HAMLINE UNIVERSITY

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Making the Most of Your Internship Experience

Laying the Foundation

In many ways, an internship is like an independent study. Because the experience takes place outside of the classroom, you as a student have the opportunity to take charge of your learning by developing your own learning plan and assessing your progress along the way. Students who put significant time and energy into this process often find that they have a more meaningful and beneficial experience.

Internships fulfill the Liberal Education as Practice (LEAP) requirement of the Hamline plan, and the LEAP Learning Agreement (LLA) serves as a sort of "syllabus" or learning contract for your internship. In it, you outline where you will be working, who will be supervising you, what your responsibilities will be, as well as a learning plan for how you will achieve the LEAP Learning Outcomes. (The LLA is an online form that is available via the Internship section of the CDC website: www.hamline.edu/internships).

There are three learning outcomes that you must address through your internship experience. These learning outcomes are the same across all LEAP experiences. However, you have the opportunity to determine exactly how you will achieve these outcomes, and what evidence of learning you will produce for your faculty supervisor to demonstrate your learning in each of these areas. The three learning outcomes are as follows:

When completing a LEAP experience, students will be able to:

- **Apply learning from particular academic programs or disciplines to their LEAP experience**.
- **Integrate skills or capacities developed through education and experience into their LEAP experience**.
- **Reflect throughout the LEAP experience to develop personal insight, growth, and development, and build capacity for lifelong learning.**

The Learning Objectives section of the LLA is structured in a chart format to help you clearly define your learning plan for each outcome, as well as the artifacts of learning you plan to produce. Artifacts are the products or assignments you plan to complete throughout your internship that showcase your learning, reflection and growth (and give your faculty supervisor something tangible to grade). The LLA includes some prompting questions to help you articulate your plan, as well as a rubric that outlines the arc of learning for each learning outcome.

Keep in mind that this chart is a planning tool; you and your faculty and site supervisors have the opportunity to make changes to the plan as the internship progresses. Furthermore, you are not necessarily expected to achieve the capstone level for each learning outcome by the end of your internship. Rather, it may take several LEAP experiences across a student's academic career for them to attain the capstone level of learning.

Additional Tips for a Successful Experience

Starting off on the right foot

- Have a conversation with your site supervisor to make sure you clearly understand the expectations of you and what to do if you have questions or concerns. Ask for an orientation, organization tour and training if you haven't received it yet. Make sure your site supervisor knows your schedule (what days/times you will be working and when you will begin/end the internship) as well as when you need to turn in your internship paperwork (LLA, midterm and final evaluation).

- Schedule regular meetings with your faculty supervisor to discuss your activities and review the progress you are making on your learning objectives. If you cannot meet in person, plan to keep in touch regularly via phone or e-mail.

During your internship

- Observe the organizational culture and do your best to fit-in. How do people dress? Do they take breaks? Are they chatty or do they keep to themselves? When and where do they eat lunch?

- It goes without saying, but it's important to work hard at your internship. Working hard also means not refusing or complaining about any assignments that come your way, no matter how menial they may seem.

- Seek out extra work and new projects as appropriate. Show your willingness to go beyond what's on the job description for your internship by making a great impression while sharpening your skills.

- Maintain a positive, eager-to-learn attitude. Ask questions. Show that you want to master the work and get to know the company.

- Develop your skills. Learn unfamiliar software programs. Try projects that help you to hone skills you've never used or don't use often.

- Be creative and bring your ideas to the table. Show that you can learn, but also that you can add value.

- Track your contributions and accomplishments. Be sure to keep a record of all the ways you've contributed during your internship. These will be helpful for your resume and future interviews.

Wrapping-up

- Schedule a final meeting with your site supervisor to review your experience and thank them for their time. Ask if they would be willing to serve as a reference for you in the future, and be sure to get their business card. Follow-up with a written note or letter thanking them for their time and investment in you as a new professional.

- Schedule a final meeting with your faculty supervisor to review your experience and turn in any final assignments. Reflect on what you learned about yourself and talk about next steps in your career planning process.

- Complete the student site evaluation, which will be sent to you via email toward the end of your internship, to share your feedback about your internship site with other students.

- Schedule a meeting with a career counselor for assistance with incorporating your internship into your resume. Discuss what you learned about yourself and next steps in your career planning process (future internships, academic plans, job search, grad school, etc.)