Real-world learning and outreach experiences abound for undergraduate and graduate students who intern with the WVU Extension Service (WVU-ES). Part of an educational network of 105 land-grant universities, WVU-ES takes the helping hand of West Virginia University directly to thousands of West Virginians in communities scattered across the state. Through its Extension Service, the University provides a “mini-campus” in each of the state’s fifty-five counties. The work at these locations addresses a wide variety of community issues via a nontraditional mix of learners, faculty, staff, and volunteers.

Drawing on the strengths of WVU’s many academic disciplines, Extension educators target social, economic, environmental, and technical problems of communities. Some Extension educators work on WVU’s traditional campuses located in Morgantown, but many of the faculty work in county settings, generally located in or near each county’s government seat. Working daily with local residents, Extension faculty find their lives often intertwine with the issues that confront their local communities. They are committed to helping people find answers that work. As they solve problems along with local citizens, individually and in groups, Extension faculty and staff translate WVU’s research into action.

When graduate and undergraduate students take part in this action, they find the WVU Extension Service to be a fertile, flexible provider of a variety of internship, work-study, and volunteer experiences. Extension educators may involve students in some or in all phases of their educational projects—research, design, delivery, and evaluation. Depending on the project, students may have hands-on experience with computer networks, distance education, publication design and production, curriculum design and development, evaluation and research, and classroom teaching.

Extension’s many programs are driven by just four major initiatives:

• 4-H youth development
• Families and health
• Agriculture and natural resources
• Community, economic, and workforce development

Extension’s program delivery, however, has roots in many career fields including:

• Agriculture
• Business administration
• Child development
• Computer science
• Communications
• Environmental science
• Engineering
• Counseling and guidance
• Curriculum design
• Health education
• Home economics
• Journalism
• Safety

Regardless of their academic disciplines, today’s students may find rich learning experiences—and rewarding careers—among Extension’s diverse educational programs. Examples include:

• WVU Extension’s 4-H program builds leaders who have the confidence that comes from learning by doing. Using clubs, special interest programs, camping, school enrichment, and individual study, 4-H works with more than 7,900 adult volunteers to involve more than 80,000 youths in educational activities—reaching one in four West Virginia youths.
• Diabetes is a major problem in West Virginia. Extension’s Dining with Diabetes is helping families learn how to select, prepare, and enjoy food that supports healthful eating habits. Each year, more than a thousand diabetes cooking school students attend classes in their own communities and learn how to plan and prepare meals that are appealing, tasty, and healthful.
• Thousands of children in rural and low-income communities nourish their bodies and minds through the summertime Energy Express program. A partnership of WVU Extension and state and local organizations, the program helps children build critical reading skills while providing nutritious meals and valuable mentoring.
• The First Impressions program offers West Virginia communities frank, detailed assessments of what works and what doesn’t as seen through the eyes of strangers. Communities in Brooke, Grant, Hampshire, and Mineral counties are among those using this Extension program to make immediate improvements and guide long-term development.
Each year, more than 12,000 firefighters and emergency responders throughout West Virginia improve their skills through training offered by WVU's Fire Service Extension. These programs help fire department personnel meet national certification standards and enhance their ability to protect people and property in their communities.

Helping West Virginia workers stay well and injury-free is the goal of WVU's Safety and Health Extension. Industrial safety specialists teach employers and their workers how to protect themselves and the public from potential hazards encountered on the job.

Opening and improving farmers markets are just two approaches WVU Extension agents are using to help farm families improve their bottom line while they bring fresh, nutritious foods to local families via direct markets, grocery stores, and restaurants. WVU Extension is helping the state’s 22,000 farmers reach a wider consumer base through its Small Farm Center.

WVU's International Extension programs open a window to the world. Through international exchange programs, educational camps, and development projects and research studies abroad, West Virginians are learning how to cross culture and language barriers to form productive, rewarding partnerships in the global village.

Extension operates the University’s special-mission campus, which is WVU Jackson’s Mill State 4-H Camp. Located near Weston, WVU, Jackson's Mill annually draws more than 110,000 guests who enjoy the 525-acre retreat’s meeting, camping, and heritage facilities.

WVU Extension programs are financed via a variety of funding combinations: federal appropriations and grants; state appropriations and grants; county commission, county school board and other local governmental appropriations; and private grants.

Graduate and undergraduate internships, work-study appointments, and volunteer service positions may be available on the Morgantown campus and in any of the fifty-five counties. Program priorities and funding determine the duration of appointments during regular semester and summer sessions.

For more information, contact the WVU Extension Service at: (304) 293-5691, or write to:

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