Student Job Shadowing Guide

Take a Tartan to Work is a job shadowing program for Carnegie Mellon undergraduate students who want to spend a day shadowing a professional at his/her workplace. The goal is to provide students with hands-on exposure to assess their “fit” in that work environment, clarify career goals and direction, and understand the connection between academics and the world of work.

What do I do to prepare myself?

Make sure all of the arrangements are planned well in advance and respond to your Host’s emails or phone calls in a timely manner. Conduct research of the company and the career field and have a list of questions in your head that you would like to ask your sponsor. This will allow you to ask more in-depth questions and make better use of the time.

Sample Questions to ask
- What is a typical day like on this job?
- What do you like most about your work? Least?
- What steps did you take to get where you are?
- What personal qualities are necessary to succeed at this type of work?
- If you could give only one piece of advice to a young person seeking a career such as yours, what would that advice be?

What should I expect to happen during my day of job shadowing?

When you arrive (on time), show initiative, curiosity and enthusiasm, because everyone you meet at the worksite is a potential contact for future internship and job searches. Dress professionally and bring a notepad and pen to take notes. Preparation, promptness and staying on target all show that you are organized and value the Host’s time.

There is no standard outline of a day of job shadowing; everybody’s experience differs. One principle guideline is to try not to interfere with the daily routine of the organization. If it is a traditional job shadowing experience, it is likely that you will spend most of your time observing others and will have some time before and after the day to ask questions and get advice and information. It is the Host who decides how you will spend your time. Some typical activities include:

- Tour the organization
- Sit in staff meetings and brainstorming sessions
- Observe client interactions or assist clients directly
- Assist with office tasks or projects; prepare or proofread documents

After the Job Shadow Experience
- View your notes and analyze the job shadow experience. Think about the information that you obtained and evaluate it objectively and how you will use it to your benefit.
- Be sure to send a letter thanking the individual for his/her time and assistance.
- Complete TATTW evaluation by March 18, 2016