Finding an Internship

By LeAnn Cunningham, Employment Relations/Internship Coordinator
JCCC Career Development Center

Internships are practical work experiences related to your college major or career goal. An internship gives you the opportunity to work in a professional setting under the supervision and monitoring of a career professional. Internships can be paid or unpaid and you may or may not receive academic credit for performing the internship. An internship is one of the most effective ways to help you define your career goals and figure out what career you may want to pursue in the future. The difference between being an intern and a volunteer is the educational component. Internships apply what is learned in the classroom to the world of work.

A successful internship should provide training similar to that in a vocational school, benefit the intern more than the employer, provide mentorship/supervision, expose the intern to a depth and breadth of experience within a company, provide compelling and interesting work, and increase an intern’s knowledge of a particular career path. In addition, internships provide an established network of professional contacts, an enhanced resume, and expand specific academic skills and knowledge.

Employers develop internship programs in order to groom and test interns for future employment with their companies. Many local employers provide internships as a way to tap into the talent pipeline available from JCCC career and academic programs.

Like any employment opportunity, being selected to complete an internship opportunity takes planning, professionalism, and effort. The following information outlines the process of preparing for an internship.

Steps in the Internship Process

1. **Explore Your Career Interests**
   Think about what type of career you want to work in and what interests you. Are you interested in engineering, marketing, computers, or working with children? Internships can give you hands-on experience and offer you a valuable way to check out exciting career fields. Internships can provide a key component in your career development process. Explore occupations on O*NET Online at [www.onetonline.org](http://www.onetonline.org).
2. Decide On Your Goals/Objectives
Consider your objectives for an internship. Do you need to complete an internship as part of your degree requirement at JCCC or are you seeking an internship to explore careers? Does the company and/or your academic program require that you receive college credit? Do you need to earn money or can you afford to do an unpaid internship? Which semester would you like to complete the internship? What are your geographic and transportation restrictions? What type of company/organization or corporate culture do you desire? What do you want to learn in an internship and how will this experience enhance your academic and career goals?

3. Meet With Your Faculty Advisor or Internship Coordinator
Schedule a meeting with a JCCC faculty member in your academic interest area or career program, or with the Career Development Center Internship Coordinator to help you answer the above questions. Discuss curriculum requirements and personal goals needed to develop a meaningful internship experience.

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To access a current listing of all internship credit courses at JCCC, type in keyword “internship” under credit class search on www.jccc.edu.

4. Find an Internship
A successful internship search takes time and effort. Start early (3-6 months) to look for an internship! Focus your search on your interest area and implement the following strategies to find an internship:

a. **Online Search**—search a variety of job/internship databases for internships, *i.e.* JCCC Career Development Center’s online database, [JobLinks](http://www.jccc.edu/career-development/experience-job-listings.html), internships.com, indeed.com, careerbuilder.com, studentjobs.gov, summerjobs.com, inroads.org, idealist.org, dwcollegeprogram.com (Disney College Program) or internabroad.com. Or conduct research on Google by company name or industry field in the Kansas City area.

b. **Company websites**—investigate company home pages for opportunities within your industry of choice.

c. **Research companies** on [www.businessjournal.com](http://www.businessjournal.com) to find recent articles about local businesses. This comprehensive database of Kansas City area companies can be digitally accessed by JCCC students on [www.jccc.edu](http://www.jccc.edu). Click on Library and Technology. Log in using your JCCC ID and password. Click on Find Articles and Databases. Click on the Browse Databases tab and the Alphabetical link. Click on the letter “K.” Click on Kansas City Business Journal. Research articles by keyword or company name. To find listings of top area businesses by industry type, click on View Book of Lists.

d. **JCCC Career Development Center**—the center is a great resource to research internships and to view recent internship/job listings from area companies.

e. **Network! Network! Network!** Ask everyone in your network (parents, friends, parents of friends, faculty, coworkers, members of your church or club, and members of the business community) for leads on companies who offer internships. Stay in touch with your network contacts during your search. Are you unsure how to network? Ask the Career Development Center for tips or view the CareerSpots video titled, The Importance of Networking at [www.jccc.edu/career-development/experience](http://www.jccc.edu/career-development/experience).
5. **Build Your Professional Image**
   Be prepared to put your best foot forward with employers. Create a targeted resume and cover letter, improve your interviewing skills and polish your professional appearance. Come to the JCCC Career Development Center for tips on resume writing and interviewing or utilize resources from the center’s Web pages at [www.jccc.edu/career-development/experience.html](http://www.jccc.edu/career-development/experience.html). Individual mock interviews are available for JCCC students with a pending job interview. Call the center at 913-469-3870 to make an appointment. Practice your interviewing skills with friends or in front of a mirror. Be ready to give specific examples in response to questions. For a listing of questions to help you prepare, view the *Interviewing Guidelines* on the above link. For online practice sessions with video or text recording of your responses, make your account at Perfect Interview™ by following the same link above.

