

## Pre-Graduate School Internship Find Your Passion



THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN  
DIVISION OF DIVERSITY AND  
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

### IE PRE-GRADUATE SCHOOL INTERNSHIP: FACT SHEET

**IE PHILOSOPHY:** Intellectual Entrepreneurship (IE) is premised on the belief that intellect is not limited to the academy and entrepreneurship is not restricted to or synonymous with business. Entrepreneurship is a process of cultural innovation. IE includes a readiness to seek opportunities, undertake the responsibilities associated with each and tolerate the uncertainty and risks that come with initiating genuine innovation. IE moves the mission of institutions of higher learning from "advancing the frontiers of knowledge" and "preparing tomorrow's leaders" to also "serving as engines of economic, social, political and cultural development." *IE shifts the metaphor and model of education from one of "apprenticeship-certification-entitlement" to one of "discovery-ownership-accountability"—something concretely manifested in the Pre-Graduate School Internship and its success.*

**IE CONSORTIUM:** Sponsored by and part of the portfolio of the Vice President for Diversity and Community Engagement (DDCE), Intellectual Entrepreneurship (IE) is an inter-collegial Consortium of the Colleges of Communication, Liberal Arts, Fine Arts, Natural Sciences, Law, Education, Pharmacy, and the Schools of Information, Engineering, Business, Public Affairs and Social Work. The mission of IE is to educate "citizen-scholars"—individuals who creatively utilize their intellectual capital as a lever for social good. IE is an intellectual platform and educational philosophy for instigating learning across disciplinary boundaries, promoting diversity in higher education and generating collaborations between the academy and society. IE initiatives pertain to the undergraduate experience, graduate study, faculty research and the connections between the university and community. Information about the University of Texas IE Consortium and its various programs is available at:

<https://webpace.utexas.edu/cherwitz/www/ie/index.html>

**IE PRE-GRADUATE SCHOOL INTERNSHIP:** The IE Pre-Graduate School Internship is offered for academic credit; participants work closely with a "faculty supervisor" and/or "graduate student mentor" to create an internship experience aimed at exploring, anthropologically and from the ground up, their chosen field of study. Interns learn about the unique aspects of graduate study that make it distinct from their undergraduate experience (e.g., conducting research, writing for scholarly audiences, participating in seminars, serving as teaching and research assistants, publishing articles in professional journals, becoming

members of scholarly organizations and learned societies, preparing for an academic or professional career, etc.). Examples of internship activities include: attending graduate classes, shadowing graduate student teaching and research assistants, attending seminars and departmental colloquia, interviewing faculty, collaborating with mentors on research projects, traveling to meetings of academic and professional organizations, working in research labs and discussing graduate study and career development with faculty, professionals and graduate students. Additionally, all IE students keep a personal journal and attend workshops/meetings where they reflect on their experiences and exchange insights on what they're learning about themselves, the culture of graduate school, and academe and ways to obtain admissions and funding. At the end of the internship, students write a report about their experiences and share it with their faculty supervisor, graduate student mentor, and IE interns.

<http://communication.utexas.edu/ie>

**IE PRE-GRADUATE SCHOOL INTERNSHIP GOALS:** The IE Pre-Graduate School Internship seeks to give undergraduates greater agency in and ownership of their education—especially underrepresented minorities and first-generation students. It does this by enabling students to become “intellectual entrepreneurs,” discovering their passions and professional aspirations and discerning how advanced education can bring these commitments to fruition; this includes acquiring an understanding of how graduate education equips them to make meaningful contributions to their communities. The internship—best thought of as an “entrepreneurial incubator”—brings students into the graduate school pipeline who otherwise would not have contemplated continuing their education and helps them select an appropriate field of study. The internship also demystifies the process of gaining admission into and succeeding in graduate school. Long-term goals of the internship include: (1) increasing faculty diversity by substantially expanding the number of underrepresented minorities who attend and complete graduate school; (2) reducing attrition rates and time to degree through more informed and conscious student decision making; and (3) producing “citizen-scholars”—well-educated persons who leverage knowledge for social good.

