Summer Internships

Russ Joseph, Northwestern University
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Who am I?

Russ Joseph
From: St. Thomas, USVI

Education:
- BS Carnegie Mellon
- PhD Princeton

Now: Associate Professor, Northwestern

Research:
- Computer Architecture
  (Power/Reliability Aware Systems)

Fun:
- Running (Eight Marathons)
- Golf

Internships: Telephone company, Microsoft (2), Agere (Bell Labs), IBM (2)
Meredith Ringel Morris

http://aka.ms/merrie

- Principal Researcher & Research Manager at Microsoft Research
- Affiliate Professor @ UW
- HCI, CSCW, Accessibility
- CS Ph.D. from Stanford in 2006
- I did internships at Lockheed Martin, AT&T Labs, Mitsubishi Electric Research Labs, MSR
- I’ve mentored 50+ interns at MSR
Practical Value of Internship

• Experience
• Improve resume (+ papers)
• Networking (reference letter writers)
• Try out potential career alternatives
  – Industrial Lab, National Lab, Startup, Nonprofit, Academia
• Live in a different area
• See different work environments
  – research, product, etc.
• Steer your academic work, inspiration for thesis
• Access to unique data, equipment, etc.
• Remember why you are in school
Getting Started: Finding An Internship

• Common Intern Hiring Windows
  – December - February (for summer internships)
  – Many places offer school-year internships, as well

• Professors’ and advisors’ contacts
• Apply to large national programs
• Career Center
• Network!
  – Conferences, Workshops
  – Career fairs
  – Professional meet-ups
Formal Process: Preparing your application materials and yourself

- Get your web page up-to-date
  - A good webpage includes a CV, links to publications, work examples (github, videos, etc.), and a nice headshot
- Research the company and its technical directions
- Create a LinkedIn page
- Do mock interviews
- Identify at least three references
- Develop and practice an ‘elevator pitch’
- If on a visa, know what paperwork is expected
- Actually submit your application!!! (Ahead of deadline)
Informal Process: Increasing Your Odds

• Contact specific mentors at the company
  – Or have advisor (other faculty) help
  – Short email
    • Similar to elevator pitch
    • Establish connection (we met at conference X…)
    • Logistic concerns: Timing constraints, other offers, etc.
  • Attach resume
  • Avoid: Offending, SPAM, Wasting recipient’s time, making them do unnecessary work

• Take advantage of networking opportunities at conferences and workshops
Exercise

Elevator Pitches

• Break into groups of 4-5 and have each person give their 60 second elevator pitch
• Spend time discussing techniques that were particularly effective
Interview: Putting Your Best Foot Forward

• **Before the interview**
  – Ask about the format of the interview
  – Research the company/group/personnel

• **The Interview**
  – Show motivation and enthusiasm
  – Ask clarifying questions
  – Ask about particular projects
  – Talk through as you answer technical/complicated questions
  – Be ready to ask a few questions of each interviewer
  – Ask about their decision timeline

• **After the Interview**
  – Send thank you notes to the folks that you meet
  – Follow up in ~1 month
Interview: Common Questions

- What are your strengths/weaknesses?
- What was your favorite / least favorite project and why?
- Tell me about your research. Why is it important?
- Interviewer describes their own research, and wants to hear intelligent ideas, questions, or feedback from you
- Give an example of how you handled a difficult situation
- Puzzle/Brain teaser
- Coding Challenge (read the book “Cracking the Coding Interview”)
- What do you do for fun?
Interview Exercise

Mock Interviews

• Pair up with one person.
• Play the interviewer and the other the interviewee
• Then switch roles

• Format
  – 5 minute questions
  – 3 minute feedback
Now That You Got the Job, What’s Next?

• **Before the Start Date**
  – Ask what to prepare
  – Agree start/end + any necessary time off

• **On the Job**
  – Do a good job!
  – Understand expectations and deliverables (of your role and broader project)
  – Keep your supervisor informed of your progress
  – Interact with the people around you (learn the culture)
  – Attend talks and seminars
  – Work independently but don’t’ be afraid to ask for help
  – Find a mentor
  – Have fun!
Post Internship: After Job, What’s Next?

- Keep in touch with host, recruiters, etc.
- Ask about the hiring process for full time
- Ask about the potential for returning next year
- Write a paper about the work