

Political Science Internship Program



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1. Introduction

The Political Science Internship Program is designed to help students tie together what they have learned through course work with practical political experience. It provides them with an opportunity to earn course credits in a learning situation outside the walls of the traditional classroom.

Students are given considerable flexibility in pursuing an internship position that is appropriate for their particular academic or professional needs. A variety of types of internships are acceptable for credit, be it serving as an assistant to a member of Congress or the state legislature, working in the city or county government, assisting a non-profit organization, or participating actively in an election campaign. The main criteria are that the position must be relevant to political science and it must provide the student with an opportunity to gain experience not otherwise available.

Once hired as interns, students work closely with a faculty member who provides a directed course of study to help the students to understand the work they are doing. The interaction with the professor is a major component of the internship program, providing the academic perspective.

2. Steps in Entering the Program

This brief section provides an outline of the step-by-step process needed to enter the internship program. These steps are explained in greater detail in later sections.

STEP 1 -- Meet with Internship Coordinator to discuss internship possibilities, the steps in the process for entering program, and eligibility.

STEP 2 -- Contact sponsoring organization to set up internship.

STEP 3 -- Determine faculty instructor to oversee academic work, if other than internship coordinator.

STEP 4 -- Have supervisor at sponsoring organization fill out sponsorship form. Return form to Internship Coordinator. The form is available on line at <http://web.pdx.edu/~hprc/FormA.pdf> and from the Internship Coordinator.

STEP 5 -- If internship is approved, register for appropriate number of credits under Political Science 404. This requires filling out a "By Arrangement Form" with the instructor.

STEP 6 -- Internship begins.

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3. Division Internship Coordinator

The Division Internship Coordinator is responsible for overseeing the internship program. The coordinator works as the division's primary liaison between the student interns, the sponsoring organization, and the individual faculty instructors. This person helps find internships, provides advice, monitors students' work within the sponsoring organization, helps students handle problems that arise on the job, and maintains all internship records. Even though the coordinator handles most of the internships in the division, all regular faculty members in Political Science can oversee internships.

Students who are interested in interning should contact the Internship Coordinator as early as possible to learn how the program works. While students are free to pursue particular internships that interest them, the coordinator maintains a list of organizations that are interested in hiring political science students as interns. Once situated in an internship, students need to continue to communicate with the coordinator to ensure that they successfully meet all the requirements for receiving a grade.

The coordinator also maintains all the forms necessary for entering and successfully completing the internship program.

Richard Clucas is the current intern coordinator. He can be reached at (503) 725-3258 or hprc@pdx.edu.

4. Technical Details

Students who are selected as interns enter into their positions as representatives of Portland State University and of the Political Science Division. It is very important to the division that the students who are selected to this program reflect favorably on the division, so that future students can continue to have the same opportunity. Internships are not only beneficial to students, but to the sponsoring organization as well. If a student proves incapable of performing his or her job at a certain level of competence and in a professional manner, it could lead to a situation in which the sponsoring organization refuses to accept future interns from the Political Science Division. For these reasons, the division has instituted some restrictions on who is eligible to enter the internship program. This section explains the division's policies on eligibility and course credit.

Prerequisites. The Political Science Internship Program is open to students in all departments and majors across the university. Before beginning an internship, however, participating students must complete either PS 101/PS 102 or PS 200. On occasion, the Internship Coordinator or the supervising faculty member may require additional class work. Sponsoring organizations may have other requirements as well. Finally, intern applicants need to demonstrate their ability to benefit from the program.

Pre-approval. Before accepting an internship, students are expected to obtain permission from the division. Students who do not obtain pre-approval may be denied course credits.

Course Credits. Students may earn up to 12 units of credit in PS 404 from their internship. Of these 12 units, no more than 4 may be for graded credit and 8 for P/NP credit. The total number of graded credits allowed is determined by the amount of time a student works in the internship. The division policy is that a student must put in 20 hours of work per week for 10 weeks to receive the full 12 credits. If a student works fewer hours, the number of credits is reduced accordingly.

In general, most students are required to write an academic paper related to their internship in order to receive graded credit. In some cases, additional academic work may be required.

For division majors, graded credits count as upper division Political Science credit. P/NP credits cannot be used to fulfill the major requirements, though they count as upper division Social Science credit. Non-majors should check with their department to find out how the credits are treated.

Acceptable Internships. Course credit can only be obtained for work that is relevant to political science. Among other implications, this means that students are expected to perform a meaningful task for the organization in which they have been placed. Typically, students are expected to perform some type of project, research, or administrative task that can be tied to the political science curriculum. Clerical and secretarial positions are examples of unacceptable work. The political science division retains the right to determine the suitability of internship positions for course credit.

Paid Positions. Most sponsoring organizations do not pay interns, but a few do. The division's policies are the same for all students, regardless if they receive pay or not.

5. Finding Internships

There are three primary ways to find internships: (1) through the division, (2) on your own, or (3) through an outside agency. A list of past placements is presented on the next page.

Through the Division. If you are interested in becoming an intern, but have no idea on how to find one, you should talk to the Richard Clucas, the Political Science Division Internship Coordinator, about your interests and to get help. He can be reached at hprc@pdx.edu. The division maintains a list of potential positions for which students can apply. While students have served in these positions before, there is no guarantee that your application will be accepted. The decision to take on an intern is solely the prerogative of the sponsoring organization. However, the coordinator will try to help all interested students get placed in an appropriate position.

