

Internship vs. Volunteer Work

An internship is, in general, applied classroom knowledge in a controlled “real-world” environment. However, each academic department must determine if the experience meets established criteria as well as expected outcomes in order to attach academic credit to the experience. Approval of academic credit (one or more hours) is from the academic department’s internship coordinator based on the employer’s internship program and student registering for the credited internship. Additionally, internships must run concurrent with the academic semester.

Points to remember:

- A student must register and **pay** for an internship course in order for the employer to host an internship as *credit only*
- An intern is under the close supervision of an employee
- An employer cannot derive “immediate advantage” from intern’s work
- Not-for-profits may have unpaid interns
- The Career & Employment Center is not involved with the awarding of academic credit

The National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) *Legal Issues* offers discernment between interns, co-ops, trainees and employees according to the Fair Labor Standards Act and the Department of Labor’s Wage and Hour Division.

Link to lists of academic colleges and majors at MTSU:

http://www.mtsu.edu/degree_programs.shtml

For the complete issue of NACE *Legal Issue* concerning internships, visit the NACE website at www.naceweb.org.
