

Internship Means Obtaining Jobs

Robert G. LaPrad

The past three-year period at MSU has seen the blossoming of an educational idea that began in 1855, when the first Michigan Agricultural College students labored daily in the fields. It was a two-fold experience: while they helped to build the first land-grant college in the U.S., they were, at the same time, attending classes in practical agriculture. Student labor in experimental plots, animal barns, and greenhouses was required until the early 1900's.

The laboratory and field work may have sufficed for those students headed back to the family farm. Today, with agriculture and natural resources at the forefront in business and industry, the employment picture is enormously more complex.

The College of Agriculture and Natural Resources has taken steps to assist in job placement in a unique manner. The College is the only one in the University with its own intern placement, and alumni coordinator, who works directly with students, employers, and M.S.U. Placement Services. It is because of this role and the enthusiasm of our faculty during the past three years that our Intern Program has increased from 30 students the first year to 226 students enrolled during the academic year, 1976-77. There are many reasons for its growth but the most important one, especially during a tight-job market, is simply a "means of obtaining jobs" upon graduation.

Critical in the long and often frustrating search for a job is the matter of related work experience. Increasingly, students are grabbing what they can get during the summer months, and in most cases, these jobs are well paying but short in related career experience — factory work, construction, trucking, bartending. Professor Donald Evans gave the definition of cooperative education as a college program which periodically places the student in the world of work in order to provide him or her with practical experience which is related as closely as possible to his or her academic program and individual interest. These periods of full-time employment can range from as short a time as four weeks to as long as one year.

Professor Evans remarks on Pennsylvania State's Project brought out what they are doing in regards to cooperative education. Michigan State's Institute of Agricultural Technology has been offering cooperative education known as placement training for over 30 years. The success of this and others has caused the cooperative education spin-off into our four-year college program re-

ferred to as the 13th Term Intern Program. The program does not alternate academic terms with practical experience, but instead is one term of work experience. Any remarks, therefore, that I'll give in regards to the subject of this paper "Internship Means Obtaining Jobs" will refer to those students completing a term of experiential learning, prior to entering the job market. I'll not question the claims of cooperative education, in the true sense, that it provides for alternating terms of work experience, especially in the distrust that some educators have in the removal of students from the halls of learning and breaking up of academic sequences; the belief that such traditions should not be violated. It depends on how you measure the total student's education. It's more than just the study of subjects with recitations, term papers, and final exams. It's the opportunity for total formation of a person's intellect and growth through a professional work experience. This educational process is a powerful agent, not only for the student, but for the institution as a whole. Internees, returning to the classroom, bring back enthusiasm which motivates other students about the real world of work — 'this is a good thing' type of work ethic — and the program gains momentum. The 13th Term Intern Program has helped tremendously to afford students career related opportunities. The program originated among a group of faculty members and administrators, and in placement, I find it a powerful asset for students in their search for employment.

The 13th Term

It works like this: juniors and seniors may sign up for the 13th Term as they would any other elective course. Application is made for any term of their last two years. The program runs for 10 weeks. The fee structure is based on that used for Continuing Education courses — \$28 per credit — but is a flat \$280 for the term. Each of the seventeen academic departments within the College has the option of assigning credits per student. This varies from zero to ten, and is determined by the program department coordinator's evaluation of the scope and depth of the participant's position.

Companies interview prospective interns and make their selections with our college intern office assisting them in the screening process. The department coordinators make their evaluations and a contract agreement is drawn up. The agreement covers the agency or company requirements, the academic requirements, the criteria of evaluation, number of credits, hours of employment, and method of remuneration. The agreement must be signed by the agency or company representative, the student, program coordinator, and me.

An area that merits inspection in interning is the relationship of the student and the money the individual is paid as a salary for his/her employment. Practically all

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students are paid. It is one of the most attractive reasons for becoming involved in an internship as it may provide the student with a means for paying part of his/her education. However, in criticism, this financial incentive can overpower students' rationality in job selection. There is great danger that, if given a choice, students will select employment which is more rewarding financially, instead of lower-paying positions which might be more educational or interesting. Added to that, students are more likely to keep financial goals uppermost in their objectives after returning to finish their college career; indeed they may have too. The intern program probably attracts some students who must, or prefer to, value financial income more than learning situations. If so, it is the emphasis the individual has chosen rather than the fault of the intern program, as the program itself represents a refreshing laboratory of experimentation. Students are spurred by their departmental intern coordinators to derive as many benefits from the experience as possible.

