

THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY  
Washington Semester Programs  
Spring 2007  
ECONOMIC POLICY INTERNSHIP

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I. Course Objectives:

The internship program is designed to provide you with a career related and on-the-job experience in a professional office environment. The internship allows you the chance to get out in the field and experience Washington first-hand. It will not only provide you with an introduction to the world of economic policy from a practitioner's vantage, but it will also assist you as you consider future career paths and options.

Through written assignments, group discussion sessions, and practical exercises, the academic component of the internship course complements the experience of the internship, helping you to evaluate and reflect on your work experience so as to better prepare you for the world of work in the future. At the end of the internship, it is expected that you will not only better understand the world of work in economic policy in Washington, but that you will better understand your potential place in that world.

II. Researching and Locating Your Internship:

The Washington Semester Program and the Economic Policy faculty have made great efforts in identifying exciting internships in economic policy throughout the greater Washington, D.C. area. The ultimate responsibility for securing the internship, however, rests with you. I will, however, help in every way I can.

There are a number of resources that can help you during this process. The Washington Semester Program office has evaluations of internship experiences by former students and reference materials such as The Washington Information Directory and the Congressional Staff Directory. Also, our library has a number of reference guides on U.S. government offices and the multitude of organizations based in Washington.

Presumably, you have been working over the last few months to identify internships that are attractive to you, and many of you have already begun making contacts. Some of you will arrive in Washington with internships in-hand. For those of you who will be spending the first few weeks of the semester securing the internship, the following guidance will be helpful in your internship search.

We have provided you with a general description of the organizations, functions, and responsibilities of the internships that we have identified. However, if you are still

not sure the precise functions of the organizations, please do some additional research to determine if the internship appears to be a good match. Keep in mind, however, that **you must begin working at your internship and submit your internship contracts to me by Wednesday, January 31, 2007.**

### The Interview:

You should plan on at least three interviews for internships that sound attractive to you to ensure that you have considered all possible options. The interview process itself can be a great learning experience. Keep in mind that this interview process will determine how you will be spending a large bulk of your time in Washington, and for many of you, represents your first substantive job experience in a professional field. You should take the process seriously, as you would any job search and interview process.

Find out as much as possible about these organizations and the specific work assignments you would receive. Be prepared to submit both a resume and writing sample. Be sure to have your resume and writing samples edited for typos or bad grammar. Print your resume on light good quality paper and have extra copies with you in the event that more than one person interview you.

Prepare yourself for the typical interview questions. Why does this internship interest you? How does it fit in with your short, medium and long-term goals? What have you heard about the organization? What experiences have you had that make you a good candidate for the internship?

It will be expected that you will ask questions as well: What will the duties and responsibilities of the intern be? Who will the immediate supervisor be and what is her/his role in the organization? In what types of short/medium and longer-term projects would you be involved? Also, it may be appropriate to ask specific questions such as "Who are the principal clients of the institution?" or "What is the biggest accomplishment of the institution?"

If you have special skills such as languages or advanced computer proficiency, be sure to bring these forward. It makes sense to familiarize yourself early in the seminar with the various information tools available to economic policy so that you are in a better position not just to complete your seminar work but also to make you a stronger asset for your internship.

Do not ignore the logistics of the interviewing process. Find out the exact spelling and pronunciation of the name of the person you are interviewed with. A call to the receptionist, secretary or other administrative person in the organization is a simple way to get this information. Make sure you know the exact time of the interview and allow plenty of time to find the office. Arrive a little early for the interview; being late is another way to start off on the wrong foot. If possible, try out the public transport system so that you feel comfortable on the day of your interview.

On the day of the interview, be sure to look your professional best. In these circumstances, there is no such thing as over dressing (save a tux or a gown). Be enthusiastic and attentive – take your cues from the interviewer about how the conversation will proceed. If you sense a lull in the conversation or if the interviewer appears to have run out of things to ask you, jump in: "Perhaps I could ask a few questions of you?" Be clear that you are available on Thursdays and Fridays only.

Upon leaving the interview, be sure to thank the interviewer for taking the time to speak with you, and try to establish the time frame for making a decision and when and how you should contact them to find out the decision. On occasion, the office may immediately offer you a position. If you are offered a position, explain that you are interviewing with three or four organizations and will contact them at the end of the process (within a week at most).