6. **Contact Employers**
   Apply for internships and be sure to target your resume for each individual internship opportunity. Include a short, concise cover letter highlighting your interest in the position. If a company doesn’t have an internship available currently, consider setting up an informational interview which could potentially lead to an internship in the future. For tips on informational interviewing, go to [www.jccc.edu/career-development/experience.html](http://www.jccc.edu/career-development/experience.html). Contact employers by email, written letter, or phone to inquire about potential internships. Be prepared to give your one minute “elevator pitch,” highlighting your skills, education, experience, and interest in interning for the company. Attempt to set up in-person interviews whenever possible, since nothing beats a personal meeting. Be ready to share your resume and know that “the interview” begins with your very first conversation with the company!

7. **Interview with Employers**
   Arrive 15-20 minutes early! Greet the employer with a firm handshake, a warm smile, and make good eye contact. Dress professionally or business casual (*i.e.* suit, dress slacks, dress shirt or khakis.) Answer questions showing the appropriate level of enthusiasm and respect for the employer’s time. Take several copies of your resume to an interview, a nice pen and notepad/portfolio, and make sure you collect business cards from each interviewer. Never show up at an interview without researching the company beforehand! View the company website for location, recent happenings, market, products, clients, etc. Ask pertinent questions and express your interest in opportunities with their organization.

Before accepting an internship offer, ask yourself the following questions about the internship:

- **Will I be exposed to a broad array of functions and duties to learn more about the company?**
  A quality internship offers a depth and breadth of experience.

- **Will I be given a variety of work experiences that are meaningful and relate to my career goals?**

- **Will I increase my knowledge and skills of a specific career area of interest to me?**

- **Will this internship further my career goals, enhance my resume, and provide me with professional contacts?**

- **Will I be assigned a mentor who can answer questions and offer advice or assist with the resolution of problems?**


- **Will I be allowed the opportunity to offer feedback about the internship midway and at the end of the internship?**
8. **Follow up with Employers**
   Send a thank you note (hand written is more personal) to each interviewer within 48 hours following the interview using contact information from his/her business card. Respond to all offers, even those you do not plan to accept and thank them again for their time. If you haven’t heard a response, follow up 7-10 days after the interview to ask if the position has been filled.

9. **Professional Conduct at Work**
   *Once you have an internship position*, conduct yourself professionally according to the JCCC Student Code of Conduct found on [www.jccc.edu](http://www.jccc.edu) and follow these suggestions:

   - **Identify Company Regulations.** Learn company rules and follow them. Know what is expected of you in the workplace. To avoid errors, ask for clarification if you do not fully understand.
   - **Attendance.** Arrive for work early each day. Let your employer know if you are ill and unable to come to work. Always show up for work!
   - **Be a Team Player.** Introduce yourself to the individuals in the office. Learn more about each person’s role on the team to understand the overall mission. Be supportive, show initiative on the job, and treat everyone with respect.
   - **Communication is Essential.** Use proper English in written and spoken communication. Use appropriate spelling and language in emails, not informal texting.
   - **Personal Appearance.** Find out the company dress code and follow it. Your dress, personal grooming and accessories impact your professionalism.
   - **Email, Internet, and Phone Use.** Know your company’s policy and limit your use of social media, Internet surfing and cell phone conversations during your work day.
   - **Keep Your Supervisor Informed.** Build a good relationship with your boss by keeping him/her updated on projects and ask questions as needed.
   - **Attitude.** Show a willingness to learn on the job and accept constructive criticism in a positive way. Show appreciation to your boss and co-workers. Do not act entitled!

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**Career Development Center**

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[www.jccc.edu/career-development](http://www.jccc.edu/career-development)

Open Hours:

Monday – Wednesday 8 a.m. to 6 pm

Thursday 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Friday 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Adapted from CareerSpots “Finding a Co-op/Internship”

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