

Capitol Hill Internship Programs and Practices



A Survey of Congressional Intern Coordinators

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What follows are the results from a survey of 61 House and 21 Senate Intern Coordinators

1. Approximately how many internship applications do you receive each year?

Answer Options	Response Average	Response Count
# of academic year applications	23.0	81
# of summer applications	30.2	81

2. On average, how many total interns does your office host per year?

Answer Options	Response Average	Response Count
# during academic year	6.8	82
# during the summer	7.1	82

3. On average, how many interns does your office typically host at one time?

Answer Options	Response Average	Response Count
# during academic term	2.9	82
# during summer	4.7	82

4. Does your office do any of the following before hiring an intern?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Contact references	69.2%	45
Review Facebook profile	55.4%	36
Review MySpace profile	32.3%	21
Conduct Google search	38.5%	25
Other (please specify)	27.7%	18

5a. House - Who on your staff is involved with vetting and selecting applicants?

Answer Options	Provides input	Makes decision
Member	21	5
Chief of Staff	39	34
Legislative Director	10	2
Office Manager	13	11
Scheduler/Executive Assistant	18	10
Press Secretary/Communications Director	3	1
Legislative Assistant	8	4
Legislative Correspondent	13	11
Systems Administrator	4	2
Staff Assistant	25	16
	<i>Response Count:</i>	<i>61</i>

5b. Senate - Who on your staff is involved with vetting and selecting applicants?

Answer Options	Provides input	Makes decision
Senator	5	4
Chief of Staff	12	4
Deputy Chief of Staff	4	2
Legislative Director	2	0
Office Manager	11	8
Scheduler	1	1
Executive Assistant	3	1
Mailroom Supervisor	2	2
Press Secretary/Communications Director	3	1
Legislative Assistant	0	0
Legislative Correspondent	3	2
Systems Administrator	2	0
Staff Assistant	5	2
	<i>Response Count:</i>	<i>20</i>

6. What are the top three factors that influence the number of interns you host at one time? (please select three only)

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Physical space	85.2%	69
Staff time	9.9%	8
Work need	54.3%	44
Personal reference from Member/staff/friend	44.4%	36
Computer availability	44.4%	36
Strength of candidate applications	44.4%	36
HOUSE ONLY - Number of available employee slots (applicable only for paid interns)	8.6%	7
Other (please specify)	4.9%	4

7. What criteria do you most commonly use to choose your interns? (please select top two only)

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Writing ability/skills	48.1%	39
Previous work experience	39.5%	32
Academic performance	37.0%	30
Relationship with office	34.6%	28
Interpersonal skills/interview performance	60.5%	49
Availability	27.2%	22
Other (please specify)	17.3%	14

8. What are the two most common reasons candidates turn down an internship in your office? (please select two only)

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Compensation (stipend, housing, etc.)	48.8%	39
Took internship in another House Member office	32.5%	26
Took internship in House committee office	1.3%	1
Took Senate internship	16.3%	13
Took off-Hill internship	31.3%	25
Not sure/No reason given	37.5%	30
Other (please specify)	11.3%	9

9. For the past year, please estimate the education level of your academic term interns:

Answer Options	None (0%)	Few (1-25%)	Some (26-50%)	Most (51-99%)	All (100%)
Freshmen	30.3%	38.2%	5.3%	0.0%	2.6%
Sophomores	18.4%	27.6%	32.9%	3.9%	1.3%
Juniors	5.3%	6.6%	44.7%	35.5%	0.0%
Seniors	7.9%	7.9%	28.9%	38.2%	0.0%
College Graduates	9.2%	34.2%	22.4%	17.1%	0.0%
Grad School Graduates	34.2%	23.7%	5.3%	2.6%	0.0%
<i>Response Count:</i>					76

10. For last summer, please estimate the education level of your summer interns:

Answer Options	None (0%)	Few (1-25%)	Some (26-50%)	Most (51-99%)	All (100%)
Freshmen	36.8%	23.7%	5.3%	0.0%	2.6%
Sophomores	18.4%	30.3%	18.4%	3.9%	2.6%
Juniors	6.6%	10.5%	35.5%	31.6%	2.6%
Seniors	6.6%	11.8%	23.7%	30.3%	1.3%
College Graduates	26.3%	23.7%	7.9%	10.5%	0.0%
Grad School Graduates	42.1%	14.5%	0.0%	1.3%	0.0%
<i>Response Count:</i>					76

11. What is the biggest challenge your office faces when finding and hiring interns?

Selected responses:
Cost of commuting and eating in DC. Most need part-time jobs to help pay for college and are not available on a daily basis.
Finding interns with local ties without sacrificing academic/professional qualifications.
stipend and getting wide range of applicants from the district
We attempt to hire people from the district and having to negotiate the cost of living adjustment sometimes causes them to decline the position and we are left scrambling for people.
The fall and spring semesters are the most difficult. We have very few applications for both.

