

The word “internship” might conjure up images of spending the whole day getting coffee and running errands.

Or if you’re the intern of my fave “Real Housewife of New York” Sonja Morgan, your internship may be spent checking her social media accounts for the “haters” along with plunging the toilet.

The **Truth**



About Internships

By Laura Hayes

“Students really should be gaining hands-on, relevant industry experience,” said Kristen Brannen, a career services specialist with Penn State Harrisburg’s Career Services Office.

That could mean independent work, but Brannen said students should participate in a way that hones their professional skills and industry knowledge. >>

Are internships really needed?

Yes.

Brannen said employers look for internships or other relevant experience. Plus, it's a way to figure out whether that field or major is really what you want to do with your life.

"They like to see students that are taking an opportunity to work under an employer in their related industry to apply themselves and apply those professional skills and that industry knowledge," she said.

Prioritize what's important

There's a variety of internships out there — some offer credits, some are paid, some last for the summer.

"Because so many organizations offer different opportunities, it really depends what the student is willing to do," Brannen said.

Although students might like to get college credits for their internship, not all programs at Penn State have an internship requirement where you can get college credits.

The most popular internship is a summer internship because the employer could have the intern full-time, though internships are offered year round.

Brannen said right now the trend is to offer paid internships because companies know students are looking to apply their knowledge and not run coffee.

But unpaid internships in social services or government agencies that may not have the funds are still out there.

"We just tell students, you really need to prioritize what's important for you," Brannen said.

Hit the web

Websites like Indeed or Nittany Lion Careers — a Penn State database where any employer or organizations can post opportunities — are a good places to look for internship opportunities. Penn State staff goes through an approval process with employers on Nittany Lion Careers to make sure the internships are legit and quality.

But Brannen encourages students to go beyond that and check out Glassdoor, which does have job postings along with reviews from past and current employees.

What should you ask?

Confirm the logistics — what are the expectations, time commitment, requirements, assignments.

Ask if the internship may lead to a job at the company because some companies use internships as a feeding program to teach a future employee about the company and industry.

Network, network, network

"Pursuing employment and navigating into different careers, that doesn't end at your first job. That's a lifelong thing," Brannen said.

Building a network is important professionally, she said. Make a profile on LinkedIn and check out Penn State's mentoring program called LionLink, Brannen advises. The internet isn't the only way to find opportunities and network with professionals in your field.

Check with friends and family who may have connections to opportunities in your field, she said.

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CAREER SERVICES SPECIALIST WITH PENN STATE
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