



Internships

By Cindy Paavola '84 BS

The ultimate test drive, for students and employers

In today's economic climate, where competition over job vacancies is extreme, internships for college students have become more vital than ever.

"As an employer, if you have candidates with experience and candidates without experience, it's obvious that the candidates with experience have an edge," says **Steve Lafond '83 MA**, assistant director of NMU Career Services. "Internships can provide that experience component that college students who haven't worked in the professional field don't otherwise have."

According to Lafond, the flip side is that in this economy, many companies are decreasing their internship opportunities. "It's hard for some businesses and organizations to justify bringing in student interns when they are laying off full-time employees and eliminating jobs."

Lafond says there are still plenty of interesting and valuable internship and summer employment opportunities for students willing to do their homework to find them.

"Students who are willing to do that can compete for opportunities that can have a major impact on their

future careers," Lafond adds.

Businesses and organizations that have recruited or selected NMU students for internships over the years include the CIA and U.S. Secret Service, the United States Olympic Committee, numerous pro sports teams, large accounting firms and a wide variety of organizations that represent many different majors.

National surveys of employers indicate that companies use internships as a way to recruit and select employees for permanent positions.

"Hiring people is a substantial financial commitment for a business and they want to feel confident they've invested in a good employee, the one that fits their organization best. Internships allow a business to see a potential employee in action," Lafond says. "Internship programs can be a little bit like a farm team for a big-league baseball team. The organization gives you the chance to step up to the plate and show them what you've got."

Besides embellishing one's resume, other benefits of internships include:

- Providing a context for coursework and allowing students to engage in the practical application of concepts and methods.
- Working with professionals who can help a student develop a sense of responsibility, confidence and leadership.
- Creating a network that offers references, advice and information about job opportunities and career advancement.
- Providing students opportunities to become more adaptable, mature and self-assured by motivating them to move outside their comfort zones and by helping them learn to balance their work and personal lives.

“When I returned to school after my internship, I was much more prepared in my classes. I feel that I had an advantage when I got back to school due to the real-life business experience that I witnessed and participated in,” says **Jenna Williams '09 BS**, a business major who interned at Kohler Company. During her internship, Jenna implemented a project management software training program and was able to participate in strategic planning and new product development for the power systems division.

For employers, internships provide access to motivated students who bring with them new tools, fresh ideas and a desire to learn and to work. Interns can, in a cost-effective manner, help free up regular staff members from more basic aspects of their jobs to focus on more demanding and profitable assignments.

“We have found that NMU interns, like graduates, are sought after once a company or organization has had one of our students,” says Lafond. “They love the work ethic NMU students bring.”

Technology has significantly changed the internship search process.

“Now students can go to a search engine and type in the word internship and their major or type of job they hope to have in the future and listings from around the world pop up on the screen,” Lafond says. “So, unlike the past when internships were often local, now students who can afford to do so can take internships all over the world, and they do. And searching for internships is being done through the new social networking tools. It's all pretty exciting and powerful.”

Jim Gadzinski '81 BS, '84 MAE, director of NMU's Academic and Career Advising Center (ACAC), says that while Career Services and many NMU departments list internship opportunities on their Web sites, there is now so much information available outside of the university that it can sometimes overwhelm students.

“That's when some of the work on the students' part really begins. They have to determine what a good fit is for them academically and financially,” says Gadzinski. “Financial matters do need to be a part of the conversation, especially these days. So the questions become, out of all of the dozens of internship opportunities out there, which ones are paid, which are not and then can you afford to have an unpaid internship; which ones are local and which ones are not, and can you afford to live away from your current location?”

Gadzinski adds that in the last 20 years, he's noticed a trend for more paid internships, or opportunities that provide a stipend.

“I think employers found that if they offered a paid internship or one with a stipend, they got better-qualified candidates to apply. A lot of employers feel that the assistance they're getting from the interns is worth paying for. Still, others feel that what the students are getting through their internships is so valuable that the experience is the

payment. They look at it as that's how people get into the field.”

For December art and design graduate **Mike Forester '09 BFA**, his internship at Rome Snowboards Design Syndicate in Waterbury, Vt., was unpaid (read more about Mike's experience on the next page), but he looked at it as an investment in getting the experience he needs to professionally get his foot in the door.

“Unpaid internships are pretty common as far as I can tell, and I think they're kind of a necessary evil. Most jobs require two to three years of experience, but how do you get that experience? You start with an internship, find other opportunities and keep building on those until you have the amount of experience everyone wants from you. Sometimes by doing those things you come in contact with someone who says, 'You're the guy for us.'”

Paid or unpaid, an internship can be an important step on a student's journey, sometimes playing a profound role in one's choice of careers and success after graduation. ■

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By Cindy Paavola '84 BS

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As the saying goes, “When in Rome, do as the Romans do.”

If **Mike Forester '09**

BFA didn't understand the line before his internship last summer at Rome Snowboard Design Syndicate in Waterbury, Vt., he did by the time he left.

In the winter of 2009, Forester was announced as the Rome Snowboard Design Syndicate's Shop Kid Art Contest winner for a second time, having also won in 2007. The annual contest, he says, is designed to recognize snowboard shop employees “who give great service to customers, especially on those days when they'd rather be on the hills themselves, and who understand the shredding (snowboard) lifestyle better than anyone.”

“To enter, shop kids go to a

template online and you create a design you think would work for a snowboard,” Forester says, who entered as an employee of Casualties Skate, Snow and Surf in Marquette, owned by NMU alums Andy and Matt Jones.

