JUMPSTARTING YOUR CAREER

An Internship Guide for Criminal Justice

DOROTHY TAYLOR

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This book is dedicated to the memories of my daughter, Sharon Doreen Hayes Lewis, and my brother, Fred Pitts, Jr.

Foreword

Internships in criminal justice serve many purposes. They provide students with insight into the day-to-day operations of a criminal justice professional agency and help students understand how knowledge gained in the classroom applies to the "real world" of the criminal justice system. It also allows them to assess their skills and abilities against the tasks of real-work situations. Internships can also provide students with connections for future employment and assist them in deciding on a particular area of interest. [See Criminal Justice Internships (http://www/runet.edu/crju.web/internship.htm). Radford, VA: Radford University, Department of Criminal Justice, 1996.] However, internships are often hit-or-miss affairs, poorly planned and with little supervision and no follow-up. Students often do not know what to expect or how to proceed once they are assigned to agencies, and agencies frequently do not know what to do with the students. Many student interns report that they fetched coffee, did filing, and "observed" for their entire experience. Few would argue that such a situation is a meaningful educational experience. This book is designed to assist students in obtaining effective internships and successful transitions to employment in the professional world. It will also help internship supervisors and coordinators develop and administer challenging and productive educational experiences for students who are enrolled in criminal justice internships.

In this book, Dorothy Taylor, associate professor of criminology and sociology at the University of Miami, offers a plan for successful internship experiences. The author, who combines many years of experience in criminal justice and social service agencies with her tenure as the internship coordinator for the Criminology Program at the University of Miami, has written an exceptionally well-conceived "how to do it" manual for effective criminal justice internships. Her approach is multifaceted, stressing not only the student's role in the internship experience, but also the role and responsibilities of the criminal justice agencies involved, and of the university and faculty coordinator.

In Part I, Taylor presents an overview of the concept of internships from historical, philosophical, and theoretical perspectives. This broad view is followed by a discussion of how to develop goals and objectives for internships and how to assess progress toward these goals and objectives. The field-placement process is then examined, and suggestions are offered for selecting internship sites, ensuring the proper placement of students, and conducting placement interviews.

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In Part II the agencies that offer internship placements, including their structure, bureaucratic concerns, and agency politics are examined. These insights into the internal operations of criminal justice agencies give both the student and the faculty coordinator information that should make the internship experience more meaningful.

Part III looks at the role of the student, the agency, and the faculty supervisor. Each of these topics is considered in detail, and important concerns for the internship experience are examined. One topic often missing from an internship syllabus is ethics. This section includes a chapter on the intern's value system and ethical principles for criminology and criminal justice.

Part IV offers a perspective on the student's, agency supervisor's, and the faculty coordinator's evaluations of the internship. The final chapter looks at careers in criminal justice, including instructions for preparing a résumé and investigating employment opportunities and suggestions for continuing education.

One unique feature of this book is the Resource Guide which catalogs criminal justice agencies in 25 major cities in the United States. This should prove to be a major benefit to students as they search for employment opportunities and for internship coordinators as they explore internship opportunities and placements.

In summary, this is an excellent and long-awaited manual for improving the internship experience in criminal justice education. I believe that it is a necessary educational tool for students and for the bookshelves of criminal justice educators.

Paul Cromwell, Ph.D. Hugo Wall School of Urban and Public Affairs University of Wichita Wichita, Kansas December 1997

Preface

This book was written for students in the social sciences (criminal justice, criminology, psychology, sociology, and social work) who are beginning a criminal justice internship in a public or private agency. It will also be a useful reference for faculty and agency supervisors. The book focuses on many issues involved in the total internship experience, especially those related to students' personal and professional development during their internship education. A guide of this sort is important because many of my students have, over the past six years, considered their internship among the most influential experiences of their undergraduate careers. At the same time, they have reported that their regular course work provides only indirect, and generally insufficient, preparation for their initial real-world experiences. This book is designed to make the connection between academic course work and the knowledge, skills, and emotional challenges that are found in the professional world of work.

Finding limited up-to-date information and materials on criminal justice internships, I decided to write this book after six years of testing the contents with criminology and sociology students interning in criminal justice and social service agencies. Because a world catalog search revealed that there was only one contending criminal justice internship book available and that the only other two publications were outdated (1967 and 1970), I also attempted to use the best information available from psychology, social work, and other disciplines that the interns will encounter in their various placements. I conducted extensive literature reviews of the leading journals and textbooks in each discipline and consulted with several faculty and agency supervisors in various colleges and universities and internship placements.

Using my personal experience as an intern and my experience coordinating internship placements for hundreds of students, I designed this book to be used as an introductory text on internships that can also be a helpful resource tool for students in their work at the agencies. I hope this book will help readers have a more effective and rewarding work and learning experience.

Acknowledgments

A number of people have influenced and contributed to the preparation of this book. For their encouragement and assistance, I would like to express my gratitude and appreciation to Professors Coramae Richey Mann and Paul Cromwell.

