The University of Alaska
State Legislative Internship Program

Information for Applicants

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A Brief Overview of the Legislative Internship Program

The UA State Legislative Internship is a demanding experience in which students from each of the three Alaska state universities (UAF, UAA, and UAS) are placed in a legislative office in the Alaska State Legislature in Juneau for the duration of one legislative session, typically lasting from mid-January to mid-April. Interns work, full time, for a senator or representative, and usually are treated as legislative staff, often participating in the policy-making process in a meaningful way. At the same time, students participate in a demanding academic program which reinforces their work experience. Admission into the internship program is competitive.

Program Organization

The program, established in 1987, is administered by the University of Alaska. UAS has primary responsibility for the academic administration of the program. All credit hours are granted by UAS.

The Statewide Program Coordinator is Glenn Wright, Assistant Professor of Government at UAS. He is the academic supervisor for the interns and he conducts the Internship Seminar. All three campuses participating in the program have Program Coordinators to aid students on these campuses who are interested in the program. The Coordinators are listed in Appendix A of this booklet.

Academic Credit

Interns receive 12 hours of upper division credit at the 400-level. Of the 12 hours, 9 are allocated for the placement in the legislative office. These credits are graded Pass/Fail only. The remaining 3 of the 12 credit hours are for the internship seminar, graded A-F. Students must obtain a passing grade in the seminar, and satisfactory evaluations from their office supervisors in the legislature in order to receive credit for their participation in the program.

There is no tuition waiver for the 12 credit hours for the program. Interns are required to pay for these at regular University credit hour rates.

For more information regarding travel to Juneau and relocation assistance, please see Page 11 of this booklet.

Eligibility

All students, whether they are undergraduate or graduate students and whatever their major, are encouraged to apply for the program if they meet the following eligibility criteria:

(1) Will be registered in a four-year or graduate degree program at any university during the duration of the internship,

(2) Are at least of junior standing at the time of taking up the internship.
**Are all applicants selected?**

No. Openings are limited. However, students with strong academic qualifications have an excellent chance of being selected for the program. If you have questions about your likelihood of admission, please contact the statewide program coordinator or the UAA or UAF coordinator (contact information on page 12).

**Who selects the interns?**

Interns are chosen by a selection committee of faculty on the three campuses, with input from the Statewide Program Coordinator.

**What happens after interns are selected?**

First, interns secure placement in a legislative office, facilitated by internship staff and faculty. The internship program acts as a facilitator to bring interns and legislators together—placements are made by the interns and legislators themselves, with the help of the statewide coordinator. Then, if they are from outside Juneau, interns make arrangements to move to Juneau.

For more information regarding internship application section and intern selection, please refer to Pages 6 of this booklet.

**How Does The Day-To-Day Internship Experience Operate?**

Once the internship begins, the intern, the University and the legislator sign an internship contract. This contract is a mutual agreement between the three parties and outlines the duties of the intern during his/her placement. Interns are expected to perform any and all tasks performed by regular staff. Flexibility and a willingness to get the job done are essential qualities of an intern.

Each intern will have an office supervisor to whom he/she will be responsible and who will evaluate him/her three times during their placement. The office supervisor is usually a staff person appointed by the legislator within whose office the intern is placed.

**Housing in Juneau**

Interns are responsible for securing their own accommodations in Juneau, though program staff can provide some advice on locating housing. Student housing on the Juneau campus is also often available, but this is located 12 miles from the Legislature—a distance interns tend to find inconvenient. Most interns find housing in downtown Juneau, near the Capitol building. The Legislative Affairs Agency (LAA), the administrative arm of the Legislature, also keeps a list of available housing in Juneau that is often made available to interns.

**Eligible and Interested in Applying?**

The following pages will give you more details on all the points covered in this overview section.
The Application Process

The Legislative Internship Program is not restricted to political science majors. All students, whether they are in a four-year undergraduate program or a graduate program, and whatever their major, are encouraged to apply. In fact, to enrich each internship class in terms of background and experience, the selection process endeavors to include as wide a range of academic disciplines as possible among the class members.

