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An examination and proposed improvement of the Carroll College Public Relations Department Internship Program

Submitted by Jill Jarman in fulfillment of the Communication Dept.
Honors Thesis Requirements

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This thesis for honors recognition has been approved for the Department of Communication Studies.

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ABSTRACT

Carroll College students wishing to graduate with a Bachelor of Arts in Public Relations are required to complete one 120-hour, unpaid internship. This internship must be approved by college administration and Communication Department faculty.

Personal experience in this program prompted me to find a way to help students and businesses get the most from a Carroll College Public Relations intern.

Today, more individuals are entering the job market with college degrees than ever before, making previous experience an even more important determinant in who gets hired for jobs. If a relevant internship with a detailed job description appears on a resume, an individual is more likely to be considered for a job. Carroll College has the ability to increase the likelihood that its Public Relations majors graduate with that valuable experience if it improves the current internship program. This can be done in part by creating internships where students and businesses are matched according to skills, tasks, and interest in the organization's field.

Thorough examination of the Carroll College Public Relations internship program uncovered weaknesses and developed improvements. Current problems have been identified as a lack of structure to the program, no protocol for providing feedback on interns or organizations, and no set assignments. Another concern for students is the informal method of seeking internships.

This thesis offers a plan to improve the program, by implementing set meeting times with the program director, by providing a feedback system for both interns and employers, by setting specific assignments, and by establishing an internship library, making internships more mutually satisfying to all who are involved.

Taking these steps to improve the Carroll College Public Relations Internship program will benefit each student and faculty member in the Public Relations program, as well as many Helena area businesses.

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Introduction to the Carroll College Public Relations Internship Program

Carroll College students wishing to graduate with a Bachelor of Arts in Public Relations are required to complete one 120-hour internship. The internship is part of the curriculum to provide students with practical experience before entering the job market.

When a student's internship is relevant to the post-graduate work the individual seeks, it is more likely he or she will be considered for hire upon graduation. According to Kurt Foeller, a 1990 Carroll College Public Relations graduate who is now responsible for hiring Public Relations professionals, real experience is necessary.

"I would be more likely to hire someone with two more years of practical experience than someone with two more years of education," said Foeller.

If students do not obtain internships that provide them with a sense of challenge and adequate responsibilities to make the internship relevant to a future career, they miss the opportunity for practical experience. It is that practical experience that is the goal of an internship. Through practical experience, students gain an advantage in the workplace upon graduation. Carroll College addressed this through implementing the internship program in the late 1980s. Since that time, the number of Public Relations majors at Carroll has increased. In fact, in 1999 six students graduated from Carroll with Public Relations degrees while there are 15 candidates for Public Relations degrees in the 2000-2001 academic year. This increase has created a need for a protocol in the program, rather than personal meetings with each student. Now, it is important to address this need

for a protocol and hold the program to its full potential, assuring students receive valuable, practical experience.

This thesis will investigate the internship program, including faculty, intern and supervisor concerns, and offer suggestions on how the internship program can become as beneficial to the Carroll and Helena communities as is possible. Proposed feasible solutions will call the program to live up to its potential. Upon improvement of the program, Public Relations majors will be more prepared for the workplace, which will benefit graduates, as well as the reputation of Carroll College. When its potential is realized, the Carroll College Public Relations internship program can be the Public Relations department's greatest offering to its students and the Helena community.

The internship program's greatest asset: dedicated faculty members. Current department chair Brent Northup and program director Patty English both recognize that the program can be strengthened in order to benefit the greatest number of people. It is only a matter of time and effort before the internship program becomes one of the Public Relations department's strongest assets.

Arriving at the Program's Potential

The Public Relations department's internship program has the potential to provide students with several advantages.

First, students gain practical experience in a safe environment. Students can ask questions and gain experience in the industry without risking losing their jobs or costing their employer extra money for training.

Second, students are more thoroughly prepared for the work force after completing internships. The practical experience from an internship gives graduates an advantage.

Third, the program acts as an aid in finding jobs for students who complete successful internships. When a student can prove his or her worth at an organization, a job offer typically appears at the end of the semester.

Fourth, experience in an actual Public Relations setting provides students with industry contacts that may be used when later seeking a career.

Finally, the Carroll College Public Relations internship program benefits local organizations. Students offer valuable labor, typically to small or non-profit organizations that cannot afford more staff members.

The following section will examine specific areas of the internship program. Suggestions for improving or retaining aspects of the program will follow this section.

Finding the Right Internship and Knowing What's Available

In order to best prepare students for the work force, internships must resemble the types of careers students will actually pursue. In a survey given to graduating seniors who had completed internships, six of 14 respondents completed internships despite a below-average interest in the organizations that employed them.

In personal interviews, students stated, "Finding an internship where I had an interest was just luck. Finding contacts ourselves is not effective because we have no idea of what kind of internships are available."

“I was not sure of my options or what was out there to do. There is no list of contacts or organizations that use interns, and there should be.”

“It would be helpful for us to know what other students do in their internships, too. Instead of just knowing that an internship is offered at a certain organization, it is important to know what the intern at that organization does.”

A valuable way to learn about available internships is through students who have previously completed these internships. If a student can inform fellow students of what a specific internship entails, including the skills that can be learned and the types of tasks that are completed, it is more likely that a student will be matched with an organization that interests him or her. Implementation of a formal procedure for presenting this information, as suggested in this thesis, will provide standards to which students will be held.

The negative response from students regarding matching interns and organizations suggests that implementing a matching system would increase the effectiveness of the Public Relations internship program and help the program to arrive at its potential.

