

Internship Handbook



Office of Service Learning

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Tulane University's Office of Service Learning

The Service Learning Internship Program is housed in Tulane's **Office of Service Learning (OSL)** and is committed to the same mission.

The mission of the OSL at Tulane is to engage faculty members and students in an endeavor that combines community service with academic learning. Service learning aims to benefit students' education, further faculty research and teaching, and build community goodwill.

To achieve this mission, the OSL strives to help create a "classroom without walls" that is beneficial to the following groups:

For **Faculty Members**, the OSL will

- assist in the development of innovative approaches to instruction,
- provide support for service learning courses,
- sponsor programs, speakers, and symposia on service learning,
- support faculty members' efforts to disseminate information through conference presentations or publications, and
- provide opportunities for collaborative community research and project development.

For **College Students**, the OSL allows them to

- apply concepts from the classroom to community service,
- learn to work with a very diverse community,
- gain knowledge and expertise from the community,
- evaluate, question and reformulate their civic values,
- prepare to participate in internships and research, and
- explore career options.

For **Community Partners**, the OSL

- makes available to them the services of university students,
- increases volunteer diversity in sex, age and race,
- allows them to identify needs and develop a service program that meets needs of both the community and the university,
- builds on-going relationships between the university and the community partner, and
- offers support through a mini-grant program.

For the **University**, the programs of the OSL

- furthers the goals of Tulane's strategic plan,
- allows the university to be an active, engaged partner in the community, and
- facilitates university teaching, research, and program development.

In conclusion, the Tulane Office of Service Learning aims to facilitate collaborative learning between university, community, faculty, and students by integrating each groups' cultures with the New Orleans' urban setting to foster mutual understanding and accessibility.

Internship Student Handbook

Congratulations on your internship! You are becoming part of a professional organization that provides an important service to the New Orleans community! This student handbook will provide you with information that will help insure your success at your site.

As interns in the New Orleans community, you become representatives of Tulane University. Therefore, it is important to keep in mind that *you are representing the Office of Service Learning and the entire university*, including its administrators, faculty, staff and your fellow students. Exercise courtesy and maturity at all times, and seek assistance immediately from the Internship Coordinator should any questions or problems arise at your site. Your responsible efforts are vital in determining the quality of your own internship experience.

Internship Learning Agreement

It is extremely important that your site supervisor understands your expectations for your internship. It is also extremely important that you understand the expectations of your site supervisor for your internship. During the first week of your internship, you will meet with your site supervisor and clarify your job description in writing by developing an internship learning agreement. This learning agreement will guide the internship experience for you. It will also assist your site supervisor in mentoring you and evaluating your experience. You are to take the lead in developing your learning agreement. However, you should not do this alone. There are three parts to the agreement: Job description, goals of the internship and strategies to achieve your goals. See page seven for more information on the learning agreement. The Internship Learning Agreement form is included in the appendix of this handbook.

Internship Schedule

Interns majoring in sociology, English, women's studies, and political science are required to complete sixty (60) service hours at their sites over the course of the semester. Interns majoring in psychology are required to complete seventy (70) hours. These hours are to be completed over a minimum of 10 weeks. Interns are responsible for meeting with their site supervisors to establish a regular weekly schedule. This schedule will be turned in to the Internship Coordinator at the first meeting of the internship seminar.

Timesheet

Tracking the number of internship hours you have completed is your responsibility. A timesheet is included in this handbook. It is your responsibility to know the sign in procedures at your site and to keep up with your hours. A copy

of your time sheet must be turned in to the Internship Coordinator at mid-semester and at the end of the semester. See your seminar syllabus for the specific timesheet due dates.

Confidentiality

As you may already know, professionals in law, social work, psychology and certain other fields are obligated to maintain confidentiality between themselves and their clients. Whatever they learn from or about their clients is privileged information and cannot be revealed to others without permission from the client. As an intern in your organization, you may have access to this privileged information. Interns are also often given access to information about their organization that is not necessarily public. Interns are expected to respect the level of confidentiality required by their particular placement. Supervisors who treat interns as professionals expect that they have the degree of maturity and training necessary to be worthy of such trust. A breach of confidentiality is a breach of professional ethics that can lead to immediate termination of the internship. Confidentiality is extremely important! Speak to your site supervisor about how the obligations of confidentiality may apply to you. If you have any questions about whether certain information is classified, also be sure to ask your supervisor.

Observing Unethical or Illegal Conduct

As an intern, you may encounter ethically or morally questionable situations. These situations may be difficult to handle when you are bound by your responsibility to confidentiality. Such dilemmas raise serious ethical questions. There are too many possible circumstances to be covered in this handbook, but the one rule you should always follow is *do not try to resolve the problem alone*. Consult with your site supervisor or the Service Learning Internship Coordinator. These situations will not be new to the professionals with whom you work. They have dealt with similar situations before and can almost always give good advice, even if it is just advice about who to talk to. As an intern, you should never act on your own judgment call about a potentially unethical or illegal act.