Compensation

There are several ways in which a company may pay the intern. One has offered \$4000 in scholarships for four students; this would pay tuition, room and board, and some wages. Some employers pay room and board, with a stipend; others pay an hourly wage or a straight salary. All employers cover workmen's compensation, and MSU protects the intern under their broad liability insurance program.

Through participation in the 13th Term, over 400 students have worked in 32 states and 6 foreign countries, including Belize, Australia, England, Germany, and British Honduras. An agricultural engineering student majoring in physical systems in agriculture recently completed an internship with International Harvester in Australia. He has since been employed by International Harvester.

There are no seminars, no workshops, no trips back to campus while the student is employed for the term in which he/she is interning. This is not a cooperative education program in the true sense of alternating work periods, and students and employers like the arrangement. Close to 87 percent of the interns have been asked back by the companies to assume permanent positions after graduation. A vice-president of sales of a national feed company has had several gratifying experiences with 13th Term Interns. Last summer an ag-education junior, working for the feed company, conducted a study on the horse business in Michigan and what the feed industry should do to best serve it. The executive feels the intern had done by far the finest job of any interns to date, and openly comments:

We got an unbiased response; he was able to give us constructive criticism. We gave him a bonus trip. An offer was made to him to work for us. He's got a job if he wants it.

The executive also states that his company is sold on the 13th Term Intern Program. "We've hired many interns,

and they have been very successful, some of our most outstanding marketing people."¹

The Dean's Office does not consider the 13th Term and a summer job interchangeable terms; the 13th Term is a learning experience, a chance to view both the real world and the academic world. The economy is tight. Industry and business don't want to spend time training students. They want them to work and be productive. How can a university possibly do this without the equivalent in the 13th Term? I have found that students who participate in the 13th Term have matured considerably in their outlook. They are more apt to make adjustments and changes, even if this entails changing their academic major or career objective.

I would like to share with you a few comments from students in answer to the question, "Did you feel the learning experience was relative to your major field of study and also helpful in obtaining a job?"

I thought that the experience of seeing and working in a commercial operation provided a good contrast between how things theoretically should be done and how they actually are done.

I'm in the Large Herd Management Program and worked on a dairy farm with over 200 milk cows. It was my first experience with a herd of this size. I learned a lot about dairy farming which I'm sure is not taught at MSU nor available in textbooks. The internship gave me many insights about the current situation and problems of the dairy farmer.

It correlated very well with my major and probably taught me as much — sometimes more — than a lot of my classes.

My field of study is Crop Science. My intern work related quite well to my major as I was dealing with 3 or 4 major crops, and followed their life cycle throughout the summer. There is no doubt in my mind, the work experience was the most single factor for being offered the job.

I feel that what I experienced through my internship at Tall Timbers Boys Camp was valuable. Though I was unable to perform many duties which related to Environmental Education, I was able to find out my capabilities of relating to boys thoughts, needs, and problems. I feel that what I was able to pull from the staff and my supervisors helped much in forming my disciplinary strategies which I plan to use in future work with children.

Yes, very much so — at the time. However, after doing some very very deep thinking, I have now gone on to what I would call "a higher consciousness." After thoroughly thinking of what I wanted out of life, I realized the meat industry is not for me. I want you to know I am deeply gratified for the opportunity I had interning in the meat industry last summer.

Placing students in the 13th Term internships has led me to look more to the private sector. Competition in state and federal agencies, which do provide many internships is becoming tighter every day, particularly in the natural resources areas. A park and recreation resources major, for example, interned at Sugar Loaf, a

¹Redmond Cotter, Ralston Purina Company, St. Louis, Missouri.

northern winter and summer resort, working with the recreational facilities and in the pro-shop. He has graduated and since found employment in the Cedar Point organization.