From submissions that came from around the globe, Rome chose finalists who not only produced great snowboard art, but who had innovative ideas. In announcing Forester as the winner, Rome representatives said, “After talking to Mike on the phone, it was clear that this kid not only has art talent, but ambition as well.”

The prize package included cash, merchandise and an internship where Forester would work with the Rome art team to fully develop his concept

into a limited board series. So after the winter semester ended last May, Forester headed east.

“It was an amazing experience,” he says. “I really got to see how hard the Rome design professionals worked at their jobs. It was crazy at times. We'd be on deadline and there'd be a bunch of us still at the office in the middle of the night trying to get a design perfectly right before morning when it had to be ready. Someone would say, 'Let's try this,' or 'Let's try that' and—wham— suddenly the design worked. It was awesome to be a part of something like that.”

Seeing the high level of dedication made an impression on the graphic design major from Royal Oak.

“I learned so much in such a

short period of time, the type of things that just can't be taught in the classroom. I walked in the door and in the first week I was hammering out projects, putting designs on gloves, jackets and boards."

He still shakes his head when trying to explain the intricacies of glove development.

"You would not believe the number of things that have to be considered. You have to really know the customers and then make decisions based on what you know about them. Who's going to be wearing the glove? What's the glove supposed to do? Can you afford to use certain materials for the whole glove, such as leather? If a material will make the glove too expensive can you use it on just parts of the glove—like the palm—and still make it affordable for the consumer? What colors will work for this glove? What kind of art? Where do you put the art on the glove? It's crazy the amount of detail that goes into developing a product such as a glove. Tactile design—not just designing how it looks, but also how it works. The process and the level of detail blew me away."

Having already completed four years of his art and design program, Mike brought to the internship a "solid skills set" to go along with his work ethic and innate creative talent. The son of a professional photographer, design always came naturally to him, and as a teenager decided he wanted to pursue some kind of art career.

"At Rome, I was a little older



"One of the best things the internship did was allow me to prove myself and my skills. I came into it thinking I could do it; I left knowing I could."

than some of the interns. I wasn't a freshman or sophomore trying to figure out if this was the field for me. I already knew it was. I was close to a degree and had some experience. But one of the best things the internship did was allow me to prove myself and my skills. I came into it thinking I could do it; I left knowing I could."



"It gives me a lot of pleasure when I'm at the hill and see someone using a board with one of my designs, or when I'm in the shop and someone chooses one of my designs."

After graduating in December, Forester formally became the art director at Casualties, where he has worked for the past five years. He's still designing for Rome products and freelancing for a few other companies, adding that he's "constantly thinking of new ideas."

He says that art in the snowboard world (skateboard and surf, too) has become serious business.

"Before it was just people creating cool designs to put on boards. Now, I see so many real artists becoming involved in the snow industry. The art on the

boards has turned into mainstream pop culture. People hang their boards as wall art when they're done riding them," he says.

"It gives me a lot of pleasure when I'm at the hill and see someone using a board with one of my designs, or when I'm in the shop and someone chooses one of my designs. I want to say, 'I'm glad you like it. I created that just for you.' I like Rome's philosophy that the board should fit the personality of the snowboarder."

Mike says he's going to try to get other NMU art and design students internships at Rome if he has the opportunity to do so in the future.

"I tell people all the time that you don't need to spend \$30,000-\$40,000 a year to go to a fancy art school for a great graphic design program. Northern has excellent teachers and facilities and provides a quality education. I really felt well prepared at graduation and going into the internship program, and I think my work there and now prove that I was prepared. I've already told the people at Rome that if they want more interns like me, get NMU students because we're trained exceptionally well, but we're also taught to be prepared to work hard for what we want—that idea doesn't scare a Northern student." ■

To see more of Mike's art and design work, go to www.mikeforesterdesign.com

LATE SHOW

with Danny Digneit

By Kristi Evans



Danny Digneit's successful bid to secure a "Late Show with David Letterman" internship in 2008 demonstrated his ability to work under deadline pressure and multitask—two qualities his future media career will demand. The NMU senior says his mom urged him to apply after she spotted a Web posting. So just before the application window closed, Digneit was feverishly compiling and submitting his material electronically, while simultaneously working his part-time job in the master control room of a local ABC television affiliate.

"It was down to the wire, but I realized it would be one of my last chances to get some hands-on experience before I graduated," says the Walled Lake native. "It was an opportunity to work alongside professionals in late-night television, which is something I'd like to get into. I had done a lot at the college level and worked in small-town TV. The national level was the next step. I knew the contacts would be solid. A Letterman internship looks good on a resumé because hundreds apply and only 12 of us were selected."

Digneit went through an intensive, three-hour interview process that

included stops in each department—from research and production to talent and music. Originally hoping for the closest match to his media production and new technology major, he instead landed a spot that aligned with his music minor: working for the assistant to Paul Shaffer, the show's bandleader and sidekick.

His tasks included making sure the band had the necessary sheet music, CDs and catalogs for rehearsals. He also kept the music library organized. Before each taping, he typed up the musical guests performing on the show and their song selections, then distributed the sheets to directors and producers. He gave calls to the band members so they would know it was time to assemble on stage. Occasionally, he fetched new music on short notice when they decided to switch up the playlist.

The internship included a bit of "go-fer" duty, such as knowing Shaffer's preferences for tea and sandwiches and delivering them. Digneit says the staff was up front about that during the interview, but purposely kept it to a minimum so students could focus on gaining professional experience. He was intimidated at first by Shaffer, but quickly found

him to be "approachable and down to earth." Digneit had only one encounter with Letterman and it was awkward at best.

