



DEPARTMENT OF
POLITICAL SCIENCE

STUDENT INTERNSHIP GUIDE

Why Do an Internship?

An internship benefits you now, strengthens your job search later, and contributes to the organizations and communities you serve.

What You Gain

1. To gain knowledge and skills related to your major and/or anticipated career field.
2. To acquire the work-related experience that employers value, fill in the gaps on your résumé, and strengthen your candidacy for post-graduation jobs or graduate school.
3. To augment your academic study by trying out in a “real world” context what you have learned without making a long-term commitment.
4. To gain experience in a professional setting and learn how organizations function.
5. To achieve personal growth and build confidence as you take on new challenges.
6. To practice employment interviewing skills and experience the hiring process.
7. To experience being an independent thinker and learner.
8. To gain the opportunity to get your foot in the door for possible full-time employment after graduation.
9. To network with contacts in an occupational field or industry.

How Internships Help You Get a Job

- **Internships can turn into job offers.** Employers offered full-time jobs to 62% of their 2024 interns.¹
- **Employers use internship experience to choose between candidates.** When deciding between two otherwise equally qualified graduates, employers rate internship experience, especially with their own organization or in their industry, as the most influential factor.²
- **Internships get you interviews.** In a field experiment that sent thousands of fictitious résumés to real job openings, applicants with internship experience received about 14% more interview invitations than those without.³
- **Internships protect against underemployment.** About half (52%) of recent bachelor’s graduates work in jobs that don’t require a degree. Graduates who completed an internship were 48.5% less likely to be underemployed.⁴

Sources

¹ National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE), *2025 Internship & Co-op Report* (2025). naceweb.org/talent-acquisition/internships/intern-offer-and-conversion-rates-fall-acceptances-rise

² NACE, *Job Outlook 2026* (2026). naceweb.org/talent-acquisition/candidate-selection/internship-experience-often-the-deciding-factor-between-equal-candidates

³ Nunley, J. M., Pugh, A., Romero, N., & Seals, R. A. (2016). College major, internship experience, and employment opportunities: Estimates from a résumé audit. *Labour Economics*, 38, 37–46.

⁴ Strada Institute for the Future of Work & Burning Glass Institute, *Talent Disrupted: College Graduates, Underemployment, and the Way Forward* (2024).

⁵ NACE, *Class of 2015 Student Survey* (2016). naceweb.org/job-market/internships/paid-interns-co-ops-see-greater-offer-rates-and-salary-offers-than-their-unpaid-classmates

How Your Internship Impacts Others

1. Internships help connect you to a greater community.
2. How you perform in an internship can impact whether a host organization would like to host another student in the future.
3. What you produce and how you perform can positively shape organizations, even if you are only placed with them for a short period.
4. Most organizations where you might intern have direct relationships with New Mexican communities, so you play a role in helping governments, non-profits and other organizations support people.

Internship Opportunities Through Political Science

There are two ways to do an internship through the Department of Political Science: apply to one of the department's internship programs, or find your own internship and register for credit. Knowing which path you are on tells you which parts of this guide apply to you. You can pursue multiple internships (including both path 1 and path 2 options) at once.

Where to find internships

Political Science internship listings. Learn about all department internship programs and find other internship opportunities at <https://airtable.com/app2ssKgsc5H4TMMB/shrx75Z2zWD0Znqe2>.

Handshake. Many organizations contact UNM Career Services and post internships on Handshake, UNM's career portal (unm.joinhandshake.com). This is also a good place to search.

Questions? The department's Education & Outreach Manager, can advise you on any internship. See "Who Can Help" for contacts.

