# INTERNSHIP MANUAL

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The Department of Recreation, Park and Tourism Administration, Western Illinois University, is accredited by the National Park and Recreation Association. This manual is consistent with NRPA field placement guidelines.

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this manual is to inform students, faculty, agency supervisors and prospective agency supervisors about the undergraduate internship and its place in the Recreation, Park and Tourism Administration curriculum at Western Illinois University for both the Macomb and Quad Cities campuses. This manual is a guide for establishing and carrying out the internship experience and should not be construed as a rigid document, prohibiting creative adaptation. There are many superior learning opportunities available in a variety of agencies that cannot be anticipated or described in this type of manual. Responsibility for the success of the experience depends on the student seeking a supervising agency which will provide an informative, innovative, expansive and encompassing internship. This is appropriate, since the internship represents the emergence of professionals who must guide the course of their own careers.

THE INTERNSHIP EXPERIENCE

The internship program represents a full-time opportunity (minimum of 40 hours per week) for conscientious students to have the best twelve-week (at a minimum) experience of their academic careers. It is a culmination of course work, prior field experience, and personal aspirations into direct application under the supervision of outstanding practitioners.

During the course of the internship experience, students may find themselves in a variety of positions – from collecting trash with maintenance crews to accompanying the chief administrator to a staff or board meeting. It is the variety of exposure as well as the intensity of the experience that makes for a successful internship. It should allow students opportunities to assess their knowledge and skills in relation to immediate and long-range career objectives. This can only be accomplished by students challenging themselves to experience failure as well as success. It is therefore essential that careful planning by the student and agency supervisor be done to guarantee the best experience possible.

The student should start the internship experience at the same time the semester begins at the University. Students must meet both university and departmental guidelines in addition to academic requirements in order to be enrolled in this academic internship.
For a list of appropriate internship duties consult the NCTRC and/or CPRP Job Task Analysis. Contents of the internship should include experience in as many of the following as are available and appropriate. The following list is not comprehensive.

1. Administration of the agency - time with top administrators to learn about responsibilities, problems, and unique qualifications for these types of positions. Time should be spent in this office observing what is done on a day-to-day basis as it relates to staff, correspondence, board members and board meetings, meetings with a variety of persons and groups, budget, public relations and work with the media, long-range planning, fund raising, work with volunteers, staff training, staff hiring and dismissal, program and facility development and operation, professional organization relationships, property acquisition, implementation of standards and legal requirements, etc.

2. Time with others on administrative and supervisory staffs including: superintendents, directors, supervisors, field directors, center directors, facility managers, personnel directors, site managers, public relations directors, and business managers.

3. Involvement in program delivery as it relates to starting new programs, supervising existing programs, and serving on a face-to-face leadership level. This should be on a broad scale with as much depth as possible without detracting from involvement in the total operation of the agency.


5. Working with planners and resource managers and other special areas where students may express particular interest.

6. Management of food service and lodging facilities.

7. Attendance at meetings involving boards, staffs, and planning sessions with contractors, architects, and fund raising professions, special committees, and other professionals.

8. Visits to a variety of agencies during the last five weeks of the internship. This is to gain exposure to other programs, facilities, philosophies and administrative procedures and to become acquainted with professionals in the field.

**Goals**

University objectives regarding the internship program are:

1. To operationalize a set of goals prepared by the student with the assistance of his faculty advisor and the Internship Coordinator.

2. To provide the student with practical experience in the organization and administration of leisure service agencies and to increase knowledge and skill at the face-to-face, supervisory, and executive levels.

3. To broaden the student's concept of the leisure services field, provide experiences that will expand the student's understanding of human behavior, and to develop better human relations skills.

4. To initiate learning experiences capable of assisting both the student and supervisor to discover student strengths and weaknesses as related to career expectations.
5. To provide University faculty with perspectives for evaluating student performance and preparatory curriculum.

6. To provide agencies with quality senior level students, involvement in preparing and mentoring future professionals and opportunities for two-way communication with University faculty.

7. Students completing an internship shall demonstrate the sustained ability to apply recreation theory, use diverse, structured ways of thinking to solve problems related to different facets of professional practice, engage in advocacy, and stimulate innovation.

