

Master of Arts in

Professional Writing



INTERNSHIP
REPORT

fall 2019

**Carnegie
Mellon
University**
English

As a supplement and extension of their coursework, MAPW students complete a required, advisor-approved professional internship in a corporate, government, media, non-profit, arts or university setting. Internships provide opportunities for students to integrate and apply what they've learned in coursework, gain valuable workplace experience, and refine their career goals and preferences. These experiences are valuable for all students and particularly so for career-changers and those with little workplace experience.

Internships are usually completed in the summer between students' second and third semester but may extend 6-months or longer depending on sponsor requirements. The minimum requirement for an internship is 8 weeks of full-time work @ 40 hours per week with most involving 10-12 weeks. The majority of internship in the corporate, government, and education sectors are paid. For internships in the non-profit sector, where funds are often quite limited, we work with students to help them and their sponsoring organization qualify for federal-sponsored Community Service grants to provide an appropriate salary. In addition, students doing low- or unpaid internships in the DC area are eligible to apply for funding through the university's Friedman Fellowship program.

The types and locations of student internships are limited only by each student's interests and initiative. While many employers who have had our students as interns in the past tend to get in touch each year looking for internship candidates, we do not have a fixed roster of set internships from which students must select an option. We believe firmly that each internship should be matched to a student's specific interests, and we work hand-in-hand with you through advising and related support services to identify (and sometimes even create) appropriate opportunities.

In any given summer, we have interns on campus, around Pittsburgh, and throughout the country working in fields as varied as public relations, editing and publishing, media relations, technical writing, web content and design, corporate communications, instructional design, and non-profit communications. While these are the most common areas pursued by students, we're quite flexible about options and have had students with relevant backgrounds do internships in fields as varied as sports media relations, museum design, healthcare communication, arts marketing, and broadcast news. The overarching goal of the internship program is to help students locate and qualify for internships that position them for the next step in their careers, a full-time position following graduation.

Internship types also reflect the kinds of employment MAPW students seek and find upon graduation from the program.



Miranda Liu

MA in Professional Writing (Dec. '19)

Writing & Communications Intern, Summer 2019

Hometown: Beijing, China

Internship Type:

- paid
- unpaid

Applied by:

February 2019

Accepted by:

March 2019

Internship Category:

- corporate communication
- editing & publishing
- grant writing / fundraising
- healthcare communication
- information architecture
- journalism and news media
- non-profit communication
- public relations & marketing
- science writing
- technical writing
- user experience strategy
- writing for multimedia

What skills did you have that gave you an advantage in securing this internship?

I have a creative writing background, which gave me the knowledge and confidence to talk about the various features that make stories appealing. The skills and writing samples I developed in the Professional and Technical Writing course also came in handy.

What skills did you strengthen or learn at your internship?

I strengthened my interviewing skills and learned to be flexible and ask the right questions. I also learned to communicate with others and reach agreements about style and tone.

What are the steps you took to land your internship?

I received an email from the English department about this internship. After submitting my resume, cover letter, and 3 writing samples, I had an interview and got the offer shortly after.

What did you do as an intern at the College of Engineering?

My main responsibilities were interviewing engineering faculty and students and writing feature stories about their work. I also wrote news briefs, drafted social media content, and added/revised content in our content management system (CMS).

What was challenging about your internship?

My knowledge of science and engineering was very limited prior to this internship, so the topics I wrote about, such as soft robotics and machine learning algorithms, were quite complicated for me.

What did you enjoy about your internship?

I enjoyed talking to people about their work. If I only read a research article, I might just get some abstract concepts and facts; however, talking to their authors allowed me to understand their motivations and feelings, which is much more appealing than simply knowing facts. Additionally, writing stories was challenging but fun because I was always thinking about how to make things interesting and easy to understand for people.

What advice do you have for students interested in this field?

