

Experiential Learning Opportunities

Engaging in internship, job shadowing and volunteer opportunities will help you to choose the career path that is a good fit for you. Experience in your field of interest will provide you with professional competencies that will propel you towards your career aspirations.

What are the benefits of experiential learning?

An internship, job shadow experience, or informational interview will provide you with the opportunity to learn from professionals in a real work environment and to develop your knowledge, skills, and professional competencies in your field of study. Ultimately, the more experiential learning you engage in, the more marketable you will be to employers!

Opportunities for experiential learning!

Required Internship – 3 credits

The career development office will walk you through the process for securing an internship. It's never too early to meet with a career advisor as the process of securing an internship can take several months. A checklist for securing an internship is in the back of this sheet.

Job Shadowing allows you to observe professionals in their work environment to see if the job and the setting are of interest to you. At the end of the experience, it's good to have an informational interview to ask questions and demonstrate your professionalism.

Student Employment

Student employment is an excellent venue for building professional competencies. You can choose to work in your field of interest or in a job that builds skills such as communication, leadership, computer skills and more.

Volunteering

Volunteering offers students the chance to build team work and leadership skills through involvement in on-campus organizations and activities as well as learn about your field of interest in organizations in the community.

Informational Interviews

Informational interviews provide you with the chance to learn more about your major or field of interest by meeting with professionals with a set of specific questions you have about their own path to success.

Community Service

Providing your time and energy to improve the well-being of your community is an important part of being a good citizen and professional.

Tips for finding experiential learning opportunities!

- Every year, over 200 students do internships in Pittsburgh, other cities and in countries around the world! Even more students participate in community service and work as student employees to build competencies and explore their career interests in real world settings.
- Creating an organized plan with plenty of time to find experiential learning opportunities will make the process easier than you might imagine. Follow the tips below.
- Start by talking early with your academic advisor about the type of experiences you should be seeking that relate to your major and your career interests.
- Meet with a career consultant in the Career Development Office. They know where students have interned and as well as opportunities that are currently available.
- Talk with friends and classmates who may have had experiences that would interest you or who know of others who have had experiences that are similar to your interests.
- Talk with faculty, family and friends of family who may have connections in the community that you may not be aware could lead you to a desired opportunity.
- Utilize HANDSHAKE's online job/internship posting database which is updated daily. To review a list of other posting sites go to our website, careers.chatham.edu.
- Attend networking events and internship fairs on and off campus. Studies show that 80% of internships and jobs are landed through networking! The Career Development Office will provide tips for making networking easy!
- If you are find volunteer work with community organizations that you like, try to secure an internship there, or find one through the connections you have made in your experiential learning.
- Review all the student employment jobs on HANDSHAKE. There are over 800 jobs on Chatham campuses that provide hands-on experience in fields of study as well as in building critical workplace competencies.
- For further information about internships and more experiential learning tips, go to careers.chatham.edu.

It's never too early to start!

Internship Checklist

The internship checklist will help you to be on track to find the best internship to meet your career interests. Set up an appointment with a Career Advisor to help you through the process which can take 3-6 months. Maximize your options by starting early!

Steps towards securing an internship

- Meet with your academic advisor to discuss timing and type of experience that supports your academic learning in your major or field of interest.
- Discuss a good choice for a faculty supervisor whom you will meet with regularly during your internship.
- Begin a search of internship opportunities in your area of interest using Handshake, your networks and other career resources.
- Create a folder or database on your computer with details of internships you like.
- Schedule an initial career advising appointment with the Career Development Office (careers@chatham.edu) for additional assistance with your search and applications, and to start the internship process.
- Meet again if necessary to understand the specific requirements for earning academic credit for your internship.
- Officially ask the faculty member you've selected to be your supervisor and discuss your internship options and possible learning objectives.
- Utilize the Internship Learning Agreement Sample to fill out your objectives and tasks.
- Develop resumes and cover letters tailored to the internships you wish to apply for and have these reviewed by a career advisor before applying
- Schedule a mock interview with a career advisor prior to your internship interview.
- Send a thank you letter to the interviewer and/or a confirmation that you will take the internship.

Once you have secured an internship

- Develop your internship learning objectives with your faculty supervisor and site supervisor.
- Establish with your site supervisor the process for achieving the specific tasks you will complete to meet your internship objectives.
- Determine with your Faculty Supervisor the academic project related to the internship (paper, portfolio, presentation, etc.) for you to complete.
- Commit to a working schedule with your internship supervisor
- Enroll in the internship course for the semester you wish to complete the internship. Deadlines are posted on the career development website.
- Complete an Internship Learning Agreement via DocuSign before the start of the semester you are enrolled for the internship course (*this will finalize your enrollment*)
- Participate in an Internship Preparation Workshop prior to the start of your internship Dates will be listed on My Chatham.
- At the end of your internship, attend an Internship Reflection Workshop.
- Send a thank you letter to your supervisor and any other colleagues you met through the internship with whom you developed a professional relationship.
- Consider doing an exit interview with the supervisor to discuss your experience and ask for ideas or contacts for your next steps in your career development.