**Selection of the Agency**

Selection of the agency should reflect the combined efforts of the student along with the internship coordinator, and a varied host of additional resources. The agency may be contacted by the Internship Coordinator before the student sends the resume and letter requesting an interview. **Students are required to interview with two agencies of their own choosing in cooperation with the Internship Coordinator to help them decide on the most appropriate learning opportunity.** A copy of the Internship Interview form, Appendix A, needs to be returned to the Internship Coordinator after each interview.

Successful internship experiences have been completed throughout the continental United States and beyond with private leisure, public recreation and park agencies at the national, state, and local levels. Students have also received meaningful experiences with agencies serving individuals with disabilities in community as well as institutional settings, various private nonprofit organizations, and commercial enterprises. The RPTA Department maintains a complete listing of past placements with accompanying information. Maintenance of sound cooperative relations with these agencies along with cultivation of similar arrangements with new sources are of primary concern.

**Therapeutic Recreation major only**

Professional Level Certification Standard for Certified Therapeutic Recreation Specialist (C.T.R.S.)

Completion of a minimum 560 hour, 14 consecutive week field placement experience in a clinical, residential or community-based therapeutic recreation program under the supervision of an on-site field placement supervisor and faculty supervisor who are certified by NCTRC at the Therapeutic Recreation Specialist, Professional level. This is included in the12-week 480 hour minimum experience required for completion of RPTA 499 professional internship credit.

**RPTA Majors with a Nonprofit Minor only**

Students wishing to complete an internship to fulfill the requirements of the nonprofit minor and RPTA major must secure placement at approved 501(c)(3) or 501(c)(4) agencies. Consultation with the Nonprofit Minor faculty is required.
THE PLACEMENT PROCESS - AN OVERVIEW

A quality internship experience requires the combined efforts of several people, with communication being a key to success. Students are responsible for keeping other members of their teams informed (faculty advisors, internship coordinator, faculty supervisor). Students should consult their faculty advisors on a regular basis concerning career options relating to coursework emphasis, vocational and avocational aspirations, and general competencies. This ongoing interaction, supplemented by conversation with other "resource people" such as faculty, practitioners, and fellow students, should leave the students with a general knowledge of where the internship could take place and of what it should consist of to meet established goals and objectives. Information files about agencies are available for student review.

It is also the student's responsibility to make initial contact with the internship coordinator concerning placement tasks. The coordinator, while serving as a general resource throughout the planning process, then assists the student in refining placement alternatives. The internship coordinator must approve the organization selection. **Students must obtain a detailed description of the internship experience from the agency and submit it to the internship coordinator for approval (also see Student and Agency Supervisor Responsibilities).** Initial contact with prospective agencies will be made by the internship coordinator only in those cases where it is inappropriate for students to initiate such action. The student will follow-up the initial selections with a letter of application and resume. Interviews with the agency are expected and must be documented with an interview form. (see appendix A).

Upon completion of an interview process resulting in agreement between the student and agency representatives, it is the student's responsibility to immediately notify the internship coordinator and the agency in writing (email will suffice). The agency will provide the student a position description, outlining specific duties and expectations. The agency will provide a supervisor's resume or Appendix F. The Internship Information Sheet (Appendix B) should be filled out by the student and returned to the internship coordinator. An Internship Agreement will then be signed by the student and the agency supervisor (or legal representative thereof) before being forwarded to the internship coordinator and department chair for signature and final confirmation. The student has access to his/her file.
GUIDELINES

Specific details about the experience follow. Some of the items will not be directly applicable to every agency or organization due to varying student interests and unique resources of the agency, therefore adjustments or variations are expected where appropriate.

1. The student will spend a minimum of twelve weeks at no less than 40 hours per week in professional field work and related studies for which twelve semester hours of credit in RPTA 499 will be received upon successful completion. The internship may be completed during any of the three academic terms.

2. The student may, but is not required to receive a stipend from the agency or organization. On a non-paid internship, reimbursement for the student's private vehicle use, meals or overnight lodging when functioning as an agency representative is recommended. Students are expected to follow the rules, regulations, and policies of the agency or organization whether or not they receive payment.

3. An Internship Manual will be available on the RPTA website. A print copy will be made available upon request. A statement will be available to delineate philosophy and objectives of the internship, progression and scope of the internship, and the forms, records, and reports to be submitted. This Manual serves these purposes.

4. The student is covered by University medical insurance during the internship. However, students involved in the internship prior to or following the actual dates of the semester for which they are enrolled are advised to consult the internship coordinator to determine insurance eligibility. When necessary, additional university medical insurance can be purchased at a nominal fee.

