## Pathways Internship

*Cold Calling a Potential Placement*

A cold call is an initial phone call to someone who doesn’t know you. Most people do not like to do it, but it is an important skill to have. The ability to present yourself well on the telephone can open doors for you and afford you opportunities you might not otherwise have. The key to successful cold calling is to *appear* confident and competent and to have the information you need at your fingertips.

When making an initial inquiry about your career fieldwork placement, it is always crucial to know the name or title of the person in position to approve your placement. This isn’t always possible. Most likely you will end up asking for a manager or owner. Or ask for the person who handles internships. If it is an organization that has never had a high school intern, you will have to sell them on the idea of bringing you on board. Not an easy task, but not impossible either.

One thing you absolutely must do is explain what the Pathways Program is. Do not wait until you are on the phone to think about what you are going to say about Pathways. A good explanation of Pathways will go a long way to making you appear confident and competent. Remember, the employers don’t need you; you need them. You are selling yourself and the Pathways Program to them. Practice what you are going to say before you pick up the phone. Write it down; have something in front of you to refer to.

# Sample Cold Call

If you don’t know who you need to talk to, you will start with an operator or receptionist.

**Hello, my name is**  **and I’m a student at Tamiscal High School in Larkspur.** (If the person you are calling is outside of Marin, it is probably better to say Marin County instead of Larkspur, because most out-of-county folks don’t have a clue about where Larkspur is. If they ask you what Tamiscal is, it is often a lot easier to say that it is part of the Tamalpais High public school district than to go through a whole explanation about it. In any event, avoid using the phrase “alternative school.” Too many people have negative prejudices about alternative schools. It would be better to say “special program.”)

**I’m in a program at school that provides students real world experiences outside of the classroom and gives us the opportunity to explore career fields we might want to pursue when we get out of school.** (Never, never, never say we *have* to do field placements or couch it in terms of an onerous requirement. That will turn them off immediately. You have to sound enthusiastic and positive. Many adults already have stereotypes of teenagers that is not in your best interest to feed into.)

**I am extremely interested in** the career field (law enforcement, cooking, medicine, etc.) **and would like to talk to somebody doing** the occupation you’re interested in **at** name of company**.** (If they cannot connect you immediately, get the name of the person you need to talk to. The chances of them calling you back anytime soon are somewhere between slim and none. You do not have a lot of time to get placed. You are the one who needs the placement, so you are the one who is going to have to work the phone.)

Once you get connected, or if you already know who you are supposed to talk to, you will have to repeat the previous spiel. You may need to call several potential placements to find one that will take you on as an intern. I’ve (Patchen) had students go through this process 30 times to get an internship.

You can craft your own script, but here is an example:

**Hello, my name is** **and I’m a student at Tamiscal High School in Larkspur. I’m in a program at school that provides students real world experiences outside of the classroom and gives us the opportunity to explore career fields we might want to pursue when we get out of school. I am extremely interested in**  **and would like to explore the possibility of doing my internship at**

Questions you are likely to be asked by someone at a potential placement:

*Describe the program you’re in. What school do you go to?*

**It’s called the Pathways Program. It’s a year-long program for seniors that allows students to take courses at College of Marin concurrently with courses at Tamiscal High School, a Tam District alternative school** (be ready to explain Tamiscal further). **The internship placement is part of the career exploration component.** (You are likely to have follow-up questions about one or more of the individual phases. You can use the written program description as a jumping off point.)

*Why are you interested in this career?*

Think this one through before getting on the phone. Your response must be positive. “Well, I dunno, you can make hella money at it, I guess,” won’t work. Example: **I’ve always excelled at math and science, so I thought an internship with a mechanical engineering firm would be interesting for me.**

*When can you come in to talk about your placement?*

Bend over backwards to accommodate them. If you make things difficult for them, they are not going to deal with you. You are operating at a disadvantage because many adults have very bad impressions of teenagers. Way too many folks get way too much of their information from TV and, in their minds, you have non-existent attention spans and spend your days smoking weed, playing computer games, and apathetically staring at your phone all day. You often have to overcome negative stereotypes. Plus, you need to get your placement nailed down *now*. So, do it as soon as you can. Remember, getting an interview doesn’t mean the placement is going to work out. Have your weekly/semester schedule handy.

*What days will you be doing your internship hours and how many hours will you be doing?*

This will vary for every Pathways student, so think about your situation *before* you speak with your potential supervisor. What are the hours and days you are available? Can you work all of your internship hours in one day, or will you need to spread your hours across a few days during the week? What is the semester schedule? When will you be on a school vacation? These are important scheduling tasks.