On Your Own. Students who are interested in pursuing an internship in an organization or office with which they are familiar, are welcome to do so. One of the key points of the internship is to get students into positions that are appropriate for their particular needs or interests. Unfortunately, the division's list of internships is limited, which means that many students will want to pursue positions on their own. There are countless types of positions available to students who are willing to put in a little effort to find them. The Internship Coordinator can provide suggestions on where to pursue specific types of positions that are not available through the division.

Other Sources. The PSU Career Center maintains a list of internships available locally and around the world. This list is updated weekly. A list of current internship opportunities with the state of Oregon is available online at <http://www.oregon.gov/DAS/HR/intern.shtml>. A list of internships with the city of Portland can be found at <http://www.portlandonline.com/index.cfm?c=41085>. Other sources for internship information include government personnel offices and non-profit organizations.

Past Placements. PSU Political Science students have worked as interns in a variety of organizations and positions. Here is a partial listing of some organizations that have accepted interns from the political science division within the past few years:

- Oregon House of Representatives
- Oregon Senate
- Oregon Secretary of State's Office
- Oregon Secretary of the Treasury's Office
- Portland Mayor Tom Potter
- Portland Commissioner Sam Adam
- Portland Commissioner Erik Sten
- Senator Ron Wyden
- Senator Gordon Smith
- U.S. House of Representatives-Oregon and Washington D.C. offices
- National Coalition for the Homeless
- AFL-CIO summer intern program
- College Republican National Committee

Oregon Amateur Sports Foundation
Future PAC
The Veterans Administration
Oregon Assembly for Black Affairs
U.S. Humane Society
Multnomah County Commission on Children, Families, and Community
Portland Development Commission

6. Legislative Intern Program

One of the most popular placements for PSU students has been in the State Legislative Intern Program. The Legislative Intern Program was created in 1976 to provide Oregon college students with an opportunity to work within the state legislature, learning leadership responsibilities as well as developing familiarity with the legislative process. Since the Oregon legislature has fewer professional staff members than many states, the student interns can play an important role in a variety of activities related to the legislative process. As a result, this program can be a very valuable and exciting experience. Some of the positions open to students include: Legislative Office Assistant, Legislative Committee Assistant, Legislative Counsel Assistant, Information Systems Computer Assistant, and Media Production Assistant. Recommended prerequisite: PS312 Legislative Process.

For more information, talk to the division Internship Coordinator and look online at <http://www.leg.state.or.us/jobs/home.htm>.

7. Selecting an Instructor

In order to receive university credit, students must identify a faculty member as the instructor of their PS 404 course. In most cases, the Internship Coordinator serves as the instructor. In other cases, however, the student may wish to work with a faculty member who has particular expertise related to the internship. In either case, the faculty acts as a guide in teaching the students about the significance of their internship from an academic perspective. This person will direct the students toward the literature that is appropriate for their specific placement. In addition, he or she oversees the students' formal course requirements, and determines their final grade (see below).

In selecting a faculty member other than the Internship Coordinator, students should consider two factors. First, students should look for a faculty member who specializes in an area that is related to their internships. Second, students should also consider finding an instructor with whom they feel comfortable. This second factor is important to keep in mind because the type of instruction that takes place in an internship can be more intimate than the traditional classroom method.

While students are free to ask any faculty member they wish to oversee their internships, it is up to the individual faculty member to decide if he or she wants to accept the students' requests.

8. Role of Job Supervisor

The Job Supervisor is the member of the sponsoring organization who is responsible for supervising an intern's work. He or she provides the intern with day-to-day direction on the task that the intern must perform for the organization, and evaluates the intern's work.

At the beginning of the semester, the Job Supervisor will be asked to complete an Internship Agreement that describes the nature of work to be completed by the student. As described above, only work that has some relationship to political science is acceptable for internship. At the end of the semester, the Supervisor will be asked to complete a second form, evaluating the student's work for the organization.

As in any other type of job, students are expected to fulfill the expectations placed on them by their job supervisor. The primary exception to this is if the supervisor strays from the original internship agreement, and uses a student solely for clerical work or in some other inappropriate manner. If this or other problems occur, students should contact the Internship Coordinator as soon as possible.

9. Appropriate Behavior

Students are expected to conduct themselves in a professional manner in their internship. This means that they arrive at their work when scheduled, they dress appropriately, they follow directions, and they interact with others in a positive manner. Moreover, students are expected to abide at all times by the ethical standards of the university and the organization in which they are placed. Students who conduct themselves in an unprofessional or unethical manner face a failing grade and/or appropriate disciplinary action.

10. Grading Policies

The faculty member who oversees a student's internship determines the student's final grade. Graded credits are based primarily on the research paper discussed above, though other assignments may be required. In most cases, the research paper requires students to tie together their internship experiences with relevant political science literature. Along with this paper, other requirements may include student-instructor conferences and presentations. P/NP credits are based on the student's performance in the internship.

Students must take responsibility for ensuring expectations are clear.

11. Contact Information

Contact Richard Clucas at (503) 725-3258 or hprc@pdx.edu