

**EXECUTIVE INTERNSHIP PROGRAM
PINELLAS COUNTY SCHOOLS
DUAL CREDIT**

The Executive Internship Program was introduced in Pinellas County high schools in 1974. Today, the Executive Internship Program is affiliated with a national organization of experiential education programs, and close to 10,000 students in Pinellas County have participated in the program.

The program represents a unique blending of the business community, the local college and the public schools. It is available to eligible high school students during their senior year. The students spend an average of 10 - 15 hours a week working with a professional at decision-making levels in their future career field. Students are not paid by their sponsors, but they do receive high school elective credit and college credit from St. Petersburg College for their participation. The serious educational nature of the program requires that interns keep daily analytical logs of their activities; participate in designated seminars; prepare presentations demonstrating what they have learned during the internship; and submit a program evaluation.

Some of the benefits of the program enable the students to: 1) make more informed decisions regarding college course work and potential majors, 2) see the relationship between theoretical classroom knowledge and the practical application of that knowledge, 3) develop a mentor relationship with a professional in their chosen career field, 4) explore a chosen field of interest, and 5) develop peer relationships with adults.

The program coordinators carefully pair sponsors and students. Pairing considerations include geographical locations, student interest, and sponsor availability, expertise and commitment to the program.

The caliber of students, cooperation and support from the community, St. Petersburg College and Pinellas County Schools are responsible for the success of the program. Eligible students demonstrate high levels of integrity, leadership, motivation, and flexibility; these are supported by a strong grade point average and an excellent school attendance record. Most sponsors have expressed their strong support of the program by their continuous participation and referral of other potential sponsoring organizations. Program sponsors serve as mentors; they monitor interns' progress, and provide resources and opportunities to foster a successful experience. Throughout the internship, sponsors collaborate and assist in goal setting and achievement and prepare periodic written evaluations of the students and their internship experiences.

Major colleges and universities around the country have recognized and acknowledged the academic merit of a student's internship experience. One university wrote:

Many scholarships at colleges and universities are based not purely on academic performance but also on outstanding leadership qualities. An internship program can add valuable experience and competence in that field.

In the *Executive Internship Program Follow-Up Survey of Former Students*, one student wrote:

The Admissions Board at Harvard was impressed with the program. From what I gather, the university feels that a professional experience adds a great deal to a high school education. I really feel that this program influenced their decision to accept me.

Also in the *Survey*, in response to the question asking students to rate their experience in the Executive Internship Program, 95% stated that it was either the "best" or a "very good" high school experience, and 98% supported the continuation of the program. In response to the question regarding the factors that influenced a change in the students' career goals, one student responded, "The internship showed me that even though I enjoyed my internship, I decided that a career in medicine or the health professions was not what I wanted . . ."

The Executive Internship Program is an excellent opportunity for capable college-bound seniors to be introduced not only to their possible future careers, but also to life's realities. A former student summed it up when she wrote,

My internship was a learning experience in life, not just job/skill knowledge. I . . . wholeheartedly endorse the . . . Executive Internship Program.

Internship placements include but are not limited to:

Law	Banking	Engineering	Dentistry
Computers	Public Relations	Business	Government/Politics
Medicine	Law Enforcement	Fire and Rescue	Architecture
Advertising	Social Services	Cultural	Science
Communications	Accounting	Education	EnvironmentalMarine
Archeology	Physical Therapy	Media Productions	Veterinary Medicine