

Criminal Justice Internships

Theory Into Practice

TENTH EDITION

R. Bruce McBride



“I like that the chapters are straightforward, easy to comprehend, and typically full of pertinent information. I had reviewed several internship texts, and this was definitely my top pick.”

Ann Dirks-Linhorst, Ph.D., J.D.,
Criminal Justice Studies,
Southern Illinois University, Edwardsville



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CRIMINAL JUSTICE INTERNSHIPS

Criminal Justice Internships: Theory Into Practice, Tenth Edition, guides the student, instructor, and internship site supervisor through the entire internship process, offering advice and information for use at the internship site as well as pre-planning and assessment activities. With increasingly more programs offering or requiring internships, the need for guidance is answered by McBride's counsel, offering students a means of enhancing their credentials and gaining a foothold in a competitive job market.

Divided into four sections—Pre-internship Considerations, Professional Concerns, The Role of the Organization, and Assessment and Career Planning—this book offers resources to enrich the student's experience and lay the foundation for future professional success. Students learn basics such as choosing an internship site at either a public agency or a private firm, résumé-writing techniques, effective use of social networks, interviewing skills, and the importance of setting and developing goals and assessing progress.

The book serves as a reference tool for professors and supervisory personnel who assist and supervise students during their internships. Suitable for all Criminal Justice, Justice Studies, Financial Crimes and Cybersecurity Investigations, and Pre-law undergraduate programs, *Criminal Justice Internships* is also useful in Social Sciences programs with a service-learning component.

R. Bruce McBride is Professor Emeritus of Criminal Justice at Utica College. He is also the former Commissioner of University Police for the State University of New York. At Utica, he served as Executive Director of the Economic Crime, Justice Studies, and Cybersecurity Department. He also coordinated the criminal justice internship program, which allowed for field study placements in the United States and overseas. Dr. McBride holds bachelor's and master's degrees from the State University of New York at Oswego and master's and doctoral degrees from the University at Albany. He is a past president of the Criminal Justice Educators Association of New York State. He continues to serve on the Municipal Police Training Council, which coordinates police and correctional training for New York State.



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Theory Into Practice

TENTH EDITION

R. BRUCE McBRIDE

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To My Extended Family—

**Barbara, Robbie and Amanda, Megan and James, Brian
and Landan**



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PREFACE

This book is directed to the student who is undertaking an internship with a public agency or private sector organization in criminal justice, financial crime investigations, cybersecurity, legal studies, and crime analysis. It is also intended to be a reference tool for professors and field supervisory personnel who instruct and supervise student interns during the experience. The objective of the book is to direct attention to professional and personal issues that occur during an internship program. At this time, many academic programs in the United States have designated the internship as either a requirement or a major elective.

In 1984, the first edition of this book resulted from a project that began to guide students through their internships. Finding there were few available materials on the subject, materials were created with former co-author Gary Gordon to give specific attention to the placement process, creating learning goals, and focusing on the internship experience. This edition is the culmination of decades of experience in using these materials with students.

This book is designed to be used as an introduction to the internship, as well as a course text while at the placement site. A student who is considering an internship will find several chapters helpful in conceptualizing what the experience will entail. The book is often used in pre-internship senior seminar and capstone courses the semester before an internship begins to focus attention on site selection, how to obtain a placement, the role of the student, and preliminary insight into the nature of organizations. Once in the field, a second reading will help clarify, explain, and promote an understanding of the experience through specific assignments, particularly the formation of educational goals.

A great deal of thanks goes to the hundreds of students supervised through the years both as a faculty member and senior police administrator. Every semester they enhance the understanding of internships by raising questions and sharing their experiences. Much appreciation needs to be given to the many internship coordinators and instructors who have used this book. Their comments and views on internships in this avenue of experiential learning are important.

