

MISG Undergraduate Internship Questions and Answers

Questions from students:

1) Q: Is this internship limited to U.S. citizens only?

A: As long as the student is enrolled in an accredited university/college in Michigan and can receive work sponsorship from that institution, they are eligible for this opportunity. They do not necessarily have to be a U.S. citizen. However, the University of Michigan is unable to provide work sponsorship for this program, which is why the student's home institution must be able to provide the sponsorship

2) Q: I am interested in the Michigan Sea Grant Undergraduate Environmental internship. Can you give me more information on the program, namely previous projects or businesses, government agencies, or organizations that have participated?

A: Thank you for expressing interest in the MISG Undergraduate Environmental Internship. We have just launched this experience so this year will be the incoming class! With that being said, we do not have examples of previous projects. While that may seem daunting, it allows you to be creative and focus on something you are curious about or really passionate about. Our internship committee recommends that you talk with a faculty member to see if they know of any organization looking for interns. Some internships may not be posted but found by word-of-mouth.

3) Q: If I find an organization that is interested, how does the \$3,125 match work?

A: That is a great question. Interns will be compensated \$4,800 directly from Michigan Sea Grant. The sponsor organization match is typically for in-kind services; these could include office space, a mentor's time, or other financial needs that arise throughout the internship and should include funds allocated for student travel to and the cost of printing a poster for the MISG seminar in late-August in Ann Arbor. Our Fiscal Officer will ask the sponsorship organization for a finance report of \$3,125 in order to ensure that the match funds are used for the internship experience.

4) Q: Are all undergraduate students eligible to apply for the Michigan Sea Grant Environmental Internship?

A: Yes. Applicants must be an enrolled undergraduate student of any level of study at an accredited university or college in Michigan. The Michigan Sea Grant Environmental Internship Program encourages applicants from underrepresented racial and ethnic groups, individuals with disabilities, and individuals from economically or educationally disadvantaged backgrounds.

5) Q: I graduated from my university in December 2018, am I still eligible to apply?

A: Yes! We are extending the opportunity to students who graduated December 2018.

6) Q: I was looking at the MISG Internship Application, and it said that you must be attending a college in Michigan. I was wondering if I would still be eligible if I was working with a sponsor organization in Michigan?

A: Unfortunately, you do have to be a student at a MI College or university.

7) Q: I saw that you had a connection near Alpena, Michigan which is where I actually live. If I had a research proposal of my own could I possible work with someone like that or an organization like NEMIGLSI. I would just communicate to them and then apply, correct? I was also wondering what the match was. I am actually interested in doing work for next summer 2022, but I would like to just get a handle on things before I start thinking about forming my project proposal. One last question: do you think that research will be in-person for 2022 summer?

A: It is exciting to hear that you have a project idea for Alpena. MISG does have a MISG Extension person in Alpena, Brandon Schroeder (schroe45@msu.edu), and he would be a good person to contact about possible projects. He is a great link to community resources and ongoing projects and is involved with NEMIGLSI. Brandon could provide you with a letter of support from a community member or guide you to one although he would not be able to provide with a match since he is part of our program. All projects would require a match of 50% which is required by the federal government. It typically comes from partners who provide their time advising you, office space, and other kinds of support. We can provide more advice or information about match if you have specific questions. A reminder that you would also need to get a letter of support from an academic advisor.

My best guess is that we will be supporting in-person research for 2022. I expect by that time we will achieved the immunity through vaccination. Most research programs that I am aware of are planning on that.

8) Q: Is there a way to apply for one project specifically on the MISG environmental internship application? I am very interested on working on the smallmouth bass project with DNR and would like to apply for solely that position.

A: Thank you for your interest in the MISG Internship. Yes, you can apply to only one of the opportunities identified in the announcement. Note, that you will need to get a letter of support from both a community partner (in this case the project sponsor) and an academic partner. You might want to contact the DNR and communicate with them about your interest and solicit a letter of support. That way you can find out more about the project and also assess how much interest there is in that particular topic.

9) Q: I am applying for the MISG 2021 student research grant and I am a bit confused about the “adequate documentation for in-kind match.” I applied for the current project, which is already established, so do I need to provide a fund matching source? I have someone lined up to submit a recommendation letter for me but they are not providing any funds.

