

ENVIRONMENTAL ADVOCACY INTERNSHIP

A proposed internship scheme matching experienced environmental advocates and interns within state and national environmental non-government organisations (ENGO's).

The proposed scheme has no formal status. For further details, to comment on the proposal or to express interest in participating in the program, please contact James Whelan on 07 3875 7457 07 3901 4218h 69 Longfellow Street Norman Park QLD 4170 email James.Whelan@mailbox.gu.edu.au

1. The aim of this scheme

To provide enhanced opportunities for committed environmentalists to learn from more experienced advocates and for seasoned campaigners to impart knowledge and skills - building the movement's capacity. Placements will entail negotiated learning tasks and objectives during semi-structured six to twelve month internships with state and national environment organisations. Interns may negotiate, prior to commencement, arrangements to gain credit for their placement toward relevant postgraduate qualifications.

2. Background

This proposal has been developed following dialogue with interested environmentalists and adult educators throughout Australia and internationally. Feedback indicates the concept responds to a felt need without duplicating existing programs (*"The field is wide open"* - Darlene Clover, Director, North American Alliance for Popular and Adult Education - Environmental Popular and Adult Education Program). Comparable internships are run with North American NGO's including Cultural Survival Canada, Highlander Institute and Citizens for Health & Environmental Justice.

The concept is supported by the team working to establish the *Terania Centre for Social Change Training, Action Research and Cross-Movement Cooperation*. The Terania Centre team comprises members with decades of experience as trainers and environmental advocates. This proposed scheme may be auspiced by the Centre once it has been piloted.

This proposal was the subject of a workshop at the November 1999 "Education and Social Action" conference hosted by the Centre for Popular Education, University of Technology Sydney. Several universities offering higher degrees in environmental education, adult and popular education and politics have expressed their support for the scheme and willingness to offer credit toward relevant degrees, subject to negotiation. Funding options are presently being explored. Ideas welcome. The proposal was also circulated at a meeting of the Mittagong Forum.

James Whelan is a researcher and Associate Lecturer with Griffith University's Centre for Innovation and Research in Environmental Education in Brisbane and works with the Queensland Conservation Council (QCC). He has been a full-time environmental advocate for the past ten years, working with the Wilderness Society, QCC and other community conservation groups in NSW and Queensland. James' interest in piloting this scheme is consistent with his Ph.D. topic "Teaching and Learning for Environmental Activism" and his involvement with the National Environment Movement Training Project.

3. Mentorship

Effective, sustained advocacy generally requires a high degree of self-direction and resilience. While some environmental advocates speak of being thrown in the deep end, others build learning relationships with more experienced advocates. While campaigning organisations are not necessarily able to provide training and supervision typical of the corporate sector, public service or other social change sectors (eg community health, community development), there is evidence that mentorship may be an effective strategy to meet teaching and learning needs.

4. Practical details

- The scheme may offer six or twelve month placement with one or more environmental organisations.
- Internships will be managed by a board comprising representatives of participating environmental organisations and tertiary institutions
- Environmental organisations interested in hosting an intern will be encouraged to provide the board with details of learning opportunities they can offer, including details of willing mentors.
- The board will call for expressions of interest from interns - determining the number of placements to be offered at any time according to available resources, potential host organisations and other practical considerations.
- Where interns seek credit toward academic qualifications for their placement, negotiation with the relevant tertiary institution will be required from the outset to establish required supervision arrangements, assessment outcomes and mechanisms for communication during internships.
- The board will be responsible for matching applicant interns, host organisations and mentors and for overseeing the negotiation and achievement of mutually agreed learning goals/outcomes.
- Participating mentors and interns will be encouraged to participate in one or more training sessions exploring the mentorship relationship, adult learning theory and other relevant topics. This is intended to enhance the teaching and learning experience for all participants.
- Interns will provide regular written reports to both their host organisation and the mentorship board, monitoring placement outcomes and conditions.
- Host organisations will be responsible for providing suitable working conditions, wages and administrative support and for conducting an exit review, evaluating mentorship outcomes and providing feedback to interns.

Placement will include

- thorough induction to the host organisation consistent with the appointment procedures for other staff
- negotiation of learning goals and internship outcomes
- the opportunity to accompany mentor to committees, meetings, lobbying, etc
- defined and regularly reviewed day-to-day role
- participation in all staff and campaign meetings
- training opportunities
- responsibility for advocacy projects involving research and representation
- opportunities to participate in environmental campaigns of interest

5. Interns

Eligibility criteria for interns

The scheme is expected to attract environmental advocates, professionals and students from environmental management, social ecology, education and other disciplines.

