

# EY Center for Careers

## Preparation and Professional Etiquette for the Summer Leadership Program (SLP)

### What is a Summer Leadership Program (SLP)?



Each Summer Leadership Program (SLP) is different, but there are common ingredients and themes across the various firms that host SLPs.

- Most SLPs are offered by larger public accounting firms; however, Disney, Goldman Sachs and other corporations may offer them as well.
- For public accounting firm SLPs, most require that the student has 2 summers remaining prior to graduation; however, check the specific requirements in Handshake to determine if you are eligible.
- SLPs run from 1 to 3 days, with most being 2 days.
- SLPs take place at the firm, hotel / conference centers, and other locations.
- SLPs are generally local; some firms offer regional, national (and international) SLPs as well.



- SLPs vary in terms of programming:
  - they usually include professionals presenting about the firm - i.e., history, size/locations, practice areas, client industry groups, internship & full-time opportunities, career paths, culture, training & mentorship programs, and more,
  - they also typically include group activities during which you may work on a business case or work together on a fun, non-business related activity (the group dynamics and individual participation are most important); some include outside community service or scavenger hunts, and
  - some may include firm tours.
- \*\* Firm professionals are observing you throughout the SLP to determine if you are a fit, and if you are genuinely interested in their firm; they are also observing your interaction with professionals and other students, and how you participate in team activities.
- \*\* The purpose of attending SLPs is for you, the student, to learn more about firms and career paths, meet more professionals (and other students - potential co-workers), and compare opportunities to make a more decision.
- You may have a formal interview before, during or after the SLP for an internship opportunity
- The dates for the SLPs vary throughout the summer (check for overlapping dates).

## EY Center for Careers

### Professional Etiquette: Summer Leadership Program (SLP)

- Big 4 SLPs also include a lot of additional networking events (i.e., coffee chats, meals, events, client site visits) before and after the SLP.
- Some firms now combine the SLP offer with an internship offer (for the following summer).

**\*\* As of now, you will still have until some time during the summer to make the decision as to what internship offer to accept** - the acceptance date for Big 4 may be different than for mid-tier; you can ask firms to extend acceptance dates (it is up to them).

#### 1. SLP to Internship Offer

Outside of the firms that now offer the internship directly with the SLP, the probability of receiving an internship offer following an SLP varies - do your research so you can have proper expectations in advance.

The SLP to internship offer conversion rate with the Big 4 and some mid-tier firms is extremely high; with other mid-tier firms, it varies. In any case, please read what is below, and implement as much as possible. Do not look at the internship offer process as a competition with the other students at a SLP as many of them are going to be your co-workers should you ultimately work with that firm. In addition, the firm's professionals are observing how you are interacting and behaving with not only professionals but with the other students. They are looking for team work, collaboration and inclusion, and not winning at all costs.

Do not automatically expect that an internship offer is guaranteed because, in fact, there have been situations where a student did not show genuine interest, did not interact well with others and/or did not participate at the expected level, and they did not receive an internship offer. What is presented below is just as important whether you are doing an SLP with a Big 4 or a mid-tier firm to help you obtain the internship offer.

#### 2. Preparation



Before you attend a SLP, learn as much as you can about the firm and, if possible, about the structure and expectations of the program. Confirm the date(s), times, location and parking (i.e., if parking is covered or reimbursed, and where to park - make sure you know which is the correct parking lot, especially downtown). Determine what you need and want to learn about the firm and the potential career opportunities

while attending the SLP, so that you are in a better position to make an informed decision if you receive one or more internship offers. It is beneficial to begin networking prior to the SLP to learn as much as you can in advance, and strengthen your relationship with the firm (see more about networking below).

#### 3. Attendance



Do attend. If you have accepted an SLP offer with any firm, it is unprofessional not to show up, and it reflects poorly on CSUN as well. You may also have taken a space that another CSUN student might have been offered. If after accepting an SLP offer, a conflict arises with another SLP or other scheduling issue, call the firm's recruiter immediately to discuss. Be 100% honest. Do not wait until the last

minute. If you give the firm enough notice, they may be able to invite another CSUN student to fill your vacated spot. It is about being professional and not burning any bridges.

## EY Center for Careers

### Professional Etiquette: Summer Leadership Program (SLP)

Arrive early / on time - do not arrive late. It indicates a lack of interest and commitment, and showing up late can / will reflect poorly on you and possibly impact your chance of receiving an interview invitation or internship offer. Prepare directions for driving or public transportation in advance (you can even scout the building in advance), and as mentioned, know exactly where you are to park.

