

UC San Diego

**DEPARTMENT OF URBAN STUDIES & PLANNING
SENIOR SEQUENCE ORIENTATION**

April 8, 2026

Agenda

- Structure of Senior Sequence
- Academic Requirements
- Internship Requirement
- AIP Process for Learning Agreement, Tracking Hours, Evaluation
- Student tips and advice
- Additional information on USP 186 and 187
- Who to contact for help
- Q & A

Senior Sequence Structure

- Senior sequence is designed around the Senior Research Project (SRP)
- **USP 186**, in which you plan and write a research **proposal**, is a prereq for...
- **USP 187**, in which you collect and analyze data and write a research **paper**...
- ...and a **poster** you present at the **Urban Expo** on Thursday, March 11, 2027

Academic Requirements

- TIP: Prioritize these classes
- **USP 186** (Fall) + **USP 187** (Winter)
 - USP 186 prereqs are FIRM: USP 30*, USP 60* (or POLI 30/PSYCH 60/SOCI 60), USP 124, Research Methods, and Technical Elective
 - *USP 30 is a pre-requisite for USP 186 effective Fall 2025
 - Prereq grades must be D or higher to be allowed to register for the classes, if received a D in any major requirements will be required to retake for graduation
- Each is 6 credits, including 2 credits for the required **internship**

USP Internship Requirement

- The internship counts for two (2) units each quarter
- It may be **related or unrelated** to your Senior Research Project (SRP)
- It can be **paid or unpaid**; a part-time job can count
- It can be **in-person, hybrid, or remote**
 - Recommend in-person or hybrid to get the best experience
- It should **apply to USP** in some manner
 - If you're unsure if a position can count, contact Jennifer and include the job description
- It should **align with your career exploration** and be professional development

USP Internship Requirement

For credit...

- **You need 100 hours by the end of Winter Quarter**
- Hours are tracked in REAL Portal via AIP
- You can start counting hours **as of Sept. 1** (can continue summer internships)
- Internship must be secured by end of Week 3 in Fall quarter
- You must start your internship by end of Week 5 in Fall quarter
- Maximize this opportunity! It is what you make of it

Career Exploration - Start Now

- Career Exploration
 - What are you interested in learning more about?
 - Conduct research and informational interviews
 - Look at full-time jobs
 - What has sparked your interest in your classes or when you read the news?
What gets you fired up?
 - Look through organizations and companies. Which ones pop out to you?

Prepare Application Materials

- Update your resume and understand the basics of writing a cover letter
 - Many posted internships will have multiple applicants and sometimes postings will only be up for a week or two so you want to have your resume ready as soon as possible
 - Hiring timeline can be lengthy - 3-8+ weeks
- Resume template will be emailed
 - Do NOT use Canva/get fancy
 - Add in course projects
 - Update it for Winter and Spring quarters

Prepare Application Materials

- Attend Summer Internship/Job Search and Resume workshop held in early July if want a refresher or missed previous workshops/USP 30
 - Also have Summer 2025 workshop recorded, has been modified since then
- Have your resume reviewed by Jennifer and/or the Career Center staff
 - Do NOT rely on reviews by those who do not work in HR or do this on a frequent basis
- Optional:
 - Portfolio: Necessary for arch/design related internships
 - LinkedIn

Recruitment Trends for USP Related Positions

- Summer Internships:
 - Some recruiting prior in FA quarter (more for larger cohorts or construction management)
 - Majority is advertised January through April/May, then will significantly slow down in June
- Fall Internships/School Year Internships:
 - July not many posted
 - August, September, early October is peak recruitment
 - Significant slow down between Thanksgiving and New Years
- Always will be one-offs to these trends

Identifying Where to Find Posted Opportunities

- No one standard place all employers post
- Utilize multiple resources
 - DUSP Blog's Internship page
 - Handshake, Indeed, LinkedIn
 - APA portal/websites
 - Governmentjobs.com
 - Organization/company websites (City of San Diego, SANDAG, Caltrans, etc)
- UCSD Spring Career Fair on Thursday 4/9
- Do NOT put all of your eggs in one basket - keep applying until you have accepted an offer

Identify and Find Unposted Opportunities

- Cold email organizations you are interested in working for
 - Attach resume as PDF, email should be a mini cover letter, direct email to someone likely with authority to hire and bandwidth to respond (middle management)
- Networking
 - Faculty, advisors, friends, family, and classmates
 - Networking events with Professional Associations
 - Alumni
 - Informational interviews
- Note: If interested in architecture or urban design related positions you need to do cold outreach

Prepare for Interviews

- Do online research about the organization
- Use Big Interview
- Prepare references
- Two way street - will this be a good opportunity for you? Ask questions
- Be sure to send a thank you email within 24 hours after the interview

What to Look for in an Internship

- What do you gain from the experience? Skills, knowledge, network, etc
- What sector are you interested in working in?
- What kinds of projects would you like to work on?
- What opportunities for feedback/mentoring exist?
- Are there opportunities to learn about the organization as a whole are will you be focused mostly on your own projects?

