

# Preparing Community College Students for Internship Success

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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=og4U02IG-IE>

## Abstract

The value of internships is well-proven. The *National Association of Colleges and Employers* recommends the following definition of the term “internship”:

An internship is a form of experiential learning that integrates knowledge and theory learned in the classroom with *practical application and skills development* in a professional setting. Internships give students the opportunity to gain valuable applied experience and make connections in professional fields they are considering for career paths; and give employers the opportunity to guide and evaluate talent. (emphasis mine)

Internships are critically important for students in a two-year program because most are entering their careers immediately after graduation. Author Emily White<sup>1</sup> says, “As an intern, make yourself indispensable while simultaneously observing and immersing yourself in the field.” A successful internship, however, requires preparation, and while not all assumptions about community college students are correct, the following characteristics are often included in the profile of many students who attend community colleges:

- First generation students
- Employed full- or part-time
- Single parents
- Part-time students
- Receive financial aid
- Minimal parental support or professional mentorship
- May be soft skills challenged

Because of some or all of the above, many community college students are unprepared for an internship or for their first experience in the professional workplace. According to Trosset, McCormack and Leatham<sup>2</sup>, “Studies have found

that employers place more weight on experience including internships, than on academic credentials.” This presentation discusses the value and process of student training in ensuring students have the knowledge and skills to successfully complete an internship and fully benefit from the experience.

Keywords: internships, community college, music business education, music education, performing arts education, experiential learning

## Introduction

The *National Association of Colleges and Employers* recommends the following definition of the term “internship”:

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Community colleges, in general, are challenged by the “assumptions.” According to former Owens Community College President, Steve Robinson, #EndCCStigma is culturally constructed and not related to quality. Sadly, community colleges are sometimes called “13th grade” or even

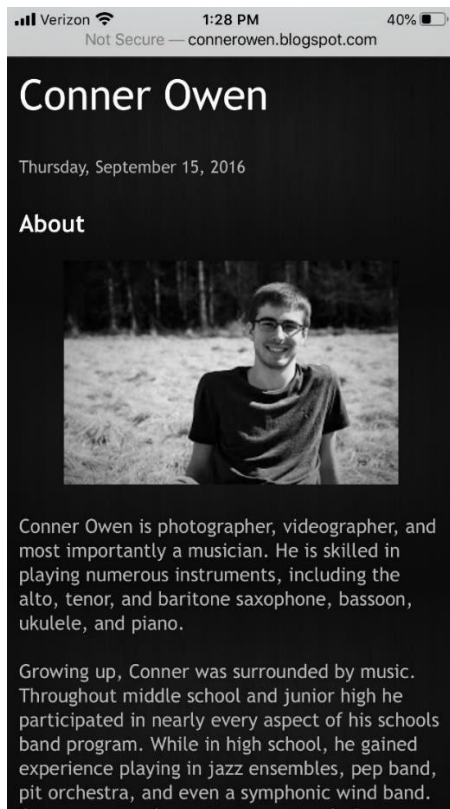
“high school with ash trays.” Community college students tend to have several common characteristics, including:

- First generation students
- Employed full- or part-time
- Single parents
- Part-time students
- Receive financial aid
- Minimal parental support or professional mentorship
- May be soft skills challenged

### Laying the Groundwork

As we prepare our community college students for internship success, we make sure to give them as many tools as possible. An “Internships FAQ” page is available on Blackboard from day one, offering scores of useful resources.

One of the students’ first projects is to establish a blog/portfolio, representing their work. Audio and visual samples and stories about experiences are added along the way. By the time students apply for their internship, they can easily share their talents and experiences with possible internship hosts.



Sample from a blog page.

### LinkedIn

Students in the course “Music Business I” are required to establish a LinkedIn page. This assignment includes:

- URL customization
- Photo
- Ten connections
- Follow a company
- Join a group

Just search for “LinkedIn for College Students” for ideas and resources for your students.

### “Professions” Classes

Students register for a class called “Professions of Music.” Their exploration activities in this class include:

- Researching a company of interest—perhaps a potential internship site
- Preparing a resume—customized templates are provided
- A professional interview experience
- Networking with fellow students and professionals
- Learning about various opportunities in their field

### Sharing Potential Opportunities



Owens Artist Connection is a Facebook group, which posts job and internship opportunities for students and graduates in the fields of fine and performing arts. Current and potential students have the ability to see the possibilities, both now and in the future. Anyone is welcome to be a member of the group by request.

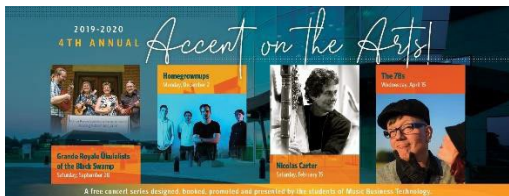
### Projects and Experiences



“Music Business I” students promote, host, provide staging support, live sound, and recording services for the student and faculty concert series presented at the end of the

semester. In addition, they collaborate with Graphic Design students to create promotional posters, postcards, and Facebook banners for the series. This gives them an opportunity to be the “client” with the graphics students and they also write the copy for the posters, in addition to press release writing.

Most music business students obtain Dante I and Dante II certification and the Center for Fine and Performing Arts is Dante-ready.



“Music Business II” and “Portfolio I” students design, book, promote, and present a professional concert series. This gives them the opportunity to recruit, contract, communicate, and network with area and regional professionals.

### Additional Experiential Learning

Owens Community College Radio was launched in March of 2016. The 24/7 all student-run radio station is available online as well as through a smartphone app. Students have the opportunity to create and host programs of their own. OCCR has expanded into the Owens Outcomm Student Media Center, offering opportunities in the fields of broadcast media and an online newspaper as well.



### More Opportunities Beyond the Classroom

Networking Fair & Symposium—This every-other-year event features keynote speakers, vendors from the fields of fine and performing arts, workshops about intellectual property, marketing, professional etiquette, etc.

“Just Say Yes”—Students are encouraged to seek experiential opportunities outside the classroom which can be added to their resumes. Some examples include:

- Entering something in the student show
- Attend field trips (Third Man Records in Detroit is pictured here), performances, and guest lectures
- Volunteer to participate or contribute in some manner with something that is happening around campus
- Network with other students in their programs as well as across campus for collaborative ideas
- Attend a performance or guest lecture



### Scenes from Internships



Reverend Guitars



Ohio Theatre



Glass City Radio

Through the various practical experiences, students prepare for internship success through exposure to professionalism, organizing, networking, and relationship-building skills.

## Endnotes

1. Emily White, *Interning 101*, 9GiantStepsBooks, 2017.
2. Carol Trosset, Holly McCormack, and Rachel Leatham, “The Liberal Arts Learning Outcomes of Internships,” *Change The Magazine of Higher Learning* (September/October 2019).



**Denise A. Grupp-Verbon** is Internship Manager for the School of Liberal Arts and Adjunct Instructor of Music at Owens Community College in Toledo, Ohio. Denise has placed over one hundred students in internships since 2012 and she is active in creating a variety of experiential learning opportunities for students as well. She has been a working musician (harp) for over thirty-five years, co-directs an annual harp festival, and has self-released a variety of publications for the harp and three CDs with her acoustic guitarist husband, Michael. Denise has a Bachelor of Music Performance from Bowling Green State University and a Master of Music Performance from Northwestern University.



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