

Internships and Graduate Assistantships

The University of Illinois at Springfield is an exciting place for students to gain hands-on experience in state government operations. A variety of assistantships and internships, offered in conjunction with a graduate degree, provide opportunities to work with the people and issues shaping Illinois public policy. Each year over 125 interns and graduate assistants—seeking academic degrees ranging from communication, political studies, business, environmental studies, and many more—work in Institute for Public Affairs-sponsored programs and activities.

Graduate Public Service Internships

The **Graduate Public Service Internship (GPSI) Program** is a 21-month program that places approximately 90 to 95 interns in governmental agencies each year. This premier internship program, administered by the Institute for Public Affairs' GPSI Unit under the direction of Nancy Ayers, provides the state of Illinois with top-quality graduates from all academic disciplines who otherwise might not have entered professional public service careers.

Interns begin a professional career with state government and simultaneously earn a master's degree. They gain valuable work experience and insight into the operations of Illinois government and receive a monthly stipend, tuition, and a modest travel allotment.

Alumni surveys show that GPSI professional experience has launched UIS students to top-level administrative positions in public- and private-sector enterprises throughout the nation.

hands-on

Legislative Staff Internships

The **Illinois Legislative Staff Intern Program (ILSIP)**, directed by Kent Redfield of the Illinois Legislative Studies Center, recruits outstanding graduate students from across the nation and provides them with an opportunity to serve with the Illinois General Assembly leadership staffs, nonpartisan research agency staffs, or private-sector businesses that work closely with the legislature.



The 1996-1997 Illinois legislative staff interns.

The internship is a work experience program that benefits individuals with a wide range of interests. It has been especially beneficial to those pursuing public- or private-sector careers related to government. Past interns include Governor Jim Edgar, Auditor General William Holland, U.S. congressmen, state legislators, lobbyists, and numerous Illinois General Assembly staff and personnel.

ILSIPs come in three varieties:

- **The Illinois General Assembly's Legislative Staff Intern Program.** This program assigns full-time interns to one of the four partisan staffs of the Illinois General Assembly or to the staff of the Legislative Research Unit (LRU). Interns draft legislation, research issues, review state appropriations, and work with legislators and legislative staff as they gain direct hands-on experience in the legislative process. The program serves 20 interns annually, with partisan staff interns working from October 1 to August 15 and LRU interns working from September 15 to August 1.

work
experience



Student interns Dan Irwin and Sarah Bush at the state capitol.

Intern Profile: SARAH BUSH

Sarah Bush learned a lot and found her experience with the Legislative Staff Intern Program "absolutely worthwhile" and "rewarding."

One of 24 interns selected from a competitive pool of applicants to work for a legislative leadership staff in 1996-1997, Bush was assigned to the appropriations staff of the Senate Democrats and tracked the budgets of nine state agencies in the spring session of the General Assembly. She kept close tabs on these budgets for several months, from the time Governor Edgar submitted them until the legislature finally approved them. She said it was particularly interesting to follow the budget of the Department of Children and Family Services because that is a large agency, sometimes controversial, with a complicated budget. Other agency budgets she tracked included those of the Department of Labor, the Illinois Commerce Commission, and the Department on Aging.

She worked with the fiscal officers for the nine agencies and kept her appropriations director informed about the budgets as they moved through the legislative process. The Senate Democrats were in the minority during Bush's internship. So their staff's role involved more reaction and analysis than policymaking, she said.

A graduate of the University of Wisconsin with degrees in history and math, Bush returned to the Chicago area after her internship with plans to seek a job in some area of public policy. She also enjoys writing and says graduate school may be in her future.

- **The Zeke Giorgi Memorial Internship.** This program is similar to the ILSIP. It provides for the orientation and education of two to four interns assigned to work with the four partisan legislative staffs for a term of 10 1/2 months from October 1 to August 15.
- **Illinois Legislative Staff Internship Program/Private-Sector Internships.** These internships place post-undergraduate students in private-sector organizations that work with the General Assembly. The program provides interns with an experience similar to that of the ILSIP legislative staff interns. In 1997, the Illinois Realtors Association hired an intern as a way to increase productivity.

gain insight

Graduate Assistantships

Two-year graduate assistantship opportunities provide educational experience related to graduate students' areas of study. Typically, 17 to 19 graduate students in a variety of academic disciplines work for the units of the Institute for Public Affairs. Their assignments include publishing; marketing; television production; and survey, legal, and legislative research and analysis. Graduate assistants receive tuition and a stipend.

educational experience

*ILLINOIS
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