

# Preface

The idea for this book was sparked many years ago at an APSA Teaching and Learning Conference (TLC), where our themed track discussions about program assessment touched off numerous side conversations about internships. To take stock of contemporary practices in political science internships, editors Renée Van Vechten and Bobbi Gentry, along with colleague Shamira Gelbman, launched their inquiry in 2015 by surveying internship coordinators located at four-year institutions, followed by a second survey in 2017 examining internship practices at community colleges exclusively. The research took shape in conference papers, roundtables, and workshops, and eventually, this volume. What's clear is that internship practices across the profession vary widely, and in some cases, "anything goes." It's no wonder that so many in the profession dismiss internships as volunteer work. Yet we also learned that many in the discipline are experts on experiential learning with a wealth of insight to share.

Situated within a larger, ongoing dialogue about teaching and learning and the undergraduate curriculum, this book is intended to fill a general need for theory-driven and evidence-based knowledge about internships. Although scholarship examining internships in political science has been around for well over 70 years, pedagogical materials remain scattered across journals, centers for teaching and learning, libraries, and faculty offices. By pooling resources and centralizing knowledge in a book such as this, we offer an overview of internship practices that we hope will assist faculty members and others who want to create, improve, or expand their programs. In essence, these chapters justify further investments in academic internship programs by faculty, their institutions, and internship providers—commitments of time, personnel, and finances to secure the sustainability of programs.

Moving towards best practices, the contributors to this book address different settings and modes for internships, legal aspects, resources, and various approaches to improving interns' learning. The opinions of the authors are their own, as are the examples and experiences at different institutions that they describe. Their studied recommendations are meant to be broad and encompassing so that they can be applied to different institutional contexts. Supplemental materials, combined with practical recommendations, help give this book the feel of a manual for undergraduate internships in the discipline.

This book also endeavors to address issues of equity in access to internships, diversity of stakeholders, and inclusion of all students, regardless of background. In order to promote inclusive writing, the singular pronoun "they" is used to recognize the multidimensionality of students, faculty, and people generally.

The editors would like to thank the American Political Science Association for recognizing the value of such a resource for members of the profession and helping to bring our proposal to fruition. Their sponsorship of the Teaching and Learning Conference (since the first conference in 2004) made this book possible by creating a space for research and collaboration to improve political science education. In addition, we would like to acknowledge the work of former APSA director Michael Brintnall, who, by establishing the TLC, contributed invaluable to the building of a community of teacher-scholars within the profession, and his successor, Steven Rathgeb Smith, for carrying on the commitment of the Association. We also thank former APSA staff member Sheila Mann for her dedication to making the APSA more relevant to the political science faculty whose main duty is teaching, along with Henry Chen, an extraordinarily efficient and capable managing editor, and skillful publications director Jon Gurstelle, for shepherding this project into existence. Lastly, we are grateful for the Political Science

Education section, which lobbied for the Teaching and Learning Conference, created the *Journal of Political Science Education*, and continues to be a kind and welcoming academic community that remains committed to advancing rigorous scholarship of teaching and learning. This member section of APSA remains open to all scholars who support the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL) within the discipline.

Because this project is ongoing and further contributions to our knowledge and understanding will continue to inform our collective practices, practical materials and additional research about internships will be available on APSA Educate (<https://educate.apsanet.org>), an open-source library created for the purpose of sharing information about political science teaching methods. These resources will be updated and expanded periodically. Finally, we would like to thank Charlie Van Vechten, David DuBose, Martha E. Richmond, family, friends, and pets Remo, Winnie, and the late Allegra for their support and patience as we worked to complete this project.