"My first day on the internship, they were showing me the ropes. I went backstage to get something for Paul and had my head down, trying to do everything as efficiently as possible. I didn't realize Dave was walking toward me. We reached a hallway door at the same time and, rather than stop and let him through, I kept going so we had to face each other and shimmy through the doorway in order to fit. He said, 'Oh, I'm sorry.' It should have been the other way around. The crew members were laughing hysterically because they knew I had no idea what was going on."

Living in New York City for a semester-long unpaid internship was expensive and required him to commit more than four years to NMU to complete his degree, but Digneit has no regrets.

"A Letterman internship looks good on a resumé because hundreds apply and only 12 of us were selected."

"It was a great experience and it just proves that you don't have to be from NYU or some big East Coast school to have an opportunity like this. I heard from several people on staff that the human resources director at Letterman looks for interns from smaller schools because they get more one-on-one experiences with professors and they're go-getters. At a larger university, I wouldn't have gotten half of the experiences I've had at NMU—from the 'Public Eye News' and 'Standing O' student television programs to working at ABC. I built up a pretty extensive resume at Northern and it helped me get the internship. I'll always be grateful for that." ■

Experience in the Field

By Cindy Paavola '84 BS

It may sound strange to say that Northern Michigan University geography students are making U.S. National Parks and Michigan State Parks more green, since parks are usually already green areas, but that's exactly what **Elizabeth Bloomfield '09 BS** was tasked to do when she took on a summer internship at Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore in Munising last year. Now, it's also part of her upcoming job as a state park ranger.



Elizabeth Bloomfield, in her ranger uniform, inventoried and cataloged every chemical being used within Pictured Rocks and did research on more environmentally friendly options to help the park in its effort to become the most carbon-neutral National Lakeshore in the country.

“Chris Case, the facility manager at Pictured Rocks, wants to make that park the most carbon-neutral National Lakeshore in the country. He's looking at the park's trucks and tractors, the efficiency of the lighting systems and such—everything that impacts its sustainability. So, my job was to inventory and catalog every chemical being used within the park, and do research on more environmentally friendly options,” says Bloomfield.

Also a part of Bloomfield's internship was writing a manual for park employees on how to properly use park-issued credit cards and buy locally to support the U.P. economy and the park's sustainability efforts. She also worked in the Munising Falls and Miner's Castle visitor centers and helped at the park's bookstore.

Bloomfield's experience at the National Lakeshore wasn't her first dealing with park sustainability. During summer employment from 2004-06 at Sleepy Hollow State Park in Laingsburg, she did research and wrote a grant on invasive species eradication. In 2007 at Van Riper State Park in Champion, she wrote grants and started a recycling program.

“An internship is a no brainer,” says the Owosso native, who graduated with a geography major. “It's so

different than learning in a classroom. It's interactive and challenges your knowledge in different ways. You need the classroom to get your foundation, of course, but you need things like internships and summer jobs in your field to get that dose of what will be expected when you are doing this as full-time employment.”

Bloomfield praises the NMU Geography Department for gently but firmly pushing her in the direction of an internship, especially

John Anderton '87 BS, department head and professor.

“Dr. Anderton put my name out there and that got the ball rolling. He was also always urging me to get involved in things. I was kind of shy in college, but through these experiences, I developed not only my knowledge of my field, but my confidence and communication skills as well,” Bloomfield says.

Those communication skills will be key in her new position as a park ranger at Silver Lake State Park in Mears.

“What I've found in my internship and summer employment experiences is that when you are in constant contact with the public, especially when you're in uniform, people tend to challenge you and your knowledge. They want to see that you know what you're talking about. I've learned how to deal with those situations better. Now, when I can't answer their questions, I know how to point them in the right direction to get the information.”

Although already hired, before starting her new job Bloomfield must first complete the required seven-week Michigan State Police Academy training program, or as she says jokingly, “a little more school.”

“I'm a little nervous, but overall, I'm pretty confident in myself. We have to go through this program

because park rangers, though not armed, do have the power of arrest. I guess it just proves that there is always a new learning experience in front of you.”

Anderton feels strongly that all geography majors (and all NMU students) should try to have an internship experience before graduating. He still clearly remembers his own student internship experience with the Forest Service.

“I loved it. That was when I knew for certain that I was in the right field and was going to be doing what I was meant to do,” he says.

Anderton says internships help student understand first-hand what the field is really like. He points out they also help students realize where their strengths and weaknesses are within the professional skill set, so if they are returning to college they can often work on those areas where more study and practice is needed.

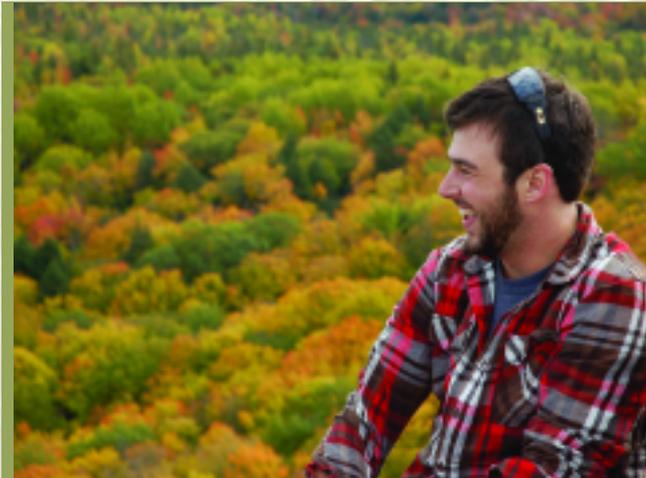
“I think internships are critical. They're the way to prove to a potential employer that you can do what you've been trained to do. When people see what our students have been trained to do, they're impressed. That's the first step to being hired for that permanent job.”

