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Intern Program FAQs

LAMONT-DOHERTY SUMMER INTERN PROGRAM

1. How can the Lamont Summer Intern Program help me?

This summer internship is a chance to focus on a specific research topic, learn the skills (lab, computer modeling or whatever) needed to make sense of the data that you may collect yourself or may have provided to you, and to come to a conclusion about the question you set out to answer. There is no substitute for such experience inside the framework of the college experience.

Completing an internship - or several - can help ease your transition from college to career. While not too many people leave school with a definition of their 'dream job' established, an internship can help you narrow your professional focus by allowing you the opportunity to explore different fields. Internships are also a good tool to help you improve your resume, develop professional skills and network.

2. Why should I choose the Lamont Summer Intern Program?

Lamont has world-class scientists in many scientific disciplines: climate modeling, atmospheric sciences, paleo-climatology, biogeochemistry, marine geophysics, marine geology, physical oceanography, seismology, marine biology, isotope geochemistry, etc. The internship at Lamont allows you to work one on one with these scientists, rather than as one of many students in a classroom setting. With a relatively modest time investment of ten weeks, you can discover if you enjoy scientific research and if you would like being a graduate student.

THE APPLICATION

3. How do I apply?

Fill out the Lamont-Doherty Summer Internship Program Online Application. The online application form is open from Jan 18th to Feb 18th.

4. What are the application requirements?

Lamont Doherty Summer Internship Program Online Application

College transcript(s) - Scanned and attached to the application form as a single file (preferred) OR sent by regular surface mail by Feb 18th.

Resume with description of computer skills (if any).

Statement of interest- You should provide a general statement about the three research mentors and research areas that interest you most. It should also include a paragraph describing the qualities of a good scientist. You might also describe a particular research project that you wish to undertake but this is not required.

Two letters of recommendation from your professors.

5. What additional requirements are you looking for in an applicant?

One year of college level mathematics (or calculus in high school), plus (depending on your disciplinary focus and if available to you) one previous earth, atmospheric or ocean-science course. (Biology intensive projects may not require calculus but you will still need to be able to use a spreadsheet program and think numerically.)

A minimum of two semesters of college-level chemistry, if selecting geochemistry research. If selecting biologically oriented research, you are required to have a minimum of two semesters of college-level biology.

A minimum of three semesters of college-level physics, if selecting geophysics, physical oceanography or atmospheric sciences research.

A minimum of two semesters of college-level geology, if selecting geology research.

6. When is the application deadline?

Lamont Doherty Summer Internship Program **must** receive the online application form no later than Feb. 18th for students to be considered. Recommendations and transcripts can arrive up to one week later but students will not be considered for acceptance until these materials are received.

7. Is there an application fee?

No. There is no application fee.

8. I applied last year and was not selected; can I reapply?

Yes. You should fill out a completely new Lamont Doherty Summer Internship Program online application. We cannot use material from a previous application; you must submit a new online application and re-submit all application requirements (See Q.2).

9. I have previously participated in the program. Can I apply again?

No. We are not allowed to accept students who have previously been LDEO summer interns.

10. Can you give me an idea of my chances for admission, for example, based on GPA scores or Class Rank?

Overall, intern mentors are looking for students who are intellectually curious and whose interests, skills, aptitude and experience best match their research program. The individual mentor evaluates all parts of the application (statement of interest, recommendations, grades, test scores, previous research experience, etc.) in an effort to get as complete a picture of applicants with similar research interests as possible. GPA does factor into the decision but other parts of the application are equally important. Students whose GPAs in science courses are less than a B if courses are difficult or B+ if courses are less difficult are unlikely to be accepted (99% probability).

11. Is it OK to send copies of awards, papers, posters, to supplement my application?

No. You may only submit the required materials. Because of the large number of applicants we must discourage you from sending in copies of awards, journal articles or other extraneous documents. You can list awards and published abstracts and papers on your resume. Note that we do not expect students to have prior research experience or publications.

12. Can an applicant who was not accepted into the program request information as to why they were not accepted?

Due to the large volume of qualified applicants to the Lamont Doherty Summer Internship Program and the small number of students accepted into the program we are unable to provide specifics as to why an application was denied.

13. Will the program keep me informed of my application status?

The online application will email you when all your letters of recommendation are received. It will also send you an email once we have received your official transcript and all letters of recommendation. This email will say that your application is complete and is able to be circulated to potential research advisors. We will email or phone you your acceptance results on or before April 1st. **Potential research mentors may contact you by phone to assess you more fully but this should not be considered an offer of acceptance unless it comes from Dr. Dallas Abbott.**

14. Whom do I contact if I have questions about the application process?

Please send an email to: dallashabbott@gmail.com

15. Can I visit the school or contact faculty before being admitted?

The best time to visit is during the LDEO Open House in the fall previous to the summer you wish to apply for. It is usually held on the first Saturday in October. See the Lamont Website for more information. Immediately after being admitted, you can begin a dialog with your faculty advisor. Also, you can begin to read background material about your project. Applicants wishing further information about a faculty member's field of research should contact that professor via email, examine the professors website and read the professors published papers. Applicants should keep in mind that faculty schedules are very full.

