

How Summer Internships Can Change Lives

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Are you ready to find your fit?

By Fiona Tapp

Summer internships, especially at large companies, can be fiercely competitive. Students want the opportunity to earn a little extra money, increase their network of contacts, and learn vital skills to bolster their future career prospects.

In fact, Mani Goulding, the author of a new book on career coaching titled “Ready, Set, Launch” believes internships are “an invaluable way for both students and corporations to test drive a career and candidate for a good fit.”

Goulding explained how before testing the waters, an industry can be difficult for young people to really have a handle on the day to day nature of a particular profession.

“For students, internships provide a way to get a reality check to see if your assumptions about a particular career are correct and if you can see yourselves continuing with a career path that is on your shortlist,” Goulding said. She also advises students to work hard and really shine during the experience – employers often mine their pool of interns when they need new employees.

Internships are an incredibly rewarding college experience, but can they be transformative?

According to John H. Pryor, a higher education professional and lead researcher on The Gallup-Purdue Index study, the answer is yes.

“We surveyed 30,000 college graduates in the US, looking primarily at engagement in their work and well being,” he said. “What we found was that having an internship while in college had a lasting effect later on in life.”

Pryor explained that an internship is much more than a just a job. Having an outlet to connect classroom theory with real-world experiences is hugely beneficial to student success.

“The key is having an internship that allows you to apply what you are learning in school in a work environment,” he said.

Some internship programs are requirements for specified careers and are even marketed as “life changing.” The summer sea term at [Suny Maritime College](#), State University of New York needs to be completed if you wish to earn a U.S. Coast Guard license. During the summer, students travel the world getting first-hand experience of operating a ship and life at sea, an undeniably special and unique experience.

Internships should offer students an opportunity to have an experience they would not likely be able to create alone. At [Linfield College](#) in Oregon, the only college in the country with an interdisciplinary degree in wine, students have the chance to work alongside world-class Pinot Noir producers in the wineries of Oregon. There is also a range of other internships available through grants and scholarships including Arts and Humanities programs and international programs.

Kristi Mackay, the Assistant Director of Internship Engagement at Linfield College, explained how internships help students to explore prospective career paths.

“Another way our internship program is valuable,” she said, “is that we seek to level the playing field for students who can’t afford to take unpaid internships. Each year, Linfield offers approximately \$70,000 of direct support for students completing internships in arts and humanities, in the local county, in public service roles or in career development internships.”

“They are invaluable for refining skills, cultivating professional connections, and taking a student’s learning from classroom theory to real-world applications,” she said.

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