



# Options to Gain Work Experience in Your Career Field

## Career Development Center

California State University, Los Angeles

[www.calstatela.edu/careercenter](http://www.calstatela.edu/careercenter)

(323) 343-3237

Gaining work experience in your prospective professional area, even if the position isn't exactly what you had in mind or directly related to what you want to do, can help you explore your interest in a field, develop relevant practical skills, expand your professional knowledge, and connect with potential colleagues and employers.

**JOB SHADOWING** involves observing a professional throughout a workday, or work week, to learn about a particular job and see how what you learn in the classroom can be applied in professional work. It also provides an opportunity to get inside information about the company culture to determine whether you would like to work there.

**Did you know?** If you are lacking professional experience you may choose to add job shadowing observation hours to your résumé. Job shadowing observation hours can be particularly helpful for those pursuing careers in specialized areas of medicine, law, or science, for example.

### **Resource for locating professionals:**

LinkedIn Alumni Network Tool

[www.linkedin.com/school/california-state-university-los-angeles/alumni](http://www.linkedin.com/school/california-state-university-los-angeles/alumni)

**VOLUNTEERING** is an experience that you typically chose for your desire to help out. Volunteers are not bound by an employment contract and are not eligible for a wage. A volunteer placement should allow for more flexibility and provide guidance so the experience is mutually beneficial. A volunteer agreement between the organization and volunteer may be signed to ensure protection and outline expectations.

**Did you know?** Many employers rate volunteer experience in the field as equally important as paid experience.

### **Resources for locating volunteer opportunities:**

Center for Engagement, Service, & the Public Good

[www.calstatela.edu/engagement](http://www.calstatela.edu/engagement)

L.A. Works

[www.laworks.com](http://www.laworks.com)

Volunteers of America Los Angeles

<https://voala.org>

An **INTERNSHIP** provides professional work experience with an employer for a period of time; usually a semester or summer. Work hours can be part time or full time, and the activities on the job may complement what you learn in the classroom.

**Did you know?** Paid internships are typically at private companies whereas unpaid internships are generally reserved for government and non-profits. Internships for academic credit require enrollment in an applicable course and faculty approval.

**Resources for locating internships:**

Handshake	<a href="http://www.calstatela.edu/careercenter/handshake">www.calstatela.edu/careercenter/handshake</a>
LinkedIn Jobs by Internships	<a href="http://www.linkedin.com/jobs/internship-jobs">www.linkedin.com/jobs/internship-jobs</a>
Internships.com	<a href="http://www.internships.com/student">www.internships.com/student</a>
Idealist.org	<a href="http://www.idealist.org">www.idealist.org</a>

**PART-TIME & FULL-TIME JOBS**, especially those in your target job or field, can help you improve life skills and soft skills, develop technical skills, gain industry experience, assess if an opportunity is a good fit for you, prove you're motivated, and build your network.

**Did you know?** Even if you are working in a field unrelated to the role you hope to do, life skills (e.g., adaptive, positive behavior, how to handle money) and soft skills (e.g., communicating with others, working in a team, problem solving, delivering on tasks or projects, work ethic) are competencies that can be transferred to any field.

**Resources for locating jobs:**

Handshake	<a href="http://www.calstatela.edu/careercenter/handshake">www.calstatela.edu/careercenter/handshake</a>
LinkedIn Jobs	<a href="http://www.linkedin.com/jobs">www.linkedin.com/jobs</a>

**FELLOWSHIP** programs are generally sponsored by a specific association or organization seeking to professionally develop future leaders in the field. Program types vary and can support activities such as research to advance work on a specific issue, developing a new community-based initiative or organization, and opportunities to future explore a particular field of work.

**Did you know?** Fellowships generally provide unique experiences that are not typically available to someone starting from an entry-level position.

**Resource for locating fellowships:**

Cal State LA Fellowship Program	<a href="http://www.calstatela.edu/nisfep/fellowships">www.calstatela.edu/nisfep/fellowships</a>
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**STUDYING ABROAD** is an opportunity to take academic courses in another country and potentially apply the credits toward your degree program. By living and studying

abroad, you learn how to navigate unknown environments independently. Experiences such as these can help you to easily apply cool-headed, pragmatic, problem-solving aptitudes in the professional world of work. On top of that, you can learn concepts in a range of professional contexts and needs worldwide. You can also volunteer or do an internship abroad.

**Did you know?** Study abroad experiences are typically highly valued by employers and can boost your chances of obtaining a job.

**Resource for locating study abroad programs:**

Cal State LA Study Abroad Program      [www.calstatela.edu/international/study-abroad](http://www.calstatela.edu/international/study-abroad)

**PROFESSIONAL APPRENTICESHIPS** can be helpful for those seeking to gain skills in a particular trade or craft (e.g. technicians, specialists, machinists). Apprenticeships are generally full-time employment that can be for up to five years and typically have career placement built in.

**Did you know?** Apprenticeships are also available to develop specific skills in fields such as entertainment, health and civil service, and information technology.

**Resources for locating apprenticeships:**

State of CA Dept. of Industrial Relations      [www.dir.ca.gov/databases/das/aigstart.asp](http://www.dir.ca.gov/databases/das/aigstart.asp)  
California Apprenticeship Coordinators Association      [www.calapprenticeship.org/](http://www.calapprenticeship.org/)

**NEXT STEPS**

**CareerExpress:** [www.calstatela.edu/careercenter/careerexpress](http://www.calstatela.edu/careercenter/careerexpress)

The Career Development Center offers an online suite of tools to help with each step of the job search process. Visit the CareerExpress on the Cal State LA website for tools for self-assessment, researching careers, preparing for the job search, and job searching.

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