

CAREER DEVELOPMENT CENTER

Phone 413-538-2080 / Fax 413-538-2081 / Email CDC@mtholyoke.edu
www.mtholyoke.edu/cdc

Make the Most of Your Internship/Research Opportunity

Congratulations on securing an internship/research opportunity! Making the most of this opportunity requires careful planning, dedication, and a good attitude. This handout provides general strategies for best preparing for your upcoming opportunity as well as for documenting your progress. It is important to also recognize that each opportunity will require different sensitivities and strategies to effectively navigate and respond to different environments, communities, and organizational structures. These suggestions have been carefully developed for you by CDC advisors and feedback from former Mount Holyoke interns and researchers.

Before the Internship

- Contact former and current interns from the Intern Network who are in your geographic or professional area. Set a date to get together or talk before or during your project
- Get a journal to keep all of your research or reflective notes on your experience in one place
- Research logistics before your arrival (transportation, directions, housing, budget, daily planner, appropriate dress). Do a trial run to your internship site and time how long your commute might take. Update your wardrobe if necessary
- Develop a budget and keep a log of your weekly expenses to stay on track throughout your project
- Get a copy of your job/project description from your supervisor
- Research the host organization (mission, staff, history, annual report)
- Research the industry/profession (see LyonNet online resources: Spotlight on Careers, Vault Career Insider, Idealist.org; talk with former interns/researchers and alumnae)
- Consider cultural differences in your host community (this applies to domestic and international internships)
- Explore effective methodologies if you are conducting a research project or independent work
- Brush up on your skills prior to your arrival (language, computer, technical)

During the Internship

- Discuss your job description, summer learning goals and future career aspirations with your supervisor. The more defined your learning goals are, the more likely it is that you will have direction and get what you want from the internship
- Keep a daily journal or unofficial record of your assignments (for your eyes only), how you accomplished them, and what you learned. This will be very useful to assess (during and after) what you have learned from your experience. It may also inform future projects, independent study, your senior thesis, and provide general reflections on your career and professional development
- Maintain a contacts notebook for keeping track of individuals (co-workers, friends, alumnae, professionals) with whom you engage with so that you can reference them in the future if needed. This will be significant for future networking.
- Seek mentorship from others (peers, supervisor, staff, faculty, former interns, and MHC alumnae)
- Engross yourself in organizational material or information pertinent to your current projects. Be aware of new things that the company is trying to achieve and see if there is a way that you can be of assistance
- Get feedback from your supervisor and peers and take interest in projects around you. This will help you understand how you are doing, and your interest might help you attain similar jobs, contacts, or internship offers in the future

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- Ask your supervisor/mentor if you could sit in on meetings, attend a conference, or engage in other learning opportunities within your organization or industry
- Engage in new or unique opportunities that push your comfort zone (cultural outing, exercise, social networking, community service or events)
- Initiate and engage in conversations! This includes conversations with your peers, mentors, professionals, and MHC alumnae. Take initiative and try to learn as much about these people as possible, including their profession and pathway. Ask someone out for lunch or coffee. Talk with them about your interests and aspirations. Conduct a formal or informal informational interview – your conversation may lead to a valuable mentorship! See the CDC Fellows Guide for informational questions prompts for good discussion.
- Initiate an independent study project for MHC credit and lay the foundation for your project during your internship/research project
- Explore ideas for your senior thesis
- Self reflection is an important part of your internship experience. Halfway through the internship, you should be able to analyze whether you are attaining your goals, or if they have changed. Reference your journal. Be proactive about your learning and take the necessary steps and seek input from others to make your experience better. Also feel free to talk to your supervisor and CDC advisors about your concerns or opinions. Complete the Mid-Project Self-Evaluation Form (found in CDC Fellows Guide)
- Utilize the Career Development Center (413) 538-2080 and the McCulloch Center for Global Initiatives (413) 538-2072 which are open during the summer and are available at any time for advice or questions

After the Internship

- Talk to your supervisor about what you have achieved. Seek feedback on your performance and areas that could enhance your skills and professional development. If possible, make a portfolio of the work you did so that you have concrete examples.
- Send a thank you letter to your supervisor, other mentors, alumnae, and people at the organization who made a difference to your overall experience. Try to stay in touch with these contacts and outside mentors on a regular basis. This will ensure your name does not fade away it will encourage their interest in your development. It will also help you maintain your network, gain references, and possible job or internship leads for the future.
- Register for the fall 2 credit post-internship/research course Coll 211 “Curriculum to Career: Tying it all Together”
- Register and present your summer experience at the fall LEAP Symposium
- Share your experience with your advisors, faculty, and participate in a panel or make an in-class presentation
- Maximize your J-term by conducting research, mentorship, job shadow experiences, or informational interviews
- Initiate a short-term (½ day to a week) job shadowing opportunity
- Submit your findings for publication (professional journal, MHC News, faculty)
- Update your resume to reflect your most recent summer opportunity; get feedback from the CDC
- Seek ideas from peers and advisors on the best ways to integrate your personal, professional and academic areas of interests into your remaining MHC experience and your post-graduation plans