Professional Behavior

In exchange for the supervision and experience that students receive, interns are expected to act in a professional manner appropriate to the setting. Once you arrive at your placement, you are no longer "just a student." You will demonstrate your professionalism by your dress, telephone etiquette, written work, accuracy, reliability, punctuality, attendance, and commitment. Interns are expected to be well organized in order to complete all assigned work. Having an exam the next day is not an adequate excuse for not carrying out a placement

responsibility. The internship and academic work should take equal priority, which means being responsible for completing both on time.

Professional Appearance

Clothing should always be neat and professional. Consult with your site supervisor about the agency's policies on appropriate attire. Items of clothing that would cause a distraction in the everyday function of your placement site are inappropriate. Such items include, but are not limited to: low rise pants, midriff shirts, short skirts, tank tops, form fitting clothing, open-toed shoes, or shirts with inappropriate slogans.

Evaluation

You will have two opportunities to evaluate your internship experience and to be evaluated by your site supervisor. The first evaluation will be at mid-semester and the second will be at the end of the semester. The final evaluation completed by your site supervisor will be more comprehensive and count as part of your final grade. It will be your responsibility to meet with your supervisor to discuss these evaluations and make sure they are completed and turned in on time. A copy of each evaluation form is included in the appendix of this handbook. See your seminar syllabus for specific evaluation due dates.

Intern Information Form

After the first week of your internship, you will complete an intern information form. This form asks for your contact information, your site supervisor's contact information, and your schedule at your internship. The form will be kept on file in the Internship Coordinator's office and used to coordinate site visits. The form is included in the appendix of this handbook.

Site Visits

The Internship Coordinator will make at least one site visit per semester. This visit will take place during your regularly scheduled hours at your site. You will be responsible for giving the Internship Coordinator a brief tour of your site. The purpose of these visits is to ensure that communication is open between all parties.

Self-Directed Learning

An important element of your internship experience is the opportunity to develop as a self-directed learner.

Applying self-directed learning to your internship means:¹

- Taking initiative, with or without the help of others, in determining your own learning needs
- Formulating learning goals
- Identifying human and material resources to help you accomplish your goals
- Choosing and implementing appropriate learning strategies
- Evaluating learning outcomes
- Asking for feedback from your supervisor

“Clearly, we are not talking here about something that would be nice or desirable; neither are we talking about some new educational fad. We are talking about a basic human competence – the ability to learn on one’s own – that has suddenly become a prerequisite for living in this new world.”²

Internship Learning Agreement

There are three parts to the Internship Learning Agreement: Job description; goals of the internship, and strategies to achieve your goals.

Job Description

During the first week of your internship, you are to meet with your site supervisor and clarify your job description in writing. Elements to consider include past courses you have taken that are relevant to your internship placement, specific theories and skills that may be applicable to the position, and other skills you would like to further develop. Questions that you might want to consider are:

- What responsibilities will you have?
- What are you expected to accomplish by the end of the semester?
- How will your work be evaluated?

Be as specific as possible when listing duties, projects, meetings, training, etc. Use this job description to identify your goals and strategies to achieve your goals.

Goals of the Internship

Goals may be described as desired knowledge, understanding, skills, attitudes or values. Begin your goals with a verb using phrases such as “to develop . . .,” “to apply . . .,” “to observe . . .,” and “to demonstrate . . .” Remember to keep your goals realistic and appropriate to the site. When completing this section, consider what you hope to gain from the internship.

Strategies to Achieve Your Goals

Translate your goals into specific activities that are congruent with both your aspirations and the needs of your site. Describe the specific process for what you will do to achieve your goals. This translation is crucial because it is the grounds for linking theory into practice. Identifying learning strategies and activities enables you and your site supervisor to identify appropriate available resources.

Once you are satisfied with your learning agreement, both you and your supervisor should sign it. Keep a copy for yourself and give one to your site supervisor and internship coordinator. It should be reviewed at mid-semester to determine if your goals are being achieved, expectations met, and to determine if changes need to be made or new goals need to be set.

Stages of an Internship³

Each intern’s experience is unique. You will most likely have a different experience from other interns, even if you are placed at the same organization. Sites are different and you will be in a seminar with other interns doing very different work with different groups of people.

Although there are definite differences, there are also similarities that cut across various experiences. Some of the concerns and challenges that interns face seem to occur in five predictable stages. These stages are: **anticipation**, **disillusionment**, **confrontation**, **competence**, and **culmination**. There are concerns you will have at each stage and, to some extent, these concerns must be resolved before you can move forward. The stages are not completely separate. Concerns from earlier and subsequent stages are often noticed. Your rate of progress through the stages is affected by many factors, including the number of hours spent at the site, previous experiences, your personality, the personal issues and levels of support you bring to the experience, the style of supervision, and the nature of the work you do at the site.

