



Summer Internship Program Offers Mentorship, Networking, and Professional Development Opportunities for College Students

When it began in 1989, The Governor’s Public Service Summer Internship program was primarily geared toward attracting college students to state government opportunities. That focus continues to hold true today, however, summer interns can now also expect one-on-one mentorship and guidance, networking and professional development opportunities and potential exposure to a variety of public service-related career paths.

“It’s a way of bringing students into state government by introducing them to the process and how we do things,” said Zach Cramer, State Personnel Department (SPD) Director of Equity, Inclusion and Opportunity.

Over the years, as the number of state agencies participating in the program has grown, so has the number of available internships.

“When I started in the summer of 2022, we were just shy of 150,” Cramer said. “This summer, we have 200 interns joining us.”

“Our goal is to increase the number of agencies that participate. Right now, we have around 30,” said Lauren Johnson, SPD Employee Experience Program Director.

The Indiana Department of Workforce Development (DWD) actively participates in the Governor’s summer internship program, which generally runs from May through August. However, while it’s not unusual for students to extend their time with state agencies by a few months, some ultimately choose to come back for a completely different internship experience all together a year after completing their first one.

Due to other commitments this summer, former DWD Marketing and Communications intern Elizabeth Price was limited to only one agency internship, but the Elon University undergraduate did go on to work several months for DWD beyond what her 2023 internship required.

“Going into the summer between my sophomore and junior year, I was hoping to find an internship that would be challenging and allow me to practice communication and social media skills while also learning web design skills,” she said.

The internship extension Price was granted proved to be as beneficial to DWD as it was to her. Ultimately, while continuing to fulfill other college requirements, she assisted the agency with things such as accessibility-related form conversion and the creation of flyers.

But understandably, as a natural communicator, she excelled during the in-person summer experience, in particular.

“Over the summer, I was able to create unique friendships with all the other DWD interns,” Price said. “I’m still in touch with a few today. It was great establishing connections with others who are in the same stage of life that I am.”

Providing the ability to network with mentors as well as other interns is a specific focal point for the internship program itself, especially in Cramer's agency.

"With our own interns, I make sure to assign them to a mentor," he said. "I try to pair them with someone who works in a different way than I do. Ultimately, it's about building their own skillset. They have to figure out what works best for them."

Aside from an ever-growing number of potential mentorship opportunities, today's state interns are seeing increased compensation, a beefed-up orientation program and an elevated focus on professional development compared to what interns from even a few years ago experienced.

"We help them with things like professional head shots, resume development and elevator pitches," Cramer said. "It's almost like an employment fair."

"Getting an internship is a really difficult process. It can be stressful and discouraging. So, I encourage other students to find a company they're interested in to then reach out and try to connect through LinkedIn," Price said. "Don't be afraid to put yourself out there. You have to show people you have confidence."

"I loved my time at DWD. The skills and connections I've made will be extremely valuable. I'm really grateful for the amount of support I've received and all that I've learned."

More information on The Governor's Public Service Summer Internship program can be found at <https://www.in.gov/spd/workforindiana/internships/>.