Public History Internship Program
Information for Mentors

Mentoring is an ancient and honored tradition of assisting another to develop personally and professionally. Often, mentoring a young person is exciting and stimulating; and interns and mentors form life-long bonds of friendship. Certainly, mentors gain some unpaid work assistance from their interns. The main gratification, however, is in knowing that you have helped a person along the path toward being a contributing member of society.

An internship is a unique experience for students and mentors. Public History internships at UM-Flint are career-focused programs and allow the student the opportunity to explore and clarify tentative choices in a particular field of interest. It is also considered an extension of the classroom and provides an opportunity for a student to learn about the discipline of history in a manner that enriches the student’s university experience. Learning on the job can be uniquely beneficial. No matter what happens – success, failure, or adjustment – the intern gains experience and acquires useful personal information. Internships also offer students the opportunity to make a positive contribution to the larger community while gaining self-knowledge.

Working with a mentor allows the student to begin to make the psychological transition between the structured, sheltered environment in high school and the greater personal independence and responsibility of the professional workplace. Students learn to relate to others while working toward a common goal as well as apply the knowledge and skills gained in academics to an authentic learning experience.

Goals: A public history internship gives students an opportunity to:
  - identify a field of interest; observe and participate in related professional activities; understand its requirements and characteristics and determine whether the field is compatible with the student’s interests, values, skills and aptitudes.
  - apply academic learning to practical situations and to apply work experience to academics.
  - develop the interpersonal skills necessary in working relationships with adults such as the ability to work independently and responsibly, to set appropriate personal and work related priorities, to plan and schedule work related activities and develop the work habits such as promptness, reliability, and accuracy that are necessary for a professional environment.

Mentor’s Role: The mentor’s role in successful internships is critical. The mentor will assume responsibility for directing the intern’s education while at the mentor’s place of employment. It is important for mentors to realize that interns are novices in content and technique as well as workplace practices. The mentor should help integrate the intern into the operational and social scheme of the workplace. Interns’ assignments should reflect those kinds of activities as necessary for professional obligations. It is important for interns to have responsibilities, and be held accountable for fulfilling them. Tasks should have educational value, acquaint the intern with the job and be of use to the organization. It is not necessary for the mentor to assign the intern an independent (research) project as is done in some of the more intensive internships. The intern can be responsible for some aspect of an on-going work site project.

Mentor’s Responsibilities: In order to assure that the intern and the mentor have a safe, successful experience, the mentor agrees to fulfill the following responsibilities. The mentor will:
  - Provide an experience which is broadly educational in scope, supportive of the stated educational objectives of the program, and directed toward providing the intern with an understanding of how professional organizations function. The mentor and intern will develop an individualized work plan.
  - Provide the intern with opportunities to accompany the mentor to staff meetings and undertake special assignments designed to enhance the intern’s learning.
• Provide an organizational overview by briefing the intern about the organization, including its priorities and major programs and how the intern fits into the program.
• The mentor should reinforce the faculty supervisor’s directives on appropriate workplace behavior and dress.
• Provide supervision, or designate someone else to do so. Verify the intern’s attendance.
• Provide direction and corrective action that will help the student socialize to the professional workplace.
• Evaluate the intern and the program at the end of the semester.