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Chapter 2

The Placement Process

INTRODUCTION

The first two steps in doing an internship are selecting the field site and "getting placed," based on your academic and career goals. There are several factors for both the student and agency to consider in the placement process. Choosing and finding an appropriate internship, résumé writing, the internship interview at the agency, and background screening will be discussed, as they are crucial to this selection process.

CHOOSING AN APPROPRIATE SITE

If your college program is one that allows you to select from a variety of field placements on a statewide or regional basis, perhaps the most important thing you will have to do is to plan ahead. You should review the program and possible placements with the internship coordinator or your faculty advisor in the semester prior to the one in which you plan to do your internship. You should be informed about the overall program including the placement process, deadlines regarding submission of application materials, and the school's academic requirements regarding prerequisites for interns. Some colleges allow interns to set up their own placement sites. In many programs, students work with an advisor to select appropriate placements. Other colleges are stricter, in that the coordinator handles all communications concerning the student and the
agency. Certain programs simply assign students to field sites, based on faculty review and field site availability. Again, you must be aware of your program’s policies regarding student communication with agencies for placement purposes.

Once you have learned about the program, you will have to decide which agency or agencies would be best for you. You may be interested in applying for acceptance in a formalized, competitive internship program, such as those offered by the legal aide societies, university law clinics, and federal law enforcement agencies. Such programs have rigid application procedures and deadlines. Often, the deadline for filing the application may be a year before the scheduled placement in order for background investigation procedures to be completed. It is a good idea to explore several alternatives. Just as you applied to more than one college, or will apply for more than one full-time job once you graduate, you should apply to several possible internship sites to ensure success. As you grapple with what type of internship to choose, you should consider the following factors:

**Post-graduation career goals.** For example, if you wish to become a probation officer, you should consider a probation agency as a field site. Students considering law school might want to intern with the office of a district attorney, public defender, or private law firm. Ideally, your internship will provide experience that is applicable to future career goals. Employment opportunities are an important outcome of many internship experiences.

**Monetary resources.** Many interns desire out-of-state placement if the school provides such an opportunity. However, additional financing may be required, especially if the agency is not able to offer a stipend. Consider costs associated with the internship, including housing, transportation/parking, wardrobe, meals, and so on. Realistically reflect on the costs associated with a distant internship to determine if your resources permit such a placement.

**Geographic location.** Issues that arise include whether you will be living at home, on campus, or elsewhere. Consider the amount of travel involved; scheduling and transportation must be part of your plan. Your program may have internship sites set up in other countries. If you are considering a foreign internship, you will have to educate yourself regarding visa requirements. You will also need to consider your financial situation, especially in regard to transferring funds so they are available to you while you are out of the country. Such internships require more advance planning than many domestic ones.
Finding the Site That's Right for You

When you have decided what type of internship you are interested in and where you would ideally like it to be located, your first step in finding an internship site should be to discuss it with the faculty or staff member who is in charge of the internship program for your department. That individual will usually have a listing of agencies that have previously had interns from your institution. If such a listing is available, you should review it carefully. The internship coordinator may also have information on agencies and companies that have expressed an interest in taking interns.

The student grapevine or informal information network is another source that you should explore. Discussions with peers provide information as to the best placement sites, the strengths and weaknesses of certain agencies, and so on. We encourage this, for it gives you a peer review of the intern program.

You should also be able to gather information from your college’s career services office. They should have a listing of possible internship sites and contact information from all of the internship programs on campus. The career services personnel may know of criminal justice internships that are outside of the usual criminal justice agencies. For example, an insurance agency that sponsors interns from the business school may need an intern with skills and interest in the computer security area. You may also find reference books with listings of internship placements. One reference source, Internships 2004, published by Peterson’s and in its twenty-fourth edition, lists 50,000 paid and unpaid opportunities in the public and private sectors. Criminal justice and related sites appear under “Other Services, Professional, Public Administration, and Transportation.”

Organizations such as The Washington Center (www.twc.edu) enter into agreements with various colleges and universities and provide many internship opportunities with federal agencies in Washington, DC. In this program, students are required to complete field work and attend various seminar programs. Credit hours, however, are awarded by the student’s sponsoring college. Your internship coordinator can advise you of any affiliations your institution may have.