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Special thanks is extended to Wendy Almeleh for her editorial contributions, Perri Weinberg-Schenker for her assistance, Will Cobb and Tomeka Law for their computer skills, and Claudine Francis and Ana Villaraos for their contribution to the resource guide.

Finally, for their patience and understanding while I spent so many hours on the computer, at the library, and performing various other tasks involved in writing a book, a huge thanks to my husband, family, and friends.

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The Concept of Internships

ong before there was big business, large government, or free-market enterprise, there were interns. In medieval times they were apprenticed to knights and blacksmiths. During the industrial age, children learned trades and skills at low or no pay from the master craftsmen. Thus, as long as there have been skills to learn, there have been interns of some sort.

Today, it is much the same. Stockbrokers, police officers, members of Congress, television producers, and educators are just a few of the persons who take interns under their wings and pass on practical knowledge of their businesses or professions. In addition, many states are in the process of enacting laws that will require prospective teachers to intern with mentors before they are considered for teaching certificates (Barnett, 1990).

An internship is as vital to current college students as is the regular curriculum. After she interviewed graduates, students, corporate recruiters, and placement directors, Scott (1992, p. 59) concluded that internships are "the single most effective college recruiting strategy."

Internships give students a much-needed foot in the door to their careers (Scott, 1992, p. 59). Internships also afford companies the opportunity to give prospective employees a semester- or summer-long tryout before deciding whether to hire them.

Indeed, internships are mutually beneficial to both students and organizations. However, not all internship placements are equally beneficial. How does an internship program ensure that students find the best placements for their future career goals? How does a student avoid being little more than a low- or no-paid gofer? These are essential questions in any overview of internships.

Field education courses at various colleges and universities are referred to by different titles, such as internships, practice, and fieldwork. Throughout this book, however, the terms *internship* and *field education* are used interchangeably.

Part I is devoted to exploring the concept of internships. Chapter 1 discusses why students should consider internships, the history of internships, the method of transferring theory into practice with self-directional learning, personal development in relation to coping skills, and professional development that is pertinent to values and ethics. Three common classifications characterize the field education process:

- 1. Overview, in which the student spends time in all branches of an agency to get an overall picture of the agency's function.
- 2. Service delivery, in which the student, under close supervision, actually deals with the agency's clients.
- 3. Research, in which the student uses the facilities of the agency as a laboratory for inquiry into a topic that the student and faculty supervisor have agreed upon. (Blackwelder and Moorman, 1975–1976, p. 2)

Chapter 2 focuses on realistic goal setting prior to starting a field placement, developing pragmatic educational objectives, and methods for assessing one's progress. Chapter 3 provides information on selecting and matching students with the best internship sites, preparing students for the background screening conducted by most criminal justice agencies, and the liability and insurance issues that arise in some agencies.

Defining Internships

Questions for Students

Why consider an internship?

What is the benefit of integrating classroom knowledge with practical experience?

What are the scholastic, personal, and professional advantages of an internship?



FIELD EDUCATION CONSIDERATION

Why should students consider internships? Although students may be confident that they want careers in criminology or criminal justice, they may not be sure of the specific area in which they wish to specialize. Internships will help them determine the most desirable areas for their future careers or indeed, decide whether they want to remain in the discipline at all. In addition, learning the management procedures of organizations affords significant insights into and understanding of the administration of various agencies. Furthermore, student interactions with agency supervisors, clients, and the agency staff constitute a comprehensive instructional experience that will prove invaluable and will aid in cultivating alliances that may be beneficial in obtaining employment in the future. In some instances, students may be employed by the agencies after the internships end.

HISTORY OF FIELD PLACEMENTS

Evidence of internships goes back to the Middle Ages, when apprenticeships were served with master craftsmen. This concept continues with field education in various scholastic areas, such as education, law, medicine, nursing, and social services. Several states require persons to undergo internships before they grant certification to practice in these respective disciplines.

From 1968 to 1980, when federal funds were available for internships in criminology and criminal justice, internships became a central component of higher instruction in the field. This funding enabled the Law Enforcement Assistant Administration (LEAA) to grant compensated internships for eight weeks or more at a salary of \$65 per week for full-time students. This policy and the LEAA were discontinued in 1980 (Gordon and McBride, 1990).

Although paid criminal justice internships were no longer available, there were still unpaid internships in the field, and the popularity of internships, in general, grew by leaps and bounds during the "intern-crazy nineteen-eighties" (Scott, 1992, p. 59). During that decade competition increased. The baby boom was peaking, with students graduating from universities in droves and seeking employment. Major companies were eager to assist. Businesses such as Digital and Wang, which invested in in-house television studios and additional perks, also invested extravagantly in internship programs.

The abundance of college students and the extensive growth in business enabled corporations to offers internships, which gave them the opportunity to train, observe, and evaluate students for future employment. Summer internships became attractive ways for students to build their résumés.

In the early 1990s, after a decade of growth, the economy stagnated and business decreased, as did many internship programs. For some corporations, internship programs are no longer cost-effective. However, internships are still the most effective model for recruiting college graduates for entry-level positions. Therefore, businesses that decrease or abolish their internship programs are "short-sighted and stand to lose their competitive advantage on campus" (Scott, 1992, p. 60).

