

# Recruiting for Freshmen

Interview Report Study about Internship Recruiting for Freshmen  
3/8/20

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<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1OhUE1tHgZUWzhVCpVc1qezWH1DwKh2S2gufv67oIpos/edit?usp=sharing>

## Introduction

The purpose of this research was to find ways to assist freshmen with recruiting for internships. We interviewed a total of 12 freshmen with the intention of asking them about their methods of seeking and applying for internships, the resources they utilized to find and prepare for internships and interviews for jobs, and difficulties they found with finding internships to apply for, applying for the internships, preparing for interviews, and networking. Our specific research questions were what could be done to make recruiting easier for freshmen and what difficulties freshmen have with the recruiting process. Finding difficulties freshmen have with recruiting would allow us to create solutions in our products in the future, and discovering how to make recruiting easier for freshmen would allow us to implement quality solutions to the problems discovered.

## Methods

### Data collection

Our target audience was freshmen at the University of Michigan. We each recruited from our already established social circles. All of the participants that I personally interviewed were students from my professional fraternity that offered to participate in the interviews after a post I made in our organization's Slack page asking for freshmen participants for a study. Our participants included:

1. A caucasian female from Chicago who is in a prospective SI major whose parents work in academia
2. A caucasian male from New York who is a computer science major whose father is a business owner
3. An indian male from Michigan who is a business major whose parents work in business
4. Two asian males from Michigan that are computer science majors whose parents work in tech
5. An asian male that is an industrial operations major from Michigan whose parents work in engineering
6. A female premed/data science major from the bay area
7. A male finance major from India
8. An EECS major from Michigan who already had previous internship experience
9. A white male considering computer science or data science from Michigan
10. A white male from Bay Area whose a marketing major through Ross
11. A white male computer science major from Michigan whose parents are both engineers

Interview protocol included in the appendix.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>[Interview Protocol](#)

## Data analysis

For this study, we analyzed the data by organizing quotes from the interviews into similar categories and creating an affinity diagram.

## Findings

For the purposes of this study, I have created personas and scenarios that each of the personas experienced to represent the different types of students that we interviewed and the findings we discovered.

### Personas:

Name: Jeffrey Smith

Descriptor:

Freshman at University of Michigan studying Computer Science. Going back home to New Jersey for the summer to work at the service job he worked at in high school.

Quotes:

“It’s not very important for freshmen to get internships”

“Companies aren’t looking for freshmen, we don’t have enough experience.”

Profile:

Jeffrey is a freshman at the University of Michigan. He is 18 years old. He lives in South Quad dormitory in Ann Arbor, Michigan, however his permanent address is in New Jersey. His mother is a nurse and his father works in finance in New York. Jeffrey worked as a waiter at a local diner throughout high school.

Goals:

Although Jeffrey would like to gain experience in the field that he is studying, he didn’t have any resources pointed out to him to gain an internship. Those he researched emphasized in their job descriptions that they are looking for juniors or seniors, so he didn’t bother applying to them.

Attitude:



Jeffrey has a negative image of recruiting for internships. He was overwhelmed by the amount of different resources to find internships and frustrated that he didn't seem to fit the qualifications of any of the internships that he looked at.

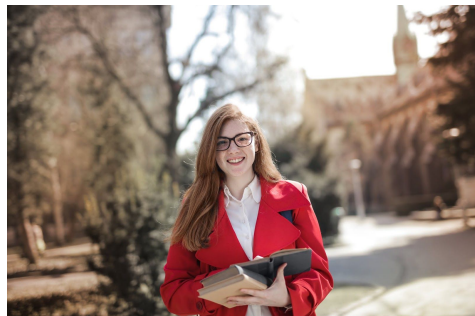
#### Behavior:

The only resource that Jeffrey used to look for internships was Google. He looked up internships in computer science and software development and looked at the qualifications and didn't bother applying for any of them. He spent maybe an hour total looking for internships, then gave up. This was a combination of factual and emotional decision making, since logically he felt that there was no point continuing the search since he hadn't come across any companies seeking freshmen, and emotional because he got frustrated trying to find internships he would qualify for.

Name: Audrey Allen

#### Descriptor:

Audrey is a freshman at the University of Michigan who intends to major in User Experience Design through the School of Information. She is still in the middle of her internship search, however if she can't find an internship, she intends to stay in Ann Arbor for the summer to take classes.



#### Quote:

"I'm still trying to find an internship, but resources are so scattered and I don't have much experience in design."

#### Profile:

Audrey is a freshman at the University of Michigan. She is 18 years old. She lives in East Quad dormitory in Ann Arbor, Michigan, however her permanent address is in Canton, Michigan. Her mother is a stay at home mom and her father works for Ford as a factory worker.