Parents, relatives, and family friends are also often a good source for internship leads. We caution against allowing the relative or family friend to take the lead in the placement process. You need to be your own best advocate.

The Internet is a valuable tool for finding possible internship sites. Many potential internship sites and well-established internship programs maintain Internet sites that offer a wealth of information. Your internship coordinator or faculty adviser may have a list of such sites.
Consulting a search engine such as Google on “government internships” will net several federal and state sites with links to many others. Student jobs.gov (www.studentjobs.gov) is another place to start or expand your search. You can also visit the web sites of specific government agencies such as the Federal Bureau of Investigation (www.fbi.gov) and the Department of Homeland Security (www.dhs.gov). You may have to search further once you are in a site, using the word “internship.”

RÉSUMÉ WRITING

In the process of selecting a field site, you will complete an application and/or submit a résumé. This will be used, along with a cover letter and other appropriate materials, in requesting a placement with a particular agency or agencies. Many schools have developed model résumés, which can just be filled in, for this purpose. We recommend preparing your own résumé because it gives you some experience in résumé writing, which you can use in job-seeking situations after graduation. Once you have sent your cover letter and resume, you may need to contact the agency by telephone to clarify certain points pertaining to the program.

Résumé is a French word meaning summary. The résumé that you send to an agency or company for placement purposes is a summary of your background, experiences, and qualifications. There are several formats used for résumé writing; your college placement office may use one that differs from the one we use here. However, human resource managers and placement consultants agree in most instances about the type of information that should be included in a résumé. Figure 2.1 shows a sample résumé.

The résumé generally has seven areas: Personal Information, Educational Background, Work Experience, Other Experience, Extracurricular Activities, Interests and Hobbies, and References. The top portion of the résumé should have your complete address and telephone number. If you are living away from home while attending school, you should include your school address because this is where the agency will be apt to contact you. Items that are not required on a résumé are date of birth, health, marital status, appearance, number of children, types of residence, affiliations, and service record. Because of civil action rulings by federal agencies and courts, inquiries in these areas are discriminatory; in other words, they have nothing to do with an initial review of qualifications for the internship, so it is not necessary to include them on your résumé. Please note that these items may be requested for background investigation purposes for security reasons.
MARY T. DOUGLAS

PROFESSIONAL OBJECTIVE

A career in law enforcement.

EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND

9/2003-present: Remsen College, Reid, NY
Major: Bachelor of Science, Criminal Justice
Degree expected: June 9, 2006
Related Course Work: Police organization and administration, constitutional issues, community policing, report writing and interviewing, computer science, research methods, forensic science, four semesters of Russian.

9/2001-6/2003: Mohawk Junior College, Reid, NY
Major: Associate Degree of Applied Science, Criminal Justice
Degree: June 14, 1999

COMPUTER SKILLS

Microsoft Word, Microsoft Excel, SPSS

CRIMINAL JUSTICE EXPERIENCE

2/2001-8/2003: Security Guard, Sangertown Mall, Reid, NY
Duties included shoplifter apprehension, routine security checks, and employee and merchandise security. Participated in specialized training in suspect apprehension and customer safety.

EMPLOYMENT

9/1998-2/2001: Merchandiser, Kmart, Commercial Drive, Reid, NY
Duties included customer assistance, inventory control, cashier.

Supervised children and adolescents participating in week-long camping sessions.

EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Criminal Justice Club, Remsen College. Treasurer, 2003-2004
Taught Constitutional Law course to high school students, October 2003
Coordinator, Criminal Justice Fair, Remsen College, March 2004

REFERENCES AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST

BURRSTONE HOUSE, ROOM 123 • 10 BURRSTONE ROAD • REID, NY 12347
PHONE 315-555-9999 • FAX 315-555-9998 • E-MAIL: MTDouglass@Mail.Com
Because your career preparations at present revolve around obtaining an education, the next major portion of the résumé is education. However, a brief statement of your professional objective may precede it. You do not need to be specific; a brief phrase, such as a career in law, law enforcement, or corrections, is sufficient. In the education area you should include your college, its address, your major or program of study, and your expected date of graduation. If you have attended more than one school during your baccalaureate studies, list them in reverse chronological order, as shown in Figure 2.1. Because your educational experience may be the only asset that you have in terms of a career in criminal justice, you may wish to elaborate in this area by listing skills you have or courses you have completed that are relevant to the field site. For example, you might want to list things such as computer skills, language skills, and so on. You also may want to list specific, applicable course work or educational seminars. Do not list every course you have completed. If the agency is interested, you can provide a college transcript.

