Interning at the Woodrow Wilson Presidential Library

The Role of Interns at the Woodrow Wilson Presidential Library

Internships at the Woodrow Wilson Presidential Library (WWPL) are designed to provide a transition between student and professional life. The value of an internship lies in the educational experience it provides for both students and WWPL staff. Interns accomplish needed museum work while gaining insight and experience to guide their future career decisions.

Interns play a vital and active role at the WWPL in the achievement of its mission. Staff members should be supportive of interns, receive them as co-workers, and provide them with the appropriate training and opportunities for intellectual enrichment.

Access to WWPL’s internal information is a privilege and interns are required to adhere to the highest of ethical standards. Interns are trusted representatives of the WWPL and bear many of the same responsibilities and obligations of staff members.

While interning at the WWPL, interns are to act on behalf of the WWPL and not for their own personal gain. Interns are to fulfill the duties of their position and avoid any conflicts of interest, or the appearance of conflict of interest. Interns may become privy to confidential information regarding programs, collections, donors, and administration. All non-public information must be kept confidential both during and after the time spent as an intern. Interns must not misuse WWPL’s name, property or services, nor should they compromise the goodwill and reputation of the WWPL in the community. Interns must adhere to all provisions outlined in the WWPL Code of Ethics, which is distributed to each intern at the beginning of the internship.

Intern Projects

The types of projects typically assigned to interns entail both specialized responsibilities necessary to complete a specific project, as well as day-to-day administrative tasks. It is desirable for interns to complete the internship with a sample of some tangible product to add to their work portfolio.
Some past projects have included:

- Researching and developing exhibition related materials;
- Researching and developing teaching materials;
- Developing activities for History Camp;
- Assisting with market research projects designed to attract new audiences;
- Providing curatorial assistance for a special exhibition;
- Researching archival material located in the permanent collection; and
- Preparing grant proposals.

*Compensation for Interns*

The WWPL does not offer paid internships. However, an unpaid internship can provide much needed experience and skills in a highly competitive job market. Interns can receive academic credit for their work. Students who wish to receive credit for their internship should consult with their academic advisor to obtain the necessary paperwork.

**The Internship Process**

Internship opportunities are posted on the WWPL website. The internship posting will give general information regarding the proposed projects and work to be performed. When individuals contact the WWPL about an internship, they should have an idea about the department or departments in which they would like to intern.

**Administration** - Strong organization skills; ability to work with statistical, financial and budgetary information; good writing and communication skills

**Curatorial** - Strong research skills, good organization, writing and communication skills

**Development** - Strong communication and organization skills; ability to interact with visitors and donors

**Education** - Background in museum education, or education, educational theories and methods; strong organization and communication skills; teaching skills; ability to interact with young visitors

**Exhibitions** - 3-D and 2-D design experience; experience with carpentry and painting

**Library and Archives** - Strong research skills; good organization skills; strong writing and communication skills
**Marketing and Communications**  Strong organization skills; ability to interact with the general public and the press; experience with social media such as twitter and facebook

**Visitor Services**  Strong customer service skills; good organizational skills; interest in museum education

All resumes and cover letters should be sent to the attention of the Administrative Officer, who serves as the Internship Coordinator for the WWPL. After reviewing the resume and cover letter, the coordinator will work with the appropriate staff member to schedule interviews for suitable candidates. The interview gives both the WWPL staff member and the candidate the opportunity to ask questions to determine how well their interests and needs match. If the first interview is by phone, a second in-person interview may be scheduled. If the applicant is accepted as an intern, an internship contract will be developed that outlines the parameters of the internship. In addition, the intern will be given copies of the WWPL Personnel Manual and Code of Ethics.

**Internship Parameters**
- The starting and ending dates
- A work schedule
- A job description that details specific goals and duties for the project, as well as the name of the supervisor
- A list of objectives describing the intern’s duties in specific terms
- Evaluation criteria and procedures
- The amount of academic credit, if applicable - in cases where academic credit is to be received, the participating school will provide its own forms, which should correspond to the intern’s contract with the WWPL.

**Orientation**

Once the internship begins, the supervisor and/or coordinator will arrange an orientation tour for the intern to meet staff members and become familiar with the facilities. The orientation will also include a review of WWPL policies and procedures, mission, general organization, security, and general work practices.

The intern will receive a packet of information including:
- Project description
- Staff List and Organization Chart
- WWPL Code of Ethics*
WWPL Personnel Manual*

*All staff, volunteers, and interns of the WWPL are required to read the WWPL’s Code of Ethics and the Personnel Manual and sign an affirmation agreeing to abide by the terms in each document.

**Intern Responsibility**

In addition to completing the internship project, there are other responsibilities that the intern should undertake to ensure the success and relevance of the experience. First and foremost, the intern should be professional and treat the commitment as such. Professional dress is expected. Any changes to the work schedule should be discussed in advance with the supervisor. While working on the assigned projects, it is recommended that interns:

- Maintain a file of daily activities, tasks to complete, deadlines, and observations about their experiences. Following the internship, a copy of this log is filed with the Internship Coordinator where it can be used to complete letters of recommendations, if requested;
- Arrange additional work experience, when possible, including reading about museum and curatorial work or interviewing staff members in departments other than the one in which the intern is working;
- Attend staff meetings and Museum functions, as appropriate;
- Complete an evaluation of the internship, including areas for improvement. This evaluation will be maintained by the intern’s supervisor, and will be used as part of the final internship report. Once the internship is complete, the file will be kept with the Internship Coordinator, Emily Kilgore.

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