

00:01 (bright music)
00:04 - How do you get your foot in the door
00:05 at one of the big four?
00:07 You take part in a Winternship
00:08 at Suffolk University's Sawyer Business School.
00:11 Hello and welcome to "The On-Ramp", an ongoing series
00:14 that highlights thought leadership
00:15 from the Sawyer Business School in downtown Boston.
00:18 My name is Julia Simone,
00:20 and today I'll be speaking
00:21 with accounting professor Melissa Renschler.
00:24 She's going to talk about Winternships
00:26 and how they help accounting students turn internships
00:29 into job offers at big four firms.
00:32 Professor Renschler, thank you so much for joining us today.
00:35 - Thank you for having me.
00:36 - So help us understand what exactly is a Winternship?
00:39 - Right, so in public accounting we have
00:41 what's called a busy season.
00:42 So typically audit and tax professionals
00:44 are really busy through the months of January and April
00:47 because so much of the work is really just concentrated
00:50 during that point in time.
00:51 So winter internships,
00:52 or as we affectionately call them, Winternships,
00:54 are really an opportunity
00:55 for our Sawyer Business School students to get in there
00:58 during those really busy times to learn,
01:00 have on-the-job training to really learn the ropes,
01:03 learn the types of procedures that they'd be doing
01:06 as full-time professionals
01:07 if they continue in the profession.
01:09 - And why are they helpful for students?
01:12 - Yeah, so Winternships are really helpful,
01:13 mostly because the public accounting firms
01:15 hire full-time employees from their internship pool.
01:19 So the gateway to the profession
01:20 is through these internship opportunities.
01:23 And so primarily getting our students,
01:24 getting their foot in the door through this exposure,
01:28 through that really on-the-job training
01:30 through the Winternships, is the best opportunity for them
01:33 to gain those full-time job offers
01:35 following their graduation.
01:36 - Is the program unique to the Sawyer Business School?
01:39 - So winter internships are not unique
01:42 to accounting students at large,
01:43 but the Winternship program here at SBS is quite unique.
01:46 So what makes the Winternship program here unique
01:49 is that we really cultivate an experience
01:51 around the internship.
01:52 So professors Tracey Riley, Andrew Stuart,
01:54 and myself have built a curriculum

01:56 to really help support our students
01:58 before the internship begins,
02:00 throughout the duration of it, and then following it.
02:03 So it's really a mode in order to support them,
02:05 to prepare them for what to expect on the job
02:08 prior to the internship starting, to really support them
02:10 and have them reflect on the experience
02:12 during the internship itself,
02:14 and then to help them finish up their coursework
02:16 prior to their graduation.
02:18 So it's meant to really be a cohorted experience
02:20 where the students, even if they're interning at different
02:22 firms, have an opportunity to connect with one another
02:26 and really share in that experience
02:28 throughout their senior year.
02:30 - And that leads me to my next question.
02:31 How exactly do students
02:33 prepare to participate in a Winternship?
02:35 - Great question.
02:36 So prior to having that kind of cohorted curriculum
02:39 experience in their senior year,
02:41 Professors Tracey Riley, Andrew Stuart, and I
02:43 really work with students to prepare
02:44 for even obtaining the internship.
02:46 So we certainly don't expect our eligible students
02:48 to just apply and get the opportunity on their own.
02:52 We really work with them up to a year prior
02:54 to review their resume, hold mock interview sessions,
02:57 bring in panels of diverse alumni who work at these firms,
03:00 or bring representatives from the firms themselves
03:04 to come talk with our students
03:05 to really help them understand, hey, what type
03:07 of position would I be most interested in, audit or tax?
03:09 Which firm culture am I gonna relate to best?
03:12 So it's a really cohesive experience
03:15 meant to support the students' confidence
03:17 and make sure that they're sharing their stories
03:19 with the firms so that the firms know
03:21 how well prepared our students are for these experiences.
03:24 - I was just gonna say,
03:25 I'm sure that helps their confidence
03:26 immensely going into it.
03:27 - Definitely.
03:28 - And what kind of outcomes have you seen?
03:30 - So the outcomes for this program
03:32 have been absolutely amazing.
03:34 In our first year, so for all three years
03:36 that this program has been running,
03:37 all eligible students have received
03:39 at least one internship offer, and the vast majority
03:42 of our students upon completing the internship,
03:45 receive some form of continuing opportunity,
03:48 whether that's a full-time employment offer
03:50 or another internship offer with a firm at a later time.

03:53 So again, kind of proving that statement
03:55 that it's such a gateway
03:56 to the profession is participating in these internship
03:59 opportunities, and our students have really proved
04:01 their worth in working really hard
04:03 during these very busy times
04:05 and really committing to the profession
04:06 after they complete the internship.
04:09 - In your opinion, what is the best part
04:11 of the Winternship program?
04:13 - So my favorite part,
04:14 separate from obviously our students succeeding
04:16 and getting full-time offers,
04:17 is toward the end of the spring semester
04:19 in the senior year, we host a travel seminar.
04:22 So the students get an opportunity to visit Washington DC
04:25 and New York City and visit with
04:27 various public accounting firms and regulatory bodies.
04:31 Notably in New York City,
04:32 we get the opportunity to work with Stacy Mills,
04:35 who is one of our Suffolk trustees,
04:36 and we get to do a flash consulting project
04:38 with her and her company.
04:40 So beyond that opportunity, we also get the students
04:42 traveling, exposing to different cultures,
04:44 and really just getting to enjoy
04:47 different atmospheres prior to their graduation.
04:49 And it's a great opportunity for them
04:51 to really come together at the conclusion of the experience
04:54 and really just relish in their hard work.
04:56 It's such just a celebratory kind of cherry on top
04:59 of their achievement in working so hard
05:01 during the Winternship year.
05:03 So that's personally been my favorite part
05:05 beyond the students succeeding so well on their own,
05:07 is really getting the opportunity
05:09 to celebrate their confidence and their hard work.
05:12 - Professor Renschler, thank you so much for being here.
05:14 - Thank you so much for having me.
05:16 - Thank you for joining us
05:18 and we'll see you next time on "The On-Ramp".
05:20 (bright music)