Internship Logistics

- Is the internship in-person, hybrid, or remote?
 - For remote internships, what software and hardware are provided for you to be successful? Are there resources for remote support?
 - Recommend in-person or hybrid for optimal learning
- Is the internship easily accessible?
- Is it possible to take an unpaid internship or do you need one that is paid?
 - Stephen Lew Scholarship
- If there are barriers you perceive to have about securing your internship let's talk about them

Final Internship Thoughts

- You must start this process by at least mid-July
- It is what you make of it both in the type of internship and what you get out of it
- Internships are long interviews -> Doing an excellent job can lead to full-time job opportunities and/or referrals
- Be responsive, communicative, and accountable

Documenting your Internship

Submitting a Learning Agreement

Tricia Taylor Oliveira

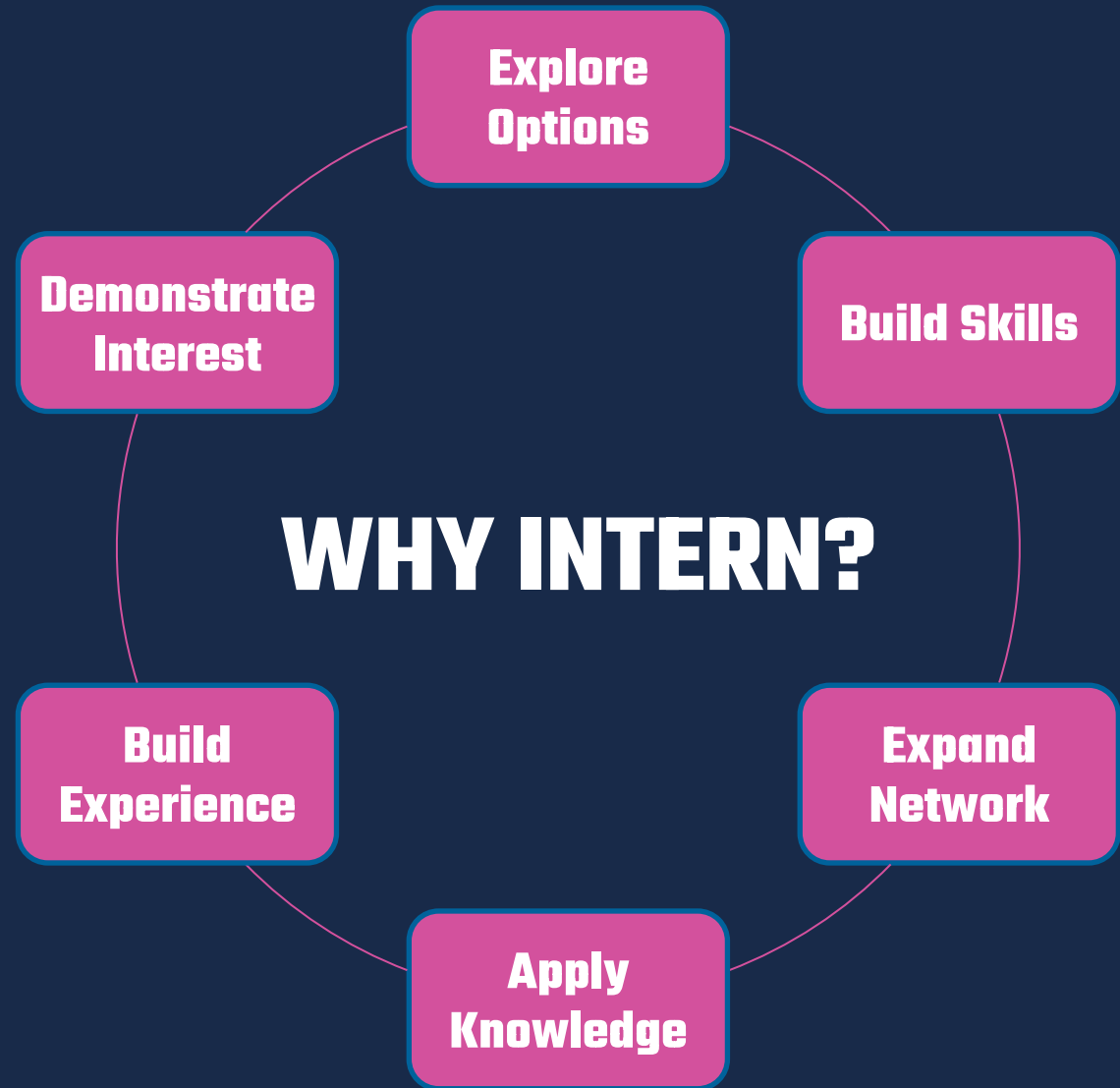
**Academic Internship Program
(AIP)**

UC San Diego

TEACHING AND LEARNING COMMONS

Employers consistently rate *internships* among the *most influential factors* in hiring decisions

NACE Job Outlook

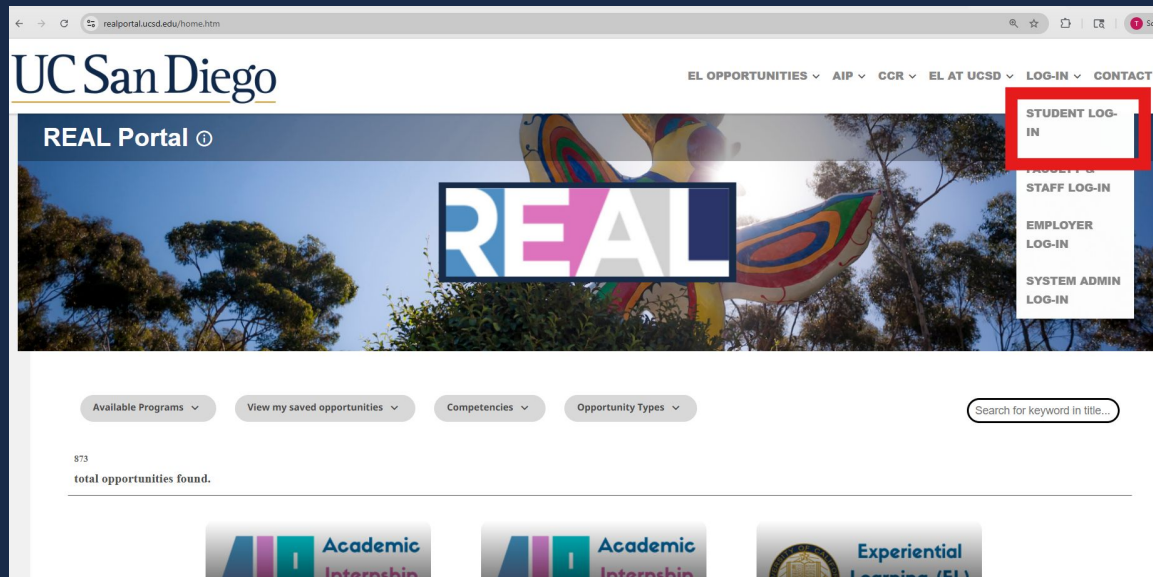


Internship Documentation

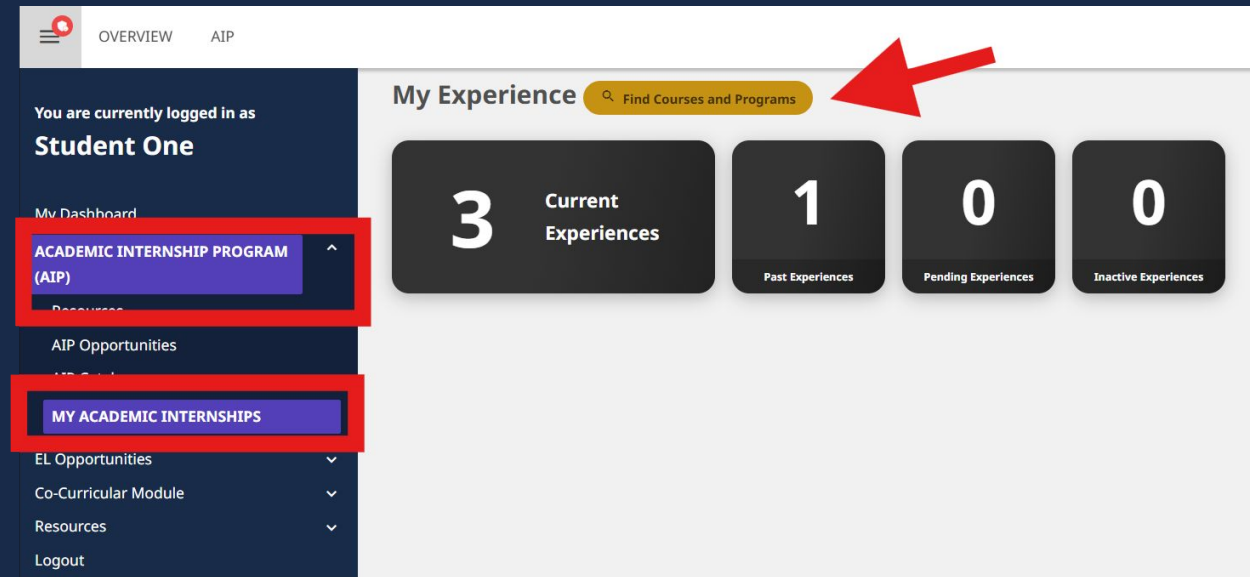
1. Submit a Learning Agreement via the [REAL Portal](#) database
 - Internship details
 - Learning objectives
 - Supervisor approval
2. Track engagement using Track Hours tool
3. Supervisor submits evaluation



