



Princeton  
Internships in  
Civic  
Service

## PICS 2010 Internship Description

**Organization Name:** Descanso Gardens

**Internship Location:** La Canada Flintridge, CA 91011

**Required Dates:** Yes  No  If yes, internship must start on: \_\_\_\_\_ and end on \_\_\_\_\_ or  
must include the period:

**Housing Will Be Available to Intern:** Yes  No  If yes, housing will be free:  or  
housing will cost the student:

### **Expected working schedule for this internship:**

Start Time: 8:30am                      End Time: 5:00pm  
Lunch break: 60 (duration)                      (specific time, if applicable)

### **Additional Information, if necessary:**

(Please indicate if any of the preparation work will take place outside of the regular work schedule)

## Organization Description

*Please describe your organization briefly, including mission statement, activities, size etc. Please also explain the benefit that will be derived by your organization by sponsoring a Princeton intern.*

Descanso Gardens is a public garden and historically significant site located within the greater Los Angeles area in the town of LaCanada Flintridge. Formerly the estate of newspaper publisher and editor E. Manchester Boddy, the 160-acre property was acquired by the County of Los Angeles in 1953. Boddy's wide-ranging interests included agronomy and ornamental horticulture. In 1942 he acquired some 60,000 camellia plants from two Japanese growers who were among the hundreds of thousands of Japanese and Japanese Americans on the West Coast who were interned in camps at the start of WWII. With expert help, Boddy replanted the camellias in the cool shade and rich soil provided by the native California coast live-oak forest on his property; soon, he was operating a large and prosperous flower plantation for the commercial flower and corsage trade. After its sale to Los Angeles County, a dedicated volunteer group formed to protect and nurture the scenic gardens within their neighborhood. Their stated goal was to preserve and develop the property as a "botanic garden with a broad educational and public-service mission." Accordingly, the volunteers inspired many improvements to the property—all of them financed with private, donated funds. In 1993, the now incorporated 501 (c) (3) Descanso Gardens Guild, Inc. took over full management of and responsibility for the gardens on a long-term contract basis with Los Angeles County. Today, Descanso Gardens annual operating budget is in the range of \$4 million and is cared for and operated by a professional staff of 55 and a dedicated volunteer corps of around 300. In 2004 Descanso Gardens was accredited by the American Museum Association as a "museum of living collections." As a nonprofit, public service-oriented institution, life at Descanso Gardens combines the operating characteristics of a museum, an outdoor education provider, park and public entertainment venue. It is not a

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“for-profit” business but must compete and survive in a business-like manner. Annual operating revenues are generated through a combination of admission ticket sales, annual membership support, public programs, rentals such as weddings and concerts, and annual fund-raising. In addition, major fund-raising is conducted to fund new collections, displays, exhibits and horticulture and history-related programs. Some 250,000 people visit Descanso Gardens in a typical year, with the high point for attendance occurring in the spring months of March, April and May. Descanso Gardens has many horticultural accomplishments in its long history and is a much-beloved resource in the local community. More information can be found at [www.descansogardens.org](http://www.descansogardens.org) and applicants can get a feel for the character of the Descanso landscape at [http://www.warrenmarr.com/poen\\_gall\\_subp.cfm?gall=desc](http://www.warrenmarr.com/poen_gall_subp.cfm?gall=desc). As a nonprofit, the Descanso Gardens Guild is typical in its need for volunteer services of all kinds, and volunteers find rewards for their work in many different ways. The Gardens have benefitted from the work and accomplishments of interns in the past and several have gone on to full-time employment with the gardens after completing their intern experiences.

### Internship Description

*Describe in detail the work or project will do; please be as specific as possible. Please also explain the benefit that a student will obtain by interning with your organization.*

For the summer of 2010 and the Princeton Internships in Civic Service program, we have identified three internship possibilities, each of which represents one vital aspect of the gardens' operations: historic preservation and interpretation; institutional advancement and fund-raising; and horticulture operations (or “gardening” in plain English!) Brief descriptions and student benefits follow.

