**Internships and Research Experience**

**Finding a Position**
Use Career Connections to search the internship database. There is additional information in this guide.

Go to The Career Center website for links to other sites: [www.muhlenberg.edu/main/aboutus/careercenter/students/job/](http://www.muhlenberg.edu/main/aboutus/careercenter/students/job/)

Refer to the many books with internship postings in the Career Resource Library.

Talk to faculty to see if your department has a list of internships or ideas on organizations you can explore.

Meet with a career counselor to discuss search options that fit your individual interests.

**Credit or No Credit?**
Many students choose to take a non-credit internship just for the experience. This is permitted as long as the employer does not require it for credit. In this case, no formal paperwork needs to be completed with the college.

If you choose to pursue a for-credit internship, the internship needs to be approved by your academic advisor. There are forms for you to complete on the Internship Manual website at [www.muhlenberg.edu/careercenter/internship/](http://www.muhlenberg.edu/careercenter/internship/).

You can have the internship during the academic year as a “class”, or in the summer and pay for the credit.

If you choose to pursue credit, the employer must sign the student's learning contract and complete the evaluation forms on the Internship Manual website. Only students with 16 units or more are permitted to apply for credit.

**Pay or No Pay?**
Internships can be paid or not. This may not be related to whether academic credit is given. For example, a credit internship may also be paid in some cases. In other cases, an unpaid internship may not be for credit. If you are not clear on whether the internship you are applying for is paid or not, consider waiting to ask about it until AFTER you receive the internship offer. You may be in a better position to negotiate pay once an employer had decided they want you.

There is a common practice in non-profits, media fields and the arts to offer unpaid internships. However, every situation is unique. Ask to make sure. Some organizations offer stipends, transportation/parking costs, meals or living expenses in lieu of (or in addition to) pay. Ask about that as well.

**Make the Most of It!**
Experience is a necessity for today’s college students. Employers and graduate programs seek candidates who have tested the waters and who have demonstrated skills and experiences. There are numerous reasons to seek independent research with a faculty member, or do an internship with an outside organization. Some organizations only hire from their internship pool!

The reasons for doing an internship or research experience fit into two main categories:

1. **Gain skills relevant to your career goals.**
   In doing independent research, students gain many valuable skills – problem solving, hypothesis testing, familiarity with research designs, methodologies and equipment, and perhaps more experience using statistics and computer packages. These skills are transferable (and necessary) when applying to graduate school in research fields, but also potentially for employment in a variety of jobs in business, education, health and science fields. Communication skills, both written and oral, may also be enhanced and honed through chances to publish and present. Working closely with a faculty member gives you the opportunity to work side-by-side and learn from an expert in the field - much like you will in graduate school.

2. **Gain experience to determine and refine your goals.**
   It’s difficult to argue against the value of gaining experience outside the classroom to enhance skills and marketability no matter what your goals. However, don’t do research, or an internship, because you think it will be less work than a class. Expect more work, more responsibility, greater independence, higher expectations of you, and sometimes a little ambiguity. With all of those, though, comes great potential for growth!

**Helpful Hints:**
- Understand the expectations of your supervisor. If you don’t understand them, or have questions, ASK. Try not to ask the same question twice.
- Pay attention to instructions, and write them down.
- Understand the timeline - discuss it with your supervisor. If you are looking at a large project or research assignment, break it down into small components for yourself, and give yourself due dates for each part of the project.
- Don’t use business or lab time for personal tasks.
- Arrive early.
- Demonstrate a positive attitude and a willingness to do the job, however small or large.
- Force yourself to go beyond your comfort zone.
- Keep track of your accomplishments and keep samples of your work.
- Show initiative; offer to help with other projects during your down time.
- Show courtesy, enthusiasm, and interest, ALWAYS...even with the menial tasks.
- Read your supervisor’s unspoken cues. For example, learn when, or when not, to interrupt.
- Model professional behavior expected of full-time employees.
- Don’t get involved in office or laboratory politics.
- Periodically review your learning contract - are you accomplishing your goals?
- Talk with your supervisor about networking.
- Ask your supervisor to write you a recommendation on LinkedIn before the end of your internship or research.
- Have fun, but not too much fun!