

INTERNSHIPS: Learning Goals



AN INTENTIONAL FOCUS ON STUDENT LEARNING is what distinguishes internships from jobs. As an intern, you should consider yourself a learner first and a contributor second, regardless of whether you are earning credit associated with your internship. To get the most out of your internship, consider setting a few learning or performance goals and reviewing them with your supervisor before, during, and at the end of your internship.

Creating learning goals:

- > Signals that you are **invested** in the experience
- > Helps ensure everybody is on the **same page**, resulting in a better experience for all
- > Helps you develop and demonstrate **important professional skills** such as prioritizing, action-planning, and accountability
- > Most importantly, helps set the stage for **maximum intern learning**

Goals can focus on different areas:

- > **Skill** development
- > **Knowledge** acquisition
- > **Personal/professional** development

SMART goals:

- > **S** – Specific
- > **M** – Measurable
- > **A** – Action-oriented
- > **R** – Relevant
- > **T** – Time-oriented

Example SMART goals:

- > By the middle of my internship, I will be able to **write a 1-pg press release** using AP style
- > By July 30th, I will be able to **troubleshoot Microsoft Excel questions** with 97% accuracy
- > Within one month, I will have **identified 50 potential new customers** and added them to the master database
- > By the end of my internship, I will **develop, pilot, and facilitate two lessons**
- > Within the first two weeks, I will **memorize 20 acronyms** commonly used at the agency.
- > By week 5, I will be able to **identify 3 career paths** in this field & **1 way to learn** about each
- > By the fundraising deadline, I will have **secured in-kind donations from 5 companies**.

Goal-setting caveats:

- > Try to **avoid** broad goals like “understand” or “learn” because they cannot be easily measured
- > **Two or three** goals is typically sufficient for a quarter-long internship
- > Writing SMART goals may require several feedback and **revision loops**

Goal-setting is a process:

- > Start thinking about potential learning goals **before you start** your internship
- > During the **first week**, meet with your supervisor to flesh out your goals in writing
- > Set up a **weekly** or **biweekly** time to check in
- > **Midway through**, discuss your progress, successes, and challenges with your supervisor; also discuss how you might want to modify your goals and/or your plan for achieving them
- > At the **end of the internship**, review your progress and celebrate your accomplishments!

ADVICE FROM INTERNS:

- > “Setting **very specific goals** is important; when goals are vague, they can seem daunting.”
- > “It is okay to **modify** your goals.”
- > “**Share your goal** with someone who can keep you accountable to it.”

SMART GOAL PROMPTS:

- > What do you **specifically** hope to accomplish?
- > How will you **measure** your progress?
- > What **actions** will you take to achieve this goal?
- > How is this goal **relevant** to your internship, academic interests, &/or career aspirations?
- > What is your **timeline** for meeting this goal?