Internships and Academic Seminars

The Washington Center

An Invitation to Affiliate
For Private Colleges and Universities
Dear Colleague:

Do your institution’s priorities include:

- Recruiting and retaining strong students?
- Connecting students of all majors with high-quality internships.
- Cultivating special opportunities for particular groups, such as honors students, national fellowship candidates and students of diverse backgrounds?
- Launching your graduates—and future alumni—on successful career paths?
- Helping students develop leadership skills and become more civically engaged?
- Providing opportunities for faculty development?

For over three decades, The Washington Center for Internships and Academic Seminars has helped colleges and universities accomplish these goals. It delivers more than a semester “away” and professional internships. It provides an integrated, creditworthy experience that transforms theory into practice, ambition into purpose and potential into achievement.

That’s why hundreds of private colleges and universities in the United States and abroad choose to partner with The Washington Center.

We hope you’ll want to work with us as well.

Sincerely,

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What is The Washington Center?
The Washington Center for Internships and Academic Seminars is an independent nonprofit educational organization serving hundreds of colleges and universities in the United States and other countries by providing selected students with challenging opportunities to work and learn in Washington, D.C. for academic credit. The largest program of its kind, The Washington Center has 80 full-time staff and more than 50,000 alumni, many of whom have now assumed leadership positions in government, corporate and nonprofit organizations.

What exactly do we provide?
In our internship program, we provide students of all majors with academic semesters and summer terms centered on professional work experiences.

We also offer academic seminars—typically one to two weeks in length—in January and May. These intensive learning experiences focus on current topics, such as the presidency, bipartisanship, politics and the media, national security and campaigns.

Our Washington, D.C. internship program has three main components

A tailored internship: We maintain ties with hundreds of internship sites in the public and private sectors. With help from our professional staff, students choose a substantive, supervised internship tailored to their academic and professional interests and needs.

An academic course: We offer up to 30 course options each semester in a variety of disciplines and interdisciplinary areas. Students choose one course, which meets once a week for three hours. Faculty are highly qualified academics and are often also practitioners in their fields (a course guide with biographies is available).

The Leadership Forum: We enrich students’ internships and academic study with weekly programming. All participants hear from prominent speakers in the Alan K. Simpson–Norman Y. Mineta Leaders Series and attend panel discussions, site visits and other activities along with other students in a thematically-oriented program area (Politics & Public Policy, International Affairs, and others). Our Public Policy Dialogues enable students to meet in small groups with members of Congress. All students carry out a civic engagement project. Finally, they document, analyze and reflect on their overall D.C. experience by compiling a comprehensive portfolio.
"At Texas Christian University, our mission is to educate ethical leaders and responsible citizens in the global community. For three decades, internships growing from our affiliation with The Washington Center have enabled participants to get an inside look at the inner workings of the District of Columbia, gain priceless professional experience and grow as ethical leaders. Washington internships have helped our students view the world in terms of opportunities and have led to success as they later searched for meaningful professional positions."

Victor J. Boschini, Jr., Ph.D.
Chancellor
Texas Christian University

Sample Internship Sites
ABC News
Amnesty International
CNN
Embassies
Interpol
Law firms and lobbying firms
Merrill Lynch
National Education Association
National Institutes of Health
Peace Corps
U.S. Attorney’s Office for the District of Columbia
U.S. Congressional Offices
U.S. Department of the Treasury
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Voice of America
Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars
The White House
Among many others

How can institutions be assured that a student’s work with us is worthy of academic credit?

Since they award their own academic credit for students’ work, there’s no more important question for our affiliated colleges and universities. With our nationally representative Liaison Advisory Board, we’ve been developing the answer for over three decades—and the fact that hundreds of institutions award credit for what students do while enrolled in our programs speaks to the success and appeal of The Washington Center’s approach.

The amount of credit and the type or types of credit colleges and universities award are, of course, institutional decisions. But generally students receive 12 to 16 credits for a 15-week semester and 6 to 12 credits for a 10-week quarter or summer term. Some credits may be in the major or minor, and some may be elective or general education credit. Some credit may be graded and some awarded pass/fail. We are happy to provide guidance as well as examples of “credit packages” from similar institutions.

How, then, can an institution be assured that a student’s work with us is creditworthy? Some of the key assurances follow.

Admissions Standards
We admit only students who are ready for a challenging academic and work experience. All have the official approval of a liaison or faculty sponsor. The average GPA of enrolled students is over 3.3. Successful applicants join one of the most diverse and motivated peer groups in the country.

The Internship
Internships are tailored to students’ professional interests and chosen from among options generated by Washington Center internship coordinators. Students are supervised by academic program advisors who visit each internship site at least once during the semester to ensure that institutions’—as well as students’ and organizations’—expectations are met.

Our agreement with hundreds of sites is that internships will be substantive and challenging and that at least 80% of the students’ work will be nonclerical. If we find that this is not the case, we will remedy the situation and, if needed, move the student to a more suitable organization.

Academic Courses
We hire only highly qualified instructors—the large majority with both terminal degrees in their fields and successful college teaching experience. Many also bring a valuable perspective of recent or current practice into their classrooms.

A detailed course guide is published prior to the beginning of each term and contains academic policies, biographical information on faculty and course summaries. We can also provide individual course syllabi upon request. Courses and instruction are overseen by our senior director of academic affairs.
“The Washington Center gives our students a wonderful academic experience that they could not obtain anywhere else. It provides them with more of everything—better internship placements, better housing and more one-on-one supervision—and at a price that allows us to make this opportunity available to the greatest number of students. The Center’s staff has been tireless in seeking out additional funds from state governments, foundations and the private sector so as to make the experience affordable to all.”

