What Makes a Good Internship?

Students should consider the following when evaluating an internship offer:

During the public health emergency, the safety of the work environment should be considered first and foremost.

COVID-19 Considerations
Should a student participate in-person at an internship site, then adherence to current state and local COVID-19 directives, and CDC guidelines is required. Also, should such a student elect to continue in-person at the internship, it is done at the student’s own risk. The University has the ability to create remote and/or independent study options for students in lieu of an in-person internship. Therefore, given the circumstances surrounding COVID-19, if a student rejects these internship alternatives, the student has assumed full responsibility for his/her well-being. For more information regarding internship guidance during COVID-19, please visit: https://careers.umd.edu/internship-guidance-during-covid-19.

1. Scope of Work
   a. Will you be performing work that will add to your professional skill set?
   b. The best internships are likely to require you to use judgment, learn new skills and challenge yourself. Low level administrative support work won’t teach you much, and won’t look good on your resume.

2. Compensation
   a. Is the internship paid or unpaid?
   b. Is a stipend offered to cover travel and parking expenses?
   c. Is your offer early enough you can apply for BSOS Experience Funds, or if it is for a summer internship with a nonprofit or in government, to Bright Futures?

3. Expenses
   a. What is the cost of your commute?
   b. Is carpooling an option? (Many Maryland students intern in certain locations, such as Annapolis during the legislative session.)
   c. Can you schedule classes on fewer days so you intern longer hours on fewer days?

4. Supervisor’s Experience
   a. A recent college graduate is unlikely to be able to teach you as much as a seasoned professional.
   b. Will you be reporting to someone with supervisory experience or who has supervised interns before?
   c. Have you reviewed your prospective supervisor’s bio or LinkedIn profile?

5. What is the reputation of the organization?
   a. Have you researched it or read only their promotional materials?
   b. Are they well established or a start-up? (I won’t approve internships in the latter, but such employers can be interesting for students with entrepreneurial interests.)

6. Training and supervision
   a. Will you receive any training before you start work?
   b. Are there ongoing training opportunities?
   c. Will your supervisor be meeting with you regularly?
   d. Will your supervisor be overseeing other interns on the same days you are interning?

7. Networking opportunities
a. Will you meet other professionals at your worksite beyond your supervisor?
b. Does your internship provider offer other career exploration opportunities such as informational interviews with colleagues or bringing in outside speakers?

8. Schedule
   a. Will the time you spend at your internship interfere with your class schedule, job and other responsibilities?
   b. It is much easier to handle an internship when your schedule is such that you limit your commute time and your number of commutes to an internship. It rarely works well to intern on days you have class unless your internship is on campus. Scheduling classes particular days, and your internship on other days, is most likely to help you succeed in both your courses and your internship. Learn how long your commute will take before accepting an internship.

9. Organizational mission
   a. Does the mission of the organization for which you will be interning align with your values?
   b. If those values don’t align with yours, will you feel comfortable having this experience on your resume in two years? In four years?