Students Interested in Applying for the Program

Those students interested in applying for the program must:

1. Meet the eligibility requirements
2. Submit a letter of interest (cover letter)
3. Submit a current resume
4. Submit a complete set of transcripts (unofficial transcripts are fine)
5. Arrange for the submission of two letters of recommendation, one of whom must be an academic reference
6. Submit a five to fifteen page writing sample
7. Submit a short (two to four page) research proposal
8. Meet the application deadline
9. Attend an interview, if requested to do so.

The Research Proposal

One important goal of the legislative internship program is to give students an opportunity to engage in real, meaningful social science research in a policy-making setting. Therefore, as a part of their course work in the legislative internship seminar, interns will carry out a research project which includes primary data gathering. Usually, students attempt to answer some question of interest—typically a social science- or policy-related research question—by carrying out interviews with legislators, staff, individuals involved in the state administrative bureaucracy. However, students have also used survey and archival research to carry out their research projects. As a part of their application, students should submit a one to two page research project proposal in which they clearly identify:

- Their research question
- A theory or hypothesis which they believe most likely answers their question
- The method they will use to gather data on their question

Research proposals need not be complex or difficult, nor is there any expectation that students will have experience carrying out survey or interview research—one of the goals of the internship seminar is to provide guidance on these techniques. However, by thinking clearly about their proposed research projects, students will find they are able to complete
their seminar research projects in a more timely fashion, and consequently, students will generate better quality research.

**Eligibility Requirements**

In order to be considered for the program a student must meet the following five eligibility requirements:

(i) Be registered at UAA, UAF, or UAS (as a full time student or through an exchange) at the time of the internship.

(ii) Be registered, during the duration of the internship, in a four-year or graduate degree program at any university in the U.S. or abroad. Students who have graduated with a four-year degree, or will do so before the internship begins and who do not intend to enter a graduate degree program before taking up the internship, are not eligible to apply.

(iii) Be at least of junior standing, or have completed 60 credits toward a four-year undergraduate degree, at the time of taking up the internship.

(iv) Have a cumulative GPA of at least 2.0.

**The Selection Process**

Because more students apply for the program than there are places available, the selection process is competitive. Interns are selected by a cross-campus, faculty admissions committee.

After an initial screening process based on the application packets, the top candidates may be asked to complete an interview to determine final selection.

In making their selection, the committee pays particular attention to the following:

(1) The relevance of the internship to the student's degree program.

(2) The relevance of the internship to the student's intended career plans.

(3) The special skills that the student can bring to the internship.

(4) The student's writing and oral communications skills.

(5) The student’s overall academic record. The higher a student’s GPA, the greater their chances of being selected.

In addition, the committee also endeavors to include students from as wide a range of academic disciplines as possible.

**The Placement Process**

Program personnel do not directly participate in placing interns with legislators. Instead, the Statewide Program Coordinator acts as a facilitator in this process. In essence, interns and legislators determine who will work for whom.
The placement process works as follows:

Internship staff and faculty compile a list of all legislators requesting an intern each year in the fall. This list of legislators is sent to all interns, and interns’ application materials are circulated to all interested legislators. It is then the responsibility of each intern to approach any legislator with whom he/she wishes to be placed, and for each legislator to approach interns who interest them.

The only stipulation in the process is that each legislator has no more than one intern.

Once an intern and legislator have come to an agreement, both the intern and the legislator must send a letter to the Statewide Program Coordinator confirming the arrangement.

In addition, once a student makes arrangements to work for a particular legislator, he/she will be bound by that commitment. The only way that the intern can be released from that commitment and remain in the program, is with the agreement of the legislator and the Statewide Program Coordinator.

Moving To Juneau

After selection as interns, UAA and UAF students will, of course, have to make arrangements to move to Juneau. Interns are responsible for finding their own accommodations in Juneau.

Program personnel can provide information regarding the layout of Juneau, convenient and inconvenient places to live, etc.

