

Public Health Science Program  
University of Maryland  
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INTERNSHIP PREPARATION CHECKLIST

1. Conduct a **self-assessment** of your internship goals:
  - a) *Personal Development*—How would you like to develop on a personal level? Do you want to increase your **knowledge** of public health (e.g., what are public health activities in hospital settings? In government?), and/or **skills** (e.g., research, advocacy, health communication)? Do you want to try working directly with a certain population of interest, or behind the scenes planning or evaluating programs?
  - b) *Academic Development*—Think about topics in which you have academic curiosity. What **health topics** in classes have been most interesting to you? Are there opportunities through an internship to pursue these?
  - c) *Career Development*—In what ways might your internship serve as a **stepping stone** to a higher career goal? How do you want to build your resume? Do you want opportunities to network at your internship site? Do you want an opportunity to apply your strengths in your internship, or explore areas out of your comfort zone? Are you thinking about graduate school? In what ways might this internship help you in posturing yourself for graduate school?
2. Peruse internship sites on the PHSC internship database (review websites, narrow site list, focus on sites that are likely to meet your goals). Feel free to consider organizations not on the website, being mindful of the criteria for site approval (See the *PHSC Student Guide to Internships*). Feel free to Google "public health organizations" and related key words in the area you would like to work to further identify potential sites.
3. DATABASE CONTACTS
  - a) Email or call site supervisors in database to confirm they are the correct contacts and inquire whether the internship opportunities listed on our website are still available for your semester of interest. Explain you are interested in opportunities for experience in *public health work*. If the answer is positive, inquire about the internship responsibilities and, if you are interested, let the contact know you are planning to send your resume and cover letter.
  - b) Send a resume and cover letter explaining your interest in the internship. (Do not presume in your cover letter that an interview will take place. Say something at the end of your cover letter like: "I will follow up within a week to confirm receipt of my resume and to inquire about a possible interview.") Be sure to reference the internship in the subject line, title your resume and cover letter files with your name (e.g., Tanya Smith resume), and include a brief emailed message to the site supervisor to say *something like*:

Dear Ms./Mr./Dr. \_\_\_\_\_,

I am a University of Maryland student in the Public Health Science Program interested in an internship position with [use full organization name]. I am available for up to \_\_\_\_ hours per week from *(start date)* to *(end date)*, and look forward to this opportunity to further my career interests. Please find my cover letter and resume attached.

Thank you for your consideration,

[Your Name]

4. NON-DATABASE CONTACTS

- a) A good place to begin your search for new internship sites is on the web. Find out if a current internship program exists, and obtain the contact information. If an internship program exists, call as necessary to confirm that the key requirements of your UMD internship are met (e.g., start and end dates; public health focus; mentored by professional w/ relevant experience). Apply for the internship program as required by the site. If you are offered the internship, explain that your Internship Coordinator must approve the internship arrangement for credit.
- b) For sites that do not appear to have a formal internship program, feel free to contact the Human Resources department at your site of interest and seek out the Director. Also feel free to network (i.e., seek out referrals) in an effort to find program staff who may be interested in an intern. Do not call or email without a professional rationale for why you contacted an individual regarding a possible internship (such as a referral, or named website contact). Explain that you are: 1) a student at the UMD, PHSC; 2) seeking an internship for (timeframe), 3) that you are seeking college credit for the internship, and, 4) that you would very much like to complete your internship at that organization. You may briefly explain why, but generally keep your inquiry brief and to the point. If the contact is interested, probe briefly as to the intern role. If fitting, offer to send your cover letter and resume and explain you will be sending the "Hosting an Intern" form too, which explains how you can receive credit.

5. Draft/Revise your resume and cover letter(s). Follow the format and content guidelines for undergraduates in the Career Center's *Terp Guide: Internship and Job Search* (pgs 15-19, 22). Seek editorial assistance! (College Park students consider drop-in reviews at the **Career Center** M-F 10-4; 301-314-7225 or make an appointment with the Writing Center (301-405-3785); Shady Grove students seek editorial assistance from the **Career and Internship Services Center**. Make an appointment at [usgcareerservices@umd.edu](mailto:usgcareerservices@umd.edu) or 301-738-6338.)

