

EXPERIENCE

PRACTICE + THEORY



—
SPRING
2017

FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Friends and Colleagues —

Is this publication for you?

Do you feel that experiential learning could help us to *do better* and *accomplish more* for our students, institutions, and communities? Are you frustrated by some of the condemnations of higher education, particularly because you share some of the same criticisms? Do you believe that our experiential learning efforts are an answer to those criticisms?

If yes, this publication may be for you.

Are you inspired by the thought of making a difference in the world through experiential learning? Are you energized by working with students and educational partners? Is encouraging young people to stake a claim in their futures important to you?

Are you often made uneasy by the “messiness” that comes with experiential learning, or do you thrive in that messiness? Are you the *thinking* type that delights in the clashing of ideas? Or, are you the *hands-on* type that relishes in the practical application of education?

Are you an experiential learning scholar, a practitioner, or both? Are you new to the world of experiential learning, or are you a well-known leader in the field? Are you an expert in a specific form, like cooperative education or service learning, or are you a novice looking for ideas, resources, and an academic community to belong to? Are you a faculty member at a small, private college, or are you a staff person

or administrator at a major university? Do you manage a small not-for-profit organization, or are you the CEO of a Fortune 500 company?

If you find yourself nodding yes to any of these questions, this publication is for you.

Over one year ago, we began building a periodical that would speak with the many and diverse voices in the often eclectic and fragmented world of experiential learning. We surveyed hundreds of people and analyzed dozens of existing publications. We consulted with many tried-and-true experts, but we also listened to the newcomers, critics, and naysayers.

What did we come up with? This publication. And it is for you.

Experience Magazine: Practice and Theory features academic and practitioner submissions that cover program highlights, field trends, how-to articles, and relevant information and resources for those in the field. The audience for this publication reflects the diverse global field of experiential learning and will provide evidenced-based and practitioner-orientated resources for a wide array of experiential learning stakeholders.

Experience Magazine: Practice and Theory will be published twice per year and will cover several types of experiential learning programming, including Cooperative Education, Service Learning, Internships, Undergraduate Research and Action Research, Study Abroad and International Experiential Learning, Student Teaching, Clinicals and Practicums, Performances and Exhibitions, and more.

You will hear from students and from teachers. You will hear from practitioners and you will hear from scholars. You will hear from employers and educational partners. You will hear from stakeholders that work local and from those that work on the global stage.

In this magazine, you will read about specific types of experiential learning and explore unique program hybrids. You will be provided with some important answers and be asked some vital questions. Your work will be celebrated here, but it will also be interrogated at times. You will find yourself often thinking, “yes, I agree with that,” just as you will sometimes find yourself challenged by the things written. You will find research that supports your practices as well as pieces that challenge your current practices.

We have set-out to produce a publication that is rich and accessible. We have worked towards reducing the divide between teachers and

learners and between campuses and communities. We have strived to dissolve the false dichotomy between practice and theory, and we have championed traditional forms of experiential learning while also spotlighting new and innovative forms.

Why did we do this? Because of you.

Our hope, however, is that *Experience Magazine: Practice and Theory* is more than just a publication **for you**. We hope, in fact, that over the next several years that you will hear your own voice within these pages. After all, this ever-evolving and collectively-authored story of experiential learning is your story, and it should be told **by you**.

Sincerely,



Michael J. Sharp, Editor

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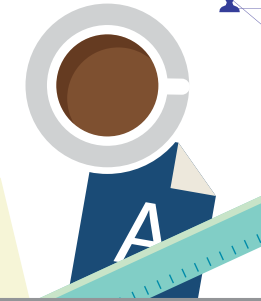
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UNIVERSITY / HIGH SCHOOL SERVICE LEARNING

A LITTLE *bonjour* GOES A LONG WAY:

Language Preparation for International Programs

Jody L. Ballah, Associate Professor (French) // University of Cincinnati, Blue Ash

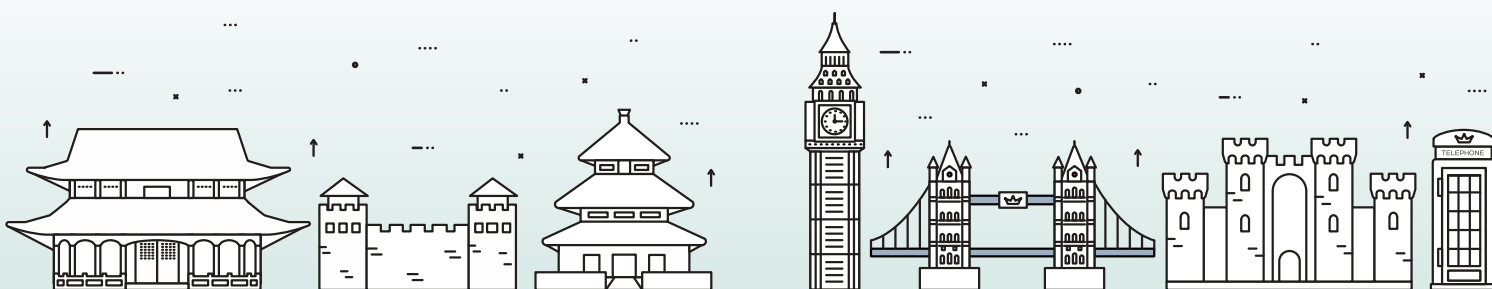
Universities and schools are increasingly highlighting the importance of community service for their students and making an experiential learning component a requirement for an undergraduate degree. Professors, administrators, and advisors extol the virtues of an experiential learning course for the student's résumé and future job prospects. As a result, it is incumbent on the institution to create new programs both at home and internationally, and reevaluate existing ones to best serve today's student population who is relying on such experiences not only academically, but also as an investment in their professional future. My relationship with experiential learning has been extremely positive, and has evolved through lessons learned, and a need to meet the changing dynamics within my university over the six years I have been offering such courses. This article will describe three international programs that I have led or co-led at the University of Cincinnati where my role was to prepare non-language students for a program in a French speaking country where they would engage with the local population.

As a language instructor for more than 20 years, it has always been a primary goal to provide authentic environments for my students to speak French. During these periods, I have witnessed different pedagogies and technologies that endeavor to fill the growing demand for better fluency, both cultural and linguistic, for students. Much of the second language acquisition literature speaks to the need to connect students' language learning to real world settings. In this way, a study abroad or service learning opportunity is tailor made for the language student and is often a required or recommended component of the major. I have been involved with the development and leadership of both of these types of programs, but it is through my work with non-language students that I have been the most challenged and rewarded. As a result, it has become increasingly clear to me that language-teaching methodologies must respond to a different, more targeted need for students to use their language skills in specific settings that do not always correspond to the traditional categories and themes generally found in beginner language textbooks.

Many articles and studies have been written about the importance of pre-departure preparation for study abroad programs. Students complete reflective assignments, cultural awareness readings, team building exercises, and other training to prepare themselves to study outside of their home country. Similarly, for an international service learning program, students prepare their projects, research the country, its needs and its people, among other tasks in order to prepare for the international experience where they will engage with the local population. However, usually little, if any time at all, is spent on language preparation for students who are not studying the language(s) spoken in the country where they will visit. While students who will study their target foreign language in an immersion setting often have a prerequisite of a year of college level language classes before going abroad, a student enrolled in a service learning program, often has no foreign language experience and must therefore rely on faculty members, group leaders or in-country translators to communicate with the community they are serving and living with, thus creating a distance or barrier between the two groups; a sense of "otherness".

In her article on showing the relevance of French through service learning, Jacqueline Thomas (2013) states that language connects human beings in the most basic of ways and connects students in all disciplines. With language at the heart of meaningful communication, it certainly stands to reason that some kind of deliberate and focused preparation be included in a

program where students will be working alongside, serving, and connecting with an international community. Indeed, when traveling as part of a service program, we are given an access to the local population that students studying at a university or average tourists do not have. Many studies have been published, in particular in the health and medical fields, about experiential learning programs where students travel internationally to serve local communities. While most of these programs discuss overwhelmingly positive and transformative benefits to students and genuinely valuable work in the community, some researchers point out a challenge of students not having even a basic knowledge of the foreign language. Aditi (2013) outlines a program where dental hygiene students travelled to Morocco to provide oral health to the underserved in health clinics, hospitals and orphanages. According to the study, participants expressed a "universal sentiment about the difficulties presented by a language barrier", it was "a challenge" that divided the group from the local doctors and other medical professionals (238). Likewise, George and Shams, in their 2011 article about an international service multi-constituent collaborative in sub-Saharan Africa to promote sustainability in the processing and marketing of the local product, shea butter, indicate that language barriers between groups often resulted in confusion and misunderstanding about project deliverables (74-75). As I read more of these kinds of studies and talked with colleagues involved in these kinds of programs, it seemed clear to me that this was an important area for growth.



My own experience with international service learning began in 2011 when I was invited to be the second faculty leader of a service group to Haiti, a Francophone region in dire straits after the then recent earthquake. There were twenty-four students in the program at a wide variety of stages in their academic career (freshmen through graduate students) and in a wide variety of disciplines of study. They were all united by a profound desire to help in a meaningful way. Originally, I had been asked to go along on the trip because of my fluency in French. However, at my suggestion, it soon became evident to my colleague, who spoke no French, and to me that we would be doing a disservice to our students if we didn't prepare them, at least minimally, to communicate with the local population they so genuinely wanted to help. My eyes were immediately opened to the possibilities. But there were also many challenges that lay before me in my task of teaching some kind of basic French to twenty-four students of varied backgrounds, in twenty minute intervals, once per week over a ten week term, while they were simultaneously working on developing their service projects, a research paper and completing weekly readings for the course. I could not rely on my years of teaching beginner French where we would start in a logical way with the present tense, progress through other grammatical structures and thematic material outlined in the textbook so that by the end of the year students were ready for their second year of French. In this program, students were not taking French as a subject; clearly another methodology was in order.

I began by designing a skeleton curriculum that would allow students to acquire and practice only the structures they would need while in Haiti engaging with the community. I therefore turned to a pragmatic approach to introducing French to my students. Rachel Shively (2010) defines pragmatic competence as 'the knowledge and skills needed to use and interpret the meanings, assumptions and actions expressed by language in its sociocultural context' (106). Applied linguists have labeled this kind of language instruction as "language for specific purposes" which promotes a targeted, context based curriculum. For my method, I chose five areas of concentration: greetings, introduction and description of self, question and answer formation, polite requests and replies and vocabulary specific to the service projects the students were working on (this ranged from a birthing clinic, working with orphans, women's health care and taking survey assessments of clean drinking water after the earthquake). Rather than design lessons in a top-down approach, I enlisted the students to help in the lesson process by tasking them to brainstorm in groups about the language structures they felt they would need. I then formed mini lessons around these topics, allowing for some practice time in class and some searching through resources outside of class. This eventually led students to compile a targeted, useful dictionary and phrasebook that they brought with them to Haiti.

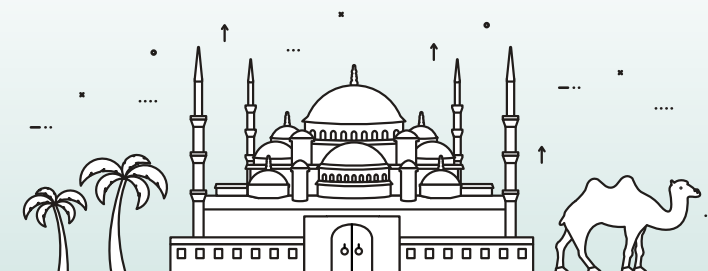
Students shared with me their nervousness about travelling to a foreign country where they would

not be able to speak the language, and how this would make them feel like outsiders. I took these comments very seriously; I had heard them before from my study abroad students who were looking at spending time in a foreign country. Well-known linguist Stephen Krashen (1981) developed the notion that people have an "affective filter" which blocks language and learning in the presence of anxiety or low self-confidence. Furthermore, understanding one's own anxiety leads to also understanding the anxiety of others when in an unfamiliar setting. I realized that part of the preparation I needed to give to my students was to instill a confidence in their abilities to still be themselves, recognize their own identity and self, while outside of their own country.

It was easier to do this with students who already had some language training — a year or so of college level French is generally enough to allow students to feel that they have a base. The students going to Haiti had nowhere near this time to develop a confidence in French. It wasn't until we were in Haiti that students felt their confidence emerge out of the contexts we were in. Fortunately it did not take very long before "*bonjour*" made a huge difference and opened the doors to meaningful communication. Students were able to negotiate meaning by helping each other, using hand gestures and pointing, drawing pictures and circumlocution. Once they realized they had made themselves understood and that they in turn could understand, there was no stopping them. My students went from asking me to translate for

them into French to asking me how to say something in French so they could say it themselves. I witnessed a most poignant exchange when I was in the birthing centre in the middle of the night while two of our pre-med students were helping to deliver a baby. When the baby was born, the students asked me how to say "congratulations" in French. When they said "félicitations" I felt proud of what they had done, and of how they had thought in that frenzied moment of activity to want to communicate with the new mother in her own language. This was one of many moments that profoundly affected me as a person and as a language professional. I knew then that this work was powerful and that I wanted to continue. My students and I had experienced authentic human interactions, more poignant and profound than any glossy textbook story.

After working with the Haiti program again in 2012, I was approached by a colleague in sociology who was interested in developing an international service learning program to the French speaking Caribbean archipelago of Guadeloupe, where the remoteness of one of its islands has dramatic effects on the education, workforce and well-being of the inhabitants. The course took a similar structure to the Haiti program where students from multiple disciplines were invited to explore contemporary social problems in Cincinnati and compare them to Guadeloupe. They designed appropriate service activities according to the needs of the population while engaged in academic coursework to analyze social structures and



contemporary issues. The international trip would take place over the Spring break, in the middle of this semester long course. Although the class size was much smaller than the Haiti classes, only eight students, I approached the language preparation portion in a similar way, tailoring instruction to what the students needed to complete their service projects, which included: working with local fishermen, teaching English to the school children, helping to repair and clean public facilities and learning and assisting the local “medicine man”. The model I had designed for the Haiti program had worked, and also had the possibility of adaptability. A smaller class size on campus facilitated more speaking opportunities for students within the time allotted for language preparation (a thirty minute segment as part of the weekly three hour seminar). Students again generated their language needs according to their service projects. In addition, there were a few students who had previously studied some basic French, which allowed me to put them into strategic working groups to take advantage of their language experience.

The previous two years with the Haiti program had allowed me to reflect on changes and improvements to my methodology. Student reflection data as well as my field notes and observations led me to incorporate more specifics into my pragmatic categories. For example, I added language structures related to invitations into the category of questions as students had more opportunities for social interaction in this community. In addition, it

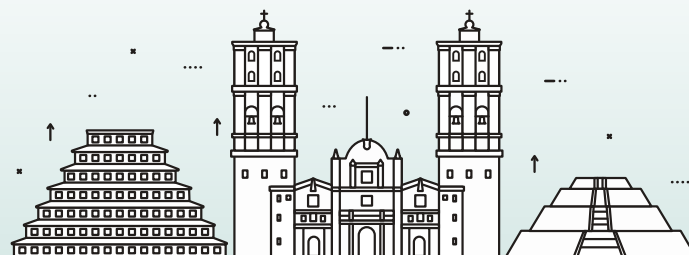
became necessary to add some instruction on apologies in French to the category of polite requests and replies as this came out of the students’ desire to be humble about their own *faux pas* in the foreign language and culture. In addition to the language improvements, I also added some specific, targeted cultural instruction to the pre-trip preparation. As part of the Haiti program, in class before the trip, students had guest speakers talking about the historical, political and social issues that had plagued this island nation for centuries. In the Guadeloupe program however, the focus was on contemporary society and its problems, and I felt that students would benefit from knowing more about this former French colony who is still under the umbrella of the French republic as one of its departments. I introduced a novel: *The Tree of Life* by Guadeloupean author Maryse Condé which tells the story of a family through several generations, and *Rue Cases-Nègres*, a popular film about post-colonial life for the indigenous people of the French Caribbean in the 1950s and 1960s. As a language teacher, I have always known about the inextricable link between language and culture and felt this to be an integral component of the students’ pre-trip preparation. While we were in Guadeloupe, students were able to make some tangible connections to what they had read, seen and discussed in class.