Work experience should appear next. Because the résumé is being used for placement in a criminal justice agency, it may be useful to create a separate category titled “Criminal Justice Experience,” as shown in Figure 2.1. Many intern candidates have experience directly related to the field of criminal justice—as security guards, police officers at summer resorts, or counselors at camps for problem children, for example. Military service, such as with the military police, can also be included in this area. If you do not have any related work experience, omit this section and use a section titled “Employment Experience.” As you can see in the sample résumé, starting and ending dates are presented in reverse chronological order by month and year. Next appear the job title, the place and address of employment, and a brief description of duties. People sometimes have a tendency to exaggerate the duties they performed. One student who worked as a groundskeeper at a college gave himself the title of “plant control engineer.” Another, who had experience as a security guard at a football stadium, termed herself a “security consultant.” An extreme example is the student who described his duties as a gas station attendant as: “Supervised the flow of gasoline products from the station to the customer.” Be truthful and avoid exaggerated or lofty descriptions.

Extracurricular activities can include all kinds of student activities, such as participation in athletics, professional associations, student groups, and community associations. You should include any offices you have held, such as president of the criminal justice club, coordinator for “Law Day,” and so on. This will show that you are a person who gets involved and who may have administrative or leadership potential.

Interests or hobbies generally include activities that are important in your life but do not fall into the employment or extracurricular activity areas. These might include photography, hunting, stamp collecting, ski-
ing, travel, and the like. The rationale for including these is to present you as a well-rounded person, not just a criminal justice student.

Under the heading "References," many résumés list the names and addresses of persons who have agreed to act as personal references on behalf of the applicant. An alternative is to state: "References available upon request."

In Figure 2.2, we present a slightly different format. Here the student used a "Qualifications Summary" to describe her general competencies. She also listed "Additional Seminars and Training" to show experiences beyond normal class work. In this format, the entire "Work History" is presented, which includes both criminal justice and other work experiences.

Whether you use these or other formats for your résumé, there are some basic considerations that must be stressed:

1. A résumé must be computer-generated, well organized and laid out, and clearly presented, without misspelled words. Keep in mind that the widespread availability of laser printers means that many résumés today look professionally typeset. You want your submission to look as good or better than the others that are being reviewed.

2. The résumé must be updated at crucial stages of your career—after completion of a degree program, a promotion, or participation in new activities. Make sure that all information contained in the résumé is accurate, as efforts may be made to verify information presented in your résumé. For example, a student was excluded from consideration for an exceptional opportunity as a result of misrepresenting his academic qualifications on his résumé. The student, who was a candidate for a baccalaureate degree, claimed to have received an associate's degree when in actuality he had the number of requisite credits, but had not fulfilled all of the requirements for the degree.

3. The length of the résumé will vary depending upon your experience and the type of position for which you are applying. As you launch your career, it is unlikely that your résumé will exceed one page. Generally, a résumé should not exceed two pages.

4. The résumé formats shown here are appropriate for internship searches and for many job searches. For some occupations, there are specific styles stressing different types of information. Your placement office may have a manual that displays these formats.
### Sample Résumé

