



HEALTHCARE MANAGEMENT PROGRAM PRE-INTERNSHIP GUIDE

A Resource for Student Interns

*Revised
July 2011*



The Health Care Management program at Towson University requires all students to experience a 12 credit, full-time field internship. The internship is faculty-supervised and Blackboard-supported, and students are assigned to a preceptor who has both significant experience in the field as well as a strong desire to mentor the next generation of healthcare administrators. We are proud that the Association of University Programs in Health Administration (AUPHA) considers our internship program as a “best practice” nationally.

The internship is an integral part of the Health Care Management curriculum and should be planned in terms of the student’s abilities, needs and interests. This Pre-Internship Manual is intended to assist the student in planning for the internship experience.



Class of May 2010 (partial)

ELIGIBILITY

To be eligible for the internship, students MUST:

- ✓ Declare HCMN as their major and Business Administration as their minor;
- ✓ Obtain a minimum GPA of 2.0;
- ✓ Complete all courses for both the major and minor with a grade of “C” or better;
- ✓ *Complete all coursework* for a BS degree, save for the internship.

Note: For Fall placement, all coursework must be successfully completed by May 31st, for Spring placement, all coursework must be successfully completed by December 31st. There are no summer internships.

PREPARING FOR AND SELECTING THE INTERNSHIP

The Health Care Management student preparing for an internship experience must be active in planning his/her internship. It is strongly recommended that students maintain a personal calendar whereby all pertinent information, dates and deadlines related to the internship preparation and experience are maintained. As the internship is designed in part to provide the student with an opportunity to transition from student to professional, it is expected that the student will demonstrate a level of personal responsibility required to successfully transition to a managerial role. Failure to do so may necessitate the internship being delayed until such time as the student can demonstrate the high level of personal responsibility required for success.

Several weeks prior to the start of each semester, “blast” emails will be sent to all HCMN majors announcing the dates and times of Pre-Internship Meetings; this information will also be posted on the HCMN website. All students intending to intern the following semester are required to attend one of these meetings (e.g. attend a September meeting to intern in the spring, attend a February meeting to intern in the fall).

Prior to the meeting students should be researching the available internship placements by reviewing the information posted on the HCMN website, reviewing the “paper files” available in the HCMN main office (Burdick 141), researching the organizations, discussing options with their advisor and/or the Program Director, and contacting previous interns as appropriate. Once this research has been completed, students should select their top three choices for placements, and submit these choices via the “Internship Request Form”, available on the HCMN website. As internship placements may be determined in part on a first come, first serve basis it is recommended students submit this form as soon as they confirm their choices.

In order to be admitted to the Pre-Internship Meeting, students will need to provide a current copy of their Degree Progress Report (DPR) to the meeting. The DPR must be signed by the student’s Advisor, indicating they are cleared to intern.

In addition, students will be required to electronically submit a professional resume and cover letter to the Program Director shortly after the Pre-Internship Meeting in order to interview for a specific placement. It is strongly recommended that these documents be finalized prior to the Pre-Internship Meetings. Finalization of these documents should include review by the TU Career Center, and at least 2 faculty/professionals. Cover letters may be “generic” at this point, since placements will not have been assigned yet, or students may direct their cover letters to their top choice of placement. All resumes and cover letters will be reviewed by the Program Director to ensure they are of a professional quality that reflects well on the TU HCMN program. Students whose resumes and/or cover letters are unacceptable and/or require multiple revisions risk having their internship delayed.

PRE-INTERNSHIP MEETINGS

As mentioned above, students are required to attend a Pre-Internship Meeting. The purpose of this meeting is to review the process for internship selection and placement, and answer student questions. Please note that it is standard practice for internship organizations to require students to be current in all vaccinations, submit to drug testing, and submit a criminal background check; this information will be discussed in detail at the Pre-Internship Meetings.

INTERNSHIP PLACEMENT ASSIGNMENTS

Once the Pre-Internship Meetings have concluded, the Program Director will begin the process of assigning the placements. Placements will be assigned based on the following criteria: the date the student requested the specific placement, the potential “match” between the student and the placement, the student’s GPA, the availability of the placement. Once initial placements have been assigned, the Program Director will confirm availability of all placements for the upcoming semester. {Please note: placement availability is dependent upon confirmation with the preceptor for a specific semester; the placement may not be available for a specific semester due to preceptor workload, staffing shortages, maternity, organizational changes, etc.}

Once placements have been assigned and availability confirmed, assuming the student has submitted an acceptable resume and cover letter and met all other requirements, the Program Director will contact the student and provide instructions for obtaining an interview.