5. Students are covered by liability insurance by the University in an amount of $1,000,000 per incident.

6. The student must not maintain full or part-time employment during the course of the internship experience unless in a temporary, supplemental or replacement category within the agency. Enrollment in any course other than RPTA 499 at any school during the internship must have prior written approval from the following: Agency Supervisor, Department Chair and the Internship Coordinator.

7. A 2.0 grade point average is required cumulative, and in the RPTA major before beginning an internship. Failure to achieve this threshold will result in the postponement or termination of the internship. Students that exceed 300 miles from either the Macomb or Moline campuses must meet a 2.5 GPA threshold.

8. Completion of all core courses with a C- or better in each class is required prior to RPTA 499.

9. The student, the agency and the University representatives agree to adhere to all applicable state and federal laws during the duration of the internship placement, inclusive of Department of Labor internship designations.

10. Students seeking certifications from NCTRC, Nonprofit Leadership Alliance or other outside entities may have additional guidelines.

11. Exceptions for Quad Cities students taking courses out of sequence may be allowed. Consult with the internship coordinator.
STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES

PRE-INTERNSHIP - Students are required to:

1. Maintain a minimum grade point average of 2.0 in major and cumulative immediately prior to participation in the internship. Students that exceed 300 miles from either the Macomb or Moline campuses must meet a 2.5 GPA threshold.

2. Fulfill special requirements if required by department head and/or internship coordinator.

3. Attain "senior standing" (minimum of 90 credit hours).

4. Successfully complete all “core classes” with a “C-” or better.

5. Successfully complete RPTA 398: Internship Seminar. This course is designed to prepare students as interns and professionals. Such topics as applications, resumes, interviewing, and professional organizations that will assist in choosing an internship are covered. Students also formulate and refine goals statements during this time.

6. Prior to the interview process, submit to the internship coordinator a sample resume and cover letter.

7. Meet with the internship coordinator to discuss possible contacts and to review your letter of application and resume. Student may meet with faculty as well.

8. Interview with at least two prospective agencies. If the agency is located more than 300 miles from the student’s main campus, a telephone interview may be utilized instead of the on-site interview. However, the on-site interview is preferred. Submit Internship Interview form (Appendix A) to agency to be completed and returned to the internship coordinator. Forms may be faxed, e-mailed or mailed to the internship coordinator.

   a. At least one interview form is required from chosen agency.

9. Acquire an Agency Supervisor Profile Information, Appendix F of the person who will be primarily supervising the student. A supervisor’s resume may be used in place of Appendix F.

10. Obtain a detailed outline of the proposed duties from the agency supervisor.

11. After the student is offered and accepted an internship, inform the internship coordinator and other agencies, thanking the agencies in writing for their time and interest.


13. Meet departmental deadlines for paperwork as follows: for Spring by November 1st, for Summer by April 1st and for Fall by August 1st.

14. Sign Internship Agreement Form (A). This must be signed prior to the start date of the internship. Failure to submit signed form will delay the start of the internship.

15. Become acquainted with agency staff, facilities, programs and procedures before the actual experience begins. This could include: a) visits by the student to the agency, b) conversations with staff at meetings, conferences or on campus, c) reading of manuals, annual reports, brochures, and other printed materials available, d) seeking out other students and alumni who have completed their internship with the agency.
16. Schedule a meeting with the assigned faculty supervisor to become better acquainted and to discuss the nature of the experience, goals and behavior objectives, weekly report preferences, etc. Review specific syllabus from faculty (see sample Appendix H).

**DURING THE INTERNSHIP - Students are required to:**

1. Pursue the internship with enthusiasm and professionalism, along with being available at all times within reasonable notice for assignments related to the internship.

2. Submit written bi-weekly reports to your faculty supervisor on time. Carefully read and include all components of each assignment. A copy of each report should be submitted to your agency supervisor so that they will know what information the University is receiving and also how students are reacting to the experience. (This is not a substitute for regularly scheduled weekly progress meetings, but it could stimulate additional discussion.) Reports are to be sent to your faculty supervisor as per your faculty member’s syllabus directions. A heavy emphasis in the reports is to be on student reactions to experiences, especially as they relate to identified goals. It is recommended that students create a template in a Word document to use for these reports.