30 State Street  
Rockville, NJ 77788  
Phone 201-555-1234  
Fax 201-555-1263  
E-mail cvincent@mail.com

**Chris Vincent**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Qualifications</th>
<th>Have worked on progressively challenging assignments throughout college in such areas as accounting, data analysis, network administration, and security. Skilled in several computer software packages. Fluent in Spanish.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Summary</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Education**  | Bandon College, Rockville, NJ  
Bachelor of Science anticipated: May 2006  
Major: Criminal Justice-Economic Crime Investigation Program |
| **Specialized Coursework** | Economic Crime Investigation, Information Security, Accounting (Introductory and Intermediate), Computer Science, Law of Economic Crime |
| **Computer Skills** | Microsoft Excel, Microsoft Access, SPSS, Analyst Notebook-Link Analysis, LEXIS-NEXIS |
| **Educational Seminars and Training** | Computer Fraud in the Twenty-First Century, New York, NY, 2004  
Organized Economic Crime, New York, NY 2003  
| **Employment** | 9/2003-present: Bandon College, Rockville, NJ  
*Network and Computer Lab Monitor:* Duties include supervision of all student assistants in the computer lab, responsibility for network administration, student accounts, virus control, and security.  
*Tax Preparation Assistant:* Assisted in the preparation of income tax returns. Interviewed clients, prepared computer entries, and reviewed tax codes for accounting staff.  
*Technology Assistant:* Entered computer data into company data bank and performed routine data inquiries for several departments. Assigned to data analysis based on supervisor recommendations. |
| **Honors and Affiliations** | Bandon College Honors Program, Economic Crime Investigation Club |
When sending the résumé to prospective internship sites, you should include a cover letter. A cover letter is simply your introduction. Depending upon the placement policies of your program, the internship coordinator may send a standard cover letter with your résumé. However, if you are solely responsible for your field placement, you will have to prepare the letter. The main guidelines are to be concise, to address the letter to a specific person, to make sure that the letter is free of grammatical and spelling errors, and, if the agency has had interns before, to cite from what source you gained information about the internship opportunity. Cover letter samples are shown in Figures 2.3 and 2.4.

**Follow-Up Calls and E-mail**

If you have not received any response to your application after two weeks, call or write the individual to whom you sent it and, in a polite manner, introduce yourself and ask him or her about the status of your request. It is possible that the paperwork was misplaced or that the person was too busy at that time to answer it. In certain agencies, you may be one of several candidates for an internship. In that case, the review and selection process takes longer.

You may also need to call to gather further information. Before you make a telephone call, be sure that you have all the facts about your college or university’s internship program, so that you can answer any questions that may arise. In addition, you should have as much information as possible regarding your potential internship site. Be polite and precise when making the call. For example, you might say something to this effect:

> Good morning. My name is Sheila Hogan. I’m a junior at Southwest State University, majoring in criminal justice. I recently sent my résumé to your office regarding a possible internship for next semester. I have a few questions. Is this a good time for you to discuss them with me?

Once you are able to discuss your concerns with the appropriate person, be sure to ask your questions from a prepared list so that you do not stumble through the conversation or forget a crucial point. As you can imagine, comments such as these are unacceptable: “Hey there. This is Chuck Camdiss. I got to do an internship for my school and I heard that you’re the person to talk to. If I do one with you, what do I have to do?”

You also need to be aware of the nature and form of any message you leave on voice mail. Abrupt, impolite, or slang-filled messages will not make a good impression on agency or corporate personnel who are returning your call or trying to contact you.
Figure 2.3
Sample Cover Letter

Mary T. Douglas
Burrstone House, Room 123
10 Burrstone Road
Reid, New York 12367

November 17, 2004

Mr. Stanley Mason
Chief of Police
Livingston Police Department
25 Dearborn Street
Livingston, NY 24033

Dear Chief Mason:

I am a senior at Remsen College, majoring in Criminal Justice. I am presently seeking a site for an internship placement for the spring semester. The internship must last for fifteen full-time weeks, for which I will receive fifteen credits. Dr. Leslie Forman of our Criminal Justice Department informed me that you have accepted interns from Remsen College in previous semesters.

I am considering a career in law enforcement and am very interested in an internship with the Livingston Police Department. I have enclosed a résumé and a copy of the Remson College Internship Guidebook for your review. As you will note on my résumé, I have experience in the area of retail security and have participated in a seminar on special tactics. My course work emphasis is on law enforcement, including courses in computer science, forensics, report writing, and interviewing.

I can be reached by telephone at 315-555-9999 or e-mail at mtdouglas@mail.com. I look forward to hearing from you and will be available for an interview at your convenience. Thank you for your time and attention.

Sincerely,

Mary T. Douglas
Mr. Gary Rockledge  
Prime Data Corporation  
235 Beef Steak Lane  
Omaha, NE 67566  

Dear Mr. Rockledge:

I am a senior majoring in Criminal Justice–Economic Crime Investigation at Bandon College. I am required to complete a fifteen-week, full-time internship during the spring semester for which I will receive fifteen credits as a requirement for graduation. I am most interested in fulfilling my internship requirement with your Fraud Management Department.