#### Goals:

Audrey's goal is to find an internship for the summer, but she is still doubtful in her ability to find an internship so she hasn't been putting much effort into searching. Her backup goal is to get ahead in her graduation requirements.

#### Attitude:

Audrey has a negative idea of recruiting for internships for freshmen. She has been confused by what resources to use for searching for internships, she's been overwhelmed trying to create a quality resume and cover letter, and feels let down by her university for not putting much effort into training her for recruiting. She also feels inadequate since she doesn't fit the qualifications for most of the internship listings she finds.

#### Behavior:

Audrey has utilized Google to look for internships. She has created a LinkedIn page, and looks on Handshake for internship offers. She struggles with putting together applications for each job. She applies for each job extremely quickly, spending usually 5 minutes on each application. She hasn't been to any resume workshops or gotten assistance with writing her cover letters.

Name: Sam Jackson

#### Descriptor:

Sam is a freshman at the University of Michigan who is majoring in Industrial Operations Engineering. He decided not to look for internships, since he secured a research job for the summer with a professor at the University of Michigan.

#### Quote:

"Finding internships is too hard for freshmen, so I thought I'd do research to build my resume up."



#### Profile:

Sam is a freshman at the University of Michigan who is majoring in Industrial Operations Engineering. His parents both work in academia. He is from California. His father is a high school teacher and his mother is a professor at the University of California - Los Angeles.

#### Goals:

Sam wants to build experience in his field.

#### Attitude:

Sam has a negative view of recruiting for internships for freshmen. He looked at some job offers, but got overwhelmed by his lack of experience and lack of resources.

#### Behavior:

Sam spent 5 minutes looking on Handshake for internships, before determining that his efforts would be better spent applying to research labs for the summer. He developed a resume and cover letter to apply for research labs, but didn't use it to apply for any internships.

#### Scenarios:

Jeffrey first began looking for internships in December during winter break. He began by Googling, "computer science internships." He clicked on an internship for a research intern at Google and looked at the minimum qualifications required. After seeing that it required machine learning experience, he clicked away from the internship. He continued his search, and looked at a job listing for an internship for a software intern at a local company, KLA. After seeing the minimum qualifications required having two years completed in school, he clicked away. He looked up resources for finding internships and came along Handshake. After creating his account, he clicked around for a while, confused by the interface. He looked at a couple job listings but got overwhelmed by the amount of information presented. He shut his laptop in frustration. He texted his friend, another computer science major, Joseph. "Hey man, I just started looking for internships and I don't qualify for anything. What are you doing this summer?" Joseph texted him back, "Bro don't worry about it. Barely any freshmen get internships. I'm just going home for the summer and working at my old high school job." Jeffrey decided to text his old manager at the diner he worked at in high school, asking for his job back in the summer. His manager reassured him that he would be able to give him hours to work in the summer.

When Audrey began looking for internships, she consulted her father to help her develop her resume and cover letter. However, her father has been working at Ford for 20 years, and no longer has experience with developing resumes and cover letters. Audrey used Google to look up resources for developing her resume and cover letter. Once she completed her resume and cover letter, she sat down with some friends from her dorm and consulted them about what she should be trying to do this summer. Her friend Samantha said, "You could try to find an internship, but they can be hard to get for freshmen. Maybe you could take some classes this semester so that you can take more SI classes next year and get an internship next summer. I think there's some resume workshops at the career center and I think I heard of interview workshops too if you wanted to check those out." Audrey considered her friend's opinion. She attempted to go to the career fair. Arriving

there, she instantly felt overwhelmed and under-prepared. She approached one employer with a short elevator pitch she had developed, and he informed her they weren't hiring freshmen. Feeling overwhelmed, she decided to apply for financial aid for summer classes. She continued to look for internships online and looking into resources to help with her resume and cover letter, however in the end she got busy with classes and forgot about her internship search.

On January 8<sup>th</sup>, Sam suddenly realized he had no idea what he was going to do in the summer following his winter semester. He realized that many college students work in internships in the summers, so he looked up internship resources. Upon discovering Handshake, he created an account and began looking for internships. After looking for 5 minutes, he realized he lacked the experience necessary to apply for all of the internships he had found. Sam talked to his friend Todd about the internship process. "Oh, there's an internship program at Microsoft for freshmen. It's called the Explorer program, I'm a part of it this summer. The deadline passed though, sorry!" Todd panicked. He called his parents in dismay. His mother told him, "You can focus on finding internships in the next couple years. Right now to get experience to help you find jobs, you could apply for some research labs. I know what I'm looking for in research assistants, so I could help you develop applications to labs at Michigan." After looking at what research professors were doing at the University of Michigan within his department, he applied for several research positions and eventually accepted one that interested him the most.