I would also like to thank Utica College faculty members Bill Virkler, Leslie Corbo, Sue Lynch, Don Rebovich, Kyung Seok Choo, Ray Philo, Robert Swenszkowski, and Greg Walsh for their advice and assistance in the changing nature of internship placements. Jenn Rubino, formerly from the Center for Career and Professional Development at Utica College, is commended for her guidance on internship trends, digital hiring processes,

and today's career opportunities during the COVID-19 pandemic. George Curtis, who retired from Utica College, is also acknowledged for keeping tabs on the ever-changing legal environment for student interns, especially litigation. Finally, thank you to Ellen Boyne and the staff of Routledge/Taylor & Francis for continuing to support this concept and for publishing this new edition of *Criminal Justice Internships: Theory Into Practice*.

R. Bruce McBride
Delmar, New York

Part I

Pre-internship Considerations



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CHAPTER 1 Introduction to Internships

This book is designed to maximize the internship experience for students enrolled in criminal justice, crime analysis, financial crimes, homeland security, and cybersecurity degree programs. This chapter presents the background to internship programs and the important reasons why a student should consider interning. Upon completing the chapter, the reader should be able to review the internship program options at his or her campus in terms of program requirements, the number of credits that might be earned, and a general range of placement sites available. Additionally, the primary learning goals that could be derived from undertaking an internship are introduced in knowledge acquisition, knowledge application, skills development, personal development, and professional development.

What Is an Internship?

An internship is a formal course undertaken in an academic program whereby the student observes and participates in various organizational operations under the guidance of a field supervisor and a faculty supervisor. During this time, the student completes academic and intern site assignments that introduce the workplace's operations and show the integration of theory, concepts, and practice. At the same time, an internship should assist the student in making future career choices complementary to his or her abilities. In summary, and as stated by the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE), "An internship is a form of experiential learning that integrates knowledge and theory learned in the classroom with practical application and skills development in a professional setting" (2010, p. 1).

Why Intern?

Many programs require students to complete an internship as an academic requirement for degree completion. Yet, other programs have an internship requirement as an elective option.

If your program of study falls into the elective option, the question emerges of why you should consider an internship. What are the academic, personal, and professional advantages to an internship? What type of internship would be best for you? How can you be sure of selecting a good field site? How can an internship help you clarify your career goals?

One result of a good internship experience is that you will develop self-directed or experiential learning in an organizational setting. This is part of the college experience whereby learning occurs outside the classroom environment in many ways, including volunteering, participation in student and community organizations, study tours, research with faculty members, work-study, and independent study assignments. An internship will also increase your knowledge and enhance your understanding of an organization's complexities and its component parts. You may find that you better understand and appreciate what you have learned in the classroom once you have applied your knowledge in a professional setting. Not all knowledge is gained in the classroom. Applications of various concepts and theories and new topic content areas are often gained during an internship. Working under the guidance of a mentor shows you how to perform various tasks.

Many students are often uncertain about what area of the field best suits their personal and professional goals. The internship experience will help to self-evaluate how you may fit into the field after graduation.

If you decide on a career in criminal justice or a related field, the internship experience will prove invaluable. In addition to gaining work experience, which is always a positive résumé item for future employment, you will develop social networks with practitioners who can help you set your future career goals and possibly assist in procuring future employment. They may help identify job openings, write letters of recommendation, or call their colleagues to recommend you. The internship may even lead to employment at the internship site if there is an available opening, and you are an outstanding worker.

Background of Internships

The development of internships can be traced to the Middle Ages when the teaching of skills and competencies for most professions and trades was accomplished by a young person serving an apprenticeship with a skilled mentor. The first professional field to adopt this model was in the medical sciences, wherein future doctors and nurses learned their skills under senior instructors. As discussed by Perlin (2012), this concept continues today in diverse academic areas such as law, journalism, social services, public administration, and education. Some states require field

training before the student may be granted a license or certificate to practice in certain professions.