Duties that do not measure up

In the third or fourth year of a Carroll education, when most students complete their internships, they have already had some practical experience through the required course Public Relations 216: PR practice. Some students have also had experience working in part-time jobs in the Public Relations field. Even students who have limited practical experience have a vast amount of theoretical knowledge. These students are ready to implement this knowledge. Ten of 14 students who responded to the Carroll

College Public Relations internship survey had already had some sort of practical Public Relations experience before beginning their internships. Unfortunately, some internships did not account for this previous experience and, therefore, did not adequately challenge the intern. Mark Prudek, an Administrative Intern for Downtown Helena Business Improvement District, addressed this in a 1992 proposal to then Vice President of Academic Affairs, Jeff Baker.

So often I hear remarks from students that internships do not truly measure or test their academic training. Further, some feel that they are spending several hours per week filing papers, stuffing envelopes, and making phone calls while the knowledge and experience from their education go unacknowledged.

Perhaps the biggest problem for Carroll graduates is that they have the education, but insufficient application of that academic knowledge. I would like to see students in internships that are more applicable to their majors and academic training.

More than two-thirds of the students completing internships in the Fall of 2000 reflected the same dissatisfaction that Prudek wrote about. Five of 13 students did not feel a sense of challenge in the work they completed at their internships. They also felt that the work they did complete was not useful. Three of these students did not feel they learned any new skills. These results indicate that some students were left wishing they had benefited more from their internships.

As the number of Carroll students majoring in Public Relations increases, it is even more necessary to have an effective matching system, as advisers are less able to provide personal input for finding internships. In 1999, six students graduated from Carroll with Public Relations degrees while there are 15 candidates for Public Relations

degrees, in the 2000-2001 academic year. This increased competition in the job market also increases the need and value of internships.

I Know Where to Work, What Now?

According to the survey, students are very excited upon receiving an internship. They recognize the potential benefits they have to gain from the experience. However, many of these students do not maximize the benefits available to them through an internship, for a variety of reasons.

There are several reasons why excitement can give way to stress in an internship. For example, some students are uncertain about the necessary paperwork. If a student does not complete paperwork properly, there is the possibility that credit may not be received. The student also must be sure that he or she completes the required number of hours (120) and that the employer is aware of the fulfillment of these hours.

The program does not currently offer formal instruction to accompany internships. Instead, students complete the necessary paperwork and go to their first day at the organization. Sometimes, this paperwork is not completed accurately or thoughtfully. Instead of a thorough description of job duties, students provide vague information. One student stated, "I will assist with clients, work with publicity in the media and be involved in client meetings." Although this job description was not completely inaccurate, the truth behind the job was that the intern filed client information, scanned newspapers for ads the organization had run, and listened in at meetings.

According to one student, the program would benefit from regularly scheduled meetings with a Carroll faculty member, as some students do not know where to go,

should they have a question. One student's question went unanswered for a great length of time because she was not able to meet with anyone who could answer the question.

One student suffered due to her inability to determine the exact requirements of the program. "I didn't ask all the right questions to find out everything I needed to do to fulfill my internship requirements," she said. "When I finally learned everything it was too late. If there had been a handbook I would have known what to do." This particular student had been confused as to the required paperwork. She completed one 120-hour, unpaid internship to find that it did not appear on her final transcript and she had not earned credit for it because she had not realized there was preliminary paperwork to complete. Eventually, she was able to receive credit for her work, but it was only after much avoidable stress.

In separate interviews with two Public Relations majors, they responded very differently to the question, "Other than the 120 hours of work, what did you understand was required for you to do to receive credit for your internship?"

The first student responded, "The only requirement is 120 hours of unpaid work. There was not anything else I had to do for my internship."

The second stated, "It is required that I have a journal of each time I go to work with a time log. Also, I need to write a paper at the end of the semester. I am not sure how long that has to be, though." If a student was required to keep a detailed journal and time log, it would be important for the student to know this at the beginning of the semester and track the internship through completion. These requirements are an essential part of the program that must be clarified.

In conversations with Northup, he made it clear that there is no standardized assignment to hold an intern accountable for the hours he/she works. The requirement varies from intern to intern, but commonly is a short reflection paper on skills learned at the internship and a brief description of the type of work completed. A statement from the supervisor at the organization is also requested in order to ensure that the intern did complete the required 120 hours of work.

The work is done... Now what?

Closely related to the lack of specified internship requirements is the lack of a feedback system, a way for students to spread the word about what they gained, or in some cases, did not gain, from an internship. This lack of a network keeps the program from benefiting the maximum number of people. The program's effectiveness can be evaluated through feedback.

With the implementation of a formal feedback system, the internship program has the ability to use each intern's experience as a tool for future interns, interns who enroll in the program at the same time, businesses that have interns and Carroll faculty advisers. A feedback system allows a more in-depth investigation of each student's internship, thus helping all participants to learn about specific internships and continue with those that are most valuable and improve or stop using those that do not provide worthwhile experiences.

A feedback system would allow individuals involved with the program to quickly target problem areas and improve upon them. It will also help inform future interns of available internships. Currently, there is no way of informing anyone, other than the

faculty advisor who reads an intern's final reflection paper, of the value of an internship. Employers are not aware of an intern's opinion of their experience unless they arrange their own feedback system, and other students are not aware of previous intern experiences with each organization.

Because of its limited audience, many students do not feel that the reflection paper is enough feedback for an internship. One student made this clear when she said, "I think a one-page reflection paper on your internship is not sufficient." Some type of presentation, including a question-answer session, should be completed in order to determine what a student has learned and clarify aspects of the internship for future students.

The truth behind the internship program is that Carroll Public Relations students are providing necessary, valuable labor and Helena-area organizations are providing equally necessary, valuable training. It is necessary to make sure that both students and organizations are getting maximum value from what should be a mutually beneficial relationship. A feedback system can work to make this possible and bring forth the maximum benefits of this program.