Intern selection should consider:

- level of prior knowledge, expertise and experience
- apparent long-term commitment to ecological sustainability and social change
- willingness to negotiate learning goals
- opportunities for the individual to direct skills and knowledge gained through the placement toward priority campaigns
- learning goals relevant to available placement opportunities

Intern responsibilities

- negotiate learning goals
- complete submissions and other work as directed, acting in a support role to mentor or independently as negotiated
- accompany mentor to advocacy forums
- participate fully in the life of the organisation - attend staff, office and campaign meetings, submit reports to management
- maintain weekly journal to document and evaluate mentorship outcomes
- participate in exit review upon completion

Benefits to interns

- learn from experienced campaigners/advocates
- gain familiarity with the environment movement
- structured opportunity to contribute to the achievement of environmental outcomes
- work experience in environmental advocacy
- meet and work with experienced environmentalists
- broaden personal/professional network, career development
- develop expertise in specific environmental issues, including political and policy dimensions

6. Mentors

Mentor eligibility criteria

- advocacy experience and success
- leadership role in environment movement
- commitment to training and mentoring
- willingness to negotiate learning goals
- capacity to commit required time, effort and patience
- willingness to participate in training
- personal philosophical support for the scheme

Mentor responsibilities

- participate in initial training session
- negotiate learning goals with intern and board
- establish and maintain mentoring relationship with intern including weekly supervision and support (minimum two hours per week)
- ensure adequate organisational support for learner, including stipend, work station, working conditions

- provide direction and support, encouraging creativity and increasing autonomy
- report to Board and host organisation on placement outcomes

Benefits to mentors

- intrinsic satisfaction
- day to day assistance in campaign work - the opportunity to delegate work in campaign areas not adequately resourced
- opportunities to reflect on own learning and learning goals
- build relationships with academic institutions, social change organisations and interns

7. Host organisations

Host organisation criteria (considerations for staff and management)

- support for the scheme
- adequate resources (space, administrative capacity, etc)
- capacity to deliver suitable working conditions for interns including OH&S, duty of care
- realistic expectations
- designated management committee member/s to liaise with the board overseeing the scheme

Benefits to host organisations

- increased staffing for priority issues
- strengthened links to tertiary institutions and other social change organisations
- benefit from the expertise, experience and enthusiasm of interns
- train and develop campaigners for future roles
- broaden networks with compatible tertiary institutions and other social change organisations

8. Internship Board

Internship Board - three/four member panel appointed to:

- develop policies for selection, placement protocols
- administer finances, seek sponsorship and other income
- promote scheme, including through environmental groups' journals, establishment of website
- select mentors and interns
- foster links with tertiary institutions, sponsors, international ENGOs
- evaluate and monitor internships

Board members will be drawn from environment groups, tertiary institutions, funding bodies and/or relevant educational bodies (eg Australian Association for Environmental Education). A larger group of seven-eight may be convened to provide broad, policy-related guidance while a smaller three-four member group will be responsible for direct supervision and coordination. Meetings will be held at least once every two months and may be conducted by teleconference if required. Secretarial support to be provided by James Whelan.

ENVIRONMENTAL ADVOCACY INTERNSHIP

1. ORGANISATION – REGISTRATION OF INTEREST		
Name of Organisation		
Location (city)		
Current campaigns (please describe the role your organisation plays in these)		
Mission Statement		
No of Staff	No of campaign staff	
Legal structure	Incorporated Assoc company cooperative other:	
Volunteer insurance (details)		
What physical resources can you commit to hosting an intern? (eg workstation)		
Why is your organisation interested in hosting an intern?		
What opportunities exist for an intern in your organisation?		
Contact Details		
Contact person		
Position		
Phone	Fax	Email
Postal address		
	postcode	
Website		

ENVIRONMENTAL ADVOCACY INTERNSHIP

2. MENTOR – REGISTRATION OF INTEREST

Name

Position

Experience with host organisation

Other social change experience

Do you presently supervise or provide training for staff/volunteers?

yes no

Details:

Have you received training in supervision? If so, please describe.

yes no

Details:

Qualifications

Skills

What opportunities could you provide for interns?

Specify any preferred intern prerequisite skills/ qualifications/ experience

Why are you interested in participating in the mentorship scheme?