Internships provide important link between school and work

On any given day, Minnesota State University, Mankato senior Nkongolo "Jimmy" Nyembwe may be conducting an interview, collecting price quotes, taking photos, or writing articles. It’s the variety that makes the man from the Democratic Republic of the Congo happy as a public information intern with the City of Mankato and Mankato Area Public Schools. Jimmy, a volunteer at Mankato Area Public Schools, was noticed for his outstanding qualities in working with youth by a City of Mankato employee. This networking, in addition to leadership skills that Jimmy developed while serving as past President of the African Student Association at MSU ultimately led to his internship offer in the Public Information Office.

For students in MSU’s College of Business, an internship is an important part of education. It is one of the strongest links between valuable classroom experience and the professional arena. Those who have completed internships say their experiences helped them better understand their course work and prepared them for the leap into the “real world.”

“An internship is a two-way road. The supervisor must be approachable and offer a mentoring relationship, while the student must be willing to work. If you are patient and ready to learn, it will be successful.”

A poor internship can result when an intern is not challenged. Interns want to apply their classroom knowledge on the job. Holly says it is difficult to get a feel for the business environment if you are only asked to run errands and make photocopies. “A good supervisor will make sure that you are always challenged,” she adds.

All three interns recommend an internship to underclassmen. “They are a valuable part of the educational experience,” explains Holly. “The majority of what you learn in an internship is not in the books, and you learn a lot of things that you'll apply to work in the future.”

Companies interested in providing a challenging internship are encouraged to contact the internship coordinator of the appropriate department: Accounting & Business Law, Dr. Paul Schwinghammer, 507/389-5427; Finance, Dr. Richard Swanson, 507/389-5429; Management, Dr. Claudia Pragman, 507/389-5417; or Marketing & International Business, Dr. Kevin Elliott, 507/389-5404.