Formalizing Internship Experiences for Wildlife and Fisheries Undergraduates at Mississippi State University

Sam Riffell and Bruce Leopold

9th Biennial Conference – University Education in Natural Resources
22 – 24 March 2012
WFA3000 Internship

- > 135 hrs / term
- Weekly journal
- Final report
- Public presentation
- Not required (except HWC option)
Faculty Goals for Internships

- Integrate knowledge with practice
- Build professional networks (i.e., get a job)
- Clarify career goals
What type(s) of professional experience qualify for internship credit?
ANNOUNCING the 4th ANNUAL DEMMER SCHOLARS Natural Resources Science Policy INTERNSHIPS AND COURSE in Washington D.C. SUMMER 2012

COURSE and INTERNSHIP OVERVIEW
This course will review and evaluate how each branch of the federal government, as well as nongovernment entities (including the media), affect the development and implementation of federal government policy in the natural resources. The course will be taught through one two-hour lecture and discussion sessions each week, augmented by nine half-day weekend field trips designed to ground class participants in the policy-making arena. Additionally, each class participant will complete a twelve-week, 40 per week paid internship with a government or nongovernment organization active in natural resources policy-making in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area.

LOCATION
Washington, D.C. metropolitan area

WHEN
Approximately May 21 – August 10, 2012
What type(s) of professional experience qualify for internship credit?

- Paid vs. Stipend vs. Volunteer
- Agency vs. University
- Do research experiences count?
- Study abroad?
An intern*ship* is a form of experiential learning that integrates knowledge and theory learned in the classroom with practical application and skills development in a professional setting. Internships give students the opportunity to gain valuable applied experience and make connections in professional fields they are considering for career paths; and give employers the opportunity to guide and evaluate talent.

National Association of Colleges and Employers
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• The experience must be an *extension of the classroom*: a learning experience that provides for applying the knowledge gained in the classroom. It must *not be simply to advance the operations of the employer or be the work that a regular employee would routinely perform*.

• The skills or knowledge learned must be transferable ....

• There are *clearly defined learning objectives/goals* related to the professional goals of the student’s academic coursework.

National Association of Colleges and Employers

Mississippi State University
College of Forest Resources
Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Aquaculture
Wildlife, Fisheries & Aquaculture — Internship Application

Up to 3 credit hours of *WFA 3000 - Internship*, complete this application, attach an OASIS curriculum sheet, secure the appropriate signatures. After completing all requirements, credit may be applied toward graduation and certification if noted below.

**Student information**

Name__________________________  Advisor__________________________

Email__________________________  Expected graduation__________________________

Classification__________________________  MSU GPA ____ Major GPA ______

**Internship Information**

Company/Organization Name__________________________________________________

Company/Organization Address__________________________________________________

Internship Job Title__________________________  Dates__________________________

Company Name__________________________________________________

Agency Mentor and Title__________________________________________________

Mentor’s Phone #__________________________  Mentor’s Email__________________________

# of Credits__________________________  Is Mentor letter attached?__________________________

This internship is: □ Volunteer/unpaid; □ Stipend/Expenses reimbursed; □ Wages or salary

**Brief description of internship duties and activities:**
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Internship Information

Company/Organization Name ____________________________________________
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Internship Job Title ___________________________ Dates ____________________
Company Name ______________________________________________________
Agency Mentor and Title ________________________________________________
Mentor’s Phone # ___________________________ Mentor’s Email ________________
# of Credits ___________________________ Is Mentor letter attached? __________
This internship is: □ Volunteer/unpaid; □ Stipend/Expenses reimbursed; □ Wages or salary

Brief description of internship duties and activities:
**Internship Grade Breakdown**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Requirement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5.0%</td>
<td>Satisfactory Completion of ≥ 135 hours (verified by letter from internship mentor)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5%</td>
<td>Advance work schedule for 135 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5%</td>
<td>Advance completion of internship goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.0%</td>
<td>Bi-weekly field reports (field journal) – due every two weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.0%</td>
<td>Mid-term report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25.0%</td>
<td>Final written report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.0%</td>
<td>Seminar to classmates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.0%</td>
<td>Faculty mentor grade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.0%</td>
<td>Internship mentor grade</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Student perceptions of WFA3000 Internship
Not At All

1. Met educational goals for internship
2. Learned about the agency
3. Extent of networking and gaining contacts
4. Gained technical expertise
5. Increased my employability
6. Changed perceptions about wildlife careers

N = 10

A Great Deal
4 of 11 internees received job offers directly from internship experiences.
Do we need to require WFA3000 Internship?
OR
Do our students get adequate professional experience?
% of students with professional experience

- Freshmen
- Sophomore
- Junior
- Senior

- 2010
- 2011
100% of Graduates have at least one professional experience!!
# of students in WFA Options

- Fisheries (old options)
- Wildlife Agriculture Conservation
- Human-wildlife Conflicts
- Conservation Law Enforcement
- Pre-Veterinary
- Wildlife, Fisheries & Aquaculture

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