

Contacting a Potential Internship Site

After you've thought about what you'd like to do and where, and have identified some likely organizations, here are some steps before actually contacting the organization.

Step 1: Nail down your proposed internship work.

Have a good idea of what you're looking to do in the organization. This will make it easier for you to convince potential sites that they are a match for you and your interests. See past internships at

<http://www.brandeis.edu/ethics/atbrandeis/sorensenfellowship/internships.html>.

Step 2: Research possible internship sites.

Looking at different organizations might help you decide on and further define your proposed internship work. For each of the organizations on your short list of possible sites, familiarize yourself with the work and mission of the organization. This will give you an initial sense of the organization and will provide a basis for your conversation with them. (This is similar to being at a job interview; having a good sense of the company/organization shows that you are serious about working with them.)

Step 3: Contact the organization.

Think about what you want to say before you call or email the organization. Be clear that you are contacting them about the possibility of an internship, and that you need a letter of intent from them in order to move forward. Make sure to let them know that a letter (or email) of intent just shows their interest in you; it is not an agreement that you will be selected as a Fellow and be able to intern at their organization. Send the organization your resume, briefly outline your proposed work, and include the details of the internship (how long it needs to be, etc). You must attach the Internship Site Description (<http://www.brandeis.edu/ethics/atbrandeis/sorensenfellowship/apply.html>), which spells out expectations of an appropriate site and describes the Fellowship.

Step 4: Work on several avenues at once.

It's rare that a student emails his or her first choice organization, gets an instant response, and finds that it's a perfect match. You're not making promises, just initial inquiries – so we suggest that you email at least two or three of your top choice organizations and see which one comes together. It's like the college selection process: you can make inquiries into several different places and see which ones work out. It's also okay to write your application essay with two scenarios if you're still pursuing two equally promising options. In this case, your essay may be 1250-1750 words, instead of the usual 750-1250.

Tip:

-Don't be shy. If you don't hear back from an organization, it is okay to contact them again. Also try other avenues of communication; if you emailed the organization the first time, try calling instead.

Sample: *This is not intended as a perfect contact letter. Just use this as an example and modify it to fit YOU, your personality, and your needs.*

Via email:

Dear [Name of director],

I am writing about the possibility of an internship with [Organization] for eight weeks this summer. I am applying for a Sorensen Fellowship at Brandeis, which would fund my airfare and living expenses for this internship if I were selected.

I am currently a Health: Science, Society and Policy major in my second year at Brandeis University (near Boston in the United States), and I am looking to go into social work within the HIV/AIDS field upon graduation. While researching your organization on idealist.org, I saw that you are looking for Community Social Workers to teach basic computer skills and to work with local children.

I would be very interested in helping to develop a website for [Organization]. I would particularly like to develop it while working with the children, teaching them the computer skills needed to build and maintain a website. The children would be the official creators of the website, with guidance on computer skills along the way. I am open to any tasks you would have for me, and I suggest building the website as only a possible way that my skills could be used at [Organization].

As part of the Fellowship application guidelines, I need a letter of interest from the potential internship organization. This letter of interest does not mean that you are committed to taking me on as an intern, only that you are interested in the possibility, should I be awarded the Fellowship.

I am attaching my resume and the internship guidelines. If you are interested in pursuing this possibility, please contact me so that we can discuss it further. I would love to answer any questions you have for me, as well as talk to you more about the work [Organization] is doing.

Sincerely,

Attachments: Resume
Internship guidelines