



Prospective students visit UConn in Storrs, Conn. on March 28, 2026. The campus was filled with families touring the university. PHOTO BY SYDNEY CHANDLER, STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER/THE DAILY CAMPUS

Less Grind, More Growth:

WHAT INTERNSHIPS ABROAD GET RIGHT



Students attend the Career Fair at the UConn Volleyball Center on March 25, 2026. The event ran from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. and hosted a variety of employers and internship opportunities. PHOTO BY NORA MARIANO, STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER/THE DAILY CAMPUS

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In about two months, internship season will be upon us, and University of Connecticut students will disperse around the country to their internships with one thing on their mind: securing that full-time return offer by whatever means necessary. More than top-tier grades or stellar extracurriculars, for American students, the sophomore and junior year internships are the biggest key to success post-graduation. This puts a massive amount of pressure on young people, many of whom are not completely sure that the internship is something they will enjoy. What is supposed to be a time of growth is instead of competition, and it seems like Americans are the only ones playing. Maybe it's time to stop terrifying our interns, and start teaching them instead.

This all begins with the culture in the office. In America, interns and younger employees are focused on what is called “face time.” Simply put, how many hours can you stay in the office and keep yourself busy? Especially in business, face time culture is so strong that people play tricks on their co-workers to appear more committed than they are. It seems silly, and it is. A survey by Slack discovered that due to face time being such an important metric for employee success, employees report spending 32% of their time on “performative work that gives the appearance of productivity.”

In Europe, the culture is completely different, and in many European Union (EU) countries, the American practices would be illegal. In Germany, working time laws mandate that the typical working time per day does not exceed eight hours, and provides protections to workers when this doesn't apply. And it works. The average number of hours per week was 38.5 in 2023. Beyond the regulations, attitudes are also different. Upon arrival to my internship in Germany, I was told by multiple team members that there are “no crazy hours” like there are at home, and multiple people have commented, perplexed, on how early I arrive to the office. For reference, I arrive no more than 15 minutes before my first meeting. But despite spending less time in the German office than a typical American intern, I feel like I am getting more done. I never feel bored; instead, I spend my limited time working hard, and I go home when the time is up. Why should I waste time and money being useless, just so that my boss sees my face?

Beyond what happens inside the office, the societal and educational view on internships makes a huge difference in growth opportunities and student success. In America, while required internships exist in co-op programs, they aren't the norm, as they take place during the semester. Instead, students are responsible for making the decision on whether or not to have hands-on experience, and only about four in 10 students end up getting it. For the students lucky enough

to be in this position, they have to capitalize on this rare chance, and that means performing with speed, precision and absolute perfection. There's no time for learning, because you should know it all already.

In most EU programs, the view on internships is much different. In addition to voluntary summer internships, mandatory internships, dual study programs and working student positions are all commonplace for students. For business students and those who choose to pursue a master's degree, it is not uncommon to see people with three or four internships before they commit to a full-time job. More opportunities and formats mean less pressure, and instead gives students the opportunities to learn, grow, switch paths and build their network all at once.

For undergraduate students facing a tough labor market, the competition of artificial intelligence and a lack of open positions is enough. American students shouldn't have the added component of abusive cultural rules and competitive co-interns to deal with. If the whole point of doing an internship is to learn the technical skills that you don't get in class, then why should the majority of our time be spent learning the political skills to make yourself look like a workhorse? All students deserve the chance to set themselves up well for graduation and that begins with giving them more opportunities, and less of a feeling like the one they get in a life-or-death game of chess.

COMIC:

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