Alexandria (Alex) Sobin is the Executive Director of the Montana World Affairs Council located here in Missoula. Sobin invites any students interested in international education and global affairs to look into an internship with the Council. “Whenever possible interns are given the opportunity to attend professional development seminars and are constantly in contact with important members of the local political, educational, and business communities.”

What is the Montana World Affairs Council?

“The Montana World Affairs Council is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization dedicated to fostering global understanding and awareness in Montana’s classrooms and communities. Founded in 2000, we assist Montanans in appreciating the relationship of foreign policy and international issues to their lives in the Rockies. The Council offers opportunities to better understand world events through people-to-people diplomacy, distinguished speakers, overseas visits, and educational outreach programs. As globalization reaches into all corners of the Big Sky, the Council seeks to help educate citizens about their increased political, economic, and cultural integration into the world.”

What does a typical day/project look like for you and/or your staff?

“The bulk of the Council’s daily activities involve planning and executing classroom and community programs to help benefit the Montana community. As a small nonprofit organization, we do everything in house from web design and social media to printing, fundraising, designing promotional and mailing pieces, and answering phones and emails. There is always something to do at the Montana World Affairs Council offices and every day is different.”

How does having UM student interns help your organization? What are some of the things interns do for the Council?

“The Council would not be where it is today without our dedicated team of UM student interns. Interns are given the opportunity to take on a real role in the organization and are rewarded
with great professional development opportunities, the cultivation of important job skills, and the chance to meet foreign dignitaries and international policy makers. Our interns do everything from communicating with members, donors, and the press, to visiting with the governor and ambassadors to foreign nations. We have had interns as a key part of our team since the Council was founded in 2000. Our former interns have gone on to work in politics both in Helena and DC, live abroad, and run large multinational companies. A Montana World Affairs Council internship is a stepping stone to a great career.”

**What is the work schedule like for your interns?**

“Our interns work an average of 10 hours a week. The schedule is extremely flexible, with the exception of events and programs. Often our interns will have the opportunity to work from home or work odd hours if that works better with their class and work schedules.”

**Are there other offices outside of Missoula? Do those places take interns too?**

“The Montana World Affairs Council is a member of the World Affairs Councils of America network. We are, however, the only World Affairs Council serving the state of Montana and though we have programs all over the state, our only office is in Missoula.”

**What is the culture and work environment like for a student intern?**

“At the Council, we try to keep things light and fun while still providing a professional workplace for our UM student interns. Often more than one intern will be in the office at a time, allowing for social interactions as well as meaningful collaborations on Council projects and event planning.”

**Are there opportunities for interns to tailor their internships to specific interests?**

“Our interns are allowed to tailor the focus of their internship to their specific career goals and areas of interest. We offer finance internships where the intern will focus on QuickBooks, nonprofit accounting and endowment planning. On the other end of the spectrum we have marketing internships that allow opportunities to engage with the public, develop graphic design and writing skills, and experiment with data analysis. Whenever possible interns are given
the opportunity to attend professional development seminars and are constantly in contact with important members of the local political, educational, and business communities.”

**Did you do an internship as a student? How did your own experiences as student shape your career?**

“During my own time at UM I had the privilege of working as a MontPIRG intern, a Habitat for Humanity intern, and later as an intern for ALPS Foundation Services. All of these internships are the reason that I focused my career path on nonprofit administration rather than my original goals of going into medicine. The fundraising, administrative, and grant writing skills I learned in those internships serve me every day of my professional life.”

Do you have any advice for students seeking internships or other experiences in nonprofit administration or related areas?

“Ask for the opportunities and skills development that you want. If you want to be able to put something on your resume, an internship is a great place to develop that skill. Odds are good that your boss will have those skills or will be excited for someone to take on that project.”
When and how do you advertise for interns?

“We begin advertising for interns in the spring for the fall semester. We are hiring now! If you are around this summer, it’s always a great time to get your foot in the door and focus on specific areas or skills that you find interesting. It’s also a great opportunity to get to travel around the state for educational programs. We have five interns at a time and give preference to students who are willing to be interns for the entire school year as opposed to a single semester. We advertise for interns through our website and social media platforms, at career fairs on campus, and through Internship Services and various other departments on campus.”

What types of students are you looking for?

“All of our interns need to be friendly and professional, and have an interest in global citizenship and international education. These skills are not confined to a specific major and therefore we love to have students from all different fields.”

Is there anything else students should know about interning with your company?

Interns for the Montana World Affairs Council are given the benefit of the “three C’s”: contacts, community, and credit.

Contacts: An internship at the Council will expose you to many cultures and allow you to meet representatives from countries all over the world. As a Council intern, you will rub elbows with local policy makers and foreign diplomats while also gaining exposure to the Montana academic and business communities.

Community: A Montana World Affairs Council internship will allow you to interact daily with other people who feel passionately about global issues and international education. Your fellow interns, World Affairs Council staff, and visiting speakers are all similarly excited about exploring our place on the world’s stage.
Credit: You can receive university credit for your internship through your major or minor department. Council staff are happy to help you work the internship into your field and provide you with relevant professional development opportunities.

Where can students get more information?

“For more information about a Montana World Affairs Council internship you can visit our website http://www.montanaworldaffairs.org/opportunities/ and feel free to email me at info@montanaworldaffairs.org if you have any questions or concerns. You can also stop by our office on the 4th floor of the Florence Building 111 N Higgins Ave. We are open 8am-5pm Monday-Friday.”