Unpaid Internships: The lasting complaint

Many Carroll College Public Relations interns are dissatisfied with the fact that their internships are unpaid. Several students have been offered payment for their work as interns, but have had to turn down wages in accordance with the program's policy. One 1999 Carroll graduate stated, "I wanted to do my internship in a bigger city, so I did mine at home over the summer. Because of the program policy, instead of making money

with my summer job, I had to pay to work there.” (The student meant that he had to pay Carroll tuition for the three credits he enrolled in for a summer internship, not that he had to pay the organization.)

Some employers also feel internships would be more effective if interns were paid. Ben Tintinger, a principal at DTArchitecture said, “I don’t understand why interns can not be paid. As an employer, I feel that I would be more likely to give my intern productive, beneficial work if I were paying for it. Paying students makes an employer less likely to take advantage of the labor. Employers will want to ensure they get their money’s worth and will therefore provide challenging tasks.”

Students, although not all dissatisfied, are still curious as to why their internships are not paid. Carroll’s Business Department offers cooperative education opportunities, allowing students to get paid while earning Carroll credits. Most Public Relations students have not heard the reasoning behind Public Relations internships being unpaid and would like to see or hear an explanation rather than accepting the policy without question.

Pravin Rodrigues, the program’s former director, and Brent Northup, the Communication Department chair, both feel that the unpaid aspect of the program is essential.

Rodrigues mentioned the concern that when internships were paid, only wealthy organizations received interns, rather than organizations that may need interns the most. He also stated that in Helena, many valuable internships are offered by small or non-profit organizations that would be unlikely to afford an intern. Also, Rodrigues was

concerned that students would accept internships based on pay, rather than interest in the work or industry of the organization.

Northup also defended the unpaid aspect of the program, "When internships are unpaid, interns have the freedom to ask for the duties they would like to work on. In a paid internship, that freedom is lost. Instead of requesting meaningful tasks, it is necessary for interns to do what they are told because they are employees."

Northup also feels it is important to remember that students do not take internships as part-time jobs, but as academic requirements. Internships require roughly the same amount of time as attendance and assignments from any three-credit course would require. The temptation to treat an internship as a job rather than an academic experience would be highly prevalent if internships were paid positions. According to Northup, the internship program was not designed to create part-time jobs for students, and should not be treated as though it were.

Disagreement as to whether or not internships should be paid or unpaid will probably continue to exist. Currently, advisers feel the program is most beneficial to the greatest number of people as an unpaid program; therefore, there will be no change in the unpaid status. However, there is still a problem of students being unaware of why the program is unpaid. With clarification, even if individuals do not agree with the lack of wages for work, at least they will be informed as to why the program is unpaid.

Suggestions that can take us there

The following section will offer solutions that can be implemented to help the Carroll College Public Relations internship program reach its full potential. There are

several suggestions made. It is believed that the implementation of all suggestions will bring the program to the highest level; however, it is possible to implement certain solutions without implementing all of them, or to implement the solutions in several steps rather than all at one time.

Internship Library

The first and most simple suggestion for improving the internship program is to create an internship library of local organizations that are interested in hosting Carroll interns. Several local organizations, including Ahmann Brothers, DTArchitecture, the Holter Museum of Art and St. Peter's Hospital, made it clear that there are many organizations that would benefit from hosting a Carroll intern. Unfortunately, these organizations did not realize the resource was available to them, and Carroll students have missed the opportunity to gain skills from these organizations.

By building a library through informing interested organizations of the opportunity to host an unpaid Carroll intern, the Helena community, as well as the Carroll College Public Relations Internship program, will benefit. This list of organizations will help to make students aware of the many possible organizations where they may intern.

Previously, a notebook was kept with available internships. Unfortunately, the most recent listing in this notebook was in 1994. An updated library, located in file cabinets in the program director's office, would assist students in locating an internship that suits their interests. Beginning after the first class had completed the improved internship program, students would also be able to research organizations through this

library, as the required evaluations of internships and papers or journals describing internships completed by previous interns would be stored in this library.

Internship Class and Handbook

Students should be encouraged to dig deeply into what internships with certain businesses offer and what tasks to seek and request (e.g. sitting in on meetings, brainstorming with teams, shadowing a supervisor, etc.), ensuring they will find internships that live up to their expectations.

The first formal instruction step would take place the year prior to beginning an internship. Each semester, students completing internships would provide a presentation on each internship would be required to attend. At this time, internship program manuals would be distributed and explained. A syllabus would also be provided and discussed. These presentations would take place in both November and April, and students completing internships the following year would be required to be in attendance at both. Tips on finding internships would be included with the student presentations. Students would also receive instructions about the forms to submit to gain Carroll approval. For students interested, but who have not yet registered for an internship in the following semester, forms could be distributed at this time. Additionally, referrals could be made to the career center to assist students who are still uncertain as to what type of work they would like to complete.

The second step of formal instruction that should take place is regular instruction with a professor throughout the internship. This instruction would come in the form of four regular meetings throughout the semester.

Meeting one would take place two weeks into the semester, immediately before the add-drop deadline, to provide an orientation to the program.

Meeting two will occur four weeks into the semester. At this time, students would provide a brief report about each internship. Then, the group could work together to solve any problems that students identify.

The week prior to mid-terms, students would be responsible for a three-page paper or journal detailing accomplished work, the value of the work, and important lessons learned about the career field. A time log of hours from the intern and a confidential evaluation letter from the employer would also be required. These submissions would be discussed in the third meeting, immediately after mid-terms.