During their communications with the natives in Guadeloupe, students were eager to speak French, in some ways more so than the students who I had travelled with to Haiti. I think this was

due in part to the small group atmosphere that this program had cultivated before and during the trip. Students were very comfortable with each other, as well as very supportive. In addition, the local population was not under as many constraints to socialize with our group as they had been in Haiti because of the political and economic climate. Students invited some local youth to join us for a meal and often engaged with them in conversations during the day — in broken English and French — about their future plans. These indigenous young people had never met American students, nor had cultivated any relationship with people of their own age outside of their own community. These discussions were very relatable to our students as they saw firsthand the hardships and problems faced by the youth on the island who had to choose between their family and leaving the island to pursue an education beyond the age of 12 years old. As I discreetly overheard some of the conversations, I observed that my students had learned to negotiate meaning in several different ways, one of which was new to me as a tool for language acquisition: social media. They had discovered a common language, one that allowed them to break down the traditional barriers of grammar and syntax. Some of these students still today keep in contact with friends they met in Guadeloupe and they communicate with words that are part English, part French and part text language. Through post trip reflection activities, students were able to appreciate the positive effect that they had on these young Guadeloupeans and how their willingness to start a conversation, at whatever level of French they

were at then, broke down a barrier and led to a new definition of what service to a community can include. It was during this program, that I experienced the best example of the lowering of Krashen’s affective filter, by both our students and the local youth in Guadeloupe as the feeling of “otherness” no longer seemed to be there during these interactions.

In 2015, I was invited to participate in another program, one that was focused differently than the previous two. A colleague, also a professor of French, had developed a European Studies course in cooperation with the Université de Bordeaux in France. During the second year of the program, I was invited to join to help with language and cultural preparation as the majority of the students enrolled in the program were not language students, but did have some very basic French language proficiency. However, two of the nine students had no French at all. What made this program different at the outset is that instead of being a service oriented program, it was a research based course where students would interact with students, professors, citizens and professionals in Bordeaux about the status of the European Union and their particular areas of research which for the nine students enrolled in the course, ranged from the use/overuse of antibiotics, the immigrant crisis, funding for the arts in Europe, language policy and the future of the Union. My involvement with this program came at a later stage than the previous two, so the language preparation was not as robust in the pre-trip planning stage for the course. My work was more concentrated while



we were in Bordeaux where I encouraged students to adapt the French they knew already to the specific contexts in which they were working. The students with no prior French knowledge were encouraged to use basic greetings, polite requests and simple sentence structure. I was very impressed with the results I saw on a daily basis.

As traditional service projects were not a formal part of this program, the students' focus was on attending academic seminars at the university and pre-arranged field trip opportunities. Local professors and students who were involved in our program spoke English with relative fluency and students were able to find English in the public services in the city. When we held our informal debriefing meetings each day, I asked students in what contexts they were able to use their French and we discussed how they felt about it and what they might add next time they were in the situation. As the days passed during our two-week stay in Bordeaux, I witnessed students more willing to take risks and to engage with their language skills. A fundamental and universal desire to connect with people transformed our students' interactions in this environment, coupled with the friendly and open demeanor of the locals we encountered. Those students who already knew some French, but who had not signed up for this class with the specific goal of improving their French, became very keen on doing just that. Students began to ask me many questions about the nuances of expressions, how to form sentences with more complex tenses and structures and how to word

relevant queries about their research. Those two students who had no previous training in French were very much supported and helped by their fellow colleagues and gained confidence through their shared interactions. The anxiety about having to speak French perfectly before entering in a conversation seemed to melt away with a simple "bonjour, comment ça va"? It was obvious that students were empowered in their abilities to communicate in French, whatever their level, and to make friends, conduct research and live in a French-speaking city. A highlight of this program came for me near the end, in one of the final seminars of the program, when our students asked the guest speaker/professor if she could give her talk in French, rather than translate it into English. All of the students agreed with this request and at the end, all reported that this was one of the best sessions of the program, including their own participation in the question period at the end of the talk. I am participating again this year in the Bordeaux program, and plan to include more language and cultural instruction in the pre-trip stage as well as look at providing different contexts for the students to use their French in different contexts while we are abroad.

An essential component of service learning is structured reflection (Wehling 2008) in which the students consciously link what they are learning theoretically in the classroom to their experiences in the community. After my own detailed reflections on my participation in these three programs detailed above, I feel transformed as an educator and as a member

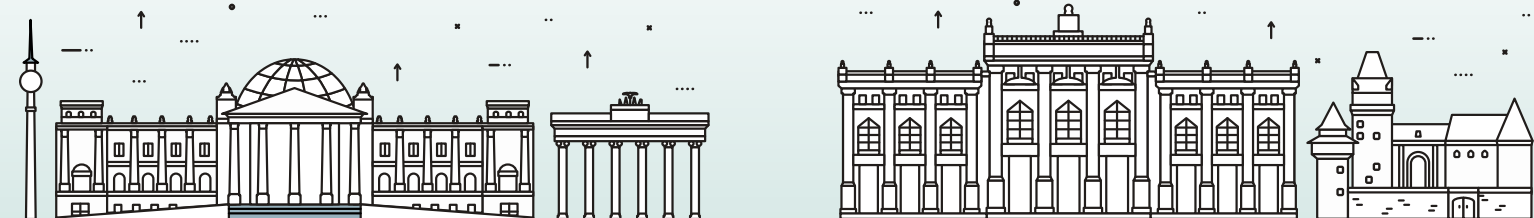
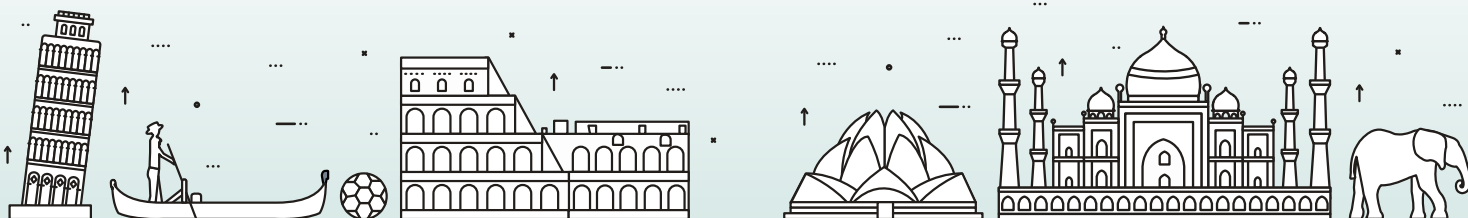
of society. I witnessed students engaged in an international community, impassioned by the work they were doing and stepping out of their comfort zone to speak a language that in most cases they had only studied for a short period of time. As students were empowered in their exchanges with natives, their confidence grew and their sense of engagement was heightened by this intimate connection with local populations. As a language professional, I learned as much, if not more from these exchanges. Language is an ever changing, evolving and fluid part of life that is very much context based. Language teaching methodology therefore needs to reflect this constant evolution. Negotiating meaning became the focus of our interactions; and students were not being evaluated by their instructor on correct grammatical language structures but instead by a real world situation where communication is a tangible product. Familiarity with culture-based expressions, introduction to targeted language structures relevant to their work in the course, focusing on intonation, and recognizing inflection and language rhythms help students and community members grasp the key sociolinguistic elements of the other culture, which should certainly be a key goal of any experiential learning program.

It is clear that our students need, are the tools to prepare for international experiences and interactions that go beyond the surface, beyond the reliance on in-country agencies, translators and infrastructure that while they may simplify communication between locals and foreigners,

ultimately lead to a distance between "us and them", an "otherness" that can only begin to melt away once we empower our students and ourselves with language tools for that most basic form of human connection.

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A Chat with
**maureen
drysdale:**

*Experiential Learning
Research Pioneer*

INTERVIEWED BY: Cheryl Cates, PhD, University of Cincinnati

Q: Tell us about yourself?

A: I am an Associate Professor in Psychology and Cross-Appointed Professor in the School of Public Health and Health Studies at St. Jerome's University in the University of Waterloo. I got my PhD in Applied and Educational Psychology from the University of Calgary, in Alberta, Canada. I teach courses in Educational Psychology, Adolescence and Emerging Adult Psychology, clinical courses on Child and Adolescent Psychopathology and Statistics for Social Scientists. My research examines school-to-work transitions and how variables such as learning environments, skill acquisitions, learning outcomes, and overall mental health lead to or impede success. Recent projects include examining (1) the impact of co-operative and work integrated education (CWIE) on several psychological constructs needed for success; (2) the impact of peer support on the overall mental health and well-being of students preparing for work after graduation. In 2003, I was selected to be the first Research Associate for the Waterloo Centre for the Advancement of Cooperative Education — a research center specializing in CWIE research. In 2004, I received a CESC-SSHRC award (large Canadian Government grant) to examine the role of CWIE in the transition from post-secondary education to the labor market. In 2013, I received an Ontario Human Capital Research and Innovation Award (OHCRI) to examine sense of belonging and peer support on student mental health, well-being, and school-to-work efficacy and a subsequent OHCRI in 2015 to run a randomized control trial of a peer support intervention for WIL and non-WIL students. Over the years, I have gained international recognition for my expertise on school-to-work transitions. In 2009, I became the principal investigator of a large international project examining behaviors believed to be important for success in the labor market. In 2008 and 2010, I was a visiting scholar in Sweden — invited to collaborate on and help advance their research on CWIE and labor market transitions. I have supervised several theses on mental health and school-to-work transitions with two receiving top thesis awards.

I have presented my research at numerous conferences and published in several scholarly journals such as the Journal for Cooperative Education, the Asia Pacific Journal for Cooperative Education, Higher Education, Skills, and Work-Based Learning, and Studies in the Education of Adults. I am the recipient of three prominent research awards for distinguished research in CWIE and school-to-work transitions: the CEIA Ralph Tyler Award, the CAFCE Graham Branton Award, and the CEIA James Wilson Award. I have served on the CEIA Board of Directors as VP of Research and I currently sit on the Board of Directors for the World Association for Cooperative and Work-Integrated Education (WACE). I am the founder and first Executive Chair of the WACE International Research Group (IRG), which advances research on work-integrated education and school-to-work transitions.

Q: How did you get interested in experiential learning research?

A: I have had several profound experiences in my life that have contributed more to my learning that I would ever had gained from textbooks and classrooms alone. In reflecting on these experiences, I became acutely aware of the power of experience. Researching that 'power' just fell into place early on in my career. Essentially, I wanted to know why and how it works. Twenty years later and I am still researching it, still looking for answers. We'll not answer all the questions in my lifetime and so I hope that the generations coming up behind me will continue on this path. The contact between students and supervisors is likely to be more immediate, dynamic, and contextualized. They spend considerable time together and may become more familiar with each other than students and faculty in classrooms. Internship supervisors may see the students several times per week for many hours. As a consequence, students may have more opportunities in internships to produce written work.

Q: What are the most important issues facing experiential learning today and how can research contribute to their evolution?

A: Issues facing experiential learning: Students need to be 'global ready' (as well as 'work ready') and we don't have a clear picture of what global ready means. We are still working on the work ready and so we have a long way to go. What attributes and skills are needed to be global ready? What experiential learning opportunities provide the conditions for students to become global ready? I think this is one of the most pressing issues. Once we know what our students need then we need to address the other on-going issues such as:

- Clearly stating the learning outcomes and objectives and aligning them with the mission and goals of universities and colleges as well as the expectations of employers.
- Valid, reliable, and practical assessment of the learning outcomes.
- Increased experiential learning opportunities so that all students can benefit from rich practical experiences
- Practitioners understanding the how and why of experiential learning

How research contributes:

- Researching the learning outcomes of different types of experiential education helps us understand what students are learning and how they are learning it. This has practical implications such as informing practice, program development, and establishing policies. Basically, the research tells us if we are doing what we say we are doing and if students are learning what we say they are learning.
- The research can also be used to 'sell' experiential learning to all stakeholders — students, parents, educators, employers, and the community.
- Researching assessment practices can lead to improved assessment practices.

Q: For the experiential learning practitioner, what key theoretical foundations should he/she understand?

A: Probably Kolb — He drew heavily on Dewey, Lewin, and Piaget. Using Kolb's theory plus theories of reflective practice, we know that students learn best by being engaged — by first *doing*, then *reflecting* on what they did, followed by *transferring* those reflections into new actions or *new practice*.

I would also recommend reading Lave and Wenger's work on communities of practice and situated learning.

I would also recommend the Experiential Education Academy that NSEE offers. The workshops would be very valuable to those wanting to learn more about experiential learning.

Q: For someone who might consider getting involved with research, what background or skills are most important?

A: They must know what questions are worth asking, worth answering, and how the answers will be used. It is also essential to have knowledge of research methods. I recommend taking a research methods course or at the very least, a full-day workshop. I also recommend partnering with an experienced researcher. Knowing how to conduct research is only one piece, they must also understand what to do with the data. Finding an expert on qualitative data analysis and a statistician for the quantitative is the best advice I can give. The final piece is knowing what to do with the findings so that they have practical implications. All too often there are boxes of useless data sitting around that never gets analyzed or disseminated.

Finally, joining a group such as the WACE International Research Group is a great way to learn about research. The IRG offers workshops and opportunities to partner with an experienced researchers.

Q: Tell us about the current state of research within the field of experiential learning.

A: I am impressed with the amount of research being conducted globally now. We are seeing more from all over the world — Africa, Asia, Australia, Europe, and North America. Ten years ago, there was very little and what was done had poor generalizability. We've (a very big WE — organizations and expert researchers) have been busy advancing it and as a result, we are seeing more and more strong research. We can't stop, so I encourage people to put on their research caps and help advance the literature on experiential education.

Q: Tell us about your current research.

A: As mentioned above, my research examines emerging adult school-to-work transitions and how variables such as learning environments, skill acquisitions, learning outcomes, social support, and overall mental health lead to or impede success. Recent projects include examining (1) the impact of co-operative and work integrated education (CWIE) on several psychological constructs needed for success; (2) the impact of peer support and sense-of belonging on the overall mental health and well-being of students preparing for and adjusting to their first full time job after graduation. Emerging adults are particularly at risk for mental health issues especially when they are in the period of transition to full-time work. For many, the workplace is particularly important as a social and learning environment, impacting not only on vocational pathways, but also on present and future health and wellbeing. It's an important topic and one that merges my research training in clinical, developmental, and educational psychology as well as public health and health systems.

Q: Tell us about the WACE International Research Group and your efforts to organize experiential learning research on behalf of WACE.

