

**Marine Technician Internship Program  
In Partnership with  
The University National Oceanographic Laboratory Systems Fleet of Vessels  
And  
The Ocean Drilling Program**

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**Overview**

The Marine Advanced Technology Education (MATE) Center began the Technical Internship Program in conjunction with the University National Oceanographic Laboratory Systems (UNOLS) vessels and the Ocean Drilling Program (ODP) during the summer of 1999. At that time, the Center was granted supplemental funding in order to pay for students to participate in at-sea internships. The original funding was for the first three years, ending during the summer of 2001. Since that time, MATE applied for and received a second supplemental, in order to continue this program. The program continues to be a success, as measured through mentor and student feedback and evaluations.

Over the past year the Technical Internship Program has worked with five different UNOLS vessel operators and the ODP, placing nine students onboard these ships. Eighty-nine percent of these operators have worked with the MATE Center in the past, showing their interest and satisfaction in the program. The ODP hosted one student over the past year, for a ten-week period.

**Results**

The MATE Center has found that over the past year, the interest in going to sea has increased. Students are excited by the opportunity to get hands-on experiences, while meeting some of the top technicians in our country. The students are gaining skills in: electronics, computers, and general sea worthiness; as well as learning how to use such equipment as a CTD, ADCP, and ROV. All of the students have stated that they have gained some sort of technical skill that will be beneficial for them in their future career. Students are also learning about interpersonal skills- how to interact with people in close quarters, for a long period of time.

One student, Penelope Ross, explains that while onboard the R/V *Seward Johnson*, “each and every person on the boat did some small thing to include me as a part of the crew and ensure that I had the information and tools I needed to function. I couldn’t have asked for a nicer group of people to be on a ship with.” Not only was Penelope exposed to great interpersonal skills, but she also learned how to operate the CTD. She states that, “although we only did one CTD cast, I learned more about this instrument than any of the others onboard. My mentor, LaVerne Taylor, helped me learn sensor recognition and afforded me the opportunity to deck test the CTD and become acquainted with the software.” As a result of this opportunity, Penelope has spoken with Rich Findley about

coming out to work for Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institution aboard one of their vessels.

Of the seven opportunities students have had over the past year, less than half of the mentors have returned evaluations. Unfortunately, this makes it hard to evaluate the program from the employer's perspective. However, if one looks at repeat customers and the hiring of past interns, then it can be extrapolated that the mentors are enjoying the opportunity to share with students. They are also, in most cases, gaining capable hands that want to learn and are willing to work in order to get the job done. Of the mentors that did return evaluations, they stated that they were impressed with their student's abilities and that all of the students had some sort of skill improvement. One hundred percent of the mentors stated that if they had an opening, they would hire the student after their internship.

Both the ODP and UNOLS vessels should start to see an increase in past MATE students applying for jobs aboard research vessels. Over the past four years, ten students have applied for jobs as marine technicians as a direct result of their internship experience. It is realized that not all of the students that finish an internship will want to go into this field, but these statistics show that the vessel operators and the program in general are achieving the goal of increasing the skills, knowledge, and abilities of students to be able to work in this field.

### **Recommendations**

The MATE Center Technical Internship Program is always striving to make this program run smoother and easier, so any suggestions on how to do that are greatly appreciated. When looking over the past year, it appears that there are a couple of issues that may help the program to work better. The first issue is that of timing; schedules must be flexible on all sides, but as much advanced notice for cruises is greatly appreciated. Perhaps it is a good method to try and work with scientists that generally do not fill their bunks or need extra help; this may allow everyone to plan further in advance.

The second issue that has become a concern for the Internship Program is that of evaluations. Evaluations are difficult for many reasons, but they are incredibly valuable to the success of the program. Unfortunately, not very many evaluations have been returned. If this is a time issue, please let the Center know how they might help with this problem- send the evaluation electronically, make it shorter, or something else. If evaluations are not being returned do to a student's inability to complete their work plan while on the cruise, then that needs to be addressed. The Mate Center realizes the sensitivity of issues related to work product, but also realizes that if there is not "real" feedback given, improvements to your experience or that of future students cannot be made.

Over the next year, the Center will continue to strive for excellence in the students placed and the experience they receive and give to you! Your feedback on how this process can be improved is greatly appreciated. The Technical Internship Program at the MATE Center looks forward to another great year working with all of you!