Improved Contact with Employers

My role with intern, placement, and alumni coordination puts me in daily contact with employers, providing the opportunity to get a more precise handle on their needs and to acquaint them with the curriculum and students to match their needs. Employers seeking new agricultural and natural resources graduates for their organizations continue to emphasize student's overall orientation to work as a major selection criterion. In fact, more employers rated 'career/work' aspirations of extreme importance in hiring than any criterion in the recent Recruiting Trends survey for 1976-77. The study,² conducted annually by MSU Placement Services among 418 employers nationally, indicated that recruiters stress the importance of career-related work experience earned prior to graduation and part-time or summer work being more important to employers than grades.

Without question, the 13th Term Program has served as a catalyst to general placement activities. Through the internships, prospective employers have gained considerable knowledge about the College, its programs, and its graduates, and have exhibited heightened interest in hiring them, whether they have served as interns or not. The visibility given the College through the intern program has been considerable.

Ag. 399 — the catalogue listing for the 13th Term — has taken the place of some elective courses in some majors. It shows up on subject transcripts as a Pass/Fail grade, significant in itself. MSU's Placement Director, too, is enthusiastic about the 13th Term and the role it has played in preparing students for the world of work. He states:

Students who have work related experience have a tremendous edge over students with just academic experience. This greatly enhances their chances for employment. A person learns an appreciation for the work ethic, what it takes to make it all go once he or she gets off the campus.

The advantage that students who have participated in an internship program have in the job market has been mentioned in several reports. One particular study³ conducted at Colorado State University and reported in the recent **NACTA Journal** revealed that:

87 percent of the agricultural baccalaureate degree students who had participated in an internship program found employment in the same general career area as their internship. Perhaps of greater significance was the finding that upon graduation 56 percent of the students either were employed or were offered employment by the cooperator with whom they had interned. Of those who were not subsequently offered permanent employment by their cooperator, 33 percent interned with cooperators who were not hiring permanent employees at the time of the student's graduation, 19 percent had informed their

cooperators of prior plans to continue in graduate school or to become self-employed and only 1 percent were interviewed but not offered employment by their cooperator.

In a related study, potential employers of baccalaureate-degree agricultural students from Colorado State University were surveyed to determine their attitudes toward experiential education. When asked which of several factors weighed most heavily in their consideration of an applicant for permanent employment, 30 of the 41 employers surveyed ranked "related experience" as either first or second in importance. All other consideration including "courses taken," "grade-point-average," "personality" and "references" ranked well below "related experience." In an effort to determine which types of "related experience" were considered to be of greatest importance, the employers were asked to rank several experiences in the order in which they would be considered in the hiring process. Thirty-two of the forty-one employers indicated that a successful internship with their organization would be the most important type of experience in considering a college graduate for permanent employment. A successful internship with another cooperator ranked second in importance. All other related types of experience including "on-campus laboratory experience," "part-time employment while going to college," "summer employment," "field trips," and "rearing in an agricultural oriented environment" were ranked considerably below the internship type of experience in importance.

The success of an institution's placement of intern students in the job market is in direct relationship to the enthusiasm of the individual department's academic advisors, faculty, and coordinators who work directly with the students seeking career/work experience prior to graduation. In our College we offer 21 majors in agriculture and natural resources. Each major has a coordinator who is responsible for the intern program.

Bob Deans, coordinator of the intern program in Animal Sciences states:⁴

Programs in Animal Sciences are developed in response to the individual student's preferences. The result is a broadly diversified program.

As an example, some of the programs that exist in the meat industry are quality control, extensive beef production operations, research and development with Upjohn Company, beef ranching in Central America and Australia, agricultural credit agencies, and thorough-bred horse breeding. Thus the relevance of student background varies.

³William R. Thomas "Experiential Education," A position paper prepared for the Task Force on "Impact of Enrollments and Student Body Composition on Academic Program, Design and Delivery." Resident Instruction Committee on Organization and Policy, Division of Agriculture, National Association of State Universities and Land Grant Colleges, November 1976.

