

Introduction to Academic Internships

The overarching goal of the Community Engagement Center (CEC) is to facilitate campus and community partnerships that make a difference in the lives of our students and the Sacramento region. Thousands of Sacramento State students participate in Academic Internships with options at more than 1,000 different sites. An Academic Internship consists of on- or off-campus experiential learning activities designed to serve approved educational purposes by offering students experience in business, non-profit or government settings for academic credit.

The CEC can assist with:

- **Current Community Learning Agreements:** Publicizing current Community Learning Agreements (i.e., Academic Internship/Community Engaged Learning Site Agreements) on the CEC Connect database so Departments/Programs know what sites are currently available for Academic Internships.
- **New Community Learning Agreements:** Helping manage the process for securing a new Community Learning Agreement by coordinating the communication between Procurement and Contract Services at Sacramento State and the community partner – this process typically begins with a request issued by Departments/Programs through our website: www.csus.edu/cec
- **CEC Connect database:** Training students, Academic Internship Coordinators, and/or faculty who supervise Academic Interns on how to use CEC Connect, the database for placement of Academic Internship students and all mandated risk-management and liability paperwork.

Student-Centered Academic Internships

Intentionally planned and tied to pedagogy

As stand-alone courses, Academic Internships, like any other course in your curriculum, involve intentional planning, course-specific goals, and rigor. Students appreciate and benefit from a high-quality experience, providing them with clear expectations, ongoing feedback from both faculty and site supervisor, and valuable knowledge and skills they can use beyond graduation.

Sustainable over time

Academic Internships provide students with the highest quality experience when relationships with community partners are strong and sustained over time. This requires ongoing communication with community partners, and relationships that are established in a formal way, with a clear scope of work for the student and intentional pedagogical goals.

Fair and accessible

When we provide all students with access to opportunities and contacts where Academic Internships exist and/ or might be possible, everyone wins. More students get connected to a wider range of community partners, and community partners benefit from access to a larger pool of talented students.

Safe from harm for everyone involved

Students operate best when they feel they are safe and well supervised at a site. A student-centered Academic Internship provides a knowledgeable supervisor, protects students (and faculty) from harm, and offers protection against liability.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Credit-bearing or Non-credit bearing?

An Academic Internship is a unit-bearing, stand-alone course that formally integrates the student's academic study with practical experience in a cooperating organization. For every one unit of academic credit received, students are expected to work 45 hours. For example, a 3-unit internship requires 135 hours of work in the field. Those hours can include some in-class time if a faculty supervisor meets with students regularly to check in about the internship, and may, with the instructor's approval, include some time for reflective practice, such as journaling.

Academic Internship or Community-Engaged Learning?

Academic Internships differ from Community-Engaged Learning (aka Service Learning) because Academic Internships are stand-alone courses while Community-Engaged Learning is a teaching strategy involving specific pedagogical practices and is usually one component of a course. Obtaining approval for a Community-Engaged Learning course is handled through the Community Engagement Center.

Paid or Unpaid?

Academic internships can be paid or unpaid. Students may receive a set stipend, be paid by the hour, or may in some cases be completing an academic internship at their place of employment *if this is allowed by their department at Sacramento State*.

Required or Elective?

Some university Departments/Programs require students to do an internship; in other Departments/Programs, students have an option to pursue an internship for academic credit. In some cases, a student may complete an internship outside their department, for example through Interdisciplinary Studies, College Corps, or the Sacramento Semester program.

Student driven or Faculty driven?

It is the faculty member who determines if the internship will provide the appropriate learning opportunities for the student. Sometimes students look for internship opportunities at the Sac State Career Center, through the job posting site *HandShake*, or at a Career Fair. Students should be advised that if they find a site and are seeking academic credit, they should work with their faculty supervisor or internship coordinator to be sure a Community Learning Agreement is in place or work to secure such an agreement with the site.

OVERALL EXPECTATIONS FOR BOTH COMMUNITY PARTNERS AND FACULTY:

- Community partners and faculty will work together to identify a shared scope of work that is mutually beneficial. This scope of work may be individualized to the student or more generic in nature.
- Faculty and community partners will have open channels of communication for dealing with any questions or concerns that may arise during the student's internship.
- Academic Internship students will work the number of hours agreed upon by the community partner and faculty supervisor.
- Students, faculty, and community partners will adhere to university risk management and liability procedures, which can be found in CEC Connect, a database for placing and orienting students at Academic Internship sites. This includes:
 - Placing the student with the Community Partner in the CEC Connect database
 - Checking to see that each student has completed the online orientation in CEC Connect
- For record-keeping purposes, students are asked to keep track of their hours and both faculty and community partners are expected to review and sign off on time logs throughout the semester or at the end of the semester.