So, like other NMU academic departments, geography faculty work diligently to learn more about internship opportunities they can share with their students and even help create new ones. Along with Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore, some of the department's internship affiliates include the USGS-Biology Resources Division, Isle Royale National Park, United States Forest Service (primarily Hiawatha Forest), Natural Resources Conservation Service, Michigan Department of Environmental Quality and Natural Resources, Alger and Marquette County Conservation Districts, the City of Marquette, Cliffs Natural Resources and many others.

Working with JM Longyear is a new internship for the department, says Anderton. Senior Phil Herout from Antioch, Ill., is using his GIS skills to help the organization manage its more than 1,000 acres of forest by electronically

linking property maps to all related legal documents.

“Longyear owns and operates natural resource businesses that manage property for sustainable forest products, minerals and real estate investments,” says Herout. “The organization has taken me on as an intern



Phil Herout, atop Hogsback, is working with JM Longyear, using his GIS skills to help the organization manage its more than 1,000 acres of forest by electronically linking property maps to all related legal documents.

for this semester and my work has been focused on digitizing documents and incorporating them into their GIS. This process will ultimately increase employee access to information. I am also working with Longyear's foresters to customize GPS software.”

Anderton encouraged Herout, an environmental science policy major and geographic information systems minor, to contact Longyear but left it up to the soon-to-be-graduate to make the call.

“I called the main office and inquired if they could use an intern for the next semester. During the initial phone interview we discussed my course work in GIS, computer cartography, remote sensing and spatial analysis. So, primarily, my knowledge of ArcMap and the fundamentals of GIS were the basis for them taking me on.”

Herout, who graduates in May, says what he's looking to take from his internship is practical experience and professional relationships.

“I was nervous at first, but I knew this was a great opportunity to apply my education. I felt prepared and was excited to get to work and see my classes work for me,” he says.

Herout says he's grateful for the experience, especially since so many businesses have not been able to continue their internship programs during the current economic slump.

“That makes it hard to get any initial experience or exposure to a field of work you may or may not like. I am very thankful to have this internship and I can't wait to see where it takes me. I have been surrounded by helpful people, eager to help and watch me succeed, so there is no doubt in my mind that this experience will help with my future career prospects.” ■



Food for New Thoughts

By Rebecca Tavernini

Just a month after graduating from Northern, **Jeff Thomas '09 BA** was on day 74 of waiting to hear from the IRS if his application for 501(c)3 status had been approved. “I’m in ‘hurry up and wait’ mode,” he says, anxious to get his organization, Nonprofit Innovations, Inc., up and running. “I also just got engaged, so I’m planning a wedding and looking for a house.” Nothing like jumping right in to life after college.

While his nonprofit is new, with a novel focus on improving how charities operate, Thomas has been training for it for years. He did an individually created program major in “civic communications,” combining political science, general social studies, communications, and art and design courses. He interned for two summers at Feeding America West Michigan Food Bank, an organization his father runs in the Grand Rapids area. And during the winter 2009 semester he gained another perspective with an internship at the Cleveland Food Bank.

“I got a lot of great experience from Feeding America West Michigan, but I needed to learn how others do it,” he says. “Going to Cleveland was almost like doing a study abroad. It was like another land, with a different culture.”

At the CFB, Thomas researched and presented a briefing for the staff on major nonprofits in Cleveland that the food bank might partner with. He helped execute a fund-raising gala at a mall. When the organization was awarded a Google grant, he was put in charge of implementing a Google AdWords campaign to reach potential clients. “That was really cool to work on. The campaign is still running,” he says.

He also learned how to process donations of food and—during the major peanut recall—how to immediately reverse the whole process. “I searched for pictures of

products that were affected by the recall (there were over 100) and made a visual guide so we could go through our whole inventory and pull out the products. We even had to reference our distribution records and try to retrieve items that had already been given out.

“There were many more people around the table in Cleveland,” he recalls. “So they were able to expand their focus and have staff specialize in one or two things. It showed me the diversity within the nonprofit sector. I learned things I wouldn’t have intuited about the psychology of fund-raising.”

“Other Help” is one of the first programs Thomas hopes to implement. It focuses on getting families into the charitable food system earlier, freeing up their limited resources to help avoid utility shutoffs, eviction and other crisis situations.

Thomas gained a wider view, too, of logistics and challenges within different environments, such as urban vs. rural. “In Cleveland you look at how to work effectively with major corporations there, and groups like the Cleveland Browns (who take part in Taste of the NFL to raise funds for the food bank), and hundreds of grocery stores. You need to determine how to scale your services so they don’t get overwhelmed by the concentrated demand,” he explains. “On the other hand, you have different challenges in a sparsely populated area like the U.P., where there aren’t as many major corporations, there’s a limited fund-raising base, and you have to find ways to provide access to your services across a wide area.”

As he was developing this understanding of the



different character of places, Thomas was also fully immersing himself in Cleveland's "foreign culture." Adding to the study abroad flavor of it, he ended up finding a roommate who was a visiting math professor from India, teaching at Case Western Reserve University. Thomas took a graduate-level course in non-profit marketing there (he much prefers NMU), and happened to fall in love with a fellow student—an old friend from middle school who's now his fiancée. He enjoyed the free music recitals at the Cleveland Institute of Music just down the street from his apartment, and even joined Case Western's Commedia dell'Arte Troupe. "It's a classic form of improvisational theatre, which I knew nothing about before, but I took part in several performances."