   **REPORTS ARE TO BE SUBMITTED ON A BI-WEEKLY BASIS. FINAL INTERNSHIP GRADES, AWARDED BY THE FACULTY SUPERVISOR, WILL BE BASED ON ASSIGNMENTS SUBMITTED (AND POSTMARKED) NO LATER THAN TWO WEEKS AFTER THE END OF THE INTERNSHIP (AS SPECIFIED ON THE AGREEMENT).**

3. The Student Midterm Evaluation of Internship (Appendix C) is to be completed and sent to faculty supervisors immediately after completion of the sixth week of the field experience. Before sending, students are expected to review it with their agency supervisors and have them sign it.

4. Internship project. Identify and complete one project specific to your speciality area. Projects are to be approved by faculty supervisor and site supervisor prior to implementation. (This will be agency, faculty and student dependent and may not occur at all sites)

5. Coordinate site supervisor evaluation forms returned to your faculty supervisor promptly.

**INTERNSHIP COORDINATOR RESPONSIBILITIES**

**PRE-INTERNSHIP - In addition to instructing RPTA 398: Internship Seminar, the Internship Coordinator will:**

1. Counsel with prospective internship students regarding placement interests and opportunities.

2. Maintain a file on each applicant for the internship experience, to include a current resume, interview sheets, potential site information, supervisor’s resume or Appendix F, and other relevant documents.

3. See that the Agreement Form is signed by appropriate parties upon acceptance of the student by the agency.

4. Assign faculty supervisors to prospective interns in conjunction with the department chairperson.

5. Maintain and make available current information regarding possible internships.

6. Maintain current contacts with professional agencies while cultivating new agency-university
relationships.

7. All internships must be approved by the Internship Coordinator. The coordinator is responsible for interpretation, enforcement and appeals of departmental internship policies set forth by the faculty.

**DURING THE INTERNSHIP - The Internship Coordinator will:**

1. Solicit curriculum evaluations from all students as part of the department assessment program.

2. Maintain relevant resources to be used for counseling and placement purposes, and documents to the student's permanent file.

3. Assist faculty and students on issues regarding communication, dismissal from internship and the like.

*Duties pertain while on contract as internship coordinator.

**FACULTY SUPERVISOR RESPONSIBILITIES**

**PRE-INTERNSHIP - The Faculty Supervisor will:**

1. Become acquainted with the agency and review student's file including resume, goals and relevant paperwork for the successful completion of the internship. It is the student's responsibility to make an appointment to discuss the agency and provide pertinent information.

2. Provide the student with specific recommendations within the framework of the internship guidelines, e.g. items to stress in reports and suggestions regarding anticipated schedule of involvements and guidance on acceptable special projects.

3. Provide the student with an expectation of how to submit bi-weekly reports via a syllabus.

**DURING THE INTERNSHIP - The Faculty Supervisor will:**

1. Maintain a copy of the student’s bi-weekly reports. Respond to student's bi-weekly report in a timely manner and return feedback to student.

2. By approximately midterm arrange for a visit or phone conversation with the student and agency supervisor. This visit should occur sometime between the student's fifth and ninth weeks.

3. Tasks that may occur during the visit/phone conversation to the agency:
   a. Spend time with the student and the supervisor together and separately in order to be certain that proper communication is taking place.
   b. Discuss the student's schedule to date and plans for the remaining time.
   c. Discuss the reports with the student and the supervisor. Also discuss midterm and final evaluations.
   d. Discuss future employment/education with the student.
   e. Build rapport for Western Illinois University with the agency.
   f. Consult with agency personnel on topics of personal expertise.
   g. Visit facilities, meet staff members, observe programs, etc.
   h. Spend an adequate amount of time to do all that is needed.

4. Return student file and submit final grade recommendations to the internship coordinator by the end of
the last day of semester classes or as soon as possible after internship ends. Agency supervisor's recommendations are considered very strongly. Quality and responsiveness of reports, along with meeting other responsibilities will also be considered. Final internship grades, awarded by the faculty supervisor, will be based on assignments submitted (and postmarked) no later than two weeks after the end of the internship (as specified on the agreement). If grades of "incomplete" are submitted, faculty supervisors are expected to make change of grade as soon as possible.

AGENCY SUPERVISOR RESPONSIBILITIES

PRE-INTERNSHIP - The Agency Supervisor will:

1. Review internship information provided by the university to determine nature of individual and agency commitment.

2. Conduct a formal interview with the student prior to placement. Complete an interview form and submit to Internship Coordinator.

