



Cal Externship Program – Sponsor Tips as you Structure your Externship

■ How to Structure an Externship

Key Elements in Planning Successful Externships

- Seek student input concerning career objectives, interests, and goals for the visit
- Prepare a written schedule to provide structure and clarify time commitments
- Arrange informational interviews with colleagues for the student to learn about other areas of the organization and to obtain a variety of career perspectives
- Assign a short-term project for visits lasting longer than two days
- Arrange a tour of the organization

Please keep in mind that most students participate in the Externship Program to learn more about a specific career and the options available within a career field. They want to know what your workday and work environment is like. Many students are also seeking advice on strategies for obtaining a job in the field or information about the background and experience needed to enter the field.

■ Four Possible Approaches to Structuring an Externship:

Shadowing

In some professions, e.g. medicine or journalism, having the student observe a typical day at work provides a great deal of information and insight. Answering questions, providing commentary throughout the day, and meeting with the student to discuss your field at the beginning and/or end of the day may be sufficient.

Observing Activities and Meeting with Colleagues

In many fields, particularly those in which the sponsor deals with confidential information or spends most of the day doing research or writing, the sponsor may wish to develop an agenda of activities for the student. It is helpful to find out the student's interests in advance and then arrange an appropriate schedule. The schedule might include: 1) meeting with the sponsor to gain an overview of the organization and the career field 2) a tour of the facility 3) individual appointments with colleagues at different levels and/or performing different functions in the organization 4) observing activities, such as a meeting, a public hearing, a sales call, or court proceedings.

Involving Colleagues in Hosting

If hosting the student is delegated to other staff, it is helpful for the sponsor to meet with the student at some point – at lunch, for example. It is also helpful to ensure in advance that a schedule of appointments and activities have been planned for the student.

Hands-On Experience

Even a small amount of career-related, hands-on experience, when combined with the observation and activities described above, can be valuable to a student. A small project, in which the student gathers or analyzes information, can help the student learn something about the organization or field.