

SCHOOL OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS



# PUBLIC POLICY INTERNSHIPS

INTERSHIP GUIDE



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## OVERVIEW

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The College of Arts and Sciences (CAS) School of Public Affairs and the USF Office of Government Relations offer internships for degree-seeking students with at least a junior standing. These internships consist of a supervised work-and-learning experience under the direction of a university faculty member/administrator and an employee of a participating sponsor/placement organization. Through these unique opportunities, students enrich their classroom experiences and discover how the insights from state and local governments translate into vocational applications in many industries. The internship is available to any academic major with department and sponsor/placement approval.

Students complete an online application on the School of Public Affairs' website. Those that meet the qualifications will interview with the School of Public Affairs Public Policy Selection Committee, comprised of representatives from each of USF's campuses. Upon acceptance into the internship, students must enroll in the classes respective to each Internship Program.

State and local governments and organizations sponsoring/placing students direct and supervise the intern for the duration of the appointment. Sponsors and placement offices are encouraged to treat the intern as a regular employee during the entire work-learning experience. The student's direct supervisor will evaluate the intern at the midterm and end of term. These evaluations are a significant factor in the student's internship class final grade assignment. Please note that a student must do at least 80% of their work hours in pre-professional activities, rather than clerical work.

## ABOUT THE PROGRAM

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According to the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE), internships can be defined as a form of experiential learning that integrates knowledge and theory learned in the classroom with practical application and skill development in a professional setting. An important element that distinguishes an internship from a short-term job or volunteer position is that intentional "learning objectives" and mentoring are incorporated into the experience. This structure allows for a balance between the intern's learning objectives and the specific work of an organization. The internship is part of an educational program and includes monitoring and evaluation by both a faculty supervisor and a sponsor/placement mentor.

Public Policy Internships are unpaid and have specific course requirements, including a minimum number of hours spent with the sponsor/placement organization. The hours are restricted to the start and end dates of an academic semester. Interns should be given significant work to do for the organization, with minimal hours of tasks such as filing and copying. This expectation differs from a part-time hire who is paid for performing various tasks the employer assigns, menial or not.

To ensure that an experience can be considered a "legitimate internship" by the NACE definition, all of the following criteria must be met:

- The experience must be an extension of the classroom: a learning experience that provides for applying the knowledge gained in the classroom. It must not be simply to advance the operations of the employer or be the work that a regular employee would routinely perform.
- The skills or knowledge learned must be transferable to other employment settings.
- The experience has a defined beginning and end, and a job description with desired qualifications.
- There are clearly defined learning objectives/goals related to the professional goals of the student's academic coursework.
- There is supervision by a professional with expertise and educational and/or professional background in the field of the experience.
- There is routine feedback by the experienced supervisor.
- There are resources, equipment, and facilities provided by the host employer that support learning objectives/goals.



All internships must comply with U.S. Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA). The FLSA does not limit an employer's ability to hire paid interns or restrict a paid employee's ability to get college credit for their work, nor does it limit unpaid internships for non-profits who rely on volunteers for their labor. Please reference the following link for U.S. Department of Labor Fact Sheet #71: <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/whd/fact-sheets/71-flsa-internships>

## Student Benefits

Internships help students develop an understanding of course content, their sense of values, and civic responsibility. In addition to acquiring internship work experience, students receive academic credit by participating in the Internship Programs. The internship experience also allows students to:

- Understand the roles and responsibilities of government and how public policy is developed.
- Enhance civic engagement skills and become an active, informed citizen.
- Explore diverse career options and interests.
- Develop or enhance professional skills and knowledge of workplace procedures.
- Develop networking contacts with professionals in public policy fields.
- Apply classroom learning to professional experience.
- Develop teamwork and leadership skills.
- Develop research and communication skills.



**Meet Megan Sirjane-Samples**  
**Director of Government Relations for Lyft**



*The USF Tallahassee Internship Program enabled me to not only secure a full-time job post-graduation, but it fostered an environment that allowed hands on, real world experience. No book or classroom can expose you to what the day-to-day life is truly like in your chosen career field like the USF Public Policy Internship Program does. In addition, the relationships I was able to develop through the program have helped me to advance and excel in my profession."*

## Sponsor Benefits

Organizations hosting interns benefit by having active and enthusiastic members of the workforce acquainted with the most recent practical tools, knowledge, and theory related to diversity issues. Interns also allow host placement offices to:

- Develop new solutions and conduct research for public policy and enhanced organization practices.
- Facilitate civic engagement, a sense of community, and social responsibility in interns.
- Integrate the latest knowledge and techniques into the daily workflow.
- Refine management skills by scheduling and supervising interns.
- Develop potential new employees or volunteers.
- Influence professional and applied curriculum development at USF to better meet the needs of the various fields within federal, state, and local government.
- Contribute to the Tampa Bay professional community by enhancing and expanding available local talent.