A: Thanks for contacting about the Internship and I am excited that you are interested in the established project option. I recommend that you contact the sponsor for the project. They can tell you more about it and can provide you with information about the in-kind match they will provide. You should also request a letter of support from them since you need two letters, one academic and one from your project partner. In that letter, they can identify the match.

10) Q: I'm interested in applying for the internship with the Detroit Zoo. On the information page, it states that applicants need a letter of endorsement from a professor or advisor. While I may have one or two professors who can speak to my abilities to a smaller degree, I have another individual not affiliated with my school who may be able to speak to my abilities much better. I

was a volunteer at the Toledo Zoo conducting education activities similar to the internship for four years, and I believe that the Volunteer Manager there would be able to speak very highly to my relevant skills and leadership for this area. Would it be possible for me to ask him to write my letter of endorsement?

A: The internship actual requires two letters of endorsement, one from an academic and one from a community-based partner. I think the letter from the Toledo Zoo would fit into that second category and would also speak to your experience working on education projects. You would still need a second letter from a professor or researcher at your college. I also suggest that you contact Mike Reed at the Detroit Zoo and talk with him a bit to better understand the project he is proposing.

11) I am finishing an application for the Michigan Sea Grant Environmental Internship. I have a project I have been hoping to pursue on mapping the changes to bird distributions in a changing climate, focusing on waterfowl, shorebirds, and the resulting implications for competition and the rest of the Great Lakes ecosystem. The results from a project of this kind could inform conservation in the region by prioritizing areas of significant diversity or increased risk. I have the support of the University of Michigan Biological Station with in-kind services in the form of space, time, resources, and printing. Because of the unique circumstances of the online semester, I have been having trouble getting in contact with specific faculty at the Biological Station for a supervisor position and it is taking a lot longer than expected. Is there any flexibility with the application deadline to give me a few more days to finalize my supervisor with the required letter? Or would it be acceptable to submit a letter from the sponsor organization with their support with the intention of finalizing a supervisor later?

A: Thanks for getting in touch with your question. Your project sounds very interesting and you have done your homework in identifying a sponsor organization and support for your project. I can understand how difficult things are during the pandemic but I think it would be best if you submitted your application on March 1. You can provide a letter of support from the organization with your application and mention that you are working to obtain a reference letter. You can email that directly to me but we are starting to review applications over the next two weeks so you should get it to me by next Friday, March 5 at 5 pm. Another option for you would be to get a reference letter from a faculty member speaking to your capabilities and dedication as a scientist.

12) Q: I am applying for the Detroit Zoo project for the Michigan Sea Grant and I have a couple of questions:

- I have written my personal statement, and is it correct that I do not have to go over the specifics of the proposal because I am applying to it instead of proposing it?

- The professor that is writing my letter of recommendation asked me about this passage:

"Please submit a letter of recommendation that explains how the internship will be supervised and how the proposed project will benefit the sponsoring organization as well as the intern. Additionally, please include sources of the match and adequate documentation for in-kind match. Please note, the match may be in the form of selected "in-kind" services or additional funds from a specific institution, agency, industry, or non-federal program. No funds from federal entities can be used as match." Since I am applying to a project that already has funds, a sponsor, and supervision, is there anything in specific that she should write about instead?

A: on the announcement, if you go to the second portion it addresses the different application process if applying for a project. See below.

If applying for a project that has been submitted by one of our sponsors (see Section H below for additional details), a complete set of application materials must include the following:

- 1) A statement detailing the candidate's interest in the proposed project (maximum two-pages, double-spaced, Times New Roman, 12-point font)
 - The statement should address the following:
 - The project the candidate is applying for, including the partner's name
 - A brief description of why you are interested in this project
 - The candidate's relevant qualifications
 - Experiences the candidate expects to receive from this opportunity
 - A description of how the proposed project relates to the candidate's future career goals
- 2) One endorsement letter from either a professor or advisor of the candidate that is familiar with the candidate's qualifications
 - The letter of endorsement should include the following:
 - Name of professor or advisor
 - Description of how the professor/advisor knows the candidate
 - A statement about the candidate's skills and leadership that would be relevant to the project
- 3) Undergraduate transcripts – unofficial are acceptable
- 4) A current resume (one-page, single-sided)

13) Q: I have a group project I am interested in coordinating, does that qualify for this internship?

