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# INTRODUCTION

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This Missouri Legislative Internship Program Intern Handbook establishes policies, procedures, benefits, and working conditions for legislative interns as a condition of their service to Northwest Missouri State University.

This Handbook is not a contract of employment nor is it intended to create contractual obligations for Northwest Missouri State University.

The policies and procedures outlined in this Handbook will be applied at the discretion of the Legislative Internship Program Directors.

The Legislative Internship Program Directors will make every effort to notify interns of an official change in policy or procedure, but interns are responsible for knowledge about internship policies, procedures, benefits, and working conditions.

This handbook establishes standards of conduct which cannot be waived without written permission from the Legislative Internship Program Directors. Such a waiver, if granted, applies only to the intern for whom the waiver was granted.

These policies, procedures, and working conditions provide an environment in which both legislator interests and the intern interests are served.

The Legislative Internship Program values the talents and abilities of our interns and seeks to foster an open, cooperative, and dynamic environment in which interns and legislators can thrive. The Legislative Internship Program provides an open door policy in which interns are encouraged to bring problems to the legislative aide or directors at any time.

Please review the policies, procedures, working conditions, and benefits described in this handbook. You will be asked to affirm that you have read, understand, agree to abide by, and acknowledge your receipt of this intern handbook and intern standards of conduct.

Regards,

Dr, Bronson Herrera, Political Science  
Travis Kline, Career Services  
Legislative Internship Program Directors  
Northwest Missouri State University

## PURPOSE

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The Northwest Missouri State University Legislative Internship provides participating students the opportunity to serve, off-campus, for the spring trimester of each year on the staff of an elected or appointed state official in Jefferson City, Missouri. Daily starting times and the number of days worked per week vary between offices. The purpose of this internship is to:

- Support the University's Public Affairs mission by enabling students to become better citizens and providing them with the opportunity to participate in state government
- Integrate academic and applied learning through regular reporting to and feedback from a faculty member at the University
- Favorably represent Northwest Missouri State University
- Allow students to gain marketable skills and experience

This is a service opportunity and is not intended nor designed to provide students an opportunity to actively influence state political issues or exactly meet each participant's personal expectations.

### **Learning Objectives**

Objectives vary with the intern placement, but typically include some of the following:

- Learn how citizens can affect public policy
- Learn how bills are introduced, voted on, and enacted
- Develop a competency in legislative research
- Develop skills for constituent service & interaction with the public at large
- Learn to write press releases and interact with the media
- Improve verbal and written communication skills
- Develop professional and interpersonal skills working in a high intensity environment

### **Position Responsibilities**

Intern duties vary with intern placement, but typically include some of the following:

- Analyze, follow, and craft legislation as it moves through the political process
- Write press releases and track coverage
- Research and assist in addressing constituent problems or concerns

- Attend hearings, committee meetings, take notes, write briefs, and report on activities observed
- Research proposed legislation to determine cost, impact, advantages/disadvantages
- Attend receptions and other events with, and sometimes in place of, the official
- Assist the secretary or aide with general office work
- Guide tours of the Missouri State Capitol
- Assist with the annual Northwest Legislative Reception, if requested
- Optional – participate in mock legislative sessions

## QUALIFICATIONS

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The mandatory requirements to serve as a Legislative Intern for Northwest Missouri State University include:

- Sophomore, Junior, Senior, or Graduate Student in good standing
- Northwest Missouri State University student, with completion of at least one trimester at Northwest Missouri State University
- 2.50 or higher Northwest Missouri State University GPA

\*Note: International students must have been F-1 status at least nine months and in good standing

## EXPECTATIONS

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### **Professional Expectations**

- Plan to attend all Northwest Missouri State University Sponsored Legislative Intern events and RSVP to the appropriate organizers
- Behave and dress in a manner commensurate with a professional public servant
- Manage and resolve personal matters including academic assignments and graduation requirements
- Immediately inform the Legislative Internship Program Directors of medical or personal situations which could impact the ability to perform internship duties
- Interact with other Legislative Interns in a spirit of support and community
- Be present and on time for professional duties Monday-Friday

- Maintain current health and vehicle insurance, including possession of personal vehicle or an alternative transportation plan to be discussed with the Legislative Internship Co-Directors
- Attend and assist with the Northwest Legislative Reception

## **Intern Communication**

The primary means of communications between the Legislative Intern Directors, the Legislative Aide, faculty members, the Political Science Department Internship Director and the interns will be through e-mail and a Northwest online website designated for the legislative internship. Interns are expected to check their Northwest e-mail and the internship website regularly. Questions and concerns may be addressed to Intern Directors at any time during the application and orientation process as well as during the Legislative Session.

