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## Give and take

By ERIKA PRAFDER

SO, you've logged in a couple of college internships under your belt — maybe even managed to negotiate decent wages each time for your time and efforts.

Prospective employers are sure to value all of the new skills you've picked up. But, if you're looking to differentiate yourself and find a way to wow hiring prospects, consider committing yourself to an externship or two.

Externships are typically voluntary, do-good/give back types of experiences and are often completed within non-profit settings.

"Many students are first exposed to community service at the high school level. Now, they're increasingly expected to continue such work at the college level," said Rob Franek, vice president and publisher for The Princeton Review.

Unlike internships, which usually take place over an academic semester or summer hiatus, externships are generally two to four weeks during college vacations.

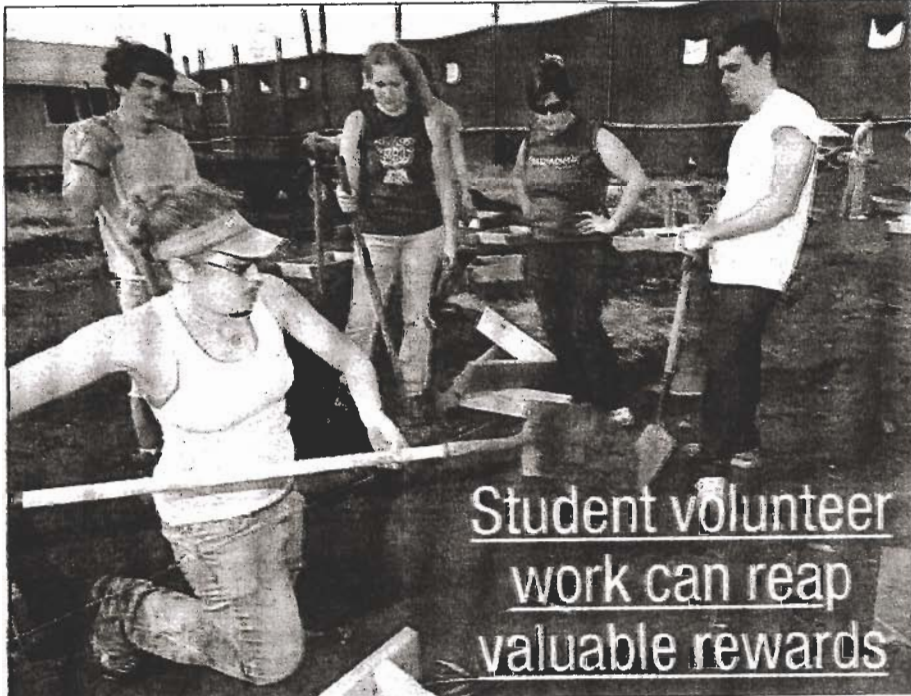
Since most college curriculums don't require students to fulfill an externship,

"What these experiences demonstrate to employers is that a student exists as a team player to the outside

community," said Franek.

While externships are largely unpaid, students often receive college credit or use their experiences for graduate school application and essay material.

There are other hard benefits, too. Marianne Recher, a third year law school student at St. Johns University, said her externship was one of the best things she's done during school.



Johns Hopkins University students work on a Habitat for Humanity project in Hawaii. This kind of volunteer work is good for the community — and the resume

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This past fall semester, she and seven other students participated in the school's Street Law Externship Program, a new program designed to hone students' law skills.

The college partnered with Jamaica High School in a project aiming to teach economically and socially disadvantaged seniors about their legal rights and responsibilities.

The St. John's law students followed lesson plans and taught an introduction to law class that covered constitutional rights, how the State and Federal court systems are organized, morality and the law and what one needs to do to be an informed citizen today.

"It was a real class for these kids — they were getting graded on it," explained Recher. "I was apprehensive. It was challenging to get up there and keep a class of 25 kids interested," she said.

The program was very well structured, though.

"Every teaching session is very relevant," explained Patricia Montana, associate professor of legal writing at St. Johns and the program's founder. "We used examples like drug testing for student athletes and metal detectors in schools."

By the semester's end, Recher said she had learned significant skills, such as how to simplify legal concepts. She also received three college credits, but the real payback will last for years.

"They truly enjoyed the experience of working with students from diverse backgrounds," said Montana. "It positively shaped their ability to be good lawyers."

The impact of hands-on work experiences with a social bent cannot be underestimated according to Sam Holleran. Currently pursuing

bachelors degrees in both Social/Historical Inquiry at Eugene Lang College and a bachelor of fine arts degree in Illustration at Parsons, he made time in July of 2005 to participate in a two-week summer externship program organized by Parsons.

He joined fellow design students from New York in the Dominican Republic where, along with Dominican students, they worked on a design challenge.

"We were based in La Romana, which is off the beaten path. The town was a hardscrabble place — not dangerous, but not tourist-oriented," said Holleran.

The students' design brief was to try and create inviting ways for tourists who came to the surrounding areas to interact with the locals.

The intense work period yielded some fruitful results.

"We designed a booklet for the local government which included hints for working the transport system, how to hire a motor-bike, facts about the local produce and the professional baseball players that practice there," he said.

While Holleran paid his own way, he says his financial responsibility amounted to less than paying for course credits at Parsons and that he recommends the experience.

"It reinforced my interest in socially-conscious work and broadened my perspective," he said.

■ For information on schools that offer these experiences, check out "Colleges with a Conscience: 81 Great Schools with Outstanding Community Involvement" (Random House / Princeton Review, \$16.95.)