Creating Your Own Internship
By Sally Kearnsley

There are many excellent sources of information about available internships on the web, in internship directories and other listings. But what if you just aren't coming up with the right one to fit your needs? Try creating your own opportunity!

Here are step-by-step directions:

1. Be sure that your resume effectively reflects the skills, experience, and academic background that you will bring to the position.

2. Decide which company or organization you would like to work for. Be sure they have a department or unit that fits your needs and interests!

3. Find the appropriate contact person within the organization. Generally, this would be the head of the department in which you would like to work. You can get his or her name in a variety of ways: through the organization's web site, through networking contacts (family, friends, or alumni of your college can be very helpful), or by calling the organization and asking for this person's name and title.

4. Approach the boss. You can do this through a letter, an e-mail, or a phone call. The key is to define what you are seeking (e.g. "a summer position in which I can use my strong writing skills), your area of interest/expertise (my keen interest in environmental issues), and what you will bring to the experience (a willingness to work hard, an eagerness to learn and contribute).

Two important pieces of advice as you are making your contact:

- **Do not** say, "Do you have any internships available?" If they have not used students in this way before, their answer will probably be "no." Describe your desire to work for the company in terms of a summer (or term or semester) "work experience" to learn more about the field.
- **Ask if there are any projects they need done which you could complete for them while gaining experience in the field. Share information about background and skills you have that might be of interest to them.

5. Start early! Use Spring Break to contact potential employers. You need time to get your resume to the appropriate person(s). Do your company research in the career center before you leave campus. Ask career center staff for help in building alumni networking contacts.

As with many good jobs, internships are not always advertised. Taking the initiative to contact the people or the organization with whom you would like to work may produce a rewarding experience for both you and your employer!