Each summer the Center for Career and Professional Development supports Kalamazoo College students as they conduct externships and internships around the world in a wide variety of fields, acquiring experience and transferable skills in their career fields of choice and building relationships with alumni professionals who serve as their supervisors and hosts.

What is an Externship?
Our nationally recognized Discovery Externship Program allows students to live and work with Kalamazoo College alumni hosts for one to four weeks during the summer. Discovery Externs are first-year and sophomore students who explore a career interest area in a hands-on setting, while building lasting relationships with their alumni hosts. Externships offer many of the benefits of an internship, but are shorter in duration and require a homestay.

Externs and their hosts agree that “porch time”—the opportunity to share insights and experiences on and off the job—is meaningful and mutually beneficial. Students gain exposure to potential career paths and see the many-faceted life of a professional, and sponsors reconnect with the vibrant intellects and passions that abound at K.

Who Hosts Discovery Externs?
Most externship sponsors are Kalamazoo College alumni, although parents and friends of the College sometimes host externs as well. Externship sponsors from multiple generations of K graduates all over the world develop mentoring relationships with externs, helping students understand how elements of a specific experience at K might translate to a prospective career field. The design of Discovery Externships encourages a look at work within the context of a bigger life, providing externs an extraordinary opportunity to connect with people who also experienced the K-Plan, many of them approaching the pinnacle of their own careers.

During an externship, a student may have opportunities for observation and access to other professionals in the field (comparative shadow experiences). Because of the shorter time frame, it is not uncommon for students to fit an externship and a separate paid job into their summers, or to complete an externship before departing for study abroad.

How Does the Program Work?
The CCPD enrolls externship sponsors year-round. In January the externship opportunities, including possible work-related activities and the sponsor’s living arrangements, are made available online. Students select and apply for them by submitting a résumé and cover letter. Following a competitive process including student/sponsor phone interviews, the CCPD then works with sponsors to make final placement decisions by early spring and offers student orientations during May.
Externships may occur anytime during the summer when classes are not in session, as arranged between the sponsor and the extern. An extern is reimbursed for half of his/her travel costs and receives $15/day for travel-related expenses. Housing and most meals are provided by the externship sponsor. Most externship sites do not offer compensation.

Because an externship is considerably shorter than the usual internship, the homestay facilitates more learning faster, and helps externs know more about what it’s really like to be a doctor, social worker, biologist, or attorney, for example.

Complete information for Discovery Externship sponsors is available at: http://reason.kzoo.edu/ccd/programs/externships/.

To learn more or to sign up as a Discovery Extern sponsor, please contact Pam Sotherland at the CCPD: pamsoth@kzoo.edu or 269-337-7183.