Innovate Carolina

AI Optimization Fellows Intern

Job Type: Summer Internship (In-Person Preferred / Remote Eligible)
Location: Junction, 136 E Rosemary St, Suite 100
Employer: UNC Chapel Hill – Office of the Chief Innovation Officer
Cohort Size: 4 Positions (Unit-Embedded)
Job Category: Artificial Intelligence / Innovation Strategy
Hours: 20–40 hrs/week (Full-Time Preferred)
Rate: Tier 4 $15.00–$18.00/hr

Job Description
Most organizations know AI matters. Few know how to actually integrate it. This internship exists to close that gap inside one of the most dynamic innovation ecosystems in the Southeast.

The UNC Office of the Chief Innovation Officer is deploying a cohort of four AI Optimization Interns—each embedded within a distinct unit of Innovate Carolina—to accelerate AI adoption, upgrade workflows, and demonstrate what operating at the frontier actually looks like in practice. Units include the Office of Technology Commercialization (OTC), KickStart Venture Services, Communications, Innovation Junction, and the Partnerships team.

This is not an IT support role. You will not be setting up software or writing user guides for reluctant adopters. You will be doing the work yourself—building, automating, generating, and optimizing—and then teaching teams how to sustain what you've built. You'll have access to the highest-tier AI tools available: Claude Opus, GPT-4o, Gemini Ultra, Perplexity Pro, Midjourney, Runway, Sora, ElevenLabs, and GitHub Copilot, among others. The expectation is that you know how to use them, push them to their limits, and develop judgment about when to use which.

Each intern will be assigned a primary unit and will operate as that unit's embedded AI practitioner for the summer. Collectively, the cohort will meet weekly to share discoveries, cross-pollinate techniques, and build a shared playbook for AI adoption across Innovate Carolina.

Responsibilities
- Conduct an AI readiness audit of your assigned unit: map existing workflows, identify high-leverage automation opportunities, and prioritize a summer improvement roadmap.
- Design and implement AI-assisted workflows using best-in-class tools—automating repetitive tasks, streamlining communications, accelerating content production, and reducing time-to-output across the unit.
- Produce high-quality AI-generated and AI-assisted deliverables: documents, reports, presentations, website content, graphics, 3D renderings, video, and audio as needed by the unit.
- Develop and maintain prompt libraries, workflow templates, and tool guides that teams can use independently after the internship ends.
- Train staff and stakeholders in your unit on effective AI use—not just what the tools can do, but how to get consistently strong outputs.
- Stay current with the AI landscape; brief the team weekly on relevant new tools, model updates, or emerging use cases that warrant attention.
- Collaborate with the full AI intern cohort weekly to share techniques, compare unit needs, and develop a cross-Innovate Carolina AI best practices playbook.
- Document impact: track time saved, output quality improvements, and capability shifts as a result of AI integration in your unit.

Job Requirements

- Currently enrolled UNC undergraduate or graduate student in good academic standing.
- Demonstrated, hands-on proficiency with at least three of the following: Claude, ChatGPT / GPT-4o, Gemini, Perplexity, Midjourney, Runway, Sora, ElevenLabs, GitHub Copilot, or comparable frontier tools.
- Ability to produce professional-quality outputs using AI—not just generate content, but edit, refine, and take ownership of the result.
- Strong communication skills; able to explain AI concepts and tool capabilities to non-technical stakeholders without condescension.
- Self-directed and comfortable operating with ambiguity—you don't wait to be told what to optimize.

Preferred Qualifications

- Experience with multimodal AI workflows combining text, image, video, audio, or 3D generation tools.
- Familiarity with prompt engineering techniques: chain-of-thought, few-shot prompting, role assignment, output formatting, and iterative refinement.
- Background in design, communications, computer science, information science, business, or a related field.
- Experience building or automating workflows using tools like Zapier, Make, Notion AI, or similar no-code/low-code platforms.
- Prior work—academic, freelance, or personal—producing AI-generated websites, graphics, video, or 3D content.
- Genuine curiosity about AI policy, ethics, and the organizational dynamics of technology adoption.
- Portfolio or examples of AI-assisted work strongly preferred.

Unit Assignments

Interns will be matched to one of the following units based on skills, interests, and unit needs identified during the interview process:

- Office of Technology Commercialization (OTC) — AI for licensing workflows, IP documentation, and researcher-to-market communications.
- KickStart Venture Services — AI for startup coaching materials, founder communications, and pitch content development.
- Communications — AI for content strategy, multimedia production, social media, website copy, and visual asset generation.
- Innovate Carolina Junction — AI for space programming, community engagement, event documentation, and member-facing content.
- Partnerships — AI for prospect research, outreach personalization, briefing document generation, and pipeline reporting.

Learning Outcomes

Applied AI tool proficiency (LLMs, image/video/audio/3D generation), prompt engineering, workflow automation, organizational change management, AI strategy and adoption, multimodal content production, stakeholder training, frontier technology evaluation.

How to Apply

Complete this brief form along with a sample project that demonstrates your abilities.