A: In 2012, I was asked by the WACE Board of Directors to form and be the first Executive Chair of a WACE International Research Group (WACE-IRG). It was created with the aim of advancing research in the field of co-operative and work integrated education (CWIE). Our goals are to:

- Establish a strong network of researchers around the globe
- Promote research on cooperative and work-integrated education
- Work with the Board of Directors to ensure that WACE events have a strong research stream
- Identify key research topics that will advance the understanding of cooperative and work-integrated education
- Be involved in research workshops at WACE events
- Collaborate on research projects
- Establish criteria for future WACE research grants and awards
- Assist in seeking research funding from foundations and funding agencies

In four years, we have grown from just over a dozen researchers to more than 100 from all over the globe and we have developed a strong structure led by a dedicated Executive Committee. The research that members of this group conduct can be used to improve experiential education programs. Increased research in this area of CWIE helps experiential education practitioners and policy makers learn more about many relevant topics, such as: the impact of CWIE on students, discerning and managing stakeholder expectations, and how to make students more marketable to employers.

In terms of my efforts — first, I work with a strong executive so the efforts are not just mine. We organize and facilitate research workshops. We have a WACE

International Research Symposium every two years. This event is very successful with attendance increasing each time. We have a quarterly newsletter to inform members of events and research being conducted in the five regions (Africa, Asia, Europe, North America, and Oceania). We have developed a research grant and a Best Research Paper award. All of these accomplishments encourage more research and have resulted in more researchers joining the group. If anyone is interested, they can [contact me](#).

Q: Do you have examples of recent studies that you would recommend for Experience Magazine readers to review?

A: Rather than specific studies, I would recommend scanning the journals where research on experiential learning is published. A few examples are: Journal of Experiential Education, Asia Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education, Journal of Cooperative Education, Higher Education, Skills, and Work-Based Learning, and the new Experiential Learning and Teaching in Higher Education (the first issue has a great article by Alice Kolb and David Kolb). There are also books and handbooks such as the *International Handbook for Cooperative Education*, *The World is my Classroom*, *Strengthening Experiential Education: A New Era*. Finally, there will be a new book coming out next year that I am co-editing with Dr. Tracey Bowen called *Work-Integrated Learning in the 21st Century: Global Perspectives on the Future* (when it's in print, we can announce it in the Experience Magazine).

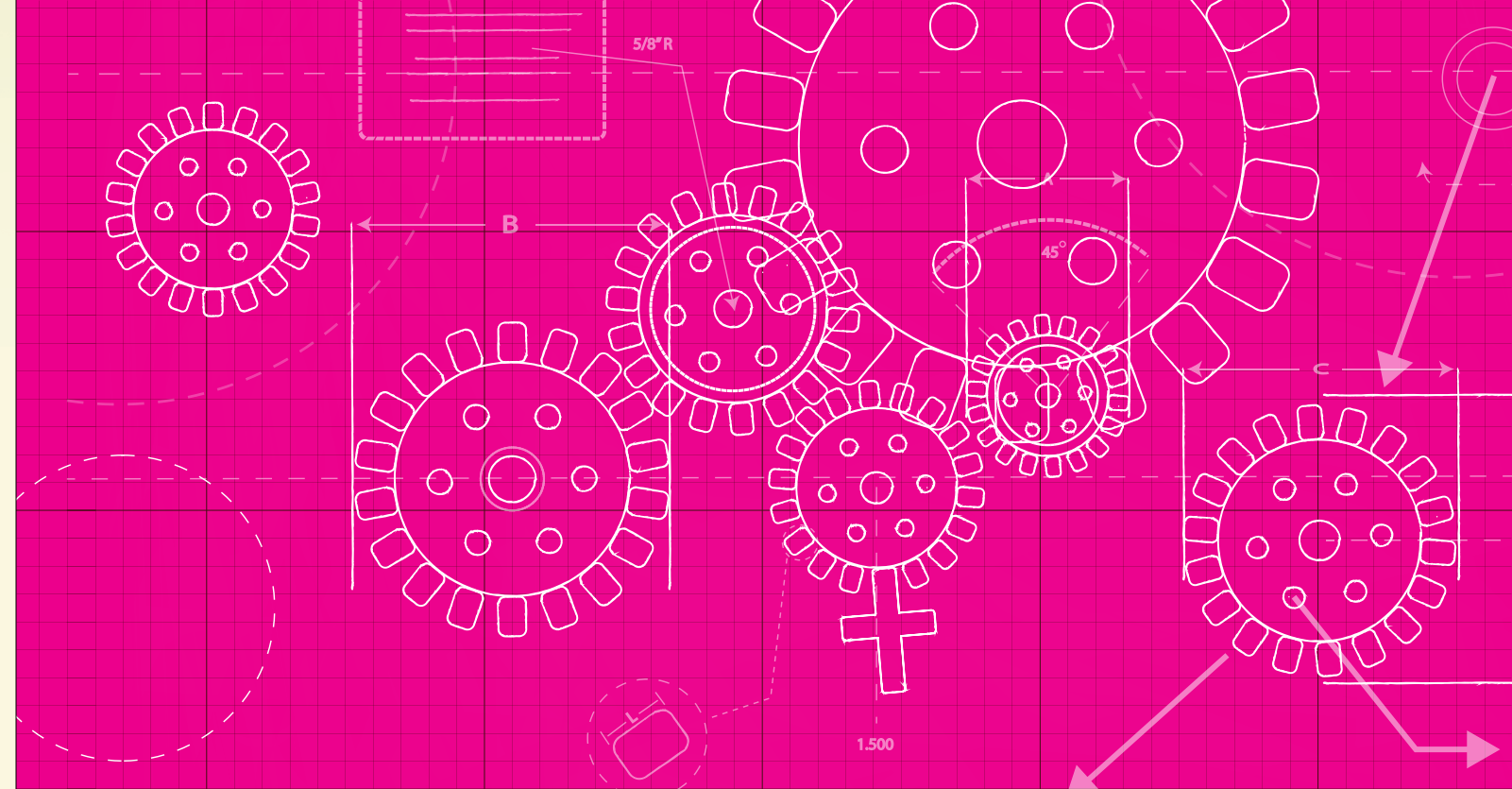
By scanning journal articles, experiential learning practitioners and researchers can learn about what research is being done and what questions might need answering.

Q: If you were given \$10 million to advance the research agenda for experiential learning, how would you spend it?

A: Wow! If only! This kind of money would allow me to do several things. This is a pie-in-the-sky answer to a very hypothetical situation.

a) Get more academic staff (faculty and research professors) involved in research. We could have very large grant competitions (not the small ones that only allow for small studies to be done at one institution). Large grants would be more attractive to faculty and worth the time and effort needed to submit a strong proposal. Large grants would allow a group of faculty from a variety of disciplines to collaborate and design large international longitudinal experimental studies examining the long-term benefits and outcomes of experiential learning. They could select a large sample of students who are just entering higher education. Then they could do baseline testing on a number of factors — everything from current skill levels, personal attributes, to mental health and overall wellbeing — then randomly assign them to a variety of experiential learning opportunities during their studies and then follow them through to graduation, their first full-time job, and then for 10 or more years after graduation, all the while doing follow-up testing at different time points and controlling for as many variables as possible such as relationships with supervisors, access to mentors, personal factors, and lived experience factors. That kind of money would support this kind of study.

b) The money could also be used to pull together a group of research experts and organize two- and three-day training workshops all around the globe for practitioners and novice researchers and teach them how to do sound, valid, and reliable research that is usable! We want research that has implications so that it can be used to inform practice and drive policy. Big money would make it easier to move this agenda along. We've been working on it for over the past 15 years but we could do so much more with a large budget.



No, Really.

Gender Does Still Matter:

Preparing Female Engineers for the Cooperative Education Experience

KIRSTI M. ARKO // MICHIGAN TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY

Coming from a Career Services department of a heavily STEM focused university, specifically engineering, I often wonder about our role in STEM initiatives. Should we only focus on the goals of our departments and universities? Do we have any obligation or do we have any opportunity to participate in the national initiatives? Should we be thinking bigger? While engineers are in high demand, there is a severe drought of female engineers. >>>

This is not new news. In fact, in recent statistics from the National Science Foundation (2015), **women represent only 14.9% of the engineering workforce.** Overall, the STEM fields are not completely deprived of women, there are actually some with near proportional showings (Cummins, 2015). However, engineering is at the bottom of the list, with the lowest percentage of women. In our universities, the numbers aren't much better. According to a 2014 NSF Study, females earned only 19.8% of the engineering degrees awarded, with the average since 2004 being only 19.2%. Only a slight increase has occurred over the past 10 years.

As members of Career Services, we have obligations to our universities, but we should also cast our attention on the larger initiatives. While focused on providing employment provision, career skills, and opportunities for students to begin and succeed in their careers, we do not do enough to empower women in engineering. In an effort to address this problem, I propose cooperative education programs as a site for careful and creative solutions to better prepare women for co-op engineering experiences. In this study, I interviewed female engineers who completed at least one semester of a co-op in order to gather information about their experiences, better understand the realities, and more effectively respond as a co-op practitioner. Using the results of these interviews, I propose key components of a cooperative education program to more adequately prepare women in engineering for a male-dominated workplace.

WOMEN IN COOPERATIVE EDUCATION

Cooperative education may be one way we can specifically focus on women in engineering and propose a small, but potentially significant solution. The inspiration for this work came from Sickles' chapter in the *Handbook of Cooperative Education* (Knowles, 1971) where she identified cooperative education as a method to break two major gender

barriers for women — “the opportunity to enter new career fields and the opportunity to gain equal pay for equal work” (p. 269). This was the first indication in the research of the unique co-op benefits for women and these benefits were critical in significance because they addressed the current gendered workplace issues. Even today those goals seem spot on, but the chapter also provided evidence of the gender stereotypes at play. In the 1960-70s, one benefit for women in co-op was the expanded pool of potential husbands, not anything we would advertise today. Also discussed were specific problems women caused: they insisted on higher wages and showed a noticeable intolerance for bosses and co-workers. The source for this information, workplace supervisors, saw women as less tolerant and more likely to leave for insignificant reasons, but might there be more to that story? When supervisors used the term “grouchy bosses,” as they were described, perhaps there was much more than grouchy, but there is no access to the insider information because the women's voices are not yet a part of the research. Mosbacker, W.B. (1973) explored the realities of working women and provided evidence for the changing world of work, women's improving status, and specific benefits, but simultaneously recognizing the work to be done. Kany (1973) reported on initial observations of a larger project, “Meanings of Work to Women Students

in a Cooperative Education Program.” One of her two major conclusions pointed to the positive influence that cooperative education has on women's identities. Rowe (1980) conducted a study to specifically look at the effect of the co-op experience on women. “The results of this study have provided very little evidence in support of the notion that cooperative education has a greater effect upon women than men” (p. 57). However, this study was done strictly with mailed questionnaires and quantitative results. I have to ask — what did this study miss? If given a chance to share their perspectives, what would the women's full stories have told us about the realities of their workplaces and how the co-op may have been beneficial to them? Using interviews, Leventman and Horst (1985) did a study on women in engineering. Their goal was to address the role of co-op in preparing women for their career and the impact on their career development. The stories they collected told of the workplace realities and concluded, “there would seem to be no substitute for the kind of practical, hands-on experience co-op provides” (Leventman & Horst, 1985, p. 213). While this sounds like a replica of any description of co-op benefits, we have to better define what the practical, hands-on experience means for women, because it is different than men. Fifolt & Abbott (2008) identified the potential of co-op programs to serve in increasing the representation of women and minorities in the sciences and engineering. They suggested co-op programs' structures and programs more inclusively meet the needs of women. More recent work has focused on retaining female engineers, both at the university and in the workplace (Franchetti, Ravn, & Kuntz, 2010; Wilkinson & Sullivan, 2004). Raelin et al. (2011 & 2014) looked not only at the retention of female engineers in the university, but also whether the cooperative education experience affected their self-efficacy in the work, career, and academic sectors. As research has shown, co-op is one area that has the potential to make a difference in balancing the gender gap and filling the employment needs.

The research on these realities cannot focus too heavily on quantitative data — Rather, we need to hear the women's stories.

In the Society of Women Engineers (SWE) 2015 annual literature review (Meilksins et al. 2015), the results were clear in identifying the presence of gender-related issues in the workplace. The research looked at why the number of female engineers continues to remain low, but also identified if and how an effort was being made to attract more women. There were also articles reviewed that assessed the current programs aimed at recruiting and retaining female engineers and scientists. Not unlike the gender-based stereotypes and discrimination of the 70's, this is further proof that gender related issues remain in the workplace, and these are only magnified for women in historically male-dominated fields. Knowing this, our obligation is to better prepare the women from our universities, and specifically, cooperative education programs should better serve the women in engineering to assist in both preparation and retention initiatives.

FEMALE ENGINEERS ON CO-OP: A QUALITATIVE STUDY

If we are to be more effective in serving the female engineers in our cooperative education programs, we need to better understand their experiences and their needs. The research on these realities cannot focus too heavily on quantitative data — Rather, we need to hear the women's stories. A quantitative approach with only numerical results, as earlier research has shown (Rowe, 1980), indicates little if any difference in the co-op experience based on gender. There is a lot missing when we focus only on the numbers. If we are to examine the conditions of women who are in

cooperative education worksites, we need to hear their story, the whole story. In his text *Learning from Strangers*, Weiss (1994) offers seven reasons for qualitative research, and three are especially important to this discussion. First, with interviews, we can develop a detailed description and this allows us to better understand the women's entire experience. A holistic description is also possible with this method. Finally, Weiss suggests interviews provide insight into how events are interpreted, and this is an absolute must. As discussed previously, Sickle's chapter provided the perspective of co-op supervisors, but if the women would have been a part of the research, we may have better understood what was meant by a "grouchy boss" or the specific reasons women left. The interpretations would have most likely told a very different story. Numbers alone are not able to provide these insights that are possible with qualitative methods. We need to know the details of the women's experiences in order to address the women's issues in the workplace. As co-op practitioners, we need to pay attention to the women in engineering, as the need is even bigger than our institutions. We need the women's voices to tell their stories so we have a starting point from which to identify creative solutions that will assist in growing the numbers of professional female engineers who begin and are retained in their careers.

In the present study, I conducted interviews with female engineers who were participating in an off-campus co-op placement. Conducting interviews with females was purposeful in exploring the realities of their lives as female engineers in the workplace. These perspectives are crucial in not only understanding that reality, but also understanding what we can do to prepare them for the male-dominated field of engineering. If we are to access those realities and the details of their day-to-day experiences, qualitative methods were an absolute necessity. The overarching study asked undergraduate Cooperative Education students during the

Spring 2016 semester to voluntarily participate in a study that was both quantitative and qualitative. The participants were asked to complete a pre- and post-semester survey, additionally, the females were asked to do a post co-op interview, with additional interviews being scheduled for Winter 2016. Women made up 28% of the study's population, an exact match to our institution's gender ratio. From the pool of women on co-op, 41% (11 women) agreed to participate in the interview portion of the study. All but one of the women were in the College of Engineering and worked in positions that were related to their major. The interviews for the first round were done by phone, with the exception of one emailed interview. The questions were given to the participants prior to the interview and followed a fixed question, open response format with minimal follow-up questioning or clarifying. The present study focuses specifically on the first-round of interviews and what we can learn about the realities of the workplace for a female co-op engineer. One question asked specifically focused on gender and ensured all participants had an opportunity to talk about any portion of their co-op experience that may have been affected by gender: "Did you notice any differences where gender played a role?" The interviews were transcribed and coded, and any responses coded as gender-related issues are included in this study.

LIFE AS A CO-OP IN A MALE-DOMINATED WORKPLACE

The first similarity between all of the women's experiences were the number of other women, or lack of, in their divisions and departments. This was something all of the women mentioned, and while some downplayed the significance, they were well aware of their minority status and talked about the numbers.