⁴R. J. Deans, Professor, Department of Animal Husbandry, College of Agriculture and Natural Resources, Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan.

²John D. Shingleton, Director of Placement; L. Patrick Scheetz, Assistant Director of Placement, Michigan State University, Placement Services, East Lansing, Michigan.

Students are counseled to consider carefully their skills, aptitudes, etc., in the selection of career/work experience they want out of the 13th Term Program.

These intern experiences result primarily in a shift in student attitude toward career selection and course relevance. Most students have had little previous work/responsibility experience especially with superior management systems.

The true exposure period is too short to have much impact on skill development or encouragement orientation but does create an awareness of their specific skill and aptitude needs in a particular career field that the university environment does not provide.

In a number of instances, students will seek a second field experience and are encouraged to do so.

The College coordinator and employer play a key role in counseling and advising students on their strengths and weaknesses. It is sad to say that some parents view experiential learning as being of much less value than classroom exercises, and students occasionally are advised against entering such programs by their parents.

Steve Kinzel, Coordinator of the Natural Resources and Environmental Education Program states:⁵

Most students seem to be thrust into a competitive job market in which they have not had an adequate opportunity to evaluate their skills or enjoyment of a particular field — a field in which they may be employed for the rest of their lives. Very few students enjoy the luxury of financial independence while pursuing their education and therefore are sometimes forced to pursue or accept jobs outside their field due to problems created by minimal compensation in their own field.

Experiential learning programs, like the internship program, provide students with an opportunity prior to facing the job market both to confirm which areas of employment they feel comfortable with and enjoy and also to discover which areas they find least challenging. This blending of the practical with the theoretical is our responsibility as educators. The objective of providing immediate employment to students after graduation may not be as critical as offering students, through experiential learning situations, opportunities, alternatives, direction, self confidence, and self awareness.

Ronald Spangler, Intern Coordinator for the Horticulture Department states:⁶

The Horticulture Internship Program has been successful in a number of ways. Our Department has grown from approximately 150 majors in 1972-73 to over 500 majors in 1976-77. The increase in enrollment may be accounted for by the interest of students from urban areas in plants. These students do not have farm or horticulture backgrounds and therefore are uncertain about the career possibilities or specific job competencies required.

In the Fall of 1976, the Department invited all majors to attend an introductory meeting to discuss internship. Over 100 students attended. Approximately 70 per cent expressed an interest in the program. Spring term 1977, 26 students were placed, with an additional 20 students for Summer Term.

⁵Steven F. Kinzel, Fisheries and Wildlife Department, College of Agriculture and Natural Resources, Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan.

⁶Ronald Spangler, Professor, Horticulture Department, College of Agriculture and Natural Resources, Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan.

All students enrolled in the Internship Program, are required to complete an Intern Goal Analysis Worksheet for which they indicate why they are seeking an Intern Position. Eighty percent have indicated they are enrolled in the program for the purpose of exploring career opportunities. Since most of the students are sophomores or juniors we have no data regarding the number of students who will seek employment in their area of interest. However, 14 students of the 26 enrolled in spring are continuing their employment through summer term. Four have decided to seek employment in other areas or have had to accept higher paying jobs in order to be able to attend college next Fall.

According to the MSU survey, mentioned earlier, which covered personnel officers of more than 400 businesses, government agencies, and educational institutions that hire college graduates, most employers don't think colleges are giving students enough practical experience to prepare them for the working world. The employers would not go so far as to require vocational training for all college students. However, they do want to see more emphasis on internships, cooperative education, and other practical methods of relating theoretical classroom activities to on-the-job realities.

I believe the work ethic is going to come on strong. Employers of College of Agriculture and Natural Resources graduates have indicated that the job applicants must show evidence of respect for the work ethic; that they want to work and that they have worked. As was brought out in the survey, employers in industry, business, and government stated that they are influenced more by such work-related attitudes and backgrounds than they are by college grades and personnel recommendations. We have experienced a tremendous growth in our College Intern Program this past year because the program is getting feedback that it is a 'means of obtaining jobs.' I can honestly predict that over 400 students will be interning this next academic year. Will it all happen by chance? No. An active promotional campaign is an ongoing necessary activity involving the faculty, students, and employers.

