

## **Preparing for a Practicum, Internship, or Experience in Your Field**

Students at UH-West O‘ahu are required to complete a senior practicum or senior project as part of their graduation requirements. For those of you who choose to do a practicum or internship, you can gain valuable experience in the workplace as you prepare for graduate school or a job. You have the opportunity to see first hand the field you want to enter and you’ll understand how to apply the skills and knowledge you’ve gained from your courses at UHWO.

An internship or practicum also can provide you with an excellent opportunity to develop a network of contacts for future work or research. Through your practicum position, you will meet experts in your field and others like yourself looking to get situated in the field. As you work on site, you will find many opportunities to talk with these people and learn about the depth and breadth of your field.

Work closely with your faculty advisor to set up your practicum. Take time to think about what you plan to do when you finish your degree at UHWO. Research possible work sites. Think about how you can use your internship or practicum as a bridge to a job or graduate program. In conversation with your faculty advisor, write up objectives for yourself that will detail skills and knowledge you hope to gain from your practicum or internship.

### **What am I looking for?**

- Be clear about your goals for your practicum. Take time to think about how your practicum will benefit you. Do you want to learn particular skills or information? Do you want develop strong contacts? Do you want to gain particular knowledge? Be very specific about what you plan to accomplish with your practicum experience.
- Research information on occupations you may want to pursue using the Occupational Outlook Handbook at <http://www.bls.gov/oco/home.htm> (Use the A-Z search in the menu). At this site you can learn about skills and knowledge you may want to acquire in your practicum.
- Read about UHWO Practicum details at <http://www.uhwo.hawaii.edu/forms/srpracticum.pdf>.

### **How do I find a site?**

- Talk to your faculty and discuss a site that will fit your skills and goals. Often, faculty have contacts with businesses, organizations, and agencies that they can recommend to you. Think carefully about which situation will best serve you and your plans.
- Review the *Big Book of Lists* put out by Pacific Business News for possible businesses or organizations you may want to contact. You can find this at your library or at Career Services.
- Check the yellow pages in your phone book under the field or occupation you plan to enter to learn of possible practicum locations.
- When you have a site in mind, research the business or organization on the web. Make sure it’s a good fit with your goals. Also find an appropriate contact person (often someone in human resources if it’s a big firm, the owner if it’s small).

### **How do I request a site?**

Once you have decided on potential sites and thought about what you want from your experience, begin to contact the appropriate people at those sites. Your faculty advisor may have contacts to recommend to you.

- Create or update your resume, cover letter and list of references. Your site often wants this information before they interview you.
- Prepare for an interview. Practice what you want to say before you meet with your interviewer. Be prepared to talk with the interviewer about your goals and objectives for your practicum or internship and how you can benefit the business.

### **On site behavior**

Treat your practicum experience as a job and promote the skills and qualities listed below:

- **Communication skills** - Observe and listen carefully to your supervisor and co-workers. Ask questions when you're unsure about any aspect of your work. Thank your supervisor and co-workers for their assistance.
- **Honesty and integrity** - Be honest in your interactions and work. Show pride in what you do.
- **Teamwork and interpersonal skills** - Work and relate well with your co-workers and administrators. Take time to get to know people at your site. Offer to help on projects.
- **Strong work ethic** - Show up on time and follow your agreed-upon work schedule. Complete your duties in an accurate and timely manner.
- **Motivation and initiative** - Go beyond just taking responsibility for your duties. Once you are familiar with your site, use your creative and problem solving skills to suggest changes you might make.
- **Dress appropriately** – observe what other workers are wearing and do the same.

If you have a rewarding practicum experience and you are interested in working for the business, organization, or agency full time, make an appointment with the person in charge of hiring and speak with them about opportunities. Update your resume and prepare to present yourself much as you would for a job interview. Thank your site supervisor for your experience, both in person and with a note. Maintain contact with people you have met at your site as they are now part of your network.

Review handouts on resumes, references, cover letters, interviews and networking at <http://www.uhwo.hawaii.edu/career2>.