Meeting four, the final meeting, will occur in November (fall semester) or April (spring semester). This meeting would include final presentations to students who will complete interns in the following semester. This class would provide students with more defined expectations of an internship and the tasks they should complete. Additionally, this class would provide a set opportunity for students to ask remaining questions. Students would be able to confirm that their paperwork was completed as students would not be on the class roster unless they had correctly registered for an internship the same semester.

Specific requirements for completing an internship would be defined through these meetings. Specifications for a final presentation, journal and/or paper would be laid out, and guidelines for logging hours would also be presented.

These meetings would provide an effective opportunity for feedback, as well as a great amount of necessary clarification that will greatly enhance the internship program.

Brochure

Maggie Long, who works in development at Intermountain Children's Home, graduated from the Carroll Public Relations program, and has served as host to several Carroll interns, says that sometimes it is necessary to "sell" the internship idea to an organization.

A brochure outlining the benefits of an intern would provide students and employees with the information to do this. Benefits for the College, and the intern would be included, as well as a description of duties that must be completed for an effective internship and a contact name to use to request further information or post a listing for an internship. Students can take this brochure with them when seeking a business to intern at, or employers can use it to explain the intern to others inside the organization.

This brochure will be available to students and employers through the program's internship coordinator. Many preliminary questions are addressed in this brochure, allowing organizations to be more informed when they initially seek interns.

Bulletin Board

There is a bulletin board outside Professor Brent Northup's office that displays some opportunities for internships. This bulletin board has the potential of being a great resource to Carroll students. Unfortunately, it does not contain as much information as it could. In order for this bulletin board to be of the greatest assistance, it must include a regularly updated listing of internships, as well as some tips on finding an internship. Additionally, this bulletin board could contain important deadlines for submitting paperwork and assignments throughout the internship.

Student Presentations

One solution to the lack of feedback provided from students completing internships is to require a final presentation. In order to keep this simple, the presentation could be graded on a pass-fail basis, allowing a student to pass as long as the presentation was completed as per requirements. This presentation would take place in front of an audience of individuals who are interested in internships. In doing this, not only would instructors be able to learn more about the kind of training offered by specific organizations, but future interns would learn more about the organizations they are choosing among.

An ideal time for these presentations would be toward the end of a semester; they would be presented to the students who are enrolled to take internships in the following semester.

Explanatory Letter

Although it seems that the unpaid status of the internship is a factor that will never please everyone, it is possible to make this situation something that is better understood. There are definite reasons that the internship has remained as an unpaid learning experience for as long as it has, although many students do not know these reasons. In order to put students at ease with the idea of an unpaid internship, it seems that an explanation must be made.

The Program Director would write an explanatory letter to introduce the internship handbook that will be delivered to all students who are to complete internships.

The letter would explain the question of unpaid internships and address the importance of the internship program and the responsibilities of a student intern.

Involving the Carroll Webpage

The internship library, application forms, and information for prospective employers could also be posted on Carroll's webpage in the Communication/ Public Relations section. At this time, the webpage is still in an early development state and building of the department sections has not been focused on. When the department sections are built, the Communication/ Public Relations department will have valuable information to add from the improved internship program. At that time, the program director should consider posting this information on the web.

Conclusion

This thesis has presented the areas of the Carroll College Public Relations internship program that must be improved prior to the program reaching its maximum potential. Having presented these recommendations, it is important to begin the steps toward implementation. Therefore, an internship library and a manual, including the explanatory letter by Brent Northup will be created to assist students in seeking internships. A listing of organizations from the library will then be posted on the bulletin board outside of Northup's office and in the manual. The manual will be distributed in the course.

Additionally, a brochure and an evaluation request letter will be implemented in order to improve communication between Carroll College and internship supervisors.

This should make the Carroll internship coordinator more accessible to organizations, and help reduce uncertainty as to organization responsibility.

With these implementations, the Carroll College Public Relations Internship Program will take several large steps toward realizing its full potential.

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**Carroll College
Public Relations
Internship Program
Manual**

A guide to completing an internship through the Carroll
College Public Relations Program

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To present and future interns:

This manual has been designed to assist you in finding and completing a career internship. This manual was first issued in Spring 2001, as part of the senior thesis of Jill Jarman, who graduated in 2001 with degrees in Communication and Public Relations (Business & Journalism).

Jarman interviewed former Communication Department interns, and turned their concerns into recommendations to improve the internship programs. Most of Jarman's recommendations have been implemented, and all of us are grateful to Jill for using her thesis to improve the internship program.

At its best, a career internship can provide students with their first job in their career field. Not only can this provide essential job training in the field, but also the internship has the potential to generate positive letters of recommendations from internship supervisors. Together, the experience and the references may enable the student to more easily obtain satisfying full-time employment in the field after graduation.

Finding a worthwhile internship

While the Communication department is dedicated to assisting students in searching for worthwhile internships, responsibility for finding the internship ultimately rests with the student. Since an internship is designed to enhance a future career, each student must select an internship based on his or her own future plans. Selection of an internship should begin by attending an "Internship Presentation Evening." These evenings are held in November and April. The student should attend the November meeting, if the internship will begin the following August. The student should attend the April meeting if the internship will begin the following January. At the "Presentation Evening" the internship materials will be distributed.

The first "assignment" after that "presentation evening" is the writing of a short two-to-three-page paper on the topic: My career options and how an internship might enhance those options. This paper should be presented to the director of the department's internship program. After reading the paper, the internship director will schedule a meeting with the student to discuss the paper - and to brainstorm about possible internships. That meeting will be organized around a single question: What types of internships would best enable the student to successfully reach his or her career goals?