16. I am still a first year student (Freshman standing). Am I eligible for the program?

No. Only sophomores and juniors are eligible to participate in the program.

17. I am not currently a science or engineering major. I am a humanities major. Can I still apply to the program?

We usually only accept students that major in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) disciplines. There are some exceptions among the Columbia and Barnard students in the Earth Intern Program. For example, majors in sustainable development, environmental policy and economics can apply.

18. Do all the interns major in Earth, Atmospheric or Ocean Sciences?

Although most of our interns have majored in ocean, earth, atmospheric or environmental science, we encourage students majoring in Physics, Chemistry, Math, Biology, Sustainable Development, Environmental Policy, and Engineering to apply.

19. Is the LDEO Summer Intern Program the same as the Earth Intern Program?

Yes. Both programs are nearly identical and candidates for both programs perform the same activities.

20. Do the Lamont Doherty Intern Program and the Earth Intern Program run at separate times?

No. These programs run simultaneously.

21. Can anyone apply to the Lamont Doherty Intern Program?

The Lamont Doherty Summer Intern program is open to any student from any college or university in the United States. Applicants **must** be American citizens or permanent residents of the United States or students from SUSTech who are fully supported by their university.

22. Can anyone apply to the Earth Intern Program?

No. This program is restricted to Columbia and Barnard University students (including those who are not American citizens or permanent residents) and students from SUSTech who are fully supported by their university. Other students who are not American citizens are not eligible for the Earth Intern Program.

23. I have previously participated in an NSF funded REU sites program at another institution. Am I eligible for admission to the LDEO summer intern program?

This depends on the funding source of your previous REU site as follows:

- If the REU site was funded through NSF Ocean, Earth or Atmospheric Sciences you are not eligible for our program.

- If the site was funded through any other division of NSF, for example Biological Sciences, you are eligible.

TRANSCRIPTS AND LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION

24. To what address should I send my transcripts?

If you are unable to attach a scanned file of your transcript(s) to the online form, email your scanned transcripts as a single file to:

Dr. Dallas Abbott

Summer Internship Program

Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory

Palisades, New York 10964

Email: dallashabbott@gmail.com

25. Can I send in more than 2 letters of recommendation?

No. You may only submit the required materials. Because of the large number of applicants we must discourage you from sending any additional documentation.

26. Can I submit a letter of recommendation from an industrial supervisor?

We understand that it may be difficult to obtain letters from faculty members. However, we strongly recommend that the two letters be from faculty members who know you well. Remember that our Admissions Committee wants to know about your potential ability to do independent research. Character references do not address those abilities. A letter from a faculty member who knows you as part of a class carries much more weight than a letter from a long-standing industrial employer.

27. How can I obtain the best possible letters of recommendation?

You need to let them know as much as possible about you-don't assume that they will remember.

Here is a list of the information you should provide to someone writing a letter for you:

- a) What you are applying for, and why
- b) The deadline
- c) Weblink, email, fax number, if available
- d) Your overarching interests, career goals if known – how this opportunity fits in
- e) What big theme you want them to get across in their letter (i.e. perfect opportunity at this stage in your career, you have a lot to contribute to the program, etc.)
- f) Their relationship with you: advisor, professor (name course(s) and include date(s)), department chair
- g) Include the approximate date when you first met (they always ask: how long, and in what capacity, have you known the applicant?)
- h) Your major

- i) List relevant academic/research experience
- j) Favorite classes, sections of classes or labs and why
- k) Examples of academic/research **accomplishments, achievements, and successes** beyond hard work and dedication that show originality, creativity, resourcefulness, and other qualities that are important for the position.
- l) Relevant internships, other experience
- m) Examples of highlights, showing leadership, other qualities important for the position
- n) Examples demonstrating relevant attributes: perseverance, determination, oral/written communication skills, teamwork, etc.
- o) Anything else you want them to be sure to mention? Maybe explain any irregularity in your record?

FUNDING

28. What kind of funding is available to support students in the program?

Students will receive a stipend of \$5000 for this 10-week program. Students have to participate in the entirety of the program. No exceptions made.

29. How does the housing work?

Student will receive free, air-conditioned housing in a shared double room at Columbia University in the City of New York.

30. How much is the fare to commute daily to Lamont from Manhattan?

There is free transportation between the Columbia campus and Lamont-Doherty.