	Path 1: Apply to a department program	Path 2: Find your own internship
Who finds the placement	If selected, the program places you with an established partner.	You do, with help from the department's listings, Handshake, Career Services, and faculty.
How you get in	Apply by the program deadline. Selection is competitive.	Secure an offer, then complete the Internship Learning Agreement and register.
Pay	All programs are paid or include a stipend.	Depends on the host organization. Many are unpaid.
Academic credit	Set by each program.	Register for POLS 2998 or POLS 491 (1–3 credit hours).
Where to start	The internship listings and the program descriptions below.	"Path 2" in this section.

Path 1: Apply to a Department Internship Program

The department runs selective internship programs with established partners. For these, you apply to the program rather than finding a host yourself. Each program has its own eligibility requirements, application, and deadline, and every program includes pay or a stipend. If you are selected, program staff will explain how credit, paperwork, and requirements work for that program. Current deadlines and application links are posted on the internship listings.

Fred Harris Congressional Internship WASHINGTON, D.C. • ONE SEMESTER

Spend a semester in Washington, D.C., working in the office of a member of New Mexico's congressional delegation and seeing firsthand how federal policy is made.

Open to undergraduates in any major with at least 60 earned credit hours and a minimum 3.0 GPA. Interns earn a full semester of credit (15 credit hours) and receive a stipend toward D.C. living costs. Applications require a résumé, two letters of recommendation (at least one from a faculty member), and an unofficial transcript.

Students will take a full load of courses created by the Department of Political Science tailored to the program that helps students integrate learning with their internship.

New Mexico State Legislative Internship SANTA FE • ONE WEEK DURING SESSION

Work full time alongside a state legislator in Santa Fe for one week of the legislative session, after a required orientation.

Interns earn one credit hour (graded CR/NC), keep a daily journal, write a short summary paper, and receive a \$500 stipend to help cover expenses.

Advanced State Legislative Internship SANTA FE • FULL LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Work at the Legislature for the entire session. Interns may be placed with legislative committees, majority or minority offices in the House and Senate, or legislative organizations. The internship comes with a \$4,000 stipend for 60-day sessions and \$2,000 for 30-day sessions.

In addition to taking an internship course, interns must plan their semester so they can be in Santa Fe during session, using second-half-semester (2H) courses that begin after session ends and online courses. Meet with the major advisor early to plan your schedule.

Mayor's Select Internship Program CITY OF ALBUQUERQUE • PAID • FALL AND SPRING

A paid, 16-week placement with the City of Albuquerque made up of two eight-week rotations, one in the Mayor's Office and one in a city department, plus a group community service project.

Open to undergraduates with a minimum 3.0 GPA who can commit at least 10 hours per week. Limited to five interns per semester.

Public Policy Leadership Pipeline NEW · PAID STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT INTERNSHIPS

Paid internships with New Mexico state and local government, including executive agencies, the legislature, the courts, and city and county governments.

The Pipeline is a partnership of Political Science, the Master of Public Policy program, the School of Public Administration, Economics, and the Ellis School of Business Leadership, and is open to undergraduates in any UNM major.

Path 2: Find Your Own Internship and Register for Credit

You find and secure an internship with an organization that fits your interests, such as a government office, nonprofit, campaign, law office, or business. You then earn academic credit by registering for POLS 2998 or POLS 491. The department approves the placement and oversees the academic side through the course. Internships found this way may be paid or unpaid, depending on the host organization.

Finding an internship for Path 2

Begin the process at least one semester before the semester in which you intend to intern, so you have enough time to find and arrange a placement.

- 1. Develop or update your résumé.** To interview with organizations for an internship, you need a comprehensive, professional, and current résumé. [UNM Career Services](#) can help you develop or update it.
- 2. Search the listings.** Check the department's internship listings (see "Where to find internships" above) and create an account on [Handshake](#), UNM's career portal and on-campus recruiting site, with hundreds of internship, co-op, and post-graduate opportunities for UNM students. Internships are also announced through the department listserv and in class.
- 3. Use your network and reach out directly.**
 - Talk with your professors, fellow students, student organization members, anyone and everyone about internships they may know about.
 - Research organizations and identify the ones you want to contact about internships.
 - Contact organizations directly, either the department you are interested in working in or the human resources department. If an organization doesn't have internship opportunities but is receptive to developing a program, we encourage you to draft an internship proposal.