#### Making a Decision and Notifying the Organization:

Upon completion of the interview process, make a prompt decision based on which organization most appeals to you. Think about the long-term returns, not just shorter-term benefits. You are strongly encouraged to select an internship which will expose you to substantive analysis and research as opposed to routine duties. This will ultimately prove more challenging and rewarding to you as you consider your future. Once you have made a choice, notify every office you have previously contacted of your decision. DO NOT leave any office supervisors wondering about your intentions – call them back and tell them that you have accepted a position elsewhere. Tie up all loose ends before moving on to the actual work experience.

#### Beginning the Internship:

On your first day, try to arrange time with your supervisor (who may be different from the person you interviewed with) to review your responsibilities, go over any initial questions you have, and remind your supervisor of your schedule. This is also the time to review your responsibilities to the program, present your contract and explain to your supervisor and explain what it represents. Also indicate to the supervisor that he or she will be asked to prepare an evaluation at the end of the semester.

### III. Internship Course Responsibilities

The academic component of the internship has three related sets of activities: (1) discussions with the faculty supervisor and other students on internships and what you are learning from them, including a short presentation; (2) two short papers (2-5 pages long (double-spaced) ); (3) one interview presentation. You are to interview someone whose job you are interested in getting in the near or distant future. This is intended as a career-exploring exercise. Three major types of questions to be addressed are: 1) how

did she/he get the job; 2) what does the job entail (pros and cons, etc.); and 3) how can you get the job (career advice)?

### Discussions with Colleagues and Faculty Supervisor

We will meet approximately seven times through the semester to discuss internships, share experiences and make a short presentation on your internship. I will also talk with you individually throughout the semester to see how things are going. Your participation in these sessions and your presentation are worth 20% of your final grade.

### Internship Papers

You will prepare two papers related to your internship. The first, which will be due on **Wednesday, February 28**, will describe your experience in finding an internship as well as organization in which you are working in. You need to outline the goals, objectives and long term prospects of the office, and how these relate to the broader issues of economic policy. It is worth 20% of your final grade.

The second paper, which is due on **Wednesday, April 25**, is an evaluation of your internship experience. This paper should address what you have learned from the internship experience, how the internship has influenced your views about future studies and careers, and other relevant observations you have on the experience. This paper is worth 20% of the final grade.

### Discussion with Supervisor and Evaluation

You should meet with your supervisor at least three times over the semester to discuss your performance, any problems and to invite constructive criticism. This will help your supervisor to begin thinking about the evaluation early in the process so that when the evaluation form is distributed, he/she is in a better position to complete it promptly with all necessary information.

I will be contacting your office around the mid-term to talk with your supervisors. This is primarily to establish contact and to ensure things are progressing well. If at any time you sense they are not, you should bring it to my attention. It will be my role to act as liaison and trouble-shooter in cases of confusion or misunderstanding. Such cases are fortunately rare, but do not hesitate to speak if your duties are unclear and the terms of your contract are not being met.

### Final Grades

Final grades will be based on the following criteria:

Supervisors Evaluation: 40%

Internship Papers: 40%  
Class Participation: 10%  
Interview Presentation: 10%

Class Schedule:

- Session 1: “Job Search Strategies”  
4:00 p.m., Tuesday, January 16, Federal 173
- Session 2: Individual Appointments on cover letter, resume, and other  
internship search related issues.  
4:00 p.m., Wednesday, January 17, Federal 173
- Session 3: Individual Appointments (Con’t)  
4:00 p.m., Wednesday, January 24, Federal 173
- Session 4: How to Make the Most of Your Internship  
4:00 p.m., Wednesday, January 31, Federal 173  
**(\*Internship Contracts Due)**
- Session 5: Internship Discussion Session  
4:00 p.m., Wednesday, February 28, Federal 173  
(First Paper Due)
- Session 6: Internship Discussion Session  
4:00 p.m., Wednesday, March 28, Federal 173
- Session 7: Internship Discussion Session  
4:00 p.m., Wednesday, April 25, Federal 173  
Presentation  
**(\*Internship Evaluation Due**  
Second Paper Due)

This schedule is subject to change. Attendance, punctuality, and participation at these meetings are mandatory.