

Internship Guidelines and Procedures
Communication Department
Cal Poly Pomona
Revised January 2008

What is an internship? 2

Eligibility..... 3

Finding an internship that’s right for you 3

Getting the most out of your internship..... 7

Procedures for Enrolling in COM 461..... 8

Writing the internship final report..... 9

Internship Forms.....13

What is an internship?

An internship is a cooperative learning arrangement between a private or governmental institution and the Communication Department that allows Communication students to apply their knowledge and skills in a professional setting. The internship program is a natural extension of Cal Poly's "learning by doing" educational philosophy.

The Communication Department is most concerned that the internship be a *mentoring* experience. In other words, the intern's immediate supervisor should have significantly greater experience and expertise than the intern in the specific job functions performed by the intern, and the immediate supervisor should be willing and capable of teaching and coaching the intern.

STUDENT BENEFITS

Here are some of the benefits that will accrue for you:

- Gain on-the-job work experience.
- Learn important job skills.
- Self-assess your knowledge & skills and where you need to improve.
- Make professional contacts in the field.
- Develop professional portfolio materials.

By interning with an institution in your field of specialization, you will have an opportunity to work with professionals, apply classroom knowledge to workaday problem situations, and learn first-hand about the demands and rewards of work in the particular profession. Internships also give you a chance to network with people in the industry, so that you become a recognized name and face. Sometimes internships turn into full-time jobs for students after graduation. But you shouldn't count on an internship becoming your first career position. Simply approach it as an opportunity to observe professionals at work and further develop your skills.

SPONSOR'S BENEFITS

- Students receive training in their area of specialization.
- Students sometimes bring fresh approaches, new ideas.
- Educational contacts for recruiting new employees.

Communication students have served as interns with daily and weekly newspapers, magazines, public relations agencies, corporations, educational institutions, hospitals, advertising agencies, and not-for-profit organizations. Some students have served internships on campus at Cal Poly. Here are some employers that have sponsored communication interns within the last few years:

KABC-TV, KNBC-TV, KTLA-TV, ESPN, CNN, *San Gabriel Valley Tribune*, *O. C. Register*, *Inland Valley Daily Bulletin*, American Cancer Society, Ketchum Communication, MTV, Bank of America, Cal Poly Public Affairs, Sacks/Fuller Advertising, Westin Hotels, Disney, Paramount, Cable Vision, Intervalley Health Plan, KBIG Radio, Sony, Warner Bros., Telemundo 52, Los Angeles Kings, LAX, Los Angeles Mayor's Office.

You will receive six units of academic credit for serving as an intern through enrollment in COM 461. The following sections provide detailed information about procedures and policies.

Eligibility

You must satisfy these criteria before applying for enrollment in COM 461:

COM MAJORS ONLY

You must be enrolled in the communication bachelor of science program to enroll in COM 461.

SENIORS ONLY

You must complete 135 credit units toward a bachelor's degree before you are eligible to enroll.

COURSE COMPLETION

You must have completed two-thirds of your communication courses and specific courses within your option area before applying for an internship.

MINIMUM 2.0 IN MAJOR

You must have a 2.0 GPA in your communication classes to be eligible for an internship.

Please note that although COM 461 is listed in the quarterly Class Schedule, the registration code number has been "suppressed." You will be added to a student specific registration list by the Communication Department staff only after you have satisfied the eligibility requirements.

Finding an internship that's right for you

It makes good sense to secure an internship that is closely related to the type of work you think you will prefer after graduation. Experiencing a particular type of professional work through an internship is a practical way of determining if it is really what you want to do after graduation. Remember also that previous work experience is important to employers, so if you decide to seek employment in the field after graduation you will already have relevant work experience reflected in

your resume. Here are some factors to consider in finding an internship that is right for you:

STAY WITHIN THE DISCIPLINE

Your internship must involve practical application of communication skills as the primary activity. Legitimate situations include application of skills and knowledge you have learned in *communication* courses, such as communication theory, organizational communication, intercultural communication, public speaking, desktop publishing, public relations, and reporting. Only internships that are centrally focused on communication activities or services will be approved. For instance, a proposed internship in which a student will receive training as a retail sales representative falls outside these parameters and would not be approved.

