Capitol Hill Internship
Programs and Practices

Congressional Management Foundation
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Internships last from a minimum of 4 weeks to a maximum of 17 weeks.
On average, offices reported half of all interns receive academic credit.

Source: CMF Survey of 21 Senate intern coordinators and 61 House intern coordinators
Interns’ Workloads Split Fairly Evenly

- **39%** clerical (answering phones, opening/logging mail, making copies)
- **33%** constituent services (tours, answering constituent mail)
- **28%** legislative (research, attending hearings or briefings, preparing memos)

Source: CMF Survey of 21 Senate intern coordinators and 61 House intern coordinators
Quality of Academic Year Interns Surpasses Summer Interns

Source: CMF Survey of 21 Senate intern coordinators and 61 House intern coordinators
Offices Perform Thorough Selection Process

- 69% contact references; 55% review Facebook profiles
- Most interns are in their Junior year or above
  - But freshmen and sophomores were more likely during the academic year
- The person most likely to make the hiring decision:
  - House – Chief of Staff, followed by Staff Assistant
  - Senate – Office Manager, followed by Chief of Staff
- The top three factors offices use to choose interns:
  - Interpersonal skills/interview performance (60%)
  - Writing ability/skills (48%)
  - Previous work experience (40%)

Source: CMF Survey of 21 Senate intern coordinators and 61 House intern coordinators
Physical Space: The Top Factor for Deciding the Number of Interns

We asked “What are the top three factors that influence the number of interns you host at one time?”

- House
  - Physical Space (87%)
  - Work need (54%)
  - Computer availability (46%)

- Senate:
  - Physical Space (80%)
  - Work need (55%)
  - Strength of candidate applications (50%)
  - Personal reference from Senator/staff/friend (50%)

Source: CMF Survey of 21 Senate intern coordinators and 61 House intern coordinators
Compensation the Leading Reason Applicants Turn Down Hill Internships

- Almost half (49%) of Intern Coordinators surveyed reported compensation as one of the top reasons candidates turned down their offer.

- We asked “What is the biggest challenge your office faces when finding and hiring interns?”
  - A majority of the responses involved finding quality interns (often tied to the inability to pay them), especially during the academic term.
  - Offices also struggle with finding interns from the state/district—though, unsurprisingly, more so in the House than in the Senate.

Source: CMF Survey of 21 Senate intern coordinators and 61 House intern coordinators

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Offices Provide a Variety of Orientation Resources

Does your office provide any of the following information to interns before or after their arrival?

- Copy of office's intern manual: 95%
- Send them to CRS' Intern Orientation: 92%
- Copy of office's employment policies: 71%
- Ad hoc/on-the-job informal orientation: 71%
- Send them to CAO's House Intern Orientation training course: 66%
- In-office formal orientation program: 65%
- Welcome letter: 60%
- Copy of CMF's Congressional Intern Handbook: 47%

Source: CMF Survey of 21 Senate intern coordinators and 61 House intern coordinators
In-Office Orientation Covers the Gamut

If you conduct an in-office orientation, what topics does it cover?

- Office procedure: 97%
- Staff roles and responsibilities: 97%
- Intern roles and responsibilities: 97%
- Equipment training (computers, phones, copier, etc.): 93%
- Physical environment (office and key Hill facilities): 86%
- Confidentiality: 81%
- Ethics: 80%
- Safety/security procedures: 79%
- Interacting with the Member: 76%
- Harassment: 50%
- Member policy positions: 33%

Source: CMF Survey of 21 Senate intern coordinators and 61 House intern coordinators
Few Interns Receive Formal Evaluations

Source: CMF Survey of 21 Senate intern coordinators and 61 House intern coordinators

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Interns Need More Realistic Expectations, Professionalism, and Writing Skills

What ways could interns be better prepared for their time in your office?

- More realistic expectations of internship (nature of work, breakdown of administrative/substantive work, quantity of Member contact): 71%
- Greater understanding of professional behavior and working in an office environment: 68%
- Better writing skills: 53%
- More informed about how congressional offices operate: 46%
- Greater understanding of the types of tasks they will be assigned: 45%
- Better customer service skills: 43%
- More informed about how Congress works and the legislative process: 34%
- More policy training: 8%

Source: CMF Survey of 21 Senate intern coordinators and 61 House intern coordinators
What has your office learned that other offices should know?

- Training and On-boarding
- Plan Projects
- Establish Ground Rules
- Check References and Social Networking Sites
- Provide Feedback
- Communicate their value
- Establish relationships with university programs

Source: CMF Survey of 21 Senate intern coordinators and 61 House intern coordinators
What would you most like to know about other offices' programs that would help improve your own?

- How to design more engaging tasks for the interns.
- How to find quality interns.
- How to handle problems with interns.

Source: CMF Survey of 21 Senate intern coordinators and 61 House intern coordinators
Hill Internships Valuable to Hiring Offices

Based on knowledge of your office's practices, how much is a prior Hill internship valued when hiring junior staff?

- Unsure: 4%
- Not at all: 0%
- A little: 5%
- Some: 39%
- A lot: 52%

Source: CMF Survey of 21 Senate intern coordinators and 61 House intern coordinators

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