How to Advocate for and Protect Yourself as an Intern
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Undertaking an internship off campus is an exciting, if daunting, prospect. As you work towards practicing the liberal arts in a new context, please know that the Liberal Arts in Practice Center is here to help you pursue your work safely and professionally. Here are some ideas for you to consider throughout the process:

Great! You’ve Been Offered an Internship!

- Determine whether or not the internship is paid or unpaid.
  - If the internship is paid, please review the tax paperwork guidelines in the “You’re Starting a New Internship” section.
    - If paid, determine if you are Exempt or Non-Exempt. Most internships should be Non-Exempt, meaning you are entitled to overtime wages. Ask about the overtime policies at the organization and the pay schedule, before accepting the internship.
    - Some organizations may ask to pay you as an independent contractor. This means that they will not withhold any taxes from your payroll and you will be responsible for paying state and federal taxes on your wages, when you pay taxes in the spring. In general, interns should not be independent contractors and we do not recommend this payment arrangement.
  - If the internship is unpaid, make sure that the organization adheres to the FLSA guidelines. In short, nonprofit organizations can ask you to work without pay. If an organization, is for-profit, the organization:
    - Must provide training similar to that given in an educational environment and the internship experience is for the benefit of the intern. Most internships require you to register for credit, to fulfill these guidelines.
    - Must not displace regular employees, but works under the supervision of the existing staff.
    - Does not derive benefit from your activities.
    - Must not promise a job at the conclusion of the internship (although offers that occur naturally are acceptable)
    - Must notify you that you are not receiving wages for your time.
- Determine the scheduled hours and start date of the internship.
- Determine the name and contact information of your supervisor(s).
- Determine the policies for requesting time off and paid/unpaid breaks during the work day.
- Determine the nature of the work, through a written job description. Use this description throughout the internship, to ensure that both you and the organization are fulfilling the agreed upon job duties.
- Register for credit prior to the published deadlines, if you plan on pursuing credit.
You’re Starting a New Internship

- If your internship is paid, you will be asked to provide the following documentation:
  - Documents that Establish both Identity and Employment Authorization or
  - Documents that Establish Identity and Documents that Establish Employment Authorization
  - See the full list of acceptable documents on page 5 of the I-9 form.
  - Please note that these documents can only be accepted in person. The supervisor or human resources staff may make copies on sight, but you should never transmit copies of these documents electronically. Not only is it unusable to the organization, but it makes you sensitive to identity theft.
  - You will also be required to complete a W-4 form. Students who wish to minimize tax deductions can provide a 2016 W-4 form reflecting a marital status of Single with 1 allowance on Line 5. Note: Actual tax liability is determined when filing 2016 income tax forms and is based on total taxable income for the year. Reducing payroll deductions will not affect your actual tax liability. Tax due, if any, would be paid with 2016 tax returns.
    - Note: This option does not apply to students in F-1 or J-1 visa status.
    - Gail Pateros in Payroll is happy to work with F-1 and J-1 visa holders for assistance with tax forms.

- If you work with sensitive populations or classified information, you may be subject to background checks prior to the first day of work. Requirements vary for background checks, but you may be asked to submit:
  - Picture ID or other identity documents.
  - Fingerprints
  - Social Security Number/Card
  - Please note that these documents can only be accepted in person. The supervisor or human resources staff may make copies on sight, but you should never transmit copies of these documents electronically. Not only is it unusable to the organization, but it makes you sensitive to identity theft.

You’re Participating in an Internship

- If your internship is paid and you are paid hourly, determine the process for accounting for your time. This may be a physical or electronic time sheet or regular communication via email. There should be a written documentation of some sort for your hours, so that both you and your employer are aware of your hours spent on task.
- If you are paid via stipend or other non-hourly wage, then you should discuss with your supervisor the anticipated hours per week for your schedule, prior to starting your internship.
- Continue to protect your identity documents and your contact information. Make sure that you know which employees have access to the human resources files (identity
documents, time sheets, etc.) and to your contact information (cell, email address, home address, etc.).

- Understand the differences between acceptable and unacceptable tasks. Even if your internship is unpaid and you are receiving academic credit, you should be deriving educational and professional benefit from your work. At every organization, interns and regular employees may need to complete menial tasks. However, if you are regularly assigned tasks outside of your job description, we recommend checking in with your supervisor.
- Complete the requirements of your internship, if you are registered for credit. Please remember that credit is awarded based on the reflection you exhibit during the internship, as well as the hours on site.

After Your Internship

- If your internship is paid, your organization is responsible for sending tax documents to you, typically in January or February. Please ensure that you notify your organization has your current mailing address. If you do not receive tax documents from them by early February, it is your responsibility to follow up.
- It is also your responsibility to file for taxes for each year. Taxes are due in mid-April each year. Please consult the IRS for each tax year's due date.