A: Yes! However, groups cannot exceed three individuals and the stipend of \$4,800 will be divided between the three interns. We require one written proposal describing each individual's role in the project and each individual's career goals. Additionally each student will need to submit a transcript and resume.

Questions from mentors:

1) Q: How is the mentorship time valued for the purpose of the \$3,125 match?

A: For the matching funds, we require that you provide a small amount of funds for students to attend the MISG seminar in late August in Ann Arbor and a portion for poster printing. The remaining balance can be used for mentorship time such as salary and additional expenses. At the end of the internship experience, the Fiscal Officer will ask for a finance report for \$3,125.

2) Q: Based on the sentences in the RFP about match, if we figure that the \$4,800 student stipend is paid out over 8 weeks at 24 hours per week that comes to \$25 per hour. Therefore, if a student were to work for 8 weeks and be paid \$4,800 but work 40 hours per week instead of 24, they would essentially be 'donating' 16 hours per week for 8 weeks, which comes out to \$3,200. Would this be an acceptable way to calculate a match?

A: Yes. In terms of the cost-share (match funds), Michigan Sea Grant will ask for a statement confirming that 16 hours a week for 8 weeks were worked by the intern at \$25 per hour totaling

\$3,200 which will be considered in-kind. However, please keep in mind that the educational or host institution will need to provide funds for printing a poster and traveling to the MISG symposium in August.

3) Q: What would it look like if an institution submitted two proposals?

A: Based on MISG Internship Program, the number of applicants that can come from a specific institution is not restricted; however, given the limited funding we will likely try to distribute the funded internships broadly across institutions. Please keep in mind that if two proposals are submitted they should be for different projects.

4) Q: We met with an outstanding applicant yesterday who would be an incredible fit for the internship program. She is currently a student at U of M. Upon review the application does day undergraduate. She is currently enrolled in a graduate program. She really impressed us and showed true passion. I was not sure if there is any flexibility with this program in term of allowing a graduate student to participate? If not, we will figure something out for her. I do not want to see this passion disappear!

A: Unfortunately, this RFP does target undergraduates only – it is part of our and a nationwide Sea Grant effort to broaden our outreach to diverse groups through undergraduates. MISG does have another RFP right now for graduate fellowships but that wouldn't start until next February: <https://www.michiganseagrant.org/research/2021-request-for-proposals/>

5) Q: I saw your posting on Handshake for the MISG Undergraduate Environmental Internship. I noticed that it closes on March 1. Have you filled this role yet?

A: This announcement is for about 10 internships to be awarded for the summer of 2021. We are accepting applications from students until 3/1 and will review applications and make award decisions by early April. Students from Oakland would definitely be eligible so please let them know about this possible environmental stewardship internship for next summer.

6) Q: I currently have a hardworking and self-motivated undergraduate student working in my lab who is very interested in applying to the MISG Undergrad Environmental Internship Program this cycle. I have also been in contact with the MDNR Contact for Partner Project #1, which is the project that my student is very interested in pursuing via his/her application, with an added emphasis of viral diseases that affect Smallmouth bass in MI (in particular, Largemouth Bass Virus). MDNR is quite supportive of the added infectious disease angle.

In reviewing the application requirements, we noticed that one endorsement letter from a “professor or advisor of the candidate that is familiar with the candidate’s future career goals” is requested. In light of this and what I mentioned above, I am wondering if there is a means to include two letters (one from my side as her MSU supervisor, and one from MDNR), or if an alternative approach would be better (i.e., possibly a joint letter of support?)?

A: Thank you for getting in touch with me about your student and her interest in the MISG Internship. The application requires 2 letters of support, one from a faculty and one from someone in the community or organization that the student will work with, and one of the letters should

indicate how the student will provide the 50% match. So, yes, a letter from the MDNR would be a good addition to the application.

Also, note that we will be able to provide about 10 internships, and of those 3-4 that will be working with the established partners identified in the announcement. Your student could note her interest in the partner identified in the RFP but also describe her specific interest and possibly identify partner support for her project idea so that could also be considered separately from the MDNR project since I think that several students have expressed interest in that project.