## **ORIENTATION AND ACADEMIC CREDIT**

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All Legislative Interns must attend orientation sessions on campus as well as a session at the State Capitol.

All majors are welcome in this program. Legislative Interns may receive up to 12 hours of academic credit for this internship during the spring trimester. Interns should enroll in 6 hours of Political Science Internship and 6 hours of Political Science Internship – Non-major to total 12 hours, or coordinate other academic internship courses related to their field of study with approval from Dr. Bronson Herrera and their academic advisor.

## **FINANCES**

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### **Intern Status**

Legislative Interns will be identified as students in good standing, which will protect them from early loan payment claims and qualify them to continue to be carried on family insurance plans. If interns receive notices from loan or insurance companies, please contact the Northwest Missouri State University's Office of the Registrar at 660-562-1151.

## Housing Leases

Northwest Missouri State University Resident Life contracts can be terminated without penalty. However, off-campus leases are more rigid and, in the worst cases, may not be broken without legal consequences, resulting in the student either not being able to apply for the program or paying rent at two different locations. Before applying for this internship, off campus students should examine their contracts and comply with the terms listed. **If a student is considering applying for the Legislative Internship in the future, it is recommended that he or she sign up for a six months lease only.**

## Medical Care

It is recommended that students confirm any existing health insurance coverage. Students are often covered by parental health insurance particularly so as the Affordable Care Act has been implemented. If the intern is not covered by such insurance, it is recommended that they discuss this topic with a program Co-Director.

## PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

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### Orientation

Intern attendance at orientation is expected.

- **Legislative Intern Orientation** **Early Dec.**
  - Details to be announced
  
- **Individual meeting with Program Directors.** **Early Dec.**
  - Review policies and expectations
  
- **On-site Training** **Early Jan. TBA**
  - Held in Jefferson City before the session opens
  - Professional dress

### Intern Evaluations

All Northwest Missouri State University Legislative Interns will complete evaluations during the internship. Informal annotations will also be recorded by the Jefferson City Legislative Intern Director(s) based on observations made during visits, reports

from intern supervisors, and Legislative Intern Panel members. These will be normally used to assist with professional references requested by the interns.

Interns will also be expected to complete the short Pre-Program and Post-Program Assessments to determine the personal progress and learning that took place through the Internship opportunity. In addition, upon completion of the internship, interns may be asked to meet with a Legislative Internship Program Director for a debriefing session.

## PROGRAM SPECIFICS

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### **Intern Selection**

This is a competitive program with only a portion of all interviewing applicants actually being selected to serve as interns. Those students not selected are encouraged to continue preparing themselves.

### **Legislator Matches**

The interview panel will consider applicants' interests, attributes, home district, political affiliation and other factors in assigning them to legislators; however, since the legislative internships are comprised of numerous variables, exact matches are not guaranteed. Although interns do not make their own matches, their input is welcomed and strongly considered.

### **Assignment Options**

Periodically, if he or she desires and a vacancy exists, an intern may serve in other offices of elected officials. However, the students in these positions will be required to work extended hours five days weekly, will not get to associate routinely with other legislative interns, and will have a significantly different experience.

### **Mock Session**

Near the date of the legislature's spring break, Legislative Interns serving in the House receive the opportunity to elect their own legislative officials, form committees, address issues, and hold their own two-day Mock Legislative Sessions on the House Floor. Historically, the interns have occupied leadership positions and

set the pace for this event. This opportunity does not currently exist in the Senate. Senate interns desiring to participate in the House Mock Session should inform the MO House Legislative Intern Coordinators and their Senators no later than February 15<sup>th</sup>. If Northwest Missouri State University interns wish to participate, they must start building votes and coalitions early in the session.

## NONDISCRIMINATION/EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY STATEMENT

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Northwest Missouri State University emphasizes the dignity and equality common to all persons and adheres to a strict nondiscrimination policy regarding the treatment of individual faculty, staff, students, third parties on campus, and applicants for employment and admissions. In accord with federal law and applicable Missouri statutes, the University does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, pregnancy, ancestry, age, disability, genetic information, veteran status, or any other legally-protected class, in employment or in any program or activity offered or sponsored by the University, including, but not limited to, athletics, instruction, grading, the awarding of student financial aid, recruitment, admissions, and housing. As an equal opportunity employer, the University promotes and maintains affirmative action programs to ensure that all individuals participate fully in every facet of employment opportunities.

