

NAVIGATING THE INTERNSHIP PROCESS

PURSUE CAREER-RELATED EXPERIENCE

Engaging in meaningful internships is a vital supplement to your liberal arts education and can help you:

- clarify your career goals and direction by gaining experience as you apply and connect classroom knowledge to the world of work;
 - strengthen and grow your professional network with contacts; and
 - develop soft and hard transferable skills, including communication, teamwork, and leadership abilities that will give you an edge professionally after graduation.
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FOUR WAYS TO IDENTIFY & SECURE AN INTERNSHIP

Pursue all of these strategies because you won't know which method will be successful in helping you secure your internship.

1. **Search for Postings:** Use Grinnell-specific and general online internship databases to find organizations that are offering internships. Typically, you will apply for internships directly through the online database (e.g., Handshake), via organization websites, or by submitting your résumé and cover letter by email.
2. **Utilize and Grow Your Network:** Reach out to family members, friends, friends' family members, faculty, coaches, previous supervisors, and Grinnell alumni for leads. Send your current résumé to your contacts to spread the word that you are looking for an internship. Be sure to include an objective (below contact header, and above "Education" section) to help the reader know what type of internship you're interested in. Also, attend campus events with visiting alumni and employers to inquire about internship opportunities. Use LinkedIn and Grinnell Connect to identify alumni who are in professional fields of interest to you. Connect with them for an informational interview to discuss their journey and for suggestions about how to secure an internship in their industry.
3. **Contact Organizations Directly:** Visit the organization's website to see if internship opportunities are posted. Look at your peers' profiles in Handshake to find names of organizations where current Grinnellians completed internships. Alternatively, use the Chamber of Commerce membership list in your preferred geographic areas to find the names of potential organizations of interest. If no information is available on an organization's website about internships, call the organization directly to inquire about possible opportunities. If the organization has not had interns previously, offer to serve as their first one (asking never hurts).
4. **Create Your Own:** Contact an organization where you previously worked or volunteered to ask about transitioning your past experience into an internship by adding additional responsibilities to use your newly gained academic knowledge. Additionally, when you reach out to alumni for informational interviews, they may offer you an internship even though their organization doesn't currently have a formal internship program. If you need to earn money over the summer, another option is to approach a non-profit organization and offer to work on a specific project to grow your professional skills on a part-time basis while also having time for a paying job. If you have more financial flexibility, offer to intern full-time and apply for funding through the CLS to offset the costs of food, transportation, and housing expenses.

HELPFUL TIPS

- **Start Early:** Searching for an internship takes time and effort. Begin the process a few months in advance of deadlines.
- **Prepare:** Create a strategic plan with your CLS adviser for securing an internship based on your interests, experience, financial considerations, and geographic interests and parameters. Have your application materials (typically résumé and cover letter) reviewed by a CLS adviser, and practice interviewing at the CLS or by using Big Interview.
- **Pay Attention:** Deadlines, application requirements, and program criteria need to be followed. Check all materials for typos and ensure the use of formal, professional language, as well as tone, before sending anything (including inquiry or follow-up email messages) to potential internship sites.
- **Stay Organized:** Use a spreadsheet to manage applications and communications with potential organizations and networking contacts to stay on top of your search process. Follow up when appropriate, and remember to send thank-you notes or emails after an interview.
- **Diversify:** Apply for multiple internship opportunities with varying levels of competitiveness and name brand recognition. Having multiple internship offers is a good problem to navigate. You can always turn down an internship offer if you have accepted another. Never accept an internship and then change your mind if another one that you deem as “better” comes along. You want to develop and maintain professional integrity during your search process.

RESOURCES

All resources listed can be accessed via GrinnellShare.

Handshake: Access Grinnellink internships (have an alumni connection) by typing in “Grinnellink” in the search box.

Goin’Global: View country and U.S. city guides with career information, including H1B employer listings, corporate profiles, and career resources for 40 countries.

Idealist: Search for internships at a non-profit organization.

CEI Internships: Access hundreds of internship opportunities in a wide range of industries.

LinkedIn: Visit the Find Alumni page under the Grinnell College School page to review alumni profiles for ideas for organizations to apply to, or network with them and join the Grinnell College Alumni group.

GrinnellConnect: Connect with Grinnell College alumni who have indicated they are willing and eager to help you in your search process.

EcoJobs: View current internships in conservation, education, policy, science, and engineering.

OPA Jobs: View current internships in the Washington D.C. area and nationally, including internships in Public Relations, Government Affairs, Legislation, Journalism, the media, nonprofits, and corporations.

ADDITIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

REUs: Conducting research is another great way to gain career-related experience if you might be interested in pursuing research professionally, or if it is needed as a preparatory experience for pre-professional programs or graduate school. The Research Experience for Undergraduates (REU) program supports active research participation by undergraduate students in any of the research areas funded by the National Science Foundation (NSF). REU projects involve students in meaningful ways in ongoing research programs or in projects specifically designed for the REU program. You can access these opportunities at www.nsf.gov.

MAPs/MIPs: At Grinnell, students can pursue a Mentored Advance Project (MAP) or a Mentored Introductory Project (MIP) with a faculty member. Speak with faculty in the academic department you are interested in conducting research in to inquire about MAP/MIP options.

Academic Credit: Students may take the INT-300 internship course for academic credit during the academic year or summer. Visit the CLS Internship GrinnellShare page for more information.

Summer Internship Grants: Currently enrolled full-time first-, second-, and third-year students in good academic standing are eligible to apply for grants through the CLS to offset the costs of an 8- to 10-week full-time summer internship. Students must have their internship secured at the time of application, meaning you must have your internship confirmed by your internship supervisor.

Off-Campus Study: There are many off-campus study programs that now offer internship components, including Grinnell-in-London. Contact OCS for more information on how to identify these programs.