RESEARCH THE ORGANIZATION & SPONSOR
• It’s definitely important to do research on the company because it will help you better understand the company and assist in preparation of questions (research “parent” companies too, i.e. Unilever is a parent company to Lipton). Preparation lets the sponsor know you are serious about learning.
• Really read the description of the companies and the sponsor’s jobs, research/prepare questions accordingly.
• The sponsor is investing a lot of time, and it’s important to invest your time to make the externship the most beneficial.

FLEXIBILITY & CONTACTING THE SPONSOR
• Be sure to talk with your sponsor and get expectations clear. Your conversations with your sponsor will set the tone for the externship. Think about what specifically you want to get out of the externship and don’t be afraid to share that with the sponsor.
• Be enthusiastic when contacting your sponsor. It will get him more excited about your visit.
• Ask about the dress code ahead of time. It may change throughout the duration of the externship depending on the activities of the day (i.e. for a business/client meeting).
• Be forthcoming with the sponsors about what you want to know; they are eager to help out.
• Make sure you get in touch with the sponsor well in advance (up to a month) and then do a follow up call a week ahead of time. This way you have two chances to ask questions.
• Consult the sponsor about a daily itinerary.
• Go willing to learn all you possibly can. Don’t be focused on only one aspect or topic.
• Even though it falls under finals week, contact your sponsor! He/she could possibly be on vacation by the time school ends and you get home – contact him/her beforehand!
• Make an effort to get to know your sponsor so you have things to talk about during the externship.
• Try to know the lingo used in the field you are applying to.
• Flexibility is important both before and after you receive the externship. Both you and your sponsor’s schedule are apt to change, especially if he/she wants to expose you to a particular meeting or event that was not initially expressed in the externship description.

PREPARING QUESTIONS & INTERACTING WITH THE SPONSOR
• Create personal expectations and goals for the externship so that the experience will be satisfying…e.g. think of questions beforehand.
• Prepare questions ahead of time; often the sponsors seem to ask students how they would like the day to be structured – so know the company, industry, and what you want to learn!
• Explain your expectations to the sponsor – and ask if this is plausible. Before making any requests, have the courtesy to research whatever you can about the company/sponsor.
• Just be yourself with the sponsor. It gives your sponsor a better idea of where to lead you with his/her advice.
• Have good questions ready for ALL people you might see, not just your sponsor.
• If you want to meet certain people (head management, etc.) just make sure you ask ahead of time

KEEP TIME & TRAVEL COSTS IN MIND
• The main thing is to be realistic about other time commitments and all travel costs.
• Know where you are going and, if possible, find out if anyone else is going where you are going; it makes the experience more enjoyable and a lot easier.
Travel costs are a big factor and must be considered before starting. Make sure you know exactly how and where you are traveling from and to, i.e. how far are the airports, are there shuttles/subways to where you are staying, estimated travel costs in the city.
Give serious attention to a timeline of events (contact, travel, stay, food, etc.) to make the externship go smoothly. Be realistic about the amount of time you want to spend there and know what particular things you want to look into at the place of the externship.
Know how you will get to and from the site. Look up bus schedules, etc, and do a “practice run.”
It’s probably better for the student to keep larger blocks of time open during the winter break period. My externship was 3 days, but the days were moved around a bit (not consecutive) since the doctor I shadowed had many responsibilities and a different schedule every week.

ADVICE FROM PAST SPONSORS
The student took the time to review our web site as well as the other materials I forwarded prior to the externship and that helped tremendously.
The student had a clear idea of what marketing was as a field. This understanding served as an adequate foundation for her being able to participate in daily activities and ask questions.
The student indicated in advance the types of physician specialists that he wanted to meet which allowed me to make the contacts before his arrival.
The student was prepared both mentally and physically for a week of moving about and challenges: physically, because he had to arise and arrive at work very early and mentally because he knew in advance what he wanted to learn about the career.
Advise students to come prepared to take notes – the last couple have not and have given the impression that they are not interested.
I was unable to inform her of what to be prepared for, so when she showed up, she was ready for anything.
The student’s attitude and creativity were the best preparation.
It is very important for students that participate to be very well prepared. Have a clear idea of their interests and an understanding of the mentor’s company’s field, products and services.
I had a positive experience because the student and I did a few things ahead of time: spoke by phone to make arrangements, set parameters, and collaborated on appropriate schedule and content.
If traveling to another region of the country, be aware of cultural factors which may affect your experience and behavior (cultural mores, economy, acceptable language or attire).

GENERAL ADVICE FROM FORMER STUDENT EXTERNS
Don’t be afraid to ask questions during the externship.
Take the time to familiarize yourself with the activities of the company or organization beforehand so you can ask intelligent questions. Be prepared to get involved.
Get plenty of sleep the day before.
Make sure that you are committed. It will hurt you and possibly the students after you if your sponsor’s company decides not to do the program again due to you.
Be on time; better yet, be a little early.
Have back up plans for your transportation (do not rely on others, have a plan B).
Be outgoing because many times these companies cannot devote one person’s day entirely to you. Get to know many in the office to get as much information as possible.
Don’t be afraid to ask for housing with the sponsor if it says it might be available.
Be ready to work. Just because you are not being paid, it does not mean that you are not costing the company money by taking up people’s time. I spent some down time reorganizing the library.
Externships in a different city/region will give you a good idea of what living in that city/area would be like.
Research the company so you are aware of the other areas of the company and can plan out a fruitful experience with your sponsor by exploring all areas you think you are interested in.
Just go in with an open mind, ready to learn all that you can.
Be patient and ask as many questions as you possibly can. Relax, it’s not as bad as it sounds, especially after the first day. Have fun with it!
Just because it’s only a couple of days doesn’t mean that you won’t be participating in the organization. Leave time to enjoy what the location of the externship has to offer, especially if you don’t go there often.
Follow the suggested calendar and timeline– it was extremely helpful to be efficient and plan everything.