Enclosed please find my résumé, along with the Bandon College Internship Program description. As you can see, I have a substantial background in accounting, computer science, fraud investigations, and data analysis. I have demonstrated competence in the use of Microsoft Excel, Microsoft Access, SPSS, Analyst Notebook-Link Analysis, and LEXIS-NEXIS. I feel that my abilities and interests are well matched with your organization, and I am eager for the opportunity to develop my skills further within the context of your Fraud Management Department.

I can be reached by telephone (201-555-1234) or e-mail (cvincent@mail.com). I look forward to the opportunity to meet with you and will be available to travel to Omaha at your convenience. Thank you for your willingness to consider me for an internship with your organization.

Very truly yours,

Chris Vincent
If you are communicating with a potential internship site by e-mail, you need to treat each message as if it were a written letter going through "snail mail." You must proofread your message to be sure that there are no words omitted, that your grammar is correct, that you have used full sentences, and that you have no misspellings. Phrases and abbreviations used in instant messaging are unacceptable. If your e-mail address includes a nickname or slang, you should consider creating an e-mail account with a simpler, more professional address, such as your first initial and last name.

**The Internship Interview**

Once the agency has reviewed your application and résumé and decided to consider you for an internship position, someone from the agency will respond and schedule a time for an interview. An internship interview is very important, as it provides an opportunity for you to meet with agency supervisors in order to give a favorable presentation of yourself that goes beyond the brief and faceless introduction permitted by the résumé. The interview is the place to discuss the various facets of the proposed internship. At this time, issues and questions about both the agency and student responsibilities can be addressed. If the answers are not satisfactory, then you, the agency, or both may reject the placement proposal. Be prepared for that possibility and have alternative sites in mind if your first choice does not result in placement. Many students have been not only sorely disappointed but have had their course of study interrupted by failing to prepare for a possible rejection. (To avoid such problems, we consider it advisable to have three sites selected as possibilities.)

In short, the internship interview should be treated the same as an employment interview would be. The following are some basic items that you should consider before the interview.

**Know something about the agency.** Through discussions with your faculty advisor and other students, you should try to learn some basic information about the agency. Some things to think about are staff size, area of jurisdiction, and general functions. If possible, you should review current events related to the agency and the immediate area. Some agencies will be willing to send you their most recent annual report, which is a public document. A good source of information is the Internet, as most major agencies and companies maintain web sites that present the agency mission, vision, public information releases, and links to various departments and services.
Dress appropriately. Before you leave for the interview, check your appearance, including the following: combed hair, clean fingernails, shined shoes, and so on. Our basic recommendation is for men to wear a tie and jacket and for women to wear a dress or suit. It is advisable to check with the faculty advisor regarding appropriate dress if you have questions. For example, in some criminal justice agencies that work with youths, it is acceptable to wear jeans and a casual shirt or sweater, because the staff is actively engaged with youthful clients in sports, outdoor activities, and arts and crafts. Chewing gum or candy, wearing strong perfume or cologne, or wearing dressy or revealing clothing will project a negative image in an interview situation.

Appear alone at the interview. Although this may sound silly, some of our students have brought friends, relatives, or parents to the interview. If someone does accompany you to the interview site, have them wait outside the agency premises.

Plan on arriving early. Vehicles break down, traffic gets tied up, and unexpected things happen. Build in extra time, even if you have to end up “killing time” outside the facility because you have arrived early. Present yourself to the receptionist, secretary, or agency head at least five minutes before the appointed time.

Prepare to answer and present relevant questions. Be alert and be prepared to both answer questions posed by the interviewer and to present questions or issues related to your learning goals and placement site considerations. The interview process may be done by one person or a group. In many cases, the résumé will be used as an initial discussion point. Some common questions presented to students are:

- Tell me (us) about yourself.
- How can this internship experience contribute to your future goals?
- What do you hope to learn from this internship?
- Tell me (us) about your academic program of study at college.
- What are your strengths and weaknesses as they relate to work situations?
- What does your college expect of our organization/personnel?
- Is there any compensation available for the organization/personnel from your college, such as remitted tuition benefits?
- Is there anything in your background that might disqualify you from employment with our agency? (This question is usually presented after the interviewer discusses the general hiring requirements for the agency.)
Some questions that you might direct to the interviewer include:

- What duties will I perform?
- What duties have previous interns performed?
- I want to improve my skills in the following areas (such as counseling, investigations, technology). Will I be able to do so here?
- Who will be my field supervisor? Will I be able to meet with him or her before I start?
- What hours (or shift) will I be assigned?
- Will there be any potential for employment with your agency after I graduate?
- Are there any particular materials that I should familiarize myself with before beginning my internship? [If placement is offered and accepted.]