REAL Portal (realportal.ucsd.edu)



The screenshot shows the REAL Portal homepage. At the top left is the UC San Diego logo. The main header features the 'REAL Portal' title and a large 'REAL' logo. A navigation menu on the right includes 'STUDENT LOG-IN', 'STAFF LOG-IN', 'EMPLOYER LOG-IN', and 'SYSTEM ADMIN LOG-IN'. Below the header, there are filters for 'Available Programs', 'View my saved opportunities', 'Competencies', and 'Opportunity Types', along with a search bar. The page indicates '873 total opportunities found.' and features banners for 'Academic Internship' and 'Experiential Learning (EL)'.



The screenshot shows the 'My Experience' dashboard for a student. The user is logged in as 'Student One'. The dashboard displays four experience categories: '3 Current Experiences', '1 Past Experiences', '0 Pending Experiences', and '0 Inactive Experiences'. A red arrow points to the 'Find Courses and Programs' search bar. The left sidebar menu includes 'ACADEMIC INTERNSHIP PROGRAM (AIP)' and 'MY ACADEMIC INTERNSHIPS', both highlighted with red boxes. Other menu items include 'AIP Opportunities', 'EL Opportunities', 'Co-Curricular Module', 'Resources', and 'Logout'.

Learning Objectives

1. Set your intention
2. Communicate your goals to your supervisor

May focus on:

- Specific skills/competencies
- Industry knowledge
- Career exploration
- Academic interests





