

Clemson University

Graphic Communications Internship Program

Overview

Internships are essential to every Clemson Graphic Communications student's career preparation. All GC majors are required to do at least two internships in order to receive their degree, and many complete three. Students are encouraged to work in different geographic locations, process areas, and segments of the industry in order to gain a broad experience in the workplace.

Internships provide a real world component to Clemson's Graphic Communications program. The experience enables the graduate to become comfortable in a professional work environment before attaining a full-time job after graduation. It is seen as a major maturing element in the program, placing Clemson students far ahead of graduates with no industrial work experience. The quality of the internships is greatly dependent upon the employing companies and the opportunities they provide for the students. Most employers view this as an investment in their own future as they preview upcoming talent and contribute to the development of prospective employees. Many companies have employed interns on a continuous basis over a long period as an inherent part of their human resources program. Some fill regular positions by using three interns a year, one each school term. Others use interns to carry out special projects that need a concentration of attention for short periods of time. In all cases, it's important for the intern to do "real work" for the benefit of the employer. This benefits both students and employers.

GC Program

The Graphic Communications Bachelor of Science degree program stresses overall comprehension of the graphic communications industries. Studies include all the major printing methods and related manufacturing processes, encompassing the broad range of products associated with this family of industries. Students use the major software applications utilized in the industry for page layout, drawing, image enhancement, and web authoring; prepress tasks for conventional and digital printing; and binding and finishing. The pressroom provides hands-on experience with offset, flexography, screen printing, ink jet and digital printing applications. In addition, the Printing/Converting Center, Clemson's off-site facility, gives students exposure to corrugated flexographic presses and the installation of a gravure press may be forthcoming in the future.

Lab projects in commercial offset, flexography, and screen printing allow students to learn the entire printing process from concept to proof to finished product. Students also have the option of taking advanced specialized classes and independent study for growth going far beyond the general requirements. Additionally, classes in planning and estimating, inks and substrates, as well as current industry trends help round out the curriculum and keep students abreast of the latest technologies.

It is believed that the ultimate success of Clemson GC graduates is due to their overall knowledge of the industrial and business settings. This requires not only a thorough grounding in technology but also excellent human relations skills. The Clemson GC graduate should be viewed as a generalist in the graphic communications field with a background in all the major printing processes. In addition to being knowledgeable of the vast majority of technical processes and problems, they are conversant with other specialists in the business and manufacturing environment. To accomplish this, the students are required to take courses in computer science, business management, marketing, and psychology.

Purpose of Internship

The Clemson Graphic Communications program requires at least two internships. The first one is usually taken after two or three GC courses and is required before students enroll in any upper-level GC courses. The second internship can be taken after at least one 400-level GC course. The students' first internship should allow them to become familiar and comfortable with typical production activities and gain practical experience on the job. The nature and needs of each employment site and of the intern affect the particular assignment. Early internships contribute significantly to the technical development of the students by putting them into a larger scale operation, often using more sophisticated technology than is available in the university facilities. Working under the direction of skilled technicians provides experience far beyond what is otherwise available in a classroom setting.

Often, upper level students, doing a second or third internship, gain exposure to the administrative and management side of the printing organization. They work as assistants to supervisors or higher-level managers doing routine or even special project tasks

such as collecting data for internal plant studies, assisting with inventory control, or establishing systems to improve day-to-day operations. Work in the customer service department is also an ideal placement for second-time interns. The students' comfort with the process and their technical language facilitate good communication skills as they coordinate with management, customers, and production personnel.

Year-round internship positions within a company are optimal both for the university and most employers. By establishing permanent positions for interns, an employer can provide full-time positions to be shared by Clemson interns, each for periods of twelve to fifteen weeks. From the university standpoint, this arrangement permits a long-term, continuous working relationship to be established between Clemson and the employer. This usually results in a more thorough understanding of the mutual responsibilities and benefits achieved by this cooperative effort.

Intern Employer Day

The best way to find the right GC intern for your organization is by participating in Intern Employer Day, a career fair held specifically for Clemson Graphic Communications students. The event is held on campus twice a year, in October and March. The event activities kick off the evening before Intern Employer Day at an industry dinner where graduating seniors meet and greet prospective employers. Students chat with industry friends from past internships and learn about upcoming job opportunities for graduation. Internships help students establish a network of support within the industry to prepare them for graduation and the job search. The following morning the employers meet to learn more about Clemson's GC program and listen to students and other employers share their internship experiences. After a chance to tour the GC teaching facilities and set up their table with company information, the rest of the day is spent meeting students. This gives the students an opportunity to ask questions and learn more about prospective employers before making decisions about internships or permanent positions. It also provides a more casual atmosphere for company representatives to briefly meet and talk to the students and set up formal interviews.

Many GC graduates return to Intern Employer Day to represent their companies and recruit interns. This is beneficial to employers because the alumni can help determine which students have the necessary background to excel in the position. The GC internship coordinator and department administrative staff work closely with employers and students in placement efforts.

Schedule and Wages

Interns are normally paid in relation to the work they are expected to perform, with overtime compensated using standard company policies. Housing and travel expenses are completely dependent on the employer policies, though many companies assist the students in securing housing arrangements. The intern is required to work full-time during the standard work week for the employing organization for a period of at least twelve weeks in the summer and fifteen or more during the fall or spring semesters.

Internship Evaluation

Prior to employment, the student attends sessions to prepare for the internship. These sessions include such topics as employer relations, getting the most from the internship, and long-term implications of the work record. Intern employers, previous interns, and university faculty discuss past internship experiences and offer suggestions for future interns. At the end of the internship, each student must submit a journal describing not just the activities and tasks performed, but anecdotal observations and learning resulting from their experiences in the workplace.

It is recommended that any routine evaluation system used for other employees be applied to the intern as well. Furthermore, supervisors complete a university evaluation form to assess the students' communication skills, performance level, and areas that need improvement. Since only one credit hour is earned for the internship, the primary value of the evaluation is in the student's personal development. Employers are asked to review their evaluations with the intern. Faculty advisors also use the evaluations to counsel the student in matters of personal and professional development.

Contact Information

To obtain more information about the next Intern Employer Day or employing Clemson GC interns, please contact:

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