// I guess I always realized I was the only girl out of all the engineers. //

// The only female electrical engineer. //

// There were three in the entire department. //

Most interesting was that while this was something they had noticed, many did not consider it an issue, more of a given. Having come from a university setting where the ratios were also unbalanced, this had become their life, their reality, and nothing they could change. "Of course engineering is male dominated," stated one of the women. Another mentioned she "just stopped noticing after a while. It's just kind of a thing." With these comments, it is difficult to see the progress we have made since 1971. At that time, the expectation would have been a male-dominated work culture, but here we are forty-plus years later and the only evolution we see for these women is the expectation that they just stop paying attention after a while.

One problem with this unbalanced gender ratio is the lack of mentors and role models available to these women. In *Everyday Feminism*, Patricia Valoy, a Civil Engineer, feminist blogger and STEM activist cited one key reason why the lack of women in STEM is a feminist issue: the need for more female role models. Valoy herself has had many effective role models, but when they are not women, it changes the outcome.

I don't see myself in them. When I see a woman in a position I'd like to be in, I internalize that, and my goal becomes that much more tangible. What I see is an individual who also faces the unique challenges that I face, and she has succeeded. (We Need Role Models section, para. 3-4)

These women may think the lack of other women in their professions doesn't matter, but I don't believe they can even recognize the detriment that occurs due to the gender imbalance. They haven't ever seen it any other way. It has been their reality, so they don't know any differently. And to ensure their school and work is not affected, they do not spend time dwelling on the facts. Again, what can they do? Valoy's point is

key in determining a solution — we need more female mentors available to our female co-op engineers. These women do not understand the increase in potential possibilities if there were more women.

The presence or lack of a female mentor plays a crucial role, and two of the women's stories show just how polarizing the results can be. The first student had a female mentor whose role was to oversee the entire unit. The student said this about her mentor, "And as a woman engineer, I really looked up to her and how she handled things, and how she displayed her leadership skills." As she went on to describe her mentor, there were traits that the student saw in her mentor that reminded her of herself, specifically her soft spoken demeanor. Identifying with that aspect of her mentor's personality, the student had always assumed it was not conducive to a leadership position. Her mentor was able to provide an example of someone who can be a leader and step up when needed, while still maintaining her true self. This was truly inspiring to the student. Enough so that she is returning to school with plans for pursuing

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leadership positions, because she realized it was possible. She saw herself in her mentor, someone with similar circumstances, and that one woman has shown her future possibilities. The second student had an older male mentor, nearly 40 years her senior. In her experience, she did not have a mentor she could relate to, nor did she see herself in him. And even worse, there were gender related issues significant enough to warrant a formal HR complaint. At this point, it is too early to predict what the long-term consequences may be, but the second woman did not have someone who inspired her, nor showed her what is possible as a woman. Instead, she saw the realities that some women face in a male-dominated culture. Though her retention as a female engineer is still yet to be determined, the workplace culture and harassment is something she will not soon forget. Her experience also confirms that not all mentors are effective. In the end, she did seek out her own female mentor, mostly because this woman had a similar harassment experience. The student knew what she needed — someone who had encountered similar workplace issues and persevered in spite of them. This is not to say that a male mentor cannot be effective, but when you compare the experiences of these two women, there is clear evidence of the payoffs from female role models and the prodigious difference they can make in not only their co-op experience, but even their long term goals as female engineers.

Overall, the results from the gender question covered a range of responses, yet provided evidence that there are issues, some issues even the women did not recognize. Many of the women began their response to the question with something like, “No, not really.” Gender was a non-issue. It was just life, and something they learned to ignore. It wasn’t until they continued to talk about their co-op experiences as it related to gender that I found out the rest of the story. Actually, half of the women did not cite any issue with gender, other than the ratios. But when they

continued with their story, there was so much more. As they spoke of the non-issues, they were actually describing clear examples where gender was in fact at play, but they did not recognize it as that. In one interview, the student described the environment and the number of women, and then after talking about the ratios, she casually mentioned at the end of her response that she noticed conversations abruptly ending when she was present. “I guess women can be harder to read or potentially be more sensitive. And so some of the men would have obviously pointed that out.” Though she noticed the actions, she was not seeing the gender stereotypes at play. She was one of few women and men sometimes acted differently around her, yet she did not consider this an issue nor a problem. This is not surprising, however, because the same held true in SWE’s 2015 Gender Culture Study. When asked about gender, there was a denial that gender was a factor because women do not want to be identified as a complainer or an advocate for women in the workplace. What is happening is so embedded and so normal that it is no longer even recognized by women as being bias at all. These were clear instances of second generation bias. Not only was there a denial, but the women were also very careful as to not complain about their situations. In their attempt to avoid complaining or whining, there was a unique commonality between multiple women when they were describing an aspect of their experience that was unfavorable. They steered clear of any negative language and used the term “different.” When one was describing her experience as a female in the oil refinery, she said, “It was a little different because most of them are guys.” She went on to describe being treated like everyone else, yet received looks from men in the refinery when she walked through in her “steel-toes, hard hat, and flame resistant clothing.” In concluding her response to the question, she cited “being lucky” as the reason she did not have any issues related to gender, after discussing her “different” experience in the refinery.

When the women continued to speak and tell their stories, it was clear that gender was an issue in the workplace for some, and most evident for those whose positions placed them in specific industries or sectors of their company. Examples included the pipeline industry, shop floor, and an oil refinery. In these areas, the gender issues were magnified. These were the places where it was clearly communicated that it was a “man’s job.” When these women shared their experiences, there was no denying that gender clearly played a role and even more significant were their shifting identities to compensate for their own gender. In these environments, the women spoke specifically about the actions they needed to take to earn respect or prove their abilities to their male co-workers. Their lack of membership in the male culture was immediately evident, but luckily, none of the women in these roles let it get in the way. However, upon arrival they were aware of not only the discourse they were entering, but also the requirements to become an authentic member of that particular team. In any co-op experience, the students may feel they have to prove their worth coming in as a student, but as a woman in these particular environments, the necessity was magnified. Not only did they have to prove that a co-op could do this work, but they also had to prove they were simultaneously “man” enough. One woman realized she was beginning with a disadvantage that she would have to work to eliminate. “I maybe had to prove myself a little bit more.” Another was given the message that she would not cut it. “You can’t handle this. You won’t get your hands dirty.” Another immediately recognized the kinds of actions necessary to enter the discourse. “These guys are going to dish out crap all day long. If you can’t dish it right back, they will not respect you nearly as much.” These women had a hard job ahead of them, not only were they needing to prove to themselves as capable engineers, but also as a minority. They had to recognize the discourse and then devise their plan of action for how they would begin to enter that discourse and become a member.

Through these transitional periods of proving oneself, the women experienced a transformation. Their identities had to shift to become a part of the discourse. They understood the unwritten rule to be more man-like, so they strove to show themselves as less stereotypical female and more male. “You start acting like a guy.” Another said, “Once they got to know me, I was just one of the guys.” When the women spoke of their identities, they were proud of their ability to become accepted and prove they could do the work. They were not despondent of their new work identity, nor did they resent the men for requiring this. The women who spoke of their success in becoming accepted in their male-dominated workplaces were proud of both their technical accomplishments and their memberships. They didn’t credit their identity as the key to their success, but rather their abilities to get the job done, to see a project from beginning to end, and ultimately the value their project brought to the company.

Despite the challenges these women faced, their success came in multiple forms. First, there was a transformation in identity from student to engineer. Another success came from their accumulation of new professional skills, which are key to future employment but sometimes difficult to gain from academic study. These professional skills included strategies to succeed in a male-dominated culture. Another measurement of success were their abilities to become team members. And not only did they become a part of their teams, but some even served as team leaders. Lastly were their accomplishments on the projects they completed. This was the most tangible measure of success, especially when their projects were being implemented. One participant had just received a photo of the part she had developed and was now installed. These women persevered despite the additional work required to be accepted as female engineers in the workplace.

PREPARING WOMEN FOR CO-OP

This group of women all found their co-ops to be valuable, but can we do more to better prepare women for their co-op experiences? It is not fair to assume that we can prepare men and women with the same information, when in reality their experiences may be very different. Our role in preparing students for co-op is one place to target women, especially those in the engineering and scientific fields, so that these realities do not come without warning. We can better prepare them with strategies and mentors before they leave campus, so they are ready for whatever may come. Knowledge is power. The knowledge we have, and should continue to collect, about the experiences of our female engineers should not be the end of our responsibility. With this knowledge, we need to identify what we can do to better prepare female engineers for their cooperative education experience. In our own university's Cooperative Education Handbook and pre-departure presentations, the topics covered are meant to prepare all students for their experience. The topics range from course requirements, university information, professionalism, and policies on sexual harassment. These topics are not adequate if we want our female engineers to be properly prepared.

We have an obligation to prepare our female engineers who will be entering a male-dominated culture. First, we could better prepare them for the interview by providing questions to ask when determining a potential employer's workplace culture. Any insight into the company may help a woman determine if it will be a good fit for her. Prior to entering the workplace, it is more challenging to accurately determine the culture, but there are tools available that will assist in finding a good fit. To start, there are details in the position description that will provide some insight into the work environment. This document can serve as a start. Online, most companies publish their mission, vision,

values, and other rhetoric that provides their representation of their culture, but this information may not match the actual day-to-day culture. However, it is still very valuable because it may provide insight into their policies for employees. Insider information about the workplace could be available through a variety of networking sources. Any alumni who are currently working at the company, or who have previously, would be a great connection for the student. A university alumni department could also be of assistance in helping the student make those connections. Students and alumni who have previously interned or co-oped at the company are also useful sources. Though not as personal, networking through LinkedIn could provide an employee connection to ask these questions. During one student's co-op, she realized the importance of finding a company with values that match her own, and she spoke at length about this priority when she searches for a full time job. When I asked her how she will get this insider information, she had a clear strategy. First she will ask very pointed questions in an interview, such as "What does the company do to create camaraderie within its employees?" She would also visit the worksite to speak directly with potential co-workers. Here she would ask questions about their experiences — "What do you like about working for this company?" Finally, she understood the value of a network and would use hers to make connections with those who may have insider knowledge.

One of the women completed her co-op with the same company she had done an internship. With previous experience, she was more aware of what she was getting into and understood she may need to shift her identity. When she described the culture of her co-op department, she used the old adage — if you can't take the heat, get out of the kitchen. This particular department's discourse also included colorful language in their day-to-day operations, and she was comfortable with her "little bit more of a

sailor's mouth." Having been previously with the company, she was much more aware of what to expect, so she was better prepared. Women can participate in any organizational culture they choose, but the key is to find the right fit. Not all women may have been up to the challenge of the "heat," nor participating in the linguistic discourse of the shop floor. Women can participate where they choose. What is least effective is to send a woman onto the shop floor when she is unaware of what that may mean. In hiring these co-ops, the employers should assist in finding a fit, but there is an opportunity for Career Services to take a more active role in better preparing women to understand how a male dominated environment and culture may affect their experience in the workplace.

In addition to understanding the environment, women also need to understand the choices that are available to them once they are working as co-ops. It would be easy to assume that these environments require a woman, or a man, to shift their identity to fit in, but this is not the case. It may be easier at times for the student to make the change, but that is not the only option. When a student enters the workplace, there may be a clearly definitive discourse, but does this require the student to become someone new? I would argue that the answer is no. Students do not need to leave themselves behind. In fact, companies hired them for who they met in an interview and that is who they want and expect to show up for work. Though it may seem easy or necessary to change who they are, that is not the only choice. As the one student said, her female mentor was able to be a leader as herself. The student had expected her mentor to be forced to act in a way that was unnatural, but she was shown that a leader can come in many different forms. There is not one way to be a leader. There is also not one way to be an engineer. To understand these types of choices, these women need more models from which to observe the many forms that are available.

To expose female engineers to other women like them, a panel of alumni and previous female co-ops would be a valuable opportunity for current students to understand other women's experiences, challenges and success. These experiences can serve as an arsenal and help them to prepare for what they may face, but also the confidence that they can be successful. They can be more confident in their own strengths and potential. They need to see women working as professionals and leaders who have made the choice to do the work as themselves, not as the environment would indicate. In addition, a few well-chosen readings can also be effective, especially if a panel is unavailable. The *Women in Engineering Proactive Network* (WEPAN) and the *Society of Women Engineers* (SWE) are two organizations that provide excellent resources. The key is to provide them with a voice. A voice they can recognize. The women need to understand the challenges and the choices available to them as female engineers.

In addition to exposing women to role models, ensuring they have a suitable mentor, as discussed previously, can be invaluable. The key is not to assume or rely on the worksite to provide the only mentor, rather Career Services should play a more active role. Fifolt and Searby (2010) conducted a mixed-methods study on STEM co-op students and mentors. As a result, they offered key skill sets, areas of knowledge, and dispositions that were necessary for a successful STEM protégé and emphasized the importance of providing training prior to a co-op experience. I would argue that not only is mentoring important for STEM students, but in particular, women. Co-op pre-departure programs for female engineers should include a component on mentoring. First, these women should be provided training on how to effectively use their mentors, realizing that assigning a mentor and mentee is not nearly enough to make the relationship valuable and effective (Fifolt & Searby 2010). Both parties need to understand their roles, and our job in Career Services is to ensure this

I am an engineer. I belong. I do good work.

happens. We most likely will not have control over who the mentor may be at the workplace, nor the credentials they hold to make them a suitable mentor, but we can better prepare the women on how to use their mentors or seek out additional mentors. And because we cannot assume the assigned mentor will be effective, an on-campus mentor program is a valuable addition. The current co-ops could be paired with another female engineer who has completed a co-op and participated in a training program to be a mentor. A peer mentor can sometimes be even more effective because the hierarchy and differences in power and authority are eliminated. This can provide a safe space for frank conversations and questions, without the threat of status in the workplace. As mentioned previously, we need to provide as many role models as possible to ensure the women have someone they relate to, someone with similar experiences and challenges. We need to ensure that we adequately prepare our female co-op students with the best chances to gain confidence and a new professional identity.

FROM CO-OP STUDENT TO ENGINEER

Cooperative education is a beneficial component to engineering education for women because it gives them three key confirmations they may be unable to achieve through academics alone, yet crucial in ensuring they have the confidence to continue and thrive in their fields.

I am an engineer. I belong. I do good work.

This may seem basic, but I would argue that this transformation in identity is even more significant for women than men. Early on Kany (1973) recognized evidence of this. A woman's identity changes as a result of a co-op, and this change looks to be extremely important for our female engineers. In the identity shift from student to engineer, the students

interviewed who had already done other co-ops or internships were further ahead in their transformation. They consistently referred to themselves as an engineer or part of the engineering group. Women with only one co-op experience were beginning the transformation, but in earlier stages. Because they were working alongside other professional engineers, doing the work of a professional engineer, and completing projects as an engineer, their identities were shifting from student towards "engineer." With fewer female role models to observe, however, our female co-op engineers have fewer examples to serve as confirmation they will be able to do it. With the plethora of successful male engineers, some men may have less doubt of their own future success because they have observed other men, much like themselves. Women do not have that luxury. With so few women working as professional engineers, it is not as easy to assume that women will be successful in the field. There are fewer examples to prove it is possible. Thus, it may be more challenging for women to feel that they belong when they are the minority, but feeling like they belong is crucial in their identity as an engineer.

Female engineers who participate in a cooperative education program also receive confirmation that they can do the work of an engineer and do it well. To participate in our co-op program there is a GPA requirement, so all of these women were academically strong. Initially, they did not assume that the transition from academics to the workplace would be seamless, and they were skeptical of the usefulness of the knowledge they were bringing. Once acclimated and given more meaningful work, they began to see the worth and applicability of their knowledge and skills. One woman talked about the mid-term evaluation process. Until that time, her supervisor had not commented on the quality of her work, but after receiving a very positive report, she


had the confirmation that she was doing good work and it gave her the confidence to speak up, contribute, and continue the work.

