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 **internship** 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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National Association of Colleges and Employers
• 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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- Mentor’s Phone #________________________  Mentor’s Email________________________
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Brief description of internship duties and activities:
<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>
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<tr>
<td>10.0%</td>
<td>Seminar to classmates</td>
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<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

Met educational goals for internship

Learned about the agency

Extent of networking and gaining contacts

Gained technical expertise

Increased my employability

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
100% of students with professional experience

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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