GETTING STARTED

The University of Nebraska at Kearney and the Department of Criminal Justice considers an internship a career enhancing experience. Internships integrate academic studies with work in a practical arena. In addition to bridging the gap between formal schooling and work, they often function as a launching pad for careers.

Arguably, all students should take advantage of the opportunity to complete an internship. However, before jumping into this decision, there are several things that must be understood—namely—internship eligibility, finding and applying for an internship, and earning academic credit. A student completing an internship will also have academic and professional responsibilities that must be met. It is also important to understand how the Internship Coordinator grades the internship for credit.

INTERNSHIP ELIGIBILITY & ACADEMIC CREDIT

All Criminal Justice students seeking internships in Criminal Justice (CJUS 475) are eligible for an internship if they have completed 9 hours in Criminal Justice and have the permission of the instructor and the department chair. Most eligible students will be a junior or a senior in good academic standing. One may receive either six or nine CJUS 475 credits. A maximum of three CJUS 475 credits can be applied toward the credits needed for the Criminal Justice core requirements. The remaining credits will be counted as unrestricted electives for graduation, but will not counted towards Criminal Justice coursework.

FINDING & APPLYING FOR AN INTERNSHIP

The primary responsibility for finding an internship belongs to the student. To begin, start by thinking about the type of experience and career you are interested in pursuing. Contact the internship coordinator for possible internship sites, or you may also want to visit a few websites that list internships, like http://www.internships.com. You might also be successful in doing an Internet search for internships and whatever your area of interest might be. After doing this—whether you have found a site or not—you will want to speak with the Faculty Internship Coordinator, Dr. Danielle Neal.

The Internship Coordinator assists the sponsoring agency, the University, and most importantly, the students in locating the “right” opportunity; helps to clarify the internship application process; and assigns academic requirements. In addition to these duties, the faculty internship coordinator is a valuable resource for students seeking a career advancing internship—take advantage of this asset!!!
APPLYING FOR AN INTERNSHIP

Once the eligibility requirements are met and an internship site is identified, you will need to apply. Often different agencies have distinct applications and processes—do not be surprised by this. Some are quite lengthy, involve various tests, and are time consuming—but do not let this put you off. Approach the application process as if you were applying for your “dream job.” To expedite the process, you should have a cover letter, an updated resume, a copy of your transcript, and three letters of recommendation ready to go.

Writing a cover letter and developing a resume is often a tricky process, but fortunately, the Career Services Center, located in MSAB #140, can help. Seek their expertise if this is new for you. A copy of your transcript may be obtained from the Registrar. You may also find pertinent information on writing these documents on the Career Services website at http://www.unk.edu/offices/careerserv/. Another website that is exceedingly helpful in writing cover letters and resumes is Purdue’s Online Writing Lab’s websites, these may be found at http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/564/01/ and http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/723/01/. If you need additional assistance or have additional questions, please seek out the assistance of the Faculty Internship Coordinator or Career Services.

When securing letters of recommendation, first—do not procrastinate, and second—seek them from past employers and faculty who can attest to your professionalism. Additionally, allow at least two weeks for their writing. Ask for their return on a specific date. Provide to those writing the letters the name(s), address (es), and position description to which you are applying. Last, ask for a generic copy of the letter—one not addressed to a specific person or site. You can then use these in the event that your first choices prove unsuccessful without feeling like you are annoying anyone. You may also want to include your resume to assist the person writing the letter. Also make sure you send those who write you a letter of recommendation a thank you. Be prepared to follow up on the letters with a reminder phone call.

EARNING ACADEMIC CREDIT

Check with your academic advisor about integrating internship credits into your overall academic plan, but make sure you start early!

CJUS 475 credits are computed at the rate of one credit for approximately every forty-five hours worked. A student must enroll for a minimum of six credit hours to obtain internship credits. Students must also accumulate internship hours during the period in which they are enrolled for credit. In other words, if you have a summer internship and want to receive academic credit, you must register for summer session credit.

ACADEMIC RESPONSIBILITIES

INTERNSHIP JOURNAL

Interns are required to submit a journal outlining their observations and impressions during the internship. The journal should indicate your day-to-day experiences and highlight those events that made your internship noteworthy. Recording notes on a daily basis and then summarizing your experiences into a five to ten page journal is the recommended approach.

Make sure you assess your degree of personal growth as a result of the internship. Include how the internship affected your personal views, career goals, and perceptions of the component of the justice system in which you worked. In other words, did your opinions change for the better or worse, increase or decrease in intensity, as a result of your internship? For additional suggestions, please refer to the course syllabus.

ASSIGNED READINGS

Students are assigned readings that are theoretical in nature and purposely intended to stimulate critical examination of an issue area in Criminal Justice. The readings provide a framework from which students may assess the institution in which they are working. In addition,
the readings provide fertile ideas upon which to base your paper.

