The Texas Rural Internship Program (TRIP) is a joint initiative between the Texas Department of Agriculture and the Center for Rural Studies at Sam Houston State University.

TRIP introduces urban college students to rural Texas by inviting them to live and work in a rural community. The purpose of the program is to provide a unique, educational and productive summer internship that is mutually beneficial for the student and the community.

The goal of TRIP is to provide much-needed interaction between urban and rural Texas, promote rural Texas to attract and retain a talented workforce, help develop some of today's talented college students into tomorrow's leaders; and cultivate ambassadors for rural Texas.

As a Texas rural community, finding resources, especially college-level resources, is extremely challenging. Through the Texas Rural Internship Program, Nocona has made great strides in projects and programs because of the excellent students in TRIP. We eagerly await additional opportunities to enlist these valuable people and their skills to promote rural Texas' and Nocona's future.

James Yohe, Executive Director, Nocona Economic Development Corporation

Participating communities have benefitted from this program through fresh perspectives and talents from participating interns. In previous years, interns have performed a variety of tasks for various projects, all of which have benefitted the local community. Projects have included working with local governments, economic development corporations, chambers of commerce or local vendors.
“This entire experience has allowed me to see the world in a different light. It has given me new experiences I never dreamed of.”

Kamesha Walker, 2011 Rural Intern, Giddings, Texas

“It was interesting to see how a community works by helping each other out and how the chamber helps the local businesses. I think a lot of people my age don’t think about that.”

Lindsay Byrd, 2010 Rural Intern, Levelland, Texas

Interns come from different academic backgrounds, including governmental affairs, public policy, political science, business and finance, marketing, family and consumer sciences, sociology and agriculture among others. Through the internship program, TDA works with the Center for Rural Studies at Sam Houston State University and Texas Tech University to facilitate the pairing of students with prospective communities. Now in its six year, TRIP has paired more than 35 interns with more than 25 different communities across the state of Texas.

Eligible rural Texas communities must:

- host a college student intern for one or two summer sessions (four to eight weeks);
- provide a stipend of $1,000 per summer session to each intern (past experience has shown that paid internships provide a more qualified field of candidates); and
- provide room and board for each intern.

Interns are paid and have the option of earning college credit for the successful completion of the internship. Both undergraduate and graduate students are eligible to apply.

“Hamilton has twice hosted one of the Texas Rural Internship Program interns. The first year, the intern managed to electrify many of our local organizations. She creatively suggested and directed projects, including a grant proposal for the city’s park department and landscaping for the new sports complex, as well as providing assistance to the local Dove Festival.”

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Communities must submit a proposal to TDA. In the proposal, communities should outline the work experience or project that would be assigned to a student intern. Communities also should provide details on room and board for the student, community service opportunities and opportunities for the student to gain knowledge about government and non-government organizations, as well as unique regional opportunities.

Community applications can be found at www.TexasAgriculture.gov. Click on Grants & Services tab at the top.

Community applications should be submitted to:
Texas Department of Agriculture
Office of Rural Affairs
ATTN: Rick Rhodes
P.O. Box 12847
1700 N. Congress Avenue, 11th Floor
Austin, TX  78711

If communities have questions, contact Rick Rhodes at Rick.Rhodes@TexasAgriculture.gov or (512) 463-7577.

Students must submit an application to the Center for Rural Studies at SHSU. Student applications can be found here.

If students have questions, contact Cheryl Hudec at ruralcenter@shu.edu or (936) 294-4380.

“Our second intern had an incredibly broad experience. She did everything from accumulating data for an economic impact study for the largest employer, to shadowing and assisting local doctors and AgriLife Extension agents, to helping with fundraisers, to speaking at our local and district Lions Club meetings. Her expert computer skills were extremely valuable to a fine art gallery in Hamilton, helping them identify and list online the Ramsey Collection’s original masterpieces. The intern told us that, as a result of her experiences in Hamilton, she’s changed her major to Business Administration — a complement to our local business and economic development corporation.”

Jane Crouch, Executive Director, Hamilton Economic Development Corporation
The mission of the Center for Rural Studies is to assist in the building, strengthening, and maintaining of rural Texas communities. It is comprised of an interdisciplinary faculty and staff, who serve rural Texans by providing research services, as well as educational and outreach programs, public policy analyses, and rural community-based planning services. Through the Center, fellows work to advance the state of knowledge regarding the social, demographic, economic, political, and cultural aspects of rural life in Texas and beyond.