

MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL PARTNERSHIPS: INTERNSHIP PROGRAMS

Volunteer service requirements, service learning, work placements, and internships are becoming more common in high schools and universities. Coupled with the popularity of television shows about law enforcement, these requirements mean that many agencies receive inquiries about internship opportunities. Internships can be a cornerstone to a larger volunteer program and can also cultivate future employees and long-term volunteers. While internships have traditionally involved criminal justice students, many agencies have found that students from diverse disciplines can be a valuable resource.

California University of Pennsylvania

California University of Pennsylvania (CUP) is located 32 miles south of Pittsburgh, in California, Pennsylvania. Previously a teachers college, CUP became a member of the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education in 1983. CUP offers associate's, undergraduate, and graduate degrees in more than 100 areas of study. CUP has an enrollment of more than 6,600 students and employs more than 600 faculty and staff members.

CUP's Geographic Information Sciences Internship

CUP offers a concentration in geographic information sciences as part of its bachelor of arts degree in geography. Students in this concentration study emergency management,

land-use geography, and geographic information systems (GIS). With help from the Department of Justice, the earth science department recently developed the CUP Crime Mapping Center, a state-of-the-art facility that includes computers equipped with the latest GIS software.



CUP students apply the GIS skills they learn in the classroom and laboratory through an internship

with one of four local law enforcement agencies: the Southwest Regional Police Force and the Brownsville, Uniontown, and Connellsville Police Departments. The students create crime maps on behalf of the participating agencies. The maps help the departments visualize where crimes are happening, identify trends, and deploy police officers more efficiently.

Most students complete the internships during the summer months. Students may receive up to six credits for an internship, and the time commitment is based on the number of credits earned. Students are required to submit weekly journals to their advisors and complete a final paper based on their internship experiences. The student's on-site supervisor must also complete an evaluation of the student's performance.

Program Benefits

Using special software, students tailor the crime reports to each jurisdiction, and the departments involved have benefited from the students' contributions. One department was at risk of disbandment until the crime maps produced by the CUP intern proved the need for the police department. Another department secured a grant based on a student's crime reports and hired additional officers. Given the small size of the participating departments, most would not have such crime reports available to them without participating in the internship program.

The departments are not the only beneficiaries of the internship program.



Interns can use the skills they learn in the classroom and computer lab in a real-life setting. Many of the students

involved in the program expressed the satisfaction of knowing their work was making a difference. Also, students said they appreciate law enforcement more after seeing the work the officers do every day. Many students volunteer with the departments after their internships end. CUP professors support the internship program and highly recommend it to students for the experience it offers the student and for the value it brings to their classroom. Classroom discussions are livelier and students are more interactive when they are able to bring their own experiences to the table. The students are able to share with each other the lessons they have learned on the job, and the internships help reinforce the lessons they learn in the classroom.

Future Program Growth

The addition of the CUP Crime Mapping Center offers many opportunities for the program to expand. Because the agencies involved with the internship program are local, the creation of a password-protected database containing the crime maps for each jurisdiction has been discussed as a future development. This database would allow other jurisdictions to view the crime maps of the surrounding areas and enable neighboring departments to better communicate and coordinate their law enforcement efforts. Expanding the internship opportunities is another goal, and the agencies involved often serve as a promotional tool for CUP, relaying the benefits of participating in an internship program to other agencies. And professors and students alike are looking to expand the work the students are doing for each agency to include more detailed and in-depth analysis of crime trends and forecasting.

Eugene, Oregon, Police Department

The Eugene, Oregon, Police Department (EPD) serves a community of 145,000, which includes the University of Oregon. EPD operates a regional 911 center and a host of special teams including the Explosive Disposal Unit, the SWAT team, and the Crisis Negotiation Team. The department of 175 sworn and 118 nonsworn employees established a volunteer program in 1999. EPD offers a wide range of volunteer opportunities, including an Exploring Post, chaplains, a senior patrol, a squad car maintenance team, a school resource team, substation staff, and administrative support staff throughout the department. In 2005 the department's 115 volunteers contributed more than 19,000 hours of service.

Internship Opportunities

The EPD accepts high school, community college, and university students into its volunteer program and can accommodate internships and cooperative work-experience placements. The department's volunteer coordinator attends the annual high school volunteer fair and sends newsletters, flyers, and brochures to contacts at high schools and colleges. Student interns go through the same placement process as any other volunteer: application, interview, background check, and orientation.

The department has between six and 10 student interns at any one time. The department has three high school students earning required community service, two community college students, and one university student. Internships are tailored to the individual student. Students have been placed at substations, in the records section, and in the volunteer administrator's office. Community college students are frequently given assignments at the neighborhood substations because this work provides them with the opportunity to interact with sworn officers and nonsworn employees and build on their community service experience. Nearly every year, the department has a student from Western Oregon University complete a 10-week, 400-hour practicum.

It is common for criminal justice students to seek internships with EPD, but internships based on other fields of study are just as common. An intern studying computer programming developed a Microsoft Access database for tracking the department's



problem oriented policing projects. Another intern studying graphic design created a brochure for the police commission. Students from the University of Oregon's (U of O) sociology department regularly request internships and are placed in assignments ranging from volunteers in policing administration to substation support. Over the years, interns from the U of O's Family & Human Services Program have volunteered for the department's school resource team as mentors for at-risk students.



Program Benefits

The volunteers who come to the department as interns require some extra work, because there is usually paperwork required by the educational institution. Generally, the students are only committing to a term, but some students have stayed on with the department after their original commitment. One community college student signed on for a one-term internship and ended up volunteering for more than three years and contributing 1,825 hours of service to the department. Three former interns have been hired as employees, two as sworn officers and one as a civilian employee.

Because volunteering for a police department is exciting for many students, the department has had an easy time recruiting interns. They find that students bring enthusiasm, a willingness to share their special skills and talents, and a desire to gain work experience. They have helped the department complete tasks and projects that would not otherwise have even been started. Students who

complete internships with the department have reported positive feelings about their experience and leave better educated about the inner workings of law enforcement. Lastly, they are invaluable ambassadors for law enforcement.

Future Program Growth

The possibilities for involving interns in law enforcement volunteer projects are limitless. EPD is now recruiting an intern from a high school art class to design a customized crime prevention coloring book to reflect the department’s diverse employees and programs. The final product will be printed with the student artist’s name in a prominent location for recognition and distributed to children at safety fairs, during National Night Out, and at other community events. The coloring book will replace those purchased by the department. An internship is being developed for a U of O business student who will update and finalize the full costing model for the department’s dispatch services contracts.

EPD also plans to recruit students interested in pursuing careers in filmmaking to videotape volunteers in their various assignments, and prepare a video that can be used at a future volunteer recognition event. The department hopes to recruit computer technology students

to help update and revamp the Web site as they do not have a full-time Web designer.

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VIPS Resources & Products of Interest

Online Resource Library

- The library provides sample documents and forms from VIPS programs with internship opportunities, including the Eugene Police Department.

Visit www.policevolunteers.org for more information about law enforcement volunteer efforts.



The Volunteers in Police Service (VIPS) Program works to enhance the capacity of state and local law enforcement to utilize volunteers. VIPS serves as a gateway to resources and information for and about law enforcement volunteer programs. VIPS is a Program Partner of Citizen Corps, an initiative helping to make communities across America safer, stronger, and better prepared for emergencies of all kinds.



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