### Key Findings

Findings from the interview study include:

- Freshmen feel that the recruiting process is stacked against them; they are frustrated that there doesn't seem to be enough resources and that the resources they do have are useless. The resume workshops they go to feel useless. Many don't know of all of the resources that are offered to them, don't know of what internships entail and the difficulty of getting them, and many haven't heard of the internships that are for strictly underclassmen. Many companies flat out ignore freshmen, never sending responses or flat out telling some that they aren't recruiting freshmen. They are told they don't have the experience yet to be successful in the internship.
- Freshmen feel confused about Handshake, claiming that it is hard to maneuver and provides too much information to the point where it becomes confusing.
- Freshmen tend to feel a sense of urgency after seeing friends get internships. They get overwhelmed and anxious about the experience in general but get even more anxious when they see others being successful.
- Many freshmen don't feel a sense of urgency to get an internship. Some know that it is very difficult for them to get one the summer after their freshman year, and accept research positions, take classes during the summer, go back to their family home, or study abroad.

## Recommendations

Those interviewed had several solutions in mind. One interviewee mentioned that they would enjoy if there was someone in their hall within their residence hall dedicated to educating those in the hall about recruiting and professional development. This could be beneficial. Many of those interviewed emphasized the importance of mentors, and having a mentor within their residence hall would allow them to approach someone in a comfortable environment. Others thought a recruiting class would be a great idea. The class would help them develop a resume, cover letter, and prepare for interviews. One interviewee mentioned that a one credit class would be beneficial, and that perhaps the class could delve into the mental health side of recruitment, since recruitment can cause freshmen to feel anxious, overwhelmed, under-achieving, and a sense of urgency. The class could also help freshmen navigate the Handshake app/website. A career fair change could be beneficial as well; currently for the engineering career fair, the app tells users what years the company is looking for. Perhaps this could be expanded upon and the career fair app could contain more insight about what would be expected of applicants. Finally, I think an app designed specially to accommodate underclassmen's needs would be beneficial. It could include lesson videos to help users create their application materials and explain how to recruit and interview, and provide links to known companies that hire underclassmen.

## Conclusion

Currently, the recruiting process for freshmen is extremely frustrating and confusing. Freshmen get overwhelmed by the process of finding and applying for internships, and don't always know of resources that the university offers. Those that do know of some of the resources feel that the resources they are provided with are useless. They don't have the experience to be successful, and get confused about resources for finding internships, particularly Handshake. To combat this, it is necessary to develop educational and mentorship programs to assist freshmen with recruiting and alleviate some of their frustrations.

## Appendices

Interview Protocol:

- i. What is your school/major?
- ii. Where are you from?
  1. Has your childhood or environment influenced you in your internship search?



- iii. What's your plan for your career so far? What are your career goals after college?
- iv. What are your plans for summer 2020?
- v. How frequently have you been looking for internships?
  - 1. If not at all, could ask why, but will be difficult
  - 2. Is there any difficulty when you are looking for jobs?
  - 3. Do you ever feel pressured?
- vi. How long does it take you to apply for a job and how do you find these jobs
  - 1. Could you pretend like you're looking to apply to some jobs - what steps would you take from looking for the job to submitting the application?
- vii. How much priority do you put on internships or jobs in undergrad or at least freshmen year? Does location and your job/tasks matter to you?
- viii. What are you looking for in an internship? (What kinds of jobs are you looking for, what are you looking to learn, paid or unpaid, etc.)
  - 1. If you weren't able to find a paid internship, what would you do? Why? (e.g. would you volunteer? Study abroad? Side projects / build your portfolio)
- ix. What's your biggest problem with using <whatever method to find internships and jobs in q6>
  - 1. What would you like to see added to help fix this issue?
- x. What do you like most about <whatever method to find internships and jobs in q6>
- xi. Is there any needs that this website is not currently supporting? (additional features, experience levels, filtering, etc)
- xii. Does UofM ever send you info about jobs?
  - 1. Do you ever look at it?
  - 2. Have you ever gone to a company day?
    - a. Was it helpful?
    - b. Did they take resumes? If yes, did you ever hear back from them?
- xiii. What resources have you used to look for internships?
- xiv. Explain your resume creation and editing process.
  - 1. What resources / websites / organizations did you use?
  - 2. Do you use a different one for different career fairs or jobs?
- xv. What has been the most frustrating thing about this process?
- xvi. Have you ever been in contact with a recruiter after applying to a job?
  - 1. If yes, what was it about?
    - a. If about interviews: How did it go? Were you well prepared? How did you prepare and what would you have done differently?

- i. Did you know the University has mock interview practice?
- xvii. Do you have access to mentors or people who can guide you in this process?
- xviii. What is your overall feeling when it comes to recruiting? What do you think you'd need to make this process easier and better?
- xix. Is there any other information that you think is beneficial for us to know that you haven't already told us about the recruiting scene as a Freshman?