“ If you're dealing with a difficult topic, ask yourself how would you explain that to your friend during a casual conversation. Pay attention to how writers hold their reader's attention whenever you read a story or news article. Also, hold on to the rhetorical strategies taught in class; you'll find them useful. ”



Deana Lorenzo

MA in Professional Writing (Dec. '19)

Marketing and Communications Intern, Summer 2019

Hometown: Hartford, CT

Internship Type:

- paid
- unpaid

Applied by:

April 2019

Accepted by:

May 2019

Internship Category:

- corporate communication
- editing & publishing
- grant writing / fundraising
- healthcare communication
- information architecture
- journalism and news media
- non-profit communication
- public relations & marketing
- science writing
- technical writing
- user experience strategy
- writing for multimedia

What skills did you have that gave you an advantage in securing this internship?

Science writing, news writing, copy-editing, social media, digital communication. I found the Style and Science Writing courses I took the previous semester to be especially helpful.

What skills did you strengthen or learn at your internship?

Profile writing, web publishing, content management, event reporting, interviewing.

What are the steps you took to land your internship?

I learned about the position through an email to the English department. I applied with a cover letter, resume, and two writing samples, and was contacted for an interview shortly after.

What did you do as an intern at the INI?

I wrote news and feature articles published on the INI website and alumni magazine. I conducted outreach with alumni to build an inventory of career profiles. I also copy-edited external communications, and assisted with layout and design decisions.

What was challenging about your internship?

Communicating knowledgeably and creatively on technical topics with people who are at the top of their fields. This experience definitely opened my eyes to the world of information security, and I feel like I just barely scratched the surface!

What did you enjoy about your internship?

Writing stories about the groundbreaking work that INI students and alumni do in cybersecurity and networking. Whether I was interviewing CEOs or competitive hackers, everyone was really enthusiastic to talk about their time at CMU.

What advice do you have for students interested in this field?

☞ *It's important to go into the internship search with a primary goal in mind. Mine was to have more STEM-related writing in my portfolio, and knowing that definitely helped focus my options.*





CAITLAN ROSSI

MA in Professional Writing (Dec. '19)

Technical Writer, Summer 2019

Hometown: Rye, NY

Internship Type:

- paid
- unpaid

Applied by:

March

Accepted by:

April

Internship Category:

- corporate communication
- editing & publishing
- grant writing / fundraising
- healthcare communication
- information architecture
- journalism and news media
- non-profit communication
- public relations & marketing
- science writing
- technical writing
- user experience strategy
- writing for multimedia

What skills did you have that gave you an advantage in securing this internship?

My skills were wrapped up in my portfolio, one that demonstrates my ability to (1) collaborate with subject matter experts; (2) adapt complex information for a general audience; and (3) write and edit with what MAPWs call "style."

What skills did you strengthen or learn at your internship?

I got a lesson in organizational and global communication. By working on a cross-functional team, I learned the nuances of communicating with different types of workers. I also got a glimpse into the complexities of public affairs at a big company, exposure that made me think strategically and globally about internal and external communications.

What are the steps you took to land your internship?

In the midst of my search—I was sending a lot of LinkedIn InMail—someone in my network gave me a lead. She previously worked in Digital Infrastructure at S&P Global and said that the team was looking for a technical writer, so I submitted my resume. A few weeks later I Skyped with the two Cloud Architects who I would wind up working with.

What did you do as an intern at S&P Global?

I wrote an internal blog called "Our China Tech Journey." Since S&P Global recently expanded to China, the Cloud Strategy & Architecture team is building IT infrastructure there from the ground up—a major initiative that I translated into a high-level, story-like narrative. In addition, I created engineer-facing documentation for Alibaba Cloud, documented policies surrounding Amazon Web Services (AWS), and wrote UX copy for an IT service portal.

What was challenging about your internship?

My role was contingent on interviewing engineers—but their role was not contingent on me! So I got practice in pitching my projects, and in the art of following up.

What did you enjoy about your internship?

For most of the day, every day, I was writing.

What advice do you have for students interested in this field?