Requirements for internship credit in Path 2

- An important element that distinguishes an internship from a short-term job or volunteer work is that an intentional "learning agenda" is structured into the experience. Internships for credit are part of your educational program, carefully monitored, and evaluated for academic credit.
- Interns must work the minimum hours required during the semester to receive course credit for the number of credits they registered:
 - 1 credit hour = at least 64 internship hours during the semester
 - 2 credit hours = at least 120 internship hours during the semester

- 3 credit hours = at least 160 internship hours during the semester
- All internships must be approved in advance. No retroactive credit will be given for internships completed during a prior semester.
- The internship must be related to the student's degree area.
- Interns must have a site supervisor at the host organization to train, mentor, and evaluate them.
- Placement may be in a public, for-profit, or non-profit setting, and internships may be paid or unpaid, full- or part-time.
- If the internship is unpaid, it must meet the U.S. Department of Labor's "primary beneficiary" test for unpaid interns (see Wage and Hour Division Fact Sheet #71 at dol.gov).
- If your internship is not completed within the semester timeframe, YOU must go through the necessary UNM process to adjust your credit hours OR request an incomplete from your Internship Course Instructor.

Non-credit internships. You may also intern without registering for credit. These internships should still be carefully monitored by an assigned supervisor in the organization, and their length and hours are set by the host organization and/or project.

Preparing for Applications and Interviews

Whichever path you take, strong application materials and interview practice make a difference. Prepare your documents and practice interviewing well before deadlines.

UNM Career Services UAEC, Building 85, Room 220

Career development appointments in person or by Zoom, Monday to Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Book by calling 505-277-2531 or emailing onlinecareerservices@unm.edu.

Drop-in hours for quick résumé questions.

Workshops and events are listed on the [Career Services website](#).

Online guides for cover letters, résumés, CVs, interviewing, and thank-you letters.

Interview practice: request it when you book an appointment.

Once You Have a Placement: Registering and Completing Requirements

Steps to Registering for Credit

1. Carefully review this Student Internship Guide and sign your Internship Learning Agreement.

For Path 2 students: Ensure your site supervisor fills out all necessary paperwork and the evaluation forms at the beginning and end of the internship. Make sure the supervisor knows the deadlines for these forms and ask them to return the forms on time.

2. **Submit the online Internship Learning Agreement Form.** All students must submit this form to receive permission to register for internship credit.

3. Register! Path 2 and Public Policy Leadership Internships register for POLS 2998 or POLS 491 (listed in the Course Schedule as “Internship”). The course defaults to 1 credit; to change it, open your schedule in LoboWeb and edit the number of credit hours. Credit toward the degree is granted based on the number of credit hours you register for. The Political Science Major Advisor can help with registration and course planning.

Other department internship programs (i.e. Congressional, Legislative and Mayor’s Select) have their own courses for which you must register.

4. Review the Internship Course Syllabus and understand the requirements to receive credit.

Completing Course Requirements

During and at the end of the internship, students may be required to:

1. Complete course assignments (requirements are in the course syllabus).
2. Complete the “Student Evaluation Form” at the end of your internship.

Who Can Help

Internships help you apply what you have learned in the classroom, build skills not easily taught in a traditional academic setting, and understand the process of finding a job after graduation. These people can help you along the way.