When we listen to the stories of women in engineering who have completed a cooperative education experience, there are key factors contributing to the recruitment and retention initiatives for women in engineering. When the women speak, it is easy to recognize their pride in proving they can do this work and do it well. We better understand what it was like for them in a male-dominated workplace, not only as a co-op, but as a woman. We realize what we can do as co-op coordinators to participate in increasing the number of female engineers. We see why it is so important to have these women working in the field, so our future co-ops will have strong female role models whom they will recognize. This is what we can do and this is what we should do to ensure our co-op programs are not a one size fits all model and meet the diverse needs of our students.

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SEIZING OPPORTUNITIES OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM

CORIE FLOOD, Industrial Design Student

// University of Cincinnati //

Sometimes as college students, we feel as though life is getting the best of us. Maybe we have too much on our plate, maybe we don't learn well in that auditorium of two hundred students. In the end, being a student is all about growing. College is one long, drawn-out, frantic, and valuable learning experience.

But what most students fail to comprehend is just how much students can gain from college that has nothing to do with their GPA or a classroom curriculum. Experiential learning is one of the most crucial opportunities that many students don't take advantage of. Whether it's working for non-profits or in corporate America, those experiences are what help you mature as a person and grow as a professional. We all want to grow in as many ways as possible in these critical years in our lives, but few take advantage of the extensive opportunities that are available. College teaches you not to make the mistake of living within the barriers and images you have for yourself. It forces you to be consistently uncomfortable so your mindset is forced to expand and shift at a rapid rate. It teaches you to be understanding of those who have different stories than you do and to accept your failures and use them as fuel for the next endeavor. The classes and exams are important, but the experiences, mistakes, and life lessons are what help us grow as adults personally and professionally.

In college, it's easy to surround yourself with people who are similar to you. You are in classes with people in the same age group and, in major-specific classes, many similar interests. Not to mention all instruction is coming from one source, the professors. It's easy to fall into a routine.

When I was 18, I made the decision to jump outside my comfort zone and volunteer with Habitat for Humanity in Chile. Living in a hostel for two weeks isn't really the first thing a recent high school graduate wants to do. Nevertheless, a few weeks away from my first day of college, I hopped on a plane by myself headed for South America. I always knew I loved to help people and had been wanting to go on a mission trip for years, so Habitat for Humanity seemed like a match made in heaven. I didn't know a single person on the trip, but it was an experience that sparked a new confidence in me. Twelve individuals with diverse ages and backgrounds soon became like family members. We met with the family we were building a house for on the first day. They lived in a slum just outside of Santiago. A few years earlier, their youngest son was playing near the washer where there was water on the floor. He was electrocuted and left paralyzed and blind. Our objective was to build them a home that was handicap accessible and suitable for these well-deserving people. Even with all they have been through, I have never seen a family so happy to be alive. It made me so grateful for the life I have. Working with, and for, people different from you helps you develop better ways to communicate and understand how important relationships are. This experience changed my life. No longer was I worried about things like traveling on my own, meeting new diverse people, or trying something new. Your twenties are the perfect time to get outside your comfort zone. The greatest harm we can do to ourselves is to not take chances. It is as the saying goes: Fear is temporary; regret will last a lifetime. I would have always regretted it if I didn't go on the trips I've been on. Encounters like these stimulate an open mind and help you formulate opinions. The following years I continued to work with Habitat for Humanity and

met some amazing human beings along the way. Sometimes volunteering isn't cheap, especially if you want to travel to do it. However, when it's all said and done, you will have gained more than lost, and be happy you went.

Working in the real world has a similar effect to volunteering. When you start a job, you'll be expected to bring something to the table. You should be organized, confident and proactive, but sometimes, it's hard to know where to begin. That's why internships and co-ops come in handy. You will make mistakes, but it's improving after those mistakes that make the rest of it a little easier. You are compelled to mature when functioning in a workplace with professionals. When in school, I compare myself to my peers instead of focusing on my own work. I have learned that though I may be very uncertain in my work for school, the work place is a very different environment. I doubted myself for my first two years of school until I started at my first co-op. In the beginning, I was very wary to be adventurous with my designs. I didn't want to make anything too crazy in fear of it not being what they were looking for. **I learned something important that day that has stuck with me since.** I was told to stop playing it safe, it's better to go bigger, bolder, and outside the box rather than try to make everything right. I learned that work ethic, professionalism, and punctuality goes a long way. You also gain loads of confidence from hard work. That self-confidence makes you more comfortable approaching superiors and expressing your ideas.

As we are one step closer to graduation and accepting a full time job, you need the right tools to score that job you want. More than 77 percent of students surveyed said internships helped them decide what they truly wanted in their

future careers. The classes you take help you know if you enjoy the skill, but it doesn't aid in knowing if you like the job. You are able to learn valuable information and a better understanding of your field because you are living. There are things you gain that you will never be taught in a classroom. My first two co-ops were in an office setting and that helped me realize first hand that although I loved the work I was doing, I did not like sitting at a desk all day. When you are spending the majority of your day and week in a specific environment, you discover whether you can sit at a desk for eight hours a day or if it makes you a little stir crazy. The culture of a workplace is also essential. Some workplaces are casual and relaxed, and some are cold, literally. Everyone has different preferences and attitudes, and everyone works differently in different settings. Workplace culture creates an environment that can strengthen or weaken performance. The way you fit in to a workplace is very important to employers.

If you're like me, you're consistently looking for ways to diversify yourself from the others; those internships and volunteer trips will do just that. Along with boosting your resume, the confidence you gain from experiential learning boosts your sureness in yourself in every other area of your life. College is meant to challenge us as students, but also to challenge us as people. Sure, we're all here for a good education that will hopefully lead to a promising career path, but we are also here to get completely lost in new perspectives, skill sets and versions of ourselves. Through my experiences, it's the practical learning I've done that has cultivated the most growth.



Infusing NACE Career Readiness Competencies with Internship/Co-op Courses

**Jennifer Blythe, Director of Internships and Co-ops,
FAU Career Center Florida Atlantic University**

In the fall of 2015, an opportune moment existed for a complete internship program redesign at Florida Atlantic University (FAU). This was the first semester of a newly approved 0-1 credit Professional Internship Course. This course expanded the experiential course offerings at FAU and allowed students that previously were not engaged in a formal experiential education program to participate. The stage was set and then a timely new announcement was made. In November of 2015, the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) released the seven career readiness competencies identified by employers as most often sought in future employees. Three semesters later outcomes are being analyzed and further refinements are being made.

Setting the Stage

Before dissecting the internship program progressive redesign, it is helpful to understand the previous state of experiential education at FAU. FAU is a relatively new university, founded in 1961. It has grown to 30,000+ students over a six-campus network. There are ten colleges and over 180 majors represented. Experiential education at FAU is decentralized. Departments at the various colleges coordinate internship programs that are credit bearing and tied to specific majors. Additionally, the FAU Career Center manages co-op courses on behalf of some of the colleges and these courses provide students with upper division elective credit. With the introduction of the Professional Internship course, a third option emerged. Through this course, students could receive transcript notation for their experience as well as the guided reflection of an experiential education program **without** having to pay for the course or earn excess credit hours. The Professional Internship course has a requirement of 60 minimum hours during the term (much less than the credit bearing options), which allows registration to occur on an ongoing basis throughout the majority of the semester. Additionally, with no GPA requirement, many students can take advantage of this opportunity.

With an increase in the number of students participating across the university, it was essential to standardize the course components as well as the outcome reporting that could be derived and disseminated. Previously, learning outcomes across placement sites were inconsistent, which did not allow for any aggregated data to be reported by major or college. Additionally, while data was collected, it was not shared nor used for program improvements. Programmatic changes were needed.

Spring 2016 Pilot Program

We were extremely excited about the transparency behind the seven NACE career readiness competencies: **critical thinking/problem solving, oral/written communication, teamwork/collaboration, information technology application, leadership, professionalism/work ethic, and career management.** These soft skills were readily understandable and generalizable to all students from all majors engaged in all types

of experiential learning. However, there were key questions that needed answers: How will we assess the competencies in a way that can show growth? How can we elicit supervisor feedback that contributes to student learning and provides outcome data?

The pilot program was launched with a total of 74 students registered for either an internship or a co-op course. There were four key engagement aspects with the students to monitor their successful completion of their experience. All students had an individual registration appointment during which they were introduced to the seven competencies and completed a pre-experience self-assessment pertaining to each competency. Internship Specialists advised students on developing learning outcomes tied to the soft skills identified as essential in being “career ready” and students determined these in consultation with their site supervisors. Students developed seven learning outcomes — one per competency. Upon the conclusion of the term, students completed a final self-assessment pertaining to the competencies and supervisors rated the students on the same competencies. Students then had a reflective session with their Internship Specialist to review their evaluations, unpack areas for future exploration and development and identify next steps. Each of these aspects is explored in greater detail.

Pre-Program Self-Assessment

Prior to spring 2016, students were not asked to assess their skill set prior to their internship or co-op experience. They had a registration appointment, in which they were told about the midterm and final evaluations to come, but were not completing any self-reflection or given guidance on skills they would be developing over the course of the term. During the registration appointment, an Internship Specialist introduces the seven career readiness competencies to the student and the student completes a pre-experience self-assessment pertaining to those competencies. They self-rate on each of the seven competencies to establish a baseline score. The intent is to compare the student’s pre-assessment with his/her post assessment to show growth. The assessment was built and collected information pertaining to a student’s major allowing aggregated data reporting by college. In this assessment students self-rate their current level of competency according to a three-point scale: Still Developing, Achieving in Most Areas, and Mastery of Content. To assist students in self-assessing original language was developed around each competency and levels were identified to help students picture themselves. Figure 1 is an example of how that looks pertaining to the Teamwork/Collaboration competency.



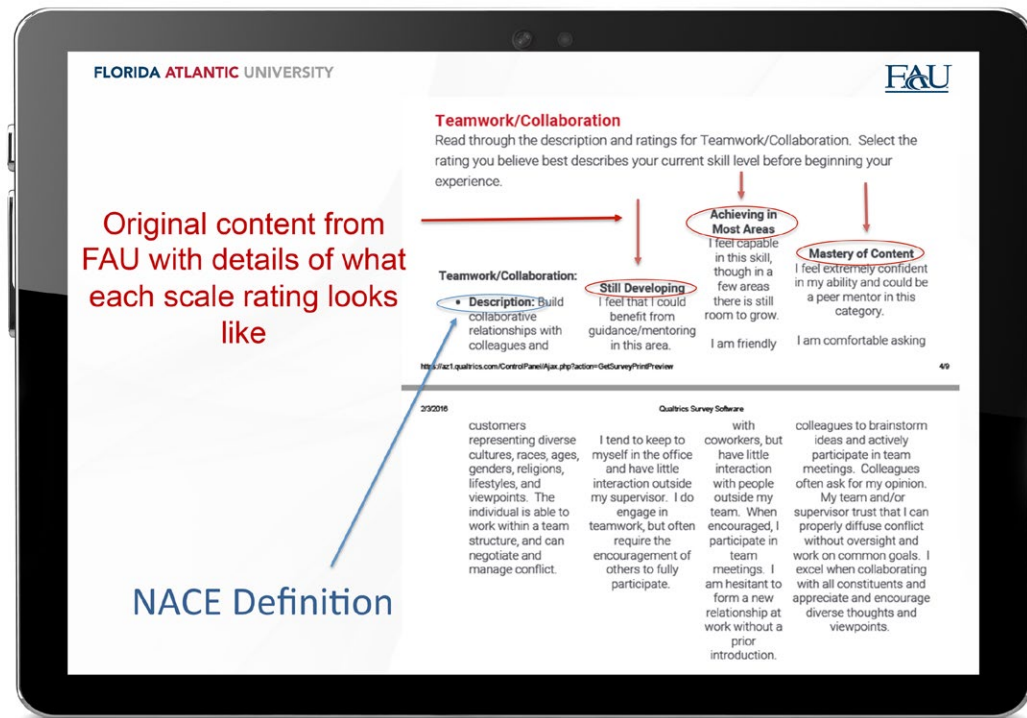


figure 1

Midterm Evaluation

The midterm evaluation has historically been a part of the program. Prior to spring 2016, students completed midterm reports where they identified, in consultation with their internship supervisor, three learning outcomes they hoped to achieve through their internships. These outcomes were submitted via an on-line link to the Career Center and, were reviewed with the Career Center providing guidance if there was additional information and/or detail required. Beginning in spring 2016, the learning outcomes became more intentional. The revised midterm, like the pre-assessment, was built in qualtrics. Students are provided with a specific framework they should use when writing their outcomes and they now identify an outcome for each of the seven career readiness competencies. Internship Specialists review the outcomes, provide feedback, and offer assistance with revisions. As with the pre-program self-assessment, figure 2 is an example of how that looks pertaining to the Teamwork/Collaboration competency.

Final Evaluation

Interns and supervisors previously completed final evaluations but they were extremely long and were used merely to determine a grade of satisfactory/unsatisfactory for individual students. They were not designed to allow aggregated reporting based upon major that could shape future program design and identify opportunities for increased learning and skill development. Students and supervisors were given two weeks to complete the evaluations through an on-line link to the Career Center.

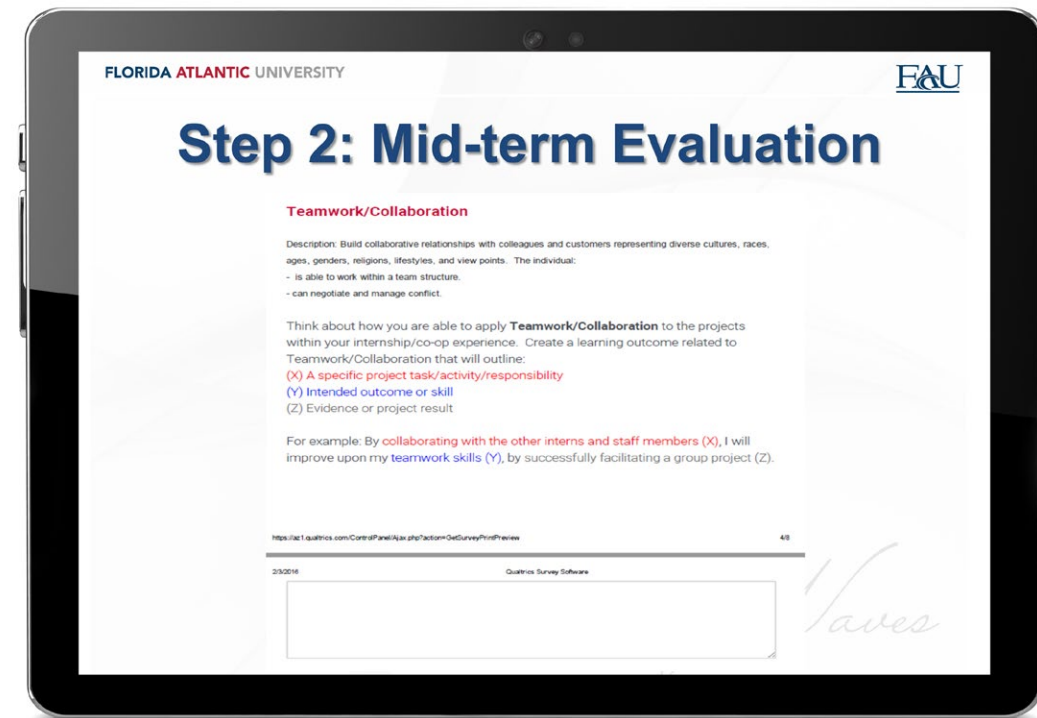


figure 2

In the revised final evaluations, students self-assessed on their post experiential education proficiency in the seven career readiness competencies. They are asked to reflect on their midterm objectives and share how they progressed as a result of the experience. In addition to selecting a rating they are asked to provide a detailed example, which demonstrates why they selected that rating. As with the other evaluations, figure 3 a screen shot to further illustrate how this looks.

