Guidance for Faculty:
Internship and Career Field Experiences Impacted by COVID-19

The Center for Career and Professional Development (CCPD) recognizes that recent developments with campus and employer closures due to COVID-19 have impacted student internships and other career field experiences. We, along with the Mercer University community, place great value in career field experiences and it is our desire to assist students and faculty in handling these engagements in a satisfactory manner. The CCPD is actively monitoring the situation through engagement with our professional networks and we are evaluating best practices in order to provide guidance to the Mercer community. We will continue to monitor this evolving situation, providing new resources and making changes to our recommendations as necessary.

Understanding that long-term planning and impact is not yet known and may not be known for some time, we have put together a plan to address student completion of internships and career field experiences for the spring 2020 semester.

Potential Options for Internship Completion
We understand that the future of spring 2020 internships remains uncertain and will be dependent largely on the intern host organization and student physical location during employer closures and campus online instruction. Faculty members who supervise internship students are encouraged to develop an internship completion plan that addresses the needs for that specific student, the desired learning outcomes, and the department.

The CCPD is suggesting the following options for internship completion. This is not an exhaustive list and we understand that other options provide possible solutions or that a selection of multiple options might be what works best for the student. It is important to realize that no two solutions will be the same.

Convert Internship to Remote Work:
Students can work with their internship host site to convert their existing internship to remote-based learning and work projects. Students would complete the internship like normal, following the existing evaluation timeline set by their program and faculty coordinator.

Seek Alternative Assignment to Complete Internship:
If students cannot convert their existing internship to a remote opportunity or if the employer prematurely ends the internship, students and faculty are encouraged to develop alternative assignments to address any missing contact hours. Potential assignments include:

- Student reflections on their internship experience and the impact of current events
- A critical evaluation of their host organization’s adaptation to COVID-19 concerns
- An exploration of COVID-19 impacts on their intended career field

Alternative Assignment consisting of Available Career Development Resources:
Faculty are encouraged to develop a plan with their students that could involve engagement with CCPD and career development resources. The faculty would determine which resources are appropriate for this situation and the student would be responsible for documenting their completion of the assigned tasks. Our office is happy to assist students with the following opportunities to engage their continued career development and meet intended internship objectives:

- Attending Career and Professional Development Week Events (March 23-27) (virtual)
- Electronic Career Document (Resume, CV, Cover Letter, etc.) Review through Handshake
- Job and Internship Search Techniques
- Viewing CCPD Recorded Webinars
• Practice Interview Techniques and Record a Mock Interview with Big Interview (you can create questions and they can share a link to the mock interview if you like)
• Identify a Potential Job in Handshake and Write a Cover Letter and Resume Tailored for that Job
• Write Two Thank You Letters to Mentors at the Internship Host Site

Evaluate Internship Completeness at time of Employer Closure:
For some students, it might be necessary to prematurely end the internship and evaluate the internship completeness at the time of employer closure, without assigning any new tasks. In this situation, students would be evaluated on the work completed up to the time of organization closure or dismissal and would still be responsible for any reflection paperwork traditionally required as part of their experience.

Assignment of Incomplete Grade with Timeline to Complete Internship:
If a student has received information from their host organization about the potential to complete their internship at a later date, it is important to recognize that the new timelines might not align with the spring 2020 semester. Faculty should use their discretion in assigning an incomplete grade and designing a new timeline for completion. In addition, the CCPD acknowledges that many employers are currently evaluating their capacity to host summer interns, which makes this option risky and potentially not advised. This would not be a good option for graduating seniors.