equipment

If your volunteer or extracurricular activities have tangible mementos, such as the playbill from the operetta for which you designed the sets or a spreadsheet you prepared outlining the budget for the Italian Club's trip to Florence, save them as part of your portfolio.

Volunteer work and extracurricular activities – they help you to become a well-rounded, fulfilled person in school, and they may well help you to get the job of your dreams after you graduate. And don't think they won't help you if you are in a vocational/technical program. Your future boss in a plumbing company or the advertising department of the local paper is also impressed if you show the "people skills" such as teamwork and leadership that are evidenced by non-student activities. Employers look at the whole picture; grades, internships, volunteer and extracurricular activities, references and life experiences.

internships

An internship is a full- or part-time temporary job, paid or unpaid, which may lead to a more permanent job at the same place of employment. Obtaining an internship is usually a competitive process and it is wise to start thinking about where you want to work several months in advance – before the school year starts for a winter-break internship and in the fall semester for work you hope to do in the summer.

An internship can add a vital piece to your resume. You know how it goes – you can't get a job because you don't have experience but you can't get experience because you don't have a job. Internships are an excellent way to get around this dilemma. An employer is happy because interns generally work for little if any pay and often perform tasks others prefer not to do, and you are happy to see the workings of an organization from the inside and get valuable professional experience. Working as an intern shows potential future employers that you are dedicated and ambitious, and that you have real-world knowledge of your field. Many employers, in fact, look to hire interns when they have regular positions to fill. A final advantage to internships is the flip side – while you may love your internship, you may find out that what you thought was your dream career is actually drop-dead boring and you really don't want to go in that direction at all.

There are two types of internships:

- **Academic internships** are the result of an agreement between a school and an employer, with the following general structure:
 - The internship is obtained through your school's career center
 - The internship must be associated with your field of studies
 - The school may give you academic credit for participation in the internship
 - You may be required to write up a report on the internship in order to receive academic credit
- **Non-academic internships** are an arrangement between the intern and an employer with the following characteristics:
 - The internship is obtained through your own research and effort
 - You will typically not receive academic credit for such an internship
 - Your status as a student may not be a consideration in obtaining a non-academic internship

SO HOW DO YOU FIND AN INTERNSHIP?

There are several ways to go about finding a potential internship:

- Work with your school's career counselor. Your career counselor knows where other students have found internships and also works with on-campus recruiters from large and small organizations from across the country. He or she can be an excellent source for internship leads. Your school's career center may also host periodic Internship Fairs or Internship Weeks.
- Talk to your professors. Your professors know where other students have interned (they wrote their letters of recommendation), and they may also have consulting or research ties with organizations that offer internships.
- Network with other students. Your friends may have leads as they too are likely to be seeking internship opportunities.
- Use your school's alumni network. Most schools work hard to maintain good relations with their alumni and probably have an alumni office. So ask for contacts at the alumni office – you might be surprised at just how strong the "old boy" ties really are.
- Ask your family and friends. You never know if your sister's boyfriend's mother works at a nonprofit looking for interns in your field, or if your best friend's cousin's office has a great internship program.
- Browse the internet. Typing "internships" into Google brings up 43,100,000 entries including www.intern.studyabroad.com, www.internshipprograms.com, www.internweb.com and www.internships.com. You can also be more specific in your search – typing in "engineering internships," brings up over 4,000,000 entries including www.tech-interns.com and www.wise-intern.com for federal technical internships. And "marketing internships" brings up nearly 5,000,000 entries including www.marketinginterns.com.

Once you have found a list of internships you would like to apply for, you will need to send each of them your resume and a cover letter and then wait for their response. This is, of course, the hardest part!