All of this will guide Thomas as the founding executive director of Nonprofit Innovations, which he explains is intended to help "develop, prove and promote better approaches to meeting basic human needs." The group will research and develop ways to help other non-profits be more efficient and effective. "Too much of the research work done on behalf of the nonprofit sector is focused on fund-raising," he says. "Not enough goes into how to use resources more effectively."

To start with, NII will collaborate with a few Grand Rapids area organizations to test ideas. Thomas says their criteria for evaluating ideas will be 1) would the approach be

significantly more efficient/effective than its predecessors, 2) is it something that can be duplicated elsewhere, and 3) can the idea ride on the infrastructure already in place?

"Other Help" is one of the first programs they hope to implement. It focuses on getting families into the charitable food system earlier, freeing up their limited resources to help avoid utility shutoffs, eviction and other crisis situations that are much more difficult to resolve. But, Thomas says, change doesn't have to be radical; sometimes all it takes is working with organizations to improve their policies governing who can apply for help, or making food more accessible by distributing it in a school parking lot in a client's own neighborhood, instead of in a building across town.

Thomas seems well positioned to continue with the collaboration and creativity that was a hallmark of his internships and Northern education, where he was greatly influenced by professors in a wide range of disciplines, such as Jim Cantrill in communications, Nell Kupper in modern languages, Daric Christian in art and design and Steve Nelson in political science, among others he would like to "lavish praise" on. "I had such a wonderful collection of professors at Northern, I'm just sorry I won't be able to keep taking classes with them!"

Alas, onward to marriage, home ownership and making the world a better place. ■

Energizing rural businesses

By Kristi Evans



Northern Initiatives offers rural entrepreneurs access to capital, information and markets. NI started as an NMU academic department in 1985 before its transition to a nonprofit community development corporation, so it's appropriate that the longstanding partnership—rooted in education—includes on-the-job learning opportunities for NMU students.

NI officials ramped up the internship program about four years ago when the corporation moved from an off-campus location back to NMU. Now settled in the Jacobetti Center, they employ seven to nine students who assist regional small businesses with market research, credit analysis, IT services, Web site development and search engine optimization.

“The students help these entrepreneurs overcome economic barriers such as isolation and seasonality and expand their presence to larger markets,” says Dennis West, NI president. “Some interns are also working on nature and cultural tourism. Most people are aware of the Soo Locks, Mackinac Island and Pictured Rocks, but there are other U.P. resources that can be leveraged to benefit nearby businesses. The students have developed social media campaigns to help publicize other venues important for building nature tourism as a dimension.”

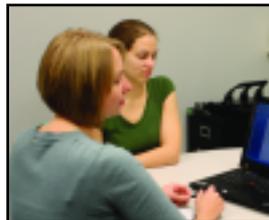
Their Facebook sites for “Bike Michigan Upper Peninsula Trails” and “Ski Michigan Upper Peninsula Trails” have nearly 600 fans. They also used social media tools to promote The Great Waters, a five-county U.P. destination.

Whether it's helping a one-man saw sharpening operation move beyond his low-visibility location, revamping a pottery studio's Web site to facilitate online shopping or

even identifying \$1 million in excess inventory at a company, NMU interns contribute significantly to projects.

“There is a lot of integration and teamwork involved,” says **Amanda Blondeau '03 BS**, who is Enterprise Center program director at NI and supervises the students. “We've been able to help more small businesses and make bigger impacts because of intern support. They bring vitality and fresh perspectives in a variety of areas.”

NMU senior Jessica Beaver has worked for NI since October 2008, with the exception of a semester abroad in Spain. She started out doing primarily market research, from tracking competitors' activities to exploring product diversification. Now she exercises her creativity designing layouts and drafting content for Web sites, such as one for a charter fishing captain that reflects his personality.



The students have developed social media campaigns to help publicize venues important for building nature tourism.



Photos by Leonard Beck

“I'm learning how I work with people and how to manage myself and my time,” she says. “I'm always working with others—not independently—so if I don't come through, it will put someone else off track. It's convenient that the office is on campus and because it's a paid internship, I don't have to worry about another job on top of it. Having this experience while I'm in college will help me with my future career.”

Junior English major and fellow intern Abby Ropp agrees. Her front-office duties include setting up appointments, designing brochures, editing material and helping with presentations.

“I'm from a small community in Leelanau County, so working for a company that focuses on rural areas is close to my heart. And this is the first time I've been able to really put my English major to use on the job. I'm also picking up new skills I've never done before. This will enable me to work in a broader field.” ■

From intern to employee

If an internship can sometimes be a foot in the door to full employment with a company, **Sara Blomquist '08 BS** stepped in with both feet firmly in place. “I knew going in that it could lead to a job offer,” she says of her internship with KPMG in Minneapolis. “Like many companies, KPMG hires a high percentage of their interns because they invest so much into training us. I received my full-time offer at the end of the internship. It was a huge relief that I didn't have to worry about job hunting after graduation.”

KPMG—one of the “big four” accounting firms, which provides audit, tax and advisory services in 146 countries with 140,000 employees—makes a business out of recruiting top graduates, and it woos them well. Not only was the internship paid, the company also provided travel reimbursement and lodging for Blomquist's two-day interview and took her out to dinner. But it's not like she didn't have to work for the offer.

“It was my first real-world setting with interviewing,” she recalls. “There were three rounds of interviews with people at different levels in the company. I was nervous about the questions they would be asking. But really, they just want to get to know what kind of person you are,



During Blomquist's internship her sister Jen (an NMU student, pictured on the left) visited Sara (right) in Minneapolis and took part volunteering in the KPMG Reviving Baseball in Inner Cities Tournament.



what your personal work style is and how you interact with a team. It's easy to talk about who you are. Nobody knows you better than yourself!”

