

## TIPS FOR CARDINAL QUARTER FELLOWS

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### **Make Your Fellowship What You Want it To Be**

#### *Do Your Research*

Even though you may know your organization's mission statement and you've checked out their website, look further. Take the time to learn about the context in which you'll be working. Research the issues your organization engages with, the specific work the organization does, its history, which other organizations it works with, and what might be involved in your specific project.

#### *Check In with Your Supervisor*

Plan on having regular check-in meetings with your supervisor. If your supervisor doesn't suggest meeting regularly (once per week) you should ask to set something up, even if it's informal. Regular meetings with your supervisor are opportunities for you to provide an update on your work so far, get feedback on that work, bring up questions or concerns that you have, and hear about things that are going on in the organization. Even if you are in frequent communication with your supervisor, you should set up a regular check-in meeting as a way to provide updates and ask for feedback and professional development opportunities on a regular basis.

#### *Take Initiative*

Whether it's approaching your supervisor to ask to set up check-in meetings or asking to attend a directors' meeting, you will have numerous chances to take initiative and direct your experience so that you learn more and have a better time. When working on your assigned projects and interacting with other aspects of the organization's work, ask questions and ask to get involved further. Tell your supervisor that you're interested in any opportunities to learn more, and then keep your eyes out yourself. The more you communicate with your supervisor and co-workers, the more likely it is that you'll know when there's something happening that you could sit in on, though always ask first if it's appropriate for you to be involved. Keep in mind that the projects or activities that you and your supervisor have decided on should be your main priority, so you may not have enough time to attend meetings or assist with other projects on a regular basis.

### **Be Professional**

#### *Attire*

Dress appropriately. Pay attention to what other people in the organization are wearing and if you're not sure about something, dress conservatively. Even if your position seems informal, flip-flops, spaghetti strap tank tops, and even jeans may seem too casual to community members or other practitioners who engage with the organization.

#### *Schedule*

Establish a schedule for your work with the organization. You should still decide on specific work days and times even if your supervisor seems fine with keeping it flexible.

#### *Punctuality*

Get to work on time. If for some reason you have to be late or cannot work on your scheduled day, call your supervisor and whomever else you were going to be working with to inform them of the situation. Given the short time frame for these fellowships, plan on making up the time within the same week.

### *Commuting*

Think about where you will be working when you make housing plans. There are excellent web resources available to help you plan your commute, whether you drive or take public transportation. Regardless of how you get to and from your organization, you should do a “dry run” at least once. (Commute time should never be counted as work time.)

### *Attitude*

There isn't one particular way to be or not be—and of course you should be yourself—but bringing a positive, open attitude to your fellowship can help build relationships and open doors for you. This means coming in with humility, asking questions, and listening as much as possible. How much you get to learn and experience depends on the extent to which the people working there want to “let you in” and show you things. It's important to demonstrate respect, interest in learning, flexibility, and willingness to help out.

### **What to Do If Things Get Complicated**

If you maintain good channels of communication, misunderstandings are less likely to arise and you'll have a tool for addressing issues should anything happen. Some things, however, may be beyond a fellow's control.

### *Who's Doing What?*

Sometimes, when multiple parties are involved with a project, there is a lack of communication among the people working on it, which leads to confusion. If you recognize that the project you're assigned to involves other people with whom you are not actively collaborating, you should talk with your supervisor about who is responsible for the other parts, whether they know what you're doing, and if they want to give you any information (or get input from you). Ask if it would be appropriate to speak with the other colleagues directly and offer your support to the entire team, if feasible.

### *Changes in Your Project*

Given the nature of busy non-profit organizations and government agencies, it is possible that your project will change. The changes may not have anything to do with you; often projects change or get delayed due to outside forces, prioritization of other work, or a shift within the organization. The most important thing is not to get discouraged; most likely you and your supervisor will find another project for you to work on. If there aren't many options, you can ask your supervisor to help you find something to work on in another part of the organization or agency.

### *Resources for Acts of Intolerance and Sexual Harassment*

While your first line of information and procedures should be the resources provided by your office, you can access Stanford University campus resources for advice on acts of intolerance and sexual harassment. See these websites:

<https://studentaffairs.stanford.edu/policies/acts-intolerance-protocol>

<http://harass.stanford.edu>

## **Additional Tips for Making the Most of Your Experience**

### *Fitting In*

- Remember that you're an outsider in some respects. Take advantage of the benefits of that by asking questions, listening, and actively trying to learn about the organization's work and culture. But also be aware of the downsides—you're new, you are not an expert, and you will have to learn to defer to your colleagues with more professional experience.
- Share your learning plan! Be vocal with your supervisor about your specific interests.
- Don't be afraid to ask your supervisor and other colleagues about their current projects.
- Initiate conversations with colleagues at all levels of the organization; find out why the work they do is important to them and learn about their career paths.
- Be helpful with the things you are good at, but try something new when the opportunity arises. At the same time, make sure that you have the requisite training and information to complete your assignments. Ask for help if you need it.
- Learn about previous projects at the workplace; know the history/context of your work.
- Be humble and flexible.
- Workplace diversity means respecting and valuing the differing skills and experiences we all bring to the workplace, as well as being aware of the additional challenges faced by some groups, be it on the basis of gender, age, culture, religion, language or personal circumstances. You may find yourself in a situation where your personal views are not reflected by those you encounter during your fellowship. Take this opportunity to learn from those who have alternative perspectives by engaging in calm, open conversations.

### *Managing Workload and Staying Engaged*

- Be proactive and helpful but learn to say no if you have too much on your plate.
- Keep a checklist of tasks you are working on, including how long they will take and when you will do them.
- If you are bored, take initiative and ask for assignments and read articles about your field.
- Be clear with your supervisor and tell them how you feel about your workload; if you don't tell them, they won't know. Talk to your supervisor often about due dates, time management, etc.
- Keep track of how many hours you work.
- Make sure the expectations of your supervisor are clear and manageable.
- Prioritize: not every job/task has the same value.
- Be creative. If you don't have anything to do, try to come up with project ideas and present them to your supervisor.
- Ask people at your workplace what they are involved in.
- Let your supervisor know what your skills are so you get realistic, and appropriate tasks.

### *Avoiding Burnout*

- Make sure you have downtime, explore local areas and get to know the community in which you are living, outside of a work context.
- Make friends at your workplace.
- Call home often.
- Take time for introspection and reflection.
- Go to bed earlier than normal on work nights and exercise.
- Bring some of your favorite music, books, movies, etc.

- Define accomplishable goals for the day or week.
- Put down the tech and try to live in the experience of where you are and what you are doing.
- Give yourself time to relax. Don't feel guilty if you are homesick, upset, etc., and don't be afraid to reach out and ask for help. If you are feeling uncomfortable or are experiencing culture shock, find another Stanford student in the area, or someone who is familiar with your situation.

### *Safety*

- Avoid public transportation late at night in high crime areas.
- Choose safe and secure housing.
- Avoid drinking alcohol and do not use illegal drugs.
- Program your emergency contact telephone numbers into your phone, and carry a physical list of the numbers with you in case you lose your phone.
- Ask your supervisor if there are things you should be aware of regarding health and safety in your workplace or the surrounding community.

### **Questions or Concerns**

The Undergraduate Fellowships Program staff are available over the summer to answer questions or speak about workplace or other concerns. Please feel free to contact us:

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