6. Begin to prepare for your interviews as you consider internship sites:
  - a) Be prepared to give a firm handshake. Make eye contact while shaking hands.
  - b) Be prepared for an interviewer to request that you: "Tell me about yourself" (Consider college major, relevant interests, and experience and skills that provide some insight into who you are. Remember that everything you say is considered in the context of whether or not you are suitable for the job and if you will fit in. Prepare an "elevator speech" in advance to help with some wording.)
 

Sample Elevator Speech:

*Hello Ms. Foster, my name is Claire Baldwin. I am a senior Public Health Science major at the University of Maryland interested in health literacy. I interned at Adventist Health Care, Center on Health Disparities last summer where I assisted in health education on diabetes management in underserved areas of Prince George's County. I am interested in how companies like yours are using technology to reach diverse audiences with health information. I was wondering if you would be willing to speak with me about your job, your path, and any career development opportunities you may suggest.*
  - c) Be prepared to articulate your internship goals
  - d) Know enough about the organizations you are interested in to explain why you might like to work there.
  - e) Prepare 3 concrete examples of your accomplishments that illustrate your abilities and show why you may be a good fit at each site of interest.
  - f) Prepare questions to ask of your interviewer(s). (See *Terp Guide* pg. 40)
  - g) Be positive—no negative comments about former work experience.
  - h) Smile, show interest and enthusiasm for the internship.
  - i) Have extra copies of your resume for the interview.
  - j) Be prepared with the "**Hosting an Undergraduate Intern**" form both for a site that is not yet approved, as well as to refresh an already-approved site.
  
7. Consider a practice virtual interview with the Career Center (see Careers4Terps homepage, click on the Student resource tab toward the top of the page, and then the "InterviewStream" tool on the left). You may select a list of interview questions for the computer to ask you OR you may also use the General Interview option. Have your virtual interview evaluated by a professional that you know.
  
8. Dress Professionally!
  - a) Women: Blouse and skirt or pants suit (skirt at knee or slightly above knee); closed toed, heeled shoes (less than 4 inches high). Modest jewelry. Neat hair.
  - b) Men: Dark suit and tie (recommended) OR blazer, khaki pants, collared long sleeve button-down shirt (white recommended), tie, leather belt and matching color leather shoes. Neat hair.

c) Both:

- i. No denim
- ii. No hats
- iii. No baggy clothes
- iv. No athletic clothing
- v. No tight, low-cut or other revealing clothing

9. After sending your cover letter and resume to a site, follow-up within a week to confirm receipt and at that time you may inquire as to whether the supervisor is interested in an interview. An email follow-up is fine and often preferred by sites. If you do not get a response back from a site after your first follow up, wait a week before a second follow-up, and express your ongoing interest and hopes for an interview. Take care that your language and tone never sound impatient. If you still do not hear back, wait another 10 business days or so before following up again, and continue applying to other sites.
10. If you are uncertain of the directions to your interview site, consider calling the site office and asking a receptionist for details. Consider also making an advance trip. Make sure you know the correct exit when leaving the Metro station, and how far you need to walk to get to the entrance doors of your building. If you are driving, know where to park. If you are interviewing at a government site, be sure to give yourself 45 minutes to get through security.
11. Allow enough time to arrive early for interviews (10-15 minutes), and be dressed professionally. Bring at least two copies of your resume with you. Feel free to take notes, but do not read from notes during the interview (a quick glance at your list of questions for the interviewer is fine). Provide the **"Hosting an Undergraduate Intern"** form to the interviewer and its purpose briefly.
12. Send thank you notes promptly after each interview. Handwritten notes are impressive, but emailed notes are fine. See Career Center Terp Guide, pages 23 & 25 for assistance.
13. Once you have accepted an internship offer, make arrangements to bring the internship contract to your site supervisor for his/her signature. Make sure you neatly complete your part of the contract in advance.