Once that question is answered, the second phase of the search begins: creation of a list of "ideal internships." Such ideal internships might be generic descriptions such as "assisting a large retirement home in marketing their services to the elderly" or might be very specific such as "working at Waterford Retirement home in the marketing department, with opportunities to help design and implement marketing plans."

Once a list of such "ideal internships" has been devised, the student and the director will begin developing a list of actual organizations to contact. These organizations will be prioritized, and a plan will be developed for contacting these organizations. Both the director and the student may contact the organization, depending on which strategy seems most likely to help obtain the internship.

Many of the "ideal internships" will involve developing an internship with an organization that has not, to this point, utilized interns. Thus, the development of the internship may involve "selling the internship" to the organization. The director will often assist in this "sales" program.

It's important to note, at this point, why internships must be unpaid. The public relations requirement insists upon 120 unpaid hours of internship experience. Why unpaid? There are three compelling reasons: First, unpaid internships place the student, not the organization, in control of the experience; second, unpaid internships greatly expand the number of organizations willing to offer such internships; and, finally, unpaid internships remove financial temptations that could diminish the academic value of the internship.

Let's take a closer look at these three reasons. A paid internship is, in effect, a form of employment. The employer must budget money to pay the intern and, accordingly, may have clear expectations as to the job description. Clearly, when a person is being paid, they are beholden to the person paying the salary. That's how organizations work. But when an internship is unpaid, the power is transferred from the organization to the intern.

We at Carroll are able to offer free labor in return for one promise: that the work would be specifically designed to enhance the future career possibilities of this particular intern. Organizations, realizing the value of free labor, are more than willing to negotiate a job description that meets the needs of the student. Conversely, if they were to be asked to pay the intern for the work, they could be expected to set job expectations that enhance the organization's profitability, rather than enhancing the student's future.

Logically, unpaid internships are more attractive to organizations simply because they do not involve budgeting. Many organizations that could never afford an internship, are eager to offer unpaid internships. In particular, non-profit organizations - often staffed by low paid "believers" - are anxious to entice interns, but are unable to pay them. While it is true that some organizations could afford interns - and some might even eagerly pay interns - such organizations are relatively rare.

And, finally, paid internships would provide financial temptations that could easily diminish the value of the internship. The first temptation would be for students to turn a part-time job into an internship, thus "killing two birds with one stone." The job description could be gerrymandered to match the work currently being done. The second temptation would be for students to limit their internship search to paid options - thus eliminating many non-profit organizations who would greatly benefit from such interns. The final temptation would be for students to think of internships as jobs - and that

mindset might well diminish the academic potential of such work. Thus a student might search for an internship with “paying the rent” in mind - rather than searching for internships with “building my future career” in mind. For all these reasons, unpaid internships best serve the long-term needs of students.

Once an internship is targeted, conversation with the organization begins. This conversation involves negotiation of a “job description” that meets the needs of both the organization and the student. The “job description” must include a plan to complete 120 hours - and a list of specific types of work that will be accomplished during those hours. Eventually, the company will submit a one-page letter outlining the internship work - and the student will write a one-page letter to Carroll College detailing his/her own internship proposal. The organization’s letter is attached to the student’s proposal, as evidence that the organization has agreed to meet the student’s needs during the internship. That student letter is part of the formal internship proposal that must be submitted to the department during pre-registration, the semester before the internship begins.

This proposal also includes other requirements, outlined in the pages that follow. The official “internship form” must also be completed and signed. A copy of the form is included in this manual.

During the two semesters prior to the internship, prospective interns are required to attend two “internship presentations.” These presentations are made by current interns, and provide an overview of the internship experience. Internship materials and manuals are distributed at the presentations - and questions are answered about the internships. Once the internship proposal is approved, the student must attend the second “internship presentation evening” by current Communication Department interns. As noted earlier, these presentations are given in April and November of each semester. The student should now be prepared to begin the internship.

Completing the internship

The rules of an internship are simple: the student must log 120 unpaid hours at the organization. Those hours could be met in three intensive 40- hour weeks, but are most frequently met in 12 weeks, involving 10 hours of work per week. Since this is a three-credit course, students must enroll in the class and pay for the class. More than 60 hours of the internship must be completed during the semester when the credits are taken.

Paperwork and meetings

During the internship, the student must keep a log of all hours worked, with notations as to the work done each day. At midterm and at the conclusion, the student will write a short paper about the nature of the work, and lessons learned from the internship. The syllabus in this manual provides details on these assignments and their due dates.

The student must also attend internship meetings during the semester. The time of these meetings will be set by the internship coordinator, along the general lines suggested in this manual.

The long-term value of the internship

The purpose of an internship is obviously not simply to subtract 120 hours of disposable time from the student's life. Rather, the internship is designed as a bridge to the student's future. Public relations is both an academic field of study and a profession. While it is certainly possible for a student to study public relations without entering a public relations career, many students do intend to pursue a PR career after graduation.

For those career-focused students, the internship serves three indispensable purposes: First, the internship may eliminate PR as a career option, an unexpected but valuable discovery. Second, the internship may sharpen a student's interest in the field, not only confirming that the career will be a good choice but providing insight into which branch of PR would best suit the student. Finally, a successful internship will provide an invaluable reference who may be willing to write letters of recommendation for that student as he/she seeks employment.

PR employers will be impressed by academic attainment, but they will not hire a student unless he/she can also provide proof that he/she will be a conscientious, hard-working "real world" employee. The internship supervisor may well become the key to the student's first post-college job. For that reason, the student must treat the internship as "real" employment - dressing formally for work, arriving a few minutes early every day, being unfailingly polite, responsive and working hard. The classic rule of employment applies here: Under-promise and over-deliver - which means that you always deliver more than you promise and you never promise more than you can deliver.

