

# Gaining Experience

## Gaining Experience

Future employers and graduate schools are very interested in candidates that have participated in experiences related to their career goals. "Related Experience" can include such things as internships (for credit or not for credit), volunteer experience, undergraduate research, student employment, and summer/part-time jobs.

## What is "related experience"?

Related experiences form a bridge between your academic learning and your career development. They can be for credit or non-credit, paid or unpaid, part-time or full-time, during the summer or over a semester.

## Why should you get experience?

1. Explore and test out career options
2. Develop your skills and interests
3. Develop your networking base

## How much experience is helpful?

Employers and graduate schools expect multiple experiences.

## What type of experience do you want?

Answer these questions to help focus your search.

- Evaluate your personal values and interests. What skills do you want to use and develop? What skills and abilities do you bring to the experience? What types of positions interest you? What type of setting/environment would you like to experience?
- When would you do this experience: Summer, Fall Semester, or Spring Semester?
- For the fields you're considering, what are your options regarding pay?
- Do you want to acquire credit for your experience?

## How do you find these related experiences?

- Explore the CANE files! Check for alumni in a field or company in which you are interested. Ask if they know of any opportunities that may be available or if they have any advice.
- E-Link
- If there is a particular company or organization you are interested in, give them a call. Ask if they offer opportunities to gain experience. Many companies do. If they don't, ask if they would consider creating a position. Or, talk to someone in Human Resources for advice.
- Talk to professors, family, friends, and others who know you well for advice and suggestions for opportunities.
- Talk with current students who have completed an internship or are completing one. Many organizations will offer the same opportunity year after year.
- Set up informational interviews with people that work in areas or organizations that interest you.

### Thinking about doing an internship?

Contact the Internship Office!  
Academic Services Building, CSB  
[www.csbsju.edu/internship](http://www.csbsju.edu/internship)  
363-5799

### Thinking about doing undergraduate research?

Contact the Director of Undergraduate Research!  
[www.csbsju.edu/undergraduateresearch/](http://www.csbsju.edu/undergraduateresearch/)  
363-3549

### Student Employment can provide great experience and help you develop skills!

Talk with your supervisor and/or check out available positions and training.  
[www.csbsju.edu/sejobs/](http://www.csbsju.edu/sejobs/)  
363-5388 (CSB), 363-3855 (SJU)

## How serious should I be about this?

Finding a related experience should be approached with the same attitude as a job search. Ideally, you should conduct your search up to six months before you plan to begin.

### Top 10 Reasons to use Career Services

1. Develop a game plan for your search
2. Get feedback on your resume and letters (e.g. cover, thank-you).
3. Complete a practice interview.
4. Learn about creating a portfolio.
5. Attend Fair preparation sessions.
6. Gain networking/information interviewing skills.
7. Receive assistance with E-link.
8. Learn how to research organizations.
9. Discuss ways to evaluate offers.
10. We're fun and helpful!

## Applying and Preparing for Interviews

- Apply for more than one opportunity.
- Prepare and customize your resume and cover letter. Make an appointment with a career counselor for feedback.
- Follow proper application procedures for the specific experience for which you are applying.
- Research the companies and organizations to which you are applying.
- Prepare for the interview. Schedule a "practice" interview with Career Services.

## Follow-Up and Make Decisions

- Write thank you letters and make follow-up phone calls.
- Based on the offers you receive, decide which opportunity best meets your personal and professional goals.
- Formally accept or decline all offers in writing or by telephone.

## Other strategies:

- Don't be afraid to call! Most people will be flattered to talk with you regarding opportunities in their field and/or with their company in an informational interview. Also, you will make a contact that could lead to a position.
- Organizations love students who will work for free. If you are having a hard time finding something in your area of interest but really want the experience, think about taking an unpaid position.
- Consider a part-time job that will offer you important transferable and marketable skills.
- If you can't secure a directly-related position, consider experience that will build your skill set.