

PLANNING INTERNSHIP PROGRAM



GOAL: A MEANINGFUL INTERNSHIP EXPERIENCE

Planning is one of several undergraduate study programs in the Department of Environmental Studies and Planning. The Planning curriculum attempts to prepare students for entry level professional planning positions or for graduate studies in planning or other fields. The skills taught in the program are those primarily of the planning generalist, although students may develop individual specialties through additional course work in planning and in other departments on campus. The program is practical in orientation and attempts to maintain a close association with professional planning practice. A meaningful internship experience is viewed as an essential component of a planning student's education and training.

PURPOSE OF THE PLANNING INTERNSHIP

The primary purpose of an internship is to provide a planning student with a learning experience in a professional practice setting. It is hoped that internships will give students the types of experiences and perspectives not possible in the classroom and workshop. These will assist students in making important career decisions. Internships also will provide students with opportunities to apply knowledge and skills acquired on campus in actual practice situations, and to learn from personal observation and synthesis, and direct participation in problem-solving activities.

We believe that internships are mutually beneficial arrangements; students gain first-hand practical experience in organizations, and agencies or firms gain the assistance necessary to carry out essential studies, projects, or programs which otherwise might take a larger amount of time to complete by existing staff, or might never be undertaken. Cooperating agencies or firms also are able to contribute substantially to the development of future planning professionals, and have the opportunity to observe and become acquainted with some especially capable individuals.

PLACEMENT OF PLANNING INTERNS

To qualify for an internship experience, a student must have senior standing and must have completed all junior level required planning coursework. The student must also be in good academic standing with the University and the Department of Environmental Studies and Planning (not on probation). These policies will be strictly followed to assure that only sufficiently knowledgeable and skilled students will be placed in participating agencies and firms. The planning internship coordinators, Steve Orlick or Tom Jacobson must verify the qualifications of a student before any placement is approved.

Internship opportunities initially may be arranged by the planning internship coordinators (or SSU Career Development Center), and agency or firm representatives. Students may make their own arrangements directly, but they must first consult with the planning internship coordinator to insure that internship policies and individual responsibilities are understood (see responsibilities below). All arrangements, including the *Internship Agreement* form with appropriate signatures, should be completed before the semester (or school vacation period) in which the internship is to take place, and in no case later than the end of the first week of the semester (or vacation period). It is preferred that planning interns work under the immediate supervision of a professional planner.

COMPENSATION FOR INTERNSHIP EXPERIENCE

Students may receive both pay and academic credit for their internship experiences. In order to satisfy the three (3) unit minimum requirement for the degree, a student is expected to work at least 135 hours (45 hours per unit). Students may earn a maximum of eight (8) units of ENSP 499 credit. Units may be earned in a single internship experience, or in multiple experiences. Academic credit will not be given after-the-fact, although a waiver of the internship requirement may be negotiated with the planning internship coordinator. For additional work beyond that for which a student has earned academic credit, the intern and agency supervisor should negotiate some mutually acceptance arrangements.

In the past, most planning internships have been paid. It has been our experience that a paid internship is the most rewarding for both the agency/firm and the planning student. As a practice matter, students with unpaid internships usually have the additional (and for them, necessary) time commitment of gainful employment elsewhere which may restrict their available time for both internships and other academic coursework. Agencies, on the other hand, may feel reluctant to give interns greater responsibilities and more challenging assignments if the interns are not being paid. In other words, both the intern and agency may take the internship experience more seriously if pay is involved, thus resulting in a better and more meaningful internship experience.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE AGENCY/FIRM SUPERVISOR

1. Interview with prospective intern.
2. Approve and sign the "Internship Agreement" form.
3. If necessary, request that the student sign up with the University for special insurance coverage (see "Liability and Insurance" discussion below).
4. Supervise the intern throughout the internship.
5. Contact the internship coordinator, Dr. Orlick, if problems or concerns arise.
6. Complete the "Supervisor's Evaluation" at the end of the term.
7. Discuss the intern's grade with the Coordinator.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE PLANNING COORDINATORS

1. Approve the student's eligibility for internship placement.
2. Approve the placement and sign the Internship Agreement form.
3. Maintain close and constant contact with the agency/firm supervisor and the intern.
4. If feasible, make one on-site visit during the term.
5. Evaluate the mid-term and final papers.
6. Discuss the intern's final grade with the supervisor and assign a letter grade.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE SSU PLANNING STUDENT INTERN

1. Contact the agency/firm and potential supervisor for placement.
2. Complete the *Internship Agreement* form and enroll in ENSP 499 for unit credit.
3. Adhere at all times to agency's/firm's policies and procedures.
4. Remember that the study not only represents him/herself, but also Sonoma State University and the Department of Environmental Studies and Planning. Professional quality work and effort are expected at all times.
5. Meet at least every four weeks with the planning internship coordinator to discuss experiences. A brief mid-term progress report shall be submitted in writing.
6. Submit a mid-term paper and typed final report at the end of the internship experience to the planning internship coordinator.

LIABILITY AND INSURANCE

A planning student intern is not covered by University insurance while working in a planning office. The agency or firm normally has insurance coverage that applies to everyone working in its office.

PARTICIPATING AGENCIES/FIRMS

SSU planning students in the past have been placed in a wide variety of public and private planning agencies and organizations. Most of these have been in the local service region of the University but others have been throughout California. In the past, SSU planning interns have been placed in more than twenty-five agencies and firms in Sonoma, Marin, Napa, Lake, Solano and Mendocino Counties. Any organization engaging in professional planning activities may participate in SSU's Planning Internship Program.

For more information, please contact:

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Dr. Tom Jacobson
Planning Internship Coordinator
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