Ask ahead about the dress code (don't make any assumptions) and dress accordingly. Find out if you need to bring anything (i.e., resume).

#### 4. \*\* Participation



**Active (and appropriate) participation at an SLP is very important. This includes asking questions, listening intently, interacting not only with the firm professionals, but also with the other students (from all colleges/universities), collaborating and cooperating with your team members on team projects and activities, learning about the firm and the professionals who present and with whom you interact, and demonstrating a genuine interest in the firm.**

What does it mean to participate with a team? Team work is helping the team achieve its goals. It does not require formal leadership, so do not feel that you have to manage the team and project; volunteer to lead the team only if you want to do so. Observe the team's process, and help fill in needs where appropriate. Help the team stay on track. Help others get involved. Your goal is not to "stand out" at the expense of others. You are being observed throughout, so how you help the team collaborate, cooperate and reach a consensus, will display your team work.

There is a lot of networking during an SLP (and perhaps, before and after). Whether it is during a coffee break, meal or other unstructured time, meeting and getting to know professionals and students alike is very important.



**What if you are "shy"?** Many of our students tend to be more "shy" than "outgoing". So, if you consider yourself to be "shy", how can you feel comfortable and network and participate effectively? Look for others who are also "shy", and introduce yourself. Start a friendly casual conversation - ask them what school they are from, where they are from, what they like about school, what are their interests, what are their career goals, etc. Be curious without being intrusive. Make casual conversation and make new friends.

You will also be speaking with professionals throughout the SLP and other networking events. When starting a conversation with a professional, ask them about their prior recruiting experience, how long they've been with the firm, what they do in their work, what are their goals, and what they like about the firm. In other words, be curious and show genuine interest. The conversation may turn to informal topics such as personal interests and hobbies as well. With professionals and students, avoid talking about any controversial topics such as politics and religion.

## EY Center for Careers Professional Etiquette: Summer Leadership Program (SLP)

The key to networking is getting to know others, learning about the firm, the work and the professionals, and developing a rapport and possible friendships with other students, some/many of whom may be your future colleagues.



There are often presentations during the SLP. When possible, ask a question that is relevant to the presentation and presenter(s), and one in which you are interested in the answer (in other words, you want to learn something more). Don't just ask a question to be noticed. You do not need to ask a question during every presentation, but do raise your hand at least once or twice to show that you are attentive, and engaged in what is going on.



**The SLP is an ongoing “interview”.** Be considerate of others and their opinions, even when you think they might be wrong. Listen to different ideas and help to integrate them into the team discussion and outcome. Focus on being an effective team player, as explained above. If you take a leadership role, do not dominate. Leadership is about facilitating the process, supporting each member of the team, and helping the team work together toward achieving the common goal(s).



Once you go to a SLP, participate fully, even if you do not think you are ultimately interested in that firm. You do not want to make a negative impression and do not burn any bridges (see below) as you cannot predict the future, and you may want to re-engage with that firm later in your career, or may work with one or more professionals from that firm in a different capacity.

The SLP may include dinner or other evening activities. Find out in advance so you are able to participate. If at all possible, show your level of interest and commitment to the firm and take part in all activities. As mentioned previously, the Big 4 host a lot of “extra” activities outside of the actual SLP to provide additional networking opportunities. Take advantage of these activities to meet more professionals and students and to learn more about the firm, the future internship, and the actual work to be performed during the internship and full-time position.

## EY Center for Careers

### Professional Etiquette: Summer Leadership Program (SLP)

With a mid-tier firm, it is recommended that you take the initiative and set up “coffee chats” (see the Coffee Chat guide on the EY Center website) outside of the SLP to expand your networking with the firm and their professionals. If you meet a lot of professionals at one firm and do not meet many at another, your comparison of the firms will be uneven. Don't judge a firm just based on the people you meet and how much time and money they spend, but evaluate each firm using the career related factors that are important to you such as the work, training and resources, work/life balance, practice areas, clients, etc. (see the Career Planning guide on the EY Center website to make a list of key factors for yourself, the Career Values Assessment and other career-related resources on the CSUN Career Center Pathways website). \*\* Utilize SLPs and outside networking to learn as much as you can about firms and make the best informed decision possible.

#### 5. Dining Etiquette



You may eat at the location of the SLP (such as a hotel or conference center), or you may go out to lunch and/or dinner at a nice restaurant, but either way, dining etiquette is important.

