



Finding an Internship

Internships and the Liberal Arts

Internships are a vital supplement to your liberal arts education. These experiences will help you:

- clarify your career goals by gaining skills and experience as you apply and connect classroom knowledge to the world of work; and
- network with contacts in the field while you develop teamwork and leadership abilities.

Armed with valuable skills, experience, and contacts, planning for your life after Grinnell will be much easier.

Tips for Finding Meaningful Internships

- **Start Early:** Completing a successful internship search and applying for funding takes a significant investment of time and effort. Begin the process a few months in advance of deadlines.
- **Prepare:** Speak with a CLS adviser about creating a strategic plan for securing an internship based on your interests, experience, and geographic parameters. Also have your application materials reviewed by CLS staff, and schedule a practice interview at the CLS.
- **Pay Attention:** Deadlines, application requirements, and program criteria need to be followed. Check all materials for typos before sending anything (including inquiry or follow-up e-mail messages) to potential internship sites.
- **Stay Organized:** Manage the application process and communications with each potential employer and networking contact by using a spreadsheet to stay on top of your internship-search process. Follow up when appropriate, and remember to send the all-important thank-you notes or messages.
- **Diversify:** Apply for multiple internship opportunities. Having multiple internship offers is always a good problem. You can always turn down an internship offer.

Four Ways to Identify and Secure an Internship

1. **Network:** Reach out to family members, friends' family members, faculty members, coaches, previous supervisors, and Grinnell alumni for leads. Send your current résumé to your contacts to spread the word. Be sure to include an objective (below your contact header but to above your "Education" section) to help the reader know what type of internship you would like. Also, attend campus events with visiting alumni and employers to inquire about internship opportunities.
2. **Search for Postings:** Use Grinnell-specific and general online internship databases to find organizations that are offering internships. Typically, you will apply for internships directly through the online database, via the organizations' websites, or by submitting your résumé and cover letter by e-mail.
3. **Contact Organizations Directly:** Use the Pioneer Internship Database in PioneerWeb to find the names of organizations where previous Grinnellians completed internships, then visit the organizations' websites to determine if established internship programs exist. Alternatively, use the Chamber of Commerce membership lists in your preferred geographic areas to find the names of organizations to investigate. If no information is available on an organization's website about internships, call the organization directly to inquire about possible internship opportunities. If necessary, offer to serve as a first intern (asking never hurts).
4. **Create Your Own Internship:** Contact a previous employer where you have worked or volunteered to ask about transitioning your past experience into an internship by adding additional responsibilities to use your newly gained academic knowledge. If you need to support yourself financially, another option is to approach a non-profit organization and offer to work on a specific project to grow your professional skills on a part-time basis while also having time for a paying job.



Internship Checklist

Internship Searching: Streamlining and Staying on Top of the Process

Searching for an internship can feel overwhelming, so it's helpful to break the process into manageable steps. The items on this checklist do not have to be followed in order. Just start checking off as many of these activities as you can, and you'll find yourself on the way to securing a great internship!

To give yourself adequate time, be sure to start your exploring and preparing months in advance of when you want to start your internship. You can receive assistance for every one of these steps through the Center for Careers, Life, and Service (CLS). Visit the CLS website (www.grinnell.edu/cls) for helpful information, or call (641) 269-4940 to set up an appointment with a CLS adviser.

Self-Exploration Phase

- I have identified and reflected on my personal strengths, skills, interests, and values individually, through self-assessments available through the CLS, and/or with a CLS adviser.
- I have made a list of possible fields of interest that I would like to explore more through an internship experience.