The Communication Department looks upon the internship as a *mentoring* experience. In other words, **(1) your immediate supervisor should have significantly greater experience and expertise than you do relative to the job functions you will be asked to perform, and (2) your immediate supervisor should be willing and capable of teaching and coaching you.**

SPONSOR'S HISTORY WITH INTERNS

Has the particular sponsor had an ongoing internship program or will this be its first experience with an intern? If the institution has accepted interns in the past, its supervisors probably have a better understanding of how to utilize an intern – to the mutual satisfaction of everyone — than do supervisors of an organization that accepts you as its first intern. If it is the community affairs department of KNBC you're interviewing with, they've been there and done that a hundred times. But if it is "Spaced-Out TechnoCom, Inc.," a new seven-person website designer, you have less assurance of internship continuity. So always ask about the sponsor's experience with internships.

TO PAY OR NOT TO PAY

Most internship sponsors do not, but it never hurts to ask. Frequently, the institutional response will be "your experience is your reward" or some similar platitude. Just keep in mind that interning for fun (gaining experience) *and profit* (being paid, too) is the way to go. Some organizations offer no wages but will provide travel expenses for interns who commute. Once again, ask the question and do not be hesitant about letting them know your skills are valuable. If they want to know what the going rate is for interns, tell them \$9 to \$12 an hour, as advised by the COM Department.

UNIONIZED OR OPEN SHOP?

Whether a particular organization is unionized or not can have a significant bearing on the type of work you would be permitted to do as an intern. If the internship sponsor is unionized, you probably will not be doing any technical hands-on work, because the union contract prohibits non-members from operating equipment. So if you want hands-on experience operating a studio camera, do not apply at KNBC; instead, consider some non-unionized institutions — ITAC at Cal Poly, municipal cable-access, or various other corporations.

PROJECT PARTICIPATION

Ask if you will be permitted to take part in a project. Examples include creating a new employee newsletter, designing and executing an audience-response survey, designing multimedia materials for an annual report, planning / executing a special event for a new product launch, creating a press kit, or putting out a feature section in a publication. If the answer is no, then the likelihood is high that your internship duties will include much routine “grunt work.” Try to avoid this type of internship. If you secure an internship that allows you to work on specific projects — ideally from start to finish — then you will walk away from the internship with some tangible work products that you can add to your professional portfolio. Subsequently, when you interview for that first career position, you’ll have meaningful experiences to discuss with your interviewers. Keep in mind that the most frequent complaint the Communication Department gets from interns is that they were not allowed to work on any sort of project. Insist that you be allowed to work on a project; if they say no, keep looking.

WHERE TO LOOK

You might want to start with the Communication Department, which maintains an internship bulletin board in Building 1, Room 313. The bulletin board carries current fliers and internship announcements from local, regional, and national organizations. Professional organizations such as the L. A. chapter of the Public Relations Society of America and the California Newspaper Publishers Association occasionally send internship directories to the Department that you may consult. Additionally, the Communication Department has a list of internships recently completed by Cal Poly Communication students. In some cases, a final internship report may be available for your reference. See Lyn Hughes, in 1-313, or Dr. Richard Kallan, the internship coordinator, in 1-310, to use the directories. You can also track down internship opportunities using the following Internet websites:

Public relations

- www.prsala.org/ (Public Relations Society of America)
- www.monstertrak.com
- Search net for “public relations internships.”

Journalism (print and broadcast)

- www.internshipprograms.com
- monstertrak.com
- Search net for “journalism internships.”

Miscellaneous

- www.csupomona.edu/career/students.html

This site is maintained by the Cal Poly Pomona Career Center. It has a sub category, Job Trak, that puts you in touch with many companies on-line. Though internships might not be listed specifically, the company may offer them. You would need to inquire.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

In terms of professional development, determine what it is that you want out of an internship; those outcomes are your learning objectives. Here are some examples that were specified by other COM students.

Creative problem solving. “I look forward to sharing my ideas and adding my insights in naming new products, merchandising, and designing. I hope the company will be very open to new ideas.”

Managerial skills development. “I know ‘intern’ = ‘gofer’ = ‘low man on the totem pole.’ On the other hand, my goal is to have the opportunity to manage some projects. If I can manage those tasks effectively, I’ll prove I can handle more significant challenges.”