Here are some tips to help you navigate the meal(s):

- If at a restaurant, do not order the most expensive item on the menu. Pay attention to what others are ordering, and do similarly.
- Do not order / drink alcohol.
- Order something that is both easy to eat and filling.
- Observe others who have dining experience as to where to put your napkin and utensils when not using them.
- Watch your table manners - don't reach across the table, try not to spill food or drink, do not eat too much at one time, and do not talk with your mouth full.
- Try to get to know the professionals and students during the meal. This is a casual, yet important part of the networking process. Listen carefully, participate in the conversation, and smile appropriately. Ask questions and share similarly as to what others are doing.
- Be yourself, and if you tend to be “shy” (as discussed above), make an effort to stretch your comfort zone and make conversation. Once you get started, it will get easier.
- Most importantly, enjoy the opportunity to get to know some professionals and other students in a more casual setting.

#### 6. \*\* Recruiting Guidelines - Offers and Acceptances

The 2019 SLP programs occur from May to July, and the Big 4 firms have set the date - July 12, 2019 - when internship offer acceptances or declines will be due. Mid-tier firms may align with the Big 4 or set a separate date.

\*\* Note: it is at each firm's discretion to extend the date to allow students to make a decision based on all of their offers. So, if you have received, or anticipate receiving more than one offer, or want to attend an SLP after July 12, you will need to communicate with the firm(s) and request an extension to convey your final decision. The intention is to encourage and allow students to attend all of the SLPs they have been offered, so they can make an informed decision.



## EY Center for Careers Professional Etiquette: Summer Leadership Program (SLP)



- If you have one or more offers outstanding, and you are still waiting to hear from one or more firms, reach out to those firms, if you are genuinely interested in them, and let them know you have one or more offers outstanding, and ask about your status with the firms with whom you are still pending.
- If you have any conflicts or difficulties with offers and deadlines, please come to the EY Center to discuss as soon as possible.
- Once you have made your decision, you can accept the offer with the firm of your choice. Upon doing so, please let the other firms, who have also extended offers, know immediately that you have accepted another offer and are declining their offer(s). It is recommended that you call the firms, specifically the recruiters, directly. It is also good etiquette to contact other professionals at the firms with whom you developed a connection.

### ***Congratulations! You've landed! Now what?***



Once you have accepted an internship offer (following the SLPs), you cannot (and should not) continue recruiting in the Fall or after. It is unprofessional etiquette to accept an offer and continue looking. You have only two options: (a) Accept an offer and stop recruiting - or - (b) Decline all offers and re-enter the recruiting process.

If you are unsure what to do or have any questions, please come to the EY Center to discuss ASAP. I will not tell you what offer to accept or whether or not to accept any offers. I will help you understand your options based on your interests and needs.

**\*\* Do not burn bridges!** As large as Southern California is, and with as many accounting professionals as there are, it is still a "small world", and it is likely you will come across many of the same people throughout your career - at the firm with whom you start, a future employer, a future client, etc.

## EY Center for Careers Professional Etiquette: Summer Leadership Program (SLP)

### 7. After the Offer - Network to Prepare for the Internship



After you have received and accepted an offer, you're not finished; in fact, you are about to begin a new phase, and that is getting ready for your internship, and ultimately full-time position with the firm.

It is probable that many students do not know yet what they really want to do with their careers, and yet the process is requiring making these big decisions. So, if you're one of the many who does not yet have a clear direction, then you can do some self-assessment to identify what is most important to you and what are your career goals and potential paths. There are tools on the EY Center website as well as the CSUN Career Center Pathways website. You are also very much encouraged to come to the EY Center to explore and discuss. Then, doing some research and networking will also help better understand your career options and employer opportunities. When you have some ideas and/or know more precisely what you want to do, the next step is to determine how to pursue your career goals with the career path and firm you have chosen.



Learn how the firm assigns and schedules clients and work within a particular practice area and industry group, and network with the managers and partners within the practice area and client group(s) that are of interest to you. While there is no guarantee, students who network within the firm with those in charge of the clients and schedules are more likely to get assigned with the industry(ies) and client(s) they desire. See the Networking and Coffee Chat guides on the EY Center website for additional assistance.

\*\* If ultimately you determine that the choice you have made is not the right one for you, that's definitely OK, and you can step back and start anew, hopefully with more self-awareness and more information about your options. As above, there are tools on the EY Center and Career Center Pathways websites, and I can help you review your self-assessment results and help you begin to chart your course.