Internships and Experiential Learning

2017 NIH BEST Consortium Workshop

At the AAMC Great Group Professional Development Meeting

Sponsored by: Burroughs Wellcome Fund

September 6, 2017 1:30-3:00pm, Orlando, FL
The Panelists

Abby Stayart
University of Chicago

Audra Van Wart
Virginia Tech

Tracey Baas
University of Rochester

Jen Greenier
UC Davis

and moderator,

Susi Varvayanis
Cornell University
Debunking some myths on internships & experiential learning:

MYTH #1 concerns attitude: "They aren't appropriate/relevant to research training…” **Tracey Baas, lead**

MYTH #2 concerns eligibility: “Postdocs and non-citizens can’t do internships…” **Abby Stayart, lead**

MYTH #3 concerns support time: ”Coordination is beyond our bandwidth and budget…” **Audra Van Wart, lead**

MYTH #4 concerns format: ”Full-time internships are the only way to experience another career” **Jen Greenier, lead**

Discussion around Time To Degree
Internships and Experiential Learning

MYTH #1 concerning attitude

"They aren't appropriate/relevant to research training..."

Tracey Baas, lead
T32 Pharmacology Training Grant requires an internship in Big Pharma or Biotech.

Statistics Ph.D. Program encourages summer internship in an industry setting.

Internship actually helped solidify their confidence that academia was where they wanted to stay.

After internship, trainee more productive because they finally have an understanding of what they want to do next (from trainee AND mentor).

Successful PIs need to collaborate with different types of people. Internship provides practice for diverse interactions.
MYTH #2 concerning eligibility

“Postdocs and non-citizens can’t do internships.”
Which of these statements is FALSE?

A. NIH prohibits postdocs from pursuing professional training away from the bench.

B. Some F-1 and J-1 visas permit part-time employment.

C. Optional Practical Training (OPT) and Curricular Practical Training (CPT) are mechanisms through which an F-1 visa holder could be paid by a source external to the university.

D. It is legal (by federal regulation) for postdocs who are US citizens to receive payment from sources outside the university.

E. Rules around sources of payment are different for postdoctoral scholars vs fellows
ONLY A. IS FALSE.

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F. None of the above are TRUE.

IN FACT, the NIH has clearly stated that postdocs are trainees, deserving of professional development opportunities:

1. July 2017: Postdoctoral fellows and trainees are permitted to spend 10 hrs/week in endeavors outside of their full-time training responsibilities. (NOT-OD-17-095)

2. October 2014: Staff in postdoctoral positions…are expected to be actively engaged in their training and career development under their research appointments as Post-Docs. (NOT-OD-15-008)
*Many successful examples have circumvented red tape by being PART-TIME & UNPAID.

*HIGHLY RECOMMENDED TO REQUIRE PI APPROVAL.

*Think beyond the traditional “3-months-full-time” format.

*Know the rules at your own institution.

Here’s a list of offices that could help:
- Dean/administrator for postdoctoral affairs
- Human Resources
- Office of international affairs (visa rules)
- Office of academic affairs (postdoc appointments)

University of Chicago myCHOICE
- Credit-bearing courses for students.
- If paid, citizen students and postdocs can formally adjust their effort paid through lab.

UC Davis FUTURE
- International students on F-1s used CPT to participate in industry internship.

UNC Chapel Hill TIBBS ImPACT
- Usually non-citizen’s visa is written broadly enough to permit an internship related to bench research.

Emory/Georgia Tech Atlanta BEST Program
- Focus on creating “immersive experiences”.
MYTH #3 re. support time

"Coordination is beyond our bandwidth and budget…"

Audra Van Wart, lead
WORKAROUNDS

Locating internships:
• UC Davis: trainees given the tools to pursue their own experiential learning opportunities through participation in a 10-week Career Exploration workshop series, advertise existing rather than create/match.
• Other institutions provide advice/structure/facilitation for trainees who seek out opportunities on their own, or lists of individuals to contact as a starting point.

Collaborating with external/internal units:
• Alumni office
• Career Services office
• Regional organizations and business partnerships (e.g. VirginiaBio, Life Science Tennessee)
EXAMPLES DEBUNKING THE MYTH

WORKAROUNDS

Offer more cost-effective formats (more in myth 4):

- Virginia Tech: Mini-internship workshops, utilize visiting speakers
- Rutgers: Shadowing experiences: 72-80 hrs over one semester (a couple days per month)
- Vanderbilt: Remote internships- funds travel for trainee and host to meet, trainee returns and completes project remotely
- Cornell: On-site experiential learning by embedding in the licensing office, biosafety office, university communications offices, on-campus or regional business incubators
EXAMPLES DEBUNKING THE MYTH

COST-BENEFIT (investment up front can pay off in long run)

Partner relationships go beyond internships
  • UNC: It does take a lot of time to set these internships up, maintain relationships with local companies, but has other benefits besides internship opportunities.
  • Virginia Tech: Industry partnership has led to internships, site visits, guest speakers, potential collaborative research efforts with faculty, and job pipeline.

Opportunities created once but relationships take less effort to maintain than establish
  • U Chicago: The biggest cost is a manpower issue related to the cultivation of the opportunity.

Empowering trainees to own their career & professional development encourages creativity
  • Cornell: Staff guide trainees who invite speakers and set up experiential activities that benefit themselves and also other trainees, become more engaged in giving back. (see myth #4)
MYTH #4 concerning format

"Full-time internships are the only way to experience another career"
EXAMPLES DEBUNKING THE MYTH

Part-time Internships
Examples:
• Science Translational Medicine, editing/publishing internship, mostly remote, 10h/week for 6 months (UC Davis)
• CA Business for Educational Excellence, educational policy, 8h/week for 4 months (UC Davis)
• ALL are part-time. 10hr/week, 10 weeks, unpaid. mostly at on-campus offices, some remote (Univ. of Chicago)

Campus-Based Internships
Examples:
• Institutional Review Board Administration, 16h/week, 3 months (UC Davis)
• Tech Transfer Office, 8h/week, 6 months (UC Davis)
• Internship and Career Center (UC Davis)
• Univ. of Chicago: LOTS. Medical Center News & Communications office, UChicago Press, Dean’s Office, microscopy core, clinical trials office, development office, center for data intensive science, library, research computing center, grants administration office, and others that wouldn’t make sense to name because their name doesn’t reveal what they do.
EXAMPLES DEBUNKING THE MYTH

Short Term Projects
Examples:
• Writing articles for campus/professional newsletters, online blog sites (UC Davis)
• Partnership with Entrepreneurship Center to pair grad students with small companies for part-time projects (UC Irvine)
• InterSECT – job simulations; hands-on experience with career-related tasks (UCSF/WSU)

Company Site Visits/Standard and Immersive
Examples:
• Biotech companies, government agencies, non-profit organizations (UC Davis)
• Short Job Immersions on Campus – ½ day visits to campus offices (UC Davis)

Courses/Workshops with hands-on skills building
• Science Communication workshops with Powerhouse Science Museum (UC Davis)
• Science Communication course with practical assignments for radio broadcasting (UC Irvine)
• PEP Program – postdocs in part-time adjunct teaching positions at community colleges or state universities (UCSF)
Who You Gonna Call?

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INTERNSHIPS AND EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING MATTERS

AND EACH EXPERIENCE LOOKS DIFFERENT.