

LEGISLATIVE INTERNSHIPS

MTSU Department of Political Science

This is to provide information to MTSU students interested in doing internships at the state legislature in Nashville.

Two types of legislative internships are available through our department: the statewide Tennessee Legislative Internship Program (the “state program”) and the MTSU program (the “private program”). They differ in some ways, but both programs offer extremely valuable and enjoyable experiences.

Availability:

Internships are available ONLY in the Spring semester, when the legislature is in session.

Duties:

Interns perform a range of duties, including research, bill analysis and tracking, constituent work, and clerical tasks. Specific duties will vary day to day and according to the intern’s placement. All interns, however, enjoy the rare opportunity to observe the state legislative process on a daily and up close basis.

Eligibility:

For the state program: Applicants must have earned at least **60 hours of college credit** (not counting developmental or remedial hours) and have a **GPA of at least 3.0** at the time of application (i.e., at the start of the Fall semester during which you apply for the internship).

For the private program: Applicants must have earned at least **60 hours of college credit** (not counting developmental or remedial hours) and have a **GPA of at least 2.5** at the time the internship would start (i.e., at the start of the Spring semester).

Application Process:

Complete applications include an application form, a biographical statement, two recommendation forms completed by faculty members, and a transcript of all college work. Applicants who qualify for both programs will automatically be considered for both. Interviews are held on campus in October. After those interviews, some applicants (usually four) are nominated for the state program. Those students go to Nashville in mid-November for another interview. After those take place, final decisions are made about all applicants. You should know

for sure whether you will be doing an internship by Thanksgiving. If you don't know your status by the time of registration for Spring classes, go ahead and sign up for regular courses as a backup plan. If you do get an internship, you can then drop those courses and add the internship course.

Number of Internships:

Each year, about four MTSU students usually win state internships; another five or so become private interns. In addition, other students are sometimes hired as clerks by the state House and state Senate.

Academic Credit:

You must be enrolled as a student during the semester of your internship. The course you will take is P.S. 4360; you can enroll for 3, 6, or 12 credit hours. In most cases, up to six hours can count toward Political Science majors or minors; an additional six can count as elective hours to be used toward graduation.

IMPORTANT: meet with your academic advisor(s) to verify exactly how your internship hours will apply to your program of study. The internship hours cannot always substitute for required major or minor courses.

Grading:

You will receive a grade of A through F based on your performance as an intern and your fulfillment of course requirements.

Paper:

All interns will write a paper describing and reflecting on their internship experiences. Papers for students enrolled in 12 hours will be at least 15 pages long; papers for students enrolled for fewer hours will be somewhat shorter. No academic credit will be awarded until this paper is done. Further details about the paper will be provided.

Work Hours:

Interns work 8:00 to 4:30, Monday through Friday, at the Legislative Plaza in Nashville. Interns receive state holidays off, but not university holidays. Unpaid overtime is not usual but may occasionally be required.

Pay:

Interns are currently paid \$350 per week, with an additional \$350 paid at the start of the internship to help cover moving or clothing expenses. State interns are paid directly by the state. MTSU interns are paid once a month by the university.

All interns are eligible for mileage reimbursement for one round trip per month between MTSU and the legislature.

Placement:

Interns work for individual legislators or for legislative committees. State interns are placed by the state's intern coordinator. Private interns, who typically work for legislators representing part of Rutherford County, are placed by MTSU's internship coordinator. Private interns will know their placement by early December; state interns usually do not find out until January.

Start and End Dates:

2015 internships will begin on **January 12** and end on **May 1**.

Taking Other Courses:

Subject to permission by the MTSU intern coordinator, the legislature's intern coordinator, and the staff of the office to which you are assigned, you may be allowed to take one additional course. However, you should not register for a course that meets on weekdays, including night classes. Distance learning or Saturday courses are allowed. In all cases, your internship duties must take precedence over your studies.

Application Hints:

Having some basic knowledge about Tennessee government and politics, and about current political events in the state, is helpful. You are not expected to be an expert, but if you have no clue about what state government does, or who the key players are, you will be at a disadvantage. Good ways to familiarize yourself are to follow current political news and to browse through the state Blue Book (www.state.tn.us/sos/bluebook). You might also visit the state web page at www.tn.gov.

For further information or to get application materials, contact:

Dr. Mark Byrnes
Todd Hall 231
615-898-2534
Mark.Byrnes@mtsu.edu