Preparation Phase

- I have spoken with my faculty adviser about my internship interests and have discussed the best times and ways to use internships throughout my four years at Grinnell.
- I have met with a CLS adviser to discuss my internship interests and to strategize various ways of searching for internships.
- I have learned how to develop and tailor my résumé for each internship opportunity I apply for and how to write a convincing and compelling cover letter.
- I have identified the geographic areas where I'd like to be located during my internship.
- I have contacted the Office of International Student Affairs (OISA) to discuss my internship options regarding work authorization in the U.S.A. if I am an international student.
- I have used the Pioneer Internship Database (via PioneerWeb) to identify organizations where other Grinnell students have interned in previous years.
- I have identified 8–10 keywords that correspond with the type of internships I am seeking that I can use in my online database searching (e.g., policy, finance, psychology, youth, art, literature, consulting).
- I have researched many organizations to determine if they have established internship programs and have noted their application deadlines.
- I have made a list of possible fields of interest that I would like to explore more through an internship experience.
- I have identified at least 10 potential internship sites or opportunities that offer the type of experience I am seeking.
- I have had my résumé and cover letter(s) reviewed by a professional in the field or by a CLS adviser.
- I have developed a list of potential networking contacts, including Grinnell College alumni, previous supervisors, faculty members, family members, and friends.
- I have developed my “elevator speech” for short encounters with potential internship organizations and alumni to pitch my experience and desire for an internship.
- I have identified three individuals who will serve as professional references for my application materials (if required).
- I have developed my interview skills for phone, Skype, and in-person internship interviews by practicing my responses to typical questions and/or by doing a mock interview at the CLS.
- I have interview attire that is appropriate for the field in which I plan to intern.
- I have a professional-sounding voicemail message on my cell phone for when representatives from internship organizations call.
- I have a neutral/professional e-mail address to use on my application materials (e.g., firstname.lastname@gmail.com).

Search Phase

- I regularly check PioneerLink, the Liberal Arts Career Network (LACN), and the Nationwide Internship Consortium (NIC) for internship opportunities.
- I have reviewed the various internship resources on the CLS's Internship Search Resources webpage (www.grinnell.edu/about/offices-services/cls/internships) and have begun searching for internship postings.
- I have been in touch with everyone on my list of potential networking contacts to inquire about potential internship leads, share my internship interests, and keep in touch with them regarding my progress.
- I have checked PioneerLink to review GRINNELLINK summer internship opportunities with alumni or friends of the College and have applied to one that piqued my interest.
- I have availed myself of the CLS's Quick Stops to get any questions answered that I have regarding applying for internships throughout the search phase.
- I have a reliable system for keeping track of my applications, contacts, interviews, and other internship-search activities.
- I have sent handwritten thank-you cards (recommended) or e-mail messages to every person who interviewed me.

Post–Securing Internship Phase

- I have a confirmation in writing from the organization that I have officially accepted the internship that was offered to me, and it also includes the start and end dates as well as an agreement regarding my compensation amount.
- I have contacted all other organizations that have offered me internships to decline their offers professionally and courteously.
- I have sent handwritten thank-you cards (recommended) or e-mail messages to each of my professional references to thank them for serving as a reference for me as well as to update them on the actual internship I secured.
- I have learned about various Grinnell-specific options via the CLS for my internship, including (a) registering my internship; (b) applying for academic credit (if needed); (c) applying for academic credit for CPT work authorization (for international students); and (d) applying for internship funding for an unpaid summer internship.

Grinnell-Specific Opportunities

- **Academic Credit:** Credit-bearing internships pursued during the academic year or summer term with oversight of a Grinnell College faculty sponsor
- **GRMC:** Local credit-bearing internships at the Grinnell Regional Medical Center facilitated by the CLS
- **Registered Only:** Internships tracked by the CLS
- **GIL/GIW:** Internship components of Grinnell-in-London and Grinnell-in-Washington off-campus study programs

Resources

CLS:

www.grinnell.edu/about/offices-services/cls/internships

PioneerLink: <https://grinnell-csm.symplicity.com>

Pioneer Internship Database: Log into Pioneer Web, go to Resources on the Community tab to view where other Grinnellians have pursued internships

Liberal Arts Career Network Internship (LACN) Database: accessed through PioneerLink

Nationwide Internship Consortium (NIC) Database: accessed through PioneerLink

Going Global (International Internships and Resources): accessed through PioneerLink

Idealist (Non-Profit Internships):
www.idealist.org

Internmatch: www.internmatch.com

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Center for Careers, Life, and Service

To make an appointment, call **641-269-4940**

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