INTERVIEWING FOR THE INTERNSHIP

Once the student has been informed of their assigned placement they must update their cover letter with the contact information provided by the Program Director. Cover letters may need to be resubmitted to the Program Director for approval at this time depending on whether the student initially submitted a “generic” cover letter. After having received clearance from the Program Director, students are to contact the designated preceptor via email, attaching both their resume and cover letter to the email, and request an interview. The resume and cover letter should be sent as separate documents in Microsoft Word format, each saved as the student’s last name and the appropriate title of the document (example: “Smith resume.docx”). It is recommended that the student include their availability in the email in order to expedite the interview scheduling. If there is a delay in response from the preceptor (more than 5-7 business days), the student must notify the Program Director. Upon confirmation of the interview having been scheduled, the student must notify the Program Director of the date and time of the interview.

The purpose of the internship placement interview is to provide an opportunity for both the student and the preceptor to determine the potential “match” between the student’s abilities and goals, and the preceptor’s and organizational needs. As such, it is critical that the student

prepare for the interview to the best of their ability. This will include the basic steps of researching both the organization/department and the preceptor, identifying student learning goals for the internship as well as initial career aspirations, developing a list of questions to be asked during the interview. It is also suggested that, depending on the student's experience with interviewing, the student conduct practice interviews through the TU Career Center and/or faculty or community leaders, and that the student contact alumni who previously interned at the specific placement. Alumni contact information can be obtained from the Program Director.

Students should bring additional copies of their resume, a pad of paper with questions, a pen and the Interview Form (available on the HCMN 495 Bb site) with them to the interview. It is recommended that students "Mapquest" directions to the interview location, and do a 'dry run' to ensure they know drive time and the location of the preceptor's office. It is also recommended that you arrive approximately 10 minutes prior to the interview. At the interview, students should make sure they inquire about parking, working hours, 'prehire' requirements, etc.

After the interview, the student is required to email the Program Director within one business day, informing him/her of the outcome of the interview. This includes indicating whether or not the student will accept the placement if offered, and providing a review of the interview in the form of an 'Interview Reflection' paper. The 1-2 page typed paper should summarize the interview experience, identify any work expectations discussed and provide a self-assessment of student performance during the interview process (e.g. did you do enough research, did you respond to questions appropriately, were you prepared with your own questions, etc.). The purpose of this paper is to provide the student with a reference for review prior to their next (job) interview. The Interview Reflection paper should be attached to the email as a separate Word document. In addition, the student should send the preceptor a written note of thanks (this may be in the form of an email), expressing interest in the placement (as appropriate).

Preceptors have been requested to return the Interview Form to the Program Director within one business day after the interview, indicating whether or not they accept the student for the placement. Once this form is received, the Program Director will notify the student of the outcome of the interview.

Please note: HCMN program policy permits a maximum of TWO placement interviews for any HCMN student. In other words, if the first placement interview is unsuccessful for any reason, a second placement opportunity will be secured by the Program Director for the student. It is important to note that the second placement opportunity may not be one that the student originally requested, due to availability. If the student is unsuccessful on the second placement interview for ANY reason, the student will not be permitted to intern. As the internship is a requirement of the HCMN program, it will be necessary for the student to change their major at that time.

PREPARING FOR THE START OF THE INTERNSHIP

Once individual placements have been officially confirmed the Intern MUST:

- ✓ Meet with the Preceptor prior to the internship start date to establish goals for the internship and to complete the Learning Contract (see below);
- ✓ Confirm with the Preceptor any additional requirements of the Health Care Organization (e.g. criminal background check, physical exam, PPD and/or vaccinations) and work to ensure these requirements are met prior to the scheduled start of the internship;
- ✓ Register for the course once the Program Director has set up registration; and
- ✓ Submit the Learning Contract, signed by both the Intern and the Preceptor, at the first scheduled Intern Seminar (held during the first week of classes).

THE LEARNING CONTRACT

Often, students are so focused on meeting the requirements of the internship that they fail to think about what THEY want to get out of the internship. The Learning Contract is designed to help students stop and think about their own personal and career goals, and verbalize those goals to the Preceptor. The Contract is available for download on the HCMN 495 Bb site and is provided as Appendix A in this document; to start, look at the competencies provided at the end of the Contract. Every HCMN student should be competent in each of these areas by the time they graduate - this is what the field expects of you when you hold an HCMN degree. Ask yourself – are you sufficient in each of these competencies? Are there some you are better at than others? Perhaps here you can start to identify your goals for the internship. Although the Learning Contract can (and likely will!) be updated during the internship, it will be necessary for you to start with a thoughtful first draft if you are to maximize this learning opportunity for yourself.

Once you have determined your goals for the internship, electronically fill in the goals, etc. DO NOT hand-write your Learning Contract – this is intended to be a professional document and should be treated as such. Also, PLEASE READ the contract in its entirety; there are sections where you are to delete some phrases and replace them with specific information. This form is merely a TEMPLATE - you are to make it into an official document. Once you have completed the contract to the best of your ability, you are to email it to your Preceptor for their review, and schedule an in-person meeting to further discuss the document. At that meeting, the Preceptor will provide input, ideas and additions to the goals section of the document. Following the meeting, you should electronically make the changes/recommendations as discussed and resend it to your Preceptor for signature. After your Preceptor has signed the Contract, it will be necessary for you to pick up the contract from the preceptor's office, so plan your timing accordingly! You must also sign the Contract; the completed and signed document is due at the first Intern Seminar, which is always held during the first week of the internship.