Many students are apprehensive about going through the interview process. Every interview should be considered good experience for the next one, whether or not you obtain the position. Many personnel specialists agree that it helps to practice before the actual interview. This can be done with a roommate, tape recorder, or videotape. Practicing can help increase your confidence in an interview situation.

When you are actually in the interview itself, always think before answering questions and answer all questions truthfully. Just as an experienced agency supervisor is aware of exaggeration on a résumé, he or she will be able to sense if you are stretching the truth or using fancy jargon to cover up your ignorance. Do not be afraid to admit that you do not know the answer to a question; instead, say that you do not know much about that topic but are anxious and willing to learn. Agency interviewers are especially interested in your future goals, courses taken, and any job-related skills, such as counseling, outdoor leadership, writing, and research.

Upon conclusion of the interview, thank the interviewer for his or her time. A few days later, you should send the person a note thanking him or her for the time spent with you and expressing your continued interest in the agency.

**BACKGROUND SCREENING**

Most internship programs have a process of screening students in order to determine if they will be allowed to intern. This step dictates whether an intern will proceed with a placement. The screening may
include academic standing, background knowledge related to the internship area, and personal responsibility. Background knowledge refers to the completed course work that makes you knowledgeable in the general area of the agency being considered. Faculty may evaluate you in terms of your sense of responsibility and ethical commitments, based on what they know of you in an academic and/or social setting (e.g., as a member of a criminal justice club). This background screening helps faculty determine whether you are prepared to participate in an internship.

After going through the program's screening process, submitting your résumé and cover letter, and completing the internship interview, you may have to submit to a background investigation by the agency. There was a time when both public- and private-sector employers could ask almost any question of a prospective employee, regardless of whether it was job-related. Because of civil action and anti-discrimination legislation and court rulings, however, employers now may ask only questions that are relevant to the position. However, greater leeway is allowed for law enforcement and other positions that require background investigations for trustworthiness, criminal history, personal habits, and the ability to handle stressful situations. Some agencies may even use polygraph tests or drug tests before allowing you to begin your internship. The following information may be requested in a background investigation for an internship placement.

- **Employment history.** In addition to the information provided in your résumé and during the interview, the agency may seek information by contacting present and former employers, including those from part-time positions. The information you have provided will be checked to ascertain honesty and reliability.

- **Previous residence.** Some agencies may want to check on living habits and financial responsibility with former landlords and neighbors. They may also want to know previous residences in order to contact local police data banks regarding warrants that do not appear on state and national criminal history computers.

- **Arrest and conviction history.** Some agencies require pre-employment (or pre-internship) fingerprinting to obtain an accurate criminal history. A person with a felony conviction is barred from virtually all law enforcement or government positions requiring a security clearance. Some individuals are arrested for felony offenses, but plead guilty to misdemeanor charges. Conviction on a misdemeanor offense, while not an automatic bar to employment, is reviewed for the type of offense, the circumstances of the arrest, and the age of the candidate when the offense occurred. In our experience, students with misdemeanor
convictions may be barred from internships based on departmental policies. For example, one of our students who was convicted of driving while intoxicated was rejected by several area police departments but accepted by a department in an adjacent state. That agency offered him an internship because the offense occurred during his sophomore year and was considered part of the “growing up” experience. Similarly, a shoplifting incident that occurred early in high school may be forgiven but would be reviewed critically if it occurred the summer before entering college.

- Academic record. Some agencies request writing samples and transcripts, particularly in situations in which research or computer skills are an integral part of the internship work experience. Grade point average is often a factor in the selection process.

- Drug and alcohol use. You and your former employers, professors, and/or references may be asked about your drug and alcohol use as part of your interview or background investigation. In addition, you may be asked to submit to a drug test as part of the screening process.

If you have any questions or concerns about a possible background investigation, we advise you to discuss the matter with your faculty advisor. In addition, as a criminal justice student, you should think about your living habits in terms of unethical or criminal behaviors. While we give our “clean up your act” lecture to all incoming freshmen and transfer students, some are still surprised when rejected for internship placements based on college-related problems, such as academic dishonesty, substance use/abuse, vandalism in the residence halls, gambling debts, lewd conduct, and poor academic performance.