Technical skills development. “From general office skills to more technical skills — drafting press releases, media pitches, planning special events, conceptualizing publicity campaigns — these are the tasks that will benefit me.”

Acquiring industry knowledge. “While I have read and studied PR in great detail, I have no firsthand knowledge of the industry. I hope that my stint as an intern will provide tangible experiences in launching a new product, pitching stories to media, and ‘putting out fires.’”

PREPARING FOR INTERNSHIP INTERVIEWS

Most organizations will require that you interview with them as part of the application procedure. Interviews can range in formality from short, informal you-got-the-job affairs to formal 30-minute sessions conducted along traditional lines of

questioning, the latter situation usually occurring in highly competitive internship situations.

Prepare for your internship interview the same way you would prepare for an entry-level position in the particular field. Make certain you have a resume and, perhaps, a portfolio. A sample resume is included at the end of these guidelines, which you can use as a model if you have not already created a resume. Be certain to list Cal Poly classes that are pertinent to the particular type of internship you seek. You might also have been involved in enough “hands-on” activity to assemble a professional portfolio, which is a sample collection of your best work. (Journalists usually call them “stringbooks.”)

Before you go to the interview, make a list of questions you want to ask. Although the interviewer will ask most of the questions, you will have an opportunity to get some answers yourself. Find out about specific job responsibilities, compensation, project participation, work schedules, and varied professional development opportunities.

Dress appropriately for the interview and conduct yourself in a professional manner. Keep in mind that internships sometimes turn into full-time job opportunities, but only for interns who perform in an exemplary way — from day one. If you feel you need some coaching on how to interview effectively, call the Cal Poly Pomona Career Center, 869-2344, for an appointment or stop by the center in Building 97, Room 100. Counselor Sharon Mathis-Curd works closely with COM students. The Center provides help with resumes, portfolios, and letters of application. It also offers mock job interview sessions. In the Communication Department, Dr. Kallan can help you refine your resume.

Getting the most out of your internship

AVOID GETTING LOST IN THE SHUFFLE

Once you have started an internship, you might find you’re not receiving as much supervision as you had expected. Work place pressures and unanticipated crises sometimes create distractions for supervisors. As a result, they might pay less attention to your professional development than they originally promised. If you run into that sort of situation, politely remind them of the promise that was made to you respecting your duties and involvement in the business. Remember, your time is valuable, too, and you’re there to learn. Don’t be hesitant about asking your boss to include you more directly in day-to-day operations.

DOCUMENT YOUR ACTIVITIES

Your final report writing task will be more manageable if you keep a journal of your daily activities during the internship. Sometimes internships stretch across an entire year. Trying to recount from memory precisely what you did and when you did it and to what effect can be frustrating as well as inconclusive. Take time each week to write down some notes about your internship activities. You need not record every activity on a day-to-day basis. Instead, simply make a note of significant

developments and activities in which you were involved. Also, be sure to read the Writing the Final Report section in this booklet before you start the internship. It offers further guidance on the sort of information you will need for the final report.

Additionally, be sure to collect in a timely manner the documents you will need for the report appendix. Make copies of all news stories, press releases, speeches, scripts, newsletters, and other messages that you prepared. If a particular message goes through several stages of production, try to include copies of the original form and the finished form. These materials will be returned to you after your report has been evaluated.

MEET PEOPLE!

“It’s who you know not what you know.” If you have never worked in the industry before, an internship is a great opportunity for you to become a visible player, or at least potential player, in the field. Suddenly, you are more than just an abstraction on a resume; you have a name, face, and personality. During an internship, you have an opportunity to rub shoulders with professionals in your field. Do the networking thing, definitely!

WALK THE WALK, TALK THE TALK

Observe and listen. Professional organizations have their own particular methods of operation and their own particular way of incorporating technical phrasing and use of jargon into their work discussion. For many students, knowledge of a particular professional field has been gained mostly through an academic perspective. An internship presents you with an opportunity to gain insight through an operational perspective, working with people who are more pragmatic than theoretical in their outlook. So keep your senses keen and let the learning curve take off.

