



Legislative Internship Program

Missouri State University

Intern Handbook

Career Center
MISSOURI STATE UNIVERSITY

Updated August 2015

(Due to current discussions in the Missouri State Legislature regarding legislative interns, this handbook is subject to change.)

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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 University 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.

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 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*:

- Junior, Senior, or Graduate Student standing, with 60 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

APPLICATION PROCESS

Students are encouraged to schedule an appointment with someone on the Legislative Internship Program Committee prior to applying. Submit the following application materials to the Career Center in Carrington 309 to be considered for the program (application deadline for Spring 2016 is Friday, October 16, 2015 at 5pm):

- Résumé
- Cover letter, answering the following questions:
 - What is your motivation for participating?
 - What goals do you have for your internship experience?
 - What skills do you hope to develop during your time in Jefferson City?
 - What strengths do you think you bring to the Legislative Internship Program?
 - How would you assess your ability to work in a stressful environment?
 - How have your experiences at Missouri State prepared you to be a good ambassador for the University?
- 3 confidential letters of recommendation mailed to:
 - Attn: Director, Career Center
 - Missouri State University
 - Carrington 309
 - 901 S. National Ave.
 - Springfield, MO 65897
- Current transcripts from the Office of the Registrar (Carrington 320)

EXPECTATIONS

PROFESSIONAL EXPECTATIONS

- Will attend all Missouri State sponsored Legislative Intern events and RSVP to the appropriate organizers
- Will attend mandatory educational programs that will occur throughout the semester.
- 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 appropriate University staff 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 University staff
- Keep track of the Missouri State University legislative team monthly visits to Jefferson City

INTERN COMMUNICATIONS

The primary means of communications between the University and the interns will be through email. Weekly communication will take place through brief logs to the appropriate University staff. Interns are expected to check their email daily for communications from University staff.

ACADEMIC CREDIT

As a part of the Legislative Internship Program, classes in conjunction with the internship for which you register will be covered by the program (6 hours). Legislative Interns may earn academic credit in either their major or minor department. **The work environment at the capitol can be quite demanding and interns are not allowed to take classes other than that required for the internship.** In previous sessions, several students who thought they could handle the additional workload either reduced their academic hours or canceled their classes.

FINANCES

STIPEND

Interns are eligible to receive a monetary stipend of \$3900. The stipend will be disbursed as follows:

- December (as soon as possible) - \$1500
- January (disbursed in accordance with Financial Aid timeline) - \$2400

If your university account has a balance, the stipend will first pay off any remaining university balance before being disbursed to you.

Each intern must visit with a Financial Aid counselor to understand if and how the stipend may affect his/her Financial Aid eligibility or award prior to accepting internship placement.

INTERN STATUS

Legislative Interns will be identified as full-time 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 I** **November 20, 2015**
 - 3:00 PM – 6:00 PM - Plaster Student Union 308A
 - Training includes welcome session, financial aid, professionalism, dress for success, housing, thank yous/introductions to legislators and alumni panel
 - Casual dress
- **Legislative Intern Training Day II** **December 4, 2015**
 - 9:00 AM – 12:00 PM – Strong Hall 300
 - Administrative paperwork (bring Spring class schedule and proof of medical insurance)
 - Training includes Politics of the Institution and differences between the House & Senate by Dr. George Connor
 - Casual dress
- **On-Site Training*** **January 4, 2016**
 - 9:45 AM – 4:30 PM
 - Hearing Room TBA, State Capitol
 - Professional Dress

*In case of inclement weather, training will be rescheduled for Wednesday, January 6, 2016.

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/LEGISLATOR MATCHES

This is a competitive program with only a portion of all interviewing applicants selected to serve as interns. The interview panel will consider applicants' interests, political affiliation, personal attributes, and other factors in assigning them to legislators. **Interns do not make their own legislator matches.** Each intern is expected to function as a regular staff member for the office in which they are assigned. Because of the staff and committee differences between the House and the Senate, students selected as Senate interns will have a different experience than their counterparts in the House.

Concurrent employment, on-campus obligations, and class work that may conflict with internship commitments **are prohibited.**

NON-DISCRIMINATION 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. Prohibited sex discrimination encompasses sexual harassment, which includes sexual violence. 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 the Equal Opportunity Officer, Office for Institutional Equity and Compliance, 901 South National Avenue, Springfield, Missouri 65897, equity@missouristate.edu, (417) 836-4252, or to the Office for Civil Rights.