Adding to the tension, she says, were all of the other students competing for the same offer, sizing her up. The accounting/corporate finance major had a pretty solid background to offer up, though. She was president of Beta Alpha Psi (professional club for accounting and finance students), chair of the College of Business Dean's Student Advisory Council, graduate of Northern's Student Leader Fellowship Program, involved in Superior Edge citizenship and leadership activities, recipient of numerous competitive scholarships, including the statewide Michigan Accountancy Foundation Scholarship, and had a 3.90 GPA. She had also worked in the office of the vice president of finance and administration at NMU.

“I felt a little at a disadvantage that I hadn't done an internship before my senior year,” she says. “But they were impressed that I was involved in different ways. It showed

that I was versatile and involved and a well-rounded person.”

When she got the internship and was on the job, she found that she was very well prepared; “in a way more than the others,” she says. “Students from big universities didn't always have the opportunities to sit one-on-one with their professors to really explain something they didn't understand.”

At the same time, she also found the work to be exciting and challenging. “The pace, what's expected of you and the responsibility you're given, was very surprising. They understand you are still a student, but they expect you to give it your best. You have to be prepared to work hard and show them what you've got to offer them.”

While she was confident she had made the right choice of careers after the internship and now as a full-time audit associate with KPMG, Blomquist recommends that students do multiple internships. “It helps you find your place, and if that career path fits you as a person.” With this fit, she hasn't even minded giving up her jeans for dress pants. ■

Capital experiences

By Kristi Evans



Rebecca Thompson, second from right, with Congressman George Miller (CA), Senator Ted Kennedy (MA), Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi (CA) and representatives from the United States Student Association at the Capitol prior to the enrollment ceremony for the College Cost Reduction Act.

Rebecca Thompson '09 BS has long recognized the value of internships and has experienced them from two perspectives: participant and facilitator. As an NMU student, she applied for an internship through The Washington Center in the nation's capital and secured one with the Department of Homeland Security. Now, as the new director of Young People For—also in Washington, D.C.—she empowers the next generation of progressive leaders at America's colleges to affect change in their communities.

Thompson knew as an incoming freshman at NMU that she wanted to pursue The Washington Center opportunity. Advised to remain patient and get involved at the campus level first, she immersed herself in the Student Leader Fellowship Program, Black Student Union and ASNMU student government, for which she later served as president. All fulfilled her goal of being an engaged student and made her a more competitive applicant for the internship.

"I worked really hard to get into the program," she says. "Once I was accepted, everything changed. I knew the minute I got off the plane that Washington, D.C., was where I wanted to be. Something had always con-

nected me to the city and being there reinforced that."

Thompson helped Department of Homeland Security staff who offered technical assistance and training in various weapons of mass destruction (WMD) scenarios to state and local entities.

"Much of the effort was directed at first responders so that in the event of an attack, there would be people trained on the ground to handle it, whether it was in Marquette County or Washington, D.C. My role involved a lot of research. For example, they offered training by issue area and I would review the information and

help them fill in the gaps. Or I would make recommendations as to what type of training best fit a particular WMD scenario."

Northern's Political Science and Public

Administration Department partners with The Washington Center, which maintains relationships with thousands of organizations in the D.C. area. Outside of their internships, students take classes and participate in leadership forums. They also have the opportunity to network with fellow interns and professionals who may help them find employment opportunities after graduation.

While her duties were not a direct match to her

Thompson helped Department of Homeland Security staff who offered technical assistance and training in various Weapons of Mass Destruction scenarios.

marketing major, Thompson gained valuable insight from the experience. “I realized I didn't want to work for the federal government, but that wasn't a bad thing. It's better to find out what you do or don't want to do during an internship than when you're relying on a job for a paycheck. An internship is the only trial run you get.”

The experience also helped Thompson identify qualities of a productive internship that she applies to her current career working with students.

“An internship shouldn't just be about stuffing envelopes or listening to people talk; it should be getting your feet wet doing what you want to do and being treated like part of the team. Young people want to engage, get out in the field, meet people and be pushed into leadership positions. My interns probably have more responsibility than they anticipated because I'm one who likes to be challenged beyond my own comfort level.”

Young People For offers a year-long fellowship for students to identify a problem in their communities and work to address it. “They create what's called a blueprint for social justice and we help them fund it. The students gain internship credit and a stipend while working on positive change at the local level. They network with peers nationwide, participate in regional skills and issue training



Thompson with members of the DC Youth Advisory Council during a local community service project in Washington, D.C.

sessions and come to D.C. for a conference.”

Prior to joining YP4, Thompson was program manager for the District of Columbia Youth Advisory Council in the Executive Office of the Mayor. She also served as legislative director for the U.S. Student Association.

“Without my internship, I had almost no real-world experience. People were impressed by that on my resume. I have to say that 100 percent of what I did at Northern prepared me for the job I'm doing today.” ■

After several years of arranging internships through The Washington Center in the nation's capital, NMU's Political Science and Public Administration Department expanded its placement options to the heart of state government. **Jeremy Hosking '07 BS**, the first student selected for the Lansing Internship Program, earned summertime credit working in Rep. Steve Lindberg's office. It proved to be a door-opening opportunity. Hosking was hired a year later as a full-time legislative aide to the U.P. representative.