Procedure for enrolling in COM 461

1. Complete the Internship Questionnaire and return it to the Communication Department, which will notify you about your eligibility. *Remember, you must be a senior who has completed the courses listed on the eligibility form by the time you begin the internship.*
2. If your eligibility is verified, you will receive an internship contract form from the Communication Department. Subsequently, you may proceed with the process outlined in the previous section of these guidelines. Once you have interviewed with an internship sponsor, contact Lyn Hughes, 1-313, ext. 3522, to set an appointment with Dr. Kallan, who will discuss the proposed internship and your related duties. Bring the completed contract form with you, making sure that you have indicated what your learning objectives are for the internship. At the conclusion of this meeting, you will either receive permission to proceed with the internship or you will be required to reconsider your proposal. Return the approved contract to Lyn.

Ideally, you should do this one academic quarter before you intend to begin the internship.

3. Once your internship has been approved by Dr. Kallan, the Communication Department will notify your internship sponsor and communicate its expectations for your internship. Additionally, the Department will request a written statement on institutional letterhead stationery from your sponsor that describes the duties you will perform during your internship. (Two hundred hours of internship work are required to receive six units of academic credit.) This letter may be mailed to the Communication Department by your sponsor or you may deliver it yourself.

4. If you wish, you may use up to three internships to accumulate the 200 hours of on-the-job training required by your internship. However, if you use more than one internship to fulfill requirements you must repeat steps 2 and 3 above for each additional internship.

5. You are *not* required to meet regularly with the Dr. Kallan once the internship has been approved; however, you may consult with him whenever you feel the need.

6. Upon completion of the internship and before you finish writing your final report, you should notify the Communication Department that you have completed your internship field work. The Department will then mail a questionnaire to your supervisor, asking him/her to rate your performance and verify the total number of hours you worked. You also will be given a questionnaire to complete about your job performance.

7. You have one year to complete your internship requirements. For instance, if you enrolled in COM 461 in Spring Quarter you have until the end of Spring Quarter one year later to complete all requirements. You will receive an Incomplete grade until you have fulfilled all requirements. (If you cannot fulfill all requirements within one year, you should meet with the internship coordinator to discuss your situation.)

8. You must submit your final report by the end of the 8th week of the quarter in which you wish to receive credit for COM 461. Whether you receive credit or no credit is determined by the internship coordinator after careful evaluation of your performance, as evidenced in your written work, your portfolio, and the supervisor's evaluation. Graded reports will be retained by the Communication Department for only one quarter after submission. Please pick up your graded internship report by that time.

Writing the internship final report

PURPOSE

As a culminating COM 461 assignment, student interns write a final report. The purpose is threefold: First, the report demonstrates to Communication faculty that you can accurately describe and objectively evaluate a work situation from a professional's point of view. Second, it forces you to think about the internship experience in terms of your learning objectives, which are reflected in the skills and knowledge you acquired. Third, it provides documentation that the Department will

use to make future decisions about placing student interns with the particular institution.

Submit your report in hard copy and on a CD. This CD will *not* be returned to you; it will be filed in the Communication Department office so that your report can be referenced by other students in the future. You need not include supporting materials from the appendix on the disk. The printed version of the report and the appendix will be returned to you after the report has been evaluated.

INTERNSHIP REPORT CONTENT

Your report should include information about each of the areas below. Use these headings in your report and follow this order of presentation. The report will be twelve to fifteen pages in length. Guidelines for section length are in parentheses. Format instructions follow this section.

Establishing the Internship. Describe how you secured the internship. How did you get the idea, who did you talk with? Did you encounter any problems? Why did you think this situation was right for you? Was this a paid internship? (one or two paragraphs)

Learning Objectives. Specifically, what did you intend to learn during this internship that would make you better prepared to reach your career goals? Relate this aspect to technical skills, managerial skills, creative problem-solving, industry knowledge, or other learning outcomes. (about a page)

Sponsoring organization. Describe the institution(s) at which you interned in terms of its business objectives, its position in the industry or, if part of the public sector, its role in governmental service. Specifically, what is its stock in trade — what products or services does it offer? Who are its customers? How many employees work there? How is it structured in terms of divisions and departments? What is its annual operating budget? Who are its principal competitors? (a paragraph or two)

Departmental responsibilities and objectives. Specifically, to which department in the organization were you assigned? Where any Cal Poly alumni working in it? If so, please note their full names and positions they hold. What is the department's function in relation to the institution as a whole? Management structure? Number of employees? Objectives? Problems that interfere with reaching objectives? (a paragraph or two)

