



Legislative Internship Program

Missouri State University

Intern Handbook

Career Center
MISSOURI STATE UNIVERSITY

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Handbook Introduction

This Missouri Legislative Internship Program (hereinafter referred to as ("Legislative Internship") Intern Handbook establishes policies, procedures, benefits, and working conditions that will be followed by all Legislative Interns as a condition of their service to Missouri State University.

This Missouri Legislative Internship Program Intern Handbook is not a contract of employment nor is it intended to create contractual obligations for Missouri State University of any kind.

The policies and procedures outlined in this handbook will be applied at the discretion of the Missouri Legislative Internship Manager.

The Legislative Internship Manager will make every effort to notify interns when an official change in policy or procedure has been made but interns are responsible for their own up-to-date knowledge about Internship policies, procedures, benefits, and working conditions.

No provision in this Legislative Internship handbook and expected standards of conduct can be waived without written permission from the Legislative Internship Program Manager. Such a waiver, if granted, applies only to the intern for whom the waiver was granted at the time of the waiver.

These policies, procedures and working conditions provide a work environment in which both legislator interests and intern interests are served.

The Legislative Internship Program values the talents and abilities of our interns and seeks to foster an open, cooperative, and dynamic environment in which interns and the legislators alike can thrive. The Legislative Internship Program provides an Open Door Policy in which interns are encouraged to take problems to the Legislative Internship Manager if they are unable to resolve a situation with their legislator.

The Legislative Internship Program is an equal opportunity employer. Religion, age, gender, national origin, sexual orientation, race, or color does not affect hiring, promotion, development opportunities, stipend, or benefits. The Legislative Internship provides for fair treatment of interns based on merit. The Internship complies with all applicable federal, state, and local labor laws.

Please review the policies, procedures, working conditions, and benefits described in this handbook. You will be asked to affirm that you have read, understand, agree to abide by, and acknowledge your receipt of this intern handbook and intern standards of conduct.

Regards,

Sarah Douglas

Legislative Internship Program Manager

Missouri State University

PURPOSE

The Missouri State University Legislative Internship provides participating students the opportunity to **serve 40+ challenging hours per week**, off-campus, for the **spring semester** of each year on the staff of a state legislator at the state capitol in Jefferson City, Missouri. Daily starting times and the number of days worked per week vary between legislators. The purpose of this internship is to:

- Support the University’s Public Affairs mission by enabling students to become better citizens and providing them with the opportunity to participate in state-level government
- Integrate academic and applied learning through regular reporting to and feedback from a faculty member and the Career Center staff
- Favorably represent MSU through dedicated service
- Help interns prepare for independent living, become familiar with life transition processes, and practice lifestyle decision-making

This is a service opportunity and is not intended nor designed to provide students an opportunity to actively influence state political issues or exactly meet each participant’s personal expectations.

Learning Objectives

Objectives vary with the intern placement, but typically include some of the following:

- To learn how citizens can interact with legislators and affect legislation
- To learn how bills are introduced, voted on, and enacted
- To learn to use available resources for legislative research
- To learn to write press releases and interact with the media
- To improve verbal and written communication skills

Position Responsibilities

Intern duties vary with intern placement, but typically include some of the following:

- Research constituent problems or concerns, then prepare verbal or written response
- Attend committee meetings, take notes, write briefs, and report on activities observed
- Research proposed legislation to determine cost, impact, advantages/disadvantages
- Write press releases and act as a general aide
- Attend receptions and other events with, and sometimes in place of, the legislator
- Assist the secretary or aide with general office work
- Guide tours of the Missouri State Capitol

Qualifications

The mandatory requirements to serve as a Legislative Intern for Missouri State University are*:

- Sophomore, Junior, Senior, or Graduate Student standing, with 45 or more credit hours
- Missouri State University student, with completion of at least one semester at Missouri State University
- 2.50 or higher Missouri State University GPA

*Note: International students must have been on F-1 status at least nine months and be in good standing

Expectations

Professional Expectations

- Plan to attend all Missouri State sponsored Legislative Intern events and RSVP to the appropriate organizers
- Behave and dress in a manner commensurate with a professional public servant
- Manage and resolve personal matters including academic assignments and graduation requirements
- Immediately inform the Legislative Internship Manager of medical or personal situations which could impact ability to perform internship duties
- Interact with the Legislative Interns in a spirit of support and community
- Be present and on-time for professional duties Monday-Friday
- Maintain current health and vehicle insurance, including possession of personal vehicle or an alternative transportation plan to be discussed with the Legislative Internship Manager
- Keep track of the Legislative Internship Manager's monthly visits to Jefferson City

Intern Communications

The primary means of communications between the Legislative Intern Manager, the Political Science Department Head and the interns will be through email. Weekly communication will take place through brief logs to the Political Science Department Head and Legislative Internship Manager. Interns are expected to check their email daily for communications from the Legislative Internship Manager.

Geographical Separation

The stringent work requirements during certain portions of this internship can put a severe strain on personal relationships if loved ones must remain in the Springfield area. Candidates to whom this is a concern should address it to the Legislative Internship Manager.

Academic Credit

All Legislative Interns attend three mandatory training sessions. (See the section titled "Intern Training.") In addition, Legislative Interns may take up to six hours of co-op, internship, or other independent study classes in either their major or minor. PLS credit may be received if the academic department does not offer such classes. However, **because the work environment at the capitol and the course homework assignments can be quite demanding, interns are discouraged from taking these classes unless absolutely needed for graduation.** In previous sessions, several students who thought they could handle the additional workload either reduced their academic hours or canceled their class. One hour of PLS independent study credit may be awarded and the fee waived for the government related training given prior to reporting for duty to those interns who so request.