## ACADEMIC COMPONENT REQUIREMENTS

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### Legislative Internship Program (LIP)

Students complete an online application and submit it on the School of Public Affairs' website. Students that meet the qualifications will be contacted by the Internship Coordinator for interviews.

#### Registration

Students are required to register for two classes for a total of 3-6 credit hours.

- **IDS 4910 Legislative Internship Seminar** meets for two hours per week. This is a class with required readings and writing assignments. Students receive a letter grade based on the quality of written assignments, participation, and class attendance (class is mandatory). Students register for two credit hours.
- **IDS 4942 Legislative Internship Field Work** is the class students register for the internship. Students work in the internship office for 9 hours over a minimum of two days. The days and time are determined by the internship/placement office and the student. Students receive an S/U grade for this course. Students register for anywhere between one and four credit hours.

#### Trip to Tallahassee

As part of the seminar and experience, students will take a trip to Tallahassee during the semester (the trip is required). You are required to notify your internship placement and your professor if you have a class on the days that coincide with the dates of the trip. If necessary, the course professor will verify the trip requirement. Students are expected to make up any class assignments they may miss when they participate in the trip.

#### Scholarships

Students receive a \$300 scholarship for participating in LIP. It is estimated that approximately \$50 of the scholarship will be used to pay for the hotel room during the trip to Tallahassee. The hotel rooms will be shared. The rest of the scholarship is for students to use as they see fit. Some students have used it for parking and gasoline to get to their internships, or for purchasing business attire for their internships.

NOTE: If the student owes money to USF (e.g., tuition and fees, housing, meal plan, etc.), the University Controller's Office (UCO) will apply any financial aid payments (e.g., grants, scholarships, loans, etc.) to what is owed before the internship scholarship funds can be used.

#### Internship Placements

The School of Public Affairs will determine the internship placements. Once students are notified of their placements, they are to contact their supervisor and set up a time for a meet-and-greet. Initial phone and/or email contact should be made within one week of being notified of their placements. The time and location for the meeting will be determined by the student and placement office. To participate in the program, students need reliable transportation. Some placements are in downtown Tampa, others are located across the USF regional service area. Students may be required to complete a background check and participate in an on-boarding/orientation process before beginning their placement.

### Tallahassee Internship Program (TIP)

Students complete an online application and submit it on the School of Public Affairs' website. Students that meet the qualifications will be contacted by the Internship Coordinator for interviews.

#### Registration

Students are required to register for four classes for a total of 12 credit hours.

- **IDS 4910 Tallahassee Internship Seminar** meets for three hours per week, prior to the start of the Florida legislative session in Tallahassee. This is a class with required readings and writing assignments. Students receive a letter grade based on the quality of written assignments, participation, and class attendance (class is mandatory). Students register for three credit hours.

- **IDS 4942 Tallahassee Internship Field Work** is the class students register for the internship. Students work in the internship office for 40 hours per week. The days and time are determined by the internship/placement office and the student. Students receive an S/U grade for this course. Students register for three credit hours.
- **POS 4910 Tallahassee Internship Individual Research** is the class students register for the academic seminars they are required to attend, and the papers they are required to write, while in Tallahassee. Students are required to attend the sessions and write academic assignments that relate to the seminar and assigned readings. Students receive a letter grade and register for three credit hours.
- **POS 4941 Tallahassee Internship Field Work** is the actual internship experience. Students are also required to write weekly reflective papers on what they experience each week and their impressions on the legislative process. Students receive a letter grade and register for three credit hours.

The Tallahassee Internship Program is for a total of 12 credit hours. Students are not permitted to enroll in other classes for the Spring semester in which they participate in the program.

### Scholarships and Housing

Students receive a \$1,500 scholarship for participating in TIP. The cost of housing will be covered by the College of Arts and Sciences.

NOTE: If the student owes money to USF (e.g., tuition and fees, housing, meal plan, etc.), the University Controller's Office (UCO) will apply any financial aid payments (e.g., grants, scholarships, loans, etc.) to what is owed before the internship scholarship funds can be used.

Housing is coordinated by the College of Arts and Sciences, but each student signs a lease and is responsible for the apartment. Students are required to live in the housing. The housing is typically a two-bedroom, two-bathroom apartment. Two students will share one bedroom. A security deposit is required prior to moving to Tallahassee. The College will inform students as to when the deposit and signed lease are needed.

### Internship Placements

The School of Public Affairs will determine the internship placements. The internship placements will be based on the needs of each office and the interpersonal and academic skills of the students. Once students are notified of their placements, they are to contact their supervisor and set up a time for a virtual meet-and-greet. Initial phone and/or email contact should be made within one week of being notified of their placements. The date and time for the meeting will be determined by the student and placement office. The internship placements will be legislative offices, public interest groups, and lobbying offices. Students may be required to complete a background check and participate in an on-boarding/orientation process before beginning their placement.

