Marilyn Marler, UM Natural Areas Specialist and Interim Director of the UM Herbarium talks about the importance of the herbarium and the opportunities available to students interested in botany internships. “This is a fun place to work and you will learn a lot about plants.”

What is the herbarium and why is it important?

“The Herbarium is a major repository of botanical specimens for researchers at The University of Montana, Montana Natural Heritage Program, Montana Native Plant Society, U.S. Forest Service, and private consultants. The Herbarium serves as a primary reference and data source in the region for these organizations. It also serves as a vital resource for rare plant conservation studies conducted by private consulting companies and government agencies. It is used by graduate students, professors, consultants and visiting researchers.”

“The Herbarium at The University of Montana is an irreplaceable resource for the study of the botany and plant ecology of Montana. It contains over 160,000 plant specimens and has the largest and best representation of the flora of the Northern Rocky Mountains in the world. The Herbarium is particularly well-known for its outstanding collections from the alpine and montane regions of Montana.”

“Through the loan and exchange programs, specimens are available to herbaria throughout North America. Also, UM students and faculty turn to the Herbarium for undergraduate training and graduate research.”

How do student interns fit into the herbarium?

“We rely on interns and volunteers to help with ongoing tasks like mounting plants and otherwise getting specimens ready for accession into the museum. Interns also help with our effort to add high resolution digital photos of all museum specimens on the on-line database.”

“We are always looking for new ways to teach the public and campus what we do here. Interns can help by contributing social media content, articles for our Friends of the Herbarium newsletter, and participating in tours or helping to train new volunteers.”
What is the work schedule like for interns and what is it like working there?

“Interns work 3-12 hours per week, and we are happy to offer flexible hours.”

“We are a small and close knit group of long time employees, campus and community volunteers and interns. We are informal and we value the ability to work independently with minimal supervision once trained.”

Does your company provide other experiences for students, i.e., research, civic engagement, or global experiences?

“There are a lot of opportunities for interacting with researchers and learning about current research (less opportunity for doing research). We encourage students to attend seminars and activities on campus through various departments as well as the Montana Native Plant Society and the Montana Natural History Center.”

When do you look for new interns and are the positions paid?

“We advertise on an ongoing basis. Internship positions are not paid; we generally have funding for one part time work study student and that position is currently filled. We also host up to 5 volunteers per semester who are not enrolled in formal internships.”

Did you participate in an internship when you were in school?

“As an undergraduate, I volunteered at the UC Davis herbarium and also did an internship in a behavioral ecology research lab. These were very important experiences for informing graduate school and career paths for me. I recommend them for anyone! Even if you are working to put yourself through school or have family commitments that prevent you from dedicating significant unpaid hours, I suggest that students find a way to get some out of classroom experience related to their field. Don't be afraid to ask instructors for opportunities that fit your situation.”

Any last advice for students looking for internships?

“Student should ask around campus and the broader community to find a good fit.”

Visit [http://herbarium.dbs.umt.edu](http://herbarium.dbs.umt.edu) or email marilyn.marler@umontana.edu for more information on the Herbarium!