Generally speaking, one should expect to read three to four books for the first six credit hours enrolled, and an additional book for each additional three credit hours enrolled. There are exceptions to this, but normally students are not assigned more than five books to read.

**Research Paper**

Each intern is required to complete a research paper. In the paper students are required to integrate assigned reading. The research paper is designed to make the intern think about the issues raised in the assigned readings, and how those issues are addressed in their practical applications. The intern is expected to synthesize the ideas found in the readings with agency practices and personal perceptions. A research paper should examine the agency and its functions in a broad and detailed manner. The Faculty Internship Coordinator approves all paper topics and further information is available by speaking to the Faculty Internship Coordinator.

Acceptable papers must be typed, double spaced, proofread, spell checked, properly documented and in the standard letter fonts. Papers not meeting this form or in flagrant violation of the proper term paper formatting will be graded as a failure.

**Paper Length**

The length of the paper or project is based upon the number of credit hours taken. The minimum length is fifteen pages and the maximum length is twenty pages. For example, students enrolled for six credits are required to write a paper no less than 15 pages in length. Students enrolled for more credits are expected to have a greater breadth of experiences, and hence write more.

Each student, therefore, is required to submit both a journal and a paper. To clarify, the journal should be between five to ten pages, and the paper should not exceed twenty pages.

**Documentation of Papers**

There are several different styles for citation. You should use APA format as it is one of the easier styles and most used in our profession. Guides for this style of citation are available in most commercial and university bookstores, as well as online at Purdue's Online Writing Lab (OWL): [http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/](http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/).

**Professional Responsibilities**

An internship is an important first professional experience. Consequently, students are expected to conduct themselves in a professional manner, both in seeking an internship and during the course of the internship service. In accepting an internship, the student is agreeing to assist the sponsor to the best of his or her ability. The student’s conduct should reflect favorably upon the sponsor, upon the University of Nebraska at Kearney and upon the student personally. If relationship difficulties arise during the course of the internship, you should contact the Faculty Internship Coordinator for help in resolving the problem.

**Clothes/Appearance**

Your appearance and demeanor reflect upon your sponsoring agency, the University of Nebraska at Kearney, and yourself. The key is to dress and behave professionally for your job responsibilities. If you are in doubt regarding appropriate attire or behavior, it is best to discuss these issues with your sponsor prior to beginning your internship.

**Work Schedules & Responsibilities**

Establish a clear understanding with the sponsor about actual working hours, starting and ending dates, and holiday periods. This is especially important if you wish to be absent from work for University breaks. Clearly understand your assigned responsibilities and the delineated limits. This information should be in writing—at least one copy for the sponsor and one for the intern.

**Confidentiality**

You may be exposed to sensitive and confidential material. The utmost discretion is required when discussing information regarding
clients and activities of the sponsoring agency. You may be held legally liable for violations of agency confidentiality.

**GRADING**

Grading is done on the basis of Credit (C) – No Credit (NC). A Credit grading is the result of a satisfactory agency evaluation, satisfactory completion of an internship journal, and satisfactory completion of a special project or paper. A grade of "C" or better is necessary to receive credit for the course. A grade of "C-" or lower will result in no credit. The internship coordinator assigns the due date for the journal, the special project or paper, and the agency evaluation. Failure to complete the professional and academic requirements on time will result in an assignment of no credit. Please remember that both the practical/professional component of the internship and the academic portion of the internship are **EQUALLY** important.

**COORDINATOR CONTACT**

Interns are required to provide the coordinator with brief progress reports periodically during the internship. The student should contact the Faculty Internship Coordinator immediately if any difficulty arises concerning the expectations of the sponsor, working conditions, or coworker difficulties.

**WHAT TO DO NOW:**

- ✓ Determine if you are eligible for an internship (see Internship Eligibility and Academic Credit). You must be a junior or senior in good academic standing and have taken at least 9 hours in Criminal Justice.
- ✓ Brainstorm. Think seriously about what kind of an internship experience you are seeking and write your ideas down—if you have multiple ideas, that is ok. Next—
- ✓ Call, visit, or email, the Faculty Internship Coordinator, to learn more about possible internship sites that you might be interested in and to learn more about the application process. Before you see her—
- ✓ Write a cover letter and resume. If you have never done this before, the Career Services Center in MSAB #140, conducts workshops and has people and resources available to help you. You will also have to—
  ✓ Obtain a minimum of two to three letters of reference. They should be from college professors or past employers. Ask those who are in a good position to assess your professionalism. If you know the sites to which you are applying, supply the names and addresses to whose writing the letters.
  ✓ Make copies of all applications.
  ✓ Be prepared to follow-up applications and requests for letters of reference with phone calls.
  ✓ Be sure to send thank you notes to whoever interviews you and those who write your letters of recommendation.