Frequently Asked Questions Regarding Computer Science Internship

**Question:** What is an internship?
**Answer:** When an employer offers a working opportunity to you and you have a lot of learning to do before you can perform productively, you can be hired as an intern.

**Question:** Who qualified to sign up for the internship credits?
**Answer:** You need to have a senior standing and at least a GPA of 3.0.

**Question:** Do I have to look for the internship opportunity or does the department offer the internship opportunities to the students?
**Answer:** You will have to find those opportunities. Every once in a while, potential employers looking for the interns contact the department and the CS Administrative Coordinator, Jo Ann Espinoza, will pass them along to students by e-mails. You can also go to the Career Center to look for the opportunities.

**Question:** Why is an internship worth academic credits?
**Answer:** Not every internship is worth academic credits. No credits will be given just because some employer is calling you an intern. Credits are awarded because there is a learning experience about to happen as in every academic course.

**Question:** Can interns be paid?
**Answer:** Yes. Most of internships in computer science are paid interns. Some interns only get pay but not credits.

**Question:** Can paid interns also get academic credits?
**Answer:** Paid interns can get academic credits as long as there is learning involved. When the learning experience can be separated from the production experience, the part of learning can get credits while the part of the production gets pay.

**Question:** How many credits is an internship worth?
**Answer:** It depends how much time and efforts you are going to spend on learning in order to perform the work required in the internship.

**Question:** How do we decide how many credits are worth for an internship?
**Answer:** A field supervisor at your future employment can help you determine how much time and efforts you will have to spend in learning before you become productive in the working environment. Then you will have to justify how many credits it is worth to the internship coordinator who will also be your faculty sponsor for the internship. If the amount of time and efforts spent on learning is about equivalent to a 1-credit semester course, it will be worth 1 credit. Similarly, if it is more or less equivalent to a 2-credit semester course, it will be worth 2 credits. When the amount of learning is about equivalent to a 3-credit semester course, it will be worth 3 credits.
**Question**: If I have been on some job and learn quite a bit about the knowledge needed to perform the job, can I get some internship credits for it?

**Answer**: No. Academic credits are awarded for the learning to be happening, not for the past learning experience.

**Question**: Do I have to set up the internship and complete all the paperwork before starting my internship?

**Answer**: Yes. Once you started the learning experience, you cannot get credits for it. Therefore, it is very important to complete all the paperwork before you start to work as an intern.

**Question**: When is the best time to get some internship experience?

**Answer**: Summer usually is the best time for internship because your working as an intern and your studying as a student will not interfere with each other. It is not recommended to have internship during regular semesters unless you have an extremely light workload of study at the time.

**Question**: What happens if I am offered the opportunity to continue working after the internship is over?

**Answer**: If you have a light workload of study during your senior year, you certainly can continue your employment. If not, you may reduce your study workload in order to continue working; however, it might delay your graduation. You will have to make the decision.

**Question**: When should I start looking for the internship opportunities?

**Answer**: In general, you should start looking in spring for summer internships. You should get the internship form from the Administrative Coordinator of Computer Science Department in Science 2 239 to get some ideas on the timeline and the documents to be completed before starting any internship.

**Question**: What do I have to do when I am offered an internship?

**Answer**: If you do not plan to get credits for it, you don’t have to do anything. However, if you do plan to get credits, you can complete the individual course form obtained from the college office and the internship form as well as the learning contract required in the internship form before you can sign up for the internship course for academic credits.

**Question**: Why do I have to complete the paperwork for the internship?

**Answer**: The internship form and learning contract are to clarify what constitutes of your internship. It serves as your protection in case that the employers would change their minds about your assignments for the internship. When that happens, the faculty sponsor will help you negotiate another meaningful learning contract to protect your benefits. The individual course form is for creating a separate internship course for you.
**Question:** What grade do I get if the internship doesn’t end before the end of summer?

**Answer:** Most of summer internship doesn’t finish by the end of summer. In that case, an I grade will be assigned temporarily and a formal grade will be assigned in the fall semester when everything is completed. Most of the time, it is due to the fact that summer interns rarely finished their report before the end of their internships and hence were not able to make their presentations, and most of their field supervisors did not send in their evaluation letters on time.

**For international students:**

**Question:** Can international students get internship credits?

**Answer:** Yes, as long as you have fulfilled all of the above requirements and obtain a working permit from the Immigration Office.

**Question:** Does the CS department help getting the working permit?

**Answer:** Not really. The CS department has nothing to do with getting you a working permit. You will have to work with the Global Affairs Office to get a working permit. The CS Department only determines if the opportunity is worth any academic credits, and if so, evaluates the internship experience after it is completed.

**Question:** If the CS department approves the internship credits, does it guarantee a working permit can be obtained?

**Answer:** No.

**For graduate students:**

**Question:** Can graduate students get internship credits?

**Answer:** Yes.

**Question:** Does the internship credits be counted toward the MS degree requirements?

**Answer:** No.

**For prospective employers:**

**Question:** What should we do to start the process of getting some interns?

**Answer:** If you write a job description including an introduction to your company and the pay scale, you can contact our department academic coordinator, Jo Ann Espinoza, at (760) 750-4118 or send it to her at jespinoz@csusm.edu. She will forward the information to our students. Any interested students will apply for the job directly to you. Once you decide to hire a student as your intern, he or she can start working. However, if the intern also wants to get some academic credits for the learning experience, the intern has to complete all the paperwork with your help before starting to work.

**Question:** How much should we pay the intern?

**Answer:** It depends. Some companies have pay scales for the interns. Others negotiate with the interns directly. Our university takes no position on this issue.