Q: The additional information you provided is also most helpful, thank you. If I understand correctly, it sounds like her two page statement of interest should note her interest in the partner project, but also that MDNR is additionally interested in examining viral diseases, if need be, as an additional project to Partner Project 1. Did I get that right?

Last, it sounds like the MDNR partner letter should include that match would be covered as described for Partner Project #1, and that my letter and/or MDNR's should also clarify that another possibility is matching funds for a project specific to "bass viruses," correct?

A: In the past, we required two letters but for this year's announcement we only required one from the sponsor. For your student, I might suggest that you include a letter from you and from a sponsor agency to cover both bases. As far as the match goes, this funding is from NOAA and requires a 50% match which we pass along to the recipient. The match can come from a sponsoring agency (like the DMNR) or from their academic supervisor, like yourself.

7) Q: We have two great applicants who have shown incredible passion and excitement about the internships. They are both finalizing their applications. I am seeking some clarification, shall I write a letter of support for Giovanni and Dawson? I am happy to do so. Going into year to of pandemic, I think we are a little more prepared and the psychology of the reality are a little more accepted (sadly). Both applicants are aware of our standards of H&S and what we are looking from them as part of these projects.

A: We require one letter of support or reference. Will your students be obtaining a ref letter from faculty at their university? If so, you could also provide a letter of support or you could provide the sole letter of support. This aspect of the application process was not as clear as it should be. I think because this is the first time we have partners for the internships, which has been such an exciting direction for this program. I hope we can continue with these partnerships in the future and getting your feedback on the application process once it is over will be very helpful. Thanks for letting sharing this information.

8) Q: Can an institution submit one proposal and ask for funding for two students?

A: Each student should submit his or her own proposal for consideration.

General Questions:

1) Q: Why did my stipend appear in my account as "financial aid type"?

A: The University of Michigan requires undergraduate stipends to be processed through the Financial Aid office. As a result, when your stipend is direct deposited into your account, it should state "financial aid type" or something similar from U of M. This is not an error.

2) Q: I received my two direct deposit from this internship through the University of Michigan. Should I be looking for a W-2 or other form from either from Michigan Sea Grant or the University? I am looking ahead to filing for 2021 and wanted to be sure.

A: For MISG stipends, the University does not provide any tax forms relating to taxable income. It is the student's responsibility to self-report this income. However, please call payroll services at 734.615.2000 option 2 prompt 1 or 866.647.7657 option 2 prompt 1.

3) Q: I am reaching out today because I have a question regarding the stipend I received from MISG this past summer as a CEI intern. Should I be expecting a W2 or any sort of paperwork for tax purposes regarding this stipend?

A: For MISG stipends, the University does not provide any tax forms relating to taxable income. It is the student's responsibility to self-report this income. However, please call payroll services at 734.615.2000 option 2 prompt 1 or 866.647.7657 option 2 prompt 1.

4) Q: I wasn't sure who else to contact about this, I attempted to contact U of M payroll services, but they weren't sure what to do either! I was a part of the 2020 MISG Summer Undergraduate research program, which I believe the University of Michigan paid for our summer stipend. I thought I would receive a W-2 in the mail because I am not a student at the University of Michigan and don't have online access to it. However, I did not receive anything in the mail. I was wondering if you knew who I could get in contact with about obtaining my W-2 for the summer, or if you could point me in the right direction.

A: For MISG stipends, the University does not provide any tax forms relating to taxable income. It is the student's responsibility to self-report this income. However, please call payroll services at 734.615.2000 option 2 prompt 1 or 866.647.7657 option 2 prompt 1.

5) Q: I am a science teacher at a High School in Detroit. I am currently teaching environmental science for juniors and seniors and have several students who are interested in pursuing environmental degrees once in college. I saw that you have internships to college students but was wondering if you had any opportunities for juniors or seniors in high school?

A: Unfortunately, MISG does not have any internships for high school students. There are likely other opportunities around the state. I am cc'ng Brandon Schroeder who is with MISG Extension and he works with K-12 education programming and he might have some ideas.