How does this apply to criminal justice? From the disciplinary perspective, criminal justice is a general term that denotes interdisciplinary scholarly teaching and research in the behavioral and social sciences (including law and public administration), focusing on the social problems of crime (Myren, 1979, p. 22). It is hypothesized that during the early years of the discipline, the idea for a field experience component in many college programs may have been passed along by faculty in fields in which such a tradition already existed. The real boost for internships in criminal justice occurred in 1968 when the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration (LEAA) provided stipends for full-time students to serve in an agency for eight weeks or more. The goals of the program were aimed at giving students direct hands-on experience as part of their course of study and providing training for future professionals and additional personnel on a limited basis to agencies. Although this program was phased out in the early 1980s, along with the entire LEAA apparatus, the internship component remains strong in most programs. Studies of criminal justice academic programs throughout the United States find that the majority have some form of internship offering, varying from three credit hours on a part-time basis to 15 credit hours for a full semester (Stichman & Farkas, 2005). Today, internships are part of elective opportunities for upper-level students, as presented in certification standards by the Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences (2005). Many organizations actively recruit interns for formal semester or summer programs. Examples include the major federal law enforcement agencies, various state police and criminal justice-related agencies, a wide range of county and local agencies dealing with law enforcement, courts, corrections, public administration, probation and parole, homeland security, private security services, and corporations dealing with fraud and cybersecurity issues. For this text, this wide range of public- and private-sector organizations dealing with crime and security will come under the academic rubric of “criminal justice.”

Your career services office will have references and links to websites that post internship possibilities, including *www.findinternships.com* and *www.cei-internship.squarespace.com*. Directories and websites have to be approached with caution, because they generally provide information only on significant companies and private-sector agencies. Nevertheless, they all offer the student great leads and ideas in seeking placement in a particular field or location. Most internship coordinators would advise you to review a wide number of organizations before deciding on an internship site.

The term “internship” is used throughout this text, but the field experience program at your college may appear under a different title, such as “fieldwork,” “practicum,” or “cooperative education.” These terms are often used interchangeably to denote either full- or part-time work experience

in which the student is assigned definite tasks and responsibilities. Most internship programs are credit-bearing and relate to the academic program curriculum. The completion of an academic internship usually earns a student college credits, the number of which generally depends on the length of time in the field. The standard 40 hours of fieldwork equates to one credit hour. During this time, the student is required to complete various academic assignments and the assigned tasks at the field site. Some agencies provide a monetary stipend for students, but most programs are unpaid, especially those in the public sector.

Cooperative education programs are not the same as internships. Often termed “work experience education” or simply “co-op,” the student in a cooperative education program works in the field for a designated time as part of the academic degree requirements. Cooperative education students are often not viewed as interns but as entry-level employees for a designative time, which may last four to six months. Some students may be allowed to take two or three cooperative education experiences, which will extend their degree work to five years. In most organizations with cooperative education programs, the students receive a salary or stipend for their work. Colleges and universities that have a strong tradition in cooperative education have developed extensive networks for placements world-wide. However, it is up to the student to secure a placement by filing a cover letter and résumé and going through the placement process.

Another field component used by some companies is the concept of “job shadowing,” whereby an organization allows students to spend a short period of time in the workplace to see what goes on in the “day in the life” of a police officer, probation officer, or crime analyst. As discussed by Loretto (2019), these arrangements are based on formal and informal arrangements between the school, the student, and the organization.

Today internships are an integral part of many academic programs in the United States. According to former State University of New York (SUNY) Chancellor Nancy Zimpher, student internships are often recalled as the most valuable experience of students’ education. “Students are more engaged with the curriculum, likely to graduate on time, and they acquire the hands-on experience that ensures them a competitive edge in today’s job market” (Bump, 2016, par. 3). The SUNY system and other major academic institutions have encouraged all students to take an internship during their course of study by creating articulations and databases with business and not-for-profit organizations.

Discussing the role of higher education in the job market, Selingo (2016), in *There Is Life After College*, writes that internships taken during the college experience have become a de facto requirement in many industries, particularly in finance, technology, and scientific services. This trend has impacted hiring trends for many graduates in that employers not only want to see the completion of the degree but some evidence

that the candidate has some experience and has applied skills in the workplace (p. 16).

Educational Goals

A review of your academic program's learning objectives will generally center on several of the following items:

- Gaining information on criminal justice theory and practice through various courses such as justice administration, criminal procedure, investigative practices, juvenile justice, criminal behavior, correctional alternatives, cybersecurity, and global crime
- Increasing competency in oral and written communication
- Developing skills in research methods and application of quantitative methods to field problems
- Increasing the ability to critically think and apply information to problems
- Helping to understand how ethical issues relate to organizational operations and policy
- Learning specific skills in forensics, investigations, counseling, cyber analysis, and computer applications

In reviewing various intern programs' descriptions, the following are generally cited as educational goals: knowledge acquisition, knowledge application, skills development, personal development, and professional development.