Finances

Intern Status

Legislative Interns will be identified as students in good standing, which will protect them from early loan payment claims, and qualify them to continue to be carried on family insurance plans. If interns receive notices from loan or insurance companies, please contact the Missouri State Office of the Registrar at 836-5520.

Housing Leases

Missouri State Resident Life contracts can be terminated without penalty. However, off-campus leases are more rigid and in the worst cases may not be broken without legal consequences. This could result in the student either not being able to apply for the program, or paying rent at two different locations if selected as an intern. Before applying for this internship, off-campus students should examine their contracts and comply with the terms listed. **If a student is considering applying for the Legislative Internship in the future, it is recommended that he or she sign-up for a six months lease only.**

Medical Care

Interns are **required to complete a Medical Information Sheet** that will be forwarded to the Legislator's office to which they are assigned. Because the Legislative Interns do not pay a student activities fee, those desiring to utilize the many services of Taylor Health and Wellness Center while they are off-campus should either pre-pay the student health fee or pay the fee the first time they utilize the Health Center's services. It is also recommended that students acquire the student health insurance plan. For information on the health insurance, contact Taylor Health and Wellness Center or visit their web site at <http://health.missouristate.edu>.

Program Requirements

Training

Intern attendance at these training sessions is mandatory in order to train the selected interns to perform their duties and enable them to maximize their Legislative Internship experience. Interns must mark these dates on their calendars now, as make up dates are not available.

- **Legislative Intern Training Day** **November 15, 2008**
 - 8:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m. (Includes lunch provided by Missouri State)
 - Training includes welcome session, financial overview, what to expect in the Legislature, and teambuilding with the new interns
 - Plaster Student Union
 - Business casual dress

- **Intern Orientation** **December 10, 2008**
 - 3:00 p.m.-5:00 p.m. (includes refreshments)
 - Held in Carrington Hall Turner Family Conference Room
 - Training counts toward PLS 399 one credit hour and includes preparation for the legislative environment
 - Led by the Vice President for Student Affairs, the Missouri State University Lobbyist , and the Missouri State University President’s Chief of Staff
 - Business Casual Dress

- **On-Site Training*** **Early January, TBA**
 - Held in Jefferson City on the Tuesday before the session opens
 - Professional Dress
 - *Interns must complete the House and Senate Research Project assigned earlier to them before this On-Site Training in Jefferson City

Intern Evaluations

All Missouri State University Legislative Interns will give to their supervisors and go over with them two Employer Evaluation Forms, one after four weeks in the position, and one in mid-April. For those students receiving a credit fee waiver from Missouri State Financial Aid, a copy of the April evaluation will be forwarded to the Co-op Internship Academic Advisor or instructor for those classes. Informal annotations will also be recorded by the Legislative Intern Coordinator based on observations made during visits, reports from intern supervisors, and Legislative Intern Panel members. These will be normally used to assist with professional references requested by the Interns.

Interns will also be expected to complete the short Pre-Program and Post-Program Assessments to determine the personal progress and learning that took place through the Legislative Internship opportunity. In addition, upon completion of the internship, interns will meet with the Legislative Internship Manager and Political Science Department Head for a one-hour debrief.

Program Specifics

Intern Selection

This is a competitive program with only a portion of all interviewing applicants actually being selected to serve as interns. Those students not selected are encouraged to continue preparing themselves in the areas listed in the **Preparing for your Interview** section of the website and apply again next year.

Legislator Matches

The interview panel will consider applicants' interests, political affiliation, attributes, home district, and other factors in assigning them to legislators; however, since the legislative internships are comprised of numerous variables, exact matches on all accounts are not guaranteed. For those candidates wishing to work with legislators from a law background, this is unlikely because MO lawmakers come from a broad range of professions. Additionally, because of the staff and committee differences between the House and the Senate, students selected as Senate interns will have a significantly different experience than their counterparts in the House. **Interns do not make their own legislator matches.**

Assignment Options

Periodically, if he or she desires and a vacancy exists, an intern may serve in other offices of elected officials. However, the students in these positions will be required to work extended hours five days weekly, will not get to associate routinely with other legislative interns, and will have a significantly different experience.

Mock Session

Near the date of the Legislature's spring break, Legislative Interns serving in the House receive the opportunity to elect their own legislative officials, form committees, address issues, and hold their own two-day Mock Legislative Session on the House floor. Historically, the interns have occupied leadership positions and set the pace for this event. **This opportunity does not currently exist in the Senate. Senate interns desiring to participate in the House Mock Session should inform the MO House Legislative Intern Coordinators and their Senators no later than February 15th.** If Missouri State interns wish to participate, they must start building votes and coalition early in the session.

Nondiscrimination Policy

Missouri State University is a community of people with respect for diversity. The University emphasizes the dignity and equality common to all persons and adheres to a strict nondiscrimination policy regarding the treatment of individual faculty, staff, and students. In accord with federal law and applicable Missouri statutes, the University does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, ancestry, age, disability, or veteran status in employment or in any program or activity offered or sponsored by the University. In addition, the University does not discriminate on any basis (including, but not limited to, political affiliation and sexual orientation) not related to the applicable educational requirements for students or the applicable job requirements for employees.

This policy shall not be interpreted in a manner as to violate the legal rights of religious organizations or military organizations associated with the Armed Forces of the United States of America.

The University maintains a grievance procedure incorporating due process available to any person who believes he or she has been discriminated against. Missouri State University is an Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action employer.

Inquiries concerning the grievance procedure, Affirmative Action Plan, or compliance with federal and state laws and guidelines should be addressed to Jana Estergard, Equal Opportunity Officer, Siceluff Hall 296, 901 South National, Springfield, Missouri 65897, (417) 836-4252.