That's a manageable goal in a 120-hour internship, but it may require skipping a few social opportunities or canceling an occasional weekend skiing trip. Such sacrifices may diminish the weekend, but may well build your future.

The communication department invites you to talk to us at any time about this internship program. It is designed for your benefit - to open doors to your future.

Brent Northup,
Chair Communication Studies

SEEKING AN INTERNSHIP

There are many different sources that may be used to find an internship. Every possible source should be considered. Students have found internships through Carroll Communication Department faculty, through the Carroll Career Center, by cold-calling local organizations, and through other students who have completed internships.

A list of organizations and contact names is included at the end of this manual. The organizations on the list have hosted Carroll interns before or have expressed past interest in Carroll interns. The organization's appearance on the list does not guarantee an open position at the organization. If a student is interested in an organization, it is the student's responsibility to contact the organization. It might also be necessary for the student to work to sell the idea of an internship to an organization.

If a student is trying to begin an internship with an organization that has never hosted an intern before, the student should take an internship program brochure to the prospective supervisor. This brochure will serve as a valuable tool to describe the internship program.

It is likely that you will develop an interest in several internships after you have begun your search. The next section is designed to assist you in determining which internship is right for you.

CHOOSING AN INTERNSHIP

When you select an internship, it is important to keep your future career plans in mind. If you are not sure what you want to do upon graduation, it could be beneficial to make a

trip to the Career Center, located in the basement of Guadalupe Hall, and complete a career aptitude test prior to selecting your internship.

Before you begin your search for an internship, complete the intern application form found in this handbook. At your discretion, you may use this form to present yourself to an organization or you may simply keep your responses in mind as you seek an organization. Be aware of the factors that are most important to you of an internship to you and look for an organization that meets these criteria.

The following questions will also help you to select an internship.

1. Would you prefer to work in a non-profit or for-profit organization?
2. What size of an organization are you seeking?
3. Would you prefer to work for a firm with clients outside the firm or would you prefer to work internally?
4. Would you like to work for a specific type of organization (e.g. a sports team, church, hospital, etc.)?
5. Would you be willing to work in an organization where you are the only person in charge of their PR, Marketing, and/or Communication duties?

The answers to the above questions should give you some indication as to the type of business where you would like to intern.

Now, you should begin to look at the different organizations around Helena. A list of organizations is included to give you an idea of your options. Do not limit your search to this list. When you find possible organizations, call the contact person and request a meeting with him or her regarding your interest in completing an unpaid internship at the organization. If you are able to arrange a meeting, arrive a few minutes early in

professional attire and present yourself as you would in a job interview. They are taking a risk to “hire” you, and you need to reassure them you will enhance, not impede, their daily operation. Throughout your meeting, try to find answers to the following questions:

1. What kind of skills will this organization be able to teach you?
2. What skills do you already possess that will be an asset to the organization?
3. What are your job responsibilities?
4. Do they have enough work to ensure that you will complete your 120-hour internship?
5. Will someone be willing and able to take the time to ensure you are properly trained to work in this organization?

The above questions are important to answer because they will ensure that there is no miscommunication regarding the organization’s role in helping you gain experience. Most of these questions will be answered through some description of the firm and your position as intern. If you are unsure about the answers to any of the questions, do not hesitate to ask for elaboration. It is important that you get practical and valuable experience during your 120 hours.

When you are satisfied that you have selected an internship that will mutually benefit you and the organization, it is time to complete the necessary paperwork.

PAPERWORK

Prior to registering for your internship, you must complete and submit several necessary forms. These forms can be obtained in the registrar’s office. Be sure to read the forms carefully before obtaining signatures. You will need signatures from the

department adviser, the organization's supervisor, and the academic dean. You must obtain the signatures from those affiliated with Carroll before obtaining the signature of the organization's supervisor.

When you complete the paperwork, you should also determine the hours you will work at the organization. Although these can be flexible, you must complete the section of the application regarding when you will be working. Predictably, supervisors like to know the hours that you will be in the office. Their early awareness of your schedule makes it easier to determine your duties.

SYLLABUS

COMMUNICATION 421: CAREER INTERNSHIP

Course Objective

The internship is an essential opportunity to provide students with practical experience in their future career field. Through completing an internship, it is expected that students will 1) gain a more accurate understanding of the nature of this potential occupation and 2) gain a sense of whether this type of career is a "fit" for the student.

Grading

Students receive a grade based on attendance at required meetings, enthusiastic, conscientious, completion of 120 hours of work at an approved organization, and submission of all required assignments.

Attendance

Attendance is of the utmost importance in this course and is a deciding factor in grading. Attendance is required at two pre-internship meetings (in November and April), at four meetings throughout the semester of the internship, and at every scheduled time at the organization.

Assignments

The remainder of the grade is determined by completion of the following assignments. All assignments must be completed in order to receive a passing grade.

1) Preliminary Paper: This short, two-to-three-page paper on "My career options and how an internship will enhance those options" will be handed in to the program director. A meeting with the director to discuss the paper will follow the submission of this paper.

2) Internship proposal: This paperwork is to be picked up at the registrar's office. Signatures of the organization supervisor, the academic dean, and a faculty adviser are required in this proposal. Paperwork must be completed before the class appears on a transcript.

3) Mid-Term Packet: This packet, submitted at mid-term, will include a time log of hours completed to date, an evaluation from the employer about the student, an evaluation by the intern about the internship, and a three-page paper or journal outlining work that has been completed to date. This paper should describe the value of the work and the lessons learned through this work.

