

It's time to learn and shine

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Whether it is work experience, or part-time jobs or a software course, college students find summer vacation the most opportune time to pursue their interest.

Vacation during summer seems to have become a thing of the past for many college students who see the nearly-two month-break as an opportunity to gain work experience.

From taking up part-time marketing assignments with mobile phone service providers to freelancing with media organisations, the last decade has seen students explore a host of opportunities in summer. More and more colleges are insisting that students take up internships in summer.

According to Rosy Fernando, head of the Department of Commerce and dean of the Students Training and Development cell of M.O.P. Vaishnav College for Women, internships and summer jobs have distinct advantages. "Students get an opportunity to apply what they learn in class. Moreover, they also acquire communication skills necessary in a corporate setting and learn about organisational structures," she says.

And first hand knowledge of organisational structure can have other benefits, she notes. "When a student sees the ambience of a vice-president's cabin and the control she has, the student might also dream of becoming one and work towards it."

Some students end up picking up knowledge of software, too. One of Ms. Fernando's students who did her internship with Ashok Leyland learnt about a performance appraisal software, while another student who worked with Hot Breads discovered her inter-

est in entrepreneurship. There have also been instances of these internships translating into part-time and full-time jobs later with the same organisation, she adds.

Students also see summer jobs as a way of making some money. Says A. Anusha, a literature student with a Chennai college: "I took up a small marketing job with a private company last year and got paid Rs. 1,000. That was big money for me."

Some of her friends volunteered with NGOs to gain experience. "They were aspiring to make it to top institutions for higher studies and thought these assignments would help," she adds.

Apart from internships and sports camps, the summer break offers the academically-minded some time off to learn something they like.

Centres such as NIIT offer Swift Summer Programmes aimed at providing a mixture of 'Fun and IT' to kids. "There are a host of short duration courses on animation, PC assembling, game development, website design and basic IT programming," says E. Venkatesan, Regional Head, NIIT.

He adds that all the courses are padded up with fun activities like treasure hunt, mind games of chess and mathemagic. "It gives them a good mix of academic learning and fun."

There are also a host of e-learning solutions for students who do not wish to spend money or energy on a dedicated course. V. Ramchandran, a Computer Science professor at Anna University, advises this mode since "it is difficult to rely on courses that are not certified and that do not have a well defined curriculum."

Aditya Vikram, who is taking part in this year's Google Summer of Code (SoC), is one such student who believes in self-learning. "The mailing list of any open source endeavour is a means to find brilliant software developers online," he says.

According to him, summer coding projects are like a sandbox. It is where technologies that will constitute the future of open source applications get tested. "Besides, there is a lot of collaboration and sharing of ideas out there," he adds.