INTERNSHIP POLICIES

A few highlights to remember on our policies...

Working Hours:

One full-semester will be spent in the health care organization internship experience. The Intern should expect to commit to a fulltime work week for each week of the semester (16 weeks). *The Intern is expected to adhere to the policies, procedures, and working hours that apply to professional and administrative staff members of the health care organization.* Interns may be required to meet additional specific requirements for employment in the health service organization (e.g., liability insurance, pre-employment physical examinations, personal background checks, etc.), and it is their responsibility to find this out during the interview.

Holidays:

The Intern will follow the work schedule of the Health Care Organization and not of the University. S/he will be off from work on the holidays recognized by the Health Care Organization for their employees.

Travel, Parking, and Other Fees:

Interns are expected to pay for their own travel expenses, parking fees, conference fees, professional wardrobe etc. as incurred as a result of the internship. If there are questions about such fees, the Intern may discuss them with their Preceptor; however the Intern cannot expect the Health Care Organization to pay these fees. These costs considered to be a part of the Intern's professional responsibilities.

Outside Employment:

There are no policies regarding outside employment, however the Internship is a full-time obligation, therefore, Interns should not be leaving the Health Care Organization early nor arriving late due to outside employment. Also, outside employment cannot interfere with the Intern's duties and responsibilities at the organization if those duties and responsibilities include being at the organization evening hours or weekends; to do so will jeopardize the Intern's final grade and possibly future recommendations.

APPENDIX A – LEARNING CONTRACT TEMPLATE



Developing tomorrow's leaders.

INTERNSHIP LEARNING CONTRACT

This Learning Contract will be between **(your name), Intern, Towson University** and **(Preceptor's name, title, organization)**. The Internship will be designed to lead toward the Intern developing the competencies identified of a Towson University HCMN graduate* to a level equivalent to that expected of an entry-level management position. With these competencies in mind, during the course of the Internship from *(first day of semester)* to *(last day of semester)*, I, *your name*, would like to accomplish the following goals*:

Goal 1: _____

* specific project/task to meet goal: _____

Goal 2: _____

* specific project/task to meet goal: _____

Etc....

Through diligent work and appropriate guidance, the above goals should be able to be accomplished. In completion of the above tasks/projects, a set of deliverables will be presented to the preceptor including at a minimum an organizational case study and a major project as defined in the Towson University HCMN Internship Handbook.

Signed:

Intern's Signature
Your name, Intern

Date

Preceptor's Signature
Preceptor's name, title

* The competencies expected of a Towson University HCMN graduate are attached.

THE PROFILE OF A PROGRAM GRADUATE

The Towson University Health Care Management Program prepares our graduates to achieve excellence in their professional careers. Our combination of rigorous academic studies and hands-on practical experience — all subject to strict measures of performance — develop the following Knowledge, Skills and Attitudes (KSAs) that are foundations for professional success:

BUSINESS SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE

Know, apply and integrate the content of the major.

KNOWLEDGE OF HEALTH CARE ENVIRONMENT

Ability to discuss and apply knowledge of the healthcare system and the environment in which healthcare managers and providers function.

- Interrelationships among cost, quality, access, resource allocation, accountability and community;
- Patient perspective;
- Funding and payment mechanisms;
- Complexity associated with interacting and integrating among health care sectors to improve service efficiency and quality.

COMMUNICATION AND RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT

Ability to communicate clearly and concisely, establish and maintain relationships, and facilitate constructive interactions with individuals and groups.

- Demonstrate effective written, oral and presentation skills;
- Prepare and deliver business communications including meeting agendas, presentations and business reports;
- Provide and receive constructive feedback;
- Demonstrate effective interpersonal relations.

PROFESSIONALISM

Ability to align personal conduct with ethical and professional standards that include a service orientation and a commitment to lifelong learning.

- Be attentive, proactive and ready to learn;
- Meet commitments and complete tasks according to assigned requirements;
- Treat others with respect; show sensitivity to their views, values and customs;
- Demonstrate ethical behavior consistent with professional codes of ethics;
- Knowledge of patients' rights and responsibilities;
- Assume responsibility for one's own career management and goal-setting;
- Demonstrate effective resume and interview skills;
- Prepare for lifelong learning and career planning.

LEADERSHIP AND TEAMWORK

Ability to inspire individual and group excellence.

- Participate in and lead teams;
- Focus on goal achievement;
- Guide team toward achievement of common goals;
- Maintain group cohesion, follower satisfaction and productivity;
- Incorporate and apply management techniques and theories.