4) Final Packet: This packet, submitted upon completion of the internship, will include a time log of all hours completed at the internship (this must total at least 120 hours for a complete internship), a final evaluation from the employer about the student, a final evaluation by the intern about the internship and a final five-page paper or journal outlining work that was completed throughout the internship. This paper should describe the value of the internship and the lessons learned through working at this organization. Two copies of this final paper must be submitted, one to be returned and one to be filed for future reference.

5) Final Presentation: This presentation will include a description and critique of the experience. A question-answer session will take place at the end of the presentation. Presentations will be made in November or April of the semester of the internship. If the internship was completed in the summer, the presentation will be presented in November.

CHECKLIST

- Pre Internship Presentations
- Introductory Paper (turned in to director)
- Application Form (turned in to director)
- Meeting with Director
- Paperwork to registrar
 - Department signatures
 - Internship supervisor signature
 - Academic Dean signature
- Intern Meeting 1
- Intern Meeting 2
- Mid Term Packet
 - Paper
 - Hour Log
 - Evaluation from employer
- Intern Meeting 3
- Final Packet
 - Paper
 - Hour Log
 - Evaluation from employer
 - Intern evaluation of organization
- Final Presentation

Timelines

Fall Semester Internship

Mid-Late April: Attend pre internship presentations. Begin searching for internship. Complete intern application form and introductory paper and submit to director.

Late April: Meet with internship director to discuss possible internships. Set up internship with an organization. Complete paperwork and submit to the registrar.

August: Begin work with organization.

First week of September: Attend first internship meeting.

Fourth week of September: Attend second internship meeting.

First week of October: Submit time log of hours and journal or paper detailing completed work. Request the confidential evaluation letter from the organization. Have it sent to the internship program coordinator.

Third week of October: Attend third internship meeting

Third week of November: Present your internship experience to the following semester's interns.

Second week of December: Turn in final packet of paper, hour log, evaluation from intern and evaluation from organization.

Spring Semester Internship

Mid-Late November: Attend pre internship presentations. Begin searching for internship. Complete intern application form and introductory paper and submit to director.

Late November: Meet with internship director to discuss possible internships. Set up internship with an organization. Complete paperwork and submit to the registrar.

January: Begin work with organization.

First week of February: Attend first internship meeting.

Fourth week of February: Attend second internship meeting.

First week of March: Submit time log of hours and journal or paper detailing completed work. Request the confidential evaluation letter from the organization. Have it sent to the internship program coordinator.

Third week of March: Attend third internship meeting

Third week of April: Present your internship experience to the following semester's interns.

First week of May: Turn in final packet of paper, hour log, evaluation from intern and evaluation from organization.

Summer Internship

A summer internship can be completed in a variety of timeframes. Students can choose to make this an intense internship of three 40-hour weeks, or can complete an internship over the course of 12 weeks as would be done during the regular school year. Further, it is possible that a summer internship will not take place in Helena, making meetings with a director difficult. Because of the individualization of each internship, the intern and director should work together to create a timeline that suits the needs of the organization, intern, and program prior to the beginning of the internship.

INTERN EVALUATION

The following letter will be sent to organizations that sponsor interns. The letter will solicit the evaluation of the student intern. Although the internship director at Carroll sends the letter, it is the student's responsibility to see that the evaluation is submitted by the organization, to Carroll College.

SAMPLE LETTER SENT TO ORGANIZATION

Dear (insert name here),

Thank you for hosting a Carroll College Public Relations student intern. At Carroll College, we feel that the experience of an internship is one of the most important steps a college student can take. Internships are highly effective in preparing students for the workplace as the real work force experience provides students with a competitive edge over other college graduates.

Because of the great experience that an internship provides, we take them seriously and hope to provide the best for our students, as well as the organizations where they intern. In order to know if our system is effective, we would like some feedback from you regarding your experience. Please take a moment to review the following questions and write a short evaluation of your experience with the Carroll College internship program.

Again, thank you for hosting a Carroll College intern. Your investment is helping to give a local student an advantage when seeking a career!

Sincerely,

Carroll College PR Internship Coordinator

Carroll College Intern Evaluation Form

- Is your intern present at the time promised? Always Usually Sometimes Rarely
- Does the intern act professionally? Always Usually Sometimes Rarely
- Are jobs completed in a timely manner? Always Usually Sometimes Rarely
- Have you noticed improvement with the intern? Much Some Little None
- How is the intern's work ethic? Great Good Fair Poor
- How is the intern's quality of work? Great Good Fair Poor
-

Please use the rest of this page, or an additional piece of paper to provide feedback on your intern. Thank you!

INTERNSHIP LIBRARY

| <u>Organization</u> | <u>Contact Name</u> | <u>Phone</u> |
|---|-----------------------------|--------------|
| Ahmann Brothers | Rick Ahmann or Debbie Starr | 442-3111 |
| Allen & Associates | | 443-7531 |
| Alternative Energy Resources Organization | | 443-7272 |
| American Civil Liberties Union | | 443-4909 |
| AT&T Media Services | Nina Smith | 443-4909 |
| Carroll College Marketing & Comm. | Nancy Lee | 447-5411 |
| Carroll College- Sports Information Dir. | Shawn Nelson | 447-4489 |
| Communication Strategies | Gloria Hermanson | 449-2334 |
| Daubert Associates | Tom Daubert | 449-2095 |
| DTArchitecture | Ben Tintinger | 449-7224 |
| Downtown BID | Paul Reichert | 447-1535 |
| Fifth Ave. Advertising | Janet Drexel | 442-3961 |
| Holter Museum | Peter Held | 442-6400 |
| Huntley Marketing & Advertising | Jeanne Huntley | 458-3745 |
| Independent Record | | 447-4000 |
| Intermountain Children's Home | Maggie Long | 442-7920 |
| KTVH | | 443-5050 |
| Montana Environmental Information Center | Patrick Judge | 443-2520 |
| Montana Shares | Joy McGrath | 442-2218 |
| Myrna Loy Center | Ed Noonan | 443-0287 |
| Olsen & Graff | | 442-5550 |
| Q Communications Group | Norma Tirrell | 442-3101 |
| Jim Robbins | Jim Robbins | 443-2820 |
| Sage Advertising | Bob Henkel | 431-1031 |
| St. Peter's Hospital | Peggy Stebbins | 442-2135 |