## INTERNSHIP COMPONENT REQUIREMENTS

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- Complete all assigned projects and tasks in a manner consistent with professional employment.
- Observe all policies and practices of the sponsoring/placement organization, including those concerned with confidentiality, security and office conduct, and procedure.
- Maintain appropriate contact with your internship coordinator and site supervisor, and demonstrate successful job fulfillment in the completed Sponsor Assessments of interns.
- ASK! Be proactive and ask if you don't understand or need clarification.
- If you have down time, let your supervisor know you are available for another task, and if your supervisor isn't available, show initiative and look for a way to be helpful.
- Understand that the success of your internship is (almost!) entirely up to you; effectively communicate your goals.

## HOSTING AN INTERN

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Getting started is easy! The first step is to complete and submit the online Sponsor/Placement Intern Request available under “Resources” on the School of Public Affairs’ website. The request will allow the School and Internship Coordinator to better assess the needs of your organization for an intern, and to determine what duties will be expected of the intern. We understand that duties may change depending upon the project; therefore, a general description is appropriate. You are encouraged to inform us of upcoming special events or projects for which you would like to utilize an intern.

Completed online requests are required because they assist in matching each intern with an organization consistent with the student’s professional goals. The more we know about your mission and business practices, the easier it will be to assign an intern with appropriate background and skills to meet your needs. If you need to update the Sponsor/Placement Intern Request at any time, please resubmit the online form rather than revising your previous submission.

Once a placement is made, both the sponsor and the intern will be notified. It is the intern’s responsibility to then contact the sponsor and arrange for an interview. If both the student and sponsor are pleased with the placement after the interview, the student internship agreement must be completed and signed.

### Preparing the Workplace

The process of making the workplace ready is far too often overlooked and underappreciated. This process includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Telecommunications set-up (e.g., phone, phone #, voicemail, etc.).
- Desk/workstation; it is important that the intern have a dedicated workstation.
- PC related (e.g., applicable hardware and software needs are requested and in place, etc.).
- Building/parking/system access (e.g., passwords requested, badge photos taken, etc.).
- Basic office supplies and other related equipment.

The bottom line is that this intern will be an employee of yours, and will be asked to perform work and contribute value. Most importantly, they will be asked to do so during a very short period of time; therefore, they must be productive from Day 1. While there will be a learning curve, and the need to come up to speed on projects, the added challenge of not having the necessary materials and tools to do their job is one that you can both manage and mitigate.

Spread word about the intern, as well as the tasks and projects assigned to them. Make the intern feel like a part of the team from Day 1. The importance of doing so is not limited to your employees, but to anyone external to the organization that should know. This might include clients and customers, suppliers, vendors, and business partners. Clearly communicate, to everyone involved, that you have an intern coming onboard. This is particularly important for those who will be working closely with the intern. Your intern will need an orientation just like any other new employee.

### Importance of the Supervisor

One of the most important factors in ensuring a successful internship experience both for you and the intern is the role of supervisor. It’s not difficult to understand why; the supervisor is charged with providing day-to-day direction with the intern. In this capacity, they are likely to have the most frequent and highest volume of interaction with the intern. The supervisor is also likely to be charged with assigning projects and tasks to the intern. While it’s possible that these projects and tasks were decided upon by someone other than the intern, from the intern’s perspective, the supervisor is the one overseeing daily workload and assigning tasks. The supervisor is going to be the person most familiar with the quality of the intern’s work outcomes; therefore, they should also be the person charged with delivering and/or coordinating feedback and coaching of the intern.

To assist the mentors in their role and to ensure that they have every opportunity to succeed, below are a few best practices regarding the mentoring relationship:

- Think of yourself as a “learning facilitator.”
- Emphasize questions over advice giving. Use thought-provoking questions that help your intern think more broadly and deeply.
- When requested, share your own experiences, lessons learned, and advice.
- Resist the temptation to control the relationship and steer its outcomes; your intern is responsible for their own growth.
- Help your intern see alternative interpretations and approaches.
- Build your intern’s confidence through supportive feedback.
- Encourage, inspire, and challenge your intern to achieve their goals.
- Help interns reflect on successful strategies they have used in the past that could apply to new challenges.
- Be open to spontaneity.
- Reflect on your mentoring practice; request feedback.
- Enjoy the privilege of mentoring; know that your efforts will likely have a significant impact on your intern’s development as well as your own.