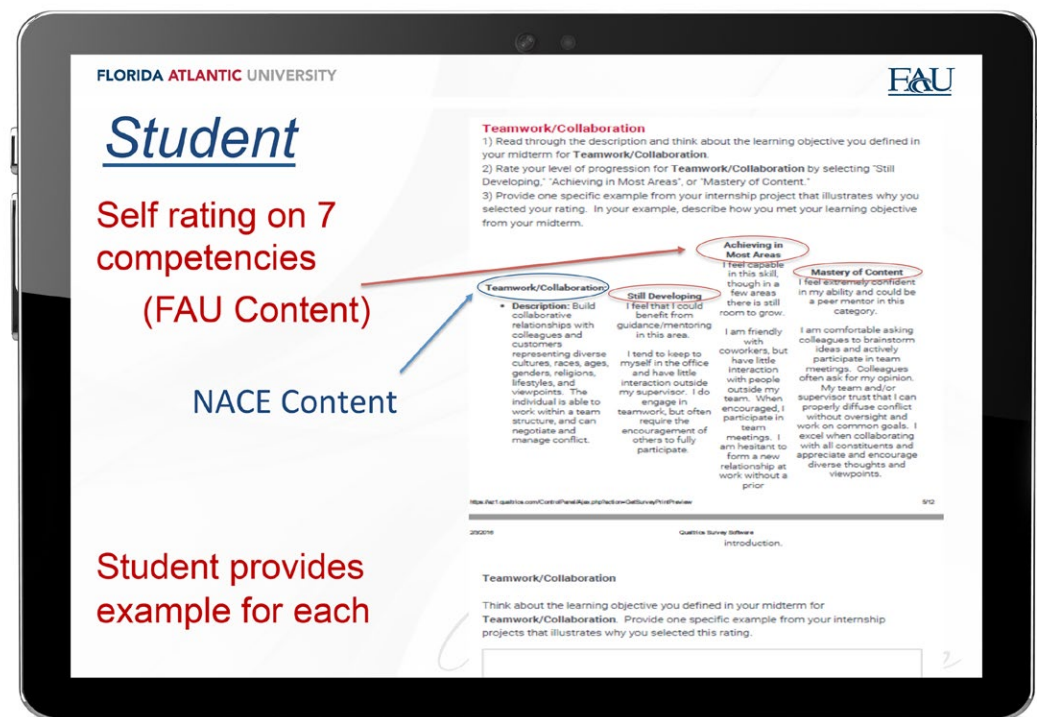


figure 3



The spring 2016 student final evaluation also asked for students to select their level of agreement with the following statement: As a direct result of this internship experience, I know what career field or occupation I want to pursue after graduation and/or future internship. Students are asked to choose from: strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree nor disagree, agree, and strongly agree. Lastly, students are prompted to report if they have secured another internship

The updated supervisor final evaluation was also redesigned to align with the seven career readiness competencies. This will allow a comparison of the intern's self-assessment and the supervisor's evaluation on each of the seven competencies. This evaluation was the first time the supervisors were introduced to the competencies – this will be an area that we will come back to later in this program overview. Additionally, we asked the supervisors if they would consider the student for employment and to rate their level of agreement with relation to the student's performance on tasks and quality of work. Figure 4 is a screen shot of this matrix.

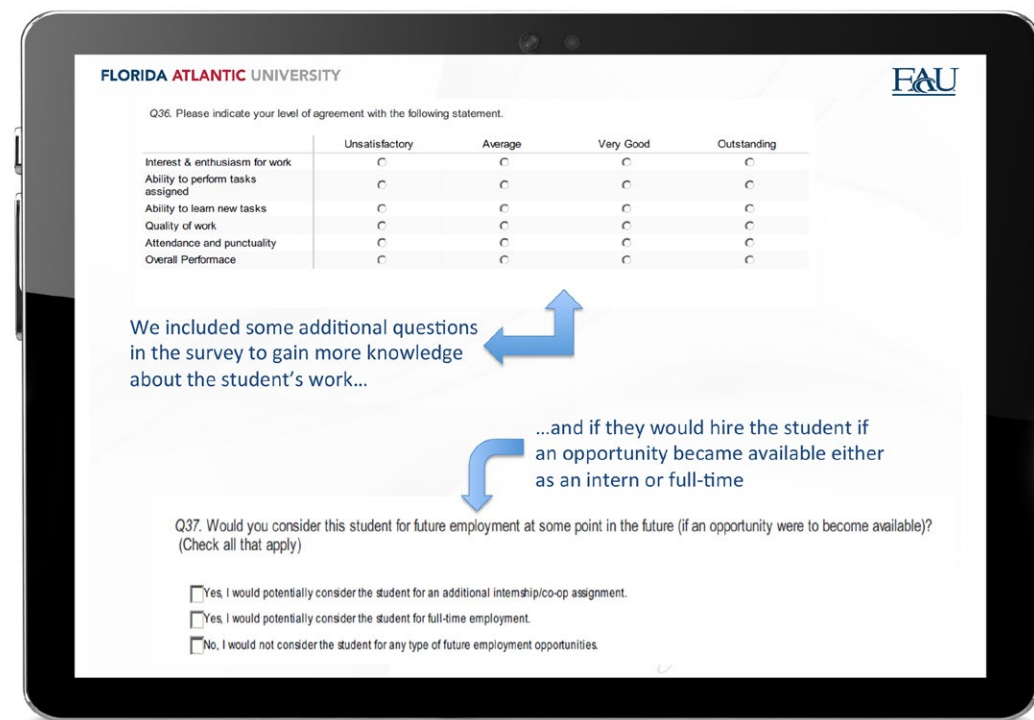


figure 4

Grading

The final evaluations were reviewed and graded either satisfactory or unsatisfactory. If additional specificity was needed an Internship Specialist would reach out to the student and/or supervisor to gain the information. The student evaluations were

loaded into their blackboard accounts. A decision was made to not upload the final supervisor evaluations and instead use them as an incentive to encourage the students to meet with their Internship Specialists for reflection and debrief.

Aggregating and Sharing Data

These new evaluations have a consistent framework for all students across all colleges and majors, and the Career Center is now able to aggregate the data and share these findings with key constituents. As more students complete this program the data set will grow, allowing for further refinement of reporting. The goal is to be able to report this data not only by college, but by major as well, and then further splice it by other factors such as on vs. off campus internship, paid vs. un-paid internship, etc.

For the spring 2016 pilot, quantitative analysis of the competencies was completed on the individual student level and aggregated by college. The pilot program data was impressive. Greater than 90% of the students, across all colleges, self-reported growth in at least one career readiness competency as a result of their internship experience. Supervisor evaluations of growth consistently matched student evaluations for all majors. Information was compiled and shared with the colleges eliciting further dialog about the importance of soft-skills and the Career Center's role in contributing to holistic student development. Here is a snapshot of some items reported pertaining to demographics, growth in career readiness competencies, and consistency when comparing supervisor and intern perceptions. It should be noted that the student self-perception and the supervisor reports were 100% in alignment (figure 5).

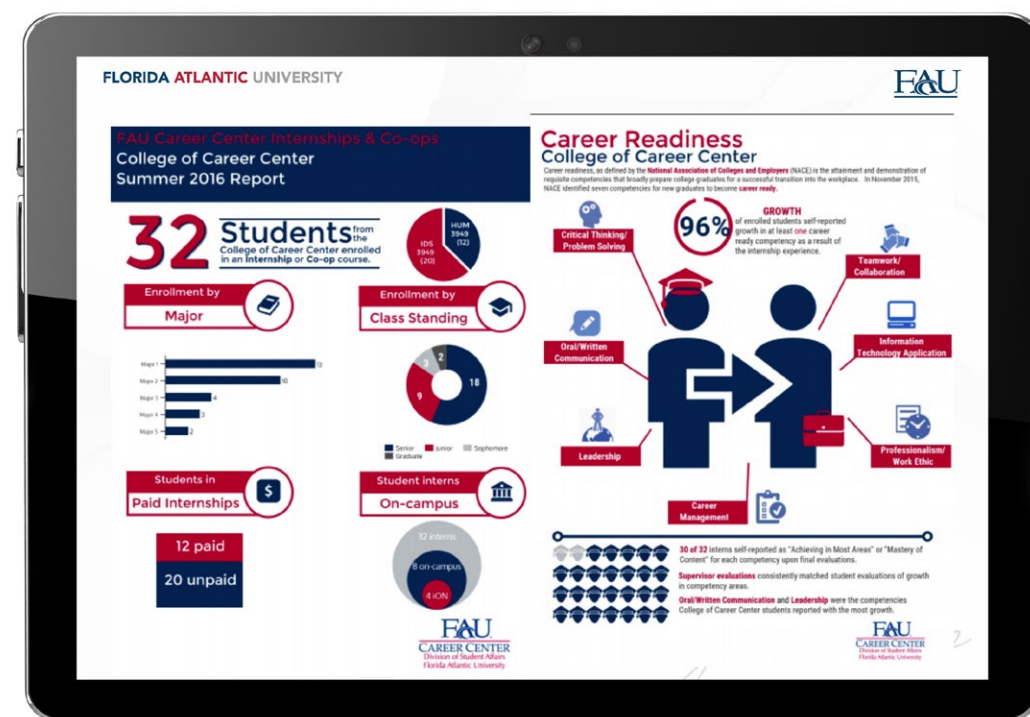


figure 5

Summer 2016 Review and Enhancements

The spring pilot program was considered a success — as students benefitted from the soft skills structure provided by the career readiness competencies. This helped them frame reflective conversations with their Internship Specialists as well as identify areas for future growth. As with any program, improvements can always be made. For the summer we implemented a few new aspects and made a couple of tweaks to enhance program communication and data reporting.

Increasing Supervisor Awareness

When we launched the program in the spring, we were very focused on ensuring that students understood the competencies and how they could benefit them. This was essential in enabling them to draft their learning outcomes, which they were to work on with their supervisors. For the summer 2016 term we recognized the importance of providing internship supervisors with the same level of awareness of the career readiness competencies as we do with the students. As we discussed previously, in the spring, supervisors were formally introduced to the competencies at the end of the term, when they were asked to rate the students on each of the competencies. In the summer, we introduced a welcome packet that was sent to supervisors when their interns registered for a course. The welcome packet provided supervisors with information explaining the seven career readiness competencies. It offered recommendations for how the supervisors could support their interns in relation to each competency. Additionally, it outlined the key dates for the program and the expectation that the supervisor would assist the intern in drafting learning outcomes tied to the career readiness competencies that would be submitted in the student's midterm. We also offered to be an ongoing resource for supervisors throughout the term.

The additional communication was sent to supervisors at the time of the student's midterm evaluation. Previously our office communicated only with the student at the time of the midterm and put the onus on the student to involve his/her supervisor in writing learning outcomes. This summer we emailed the supervisors, letting them know that the interns had received their midterms and that they will be reaching out to their supervisors for assistance in developing the learning outcomes. Additionally, we offered to provide the supervisors with a copy of the evaluations for their records. The increase in midterm communication with supervisors, as well as the welcome packets, were well received and strengthened the relationship between the supervisors and the Career Center.

Student Evaluations 2.0

For the summer we endeavored to enhance our ability to capture student growth pertaining to the career readiness competencies. In order to achieve this, we changed the scale from three fixed points (still developing, achieving in most areas, mastery of content) to a ten-point sliding scale. We came to this decision after the interns had taken the pre-assessment, therefore only the final evaluation for the students and the supervisors reflected this change in the summer. In the fall 2016 term, all evaluations will be moved to the ten-point sliding scale.

We also added additional questions to further hone in on student growth. In the spring, we calculated growth based upon pre-assessment scores and post-assessment scores. In the summer we added a question asking students to reflect on the competencies and provide their perspective on how their career readiness level changed since the beginning of their internship. This was created as a ten-point sliding scale and we wrote language to help students identify where they fell on the scale (figure 6).

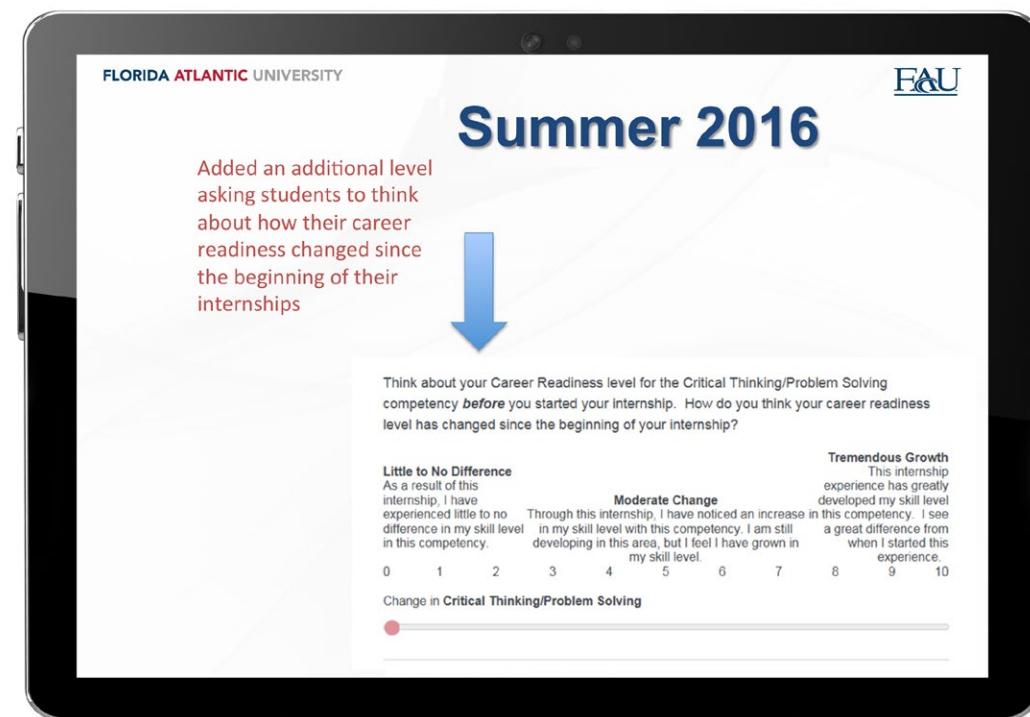


figure 6



A second question was included that asked students to rank the seven career readiness competencies. Interns were asked to indicate which competencies they grew the most in and which ones they grew the least in. (figure 7).

