Internships: University of California Center Sacramento

The University of California Center Sacramento is an academic, research and public-service program that serves the University of California system and, as such, UC Center draws its students from every UC campus. Most students are self-selected upper-level undergraduates interested in public policy and in exploring careers in public service. These students are adventurers, having made the decision to spend three months away from their home campuses and friends, and outside of their normal comfort zones. They are California’s future leaders, thinkers and innovators, and UC Center is dedicated to providing real-world experiences to help inspire and inform their career choices.

As a result, the heart of the Center’s academic program is an internship tailored to the needs of each student. An internship is a collaboration or partnership between the University of California and those agencies, organizations and individuals willing to host and mentor students. Students work with faculty and staff to secure internship placements that meet each student’s academic requirements and career goals.

The program is administered by UC Davis in collaboration with the UC Office of the President and on behalf of the 10-campus UC system.

To satisfy academic requirements, students work a minimum of 240 hours at their internships over the course of a 10-week or 11-week term. Internship hosts and supervisors are expected to provide students with substantive work. Students understand that they are not employees of the host organizations, nor should they expect any compensation or benefits from the hosts. The internship is part of an academic class (POL 192 A&B), and student participation in that class earns 10 units of academic credit from UC Davis. At the completion of the program, those credits transfer back to the home campuses of all non-Davis students.

The internship placement process begins immediately after a student is accepted into the UCCS program – usually more than a month before the start of the program. Once a student’s approved application is forwarded to UC Center from her/his home campus, that student receives a welcome email from the UCCS internship coordinator. In that email, the student is asked to schedule a telephone interview with the coordinator. That conversation begins the internship placement process.
**Goals and Placement Procedures**

- UC Center internships are tailored to the specific interests of each student.
- Each student participates in the program for one quarter only, so internships last no more than 11 weeks.
- Placement is the responsibility of students and occurs after UCCS staff members collaborate with students to explore policy areas and venues.
- Staff provides a list of potential placements that reflect the student’s interests.
- Students negotiate placements based on the list provided by staff.
- Because of this procedure, and because internships reflect the interests of individual students, there is no way to predict – term to term – where placements may occur. An agency may host an intern from September to December (fall quarter) but then not host an intern again until June (summer session).

**The Placement Process**

1. Student and UCCS internship coordinator meet to refine the student’s policy interests, determine the student’s preferred venue, and prepare the student for an internship interview.
2. Internship coordinator contacts potential placements to determine which offices of interest to the student are able to host an intern for the coming quarter.
3. Internship coordinator sends the student information on relevant internships (those that meet the student’s criteria and also have agreed to consider hosting for the coming quarter), including website URLs and supervisor’s name, email address and phone number for each placement.
4. Student sends each potential placement an introductory email, attaching his or her resume and requesting a convenient date and time for either a phone or in-person interview to explore the internship.
5. Student and host conduct an interview.
6. Host considers student’s suitability and, if acceptable, offers the student a placement.
7. Student accepts or declines the offer.
8. Student notifies internship coordinator that the placement has been made.

**Time commitment**

Interns are required to work 240 hours during the term – equal to about three, 8-hour days a week. With the exception of Thursdays, interns are free to work all day during every workday. On Thursdays, interns must attend a political-science seminar (POL 195) at UC Center, starting at noon and continuing through the end of the work day. Interns may report for work on Thursday mornings but must leave for UC Center no later than 11:45 a.m. Interns also must attend a second class (POL 192) on Wednesday, starting at 5:10 p.m.
Guidelines for Internship Hosts

- Interns should be treated as would any member of the staff
- Interns should be given a specific supervisor/mentor, and this supervisor should remain consistent throughout the internship
- Where possible, interns and supervisors should create a regular work schedule
- Interns may work weekends if necessary for special projects or events
- Interns should have adequate work space that includes a desk
- Interns may be asked to use their own computer
- If office space is limited, or if an internship supervisor/host works from home, arrangements may be made for UC Center to provide office space
- Interns must adhere to the office dress code

Student Responsibilities

- Maintain a professional demeanor at all times
- Be on time for work and for all meetings, events, hearings and other activities associated with their internships
- Complete all work assignments on deadline, or in a timely manner as determined by a supervisor
- Submit a weekly electronic journal to UC Center staff, summarizing her/his internship-related activity for the previous week
- Communicate concerns and/or problems to host supervisor in a timely manner
- Notify host supervisor and UC Center staff of any illness or reason the student cannot report for work

Internship Host Responsibilities

- Provide adequate work space
- Provide consistent supervision and mentoring
- Where practical, adhere to a regular work schedule
- Provide substantive work and adequate supervision (see below)
- Include interns in meetings both inside and outside the office, hearings at the Capitol and other events
- Communicate concerns and/or problems to the student and attempt to resolve those concerns with the student
- Communicate concerns and/or problems to UC Center staff in a timely manner
- Submit a brief evaluation of the intern’s performance to UC Center staff at the end of the quarter (form provided by UC Center)
What do we mean by “substantive work?”

Generally, “substantive work” means that interns spend most of their time on policy-related projects that will contribute to their academic and professional growth rather than performing merely clerical duties. Virtually any form of research is considered substantive, as is “shadowing” of key personnel. We also urge that interns be included in meetings where political strategy or policy issues are discussed, even though the student may be a “fly on the wall” rather than an active participant in the meeting. We understand that some time may be devoted to answering phones, sifting through emails or other clerical tasks, but we ask that no more than 20 percent of an intern’s time be spent on non-substantive work.