

CAP's Preliminary Undergraduate Internships Policy

TO: Steering Committee

FROM: Committee on Academic Programs

RE: Preliminary Recommendation on Undergraduate Internships

DATE: April 3rd, 2016

Background:

On February 23rd, 2015, CAP received a charge from Steering that included an attached memo from Dean Benjamin Rifkin that addressed the on-site hours requirement for an undergraduate internship. The memo noted that the 200 hour requirement was “out of line with broader academic expectations” and “not an appropriate correlation with our larger academic system.” Steering in turn asked CAP to “review the Internships-Undergraduate policy’s requirement that students must complete 50 hours of on-site experience per academic credit.” The charge also referred to a series of recommendations made by the Task Force on Mentored Internships, and Steering noted that these recommendations “warrant immediate attention” and requested that CAP “consider the Task Force’s recommendations along with Dean Rifkin’s memo.” Finally, Steering asked CAP to “review the Internships-Undergraduate policy as a whole and if changes are warranted, to recommend a revised policy.”

Testimony:

Steering requested that CAP “seek testimony from Academic Leaders and the Career Center” and then write a preliminary recommendation. After collecting this testimony, CAP “should then seek further testimony from “faculty, students, and staff through the constituent organizations.” To solicit testimony from Academic Leaders and the Career Center, a series of questions were generated using Dean Rifkin’s memo and the recommendations made by the Mentored Internship Task Force as guidelines. An email was sent on December 4th, 2015, and this testimony was in turn discussed at CAP’s meeting on January 27th, 2016. The responses to these questions (and CAP’s discussion of them) were used to create the following recommended changes/additions (in **bold** below) to the current undergraduate internships policy document. A rationale for each proposed change/addition can also be found below.

Current Undergraduate Internships Policy Document:

The Internship: Statement of Purpose

The primary purpose of the college-level internship is the development of occupational or professional competence in the actual occupational setting after theory education has been completed. Other purposes (income, career exploration, learning-by-doing, on-the-job training, etc.) cannot be the primary purpose, though they may occur as a second result of the internship experience.

Credits, GPA, and Requirements for the Internship

1. Enrollment is limited to upper division program majors or minors with at least a 2.5 GPA in that program. **CAP recommends changing this to: “Students who wish to participate in an internship program must have a minimum GPA of 2.0 and have completed at minimum of three course units at TCNJ. Departments may require a higher minimum GPA if it is deemed appropriate.”**

Rationale: It was suggested in initial testimony that programs have flexibility regarding GPA requirements, and the minimum GPA was lowered to reflect TCNJ’s definition of a student defined as “in good standing.” Testimony, and CAP’s discussion of this testimony, also suggested that students needed to attend TCNJ for the equivalent of one semester as a full-time student before participating in an internship (thus, the requirement for the completion of a minimum of three course units).

2. Appropriate prerequisite courses must be identified and be completed successfully prior to the internship experience. Additional requirements may be established by the department.

3. Actual professional situations where the student experiences the requirements of employment must be used.

4. The internship is an applied experience. In the internship, the student must apply what she/he has learned in the classroom. This academic foundation must be identified in a general way in the course offering proposal. Specific knowledge, methods, skills, activities, etc. must be listed for each intern in the proposal. (See below.)

5. A minimum of 50 on-the-job hours should be required per quarter course unit of credit. **CAP recommends changing this to: “A minimum of 45 on-the-job hours should be required per course unit of credit. Individual departments have discretion as to whether or not academic tasks can count as part of this hours requirement, but no more than 25% of internship hours can be spent completing academic tasks.”**

Rationale: The federal government mandates that 45 hours are required for each unit of a credit bearing internship. CAP recommends aligning the required hours for TCNJ internships with this requirement. It was also suggested in testimony that programs have discretion to allow academic tasks to count as part of this requirement.

6. A substantial written assignment (or portfolio) requiring research and/or creative work should be required. A simple log describing activities may be included but in and of itself is not sufficient to satisfy this requirement. Exceptions may be approved by the department chair in fields where there is an extensive professional component already required (e.g., in the Journalism/Professional Writing major where the intern's duties may be public relations, researching, reporting that constitute a substantial writing, research, and creative experience).

7. The intern should be paid a salary whenever possible.

8. Internships may be offered on either a graded or pass-fail basis.
9. Second internships within the same program should be limited to those situations in which the student will be able to apply essentially different knowledge, methods, skills, etc. (still program related) than those applied in the prior internship. This limitation does not apply to a second internship in a different program (e.g., a second major, minor).
10. Maximum internship course units to be counted toward a degree by any one student are three. Maximum course units for a single internship are two.

The Internship Contract

An internship contract consists of two parts: the proposal and the enrollment form to be developed by the Office of Records and Registration. The student will prepare a written proposal meeting the following requirements:

1. The proposal should state the number of credit hours from any previous internship, as well as the semester taken and the firm or agency where the internship was done.
2. The proposal must explain exactly how credits are to be earned, what on-the-job activities will be required of the intern, and how these activities relate to program learning goals and objectives.
3. The proposal must describe the methods of evaluating the student's performance in the internship to be used by the faculty supervisor, **which may include evaluation(s) by the on-site supervisor.**

Rationale: This was recommended by the Task Force on Mentored Internships, in accordance with current national best practices. Initial testimony suggests that many/most programs offering internships are already doing this.

4. The proposal must identify the firm or agency where the internship will be done.
5. The proposal must identify the professional person at the firm or agency who will supervise the student during the internship.
6. The proposal should require on-site visits by a supervising faculty member whenever feasible.
7. The proposal must be approved by the department chair or his or her designee before a student may proceed with the internship.
8. The approved proposal must be delivered to the Office of Records and Registration by the end of the first week of the semester in which the internship is to be completed.

9. Copies of the approved proposal should be provided to the student, the faculty supervisor, the department, and the firm or agency supervisor.
10. If the circumstances of the internship change, it is the responsibility of the faculty supervisor to send an addendum to the proposal to the Office of Records and Registration.

Faculty and Administration

1. The supervising faculty member should be compensated at the independent study rate. Travel expenses for all on-site visits should be paid.
2. A periodic review of the quality of internships should be conducted under the direction of the dean of each school with departments offering internships.

CAP recommends the following additions to this section:

3. All internships must specify defined learning goals and objectives.

Rationale: This was recommended by the Task Force on Mentored Internships, in accordance with current national best practices.

4. At the beginning of an internship experience, a representative of the department offering the internship should establish contact (either in person or via phone or virtual platform) with the on-site supervisor to discuss goals and expectations of a specific internship.

Rationale: This was recommended by the Task Force on Mentored Internships, in accordance with current national best practices.

5. At the end of each semester, the student and faculty sponsor should provide feedback on the quality of the internship experience. Departments should develop systematic procedures for gathering and reporting this feedback to the appropriate contact in the department (e.g., program coordinator, chair).

Rationale: This was recommended by the Task Force on Mentored Internships, in accordance with current national best practices.