31. Will I have to pay for my airfare?

Students who travel to New York for this internship from more than 200 miles away are eligible for a R/T supersaver airfare. If possible, we prefer to buy the ticket for you and will contact you about this after acceptance.

32. Is my REU stipend taxable?

Yes it is but you will not necessarily receive a W-2 form. You should save documentation of direct deposit of your paycheck.

THE PROGRAM

33. I am waiting to hear from a job offer. Can I join REU later after hearing the results of this offer?

Given the large number of applicants placed on the waiting list, we need to know if you would accept our invitation to participate by the deadline we give you. (Applicants are accepted on a rolling basis after mid March.) We consider it unethical for you to give a written acceptance of the LDEO internship and later to decline it for another internship.

34. Are there opportunities to expand my involvement beyond REU?

There are potential opportunities. Students may continue the project as a senior thesis. Some sophomores continue their research project in the summer after their junior year. Ask your research mentor about this after you have been at LDEO for at least a month.

35. How are research mentors selected?

Students are matched with research advisors through the application process; this is why the student statement of interest is an extremely important part of his/her application. You are more likely to be accepted if you mention the research mentors for each project by name in your statement of interest.

36. Do I select the project I want to work with?

Students are asked to select possible research areas as their first, second and third choices out of topics submitted by potential research advisors. The pool of research advisors is large enough to ensure that we can meet one of your three choices.

37. When do I know which research project I will be participating in?

When you are admitted you will be notified about your research mentor.

38. Will I work alone in a research group or will I have other interns to collaborate with?

This depends on the research advisor. More often than not, the intern will be part of a research group that contains other interns or graduate students. Many projects will include high school students from our high school research program.

39. Can I be late to start the program?

We discourage this but some advisors allow it for up to one week. Students do need to complete the full 10 weeks of the program.

40. Can I miss a week of the program?

Only if you can start a week early and provide your own housing during that time. A week's absence is the maximum that is allowed.

41. Where will I live?

Students live in suites on the Barnard College campus. Most students choose to accept the free air-conditioned suite that is provided. Each suite has a common kitchen area and a shared bathroom facility. We loan the members of each suite cooking utensils for the summer. Students are responsible for returning them clean and accounted for at the end of the summer. There is no cafeteria program, students cook for themselves in their suites. Every dorm room comes equipped with a phone. The program does not provide bedding, thus, you must bring your own. Students use their Columbia or Barnard ID to enter the dorms. (Students from outside Columbia or Barnard are issued Columbia IDs.)

If you prefer to live at home, you can do so. However, we find that the students who live in the dorm have a wonderful time interacting with one another and experiencing the environment of New York City. In addition, this is an opportunity to learn about other research projects.

42. How will I get to work each day?

There is a special intern shuttle bus service between Columbia/Barnard campus and Lamont. Interns will travel free on this bus. If you are living at home, it is sometimes possible to arrange to ride to work with another Lamont employee. If you live at home and live close to the Columbia/Barnard campus, you can ride the intern shuttle.

43. How many hours am I expected to work each week?

You are expected to work Monday through Friday 9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. The intern shuttle bus leaves Columbia each day at 8:30 am and arrives at Lamont just before 9:30 am. The returning bus leaves to go back to Columbia every day at 4:30 p.m. You are given reading materials and writing assignments to work on for an hour or so during weekday evenings. If you must be absent during the week, you should expect to make up the hours. You should not expect to take classes or hold down another job during the period of your internship.

44. Do I need to bring a car?

No, all of New York City is easily accessible by public transportation. The nearest subway stop is less than a block from your dorm. If you do wish to bring a car, it will entail a bit of extra work. New York City has alternate side of the street parking zones that require you to move the car every day, usually during working hours. We strongly recommend that students do not bring cars except if they are commuting daily from home. We are experiencing increasing difficulty in obtaining parking permits for overnight parking for interns and do not know if we will be able to accommodate overnight parking this year.

LIFE ON CAMPUS

45. What is Lamont like?

Lamont is located between two New York State Parks on the top of the Palisades Cliffs, near the New York/New Jersey state line. The Lamont campus is wooded and green, with trees and lawns around the buildings. At different times of the week, members of the Lamont staff play soccer, basketball, baseball, volleyball, and ultimate Frisbee during lunchtime. There is also a yoga class at noon on Tuesdays. Summer interns who are interested are encouraged to participate.

46. Is New York City safe?

New York City is one of the safer of the major cities. Like all cities, it has wonderful things to see and do but requires appropriate attention to the surroundings. You will be given travel information and will learn to navigate the city. You will meet people from all over the world at Lamont. Most consider NYC to be one of the best perks about being at Lamont. Most students have a great time exploring New York City during the summer.