**IE PRE-GRADUATE SCHOOL INTERNS:** *Over 2000 students have participated in the Pre-Graduate School Internship since 2004. Each year the number of interns has increased dramatically; in the spring of 2014, 200 interns were enrolled. The IE Pre-Graduate School has had unanticipated—yet very significant—consequences for two important populations; each semester, approximately 50%-60% of IE Pre-Graduate School interns are underrepresented minorities (African American, Latino or Native American) and/or first-generation (neither parent graduated from college) students—a disproportionate number compared to the proportion these students comprise in UT's overall undergraduate population. In 2013-2014, 70% of interns were from these populations or were economically disadvantaged students, and nearly 71% were women. The philosophy of intellectual entrepreneurship (empowering students by letting them design and own a learning experience that unites their passions and academic interests), accounts for much of this effect. For example, rather than focusing exclusively on students already interested in graduate study and helping them navigate the application process, and instead of serving primarily as a “recruitment” strategy, the IE Pre-Graduate School Internship provides an opportunity for students to discover their aspirations and explore the value of academic disciplines and the culture of graduate study. Not surprisingly, interns report that for the first time in their undergraduate experience a “space” was provided to make an “authentic decision.” By creating a course where students can reflect upon the role education plays in meeting their goals, IE permits students to view academic disciplines not as artificial containers into which they are placed, but as lenses through which to clarify their visions and as tools by which their goals might be realized. The value of IE as a mechanism for increasing diversity inheres in its capacity to help students discover otherwise unobserved connections between academe and personal and professional commitments. As IE Director Richard Cherwitz explains in an article published in the *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*, “Minority students reported that by rigorously exploring how to succeed, IE [the Pre-Graduate School Internship] demystified graduate school and the academic-professional world, helping them—many of whom were first-generation students—learn the unspoken rules of the game. More important, though, students told me that IE provided one of the few opportunities to contemplate how to utilize their intellectual capital to give back to the community as well as their academic disciplines—matters informing the career decisions of many first-generation and minority students.”*

<https://webspace.utexas.edu/cherwitz/www/ie/diversity.html>

In AY 2013-2014 over 100 faculty members (“supervisors”) and over 200 graduate students (“mentors”) worked with IE Pre-Grad interns; these faculty and graduate students represented 11 separate UT colleges/schools and over 40 different academic departments. IE Pre-Graduate School interns have studied in and undertaken their internships in every one of UT’s colleges and Schools (Liberal Arts, Natural Sciences, Fine Arts, Geological Sciences, Law, Education, Communication, Information, Social Work, Business, Nursing, Engineering, Architecture, Pharmacy, Public Affairs). An accurate estimate is that, since 2004, interns represent approximately 60 academic disciplines within these colleges/schools; when interns meet during the semester as a group and share their experiences, a wonderfully rich interdisciplinary discussion transpires—something that allows interns to unearth the enormous value of a variety of academic pursuits as well as the wide array of meaningful career paths that follow attainment of an advanced degree.

**IE PRE-GRADUATE SCHOOL INTERNS WHO CONTINUE ON TO GRADUATE SCHOOL:**

*Based on self-report, we estimate that over 50% of Pre-Grad interns who received a baccalaureate degree now have entered graduate school; this percentage is slightly higher for underrepresented minorities and first-generation students.* Many of these students report that they had not seriously contemplated graduate education prior to enrolling in the IE Pre-Graduate School Internship. From 2006-2013, interns went on to such prestigious institutions as California-Berkeley, NYU, Columbia, MIT, Northwestern, USC, London School of Economics, Cal Tech, Michigan, UCLA, Harvard, Johns Hopkins, Duke, Penn, UNC, Texas and others. An equally compelling fact is that approximately 10% or more of interns decide as a result of the internship that graduate school is not for them, should be postponed or should be pursued in a different academic field than what they first decided. This is a success story as well since currently there may be too many students attending graduate school for the wrong reasons (often by default) or enrolled in an inappropriate academic discipline; as a result, some of these students incur substantial debt, become alienated from the academy and are among graduate schools’ attrition statistics. Employing the philosophy of intellectual entrepreneurship, the Pre-Graduate School Internship not only has been successful in bringing a new population into the graduate school pipeline, but has been effective in making sure that students’ passions and professional aspirations are consciously reflected in their decision about whether to seek an advanced degree and if so in which field. Student narratives and videos supporting these findings and other successful outcomes are contained on the IE WEB page:

<https://webspaces.utexas.edu/cherwitz/www/ie/kern.html>