Francis Graham Lee, Ph.D.
Professor of Political Science
and Campus Liaison
Saint Joseph’s University

Guided Reflection and Portfolio Creation
Under the guidance of their academic program advisors, students complete assignments that are uploaded to our online course management system MyTWC for feedback. These assignments, through which participants document, analyze, and reflect on their experiences, are compiled into a final portfolio.

Common components include an individual development plan, a revised résumé, an informational interview write-up, a civic engagement report, sample work products from the internship and academic course, and a capstone reflection. Guidelines for assignments and rubrics used by academic program advisors are available upon request.

Grading of Student Performance
Just as colleges and universities award their own credit for students’ satisfactory completion of our internship program, they determine students’ grades. The Washington Center, however, provides the campus with the thorough documentation it needs to make this determination. In addition to a brief midterm evaluation, institutions receive final evaluations from each student’s academic program advisor, internship site supervisor and course instructor, each of whom recommends a grade. The students’ portfolios are also sent back to the institution.

Inspection Visits and Requests for References Encouraged
We invite faculty and other campus representatives to visit at any time for a full orientation to our program—internships, academic courses and Leadership Forum—and to tour our facilities, which include our headquarters building in the Dupont Circle area and our state-of-the-art Residential and Academic Facility at NoMa five blocks north of Capitol Hill. If you would like to visit us, we may be able to help with expenses.

We also invite prospective partners to speak with members of our Liaison Advisory Board, who are faculty, staff and administrators from affiliated institutions across the country. Please don’t hesitate to be in touch with us if you would like selected names and contact information.
“Furman University’s relationship with The Washington Center, now in its fourth decade, has allowed more than 1,000 of our students to participate in substantive internships that have given students professional experience and an opportunity to see how what they’ve learned in the classroom relates to the real world. The Washington Center’s rigorous program encourages students to explore and develop the connections between their academic and professional pursuits.”

Danielle Vinson, Ph.D.
Professor and Chair of Political Science and Campus Liaison
Furman University

Is housing provided?
Yes, it is guaranteed to all accepted students. Students live in shared, fully furnished apartments in our Residential and Academic Facility @ NoMa (pictured above), just a few blocks north of Capitol Hill, or, when additional apartments are needed, in carefully selected and well-established area neighborhoods.

All housing facilities are easily accessible to Washington’s Metro subway system. Student services professionals—including alumni in residence assigned to each building—organize a range of social and professional development activities and provide an important “safety net” in case of emergency.
“When Wake Forest University first explored opportunities for academic internships in Washington, we conducted a thorough evaluation of The Washington Center’s history, mission, programs and operations. We were convinced that our partnership would serve our requirements for both academic rigor and internships that were discipline-based, experientially probing and exceptional in quality. The high caliber, commitment and responsiveness of the entire staff have been hallmarks of our very successful affiliation.”

**What is the cost? How is it paid?**

The program fee and housing fee for each upcoming term are available on The Washington Center’s website at www.twc.edu/program-fees. The figures given are “sticker prices.” Students’ actual net costs vary greatly as a result of additional aid received from any of several sources, including their institutions, states, internship sites and The Washington Center’s own substantial financial assistance program.

The program fee is set between the average tuitions of public and private institutions nationally. This enables most private colleges and universities to collect their usual tuition (students remain enrolled on the home campus), pay The Washington Center’s program fee from the amount collected, and retain the difference on campus. Again, we can provide examples of arrangements in place at similar institutions.

**What are the academic seminars that are available to students?**

Academic seminars are intensive one-to two-week programs that draw on the extraordinary resources of Washington, D.C. By going on site visits, hearing from speakers, and participating in small-group discussions, students gain insight into some of the most important issues of the day. Typically run in January and May, the seminars are open to students at all levels.

Topics covered include Exploring Bipartisan Solutions, Politics and the Media, and National Security, among others. Every four years, our Campaign Series focuses on the presidential election process and includes programs at the conventions and the inauguration.

The Washington Center provides incentives for faculty to bring groups of students as part of a mini-term or semester add-on course. The faculty development opportunities are also considerable. For upcoming seminars, please visit www.twc.edu/seminars.

**Visibility and fundraising opportunities**

Affiliated institutions can use our reception space at a special rate, and many have hosted alumni and prospective student receptions there. Our annual fall Gala brings together friends and supporters of The Washington Center—including many college and university sponsors. Institutions have leveraged Gala to connect with local alumni and potential donors. Washington Center students are also featured on close to 100 videos on C-SPAN’s archives at www.c-span.org.

Sample Private Institution Affiliates

Bradley University  
Case Western Reserve University  
Clark University  
Dickinson College  
Elon University  
Emerson College  
Furman University  
Loyola Marymount University  
Quinnipiac University  
Saint Joseph’s University  
Saint Lawrence University  
Stonehill College  
Suffolk University  
Sweet Briar College  
Texas Christian University  
University of Mount Union  
University of Rochester  
University of San Diego  
Villanova University  
Wagner College  
Wake Forest University  
Washington College  
Xavier University

Among many others
We hope this summary clarifies why The Washington Center has become the largest organization of its kind and the partner of choice for colleges and universities. Few institutions are in a position to offer their own program in Washington, D.C. And even those that are may find that by partnering with us, they achieve their goals at a fraction of the cost, without the liability and with a far greater assurance of quality.

We invite you to explore an affiliation between your college or university and The Washington Center. An affiliation is a simple no-cost, no-obligation agreement that spells out your institution’s preferences regarding the credits students will receive, the handling of fees and the appointment of a campus liaison.

To take the next step toward affiliation, you can access a copy of our brief Institutional Preferences Form at www.twc.edu/affiliation (click on “Documents”). Completed and signed by a senior academic officer, this form will provide the foundation for our partnership.