**Archivist:** Though our holdings in historical material from the Boddy era are not overwhelmingly extensive, there is a rich reservoir of historically significant material that awaits organization, digitization, and preparation for public viewing and enjoyment. The goal of the Archivist internship is to preserve, catalog and contextualize the many letters to Manchester Boddy from national and international figures of his day. The 1930s and 1940s were a formative period in the history of Los Angeles and life of Manchester Boddy. Personally and through his newspaper, Boddy was an active figure in the public discourse. Current holdings include approximately 250 letters from a wide variety of public figures in politics, government, industry, the media, and the motion picture industry. In addition to archiving this portion of Boddy's correspondence the intern would research the writer of each letter, create an informal catalogue of the letters, their subject matter, and their significance, and prepare and present an exhibition, including a public presentation, of the results of the research and cataloguing. We believe that such a project will result in a broader perspective on the man and his role in the great debates and issues of his day.

**Development and Communications Intern:** Although owned by Los Angeles County, Descanso Gardens is 95% independent of County management and support. As such, it functions exactly like every public-service nonprofit organization in that it must depend on the generosity of others for a substantial portion of its annual budget. Our ability to attract unrestricted funds is directly related to effective communications about the many exciting programs and public service activities ongoing at the Garden. We would benefit greatly from an intern who would work directly with our Manager of Communications and Public Relations to research, develop and present content promoting the gardens and the many good works of the Guild to new media and press outlets. The intern would assist the Manager in designing and preparing an overall marketing plan for the gardens in 2011. In addition, the intern would assist the Development team to establish strategies and initiatives to build the membership base (currently at 8,200 households); increase support from upper-level members; and assist in the design and preparation of the annual fund-raising gala event in October, which will include the grand opening of a new art gallery space co-located with the historic Boddy House on the property.

**Horticulture Intern:** This opportunity is not for the faint of heart or those with an aversion to the heat of a southern California summer. But it is for the intern who literally wants to get his/her hands dirty and discover both the challenges and the joys of working as a member of the Descanso gardens staff and directly taking care of the plants, plant communities, horticulture displays and landscapes that comprise the heart and soul of Descanso Gardens. Working as a member of the gardens crew, the internship will include all aspects of gardening including accessioning, planting, soil preparation, weeding, pruning and routine maintenance, display replacement and refreshment, plant propagation, and various other tasks. 2-3 days per month are designated as “all-hands work days” and the entire crew devotes a morning or a full day to a single project somewhere on the grounds—the Rose Garden, the Camellia Forest, the California Natives acreage, the Harvest Garden, and so forth. The gardens intern will participate as a full member of the horticulture and

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grounds maintenance team, and will learn the public-garden business from the ground up. (Please note that while the hours for the Archivist and Development intern positions are typically 8:30 AM to 5:00 PM, the horticulture crew starts the day during the summer months at 6:00 AM and, with several breaks during the day, ends at 2:30 PM.)

### **Intern Qualifications**

*Describe any particular skills, background, or qualities you are seeking in an intern.*

Archivist Intern. Appropriate for a history major, journalism, English major, American Studies major. Great attention to detail and care with fragile, historically important primary source materials. Reasonable knowledge of and/or interest in mid-20<sup>th</sup> century American, European and Asian history would be a plus. Must be capable of taking direction but also exercising independent judgment; ability to work independently and take personal initiative a must.

Development Intern. Ideal for people interested in or majoring in English, media studies, American studies, nonprofit management, journalism, marketing. Must have exceptional writing skills and facility with contemporary media—the web, Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, etc. This is a position for the pleasant extrovert—easy to meet, easy to be with, appealing to many kinds of people, patient, kind by nature. EVERY PERSON who walks through the front gate or comes into contact with Descanso Gardens is a potential supporter and philanthropist who will sustain the Gardens into the future, and all Descanso employees are ambassadors first and foremost.

Horticulture Intern. Great for majors in biology, botany, biochemistry, ecology, sustainability, or perhaps to an athlete interested in staying in good condition over the summer. The work is physical, demanding, and includes activities typically associated with gardening: digging, cutting, clearing, hauling. Substantial opportunities for interaction on the grounds with visitors, members and volunteers.

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