12. Please indicate if there is a minimum or maximum amount of time for an internship in your office.

Answer Options	Response Average	Response Count
Minimum (in weeks)	5.6	60
Maximum (in weeks)	17.54	50

13. In the past year, what is the typical percentage of time your interns have spent on the following activities:

Answer Options	Response Average	Response Count
% on clerical tasks (answering phones, opening/logging mail, making copies)	38.6	78
% on legislative tasks (research, attending hearings or briefings, preparing memos)	28.0	77
% on constituent services (tours, answering constituent mail)	33.0	78

14a. House - Does your office compensate interns in any of the following ways?

Answer Options	No	Sometimes	Yes	Response Count
Interns are paid/receive stipend	36	18	4	58
Housing is provided	55	1	0	56

14b. Senate - Does your office compensate interns in any of the following ways?

Answer Options	No	Sometimes	Yes	Response Count
Interns are paid/receive stipend	8	3	9	20
Housing is provided	18	1	0	19
Metro benefits	15	1	3	19
Health insurance	18	1	0	19

15. How much assistance does your office provide interns in locating housing?

Answer Options	We set it up for them	We provide links and resources	It varies	We provide no assistance	Response Count
Academic year interns	0	54	11	10	75
Summer interns	1	62	6	5	74

16. In the past year, approximately what percentage of your interns received academic credit for their internship?

Answer Options	Response Average	Response Count
% receiving academic credit	49.5	58

17. Does your office prefer or require interns to receive academic credit?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Require	1.3%	1
Prefer	20.5%	16
Neither	78.2%	61

18. If your office distinguishes between interns who receive academic credit and those that do not, in terms of the type of work assigned to them, please indicate how.

Selected responses:
If an intern is receiving academic credit, we try to make sure they have a clear plan for their time in our office. We try to give all of our interns, regardless of credit, exposure to all activities of the office.
We do not distinguish between them, but those that are getting credit seem to provide better research.
The only distinction is if the student is in a grad or law school program. Their work tends to be more legislative and less administrative/clerical.
There is no distinction between the two. All receive the same experience and opportunities.

19. Which of the following does your office typically provide for an intern?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Assigned desk	50.6%	39
Assigned computer	49.4%	38
Shared desk	51.9%	40
Shared computer	49.4%	38
Official e-mail account (ex: intern1@...)	81.8%	63
Official BlackBerry	2.6%	2
Other (please specify)	2.6%	2

20. What has your office learned in the intern process that other offices should know to have a successful program?
Selected responses:
A day one training program is the most efficient way to train all of the interns at the same time and to establish priorities, expectations, and accountability.
Don't just have them run errands and do menial tasks. Encourage them to go to hearings that they have an interest in, not just hearings to help LA's get information. Ask them to prepare a short report on the hearing as a project. Give them more access to the Congressman.
Advertising on the web sites of the colleges and universities in our district helps in recruiting interns.
training, coaching, and feedback important
Got to make sure to keep them busy with productive work. also important to involve them in the office and not treat them differently - ie, allow them to attend staff meetings
Limit the number of interns in order to give all interns a better experience. Plan projects ahead of time, so new interns have enough to keep them busy.
It is important to let them know from day one what they will be doing and the expectations of them.
We rotate desks and routine administrative tasks among interns so no single intern has the worst space in the office or has to handle the majority of the phone answering/electronic mail & fax processing/mail distribution tasks.
The interns will work harder and be more dedicated to projects if they feel important and included and get to see the final outcome of their labor.
We have found that assigning an intern to a specific Legislative staff helps to make sure the intern receives legislative work along with the administrative work.

21. What would you most like to know about other offices' intern programs that would help improve your own?
Selected responses:
How do you keep your summer interns busy?
what they do when you are unhappy with an intern's performance.
It would be helpful to learn about some new ideas or resources to use for recruiting interns/publicizing the internship.
How to attract interns during the academic year. Interesting intern projects that can benefit the office and the intern
if anyone is using a good online/paperless application system
What tasks other than clerical work do you have them do? Is there any event or activity that interns really enjoy doing?
What information do other intern coordinators provide to interns prior to their arrival and what items are covered during intern orientation?
Troubleshooting behavioral issues would be helpful from a management perspective. It's also helpful to know what other offices offer in the way of access to the Senator and benefits/compensation.

22a. House - If different from the intern coordinator, who functions as the interns' day-to-day supervisor?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Staff Assistant	47.8%	11
Scheduler/Executive Assistant	13.0%	3
Systems Administrator	0.0%	0
Office Manager	8.7%	2
Legislative Correspondent	17.4%	4
Legislative Assistant	13.0%	3
Press Secretary/Communications Director	0.0%	0
Legislative Director	0.0%	0
Chief of Staff	0.0%	0

22b. Senate - If different from the intern coordinator, who functions as the interns' day-to-day supervisor?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Staff Assistant	16.7%	1
Scheduler	0.0%	0
Executive Assistant	0.0%	0
Systems Administrator	0.0%	0
Office Manager	33.3%	2
Deputy Chief of Staff	0.0%	0
Mailroom Supervisor	33.3%	2
Legislative Correspondent	16.7%	1
Legislative Assistant	0.0%	0
Press Secretary/Communications Director	0.0%	0
Legislative Director	0.0%	0
Chief of Staff	0.0%	0