In addition, as Brenda Brassard, human resources manager for Fidelity Investments in Boston, noted: "Companies are doing less hiring, so the competition is fiercer for internships" (quoted in Wennes, 1993, p. 31). Internships have become significantly more difficult to obtain because there are more students than available positions. When they need to hire more personnel, businesses are more likely to hire those with the pragmatic experience that internships afford. Students are aware of this attitude. As a Wichita State engineering major, Gary Spexarth, said of his internship experience: "I learned a lot more than I ever will, or have, by going to school...it looks so much better when you graduate" (quoted in Wennes, 1993, p. 32).

FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE

Field education has become a central component of the instructional process, affording students a chance for hands-on experience with criminology and criminal justice

practitioners. Furthermore, in internship courses, the didactic instruction received in the classroom is enriched, enhanced, and better understood through practical experience in the application of concepts, theories, and principles. (For the principles of internships, see Box 1.1.)

Much of a student's educational instruction occurs in the classroom and consists of note taking and discussion. Learning is restricted to the course content, the instructor's knowledge, the syllabus, and other students' contributions. In this setting, one may or may not choose to participate.

During an internship, the education process is guided by the student (Gordon and McBride, 1990:05). The instructional procedure is guided by actual situations (Dudley, 1980). In addition, examinations and rebuttal are eliminated from the evaluation process.

Although students can apply their knowledge directly and observe particular theories in practice, there may be some they may never observe. It is rewarding to hear from students: "I think internships should be required. The textbooks just don't tell the whole story. Those theories just don't prove out in the real world." For most students, the internships are the first time they are given the chance to test various theories of criminology in a professional setting. In addition, most internship courses require a term paper and several agencies request written narratives. Students' verbal and written communication skills usually improve, as do their listening and interviewing skills.

PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

During the course of their internships, students may be compelled to define, evaluate, or reevaluate their values. By becoming self-aware and learning about their own perspectives and capabilities, they will be able to cultivate the reliance and self-confidence that are crucial to problem solving. This process will be facilitated by their exposure to people who think, believe, and behave differently. These encounters, which are prevalent in many criminal justice agencies, may cause students to examine their own biases and opinions about social issues and become defensive because of their need to reject clients' different values and actions taken by criminal justice agencies. In any event, this exposure will stimulate passions and feelings associated with genuine life circumstances that cannot be generated in the classroom. Some understanding of causal elements in relation to people with problems should empower students to strengthen their convictions about the dignity and value of the persons they are learning to deal with. Assistance from faculty supervisors and agency supervisors should enable them to become more self-aware and thereby to move from subjectivity to objectivity when working with clients.

As interns, students will need to dress properly, maintain an acceptable image, and be dependable. The interns should be prompt, dependable, and efficient. They should also be aware of the significance of performing within an agency context and the necessity of communicating to people in all positions.

In addition to acquiring experience, internships enable students to determine if they really want to work in the field. Most students who approach me for internships

Box 1.1 PRINCIPLES OF INTERNSHIPS

Hal Blackwelder and Elliott Moorman, Internships in Criminal Justice: A Guide to Service-Learning Internships in Agencies of North Carolina's Criminal Justice System. Raleigh, NC: North Carolina Department of Administration, 1975–1976.

This booklet is an outgrowth of the Criminal Justice Recruitment and Service-Learning Project, sponsored by the North Carolina Department of Administration during the 1975–1976 academic year. The project was funded by the Governor's Commission on Law and Order with federal funds from LEAA. It was charged with creating new internships (using the model developed by the North Carolina Internship Office) in state and local criminal justice agencies and with cataloging and coordinating existing internship programs in the criminal justice system.

According to Blackwelder and Moorman, internships are a priceless tool in criminology and criminal justice training in that they give students the opportunity to combine information that they learn in the classroom with practical applications. A well-designed internship is an arrangement between a student, a faculty coordinator, and an agency supervisor. The authors stated that internships are based on seven principles (p. 23):

- Each service-learning intern [should] have at least one well-defined activity
 that is regarded as worthwhile by the organization or group with whom
 the intern is affiliated, by the intern, and by the faculty mentor.
- Each service-learning intern [should] develop specific learning objectives
 that can readily be identified and reviewed periodically throughout the
 work period. The support committee members of faculty and host organization representatives should also develop specific objectives for their
 participation.
- 3. Each intern or group of interns [should] be supported by a college-related faculty person and/or community or public organization person. The roles of these support people are to assist with task definition, learning objective definition, carrying out of the task, counseling with the intern, and carrying through with the ideas and projects initiated.
- 4. Each intern [should] *contract* as an independent agent with the organization involved to do the work and pursue the learning objectives in cooperation with a postsecondary educational institution.
- Each intern [should] have adequate time for private reflection for assessment of the worth of his own experience in providing service to others and learning in a nonschool setting.
- 6. Each intern [should] produce a report or communication vehicle that is primarily for the agency with which he is affiliated.
- 7. Such a *product* should also be illustrative of the learning realized through the experience.