My responsibilities and duties. Describe the assignments you were given. *Please do not chronicle your day-to-day activities;* simply relate your major work activities during the internship, indicating the approximate number of hours spent on them. How did they relate to the department's objectives? Try to categorize these, if appropriate, into either program-related activities or routine-operational activities. Program-related activities are those that directly supported some timely objective of your department. They are usually associated with some culminating work product, and represent the fun stuff in an internship. Routine-operational activities, on the other hand, are the "gofer" activities assigned to you that deal with seemingly mundane aspects of the business. For better or worse, all internships involve a certain amount

of work in the routine-operational category. Think of it as a head start on "paying your dues." (one to two pages)

Applying my skills and knowledge. Note the particular skills you used during the internship. These will no doubt include personal skills — your ability to present a persuasive argument, for instance — as well as technical skills, such as using desktop publishing software to design materials. Additionally, note how your university education enabled you to understand professional situations and facilitate problem solving. For instance, did you encounter any ethical problems during the internship that perhaps made you turn for guidance to some of the principles you studied at Cal Poly in the communication law and ethics courses? In particular, tell us about classes at Cal Poly that were helpful in providing knowledge or skills useful to you on the job. Did you encounter situations where you felt disadvantaged on the job as a result of some weakness in your university preparation?

In reference to work products, what contributions did you make? Be certain to include in the report appendix copies of any materials you prepared or helped prepare.

Last, explain how compatible your actual internship situation was with the learning objectives that you originally established for yourself. Did you find that your original objectives needed revising to suit the reality of the actual on-the-job situation or were your expectations fully realized during the internship? This section of the final report is crucial. *If you do not offer a comprehensive assessment, the report may be returned to you for further attention. You should devote at least four pages to this section of the final report.*

Evaluating the internship sponsor. This section requires you to make some critical judgments. In the future, students and faculty will refer to your commentary to help them decide if the internship situation you have described is suitable for someone else. Here are a few issues you will want to address:

- In terms of supervision, were you told to report to a specific person? Was your supervisor readily accessible? (For instance, could you speak with the person once a week if need be?)
- Did your supervisor have expert knowledge or skills that related to your job activities or were you the only "communication specialist" in the work unit?
- Were you promised any internship training opportunities that were never realized? Did personnel at the internship site demonstrate on-going interest in your personal learning process?
- Did you receive any feedback about your work performance? Did the internship sponsor encourage you to take the initiative in deciding how a particular task should be accomplished? (about a page)

If I could change the world. After observing the operations of the sponsoring institution for several months, what suggestions do you have now for improvement in the way they organize for work? Would you encourage the Communication Department to pursue future internship opportunities with this sponsor? If you feel

strongly that the internship should not be continued, you may wish to speak directly with the internship coordinator, Dr. Kallan, about your concerns. (one to two pages)

Internship report format. You do not need a formal title page. Simply provide the following information at the top of the first page:

Your name
Student identification number
Date of the report

Organization name
Supervisor's name
Address and phone

Paid (rate) or unpaid
**Full-time work was/
was not offered.**

Next, compose a resume entry following the example below. Start your report five lines below the resume entry.

News Writing Intern

Inland Valley Daily Bulletin, Ontario, California

January 2006 to June 2007

- Assisted Sports Editor with high school basketball game coverage.
- Edited wire service copy and wrote headlines.
- Wrote feature story about California International Speedway.
- Assisted photo editor with photo coverage of high school sports.

Use standard page margins of at least one inch and double space between lines. Make certain your printer produces a dark image. Manuscripts that are lightly inked will be returned for reprinting.

Place samples of your work and other supporting documentation in a three-ring binder marked *Appendix*. Include a table of contents for the appendix if you have several items.

Don't forget to submit both a hard copy of your report and an electronic copy in Microsoft Word on a CD.

Index of Sample Internship Forms

ELIGIBILITY FORMS

PAGE 14 – JOURNALISM ELIGIBILITY FORM

PAGE 15 – ORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNICATION ELIGIBILITY FORM

PAGE 16 – PUBLIC RELATIONS ELIGIBILITY FORM

INTERNSHIP CONTRACT FOR COMMUNICATION 461