



# FINDING YOUR OWN EXTERNSHIP

***The goal of an externship is to Explore career options, Make Connections for your future, and Learn from industry professionals.*** Developing your own externship is much like finding an internship or job. The biggest differences are that an externship is for a very brief period of time ranging from a few hours to a few days and that the goal is to gather information to help you make career decisions. Also, you may do an externship on your own any time of the year, be it winter, spring, fall or summer break. The following steps will give you a guideline for locating possible workplace mentors. If along the way you have any questions please make an appointment with our staff and we'll be happy to help.

1. **Locate potential workplace mentors.** Be open to all kinds of learning experiences remembering that this is only for a short while. You can start with alums, family friends, or community contacts. To identify alums, access college resources and social media. The **Alumni Directory** by going to the [Networking-Connecting with Swatties](#) section of the Career Services web page and clicking on the Directory link. You can login with your network credentials and then search by location, career field, organization, etc. You can also search specifically for alumni indicating they are willing to mentor an extern, but we encourage you to reach out to any alumnus/a in your fields of interest. Social media is a great way to link up with alums. Check out **LinkedIn**, search under Swarthmore College and then click Alumni for a keyword search, also use our group **Swatties Helping Swatties Mentoring and Networking**.

2. **Introduce yourself and your request.** Some people are not familiar with an externship so you'll need to explain what you're asking for, give a little background on yourself and explain that the college supports experiences like this. The college does not grant credit or oversee student-created externships, however. You can either email or call people. Sample emails follow. Please feel free to personalize these examples for your use.

## **Example Requesting an Externship set up similarly to the College's program:**

*Dear [Alum]:*

*My name is [student] and I am a junior at Swarthmore College, majoring in economics. I obtained your name from the College's Online Alumni Directory and am writing to ask you to volunteer to participate as my workplace mentor for the Swarthmore Extern program during the week of January ##. \***<change the time period if another time works better for you>***

*As you may know, the Swarthmore Extern program is a popular one-week program that allows Swarthmore students to explore possible careers and fields of interest and to build professional mentoring relationships. Workplace mentors generally have an unpaid extern at their worksite for five days. Sometimes they might share an extern with another Swarthmore alum or a colleague. The nature of the externships can vary greatly. They can include shadowing the mentor or colleague, attending meetings, and working on short writing, research or data analysis projects.*

*<Here you will want to write something about yourself, the type of work you are interested in and, if applicable, your background in the field. Feel free to attach a resume to the e-mail.>*

*I hope you will consider hosting me as your extern during winter break. I live in <city/location>, so I would be able to easily commute from home to your workplace. If you are unable to mentor an extern, I would still appreciate communicating with you via e-mail or phone to learn your insights into this interesting career field.*

*Please let me know a time it would be convenient for us to talk in detail. You may call or email me at... Additionally, please let me know if I can provide any more information about myself or externships in general before we meet. I look forward to hearing from you and thank you for considering my request.*

*Sincerely,  
[Student]*

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## Example Requesting an Externship during another time of year or for a shorter period of time:

Dear Ms. Papazian:

*My name is Kendra Kemp and I am a sophomore at Swarthmore College, majoring in biology and economics. While meeting with a counselor within Career Services, I was encouraged to contact you to learn more about your career field and your area of focus at the Golden Gate Institute. I am writing in the hope of obtaining an opportunity to conduct a brief career exploration/job shadow experience at your workplace during \_\_\_\_\_ (specify a day(s) or week that best fits your schedule).*

*Having worked as a Student Conservation Associate at Acadia last summer, I was introduced to a variety of different divisions of the National Park. However, I never had the chance to really see the behind the scenes project development that happens in the parks, and I would love to gain this experience. I am exploring a career connecting environmental sustainability to broader issues, including public health and urban planning. This fall I plan on traveling to China with my Environmental Policy class to work on a research project on sustainable urban systems, enabling me to explore my interests further in a more vocational context.*

*I hope that you will consider allowing me to learn about careers in your workplace through a job-shadow experience (externship). If you are unable to have me job shadow you, I would still appreciate communicating with you via email or phone to learn your insights into this interesting career field!*

*Please let me know a time it would be convenient for us to talk in detail. Also, please let me know if I can provide any more information about myself in general before we chat. I look forward to hearing from you and thank you for considering my request.*

*Sincerely,  
Kendra Kemp '21*

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**3. Confirm with your workplace mentor** that they are able to have you at the date and time you have set up. Remember, an externship can range from one day to a couple of weeks and you can do this over winter break or even spring, fall or summer break, or any time of year, for example several Fridays in a row during the semester. Being flexible keeps your options open.

**4. Remember good etiquette.** Be thankful to your mentor for having you in their place of work. They are doing this for your benefit. Be professional during your experience and send a thank you at the end of your externship. Feel free to talk with a Career Counselor or Career Peer Advisor for additional ideas.



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