

Objectives

To gain a specific and detailed understanding of the Legislature.

To understand its structure, functions, rules and regulations, laws, policies and procedures; goals; personnel; allocation of resources.

To understand the relationship of the Legislature to other parts of the political system.

To understand political behavior.

To learn to do staff work, particularly involving:

- Defining a problem
- Collecting information, facts and attitudes
- Developing judgment of what is relevant, valid, and important
- Summarizing complex material
- Developing alternatives
- Effective oral and written communication
- Dealing with opposition to proposals

Identification and analysis of political strategies in committees, on the floor, and behind the scenes.

Learning and using the resources available to the legislator.

Skills to learn

Keeping a journal of work done

Taking notes at meetings

Writing letters and memos; knowledge of Word is helpful

Learning to use persons and facilities in government and the community as research sources

Writing reports

Expressing yourself verbally and in writing

Arranging and scheduling meetings

Learning how to use the facilities provided for Legislators; e.g., Index departments, Secretary of the Senate's office, Research offices, etc.; journals, session laws and statutes

Finding out where Legislator stands on key issues

Researching a bill or an issue

Recognizing confidential matters and keeping them confidential

Duties

Each intern will be assigned specific duties by the Senator for whom they work. Duties will vary, but generally they will be in the areas listed under "Skills" above, and in the special interests which the Senator has.

RATIONALE FOR EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

Because it provides a unique opportunity to integrate theory and practice concerning political behavior, experiential learning can be a valuable part of a college education. Moreover, since the student is placed in a work situation, it may assist him or her in selecting and preparing for a career.

For the student given to abstract analysis of the political process, an internship provides an opportunity to do some "reality-testing" which can demonstrate both the utility and shortcomings of widely used concepts, models, and theories. For the student who wants a practical education and is impatient with theory, an outside experience may help make abstract analysis more real as well as more meaningful. Each, in his or her own way, learns that participant-observation is a useful method of social inquiry which adds depth and substance to understanding.

Employers usually give preference to persons with work experience. How does a college student ever gain relevant experience if the experience is a prerequisite for the job in the first place? A well-developed internship program which gives students short-term job experience opportunities may help alleviate this difficulty. In addition, an internship may give students a chance to try out career areas they are considering. By experiencing and observing first-hand, students can get a good idea of what a given job is like.

Successful internships may often involve many different kinds of tasks, but sometimes may encompass a single project. Specific learning objectives can and should be achieved. This will depend on the nature of the intern's assignments, the simultaneous course-work, the reading the intern does in addition to the assignments, as well as the individual's application to the work.