Keegan Flaherty, Executive Director of the Montana Innocence Project (MTIP), understands the importance of student interns and encourages students to get involved with this important organization. “Our mission is unique and has a great impact on Montana’s justice system.” Read on to learn more about MTIP and the types of internships they provide.

What is the Montana Innocence Project (MTIP)?

“Founded in 2008 by a committed group of officials, attorneys, journalists & professors, MTIP is a statewide non-profit dedicated to freeing the innocent and preventing wrongful convictions. We provide charitable, legal, and investigative assistance to Montana prisoners who pass our rigorous screening. In addition to casework, we advocate for policy reforms that will prevent wrongful convictions and work to educate Montanans.”

How long have you had an internship program?

“For six years.”

Where do UM student interns fit into MTIP?

“With only three staff, MTIP wound not be able to advance our caseload of 70 cases without the help of students.”

“Students participate in investigating cases, acquiring documents and critically applying why a wrongful conviction may have occurred. If students are interested, they can participate in policy reform, education of wrongful convictions, grant writing, and fund development.”

“When court hearings and prison visits are scheduled, students are almost always welcome to attend with MTIP staff. We travel a lot throughout the state - students are invited on a case by case basis.”

Are you looking for students in a specific major or with a particular skill set? Are the positions paid?

“We work with Journalism, Legal, Paralegal, Criminology, and Social Work students; although, we are always interested in a student that can bring something new to our organization. In lieu of advertising for position, we tend to do presentations to students so they can hear more about our work before contacting us about an internship. Unfortunately, unless an internship is through work study, we are unable to pay our interns.”
What is the time commitment for student interns? What’s it like working there?

“We are flexible at MTIP, as students dedicate anywhere between 10 - 30 hours each week. MTIP has a relaxed atmosphere, yet still remains professional. Open communication leads to a productive work environment without micromanaging.”

Since MTIP is a statewide organization, do you have offices in other Montana cities?

“We work statewide, but the majority of our staff and offices are located in Missoula. If an intern has worked in the Missoula office and established a positive relationship with MTIP, we do sometimes allow remote internships.”

How long do you generally work with a client? What is your success rate?

“Do to a slow moving justice system; we work with clients for years. It takes an average of five years to move forward towards exoneration and can take even longer to fully exonerate someone. We have yet to exonerate an individual, but we are as close as ever!”

Would you recommend having an intern to other companies/organizations based on your experience?

“Yes. We would not be able to do our work without the assistance of our interns. They are an essential component in making an impact on the justice system in Montana.”

Do you have any advice for students looking to go into a career in criminal justice?

“Hard work and dedication pays off.”

Visit www.mtinnocenceproject.org for more information on this employer! You can also email Keegan directly at kfmtip@mtinnocenceproject.org.