

# Academic Internships vs. Service Learning

- An academic **internship** formally integrates the student's academic study with hands-on, professional experience in a cooperating organization related to the student's career interests.
- Through hands-on work experience, students explore the profession to determine if their chosen career path is right for them without having to make a full commitment.
- Academic internships assist students in developing new skills and honing ones they already have for post-graduation endeavors. In other words, internships help students get prepared for their desired career field.
- **Service learning** is a teaching method that promotes student learning through active participation in meaningful and planned service experiences based on community needs that are substantively related to course content.
- Through reflective activities, students enhance their understanding of course content, general knowledge, sense of civic responsibility, self-awareness and commitment to the community.
- Service Learning prepares students to better understand course content via learning by doing or "experiential learning."

- An academic internship does not have to be related to the community, non-profit, or “civic responsibility”. Rather, it can be strictly related to a business or governmental enterprise.
- Students may receive financial compensation.
- Firsthand experience at the academic internship placement itself embodies the vast majority of the student’s time, and may include a small component of class assignments, such as a reflective journal. (Approximately 45 hours for each credit earned).

- Student learning provides students opportunities to participate in organized service activities that meet community needs while linking the community service experience to course content.
- Students do not receive financial compensation.
- Firsthand experience at the organization includes a small, but important component of the course assignments, in particular reflections about the service engagement. (Approximately 20-30 hours over the course of the semester).

- Usually offered to upper division students thru a designated internship course and occasionally through a field placement course or as an independent study.
- Academic departments may offer in variable units, depending on the total number of hours invested in the internship.
- May be offered as credit/no credit or with a traditional letter grade, depending on department.
- Guidelines for internships are found in [CSUSM's internship policy](#).

- From first year undergraduates to graduate students, service learning can be integrated into most courses.
- Units are tied to the service learning course, usually 3 units.
- Graded as a component of the course.
- Guidelines for Service Learning are found in the CSU system-wide document, ["Managing Risk for Student Learning"](#).

- Students are required to complete placement documents and a safety and workplace orientation through the Internship and Service Learning [database](#) to ensure liability coverage with the University.
- Existing internships courses automatically have the internship attribute.

Academic Internships

760-750-7005

[internships@csusm.edu](mailto:internships@csusm.edu)

- Students are required to complete placement documents and a safety and workplace orientation through the Internship and Service Learning [database](#) to ensure liability coverage with the University.
- Instructors are required to request that their AC add the service learning attribute each semester to indicate that this course includes service learning.

Service Learning

760-750-4055

[servicelearning@csusm.edu](mailto:servicelearning@csusm.edu)