Knowledge Acquisition

At this time, a good portion of your academic learning probably involves sitting in a classroom or logging into an online platform, undertaking readings from books and articles, taking notes from a lecture, or discussing issues in a seminar or discussion forum. Much of what you learn depends on the nature of the course, the instructor, specific assignments and discussion threads, readings, and, at times, other students in the class. Of course, what you get out of the traditional classroom or online environment also depends on your preparation and involvement efforts.

In an internship program, self-direction is essential to a valuable learning experience. According to Segroi and Ryniker (2002, p. 188), internships are a form of experiential learning whereby "the student takes

significant responsibility in the learning process.” While many students are apprehensive about this approach to learning because it is not the usual way, for many, the knowledge acquired through an internship is most satisfying. “For the first time, I really know how to conduct an investigation and put a case together,” remarked one student. Another stated, “I learned a great deal about probation and the way an agency operates. It was more than I could ever gain from a textbook.” Most students who intern find that they gain a great deal of knowledge about an organization that cannot be learned in the classroom environment. The day-to-day interaction with staff, clients, and the community at large provides a rich educational experience.

Knowledge Application

Although closely related to acquiring knowledge, knowledge application refers to applying theories learned in the classroom to actual practice. Your formal coursework is based on a theoretical framework, a conception, or a model of how the system or a specific agency operates. Through textbook and classroom studies, you have learned and discussed such concepts as authority, discretion, deterrence, public policy, routine activities, socialization, and social control. During an internship, you will see certain theories in practice, while others will never become apparent. As Ross and Elechi (2002, p. 299) write, the internship experience brings forth the practical realities of criminal justice operations in comparison to what is presented in the curricula. Students often write about applying theory and how certain concepts may or may not apply to a specific social setting. An internship is usually the first time you are allowed to test various theories in a field setting.

Skills Development

While a college education assists in developing job-related skills, an internship provides an excellent arena for further acquiring and developing such skills. Seeing the immediate application in job-related tasks, many students even improve their academic skills through internships, especially in written communication. Because report writing is an essential part of what professionals are required to do in many agencies, many students realize that good writing skills are necessary, and that the coursework taken in a program has much relevance. As one former intern recently wrote, “One thing that I did take away was the importance of good report writing. This is especially important because much of the cybercrime case I worked had a strong probability of eventually leading to legal prosecution.”

Another area of improvement is oral and interpersonal communication. Many students can acquire good listening and interviewing skills by dealing with clients. Some placement sites require intern candidates to have research and computer skills that may be applied to a project to improve the organization. These skills are then further developed during the internship.

Personal Development

At the field site, you will often be in situations that force you to clarify your values and develop the confidence and self-reliance necessary to solve problems. Working in an organizational setting brings you into contact with people who think, believe, and act differently than you do. Their conception of what is the right way of getting a task done and just may differ dramatically from yours. In this context, you may feel the need to defend, justify, and reappraise your values and reject those of others. Because ethics related to internships is important, an entire chapter of this book is devoted to it (see Chapter 8).

Very often, students express some concern about how they will cope with their internships. Many lack self-confidence about meeting new people and entering new situations or wondering if their opinions will be valued. Worries or self-doubts of this nature are natural. Academic supervisors become concerned if a student feels that he or she can handle everything and anything that could happen in the organization. One of our students had concerns about being able to handle himself in situations involving death. Another, concerned about controlling his temper, presented the question, "What will I do if some guy calls me a so-and-so when I am with an officer?" Another student, assigned to a law office, expressed doubts about whether her writing and research abilities would be acceptable, since there would be law school interns in the same office. The author is aware that situations of this nature can be stressful, but they serve to contribute to the development of your confidence and self-reliance. For many students, an internship is their first "professional" job. Thus, certain personal goals include time management (getting to the site on time and meeting deadlines) and adapting to various rules and regulations such as dress, computer access and use, parking, and dealing with confidential information.

