

NODA



Internship Program

CANDIDATE PREPARATION GUIDE

NODA's internship portal allows professionals in the field of orientation, transition, and retention to post new positions for graduate internships. These internships can vary in length, time of the year, job responsibilities, salary, and benefits. NODA provides the timeline and resources to aid in the search, but the search and internship experience is 100% between the hosts and the candidates.



How the Process Works:

- Review NODA's timelines and expectations at: nodaweb.org/events-overview/internship. Questions? Don't hesitate to email noda@umn.edu.



Reviewing Your Options:

- With hundreds of options, knowing how to wade through all of the possibilities can be initially challenging. Here are four key areas to think about as you review the options. Please note that candidates place different levels of priority or importance on each of these different areas. As you start this process, start to reflect on what is critical for you in a position, what is a bonus, and what isn't necessary.
 - **Location:** Where do you want to go? What type of institution would you like to work at? Where might you want to work in the future? Do you want to diversify your experience to complement what you currently have or deepen your experience in a particular area? An internship can be a great time to take a risk since the role is so short in nature. Internships can help you see what you could want or avoid in a future job, help you get acclimated to a different region of the country, or start to build a network of support when you search for a full-time role in the future. A quick Google search can help you find a host institution's website or more information about the institution's program you

are reviewing. Try to avoid judging a book by its cover. A few minutes of research can help you avoid overlooking great programs and institutions.

- **Salary & Benefits:** How much do you need or want to earn? Think about what other costs you may need to continue to cover while you are away (current bills, rent, tuition, etc.), travel expenses to get to a host institution, and other potential costs you may need to live in a new area. As you search through the positions, you'll be able to see the salary or pay structure for each institution. There is a wide variety based on the cost of living for the area, length of the role, and other benefits a host may be able to provide. While it may be initially tempting to focus on salary, be sure not to select an internship purely based on salary. The experiences and opportunities you may receive can often make a bigger impact on your satisfaction in the role and your future career than the initial salary.
- **Experiences & Opportunities:** Reflect on what you hope to get out of the experience. What is your "why" for applying for an internship? Which roles can help you grow? There are so many types of responsibilities and opportunities you can get out of internships. Do you want to have experience: supervising students, implementing assessment, presenting in front of large or small groups, logistics and planning, crisis management, creating and implementing training, working on special projects, managing a residence hall, or in-session problem solving or customer service just to name a few? It can be helpful to assess what skills you want to gain or strengthen before you review positions so you have an objective way to evaluate options.

Also think about what types of orientation, transition, and retention programs and populations you want to serve. You'll see overnight programs, one-day sessions, extended orientation, and welcome week models. You'll also see programs that work with first-time first-year students, transfer students, families/supporters, non-traditional populations, specific populations, or some combination. You may also see separate positions at the same institution so be sure to review the job descriptions to determine if you want to apply for one or both options.



Timing & Dates:

- **Of the Process:** Start to consider how your timing can affect the process. The internship process has peaks and valleys. Sometimes it will be really busy (for example: when you are applying for positions or doing interviews), and other times it will be slower as you wait for the next phase of the process. How does NODA's timeline overlap against your other responsibilities (school, work, life)? Try to be proactive and anticipate the busier times. Help yourself by starting to prepare your resume and cover letter now, and think through potential interview questions. You may have a pretty quick turnaround between

being offered an interview and the actual interview, so begin preparing ahead of time when your responsibilities may be slower.

- **Of the Positions:** Look into the responsibilities of your graduate assistantship this semester. Will you be able to adjust your work hours for interviews? Start having that conversation with your supervisor now to see what is possible. Also, think about when you could start and finish an internship. Institutions will provide their start and ending dates with their positions, and if there is any flexibility in those dates. You can also ask for clarification if you may need to adjust the dates they provided, however, if there is flexibility it is likely within a few days and not variable by a large amount of time. It can be helpful to also start to map out any other conflicts you may have this summer. Do you have family weddings, graduations, or other times when you wouldn't be able to work? This could be something to discuss during the interview process so you can be transparent with any conflicts. Finally, look at the workload of the positions. Some may have you work full 40 hour weeks in a traditional 8 a.m.-5 p.m. role, some may work by session where the time commitment varies by week, and others may have you help plan a program that happens after you leave. Does the time commitment match what you need for academic credit or what you desire for your day-to-day experience?



How Many Positions Should I Apply For?