Promotion Necessary

In the closing minutes, let me share with you a promotional program I think is necessary to make an internship program or a career/work experience that leads to job-employment a reality for agriculture and natural resources graduates. In attempting to place 40 per cent of our juniors in the intern program this academic year 1977-78, the following promotional activities will be carried out.

Use of the public press, in a general way, to present studies covering the intern program and the development of new programs. Weekly and hometown newspapers are receptive to stories describing the unique positions held by intern students featuring their intern assignments. This should not be a shotgun approach, but a personal note, with a release to an editor about someone from the area.

Stories describing the intern program are welcomed in employer publications, especially if the students participating are sons or daughters of long time employers. We intend to inform the editors of these publications about the success of "their" interns back on campus such as making the Dean's honor list, student senate, or club activities.

Radio and television programs are being scheduled through public service announcements to tell about the intern program and its opportunities. Radio is usually limited to a program of 15 minutes or less while a number of television stations have found a place for a half-hour program on internships. The response to these programs has been most encouraging.

Campus literature, such as our intern brochure, and especially our *Focus* magazine features the intern program; tells the story about students who can earn their own way in life, even if only partially. High school counselors are kept well-informed because their support has a significant impact on our programs. *The State News*, a campus press, will be used by working with student journalists writing feature stories.

Newsletters and bulletins sent out by the different departments are good outlets of information about the intern program. Another area we intend to use in our promotional plans is that of singling out employers, students, faculty, and supervisors of employer organizations by recognition awards such as certificates or plaques. These, in turn, generate their own news value.

Intern — Update Newsletter

We believe in keeping the faculty and administrative personnel informed about the intern program through a newsletter called 'Intern-Update.' Keeping the faculty in the position of supporting the intern program is most important. The references they make to the intern program in the classroom or when advising students can be a tremendous plus side. Keep them informed of the internees successes that come from their departments. Let them share in the feeling of success. In turn, encourage them to make use of these interns who bring back a wealth of experience and 'field sense' to the classroom discussion and to the laboratories.

A year ago we had an executive from a national corporation who had six interns from three different majors interning in three states spend a day on campus. On January 6, 1977, the six students who interned with the company, the department chairmen, the department coordinators, administrators, and two company executives had lunch and an opportunity to get a direct feeling in regards to change, suggestions for improvement, and in turn a vote of confidence. It let them see the academic side, the department facilities, visit with the faculty and students and talk with the administration. This visitation of the employer had a very good plus value. Today we have twelve students interning with the company in five states.

The employer who had success with our intern program looks to us as a supplier of a product that is welcome — graduates. In this day, when funding is short, when education is being reviewed and surveyed from all angles, it is good to be able to promote a product that is readily acceptable by employers, faculty, and students. Most people still look at the work ethic as being "a good thing." An internship fits the mold that says to people, "this is a good thing;" a means of obtaining a job.

What's Right In American Education ?

Helen D. Wise

Many things are right about American Education — many that we take for granted:

- it is free and universal
- it provides equal opportunity for all - citizen and alien
- its teachers are the best educated in our history
- its teachers are assuming greater professional and public leadership
- it has access to instructional materials and technology better than those of any other nation in the world
- its students have more rights and exercise greater responsibility than those of any other nation
- it has proven its value in preparing American citizens for the ups and downs of life by its contribution to the achievements of the space age and its human contribution to the American people's ability to cope - with Vietnam - and Kent State - with economic depression - and Watergate
- it continues to be restless, testing old ideas, undertaking new responsibilities from early childhood education to life-long learning.

Finally, and most important, what's right about American education is that its children are learning. And not only are children learning, but adolescents and pre-teens, and those unpredictable teens, too. They're learning in unprecedented numbers; and they're learning fantastic information, concepts, and ideas. They're coping with facts and formulas and figures unknown when many of us went to school, and they're preparing well for jobs and professions unknown to us and to them.

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