Professional Development

Your internship should help you evaluate your interest in pursuing a career in criminal justice or a related field. This is preceded by the difficult question, "Why are you studying criminal justice or a related area such

as financial crime investigation, emergency management, homeland security, forensics, or cybersecurity?” Many students enroll in these programs because they have a notion about careers or postgraduate work related to the field. Most students realize that they will have to spend time in an entry-level position before moving upward in an organization. Therefore, many view the internship as an opportunity to see if they really wish to enter the field and to gain experience at the entry level. Most students complete their experience satisfied with their career goals; others find that their chosen area does not suit them. One striking example involves a student who was interested in criminal law as a career. After one semester in a law office, he changed his mind.

Another student in a sheriff’s department wrote, “I was unsure what I wanted to do after graduation. To see various aspects of the system and department allowed me to better focus and grasp what I want to do for a career.”

Many students see the internship as a vehicle for job placement. There are cases in which students obtained a job with their organization either during or immediately following their internship. In these cases, there was an opening, the student enjoyed the work, and the placement site agency wanted to hire the student. In some cases, the students were granted probationary status for civil service purposes. To be candid, this only occurs in a small number of placements. While the internship experience may or may not lead to immediate employment with the host field site, it provides valuable experience and insight into how one goes about procuring employment in a specific field of criminal justice. Additionally, you can begin career networking by developing important references and contacts.

Many organizations would like to hire successful interns but are unable to at the immediate time of the placement conclusion because of budget considerations and civil service requirements. While this may be frustrating, students must never treat the internship experience as merely a temporary obstacle to be overcome on the way to graduation. Students who are not successful in their internship can be negatively affected when it comes to future recommendations or pre-employment background checks. Academic and field supervisors may have to respond “I do not recommend” or “No comment” for interns who displayed unethical behavior or exhibited serious personal or professional problems during the internship. Therefore, you must bear in mind that the internship can have a direct effect on future employment and educational opportunities. From the beginning of the internship, you must perform with professionalism and an eye to the future.

About This Book

This book is divided into four parts: Pre-internship Considerations, Professional Concerns, The Role of the Organization, and Assessment and

Career Planning. In Part I, Chapter 2, "Preparing for Your Internship in the Age of Transparency," has been added to address the increased use of blogs and the popularity of social networks and online video websites. You are encouraged to review this before you begin your internship search, because your participation in these technologies may affect the process.

Chapter 3, "The Placement Process," discusses how to obtain a criminal justice internship placement. Although the process varies from school to school, there are some common concerns faced by all students. The internship should be looked at as a dry run for postgraduate employment, so information is included on résumé writing, telephone and e-mail etiquette, background investigations, and how to conduct yourself in an interview. The chapter also presents several resources for finding an appropriate site, including your college's career services office and various Internet sites.

Part II, Professional Concerns, discusses some major issues that can arise during an internship. Chapter 4, "Setting Goals and Identifying Educational Objectives," focuses on setting your learning goals before beginning your internship. You may be asked to set goals in the following areas: knowledge acquisition, performance assessment, personal development, and professional development. Although your goals may change during your internship, they provide a foundation for your performance and understanding of issues at the internship site.

The four stages of an internship experience are discussed in Chapter 5, "Your Role as an Intern." Critical issues presented include role conflict, social isolation, and interpersonal relations. Chapter 6, "Being a Participant-Observer," provides a methodology for recording your experience. Supervision during an internship is dealt with in Chapter 7, "Intern Supervision." The supervisory process, which involves both academic and field supervisors as well as peers, is an important facet of the learning process. Chapter 8, "Ethics in Practice: Guidelines," is an important chapter because many interns are confronted with real-life ethical and moral dilemmas. Based on recent scandals in business and criminal justice organizations, it is important that you begin to identify and distinguish between personal ethics and emerging professional ethics.

Part III, The Role of the Organization, is about the operations of the internship site. Chapter 9, "Organizational Characteristics: Formal and Informal Structures," reviews the basic organizational structure tenets. Your success in the internship may depend on how well you adapt to your agency's formal and informal structures. Two agency case studies, the Flanders County District Attorney's Office and the Northwest Frontier Bank Corporation, illustrate these concepts. Recent trends in organizational dynamics, such as total quality management, reengineering, and ethical issues, are also presented.

