

Pre-Law Internship Guide

While internships are not a requirement to apply or be accepted by law schools, they are beneficial and highly encouraged, as they can help you evaluate whether a legal career is a good fit for you. It is always advantageous to get exposure to the work environment, explore your interests, gain skills, and to build your professional network. Here are four ways to approach getting an internship as a pre-law undergraduate student:

Legal Exposure

Most "legal" internships are offered to 1L and 2L law students in law school. If you are looking to gain legal exposure as an undergraduate, your chances of finding an internship are higher if you look at positions that are more clerical and administrative based. It is important to note that you are gaining exposure and this is a great starting point in understanding what goes on to a day-to-day life of a lawyer in a work setting.

Area of Interest

Not all internships have to be in a legal setting. They can be more related to your broader area of interest. For example: If a student is interested in becoming an immigration lawyer, they may consider getting an internship at a non-profit or organization that works with immigrants. Though there may not be a legal aspect to the internship, the student is gaining valuable skills and experiences working directly with the population, policies, and work they want to pursue. In addition, the student is furthering their learning and commitment to public service, which may inform the type of law school and program they wish to attend.

Skills

The American Bar Association (ABA) lists the following core skills, values, knowledge, and experiences students can acquire before law school. Having these core skills can be a good foundation for your future legal education and work.

- Problem Solving
- Critical Reading
- Writing and Editing
- Oral Communication and Listening
- Research
- Organization and Management
- Public Service and Promotion of Justice
- Relationship-building & Collaboration
- Background Knowledge
- Exposure to the Law

Any type of internship, whether legal related or not, will be able to provide you some experience, training, and opportunities to gain and practice these skills.



Networking

Building a network is an important part of a student's educational and professional success. Ways you can network as a pre-law student include emailing lawyers and inviting them for informational interviews (LinkedIn is a great tool for this), attend and introduce yourself at law school fairs and events, and participate in pre-law related groups (UW Phi Alpha Delta). During your internship, challenge yourself to talk to as many people as you can. Ask these folks about their job and their experience with law school.

Tips:

- Search online: Handshake, Job and Internship Fairs, Idealist, Indeed, and LinkedIn
- Check out <https://careers.uw.edu/internships/>
- UW's Law Societies and Justice (LSJ) major has a comprehensive list of internships that their students have done in the past (<https://lsj.washington.edu/internship-requirement#recent>)
- Some majors will allow you to do an internship for credit while in school. Contact your departmental advisor to inquire if this can be done
- The Washington State Legislature offers a Legislative Internship Program to juniors and seniors of all ages where interns will spend winter quarter working in Olympia with staff as members of the Washington State House of Representatives or Senate
- Volunteer at non-profits, public interest organizations, legal clinics, and legal aid offices. Visit the King County Bar Association website and look under 'Volunteer Opportunities'
- Consider getting a legal job as file clerk, paralegal, or legal assistant during school or after graduation
- Other ways you can gain exposure and skills outside of doing an internship include joining a UW RSO, service learning with the Carlson Leadership & Public Service Center, student employment, taking on various leadership roles, research, taking various classes where these skills are practiced/learned, writing for the UW Daily, shadowing/informational interviews with attorneys, and volunteering
- Make an appointment on Handshake to speak with a pre-law career coach



CAREER & INTERNSHIP CENTER

UNIVERSITY of WASHINGTON

Division of Student Life