A Palmer native, Hosking had applied for the internship to gain practical experience to complement the theoretical knowledge gleaned from the classroom. He described his first week in Lansing as an acclimation period—sifting through files and e-mails to familiarize himself with



Jeremy Hosking, right, with Michigan Representative Steve Lindberg, center, and fellow staff member Craig Brunet, '01 BS, '04 MPA on the House floor.

upcoming issues. Soon he was sitting in on committee meetings, taking notes and watching the procedures unfold.

“In class, we learned how bills are introduced and become law, but I quickly realized it doesn't always work that way with interest groups

and lobbyists,” says Hosking. “The classroom is a controlled setting; there’s not a lot of control outside it. It was an eye-opening experience. Sometimes the party system makes politics pretty dysfunctional. I see things as gray and I don’t think compromise is a bad thing, so I’m often surprised by the process.”

Hosking applied his writing and research skills toward drafting letters in response to constituent concerns or complaints. He had to be an effective listener during occasional meetings with visitors from the district when Lindberg was in a session and unavailable.

“In class, we learned how bills are introduced and become law, but I quickly realized it doesn’t always work that way with interest groups and lobbyists.”



“People skills and relationships are very important. I worked for Steve’s campaign during my campaign practicum and my favorite part of that was going door to door and listening to people’s concerns. Those skills helped me as an intern, I use them now as a legislative aide and they will be critical if I run for office one day.”

The Lansing internships offer many intangible benefits, but they are unpaid positions and students are responsible for their own room and board, transportation and living expenses. Hosking said he wouldn’t have been



David Haynes discussing "Politics in the U.P. in the Late 20th Century" at the 2008 Sonderegger Symposium at NMU.

able to afford the opportunity without financial support from an NMU Foundation scholarship funded by Northern alumni and friends.

Tom Baldini '65 BS, district director for Congressman Bart Stupak, and **David Haynes '72 BS**, associate professor of political science, are two of those donors.

“I thought it was important to help provide students who were currently enrolled at NMU the opportunity to experience work-related activities in their field of interest beyond the education on campus,” says Baldini.

“Internships allow them to preview and experience what they are considering as a future career—to decide what they like or dislike about a particular career before they graduate. Most internships aren’t compensated, so this scholarship was a way to counter that and help out. The fun part for me is hearing about some of their experiences and observations after they return.”

Haynes has placed students in Lansing, Madison and Minneapolis. “Internships are part of the core education of the department. They’re also good resumé-builders. Getting on-the-job experience along with an academic education produces graduates very employable in the market. But there are expenses associated with that experience. I didn’t want the cost to be a barrier, so I decided to put some money together to help them take advantage of these internships.” ■



Tom Baldini, district director for Michigan Congressman Stupak, helps fund a scholarship assisting interns in government and legal settings.

Just Kids

Criminal justice major Allison Gager describes her internship at the Marquette County Juvenile Court

I have been interested in the law as long as I can remember. My father is a former police chief who now works as the deputy director of NMU Public Safety, so I suppose I got my interest in law from him. I have also spent the past 3 1/2 years working for the U.S. Attorney's Office in Marquette as a student legal assistant, which has further enhanced my interests. I hope to continue working at the U.S. Attorney's Office as a full-time legal assistant, and then continue in some form of federal government work, but as a victim/witness specialist, legal assistant or federal probation officer.

I had considered doing an internship and when I received an e-mail from Criminal Justice Department Head Dr. (Dale) Kapla, saying some were still available for the fall 2009 semester in the area of probation, I took it as a sign and went for it.

My supervisor was Juvenile Probation Officer Connie Hemmila, and I spent most of my time working directly with her, first shadowing her, and then actually taking on some real responsibilities.

In the beginning I sat in on meetings with clients and court hearings, just absorbing knowledge, but by the end of my semester there I was actually conducting office meetings myself, going to schools to visit clients, handling drug tests and writing reports.

It was a truly amazing learning experience, mostly because the entire staff was so willing to teach me and to let me try whatever I wanted on my own.

Obviously because of the confidential nature of the work, I cannot get into any details about specific experiences I had with clients there, but all in all, I think the most surprising thing I learned was how quickly, even in an "authority" position like a probation officer, you can become attached to these kids.

"I could go into work at juvenile court after having what I would consider a completely horrible day, and by the end of my time there, my problems always seemed incredibly trivial in comparison to what some of these kids experience."

The nature of work in juvenile court is that you are supposedly working with the "troubled kids" or the "bad kids," but I learned so quickly that you cannot put labels on them, because despite the fact that they may do some questionable things, when it comes down to it they are just kids. And most of them are incredibly likable and friendly, and were simply born into bad situations, or have had life difficulties that I could not even begin to imagine going through. I could go into work at juvenile court after having what I would consider a completely horrible day, and by the end of my time there, my problems always seemed incredibly trivial in comparison to what some of these kids experience.



At times, it was definitely hard to maintain composure during some sensitive meetings and proceedings, especially since as much as you may try to keep a professional distance from these kids, you end up feeling incredibly attached to them—at least I did. I think that the key that I found in these situations, especially when I had no idea what to say or do, was just to listen, take it in and just be a voice of calm. I had to realize early on that I am one person and there is only so much that I can do. I can't save the world on my own. So I listened, absorbed and tried to say something helpful if I could, but at the same time try not to say too much. It's a difficult skill to master, and I'm sure if you asked some of the veteran probation officers over there, they'd say that even after years on the job, there are certain situations that still get to them as well.

After ending my internship at Juvenile Court, I was offered a paid position as an in-home detention worker where I work one-on-one with a youth on probation. I have also done some mentoring work for the court.

