UCSF Global Health Internship

HOW DO I GET THERE:
STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE TO PLANNING YOUR INTERNATIONAL INTERNSHIP

The most sage advice for planning an international internship is **START EARLY!!!** Simple steps, such as talking to your school’s student affairs advisor, provide a significant advantage when done in a timely manner. Due to the legalities of traveling to another country and communicating with your international site, **time is your best ally** in allowing your internship to begin smoothly. This section is intended to provide you with important actions that need to be taken at selected intervals before you begin your elective. Again we cannot stress enough the importance of completing these steps **on or before** the selected time intervals. Remember a great measure of the success of your internship **depends on YOU!**

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ONE YEAR PRIOR TO INTERNSHIP PERIOD

- Select a site on interest
  - You may choose a site based on funding, previous experience of other students, your heritage or a general desire to expand on previous experience. Whatever your reason for choosing a particular site, be sure of your motivation. An international health experience is a commitment to serve others and will impact your life and interactions with others in ways you cannot imagine. So take time to assess your motivation for embarking on this journey and choose your site accordingly.

- Research the politics, health care system, culture and customs of your host country
  - Speaking of motivation, this step is one of the most rewarding in terms of gearing your mind towards the elective. It is essential to learn as much as you can about your host site before arriving to prepare you for what you will and won’t see, hear and feel. Background knowledge also facilitates you interaction with you hosts, including language preparation, learning acceptable behavior and dress, and focusing on pertinent health care issues. Start by reading the newspaper, searching the web, and reading travel guides, such as *The Lonely Planet* series. Don’t forget to enjoy this process. Read the popular literature of your host country. Watch films illustrating the culture or history of that region. For instance, in preparing for a trip to El Salvador, one student group spent three months speaking with public health officials, missionaries, and other students well-versed in the issues of that country. They also read and watched historic accounts of El Salvador’s
political struggles. **Be creative!** There are numerous ways to accomplish this step.

- **Contact the site**
  - Write to the student coordinator or similar person of the site stating the following information:
    - Your interest in that site and why
    - Your current year in school
    - Your goals for an international internship
    - Your contact information
    - Request for an application and/or more detailed information regarding the site
    - Your availability
    - Any additional pertinent information or questions
  - If you email or call, make sure to follow-up with a letter to remind the coordinator of your intentions and to document your request. Also include a resume or curriculum vitae to paint a complete picture of yourself. Remember this is a request to work at that site (akin to requesting admission to school) so present it accordingly.

- **Select the dates of your internship**
  - This is dependent on many factors, including your year in school, minimum requirements for internship credit, funding, and the response of your host site.

- **Secure departmental approval from your school**
  - There are different policies at different schools but a few general guidelines are true everywhere. Speak to your student affairs dean and, if your school has one, an internal health medical educator/coordinator. They will be able to instruct you on how to obtain departmental approval and academic credit for your experience. A well-prepared proposal detailing your plans may be required. Generally, present the same information you stated in your contact letter to the host site. Also include the purpose of the elective, your role in the elective, and the structure of the internship (research, project, or clinical work). As in the clinical setting, documentation is important! The clearer you are about your plans, the easier it is to obtain support and academic credit.

- **Determine the cost of the internship**
  - Items to include in your budget:
    - Transportation - airfare, travel to and from the airport, on-site transportation
    - Housing
    - Food
    - Insurance - there are several plans for international travel, one of the best being the *international student identification card (ISIC)*, which for $20 provides evacuation insurance and a multitude of student discounts for an entire year. The card can be obtained from your international health medical educator or Council travel agency.
Start raising funds
- Money may not make the world go round but it will help you get around the world! Be sure to exhaust all potential sources of funding, including your academic/career/religious organizations, your student affairs office, and your relatives. Remember, no contribution is too small! Five bucks can provide you with one or more meals, transportation for a couple days, a gift for your site hosts...you get the idea. See the section subtitled funding your international internship for more detailed suggestions and sources.

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SIX MONTHS PRIOR TO INTERNSHIP PERIOD

- Check on your status at home:
  - Is departmental approval/academic credit confirmed?
  - How will your evaluation be reviewed and included in your student records?
  - Have you made arrangements for your bills/vehicle/possessions?

- Check on the status of your request at the host site:
  - Have you received a letter of agreement from the site?
  - Who is your on-site advisor (a specific person to whom you are accountable)?
  - Who will evaluate you and how?
  - Where will you live? eat?
  - How can you be contacted in your host country?
  - What supplies can you bring for your host site?

- Check on the status of your transportation to and from your host country:
  - Have you purchased your airline ticket?
  - Do you have a current passport?
  - Is a visa required? (contact your embassy)
  - How will you get to your host site from the airport? Will anyone pick you up and, if so, who?

- Check on your budget:
  - How much more funding do you need?
  - Do you need to add/modify/remove any budget item?

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THREE MONTHS PRIOR TO YOUR INTERNSHIP PERIOD

- Apply for a passport and visa, if necessary.
- Schedule your immunizations! Remember this appointment.
- Confirm health and medical evacuation insurance.
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ONE MONTH PRIOR TO YOUR INTERNSHIP PERIOD (You’re almost there!)

- Contact your on-site advisor again:
  - Are the supplies you obtained appropriate?
  - Did you send your travel schedule?
  - Have you clarified any unanswered questions from the section above (six months prior...)?
- Recheck your status at home:
  - Do you have all the necessary travel documents?
  - Did you make photocopies of all documents, including the letter of agreement from your host site? (put these in a different location than the originals but BRING THEM WITH YOU)
  - Do you have all your immunizations and documentation proving it?
  - Have you packed your clothes, supplies, a journal, a couple pictures of home and your family, etc?
  - Have you walked around your room and up and down stairs with your bags for 15 minutes?
  - IF YOU CAN’T CARRY IT, DON’T BRING IT, ‘CUZ YOU DON’T NEED IT! - you will not have someone on hand to lug your bags for you and the lighter you travel the easier it will be to get around. Believe us; you will appreciate this warning as soon as you arrive in your host country.
  - Have you researched your host country and adequately explored issues of culture shock, gender issues, adjustment etc.?
  - Is your budget in order? Did you obtain traveler’s checks (e.g. from American Express - replaceable if lost or stolen)

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...AND WHEN YOU RETURN HOME

- Send a thank you letter to your host site and advisor.
  - Show your appreciation for the experience and being a guest at that site. You do not want to postpone this step. You may not fully understand all the benefits of the experience for many months.
- Prepare a report
  - Regardless of whether it is required or not, prepare a document stating the following:
    - If and how you achieved your goals
    - Additional goals fulfilled
    - How the experience has impacted you now and how you foresee it impacting you in the future
    - Your evaluation of the internship- was it a good match for you, was there enough time to immerse yourself at least partially in the culture...
    - Redefine your role and your advisor’s role
    - Lessons learned
- What you would tell other students preparing to participate in the same or similar internship abroad

- Complete your immunization schedule

- SHARE YOUR EXPERIENCE WITH OTHERS!!!
  - Prepare a brief, e.g. 15 minute, presentation for your dean and other interested students.
  - Put your experience on file the student affairs office
  - Hold a brown bag lunch to show pictures and discuss your experience. Invite others who have gone abroad to join you in doing this.
  - Keep in touch with your host site - this will ease the ‘reverse culture shock’ you will experience upon reentry.