

A Few Words of Advice on the Importance of Internships

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As most of us are pushing through the semester ready for Thanksgiving break and wrapping up all of our assignments, it is easy to just push some things to the side to do later, when you have more time. For most things, that is okay, like

deciding to watch all five seasons of Breaking Bad again, but when it comes to getting an [internship](#) for the spring semester, that is something to start thinking about now. Sigh, I know, that word 'internship' is a scary and daunting.

I can remember back to every time that a professor or my advisor would bring up the importance of internships, I would cringe, close my eyes, and pray that I was a freshman again. I didn't understand why I should leave my part-time job; it paid okay and got me through school, but I wasn't gaining any skills or experiences. I knew that in order to find my passion and be successful, I would have to do it sooner or later. I threw a blazer on, crafted a resume, and landed my first internship. The only thing I regret is that I didn't do it sooner.



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Whether you are a freshman, a junior getting ready for senior year, or you are graduating in May, it is important to get an internship as soon as possible. And if you aren't sure what you would really like to do after graduation, use that as your fuel to find something that you love.

The great thing about internships is that you can use the experience to help narrow down your career search and to focus on areas that you are truly interested in.

And if you are really ambitious, I would suggest getting as many internships as you can between now and graduation. Whether it is over summer vacation or one day a week, the experience that you will gain will be worth every minute.

Here are a few tips to consider:

Listen to your professors, advisors, and parents

Although you may be comfortable at your part time job, it won't even have a spot on your resume in a couple of years, so now is the time to prepare yourself for post-graduation. Experience is key.

Build a [LinkedIn](#) profile

LinkedIn is a great way to build your online portfolio of your skills and qualifications as well as connecting with classmates and people you know in the professional world. You would be surprised how many people use LinkedIn to stay in touch, to post job openings and to build a professional community. It's a great way to build and maintain relationships with the professionals that you will meet along the way.

Textbooks can only teach you so much

Despite which major you are in, textbook knowledge is almost useless without real-world experience. While textbooks teach you concepts and theories, and formal education teaches you skills

such as time-management, an internship will allow you to apply that knowledge.

Pay attention

Once you have started your internship, you will be surrounded by professionals that have been working in the field for years. If you are a business major, you will hear acronyms and terms that are unfamiliar and weren't taught in the classroom. During my first internship I had an entire sheet of paper listed with terms that I had no idea what they meant. Pay attention to the language that is used and jot down anything that doesn't come naturally. And Google them later, you will thank me.

Don't be afraid to speak up

An internship can be intimidating and overwhelming. If you don't understand something, politely ask for clarification, especially if you are given an independent task. Interns aren't expected to be experts, so don't be afraid to ask questions to better understand what is expected of you. Internship mentors expect this, so take advantage of open communication and asking questions.

Internships allow you to build upon your strengths, help you develop as a professional, and let you discover your passions and interests within your field. By gaining this experience, you will be more qualified for a job post-graduation, and you will have a better sense of where you want to take your career.

Now that you know you shouldn't put it off, interested in getting the ball rolling?

[E-mail](#) Internship and Career Planning to make an appointment with Barbara Wirth, our Internship Coordinator. She can help you with your internship search and fill you in on the approval process.

Written by Sabrina Brown

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