Persons having inquiries concerning the University's compliance with this policy or any laws and regulations prohibiting discrimination are directed to contact the following:

- An employee with questions or concerns about any type of discrimination in the workplace, including discriminatory harassment, is encouraged to bring these issues to the attention of the Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Officer, who may be contacted at: EEO Officer, Northwest Missouri State University, 800 University Drive, Maryville, Missouri, 64468-6001 (660-562-1128).
- Questions or concerns regarding the University's compliance with Title IX may be directed to the University's Title IX Coordinator or Deputy Title IX Coordinators. The University has designated the following Title IX Coordinator and Deputy Title IX Coordinators as named in the University's Title IX Policies and Procedures:

William R. Sabio  
Assistant Vice President of Title IX and Equity  
25 North Complex  
Tel: 660.562.1013  
Email: [wsabio@nwmissouri.edu](mailto:wsabio@nwmissouri.edu)

Kori Hoffmann  
Student Development and Conduct Coordinator (Deputy Student  
Coordinator)  
Union, Room 2140  
Tel: 660.562.1554  
Email: [khoff20@nwmissouri.edu](mailto:khoff20@nwmissouri.edu)

- For ADA/Section 504 related questions or concerns, please contact:

William R. Sabio  
Assistant Vice President of Title IX and Equity  
25 North Complex  
Tel: 660.562.1013  
Email: [wsabio@nwmissouri.edu](mailto:wsabio@nwmissouri.edu)

- For all other inquiries related to discrimination at the University, please contact:

William R. Sabio  
Assistant Vice President of Title IX and Equity  
25 North Complex  
Tel: 660.562.1013  
Email: [wsabio@nwmissouri.edu](mailto:wsabio@nwmissouri.edu)

No individual will be subject to any form of retaliation, discipline, or other adverse action for reporting conduct in violation of the University's nondiscrimination/EEO policy, assisting/cooperating in making a complaint, or assisting with the investigation of a complaint. Any individual who believes they have experienced or witnessed retaliation should immediately notify the appropriate member(s) of the administration as identified above. *Those found to be engaging in any type of discrimination in violation of the law or University policy will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal or termination of employment.* (Source: KCP-4567457-1)

## Harassment

*Northwest's Commitment*

All members of the University community have an interest in increasing and maintaining an environment free from harassment, including sexual harassment. Sexual harassment is a violation of federal and state law, as well as Northwest policy. All faculty, staff, and students need to be aware that they will be subject to disciplinary action for violations of this policy up to and including termination. Northwest is committed to providing an environment in which individuals are treated fairly and with respect. Harassment will not be tolerated under any circumstances within the University's jurisdiction, whether it is in an academic, employment, residential, or social situation.

### *Definition of Sexual Harassment*

Defined by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission ("EEOC"), unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical contact of a sexual nature constitute sexual harassment when:

- Submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's employment or academic standing, or
- Submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for employment decisions or academic evaluations affecting such individual, or
- Such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work or academic performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working, academic, or social environment.

### *Examples of conduct that may constitute sexual harassment include:*

- Verbal: suggestive comments about a person's clothing, body, or sexual activity; humor or jokes about sex or about gender-related characteristics; sexual innuendos and comments; direct or indirect threats linked to sexual propositions or sexually-explicit questions
- Nonverbal: suggestive or insulting sounds (leering, whistling); display of sexually-explicit pictures or photographs; obscene gestures; staring at a person's physical features
- Physical: intentionally brushing a person in passing; inappropriate touching, patting, or tickling; pinching or squeezing; coerced sexual activity and sexual assault
- Written: suggestive notes, letters; suggestive E-mail messages, text messages

### *Reporting Procedure*

Early reporting and intervention have proven to be the most effective method of resolving actual or perceived incidents of harassment. If you feel you have experienced or observed any form of unlawful harassment, please take the following actions:

- Promptly advise the offender(s) that the conduct is unwelcome and request that it be stopped immediately.
- Document the incident as to date, time, place, witnesses, and nature of the incident.
- Report the incident to the EEO Officer immediately. In all cases, the EEO Officer or his or her designated representative will be available to hear complaints. The EEO Officer can be contacted at: EEO Officer, Northwest Missouri State University, 800 University Drive, Maryville, Missouri, 64468-6001 (660-562-1128).

#### *Additional Points*

Every effort will be made to ensure the confidentiality of those who report a complaint or participate in the procedures. Persons making false accusations in harassment cases will be subject to disciplinary action and those who falsely report sexual harassment, use the reporting procedures, or are involved in the harassment procedure, will likewise be subject to disciplinary action.