

# Recipe for a Strong LTI

By Bennett Schlesinger, Met student '06

On a crisp fall day in New England, Jeremy Alper, a twelfth grader at The Met, gingerly dismantles a photovoltaic solar panel from the roof of a house. Assisting his mentor, Bob Chew of Solar Wrights, the two lay the panels out on the ground for replacement. Since last year, Jeremy has been interning with Bob, assisting with solar panel installations and learning about new advances in renewable energy. He has even ventured into political activism, learning about different policies that promote green energy. Last May, Jeremy won a \$20,000 grant from the "Solar on Schools" program which will pay for the installation of solar panels on the roof of the Met Unity building. By all accounts, this is a stellar internship. Jeremy is passionate about what he's learning and he's applying his new-found knowledge by bringing solar energy to The Met.

But, what are the ingredients that really make Jeremy's LTI high quality? I have spent the last few months interviewing students and mentors to identify some common trends among the most rigorous and successful internships. First, I noticed that the intern always had a strong personal and professional relationship with the mentor. While it may seem obvious, developing rapport enables the mentor and student to connect beyond their work and really get to know one another. By knowing him well, Bob could recommend very specific resources to Jeremy that were appropriate to his skill level.

Second, the strongest internships were the most closely related to the students' interests. Another student I interviewed, Joseph Hernandez, is very interested in becoming a personal trainer, so his LTI at a gym, with a personal trainer, is very successful. He has taken this experience and used it to design and teach a class on personal fitness to Met students. A third student, Natasha Luigui, interns at the Miriam Hospital Emergency Room, where she serves as an ER Patient Liaison. She has been researching different career opportunities in the medical field and creating a Medical Career Guide for Met students. Both of these projects allow the students to delve into exactly what they're interested in and, as a result, they take the work more seriously and explore it in great detail.

Finally, one of the most important predictors of a high quality internship is the capacity for academic depth. This allows the student to gain strong academic skills that will help them in college and in their careers. Jeremy, for instance, was studying solar energy, which has enormous learning opportunities related to empirical reasoning (studying how solar energy works), quantitative reasoning (constructing the solar panels), social reasoning (studying efforts to promote green energy through public policy), and communication (applying for a grant to install the panel).

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