- Unfortunately, this is not an exact science. You want to have enough so you have options, but not too many that you can't actually do the interviews, if chosen to move forward. It can be helpful to evaluate the competitiveness of your search area. Big areas, cool spots, or well-known universities could have more demand. If you have minimum orientation experience, you may want to look into applying to more positions. If a lot of your options might be in high demand (i.e. traditional orientation position with "everything", great pay or benefits), then you may want to add some additional options. However, if you don't see yourself saying yes to an internship because it does not have your "must haves" or conflicts with your available dates, then save the host and your time by not applying.
- Think about how much time you realistically have. Some hosts may do two rounds of interviews within the first round. What do your work and class commitments look like during the interview window? Are you going through the ACHOU-I & NODA internship processes? Make sure to take care of yourself and try to avoid overloading on interviews. Try to balance being critical of the position descriptions and being open to new opportunities.
- Standard practice would be to not exceed applying for more than 20 positions.



Resume & Cover Letter Tips:

- While there are numerous resources and tips online to create strong resumes and cover letters, here is some advice specifically to help in this search process.
 - **Convert your documents to PDFs to preserve formatting.** Label any files with your name. It can also be helpful to include your name on every page within your documents. Hosts sometimes print out the files and this can help keep all of your pages together.
 - **Proofread your files and have others review them too!** Know that resumes and cover letters can be subjective so you may get competing feedback based on people's individual preferences. When you get conflicting opinions, remember that at the end of the day, you get to decide how best to highlight yourself. Make sure what you share is something you are proud of.
 - **Showcase your transferable skills.** We know that not all applicants have been involved in orientation programs, and that is ok! Think about what work or experiences you do have that could translate into orientation, transition, or retention positions, and try to showcase that in your resume or cover letter. Remember hosts are seeing a lot of applicants, so use your experiences to help set you apart, catch their attention, or give them confidence that you bring something special to their team.
 - **Use your cover letters well.** Cover letters should help direct the reviewer to key parts of your resume, provide context to your experiences, and show personality and passions. Cover letters help show the human behind the list of experiences on your resume. Think about what makes you you? Why was an experience or role on your resume meaningful or how can that experience help in a host's position? It can be helpful to customize cover letters to the institution so you can speak towards what they may be specifically looking for. However, do not feel like you have to write a ton of cover letters from scratch. Instead, create a template that includes some standard great connections or experiences that would work for a lot of positions and then make minor tweaks when needed. Be sure to always double-check that you are uploading the right file to the correct institutions! It can be helpful to add an institution's name to the file name to prevent errors.
 - **Think wisely about your social media accounts.** If you choose to include social media or LinkedIn handles be prepared for potential employers to look you up. Even if you don't specifically include this info, if your social media is public, know that it is possible that a supervisor can view your posts.
 - **Get insight and feedback.** Use your Career Center, mentors, past or current supervisors, or other resources to start updating your resume and cover letters, and preparing for the interviews.
 - **Start doing your research.** Know your why for wanting to apply for an internship. What do you want to get out of this experience? Plan when you will research the positions, what you want to learn, and what lingering questions you may have. This can be useful information during the interview process or as you are comparing offers later.
 - **Ultimately, put yourself in the interviewer's shoes.** Hosts hear from a lot of applicants through this process. We want to get to know you, what makes you unique, and what you could bring to their team. Help show that. We also see a lot of people with similar experiences. Many are orientation leaders, residence assistants, in Greek Life, or a leader in other student

organizations. Help share what you specifically did in those roles since it can vary at every institution.



Showing Your Best YOU!

- **Treat this as a real job search process, because it is!** You are starting to develop your professional persona in the orientation, transition, and retention field, so take the time to put your best foot forward. Respond to communication in a timely manner, double-check yourself when submitting your applications, be prepared for interviews to not waste any time, and be respectful throughout the process. NODA is a small community and it is very possible you could later cross paths with someone you meet through the internship application and interview process.
- **Show up as your authentic self.** Hosts want to get to know your true self and what you can contribute to their team rather than sharing what you think hosts may want to hear. To help be your authentic self, define and embrace your strengths, reflect on what you value in life and work environments, and have grace and understanding with yourself as you go through this process. If you make a mistake, that can be okay. It is all about how you recover. Aim to be the best version of yourself so hosts can truly get to know you. This may also mean slowing yourself down to really think and reflect throughout this process. This can often be one of the first times where you have to make large professional decisions in a fairly independent manner, so try to lean on people you trust to give you encouragement or a listening ear when needed.



Questions?

For any inquiries regarding the program, please reach out to the NODA main office:
noda@umn.edu.