

How to Obtain an Internship

In the field of planning, an internship is one of the best ways to begin your professional career. Internships often lead to long-term jobs. They provide professional experience that boost your resume and help you learn more about the type of jobs you might wish to pursue or avoid in your career. The ideal time to begin looking for an internship is during your junior year. Ideally, you should seek an internship during the summer between your junior and senior years, but you can certainly do an internship earlier (speak to an advisor first).

These guidelines will help you successfully find an internship:

1. Start the process of searching early

Do not assume you can get an internship just a few weeks before a semester begins. Finding an internship can sometimes take 3 – 6 months.

2. Talk to your professors

Faculty have many connections in the professional community and can connect you if you let them know you are looking for an internship.

3. Have a resume, cover letter, and business card prepared


Make sure that your materials have been proofread and are free of grammar and/or formatting errors. Business cards can be passed out at professional networking events along with your resume and cover letter.

4. Get engaged in professional organizations

The American Planning Association, the Palm Beach Planning Congress, the Urban Land Institute, and the Congress for the New Urbanism or others that relate to your professional interests. Most, if not all, of these organizations offer discounted or free memberships to students. However, keep in mind that joining is not enough. It is imperative to attend events armed with resumes, cover letters and business cards. You must take the initiative to introduce yourself to professionals at these events and tell them that you are looking for an internship. Everyone at these events was in your same boat at one point so most people are usually helpful once you talk to them.

Useful Websites:

1. <http://www.floridaplanning.org/>
2. <http://www.floridaplanning.org/apa-fl-sections/broward/>
3. <http://www.floridaplanning.org/apa-fl-sections/treasure-coast/>
4. <http://www.floridaplanning.org/apa-fl-sections/gold-coast/>
5. <http://www.pbcplanningcongress.org/>
6. <http://seflorida.uli.org/>
7. <http://cnuflorida.org/>

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5. Call planning agencies and private sector consulting firms and ask to speak to a professional planner that works in a specialty area that you have interest in (ie. economic development, urban design, transportation planning, affordable housing, land use planning, environmental planning, transit-oriented development, etc.). Introduce yourself and let them know you are interested in learning more about professional practice and are looking for an internship. Ask to meet with them in person for coffee or lunch or ask to visit their office so you can see first-hand some of the projects they are working on. Most cities, towns, and counties have planning departments. You should do an Internet search for the municipality and “urban planning department.” Once you find the website, search for a staff directory if you can find one and a planner directly. Many cities do not have staff directories so you might need to call a main number and ask to speak to a planner. Calling is always better than cold emails.

For example, here is a link to the City of Boca Raton’s Development Services office:

<http://www.ci.boca-raton.fl.us/pages/development-services/contact-information>

They do not list individual staff members so you would need to call the main number and ask to speak to a planner.

Ft. Lauderdale is similar: <http://www.fortlauderdale.gov/departments/sustainable-development/urban-design-and-planning>

You should also call the Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs). Here are links to the MPOs in the region’s staff directory:

<http://www.browardmpo.org/about-us/staff>

<http://www.palmbeachmpo.org/contact/staff-directory>

<http://miamidademppo.org/contact-us.asp>

There are also many private sector consultants. An Internet search for “urban planning consulting firm, South Florida/Palm Beach County/Broward County/Miami” brings up lots of leads.

6. Be sure to check out the weekly **School of Urban Planning Newsletter** for internship opportunities and additional information!
Contact Alejandra Quintero at Mquinte5@fau.edu to be added to the contact list.
7. If you are stuck, ask a professor or adviser for help. However, if you haven’t done steps 1-6 above, do not expect that a professor or advisor will do this for you. Remember, it’s your career so you need to be proactive in finding a good internship. Good luck!