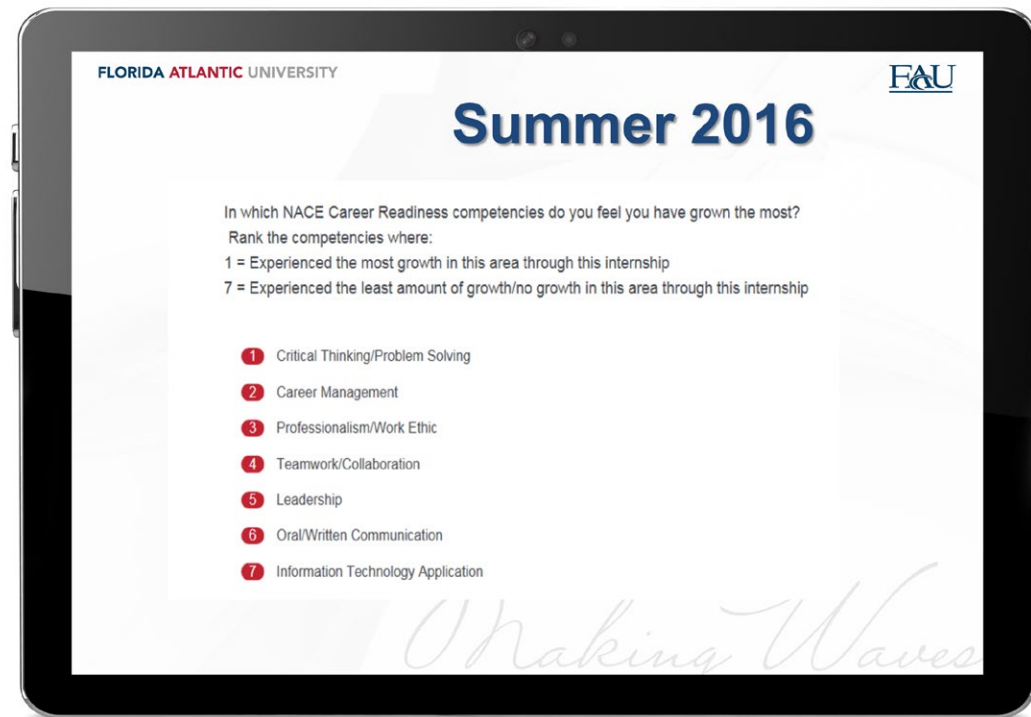


figure 7

Having three data collection points pertaining to growth allows us to analyze this aspect in greater detail.

Not only did we enhance our questions pertaining to student growth, but we also tweaked how we framed our reflection questions pertaining to the competencies. In spring 2016 we asked students to think about their learning objectives that they provided in their midterm evaluation and construct an example as to how they achieved the outcome. Student responses were not always as robust as we would have liked. Thus, in the summer, we took a different approach. Instead of asking for an example, we reframed this question as an interview scenario. Students were asked to report on their competencies as a response to an interview question. Our responses greatly improved by asking students to think about it from a job interview standpoint. An added benefit of this format is that it helps students prepare for future interviews (figure 8).

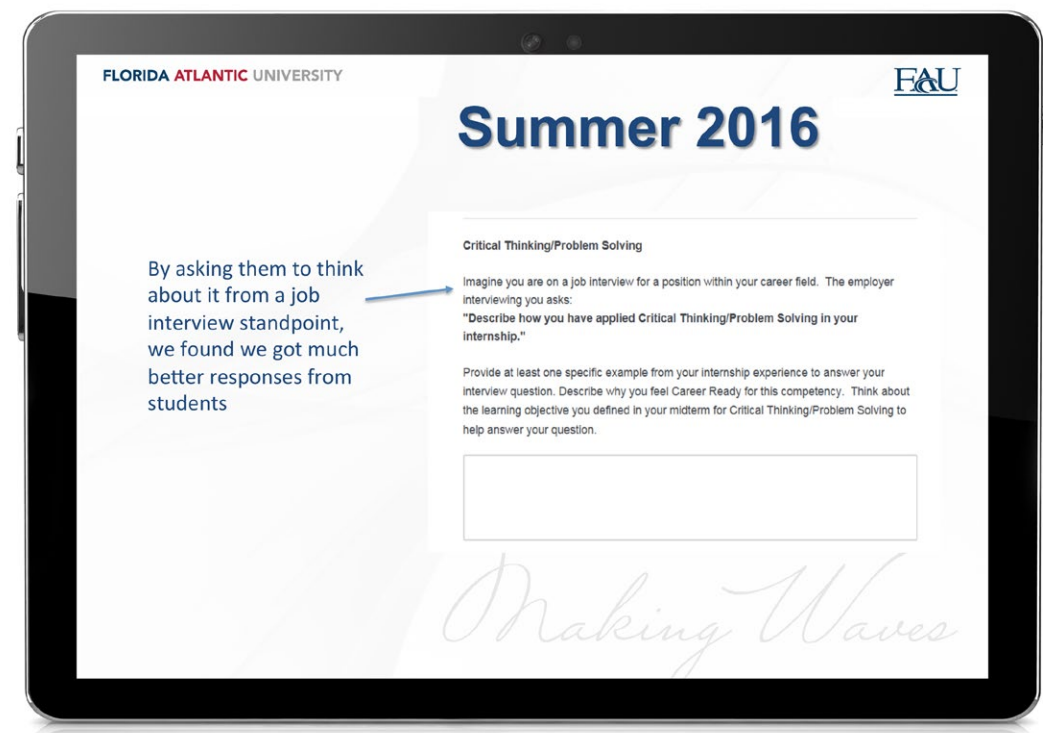


figure 8

Supervisor Evaluations 2.0

As with the student final evaluations, we enhanced the supervisor final evaluations with question redesign and additions. The supervisor final evaluations were changed to a ten-point sliding scale increasing their options as far as rating the student's level of competency. Additionally, similar to the growth question in the student evaluation, we asked the supervisor to report on the intern's level of growth for each competency viewed during the internship experience. We did not assess the supervisor's perception of growth previously (figure 9).

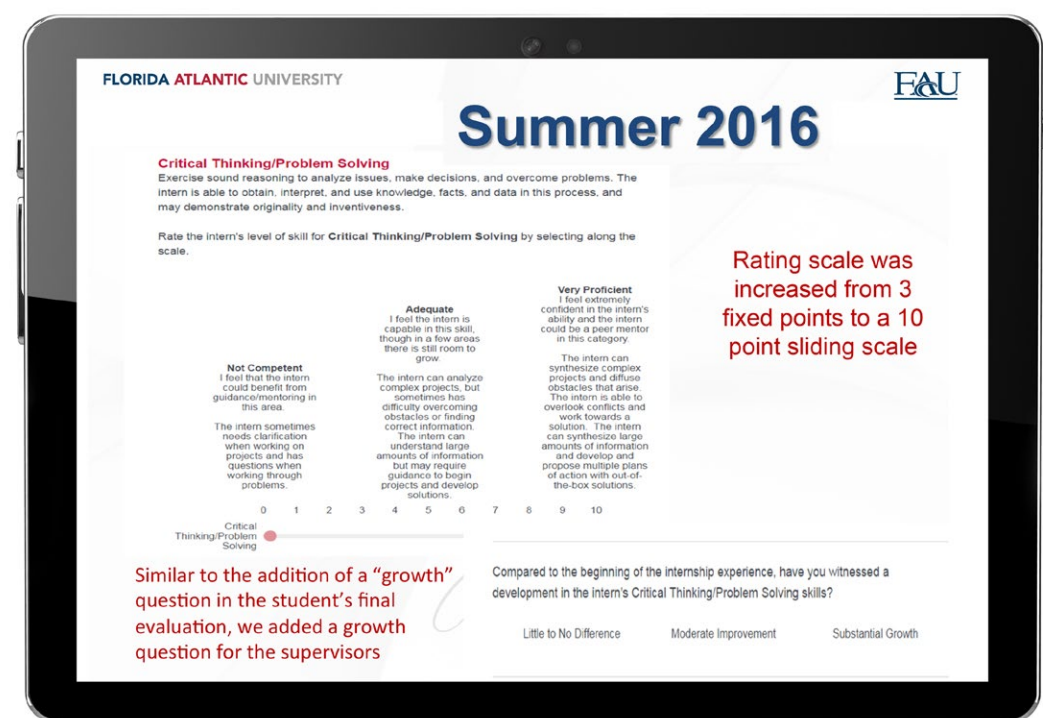


figure 9



When we reviewed the supervisor final evaluations we became curious as to how supervisor ratings may relate to their experience with supervising interns. To investigate this, an additional question was added. Supervisors were asked if they ever previously supervised an intern as well as prompted to clarify if it was with their current organization or a previous organization. Our summer 2016 data found that over 80% of the supervisors had previously supervised an intern with 63% having supervised an intern previously at his/her current organization.

Fall 2016 Continued Refinement

Ten-Point Scales

We are excited to review how students grow in relation to the competencies at the close of the fall term as this is the first term where all evaluations are built with a ten-point sliding scale. Now we will have the ability to calculate growth on a ten-point scale and analyze it in conjunction with the questions that ask students and supervisors to report their perception of growth (figure 10).

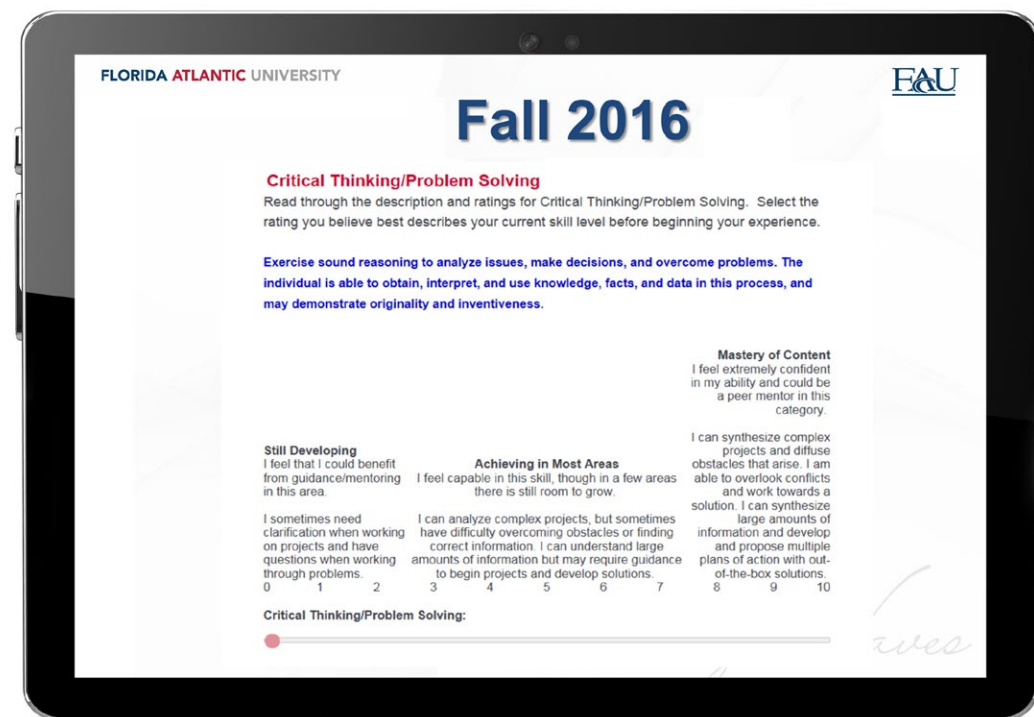


figure 10

Program Enhancement

Our goal was to increase the support and guidance provided to students pertaining to the career readiness competencies. Thus, the internship team decided to send weekly emails to interns with multimedia aspects pertaining to the competencies. The first week, interns were emailed a welcome letter and a refresher on the competencies. This refresher is helpful as some of them registered weeks prior to beginning the experience and may not have remembered all aspects they discussed with their Internship Specialists. Each of the next seven weeks was tied to an individual competency, such as week two relating to Critical Thinking/Problem Solving. During the week, students receive an email with either an article, video, TED talk, etc. that offers them an additional perspective on the competency. We look forward to seeing what students think about this new addition.

Supervisor Experience

We continued to look for ways to better understand supervisor evaluations of students. This fall we included a question that asked supervisors how many interns they are currently supervising. Supervisors could select from: 1, 2-4, and 5+. We are interested in the response to this question to see if there are any observations we can offer when looking at this information in conjunction with how they assess their interns.

Outcomes Reporting

Our prior student evaluations asked the students to let us know if they secured another internship and our previous supervisor evaluations asked supervisors if they would consider the student for an additional position as an intern or full-time hire. With the increased importance on outcomes reporting, this question design fell shy of providing a complete picture. For the fall 2016 evaluations, we incorporated skip logic questions to better assess the outcomes of the experiences. First, students are asked if the organization extended them an offer of full-time employment. If they select "Yes," they are then asked if they will be accepting that position. If they select "No" to that question they are asked to explain why. We also included a question to determine if a second internship offer was extended. Students are asked if the organization extended them an offer to continue their internship. If they select "Yes" they are then asked if they will be accepting the position. If they select "No" to that question they are asked to explain why.

We also added questions to the supervisor evaluations to confirm the outcome data. Supervisors were asked if their organization offered a full-time offer of employment to the student. If the supervisor indicates "No" to that question he/she is asked if



there was a full-time offer to extend. This will hopefully help us to determine if there are opportunities that our students are not securing and explore how we can assist them. If the supervisor reports that they did extend an offer to the student, he/she is then asked to confirm if the student did or did not accept or if the intern has not yet responded. We look forward to seeing this outcome data at the conclusion of the term.

What a Year!

The internship program underwent many changes that strengthened student learning, relationships with supervisors, and outcome reporting. Figure 11 shows a consolidated table detailing the evolution of the program thus far.

	Spring 2016	Summer 2016	Fall 2016
Pre-Assessment Rating Scale	3 Dimensions (Fixed)	3 Dimensions (Fixed)	10 Dimensions (Sliding Scale)
Final Student Self-Assessment Rating Scale	3 Dimensions (Fixed)	10 Dimensions (Sliding Scale)	10 Dimensions (Sliding Scale)
Final Supervisor Assessment Rating Scale	3 Dimensions (Fixed)	10 Dimensions (Sliding Scale)	10 Dimensions (Sliding Scale)
First Supervisor Career Readiness Info. Communication	In Final Evaluation	Welcome Packet	Welcome Packet
Student's Perception of Self-Growth	N/A	Included for Each Competency	Included for Each competency
Student Rank's the Competencies in Order of Most Growth	N/A	Included	Included
Supervisor's Perception of Growth	N/A	Included	Included
Gathered Info. about the Breadth & Depth of Supervisor's Internship Experience	N/A	One question added to Final Evaluation	Second question added to Final Evaluation
Outcome Data	Minimal	Minimal	Expanded

figure 11

The future is exciting! The FAU Career Center intends to collect and aggregate data across terms, which will increase sample size when compiled at the college level. Longitudinal data analysis will be conducted to investigate how students participating in an internship or co-op course grounded in the NACE competencies fair in relation to persistence and employment post-graduation statistics when compared to their peers who did not participate in one of these courses.

Internships Not Worth a Dime of Tuition Dollars?

HOW TO ENSURE ACADEMIC VALUE AND A RETURN ON INVESTMENT IN COLLEGE INTERNSHIP PROGRAMS

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ABSTRACT

As a result of the explosion of unpaid internships in the U.S. since the 1980's (Perlin, 2012), many colleges and universities offer academic credit for internships in exchange for tuition dollars. Yet the pedagogical structure of the internship program and the manner in which credit is earned varies widely across institutions of higher education. At the same time, as tuition across the nation has increased, so has the student demand for a clear Return on Investment (ROI) (Markovich, 2012) — in terms of skills development and learning outcomes as well as direct exposure to industry practice and professional norms (Burrows, 2015). This article argues that many unpaid internships for college credit simply are of little value to the student by these measures, and institutions cannot ethically charge tuition for internship programs that are poorly designed. This article identifies precise pedagogical elements that college internship programs should include in order to deliver a >>>

Return on Investment (ROI), comply with the U.S. Department of Labor (founded by the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1937) — Fact Sheet #71 (Bacon, 2011, Curiale, 2009), be ethically and pedagogically sound, and meet both students and employer's needs. Analysis of a multi-site case study comprised of data collected from internship advisers, representing a variety of campuses and internship program structures, through a survey as well as responsive interviews — presents eight themes that emerge from the qualitative data, and concludes that the program structure and its pedagogy are integral to the academic experience and hence the academic value offered through internships (Braun, 2012, Burrows, 2015). Specifically, the intern should earn academic credit through directed curriculum, which includes structured reflections, discussion, and a formal presentation of learning outcomes. Regular collaboration and communication between academia and industry should be initiated and maintained and assessment of learning outcomes by both faculty and employer should be conducted (Alpert, Heaney, & Kuhn, 2009).