SMART Goals

Specific

Measurable

Attainable

Relevant

Time-phased

NO

- Gain skills to enter the workforce
- Decide what I want to do in the future



YES

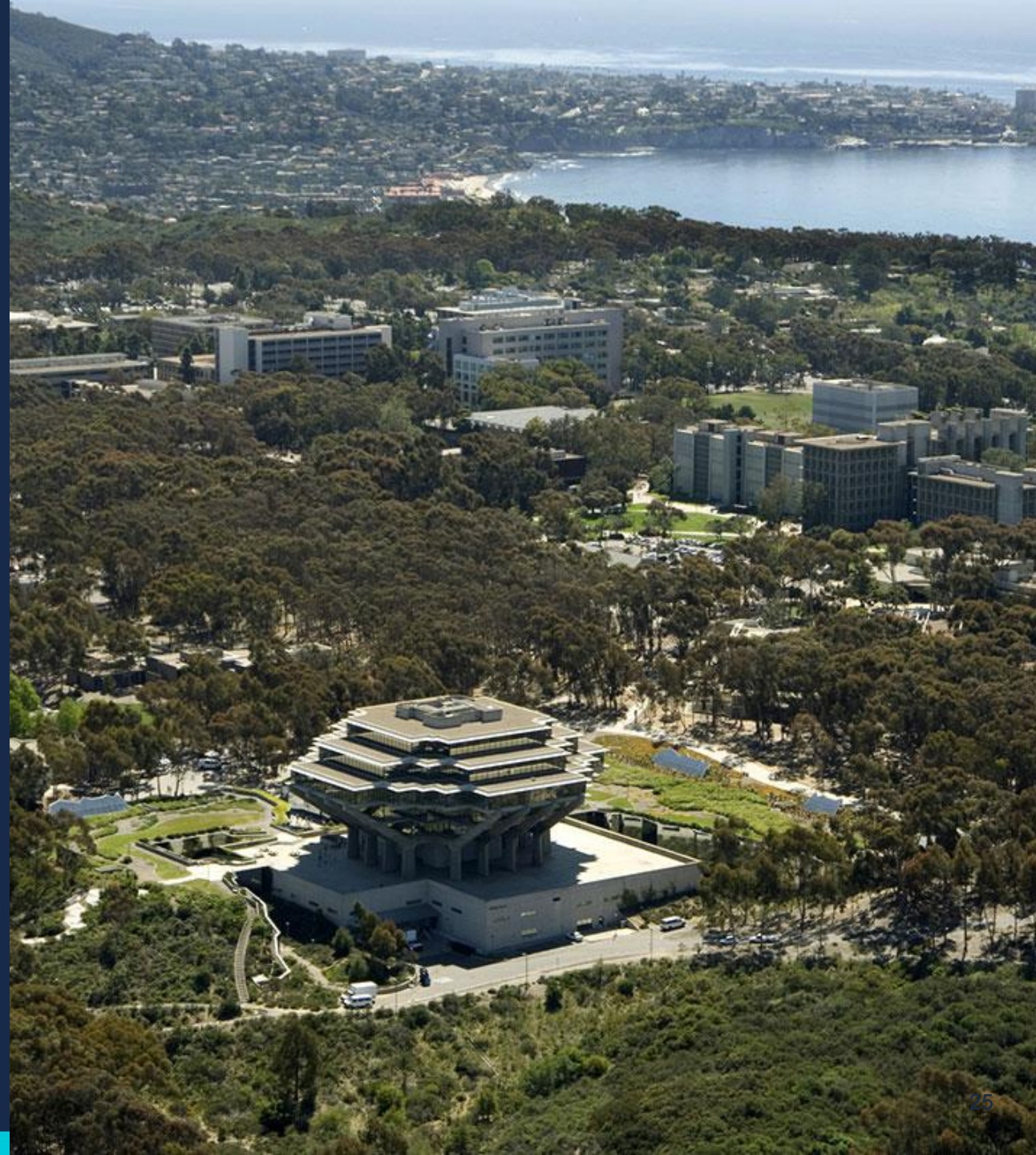
- Practice and further develop my skills using GIS in a professional setting
- Increase my knowledge of the professional roles involved in local planning



Remember...

- The Learning Agreement is professional communication shared with your Internship Supervisor
- Submit the Learning Agreement once you have your internship secured (and no later than 2 weeks after starting)
- Using AI to assist with writing your description or goals? Be sure to carefully review, refine, and edit for clarity and accuracy—**do not copy/paste as is!**

Tricia Taylor Oliveira
Director, Academic Internship Program
UC San Diego
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Contact me on the VAC!



Advice from former students

In Winter 2025, the final assignment in USP 187 was to write a short reflection on the internship experience. One of the optional prompts was to offer advice to future students in the Senior Sequence. 58 students submitted reflections.

Here are some of the most common themes in their advice with [some of Prof. Martin's observations](#).

34% advise you to align your internship with your research topic

- It can help with time management
- It can help you stay motivated
- It can give you access to unique data
- You can align them by picking your internship to match your topic *or by changing your topic*

28% advise you to manage your time carefully

- Keep up a steady pace with a regular schedule
- Use a calendar
- Plan months in advance
- Finish some things early if possible
- *No one was glad to have procrastinated*

19%

advise you to communicate clearly
and often with supervisors &
instructors

- Ask supervisors for the schedule you need
- Check in regularly with TAs and instructors
- Ask for help with contacts, data, & methods
- Come to office hours early in the quarter

16% advise you to start looking for an internship early

- Think about possible research topics now
- Start looking for potential internships now
- Ask around! Use your networks!
- Your first ideas might not work out

7%

advise you to take care of yourself
as your highest priority

- The Senior Sequence can be stressful
- *All of these tips will mitigate stress*

Who can help you?

- Questions about your academic schedule = **Dawn**
- Questions about career exploration, resumes, cover letters, internship search = **Jennifer, Tricia, Career Center** staff
- Questions on if a particular position can count for internship requirement = **Jennifer**
- Questions on how timing and hours of internship impact grade and any extensions on deadlines = **Prof. Martin & Prof. Bussell**
- Brainstorming internship ideas and connections = **DUSP Faculty, Jennifer, & Tricia**
- Questions on AIP paperwork/forms = **Tricia**

PLEASE UTILIZE YOUR RESOURCES EARLY!