Housing

Staff in students’ legislative offices may have leads on apartments available to interns. Additionally, the Legislative Affairs Agency (LAA) keeps a list of available accommodations in Juneau. Students can contact legislative affairs for access to this list once they are placed with a legislative office. Craigslist and the Juneau Empire (Juneau’s local newspaper) web site are also potential sources of information about rentals. Three-month leases for January through April are very common in Juneau, so students need not worry about finding a lease for the length of the legislative session. Student housing is also available at UAS, but this housing is located in Auke Bay, about twelve miles from the Capitol, and commuting can be problematic for students without personal vehicles.

Typically, interns choose to live in downtown Juneau, all of which is within walking distance of the Capitol building. Rental costs are somewhat higher than in other parts of town, but most students find that the convenience of living downtown outweighs the potentially higher cost.

Vehicles and Parking

With a vehicle, students will have a much wider range of housing to choose from, but parking presents its own problems in Juneau. If students are planning to bring a car with
them, they should make sure they know where they will be able to park it. For more information on parking in downtown Juneau, students can contact the City and Borough of Juneau’s Parks and Recreation department, or read the city’s parking guidelines:

http://www.juneau.org/parkrec/parking.php

Traveling to Juneau

We typically recommend that students plan to arrive in Juneau a day or so early, in case of weather delays or other complications. This is because attendance at the pre-session orientation is required.

The Internship Contract

The basis of the duties and obligations of an intern, plus the method by which he/she will be supervised, is set out in a contract. The parties to this contract are the legislator (or his/her designee), and the Statewide Program Coordinator as the representative of the University.

This contract will be signed by both parties during or before the first week of the legislative session.

Credit Hours, Supervision and Evaluation

Interns receive 12 credit hours at the 400-level, though other arrangements may be possible, as needed. These are divided as follows.

Nine of the 12 credits are for the placement in the legislative office and are graded Pass/Fail only. In order to be awarded these 9 credits an intern must:

- Work a total of 490 hours during the session;
- Receive at least a satisfactory evaluation on all three occasions on which he/she is evaluated by his/her office supervisor;
- Attend the pre-session new staff orientation session;
- Obtain a passing grade in the Legislative Internship Seminar.

The additional 3 credit hours are for the Internship Seminar. This is graded A-F. See the Internship Seminar course syllabus for details.

All interns, undergraduate and graduate, are limited to registering for an additional 3 hours for the semester. This means they can register for a maximum of 15 hours. However, students are strongly advised not to take an additional course while in the internship program because of the demands of their full-time employment in the legislature and the demanding academic requirements of the program.

In addition, and also because of the demands placed on them in the internship, students are strongly discouraged from seeking part-time employment. However, those students who
engage in part-time employment during their internship cannot arrange this employment
during the work day (8am-5pm) Monday thru Friday nor during any of the seminar sessions.

Academic Supervision of the Interns
The Statewide Program Coordinator, currently Glenn Wright, is the interns’ academic
supervisor while in the program. He acts as the interns’ advisor during their internship,
conducts the Internship Seminar, and acts as the University liaison with the Legislature and
particularly with each intern's office supervisor.

The Intern’s Legislative Office Supervisor
In addition to his/her academic supervisor, each intern will have a supervisor in his/her
legislative office. This supervisor is usually a staff person designated by the legislator in
whose office the intern is placed.

The office supervisor will be responsible for the day-to-day supervision of the intern. It is the
office supervisor who will evaluate the intern's performance three times during the legislative
session.

The Internship Seminar
The University of Alaska Legislative Internship Program strives to integrate a formal and
systematic understanding of the legislative process with the practical experience gained from
working on the job.

Together, the systematic learning provided through the classroom and the practical
experience acquired by the day-to-day work in the office provides the student with a unique
understanding of the Alaska legislative process that could not be obtained by classroom
learning alone or entirely by working on the job.

The purpose of the Internship Seminar, therefore, is to provide the student with a systematic
learning process during his/her placement. The pre-orientation session, which is part of the
seminar, also gives students a basic understanding of the process and makes their integration
into their legislative offices as smooth as possible. Then, regularly scheduled seminars help
to maximize the learning experience.

