

Internships pay off, with experience, connections



This year, Grecia Ayon worked as an intern for Mutual Housing California. After that, the UC Davis graduate got a full-time job with the local nonprofit.

Next year, she'll be moving to San Francisco to work for Enterprise Community Partners as a program associate.

It's the dream of every intern. Do well and turn the internship into a job.

Because Ayon shadowed a community organizer at Mutual Housing, the internship was exactly like the job itself.



Grecia Ayon, left, chats with Trish Methvin, a resident of the Tremont Green Mutual Housing Community on Marden Drive in South Davis. First an intern, now a staff member at Mutual Housing California, she's moving on to a new job in San Francisco.

Photo courtesy Sue Cockerell from the Enterprise

"It was very hands-on," said the 22-year-old Davis resident.

"Everything the organizer did, I had the opportunity to do, too.

"There is no faster way to learn than by doing and I learned very quickly, as a result."

She worked with the residents at Mutual Housing at Spring Lake, which not only gave her a more skills to add to her résumé, but gave her a sense of how she might use her minor in community and regional development studies on a daily basis.

She also interacted with staff members and the nonprofit's partners, such as other nonprofits.

"We always try to make our internships relevant to the student's career," said Rachel Iskow, Mutual Housing California chief executive officer. "We look for people who are enthusiastic about contributing to the success of a nonprofit that develops and operates housing for families and children, but can also help the intern meet their goals."

Part of Mutual Housing's goal is to provide professional training to interns.

"This internship was above and beyond the usual," Ayon said. "They were mentors who wanted to make sure I did

something productive that helped me improve my skills, something that helped me meet my goals."

As of June, when Ayon graduated with a bachelor's degree in political science, she became a part-time community organizer at Mutual Housing. The next month, she went full-time at Moore Village and Tremont Green Mutual Housing Communities, helping residents with their finance stability.

"My focus is on getting residents to talk about their finances and their goals," Ayon said. "We have a lot of classes starting on financial capability for them.

"I also look for different types of resources for them – and we teach them leadership skills so they can become an asset to the community."

At Mutual Housing, there are opportunities in community-building, youth development and tutoring, green living and computer education, as well as in other divisions of the organization.

Mutual Housing California develops housing that is affordable to a diversity of households. Our housing builds strong and stable communities through resident participation and leadership development. For more information, call (916) 453-8400 or visit our website at mutualhousing.com.

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All tutoring opportunities are listed on the organization's website.

UCD's Internship and Career Center places more than 6,000 students in internships each year. Of UCD's 27,656 students, 80 percent complete an internship before graduation, compared to 58 percent nationwide. Internships are available for undergraduate and graduate work.

"Internships can be life-changing," said Marcie Kirk Holland, UCD Internship and Career Center director. "They can provide skills and contacts to get people started in a profession."

For Kirk Holland, being involved in the logistics of the organization and the job is very important.

"The employer creates a description of the internship that allows students to have an idea of what is expected and what the employer wants," she said.

During his internship with the affordable housing developer, Diego de la Torre helped keep track of every detail of running a nonprofit with 19 communities in Sacramento and Yolo counties.

With his supervisor, de la Torre checked that rents were coming in on time, solar panels were working as expected, and water tracking software was validating water use.

"I learned good networking skills," said de la Torre, now an entry-level civil engineer. "I learned very important soft skills, like how to work with other people in a team, how to be comfortable on the phone."

UCD uses a "transcript notation" process at the beginning and the end of the internship to clarify goals.

"That way, they both know their expectations match," Kirk-Holland said.

While she had various internships during her undergraduate and graduate years, former student Hang L. Huynh appreciated the internships she had through UCD.

"They gave me real assignments that a full-time employee would have," she said. "Other internships only wanted students to perform administrative tasks."

At Mutual Housing, Huynh checked residency requirements as well as other documentation.

"By the time I got to a job, the professionalism was there and the knowledge that I could meet deadlines."

Huynh had a double major in community regional development and psychology. She now works as an assistant housing planner for the city of Milpitas.

The internships at Mutual Housing California are among thousands available at nonprofit and for-profit companies in the region through the UCD program. Some internships are paid, but not all. Depending on the company, some may include a transportation stipend.

For more information on Mutual Housing internships, go to www.mutualhousing.com/intern-and-volunteer-opportunities. For more information on UCD internships, go to <https://icc.ucdavis.edu>.

Founded in 1988, Mutual Housing California develops, operates and advocates for sustainable rental housing for the region's diverse households.

A member of NeighborWorks America – a congressionally chartered nonprofit that supports community development nationwide – Mutual Housing has more than 3,000 residents, nearly half of whom are children.

Through its focus on leadership, the nonprofit provides training and mentoring as well as educational programs, community-building activities and services for residents and neighbors.

For more information, go to www.mutualhousing.com.