Contact	How they can help	Email
Hannah Wood Education & Outreach Manager	Facilitates and advises on all internships, including department programs and internships you find on your own.	hmwood@unm.edu
Luke Wilson Political Science Major Advisor	Registration and course planning, including fitting an internship into your degree plan.	polisciadvise@unm.edu
Eric Griego Professor of Practice	Instructor of Record for internship courses (POLS 2998/491). Facilitates registration and provides internship advising.	ericgriego66@unm.edu

Department office: polisci@unm.edu · 505-277-5104

How Your Instructor and Site Supervisor Support You

Your Internship Course Instructor (POLS 2998/491)

- Reviews and signs your Internship Learning Agreement.
- Guides your coursework and evaluates your work.
- Checks in to make sure your internship is a sound learning experience.
- Assigns your course credit.

Your Site Supervisor

- Works with you to set a learning plan and signs your Internship Learning Agreement.
- Trains, mentors, and supervises you at the host organization.
- Gives you feedback and completes evaluations at the beginning and end of your internship.

Professional Expectations and Making the Most of Your Internship

As an intern, you represent the University of New Mexico. Your conduct should make the host organization want to host UNM students in the future. Your internship is also a chance to find out whether you like the work while building your résumé and gaining experience you can't get in the classroom.

Your Responsibilities and Professional Conduct

- **Own the process.** Take the initiative, commit to your internship, and meet every timeline and deadline.
- Arrive as scheduled, ready to work, and stay for the agreed-upon time. Follow through with your commitments.
- Understand what counts as a permissible absence and whom to notify. Let your supervisor know if you will be absent during UNM holidays or academic breaks; your host organization does not run on an academic calendar.
- Conduct yourself in a businesslike and ethical manner and keep information about work-related personnel and projects at your site confidential.
- Dress appropriately and as required by your host organization.
- Do not conduct personal business during work hours (for example, do not use work computers for personal or school tasks).
- Communicate with the department and your host organization by email, in person, or by phone as required. It is **crucial** that you check your student email regularly.
- Be fair, considerate, honest, and cooperative with co-workers. Be positive and supportive.
- Keep an open mind; avoid jumping to conclusions and try to make informed judgments.
- Assert yourself and your ideas in an appropriate and tactful manner.
- Track your hours and report them accurately. **You are required to complete specific hours and outcomes for your academic internship;** consult your Course Instructor for the requirements.
- Tell your Internship Instructor promptly about absences, changes in your work duties or supervision, or other problems at your site.

If you experience harassment, discrimination, or any situation at your site that makes you feel unsafe, contact your Internship Instructor or the Education & Outreach Manager immediately. You can also contact UNM's Office of Compliance, Ethics & Equal Opportunity (CEEEO).

Getting the Most Out of the Experience

1. **Communicate with your supervisor.** Together, develop a clear plan for the internship. Share your progress clearly and frequently, ask for feedback weekly, and accept suggestions for improvement.
2. **Be observant.** See how people organize their ideas and respond to situations. Ask questions and take initiative as appropriate.
3. **Expect some busywork.** All internships, and most jobs, involve some routine tasks. Ideally you will have dedicated projects to work on during your internship, but don't underestimate the value of doing well on routine tasks, too.
4. **Go above and beyond.** Volunteer for extra assignments that show off your ideas and prove your value to the organization. Don't settle for just getting the job done; do it well.
5. **Network.** Interns often get to attend meetings and see the inner workings of an organization and all levels of management. Network with employees and build professional contacts with everyone you meet.
6. **Get a recommendation.** While you are fresh in the minds of your supervisor and co-workers, ask for a letter of recommendation or a future reference.
7. **Know when nonpartisanship matters.** In nonpartisan staff offices and government agencies such as the Legislative Council Service or Legislative Finance Committee, present your skills, not your politics.
8. **Keep in touch.** Staying in contact with co-workers keeps you current on the organization and keeps your name in mind when hiring decisions are made.

Finish Strong

Finish your internship with the same energy and commitment with which you began.

- Bring your projects to completion and leave a positive imprint on the organization.
- Leave a smooth handoff: put together a thorough summary of your work so that whoever takes over your responsibilities is not left hanging.
- Send a thank-you note to your supervisor and anyone else who was helpful to you.