

Purpose

The professional practice:

1. Furthers the mission of the Fellows Program to provide community and economic development services to communities, especially those most in need.
2. Provides Fellows with professional work experience in community and economic development.
3. Enhances opportunities for research, including the completion of thesis or capstone requirements.

The ACED/Peace Corps Fellows Program Manual contains more information on the professional practice: <https://stevensoncenter.org/aced/forms/>

Procedures

Stevenson Center staff facilitate the placement process to ensure the **best mutual fit for the group**, carefully considering Fellows' preferences and hosts' needs.

Placement decisions are important to all stakeholders in this experience, including:

- Communities and agencies, which fund and support Fellows in the field, and who depend on Fellows for technical help;
- Fellows, who are seeking an internship that continues their education and gives them experience that furthers their individual career goals; and
- Faculty and staff of affiliated departments/schools, who contribute to the education of these students and their preparation for internships and careers.

While it is important to the Stevenson Center that Fellows' career goals are met, the Fellows Program must also meet the needs of the other stakeholders. The Stevenson Center must determine the overall direction and appropriateness of placements and must work under the constraints of funding and site availability.





Benefits

Benefits of the 35 hours/week, 11-month internship include:

Academic

- Ability to directly apply and further develop skills and knowledge gained in the classroom.
- Multiple possible topics and resources for capstone or thesis research.
- Structured reflection, evaluation, and documentation of the experience.
- Support from Stevenson Center faculty and staff.
- Up to 8 semester hours toward the Master's degree.

Professional

- Typically allows for full responsibility for one or more projects.
- Chance to delve deeper into and to better understand development issues.
- Networking opportunities.
- Possible job offer and valuable references for future employment.

Financial

- Stipend for 11 months.
- Full-tuition waiver.
- Possible Segal AmeriCorps Education Award for service in Illinois.

Personal

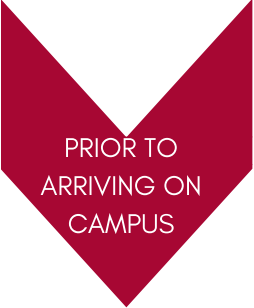
- Placement process that emphasizes service and students' input.
- Immersion in an organization and its community.
- Knowing that you have made a difference and that you are not the only one benefiting from your graduate study.

Considerations

- The professional practice aims to build transferable skills in community and economic development; **specific types of internships and specific locations are not guaranteed.**
- Flexibility is critical! The more specific a Fellow's substantive interest, the more flexible that Fellow must be geographically. Conversely, the more narrow a Fellow's geographic need, the more flexible that Fellow must be in terms of the substance of the internship. The internship may or may not have an overt connection to the Fellow's academic discipline. **It is unacceptable to pursue a particular type of internship to the exclusion of all others.**
- Fellows must maintain a cumulative grade point average of 3.0 or better AND have a C or better in all required classes to qualify for the professional practice.
- Fellows submit reports with work samples at least every other month during their professional practice. These items, along with site supervisors' evaluations, serve as the primary basis of internship grades. (Requirements vary for Fellows in grant-supported placements and/or with AmeriCorps status.)
- Fellows must adhere to all policies, procedures, standards, and schedules established by host organizations.
- The Stevenson Center strongly discourages additional employment, as it is likely to interfere with academic progress and the internship experience.
- Fellows continue to enroll as graduate students at Illinois State University and receive full tuition waivers during their internships. Fellows must pay student fees and secure health insurance through ISU (reimbursable for fall and spring semesters) or their own privately secured plan.
- Host organizations provide a significant financial commitment to host a Fellow, which carries weight in the placement process. Fellows receive a monthly stipend and are responsible for their own room and board, transportation, and other costs of living during the placement.



Placement Timeline



PRIOR TO
ARRIVING ON
CAMPUS

- Stevenson Center (SC) staff and prospective Fellow briefly discuss placement process during interview, including any reasons why Fellow might not accept a placement
 - Fellow signs letter of commitment, confirming commitment to ACED sequence with 11 months of professional practice
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FALL
SEMESTER

- Fellows receive program manual with description of placement process and related requirements at New Student Orientation
 - Group meeting to discuss placement process and identify issues, skills, and types of organizations that interest Fellows
 - Fellows submit statement of professional interest (internal document that helps SC staff learn more about what each Fellow hopes to gain from professional practice)
 - Fellows submit leads (suggestions of potential host organizations that could benefit the group)
 - Fellows submit résumés to SC staff, to be shared with prospective hosts
 - SC staff solicit applications from organizations/communities using existing contacts and new leads
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EARLY SPRING
SEMESTER

- SC staff continue to solicit host applications
 - Fellows may revise résumés and statements of professional interest to reflect newly acquired skills and experiences
 - Group meeting to review applications received and discuss interview process
 - SC staff solicit feedback from students and prospective hosts to gauge mutual interest and arrange group-based interviews, with additional feedback after each interview
 - The goal is the best outcome for the group as a whole with available applications/information
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LATE SPRING
SEMESTER

- Placement assignments are made by end of spring semester and finalized with board approval
 - Fellows complete checklist of transition items before leaving campus
 - SC staff complete contract process with host organizations and assist Fellows in completing checklist items including necessary hiring documents
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SUMMER
SEMESTER

- Fellows conclude on-campus coursework in accelerated summer course, examining select issues affecting nonprofit/public sector work
- Placements begin between mid-June and September 1, with a date mutually agreed upon by Fellow and supervisor
- Placements extend 11 calendar months from the start date, with ongoing communication between Fellow, host, and SC staff