

MINNESOTA STATE SENATE INTERNSHIP

Objectives

- To gain a detailed understanding of the Legislature, including its structure, functions, rules and regulations, policies and procedures, and allocation of resources.
- To understand the relationship of the Legislature to other parts of the political system.
- Comprehension of working in an office environment, including:
 - Collecting information and attitudes on a specific topic.
 - Developing judgment of what is relevant, valid, and important
 - Summarizing complex material
 - Developing alternative methods and responses
 - Effective oral and written communication
 - How to handle opposition to proposals
- Identification and analysis of political strategies in committees, on the floor, and behind the scenes.
- Learning and using the resources available to the legislature.

Common Duties

- Interns are assigned duties by the Senator for whom they work, which may include:
 - Taking notes at meetings (constituent meetings, committee hearings, etc.)
 - Writing letters (to constituents, lobbyists, other legislative staff)
 - Using facilities throughout the Capitol as well as community resources to conduct more thorough research.
 - Communication with non-partisan offices, including the Secretary of the Senate's Office, Journal, Engrossing, and Index
 - Researching a bill or an issue

Benefits of an internship with the Minnesota State Senate

For the student given to abstract analysis of the political process, an internship provides an opportunity to do some "reality-testing" which can demonstrate both the utility and shortcomings of widely used concepts, models, and theories. For the student who wants a practical education and is impatient with theory, an outside experience may help make abstract analysis more real as well as more meaningful. Each, in his or her own way, can learn the benefits of participant-observation as a useful method of social inquiry which adds depth and substance to understanding.

Employers usually give preference to persons with work experience. How does a college student ever gain relevant experience if the experience is a prerequisite for the job in the first place? A well-developed internship program which gives students short-term job experience opportunities may help alleviate this difficulty. In addition, an internship may give students a chance to try out career areas they are considering. By experiencing and observing first-hand, students can get a better idea of what a given job entails.