

Wisconsin Park & Recreation Association

Career Center Tips:

How to Turn Your College Internship Into Employment



Young job seekers who can't seem to land [full-time employment](#) may want to tap into a segment of the job market that is always recommended, but often overlooked: [internships](#).

[Internships](#) have always been encouraged among [college students](#) and recent graduates pursuing careers in parks and recreation, but they've never been more important than in the current economy. In this competitive job market, the first thing employers are looking for is relevant experience. Internships help not only to build skill sets and establish successful track records, but they offer great networking opportunities to land a full-time position after graduation.

Students pursuing careers in parks, recreation, natural resources or therapeutic recreation take notice--fifty-nine percent of employers said they are likely to hire their college [interns](#) as full-time, permanent employees, according to a new survey from CBcampus.com, CareerBuilder.com's college job-search site. Twenty-four percent of hiring managers said they plan to hire college interns in the first half of 2009, while 12 percent plan to do so as early as the fourth quarter of 2008.

Earning money ... and experience

For employers, the most valuable part of an internship is providing young people with real-world experience, as well as an enhanced skill set. But for the interns, the most valuable part also includes the contribution an internship makes to their [bank](#) accounts.

The majority of employers looking for college interns say they plan to pay them \$10 or more per hour. Twenty-three percent will pay in excess of \$15 per hour and to a lucky few, 9 percent of employers will dish out more than \$20 per hour. Only a small percent of hiring managers in parks and recreation offer unpaid positions.

What are employers looking for?

Many students in internships don't know what hiring managers are looking for in potential **full-time** candidates. When asked which factors were among the most important in influencing their decision to hire a college intern permanently, employers cited the candidate's aptitude to produce timely, quality work; critical-thinking and problem-solving skills; and level of professionalism.

If you're looking to turn your internship into a full-time gig, here are five tips to help you:

1. **Treat your internship like an extended job interview -- because it is.** Arrive on time, beat (or at the very least meet) deadlines and consistently deliver strong work.
2. **Seek out challenges** -- Employers want employees who show initiative and a desire to learn and develop. The majority of employers are more likely to permanently hire a college intern who asks for more responsibilities.
3. **Ask good questions** -- Employers know you don't have all the answers. In fact, most employers indicate that candidates who come to them with thoughtful questions have a better chance of getting hired full time.
4. **Remember the golden rule** -- Always be respectful, address co-workers courteously and don't get caught up in office gossip.
5. **Leave a positive impression** -- Show enthusiasm for the projects you're working on and the company overall; don't complain; and refrain from e-mailing or talking to friends.