Organization Name _____

Contact _____ Phone _____

Industry _____

Internship Description & Term for Internship _____

Areas you would like your intern to have experience in (check all that apply):

- Event Planning Excel Grant Writing Graphic Design Press Releases
- Relations with: Research Other (please specify) _____
 - Printing companies
 - Media
 - Advertising Agencies
 - Clients (directly)

Areas where you can provide an intern training:

- Event Planning Excel Grant Writing Graphic Design Press Releases
- Relations with: Research Other (please specify) _____
 - Printing companies
 - Media
 - Advertising Agencies
 - Clients (directly)

Please list any additional information that you feel is important in matching your organization with an intern _____

Thank you for taking the time to complete this application. When a match is found, an intern will contact you.

Name _____ Phone _____

Please describe your ideal internship _____

Areas where you have experience:

- Event Planning Excel Grant Writing Graphic Design Press Releases
- Relations with: Research Other (please specify) _____
- Printing companies
 - Media
 - Advertising Agencies
 - Clients (directly)

Areas where you would like to gain experience:

- Event Planning Excel Grant Writing Graphic Design Press Releases
- Relations with: Research Other (please specify) _____
- Printing companies
 - Media
 - Advertising Agencies
 - Clients (directly)

Please list any additional information that you feel is important in matching you with an organization. Include previous, related work experience. _____

After completing this form, please submit to the internship coordinator. Also, schedule a meeting with the program director to discuss internship possibilities.

Appendix C

Brochure

The following document will be made into a brochure to be distributed to employees who are considering internships. This is an asset for a student who is "cold-calling" for an internship.

Internship Program (include program philosophy from Brent's letter)

Carroll College's Public Relations Department requires degree-seeking students to complete one 120-hour unpaid internship. This internship is an educational experience that allows students to gain true hands-on experience in a learning environment that extends beyond the classroom. Internships provide students an opportunity to work under supervision and develop a true feel for the workplace. They also provide students with experience that gives them the upper hand when searching for a career.

Student Experience

Most students come to the internship with previous experience working in groups on Public Relations campaigns through a required PR course at Carroll. Students in the Public Relations program have emphases in either business or journalism, or both. These emphases prepare students to work in a variety of professional careers. During their education at Carroll, Public Relations students study desktop publishing, journalism, marketing, ethics, research methods, small group, interpersonal, organizational and professional communication. These courses prepare students to work effectively with groups, in professional situations, and as part of an organization.

Benefits of an Internship

For a student

Enable students to explore career options in a work place conducive to learning.

Experience increases student marketability when seeking a career.

Provides a professional reference and contact person

Trains student in practical PR skills

Provides student with professional experience

For organization

Brings in fresh, new creativity to skilled staff

Provides contact with Carroll College and its students

Trains a potential future employee without pay

Assists in responding to organization's employment needs

Carroll College

Builds rapport with community

Better prepares students for the job market
Offers learning experience not available on campus
Increases faculty contacts in the community

How an internship begins

Organizations are able to initiate internships by contacting the internship program coordinator, whose business card is included. At this time, the organization will be asked to provide a description of the opportunity available for an intern.

Students are also able to initiate internships by contacting an organization where they are interested in working and requesting that the organization host an intern.

Before the internship begins, the organization and the intern are responsible for submitting a job description, including work objectives and goals, as well as a schedule of work hours. It also names the intern's supervisor, who will act as a contact person for the college for the mid-term and final evaluations.

Employer Responsibilities

First, the employer must define the internship project, including major projects or campaigns that the intern will work on. When the intern begins work at the organization, it is the employer's responsibility to supervise the work and assist the student in identifying tasks, objectives and goals for the internship. The supervisor will also provide feedback so the student can improve. Some orientation, training, task supervision and mentoring may be required. Upon completion of the internship, and at mid-term, the supervisor will be asked to provide a brief, written evaluation of the intern's performance.

Student responsibilities

The student is responsible for securing all paperwork required for an internship. The student also must submit a work schedule that allows him/ her to complete 120 hours in a semester. Often, this means twelve 10-hour work weeks; however, with a supervisor's approval, any schedule that meets the 120-hour requirement is acceptable. It is the student's responsibility to adhere to this work schedule, conducting him- or herself in a professional and timely manner.

Why a Carroll College intern

The emphasis that the PR department places on professionalism in their interns is important. Carroll's students offer high caliber performances as interns because they have knowledge of public relations, as well as some practical experience in the field. Students are encouraged to get the most of their internship, treating it as a job where serious work ethic, productivity, integrity, creativity and professionalism matter. Therefore, Carroll College interns provide organizations with professional, creative employees that truly care about their work.

Timeline for internship

Interns typically seek organizations in late March, early August, or late October, when course registration occurs. Because internships are completed for class credit, it is important to remember Carroll's semester schedule. Those internships that are completed

in the fall usually run from August to December. Spring internships begin in January and are completed in early May. Summer internships are also an option, although less common. These internships can be completed between May and August. The College recommends seeking fall interns in early March, spring interns in early October and summer interns beginning in January when students begin to think of their summer plans. To post an internship, contact the Carroll College Program Director on the enclosed business card and offer a description of your available internship, including the semester for which you are seeking an intern.