LIABILITY AND INSURANCE

You should be aware of your college or university’s liability and insurance policies regarding internships. The biggest danger is student injury while performing internship-related duties. Both the agency and the student must be safety-conscious. Because faculty supervisors are not present, the duty of care rests with the field supervisor, who must make decisions on whether the student can observe or participate in an activity. At the same time, the student must make similar decisions. In addition, some guidelines should be agreed to before the internship begins. For example, for law enforcement intern placements, we recommend
that students either stay in the patrol car or remain at a safe location if the field supervisor has to respond to a “shots fired” or “officer down” call. In probation department internships, students should not be on their own conducting home visits in “rough” neighborhoods.

It is important for the intern to realize the inherent risk in criminal justice internships. Some of our students have confronted dangerous individuals, been involved in patrol car accidents, and been a part of unexpected, unsettling, or frightening situations. You may be asked to sign a consent form informing you of inherent danger and releasing the agency from liability. While these forms do not bar future legal action or recovery completely, they are useful for ensuring that the parties understand the risks involved in the placement. Students must be allowed to reject a potentially high-risk assignment without academic or disciplinary penalty.

Students should be aware of the consequences that will occur if they are terminated from the agency site. The extent to which a student will be allowed to complete the degree program will depend upon the program’s curriculum requirements and the nature of the termination.

A question that is frequently posed by students and agencies is what happens if the student, agency, and school are sued for an alleged act of misfeasance, malfeasance, or nonfeasance during the internship. There is no certain answer to this question because every case will have different circumstances. Campus and agency placement coordinators should review this possibility with appropriate counsel and insurance agents. Insurance carriers do offer policies directed to off-campus learning activities and liability. Some colleges offer insurance for students specific to internship placements. On Michigan State University’s web site, “Information for Students: Criminal Justice Internships” the following statement is made:

Students enrolled in an MSU internship course have an official relationship with the University and are thus indemnified against suit. Hospitalization and health costs are not covered by the university nor the hosting agency. Each student must sign an insurance/liability statement certifying possession of a health insurance policy. (www.cj.msu.edu/~career/cjipp.html)

On the other hand, Syracuse University states in their “Student Internships Guidelines”:

**Liability for Student’s Actions.** The University’s position is that the institution that is supervising the student on-site should be responsible for the student’s actions. If the action results in liability, the host institution should be responsible for the damages associated with the student’s action(s). Please note that if the University is providing on-site supervision, the University has insurance coverage available for these instances. (bfasweb.syr.edu/risk_mgt/internship.htm)
Other colleges require that student interns purchase their own insurance policies prior to an internship placement for the duration of the placement. You should investigate what insurance coverage is expected of you as an intern prior to the commencement of the internship, for your own protection as well as for the benefit of your host organization. Appropriate insurance coverage may open the door to internship opportunities not otherwise available.

Students must have medical insurance in the event of accident or illness. One student was sent to the hospital for observation after the patrol care she was riding in collided with another vehicle. This simple ride and evaluation at the emergency room came to $2,200. Based on the chaotic state of health care, we have found that many students thought they had insurance coverage based on their parent's coverage or through the school. In many cases, this proved unfounded—because of age requirements, suspensions in coverage after employment terminations, and various other reasons.

**CONCLUSION**

We feel that it is the responsibility of the criminal justice faculty and the internship coordinator to approve only those agencies that have high standards of professional performance and that are willing to work with you and your faculty advisor to provide a worthwhile and educational program. In turn, you, the student, have a responsibility to present yourself in the best light: from a complete, professional résumé and cover letter to your appearance and performance during the internship interview. Working together, you, your faculty advisor, and the agency personnel can ensure the most appropriate internship placement for you.
Thinking About Your Internship Placement

1. Develop a "me file." Include your transcripts, copies of your best term papers, names and addresses of all former residences and employers, and current references.

2. Prepare a résumé and cover letter, and keep it updated.

3. List the factors that you should consider in selecting an internship site, in the order of importance to you.

4. Develop a list of possible internship sites from a variety of sources, including your internship advisor, previous interns, and the Internet.

5. Develop questions that you would ask in an internship interview.