Chapter 10, "Political, Economic, and Legal Factors," discusses the ways in which day-to-day operations and personnel are affected by those factors.

Also covered is the role of public policy and its impact on organizational decision making. Chapter 11, “Organizational Goals and Relationships,” discusses organizational effectiveness and its relationship to the overall criminal justice system, including the system of checks and balances. In Chapter 12, “Using Information and Technology as Crime-fighting Tools,” we discuss how the use of technology in the prevention, detection, investigation, and prosecution of crime continues to change. Progressive public agencies and organizations in the private sector use technology to assist in the day-to-day operations of fighting crime. As a result, interns are exposed to more technology and can apply the skills they have learned in the classroom to the tasks at their site.

In Part IV, Assessment and Career Planning, Chapter 13, “Assessing Your Experience,” will aid you in evaluating your progress, as well as your total internship experience. It is divided into two parts: assessing your performance and assessing the organization. Factors to consider in seeking post-graduation employment are discussed in Chapter 14, “Career Planning.”

Highlights for the Tenth Edition

Criminal Justice Internships: Theory Into Practice continues to be a widely used text for internship courses offered in associate and baccalaureate degree programs, and as a benchmark reference book for curriculum planning and review. The following updates have been made to reflect current policies, practices, and trends affecting all organizations in the criminal justice ecosystem. Readers will note many comments made on the current COVID-19 pandemic, which altered American higher education in March 2020. As with many on-campus classes, internships were abridged or changed to remote worksites.

Chapter 1 gives an updated overview of the nature and purposes of an internship in the academic setting. Discussion includes the relationship of an internship with the overall academic goals of criminal justice programs and their importance for future career goals. Cooperative educational programs are briefly discussed in comparison to internships and “job shadowing.”

Chapter 2 presents more information on the impact of the Internet and the changes that continue to be made in social media. Further encouragements and cautions are given here, as potential employers often look at social media sites for intern placements and employment.

Chapter 3, on the placement process, updates the steps for résumé development and intern placement. It also discusses the current issue of remote placements during the current pandemic and participating in online interviews. The important message here is to begin making plans for an internship early during the academic experience.

Chapter 4 gives further guidance for setting goals and objectives for an internship experience based on general education objectives for most criminal justice programs. Attention is given to the applications of academic theory and various concepts as a part of knowledge acquisition.

Chapter 5, on the role of the intern, reviews the main steps to becoming a participant-observer. Interns often need to remember that they are student participants in an organization.

Chapter 6 presents a further discussion of the socialization process from entry to termination and ideas on conducting structured and unstructured interviews.

Chapter 7, on supervision, updates the student, faculty supervisor, and internship field supervisor's role. The roles of these three parties are important for the success of the internship. More attention is given to "when things go wrong" and what to do.

Chapter 8 reviews the ethical issues that students face and the critical need to need for confidentiality and maintaining appropriate interpersonal relationships. As with any other college course, the rules regarding plagiarism, cheating, and lying prevail. The author includes a short list on how students can get into difficulty during their internship.

Chapter 9 updates the Northwest Bank case study and the new trends during the pandemic economy.

Chapter 10 outlines current political, economic, and legal trends that impact criminal justice organizations, including those that provide compliance for federal and state laws.

Chapter 11 examines how organizations create goals to compete and survive in the community environment.

Chapter 12 updates digital technology's role in criminal justice agencies for crime detection, investigation, and prevention. Further discussion focuses on the expansion of cyber-related offenses that agencies must address.

Chapter 13 gives updated examples of assessment issues that students should review before and after their placements, including dealing with clients and customers.

Chapter 14 presents further guidance on career planning and how the internship experience is an essential guide to postgraduate career planning. Updated Department of Labor hiring and compensation regulations and trends are presented as well as the author's observations on successful careers.

This book, which is based on the author's experiences as an intern coordinator and supervisor, is designed to maximize the internship experience—an essential component of any criminal justice degree program. I wish you well in your endeavors and trust that this book will be a valuable resource for you before, during, and after your internship.