

# Student desire a must in internships

By Rachel Vance

Cathy Madigan is one of the lucky ones. She found a faculty member who believed strongly enough in student internships to announce one to his classes.

But, she got caught in the cross-fire of intra-division confusion.

After hearing about the legislative fellowship, Cathy approached the advisor in her division, Public Affairs. But they were not familiar with the program and told Cathy to call the name listed on the brochure for more information.

She made the call, completed the application, and, as instructed, returned it to her division advisor.

Cathy was then informed that it should be processed through Career Planning, so she took the application to them.

Career Planning, however, had no information on the program, so they sent it back to Public Affairs.

It was eventually processed and sent to the appropriate persons in the Pennsylvania House of Representatives. They reviewed her application and awarded Cathy the prestigious fellowship.

Cathy followed the standard procedure, but it almost did not work for her. Because of her persistence, however, she won the fellowship which earn her nine credits as well as giving her an opportunity to apply classroom theory to a real-life situation.

According to promotional literature, Capitol Campus encourages internships, but, in reality, only four of the five divisions offer them to students. The divisions which offer internships include humanities, public affairs, business administration and behavioral science and education.

While these strongly structured internships are good for the students in those programs, the non-required internships have one thing in common -- the rely on the student to initiate them.

The Humanities division focuses on finding an internship to fit the learning needs and career choices of the individual student. According to Eton Churchill, coordinator of the Multi-Media option in the Humanities division, once a student determines career goals and makes his or her desires known, a search is initiated to match the internship with the student.

"Students have a responsibility to work closely with their advisors," Churchill said. "They are obligated to let their advisors know what they want."

Myra Fink, a humanities student, tried to do just that. She requested an internship as advertising coordinator for the Capitol Times, feeling that the experience would assist her career goal of public relations. But, although she could assume the position, she would only be given course credit if she were a business administration student.

"When I discussed it with the business administration advisors, they suggested I attend main campus for my education," Fink said. "My husband and two children weren't pleased by the suggestion."

Most public affairs internships are also initiated by students, according to Lloyd Woodruff, associate professor of public administration, but these students are referred to Career Planning to apply for The Capitol Semester program organized by Peggy O'Hara, coordinator of Career Planning.

"We don't have a concentrated program to find internships for these students," said Woodruff. "We offer guidance but don't have any guaranteed slots."

The Capitol Semester program is a new project that attempts to centralize all state-government internship applications. The Career Planning office serves as the campus coordinators at Capitol. They provide the applications, process them and forward them to the state for consideration. According to O'Hara, the state reviews the applications for potential internships and contacts the students for interviews in various state agencies.

"The benefit of this type of program is that it crosses all majors," O'Hara said. But, she added, the problem is getting the necessary information to the students.

"We send information on these internships to the divisions and faculty, then we post the announcements on bulletin boards. I don't know exactly how the faculty announces them to the students," O'Hara said. "We get students applying for these internships who haven't checked with their advisors to see if they can get credit for them."

"The internship program provides an opportunity for students to build or strengthen their resumes," O'Hara said, "and students who take advantage of them are usually the ones called in for interviews and usually get the jobs."

The concept of the passive, student-initiated internship is exactly what the National Society of Internships and Experiential Education (NSIEE) is trying to change. The 900-member organization

wants colleges and universities to strengthen and expand programs so that an internship is available to every student.

The problem with relying on students to initiate the internship is that the student may have an advisor who doesn't feel strongly about the benefits, and some students don't even find out about the program until it is too late, offered Jim Case, president of NSIEE. "Many students who are not doing well in a cognitive classroom situation would actually experience better learning in an alternative program. The student-initiated program often doesn't reach the person it would benefit most."

Kenneth P. Mortimer, executive assistant to the president of the Pennsylvania State University, recently chaired The Study Group on Conditions of Excellence in American Higher Education, and some of the findings support NSIEE's claims.

Published in "The Chronicle of Higher Education," the study warns that "the college curriculum has become excessively vocational in its orientation, and the bachelor degree has lost its potential to foster the shared values and knowledge that bind us together as a society."

The study urges more emphasis on building personal values such as self-confidence, persistence, social responsibility, leadership, empathy and understanding of cultural and intellectual differences.

To this end, the study recommends that faculty "encourage internships and other forms of carefully monitored experiential

learning." To the students, the study says "make sure that you take at least one independent study course and one internship during your college career, and that these experiences involve research and the opportunity to apply theory to problems in the world beyond the campus. Insist that your institution provide these opportunities."

One of the big problems with internships is lack of centralized information for students and lack of administrative support for faculty, according to Annette Wofford, office manager for NSIEE. "Internships take a lot of time, effort and money to set up properly. The burden of responsibility usually falls on the faculty, who have many other responsibilities to meet. If they aren't given support in these efforts, the programs

usually don't develop.

The Behavioral Science and Education division at Capitol has centralized its required internships through the efforts of one faculty member.

"I think you'll find a passive attitude unless one person does take the responsibility," said Division Head Stanley Miller. "If nobody is responsible, not much will happen. Since we have one person responsible for the program, she makes it happen."

"It's time schools stop treating internships like step-children," said Wofford. "We feel it's the responsibility of schools to provide all types of educational experiences to students, not just structured book learning. And we believe in an internship for each and every student."



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