*Adapted from “Mentoring Guide: A Guide for Mentors,” Center for Health Leadership and Practice.*

## Evaluations

The supervisor is required to complete a formal evaluation of the intern at the midterm and end of term. The internship coordinators will prompt the supervisor when it is time to complete each evaluation. While evaluations are submitted online, the supervisor should share the information with their intern. The Midterm Assessment is an opportunity to provide the intern with feedback on areas of improvement, as well as reviewing what they are doing well. This timely perspective allows the intern to take action while there is still an opportunity to influence the outcome of the complete internship.

The End of Term Assessment provides a nice conclusion to the internship. Projects can be wrapped up and transitioned. They provide a great opportunity to “look back” and comment on the progress made by the intern over the course of the entire internship experience. Additionally, you are afforded the value of a comparison point with the midterm evaluation. Discussions during the end-of-internship review can be preceded with “when we discussed this during the mid-internship review, this is where you were at...” It’s always nice to have a point of comparison because it nicely sets up the conversation related to positive, negative, or neutral movement.

The end-of-internship review may also be the driving force in making a decision regarding next steps. Next steps could be a number of different things, including: 1) extending the internship beyond its original end date; 2) extending an invitation to return for a second internship; or 3) a possible employment offer. When these and other matters related to continued employment are tied in part to review, additional review of the performance management process is encouraged. This review should ensure fairness, objectivity, and consistency in execution and with existing internal practices.

## Top Requests of Sponsors/Placements by Interns

### “Give me real work.”

It can’t be said enough that interns want to work and learn. They want to contribute to your organization and become discouraged if they feel they are just doing busy work, or routine administrative work that should be done by paid support staff.



**“Please provide feedback.”**

Remember that interns are students and they may not have the business skills and experience that you take for granted. If your intern makes an oversight, just pull them aside and explain how the situation should be handled in the future.

**“I want to be included, too.”**

Is there a staff meeting they can attend? Can they tag along to that next project meeting or office luncheon? Include them in the daily life of your workplace. After all, if you help them gain a broader perspective, it will help everyone involved.

**“Please explain.”**

When you assign work, make sure you give a detailed explanation. While the work may seem trivial and obvious to you, it may not be obvious to someone who has never done it before. Patience and a few extra minutes at the beginning will pay off later when your intern can produce good work independently.

**“I want to see my supervisor, please.”**

Make sure that you remain accessible to your intern, and avoid any isolating work that leaves the intern without direct access to supervision and guidance. As newcomers, interns may not speak up if they're feeling ignored, so the burden of making sure they're okay is on the supervisor. Regular times should be scheduled to meet with the intern.

**“Be prepared for my arrival.”**

Brief your staff of the student's impending arrival and help the intern get started on a positive note. If you want to get a job done, you need to supply the intern with the tools they need. Also, make sure you provide the intern with a clear list of roles and responsibilities, highlighting any relevant deadlines and expectations.

**“Appreciate me.”**

Remember to enjoy your intern! You will both benefit if you take the time to appreciate contributions made by your intern.

## TERMINATION OF INTERNSHIP

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Every effort is made by both the internship coordinator and the sponsor/placement supervisor to support the internship learning process, but on occasion, it may be necessary to (a) terminate a student intern; (b) remove an intern from a sponsor/placement office; or (c) remove a sponsor from the approved list. If a student intern is dismissed through no fault of their own, every effort will be made for reassignment elsewhere. However, if a student intern is dismissed with cause, an unsatisfactory grade will be recorded, the student will be ineligible for any future internships, and (if appropriate) the student will be referred to USF's Office of Student Conduct and Ethical Development for violating the Student Code of Conduct.

Because of differing sponsor/placement guidelines, each case must be considered separately. Possible grounds for dismissal of an intern by a sponsor/placement or the University may include, but are not restricted to, the following:

- Lack of student responsibility (e.g., being constantly late for work, failing to report absences in advance, misuse of equipment, failure [within reason] to undertake or complete assigned tasks, etc.).
- Engagement by the intern in illegal or unethical behavior.
- Violation of sponsor's policies (e.g., confidentiality, safety, sexual harassment, racial or religious discrimination, etc.).
- Reporting to worksite under the influence of alcohol or illicit drugs.
- Violation of USF's Student Code of Conduct.

If a sponsor/placement is removed from the approved list while hosting an intern, the internship professor, in consultation with USF's Office of Government Relations, will arrange for an alternative placement. The intern will not be penalized in this case and will be allowed an opportunity to successfully complete the term.

# MORE INFORMATION

## Questions about the programs' application process?

Contact Catherine Koziol,  
Internship Coordinator  
[cjk@usf.edu](mailto:cjk@usf.edu)

## Questions about the programs' academic components?

Contact Annie Valdez,  
Academic Program Specialist  
[annievaldez@usf.edu](mailto:annievaldez@usf.edu)



UNIVERSITY of  
**SOUTH FLORIDA**

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