23. Which tasks does the intern supervisor perform? (please select all that apply)

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Assigning clerical tasks	84.4%	65
Soliciting assignments from other staff members	77.9%	60
Supervising constituent content	48.1%	37
Training and orientation	93.5%	72
Finding Hill events	59.7%	46
Providing formal feedback	64.9%	50
Writing letter of recommendation	71.4%	55
Serving as mentor	64.9%	50
Offering job-seeking guidance	62.3%	48
Other (please specify)	2.6%	2

24. Does your office provide any of the following information to interns before or after their arrival?			
Answer Options	Before arrival	After arrival	Response Count
Welcome letter	54.5%	5.2%	46
Copy of office's intern manual	32.5%	62.3%	73
Copy of office's employment policies	18.2%	53.2%	55
Copy of CMF's Congressional Intern Handbook	14.3%	32.5%	36
Send them to CAO's House Intern Orientation training course	2.6%	63.6%	51
Send them to CRS' Intern Orientation	7.8%	84.4%	71
In-office formal orientation program	6.5%	58.4%	50
Ad hoc/on-the-job informal orientation	7.8%	63.6%	55

25. If you conduct an in-office orientation, what topics does it cover? (please select all that apply)		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Office procedure	97.1%	68
Equipment training (computers, phones, copier, etc.)	92.9%	65
Confidentiality	81.4%	57
Interacting with the Member	75.7%	53
Staff roles and responsibilities	97.1%	68
Intern roles and responsibilities	97.1%	68
Member policy positions	32.9%	23
Physical environment (office and key Hill facilities)	85.7%	60
Safety/security procedures	78.6%	55
Ethics	80.0%	56
Harassment	50.0%	35
Other (please specify)	0.0%	0

26. What ways could interns be better prepared for their time in your office? (please select the top three)		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
More informed about how Congress works and the legislative process	34.2%	26
More informed about how congressional offices operate	46.1%	35
Greater understanding of the types of tasks they will be assigned	44.7%	34
Greater understanding of professional behavior and working in an office environment	68.4%	52
Better writing skills	52.6%	40
More policy training	7.9%	6
Better customer service skills	43.4%	33
More realistic expectations of internship (nature of work, breakdown of administrative/substantive work, quantity of Member contact)	71.1%	54
Other (please specify)	5.3%	4

27. If your interns have a designated mentor apart from the intern coordinator or supervisor, please indicate their role:		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
N/A - no designated mentor	66.1%	41
Responsible for orientation	4.8%	3
Meets with intern at key points (beginning, middle, and end of internship)	12.9%	8
Regular meetings or chats	11.3%	7
Informal chats	22.6%	14
Supervises assignments	11.3%	7
Other (please specify)	3.2%	2

28. What type of feedback do your interns receive? (please select all that apply)		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Informal, in-the-moment feedback	97.4%	75
Formal mid-term "sit-down" evaluations	23.4%	18
Formal "sit-down" exit evaluations	23.4%	18
Written performance review	13.0%	10
Self-evaluation form	9.1%	7
Other (please specify)	3.9%	3

29. On average, how would you rate the performance of your interns?					
Answer Options	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent	Unsure/No opinion
Academic year interns	0.0%	6.5%	44.2%	49.4%	0.0%
Summer interns	0.0%	6.5%	59.7%	32.5%	1.3%
<i>Response Count:</i>					77

30. Would you contact another office to help find a job for a former intern?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes, for any intern	9.3%	7
Yes, but only for above average or exceptional interns	84.0%	63
No	2.7%	2
Depends on my workload	1.3%	1
Other (please specify)	2.7%	2
<i>Response Count:</i>		75

31. What are the biggest challenges or problems your office experiences when managing interns (once they've started in your office)?
Selected responses:
Some tend to become too comfortable or lose focus.
Keeping them busy - especially the needy ones who don't really understand the roll of an intern.
Finding enough for them to do other than providing constituent tours and finding enough space for them to work in
Providing efficient feedback to the intern (and, arguably, for the intern coordinator/office) and maintaining intern enthusiasm for tasks.
Office professional behavior.
Ensuring that each has a well rounded list of projects and that each is doing something in which he or she has an interest
Making sure they have some interesting work assignments in addition to the daily administrative tasks.
Making sure the boring tasks are equally distributed and managed - for example one intern isn't always answering the phones first but all interns are pitching in equally.
Time and supervision of general training -- writing style for constituent letters, interacting with constituents on tours and greeting in the office, proper phone etiquette.
Helping them set realistic expectations of what they will be doing and teaching them to complete tasks properly
Keeping them busy and excited about their opportunities in Washington DC and on the hill.

32. Please tell us about the staff in your office.		
Answer Options	Response Average	Response Count
Number of staff in DC office	14.4	77
Number of DC staff who are former Hill interns	5.3	77
Number of DC staff who are 25 years old or younger	8.1	73

33. Based on knowledge of your office's practices, how much is a prior Hill internship valued when hiring junior staff?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
A lot	51.9%	40
Some	39.0%	30
A little	5.2%	4
Not at all	0.0%	0
Unsure	3.9%	3