

# THE IDEAL INTERNSHIP

Quality internships provide an invaluable stepping stone towards professional practice and create continuity within the design profession. The Dept. of Art + Design at Arkansas State University thanks those who open their doors to young designers and generously share their knowledge and experience with the next generation of design practitioners.

## WHAT IS AN INTERNSHIP?

An internship is a temporary job at a design consulting firm, advertising agency, in-house design office, or similar environment that is geared toward an upper-level student about to graduate and enter the career as a professional. Students and young designers often develop their practice by broadening their education with a mentor, while gaining experience in a professional design environment.

Many of the demands put forth in the Agreement – for example, monthly evaluations – are due to rules for class credit the student is paying to receive from Arkansas State University and its Dept. of Art + Design. **Thank you for your help!**

## HOW INTERNSHIP OPPORTUNITIES BENEFIT STUDENTS:

- Apply design skills acquired in school to real-world projects.
- Observe and apply professional communication skills to be successful in any career, especially in the world of design.
- Gain insight into the professional world of design, including how time management, client relationships, collaboration and teamwork, and consistent process all play a part.
- Begin growing one's network of professional designers for future success.
- Gain the experience necessary to show on a resumé as proof of applied knowledge.

## HOW PROVIDING INTERNSHIP OPPORTUNITIES BENEFITS BUSINESSES AND INDIVIDUALS:

- Employers benefit from each intern's unique approach, perspective, and assistance during the creative process.
- Provide freedom for professional staff to pursue other creative or more advanced projects.

- Assist an organization in application of the latest strategies and techniques in the field.
- Maintain connections with colleges and increase visibility on campus.
- Promote community involvement. Public service and philanthropy are excellent public relations tools.
- Recruit other students and generate enthusiasm.
- Create awareness of the field for future hires.

## STUDENT TIPS: HOW TO BE A GOOD INTERN

To make a good impression as an intern, students must exhibit the utmost professionalism. Students may receive more responsibility by presenting themselves as dependable, easy to work with, and appreciative of the internship opportunity. Students should take cues from co-workers and fall in line with the social style of the workplace. **As an excellent intern, the student should:**

- Arrive on time and be ready to work as soon as they get there.
- Treat everyone in the office politely and respectfully.
- Prioritize communication and ask questions if they do not understand something.
- Make no unreasonable demands.
- Show enthusiasm and a willingness to help.
- ***Communicate with Faculty Instructor if there are any concerns.***

## INTERNSHIP SUPERVISOR TIPS

- Provide an opportunity for students to work directly with a senior level designer or art director who acts as a mentor.
- Situate students in an on-site, professional, ethical, and safe work environment.
- Take account of student's personal learning goals and answer their questions.
- Provide students with the opportunity to experience a broad range of activities, including ideation and creative concept development, client interaction, new business proposals, and production preparation.
- Ask students to perform administrative work only as it relates to the design profession.
- Give students an evaluation at the conclusion of the internship.
- ***Communicate with Faculty Instructor if there are any concerns.***

Paraphrased from AIGA's [A Guide to Internships](#).

# THE STAGES OF AN INTERNSHIP

Adapted from: Sweitzer, H.F. & King, M.A. (1999). *The Successful Internship: Transformation & Empowerment*

**These are not directions/steps that one must follow.** Instead, students and Internship Supervisors may choose to read through this to better prepare for an ideal internship that benefits everyone!

“Some of the concerns and challenges interns face seem to occur in a predictable order. Each stage has its own obstacles and opportunities. There are concerns interns will have at each stage, and to some extent, those concerns must be resolved for them to move forward and continue learning and growing. However, the process of resolving the concerns is also a learning experience in and of itself. At each stage, there are important tasks that will help interns address the concerns. If these tasks go undone and the concerns are left unresolved, the intern can become stuck in a stage.

Rate of progress through the stages is affected by many factors, including the number of hours spent at the agency; previous internships or field experiences; your personality; the personal issues and levels of support you bring into the experience; the style of supervision and the nature of the work. The more you understand as a supervisor, the better the learning experience for the intern.”

## STAGE 1: ANTICIPATION

- Beginning of internship!
- Anxiety is high and there is plenty of interaction with many individuals.
- Student should develop good relationships with supervisor, co-workers, etc.
- “What if?” is common as exciting possibilities begin to take shape.
- Supervisor should level task accomplishment low, but defining specific goals with consideration of skills is needed to complete said goals.
- The more information explained to the student – including dress code, hours, goals, etc. – the more likely for a successful internship. Avoid assumptions.

## STAGE 2: DISILLUSIONMENT

- Gap between expectations for the internship and what is actually occurring. Sometimes gaps are small, others large. ***If student or Internship Supervisor is concerned, please reach out to the Faculty Instructor as soon as possible.***
- “What if?” from previous stage has become “What’s Wrong?” This is normal.
- Possibility for tremendous personal and professional growth by working through problems!

### **STAGE 3: CONFRONTATION**

- To get past Disillusionment stage, intern must face and study what is happening. As issues raised in disillusionment are resolved, task and morale accomplishments will increase!
- Failure to acknowledge and discuss problems professionally may diminish learning experience, performance, etc. This results in lost educational and future networking opportunities.
- Student and supervisor may need to reevaluate goals, as perhaps these were unrealistic or opportunities may have changed.
- Must continue to confront problems and not get “frozen in the moment.” Empowerment from this acknowledgment can equip intern to problem-solve more effectively.

### **STAGE 4: COMPETENCE**

- Morale is high as trust in performance is exhibited from both the intern and the supervisor.
- Transition from “apprentice” into “professional” begins!
- For students, this provides a strong platform to demand more from one’s self and request an increased work load, and responsibility.

### **STAGE 5: CULMINATION**

- May face a variety of feelings at this stage when the internship ends – both pride in accomplishments and sadness in leaving are both common.
- Strong emotions from this capstone course experience are often mixed with college graduation excitement. For mental health, students are encouraged to address these emotions and find an avenue to express them.

# GETTING TO KNOW EACH OTHER

At the beginning of any professional interaction good communication is crucial to getting to know the other person and building that relationship. Here are some questions to get dialogue started.

*Paraphrased from [this source](#).*

## **SUPERVISORS/MENTORS TO INTERNS**

1. What are you most proud of?
2. What stands out as a peak experience in your internship or working here? What happened? What role did you play? What were the circumstances surrounding the event?
3. What if anything would you like to work on or improve? What tools or resources if provided would help you develop and grow in this area?
4. How can I help you get there?
5. What are we doing well? What should we keep doing? What should we stop doing? What is possible – what should we start doing?
6. What energizes you?
7. If you had a list of tasks and two gages one for energy (empty to full) and one for engagement (empty to full), which tasks do you do that make you feel energized and engaged and which tasks do you do that make you feel depleted of energy and disengaged?

## **INTERNS TO SUPERVISORS/MENTORS**

1. How can I help you?
2. How do you spend most of your time?
3. What would you do if you were me?
4. What has your career progression looked like? How did you get to where you are today? Is this where you thought you would end up?
5. What are you most proud of?
6. What used to be your biggest weakness?
7. What excites you the most about what you do?
8. What courses do you suggest I take in school to maximize my learning? What class did you take that was the most helpful in your career?
9. What's your favorite thing about your job?
10. What professional organizations are you associated with?
11. Could you recommend people in the field whom I could talk to about my career?