

9 Reasons Why STEM Students Should Apply For the Washington State Legislative Internship

1. PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Most of you have had experience in lab work. However, one of the things that I learned from this experience is that while those experiences are valuable, they still don't prepare you for the work and pace of a professional office setting. Through this internship I was able to learn how to act and work in a professional manner in an office setting that deals with frequent visitors and is often under close scrutiny. No matter what your future career goals are, whether it be working as a doctor, engineer, or pharmacist, one of the key skills that you can rely on in almost any job is professionalism.

2. EXPERIENCING THE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS

What does government have to do with STEM, you ask? Well, believe it or not the government is very heavily involved in the STEM field, even if you haven't noticed it. In the health care field, for example, government is an important part of that due to the regulations they can propose and enforce such as with the Affordable Care Act or regulations on pharmaceuticals. Almost everything is regulated by the government, so learning how the legislative process works will only benefit yourself in the future. Learning how a bill becomes a law, and the steps in that process where the public can give feedback are not only important in your role as a citizen but also as a professional so that you can have your voice heard on issues affecting you.

3. SHADOWING EXPERIENCE

One of the opportunities this internship offers is shadowing those who are either making the policy or enforcing it. Shadowing opportunities include the state Health Care Administration, Veterans Administration, Department of Ecology, and others. Through this experience you will be able to learn the intricacies of how these agencies interact with people, whether they are simply citizens or people that share your interests.

4. A SENSE OF ACCOMPLISHMENT

When it comes to college life most of us are used to the seemingly unending grind of schoolwork, studying, and test taking. Throughout all of that work there are few times where you could point to something you did as having had an impact on someone else's life. Through the casework you do in this internship, you get the chance to help improve the life of someone else, whether it be in helping them find shelter after becoming homeless, helping them deal with Labor and Industries in order to get their workers' comp, or assisting them with social services. That feeling of accomplishment when you know you have made a difference for someone is priceless.

5. NETWORKING

Through your time as an intern you have the unique opportunity to meet with and interact with people who can help you later in life. Whether they are a legislator, lobbyist, or one of your fellow interns, the chance to build a relationship and network with so many different individuals is something that will definitely benefit you later in life. This internship is a great way to build relationships with those who share common interests with you, while at the same time potentially opening doors for you in the future. The relationships you make here may someday help you later in life, whether that be in your future career path or personally.

6. DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE

Most interns are majoring in political science or one of the humanities. Through this internship you get the chance to see the world in a different perspective and interact with peers who have chosen a different field of study, while conversely as a STEM student you get the opportunity to share your own unique experience and expertise with them.

7. STAND OUT

I personally chose to pursue this internship to make myself stand out amongst the crop of pre-med students when it comes time to apply for medical school. When it comes time to get a job or pursue post-secondary education one of the things that most recruiters will look for after they compare your test scores and grades is your other experiences. This internship is something that will set you apart from everyone else, and the prestige of having participated will surely help you later in life.

8. CAMARADERIE

Aside from the professional benefits this internship can give you, there remains other benefits that are often not considered. One of those benefits is the great sense of camaraderie that you will inevitably build between yourself and your fellow interns. Whether it be going to a restaurant on the Friday after work, going bowling on the weekends, or going to karaoke during the weekdays you will make friends through this internship who will last for a long time.

9. FOOD AND FUN

Let's face it, as poor college students most of us can probably understand the draw of free food. Whether it be baked potato day this week, beef day on another week, and dairy day in between, the point is that while this internship is a serious endeavor that doesn't mean that it is all work and no play. So in addition to all of the professional benefits this internship can give you, this internship will also make sure that you will not be bored stiff while you're here.