“ Technical writing is a great way to get your foot in the door—there’s such a need for people who can make the complex readable. But big companies offer room for growth, and you may find other opportunities: UX writing, corporate communications, or something else entirely. Your writing skills will add value everywhere. ”



Ana Karina Van Nortwick

MA in Professional Writing (Dec. '19)

Communications Specialist (UX Writer), Summer 2019
Hometown: El Paso, Texas

Internship Type:

- paid
- unpaid

Applied by:

February 2019

Accepted by:

March 2019

Internship Category:

- corporate communication
- editing & publishing
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- technical writing
- user experience strategy
- writing for multimedia

What skills did you have that gave you an advantage in securing this internship?

Having a working portfolio helped, I was able to showcase strong writing samples to an alumna who then connected me with a recruiter on campus. The skills I learned in the Style, Document Design, Web Design, and Professional and Technical Writing courses played a significant role in preparing me for my internship.

What skills did you strengthen or learn at your internship?

I strengthened my editing, design, content writing, and benchmarking skills. I also got to use effective communication with team members and taught myself API documentation for one of the teams I was assigned to work with over the summer.

What are the steps you took to land your internship?

I wanted something in Pittsburgh and focused on finding an internship starting in late winter/early spring. I looked around and reached out to a few places, but found this opportunity through one of the e-mails Jen forwarded. I feel that reworking my portfolio and tailoring it to my specific interests helped showcase who I was and what I offered.

What did you do as an intern at PNC?

I worked in Digital Retail, where I did a variety of things. A few things that I did include API documentation, creating content guidelines, editing product or feature content, and proof-reading e-mails and notices. Additionally, I did a capstone that allowed me to use my benchmarking, UX, and design skills. I also networked within the company to learn the different ways PNC employed writers.

What was challenging about your internship?

The API documentation. I didn't have the definitive technical writing skills for this team, but I was able to learn and reach out to people in my cohort for information and finished my task.

What did you enjoy about your internship?

I enjoyed working with the writers and designer, and the chance to try new forms of writing.

What advice do you have for students interested in this field?

“ You are an expert in your field and should never be afraid to speak up when you see something that can either improve or change. Trust that the skills you acquire through your hard work in this program are great assets. Remember to be you, stand out, network, and collaborate to learn as much as possible in the time you are here. ”



John Zoppina

MA in Professional Writing (Dec. '19)

Technical Writer, Summer 2019

Hometown: Riverside, NJ

Internship Type:

- paid
- unpaid

Applied by:

January 2019

Accepted by:

March 2019

Internship Category:

- corporate communication
- editing & publishing
- grant writing / fundraising
- healthcare communication
- information architecture
- journalism and news media
- non-profit communication
- public relations & marketing
- science writing
- technical writing
- user experience strategy
- writing for multimedia

What skills did you have that gave you an advantage in securing this internship?

At LinkedIn, humor is a core value; one of my writing samples was thorough, but lighthearted: I had documented how to assemble a common children's toy. That, combined with a few years of experience working in technology, gave my interviewers and me a few talking points during my interview process.

What skills did you strengthen or learn at your internship?

This internship strengthened the practical, hands-on skills that a student can't learn in the classroom: how to conduct a great meeting or teleconference; making a case for your work, or showmanship; how to delegate tasks or ask subject matter experts to help you understand something.

What are the steps you took to land your internship?

First, I looked for emails from alumni about internship and job openings. They arrive frequently; use them to your advantage. I applied, interviewed, and informed my recruiter about other pending offers.

What did you do as an intern at LinkedIn?

I documented the steps a project manager would take to determine how much their service cost the company daily (for example, messaging, suggested contacts, and so on).

What was challenging about your internship?

I'm a good writer; I'm not skilled in data visualization or analytics. My internship focused on documenting data visualization tools and how those visualizations might inform someone's decision-making process.

What did you enjoy about your internship?

This internship reminded me that I study professional writing because I want to be a lifelong learner. I know how to help someone tell their story; helping them effectively often requires that you learn about what they do.

What advice do you have for students interested in this field?

☞ *Be humble. As a technical writer, you know how to tell a story, but you also rely on subject matter experts to discover what the story really is. Ask questions — and when the answer doesn't make sense, ask again. If you're working with the right people, they won't mind clarifying. And if they mind, you're probably not working with the right people.* ☞

PREVIOUS INTERNSHIPS



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