3. Provide Internship Coordinator with a description of duties and responsibilities that the agency will assign to the student.

4. Provide Internship Coordinator with the current profile (Appendix F) or resume for the person who will be primarily supervising the intern.

5. Sign and return Internship Agreement Form, retaining one copy.

6. Provide the student with current information regarding the agency (organizational structure, program brochures, etc.).

DURING THE INTERNSHIP - The Agency Supervisor will:

1. Work with WIU faculty to fulfill the university’s educational function.

2. In conjunction with the student, develop goals and objectives, create a basic schedule of involvements for a minimum of twelve weeks, and identify a special project for student.

3. Meet weekly with the student to assess progress and define upcoming responsibilities and expectancies.

4. Inform the student of personnel policies and procedures.

5. Profile, in a specific manner, the clientele and service environment (social, economic, political, and religious). Provide budget and other pertinent information for student academic reports.

6. Assist student in identifying and completing a special project.

7. Complete, review with student and submit midterm and final evaluation forms to faculty (Appendices D and E). (Can fax to 309/298-2967 or e-mail)

8. Mentor student in professionalism

9. Assist student in networking.

10. Meet with faculty face to face or via telephone.
11. Ask questions, discuss concerns in a timely manner.

12. Submit letter of recommendation for student's file along with final evaluation.

**EVALUATION PROCESS**

Completion of internship. The student will complete the internship in its entirety as per the agreement form. Dismissal from the internship agency will result in failure of the internship. (Students who feel they are dismissed without just cause may appeal to the internship coordinator, faculty supervisor and/or the chair).

Supervisor evaluation. The student's progress should be continually monitored by the agency supervisor, with regularly scheduled opportunities for discussion. The formal Evaluation Forms (Appendices D and E) will be completed by the agency supervisor and returned to the faculty supervisor at midterm, following week 6, and upon completion of the experience. The Evaluation Form should be reviewed with the student before it is sent to the faculty supervisor. Evaluations by agency supervisors are considered strongly in final grading of the student internship. Final supervisor evaluations should be received by the internship coordinator no later than 2 weeks from the completion of internship. Realizing the diversity of placement opportunities, Evaluation Forms represent a general approach to student assessment. Feel free to add additional documentation to explain the evaluation.

Student evaluation. Students complete the Student Midterm Evaluation of Internship Form (Appendix C) at the end of six weeks. After sharing it with their agency supervisor and having the supervisor sign it, it is forwarded to their faculty supervisor.

Bi-Weekly reports. The student will be given faculty feedback on bi-weekly written reports. These reports constitute the bulk of the grading opportunities for the internship experience. These reports are the manner in which students demonstrate learning to be assessed by faculty supervisors. Failure to complete reports in a timely manner may result in failing the internship. Please see your faculty member’s syllabus for specific writing guidelines. Both content and presentation will be graded.

Portfolio project. Student will be graded on materials they provide as support for their internships. Students are expected to review the feedback provided by faculty. The objective of the portfolio is to provide students opportunities to remedy content, grammar, and formatting concerns provided on reports. The portfolio should include an APA style cover-page and corrected versions of all six reports. Artifacts should be included, and treated as an appendix. Approved artifacts may include, but are not limited to, program plans, power points, videos, oral or written presentation of projects.

Faculty will assign all grades based on demonstrated competencies as an entry level professional. Grade reductions up to and including failure of internship will occur for any of the following: late submission of reports, failure to submit reports, inadequate reports, failure to coordinate a visit of a faculty supervisor, failure to submit midterm student evaluations, failure to coordinate agency supervisor evaluations, failure to complete a student project.
STUDENT CHECKLIST

The following items must be accomplished before beginning the internship:

_______ Submit resume and cover letter to the Internship Coordinator.

_______ Complete a minimum of two interviews with selected agencies. Have completed Internship Interview forms (Appendix A) returned to the department. At least one of which must be the agency you will intern with. Inform ALL selected agencies of final decision and send thank you/rejection letters.

_______ Submit list of duties or position description to the Internship Coordinator.

_______ Submit Agency Supervisor’s resume or Appendix F to the Internship Coordinator.

_______ Inform Internship Coordinator of agency selected and fill out the Internship Information Sheet, Appendix B.

_______ Sign Internship Agreement Form (Appendix I).

_______ Meet with assigned faculty supervisor face-to-face or electronically.