I don't know if any class can fully prepare you for a real-world situation like this, but I think that's the beauty of the internship because it gives you experiences that a class cannot. ■

From Ireland to Marquette

Irish intern Brian McGowan experiences life across the pond.

By Rebecca Tavernini

While many students head away from Northern to try their hand at future careers, a few come from afar to undertake an internship on campus.

Brian McGowan, a sports and exercise science student from The University of Limerick in Ireland arrived in Marquette in January to spend the winter semester and summer here.

"I found out about NMU at an international conference on biomechanics in sports that was hosted in Limerick and will be hosted here this summer," McGowan explains. "I met a Northern professor who had ties with UL and I asked about opportunities for an internship. It sounded good and here I am six months later. I didn't realize quite how cold it was, though!"

That professor was Randy Jensen from the Health, Physical Education and Recreation Department, who was not only at the conference but had previously spent a sabbatical in Limerick. One of McGowan's internship duties will be helping to organize the International Society of Biomechanics in Sports Conference this summer. It's expected to bring in more than 300 experts from around the world.

"I love biomechanics and exercise physiology. But my favorite areas are strength and conditioning. I hope to carry on my education as a post grad or a master's student and would like to do research in one of those areas. Who knows? Maybe I'll go somewhere new again," he adds.

That will be easier to do now that he has been cleared by Homeland Security. "Apparently I was to be classified as a suspect alien on their computers, so it was difficult to get a Social Security number [which he needed in order to register at NMU]. I only live across the pond! They sorted it out now, though."

In his internship he's teaching a soccer class, doing a coaching course for Olympic weightlifting,



developing some research papers and sitting in on a few classes. "I hope to improve my research skills and further my knowledge by learning from the people here at Northern," he says. "I will be meeting new people and making valuable contacts. The students and staff are really friendly."

"I've already made some good friends—which was easy with an accent like this!" he jokes. "Although some of my phrases are lost over here."

He's also running with the men's track club and playing pick-up soccer for fun. "My best experience so far was a night at a ski jumping competition in Ishpeming in the cold with a big bonfire, beer and dogs. I loved it."

He is also impressed with NMU's sports facilities and many activities for students. "People don't realize how lucky they are to have all these facilities and cheap PEIF membership. I'm amazed at the funding for sports and the amount of top coaches at Northern. People have real dedication to their sports over here." ■



International internships

It's not uncommon for NMU education students to student teach abroad (which is much like an internship), but now a new program through NMU's International Programs Office expands opportunities for students in many other fields by placing them in summer internships in Dublin with well-known companies and small, innovative firms. Students also earn credit, have time to explore the city and stay in a new student apartment complex.

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Thinking of having an intern?

Ten things to consider

By Robert Lion

Employers are often interested in offering internship opportunities but are often unsure where to start. Here are 10 common questions—from employers and students—that may help if you're in a position to offer an internship opportunity. Both perspectives are equally important to consider.

The employer's point of view

• **Do I have to pay an intern?** This is not always a simple yes or no answer. Different academic units/majors have different requirements for financial compensation. It's best to consult with a representative from the academic major from which you are hoping to attract students.

• **Do I have sufficient or appropriate work?** You want to make sure that you don't have too little or inappropriate work for interns. The internship experience should challenge the student to draw upon their education to work through their duties. For most students, this experience helps them recognize the direct ties between their education and its actual application.

• **How long and when will I need them?** Consider the volume of work and the time needed to accomplish specific tasks to assign your intern. While some organizations may want students at specific times during the year, it is important to be mindful that NMU students complete courses on a semester cycle and often receive course credit for an internship. Generally, late August through early December; mid-January through April; and May through July are good timeframes.

• **Will they have the qualifications I need?** It is important to make a good match between a student's education, experience, skill set, interests and personality and your projects and work environment. Be specific in the qualities you're looking for.

• **What happens if this doesn't work out?** Sometimes an intern is not a good fit for an organization (for any number of reasons). It is best to address performance-related issues as they arise, with the student and their NMU internship supervisor. Should you ultimately determine that the intern is not meeting your expectations, you are not obligated to continue the relationship. It's important that it is beneficial to both employer and student.

What students look for

• **Can I find affordable housing and transportation?**

Relocation, daily transportation and lodging costs students may incur during a paid or unpaid internship outside of their college or home area are major considerations. In some instances, friends and family can help provide lodging. But many students must weigh the benefits of firsthand experience against the potential financial setbacks the opportunity may pose. Because few large companies are located in the U.P., students often need to travel to large cities, where daily life can be especially challenging on an intern's wage.

• **When do they expect me to start and stop?** Students really feel confined to the semester, quarter, or trimester cycle of their school. While some great internships may entice students to leave school several weeks before the end of the term, this puts a student in an awkward situation. When possible, try to follow the semester cycle (with NMU students). Be clear what their work hours will be and if there is any flexibility.

• **Will I be the only intern on staff?** For many students, great friendships are created through internship experiences. But it can be a scary and isolating situation at first. So even if you do not have other interns at your organization, is there a way you can connect them with other local interns or young employees?

• **What are the unique opportunities beyond on-the-job experience?** Students who take internships are often looking for experiences beyond the day-to-day work; they are looking for networking opportunities, leadership development and other higher-profile experiences that they wouldn't typically have access to. Opportunities to meet with executives and movers and shakers in your field are often big selling points for internships.

• **Will I get to apply what I have learned?** This may also be asked as, "Are the duties appropriate for a person with my level of education?" Most students want to have some challenging components to the work and develop new skills. However, it shouldn't be beyond their capabilities, or menial tasks with little learning value. Finding a good match for their interest and experience level is key. ■