Stage 1: Anticipation

As you begin your internship, there is a lot to look forward to. The internship is your chance to actually get out into the field, apply what you have learned in the classroom and make a contribution to others. For many interns, there is anxiety associated with this eagerness. It may not be visible, but there are enough unknowns in the experience to cause some concern and anxiety in anyone.

This stage is often called the “what if” stage because interns wonder about things such as: What if I can’t handle it? What if they won’t listen to me? What if they don’t like me? What if my supervisor thinks I know more than I really do? What if I can’t do what is expected of me? You will probably be concerned about what you will get from the experience and what it is like to work at this particular site. You may fear that you are not competent but have gotten this far only by luck and you will be found out. You may also wonder about your role; you are not in a student role while at the site, but you are not a full-fledged staff member either. Most interns are concerned about the reception and treatment received from the site staff. You may also be wondering how you are going to manage the other responsibilities in your life and who is going to be there to support you.

At this stage, you may not be learning the specific things you went there to learn and that can be frustrating. What is important at this stage is that you learn to define your goals clearly and specifically and begin considering what skills you will need to reach them. You must also develop a realistic set of expectations from the experience.

Stage 2: Disillusionment

At some point, you are probably going to reach a stage when you are not as certain or positive about your internship as you would like to be. You may find that you are having some trouble going to the internship or that you are complaining about the experience. This is normal! In fact, it is an unusual intern who does not experience some kind of disappointment during the internship. One reason for this change is that there is almost always a difference between what you anticipated about your internship and what you really experience. The size of your gap will depend on how successfully you accomplished the tasks of the anticipation stage, but it cannot be avoided altogether. The disillusionment stage is often referred to as the “what’s wrong?” stage. Concerns at this stage center on many of the same areas as earlier in the placement: supervision, co-workers, the site, the “system”, clients, or yourself. Feelings associated with these concerns may include frustration, anger, disappointment and discouragement. You may find yourself directing any or all of these feelings at your site supervisor, co-workers, clients or even yourself.

Some interns resist acknowledging their concerns, even when their level of task accomplishment is dropping. You may fear that any problems must somehow be

your fault or that you will be blamed for them. You may think that “really good” interns would never have these problems. In fact, it is the failure to acknowledge and discuss problems that can diminish your learning experience. To move through this stage, you need to acknowledge the gap between your expectations and what is actually occurring at your internship site. You need to accept the fact that it is okay to be disappointed and to clarify the specific areas in which you are having problems.

Stage 3: Confrontation

It is possible to become stuck in the disillusionment stage and that can have unfortunate consequences; at best learning and growth can be limited and at worst, the placement may have to be renegotiated or even terminated. On the other hand, confronting and working through the problematic issues can present opportunities for personal and professional growth.

Moving through the confrontation stage involves taking another look at your expectations, goals, and skills. The goals you originally set may have seemed to be reasonable at the time you made them, but experience may have shown that some of them are not realistic or opportunities may have changed. As you reassess your goals, you will need to develop new strategies as well. As the issues raised in the disillusionment stage are resolved, morale begins to rise as does your task accomplishment. As you reassess your goals and strategies, you will feel more independent, more effective, and more empowered as an intern. You will also have a sense of confidence that comes from effectively confronting and resolving problems.

Stage 4: Competence

As your confidence grows, you will move into a period of excitement and accomplishment. Morale is high, as is your sense of investment in your work. Your trust level in yourself, your site supervisor, and your co-workers often increases as well. You may find yourself thinking less of yourself as an intern and more as a professional. You may find that you want more than you are getting from your assignments or your site supervisor. Many interns report that during this time they are better able to appreciate the ethical issues that arise in their placement and are more willing to confront them. These are all positive developments, but you want to be sure not to take them too far, which can lead to perfectionism. It is important to share your concerns openly with your site supervisor. Excellence, not perfection, is your goal in this stage.

Stage 5: Culmination

This stage occurs as your internship draws to an end. It seems that just as you are feeling fully integrated into the work setting, you become aware that your internship will only last for a few more weeks. If you are working with clients, now is when you begin the process of ending your relationship. This is the time

in which your relationship with your co-workers and supervisor changes. For obvious reasons, this is the “saying good-bye” stage, whether it is to just your internship experience or to both your internship experience and your college experience. It is important to finalize any projects you are working on and to provide your co-workers and supervisor a summary of where you ended. This is also the time in which your final evaluation with your site supervisor is held. Good-byes are not easy and many people find it difficult to do. To address the concerns of this stage, it is important to recognize any feelings and reactions you are having, and find satisfying ways to say good-bye to your site supervisor, co-workers and anyone else you have worked with during your internship.

1. Knowles, Malcolm. (1975) *Self-Directed Learning: A Guide for Learners and Teachers*, p. 18
2. Ibid, p. 16-17
3. Sweitzer H. & King M. (1994) *The Successful Internship: Transformation & Empowerment*. Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole.

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