Working in the Legislature: Work Time Required
Interns are required to work through the regular legislative session. During their placement
they are required to work at least 490 hours. This works out to approximately 35 hours per
week. The actual number of hours worked per day is something to be decided between the
intern and his/her office supervisor. This will vary according to the organization and special
needs of the office. However, interns must be available to work during weekdays, Monday
thru Friday, from 8:00am. until 5:00pm. Students cannot have other employment during
these hours on week-days.
In whatever way the office decides to allocate the number of hours per day, interns are not required to work more than 490 hours during the internship. The regulations of the internship program prohibit an intern from receiving any payment for any additional hours worked; and no additional credit hours are available.

However, if the intern wishes to work additional hours they are free to do so.

Some offices will require that an intern work the same hours as other staffers. This is usually made clear by the legislative office at the time the student seeks a placement. However, it is important that the student ask about the work hours expected by the office. Those students not wishing to work more than 35 hours per week should obviously avoid offices requiring that an intern work additional hours.

Similarly, students should clarify, during the placement process, the expectations of different legislative offices in the event the legislative session exceeds the 90-day statutory limit. It is quite common for the legislative session to take more than 90 days, and while some legislative offices may be willing to host students only for the 90 day period, many others expect students to work through the conclusion of the regular session, which often exceeds 90 days.

Interns are not required by the Legislative Internship Program to work any Special Sessions of the Legislature. An intern fulfills his/her commitment to the program on the last day of the regular legislative session.

**Assignment of Tasks in the Office**

The internship contract sets out in broad terms the types of practical experiences that the University would like a student to obtain during his/her placement. However, it must be emphasized that University program personnel do not determine the specific tasks that an intern will be assigned on a day-to-day basis. These tasks are solely determined by the intern's legislator or office supervisor.

**Appropriate Dress**

Most legislators will require that their staff, including interns, dress in a professional fashion. Exactly what constitutes “professional” varies from office to office. Generally, however, during the regular work-week, jeans, sweatshirts and tennis shoes inappropriate. Oxford shirts, ties, khakis, suit jackets or blazers, and matching shoes are typical for men. Suits are common. Appropriate professional dress for women is more complicated, but subdued colors are preferred, and open-toed shoes and short skirts are discouraged. Interns should be sure to ask their office supervisor or legislator about the appropriate dress for their office.

**Registering for Classes**

All credit hours for the internship program are granted by UAS, but credits transfer seamlessly from UAS to the other UA schools. Typically, students receive 400-level PS (Political Science) credits, but UAS also has the ability to award credits in a number of other subject areas, with Alaska Native Studies being the most common alternate. Students
interested in receiving credit in areas other than political science should speak to the statewide coordinator, who will be happy to facilitate students’ efforts to pursue credit in many other subject areas.

Students register for the internship courses during the regular spring registration at their respective campuses. Spring registration begins in late November and continues through mid-January, though UAS is closed for the holidays. Students must be cleared for registration by the UAS Department of Social Sciences.

**Course Designations and Credits**

- PS 491: Legislative Internship—9 hours
- PS 492A: Legislative Internship Seminar—3 hours

**Graduate Students**

Graduate credit may be available. Please speak to the statewide coordinator for further information.

**Campus Residency Waiver for Undergraduates**

University of Alaska regulations require that to receive a degree from a particular campus (UAA, UAF, or UAS) a student must receive his/her last 30 hours of course credits from that campus. However, this rule has been waived for students participating in the Legislative Internship Program. This means that, although they receive UAS credits for the internship, UAA and UAF students can still graduate from their own campus even if the 12 hours of the internship is part of the last 30 hours of credits toward their degree.

The transfer of credit from one campus is generally automatic. If UAS internship credits do not automatically appear on students’ transcripts, a call to the UAA or UAF registrar’s office is generally all that is required.

**Relocation Allowance**

**Relocation Allowance for UAA and UAF Students**

To aid in covering the costs of relocating to Juneau for the session/semester, UAA and UAF should contact their program coordinator to see what assistance might be available.

**Travel Arrangements**

Interns are entirely responsible for making their own travel arrangements and paying all costs of travel.
Program Personnel

Statewide Coordinator
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and Statewide Program Coordinator
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Legislators and UAS students interested in the program are welcome to contact Glenn Wright. Students at UAA and UAF can also contact their campus coordinator.

Campus Coordinators

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