INTRODUCTION

Since 1906 many educators have known, with the birth of the cooperative education movement, that experiential education offered a tremendous learning opportunity for college students. Since that time the manifestations of experiential education have taken many different forms, been administered in various ways with varying educational philosophies governing

the pedagogical foundation of the curriculum across different countries, campuses, and now, delivery platforms. In the past few decades, across the U.S., internships have been increasingly incorporated into the curriculum in both liberal arts and pre-professional academic programs. In some programs, at some colleges and universities, internships are credit bearing, in others — even on the same campus — internships do not carry academic credit. Regardless of the structure of the program, when academic credits are earned, tuition is charged. This article will examine the inter-relationships between internships, academic credit, a meaningful learning experience, a Return on Investment (ROI), and compliance with the Department of Labor (DOL) for unpaid internships in the for-profit sector (Bennett, 2011). What has loosely been termed, “the perfect storm,” has created the need to examine these relationships and the ethicality of charging tuition for academic credits earned for an internship, without the concurrent delivery of a robust academic experience. Drawn from a doctoral study conducted in 2014, the author will present an argument for how to ensure academic value and a ROI from college internship programs.

THE ETHICAL CHALLENGE OF CHARGING TUITION DOLLARS FOR INTERNSHIPS

While some liberal arts colleges and universities have never offered academic credit for internships, other colleges and universities have increasingly supported credit bearing internships as their value has almost become

Without a commitment to providing an academically structured field work curriculum, which includes evaluative feedback and assessed learning outcomes, the question arises, what are students being charged tuition for?

a mandate for employability for college graduates. The experiences, many inside and outside of academia believe, provide direct exposure to industry practice and professional norms as well as the opportunity to build and/or hone professional skills. The latest issue now under the microscope is whether credit bearing internships — and the requisite exchange of tuition dollars — are a worthwhile investment. The pedagogical structure of internship programs and the manner in which credit is earned varies widely across institutions of higher education. And, herein lies the problem with painting all credit-bearing unpaid internships with the same brush.

Recently some have argued that many unpaid internships for college credit simply are of little value to the student by these measures (Mangan, 2014), and institutions cannot ethically charge tuition for internship programs that are poorly designed, with no clear strategy for how to deliver meaningful learning outcomes associated with an internship experience. A recently published Inside Higher Ed article — *Paying to Work — New twist in the debate over unpaid internships is whether colleges should charge tuition for them* (Wexler, 2016) — identifies elements of collegiate institutional support that warrant charging tuition for credit bearing internships. This author believes that

there are precise pedagogical elements that the internship programs must include in order to deliver a ROI, comply with the DOL, be ethically and pedagogically sound, and meet both students and employer's needs. The internship program structure and its pedagogical framework are integral to the academic experience and hence the academic value offered through internships, warranting the cost of tuition. Specifically, the intern should be engaged in directed curriculum, concurrent with the internship experience, which includes structured reflections, discipline and industry-specific readings, facilitated peer discussions, and a formal presentation of learning outcomes. Regular collaboration and communication between academia and industry should be initiated and maintained by an assessment of learning outcomes by both faculty and employer. Without a commitment to providing an academically structured field work curriculum, which includes evaluative feedback and assessed learning outcomes, the question arises, what are students being charged tuition for?

SUMMARY OF RESEARCH ON THE LEGALITY AND VALUE OF UNPAID INTERNSHIPS

Discovering what learning outcomes are achieved through an unpaid, academic

internship is important to those in academia, industry, and experiential education as a whole. Data for the doctoral study was collected using an online survey, composed of 28 questions, which was sent to 60 participants, with the goal of receiving 20 responses. In addition, in-depth, responsive interviews (Rubin & Rubin, 2012) were conducted with eight participants. The survey was designed with some multiple-choice questions and several open-ended questions that encouraged comments. The study this article draws from was an in-depth examination of the perspectives and practices of internship advisers. The structure, processes, and personnel involved with internship programming varies widely from institution to institution. The participant sample for the study represented that variety. The participants were representative of large and small, public and private, urban, suburban and rural institutions of higher education. They all advised undergraduates, and in addition, as indicated on the survey, 59% advised both graduate and non-traditional students. The titles of the participants represent both faculty and staff positions, and range from Coordinator to Assistant Dean and include key words such as experiential, career development, and internships. All of the participants worked or had worked directly in an advisory capacity with students completing unpaid internships in the for profit sector. The findings represented variations in student population size, campus type, geographic location, type of student populations served,

and the role the participant plays and the title they hold in regard to internship programming. The survey respondents indicated that the percent of unpaid internships ranged from 15% to 100%, with the average indicating that 64% of academic internships are unpaid. The study examined how advisors' approaches and processes had shifted in response to the increased media attention (Schorr, 2014) on unpaid internships, the reissuance of the DOL fact sheet #71(DOL, 2010), and increased demand for a ROI from a college education.

Utilizing the framework of informal learning theory (Eraut, 2004) and the 5-stage model of skills acquisition (Dreyfus, 2004) one can evaluate if an unpaid internship falls within the guidelines of the DOL (DOL, 2010). If an intern effectively demonstrated mastery of discipline specific skills, as outlined by Dreyfus (1984), through their unpaid internships, and if the internship was conducive to informal learning (Eraut, 2004), the lack of compensation was justified, according to the law, and implied a ROI. What was not fully addressed in the data was the socio-economic inequality that is perpetuated by unpaid internships (Edwards & Hertel-Fernandez, 2010). Unless all students have equal access to the learning opportunities and skills acquisition currently available through unpaid internships, this practice will continue to negatively impact the economy and further perpetuate a deepening class divide (Gregory, 1998), as well as increase the scrutiny for a ROI from unpaid internships.

ABBREVIATED LITERATURE REVIEW — ESTABLISHING A CONTEXT FOR THE FINDINGS

The literature reviewed for the study revealed that unpaid internships have become a vital component of the labor market, can demonstrate a return on investment of a college degree, a rite of passage, and a complex social justice issue that must be addressed. The U.S. DOL laws have not kept pace with the prevalence and importance of internships as integral to a college education and yet the federal government has a critical responsibility to ensure that workers of all kinds are not subject to discrimination, are compensated fairly for their contributions, that social injustice is not institutionalized through unpaid internships, and that employers do not have an incentive to replace full time workers with unpaid interns (Edwards & Hertel-Fernandez, 2010, Bacon, 2011, Curiale, 2010). Additionally, institutions of higher education are responsible for the experiences of their students and delivering a ROI on a college education. As institutions are responsible for providing a safe living environment and a dynamic learning environment, so too are they responsible for their students' field based learning experiences, particularly if they are collecting tuition for such opportunities (Fink, 2013). As the literature demonstrated, there is accountability, for all stakeholders in experiential education, in this case unpaid internships: employers, students, academic advisers, and the federal government. The quandary remains, however, are experiential educators taking the appropriate steps to

ensure we can demonstrate a return on investment from unpaid internships, particularly as "regulation itself may deprive student interns' considerable opportunities and diminish individual prospects for employment" (Gregory, 1998, p. 253). One would hope that this deprivation in the short term may result long term in employers offering compensation for internships and as FDR hoped in 1937, "a fair day's pay for a fair day's work" (as cited by Curiale, 2010, p. 101).

ESTABLISHING A ROI FROM INTERNSHIPS THROUGH ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING OUTCOMES

Almost all the participants noted that students were under more financial pressure since the economic crash in 2008, and were more responsible for personally supporting their education. While record numbers of high school graduates are attending college, the cost of college continues to rise, and family incomes are not keeping pace with this increase. Most families are not able to contribute significantly to the cost of their children's education. Since 1982, the cost of tuition has been increasing at triple the rate of inflation (Odland, 2012). As a result, the affordability and the value of a college education are being called into question (Wildavsky, Kelly, & Carey, 2011). There is significant data, however, which indicates that despite the increasing costs of tuition, a college degree has never been more valuable. In the U.S., a child from a family living in the bottom quartile of wage earners, who earns

a college degree, has an 84% probability of rising above the bottom quartile, whereas a child from the bottom quartile, who does not earn a college degree, has only a 5% probability of rising above the bottom quartile (Markovich, 2012). Later in life, graduates enjoy substantially higher earning potential, but most graduating college students initially struggle to obtain an economic foothold. This scenario has added significant pressure for colleges to deliver a greater ROI, as the stakes have become so high. Effective internship programming has become one way that colleges and universities have attempted to deliver a ROI. It now behooves experiential educators to prove, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that when charging tuition dollars for unpaid internships, we can, in fact, document a return on investment from those internships. Assessment of learning outcomes from traditional academic courses has become more important in academia in the past few decades. With the pressure to demonstrate a ROI from a college degree, evidence of concrete learning is critical to many stakeholders in academia. Additionally, assessment of learning outcomes from internships has become critical in establishing the value of internship programming, in regards to both ROI from a college degree, as well as compliance with the DOL Fact Sheet #71.

The interface with employers and the requirement of a performance evaluation of the intern are important components that keep the focus on the learning. Sapp and Zhang (2009) assert, “a more systematic approach to using industry feedback is

warranted as a valuable component of the overall assessment of student learning outcomes” (p. 280). Assessment practices of experiential education are not well developed across the globe, yet are critical to understanding the value inherent in unpaid internships, as well as other forms of work-integrated learning. Determining the value of unpaid internships by assessing the learning outcomes of these experiences is of primary importance to all stakeholders involved with experiential education.

Sturre Von Treuer, Keele and Moss (2012) promote the use of formative assessment (using judgments for the purposes of ongoing improvement), as this facilitates learning and reflection, appropriate in education. What is learned from formative assessment is incorporated into adjustments made to the content or context of the learning. The formative assessment process is utilized in a developmental way to further the student’s learning from the placement and the activities therein. There is a feedback process inherent in formative assessment protocols. Attention is given to the development of “tacit competencies that enhance the immediate and future employability of students” (Sturre et al., 2012, p. 73). The assessments may determine how successfully a student is moving through the 5-stages of skills acquisition (Dreyfus, 2004) while participating in an internship. While there are many effective outcomes from formative assessment practices, there are some limitations as well. Sturre et al. (2012) discuss the limitations of formative assessment practices, including

the facts that it is resource intensive, assessors should be trained, and how there is a need for multiple assessors. Dunn, Shier, and Fonseca (2012) developed an assessment model for multidisciplinary workplace settings. The model promoted the use of a multi-faceted portfolio, which included “a series of structured written reports, the development of learning objectives and reflective summaries, the development of an experience record sheet, a map of students’ graduate attribution development, and the submission of a cumulative collection of work as a portfolio” (p. 139). According to Dunn et al. (2012), “The authenticity of this approach was increased as the employer was required to authenticate the portfolio” (p. 141). Alpert et al. (2009) developed guidelines for what should be included in a formative assessment. The components that Alpert et al. (2009) recommended for inclusion were a draft of the internship project proposal, a mid-semester progress report, and a major report applying textbook principles, to be reviewed by both the employer and the faculty supervisor. Alpert et al. (2009) found that a portfolio of work, activity logs, weekly reflection journals, literature reviews, article analyses, oral presentations, and final reflection papers had “all been used as part of assessment” (p. 38). Jaekel, Hector, Northwood, Benzinger, Salinitri, Johrendt, and Watters (2011) postulate that students should be assessed through a variety of methods that are not only objective (tests), but also subjective (portfolio review, observations, oral presentations), so they

can “reflect on their performance and make necessary adjustments that will foster growth” (p. 22). Whatever the methodology used for assessment or what artifacts are included in assessment; findings should be aligned with the DOL criteria, employer expectations, and institutional learning goals.

The literature reveals that there is tremendous variability in the responsibility for whom conducts assessment. In some cases, assessment is conducted entirely by faculty, in some cases, assessment is balanced between employer and faculty; additionally, in some cases, students’ self-assessment, peer-assessment, and portfolios are a significant part of the final evaluation, at other times portfolios are not included at all. In a majority of the models reviewed, in the literature as well as the empirical data collected here, a student’s final evaluation was a combination of feedback from the employer, the faculty member, and from a student’s demonstration of capabilities via written work and reflection. Alpert et al. (2009) found that grading and “maintaining the integrity of the grading process,” (p. 39) was a challenge. Some employers’ welcome being involved in the students’ evaluation, others do not. This was evidenced in the data collected through the survey and the interviews for the doctoral study (Burrows, 2015).

Maxwell and Lopus (2001) identified a “Lake Wobegon effect” (p. 201) in student self-reported data. In short, self-perception was inflated positively and did not reflect objective reality. This calls into question the

validity of students' self-assessment data in evaluating their internships. Cooke and Cambell (1979) also identified self-reported data, using surveys, as potentially biased, as students have a tendency to report what "reflects positively on their abilities, knowledge, and so forth" (as cited by Jaekel et al., 2011, p.15). The portfolio assessment model, put forth by Dunn et al. (2012), required the engagement of students, faculty, and employers. While this triangulation approach lends itself to greater authenticity, it requires a great amount of time and other resources. Ferns and Moore (2012) indicate that assessment of Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) is a multidimensional task, which blends "teaching, facilitating grading, grading, and organizational and interpersonal skills for successful implementation" (p. 219). Ferns and Moore (2012) also recognized this process as resource heavy, but saw it as a necessity for universities to move to an "evidence-based and standards-focused regulatory framework" (p. 219). As the demands for a ROI from a college degree and compliance with DOL regulations increase, assessment protocols will become a more visible requisite in internship programming.

The introduction of assessment protocols as a standard component of any internship program will require another layer of diligence. Some colleges and universities have assessment practices for internships in place. Some would need to be developed. The steps involved in establishing assessment practices for field-based learning would involve a program evaluation, a defined list of desired

learning outcomes, an assessment tool, and an excellent communications strategy to roll out the assessment initiative. Accountability for administering the program, collecting the results, analyzing the data, and reporting the results would have to be assigned. While this is resource intensive, this research (Burrows, 2015) indicated assessment as an essential component of internship programming yet to be fully developed.

IMPLICATIONS FOR INSTITUTIONAL STRUCTURE AND RESOURCE ALLOCATION FOR INTERNSHIP PROGRAMMING

What emerged from *Giving and Getting; the Changing Landscape of Unpaid Internships* (Burrows, 2015) are implications for practice, which are greater educational and governmental oversight prior to and at the conclusion of an internship placement. Requiring a detailed description of the responsibilities and supervision available at an internship from an employer as well as a commitment to post the DOL Fact Sheet #71 and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 in the workplace is crucial. Semi-regular contact or visitation at the internship work site by the academic internship adviser ensures that effective learning, evaluative feedback, and supervision are occurring. Assessment of learning outcomes from the internship allows for demonstrated evidence of a ROI and compliance with the DOL criteria for unpaid internships. Stipends for students with demonstrated need, or federal-intern study funds, could be institutionalized to enable

greater access across socio-economic lines to the educational and professional benefits derived from an unpaid internship.

The area in which internship programming is housed in the academic institution has implications in regards to its integration with academic learning outcomes and curriculum. This stems from the educational philosophy of the institution and the value placed on experiential education. Across the globe, the value in academia of experiential education, service and global awareness has risen in importance and become a more central message in many academic institutions' mission statements. This shift has meant that more internship advisers hold faculty rank, or the reporting structure for the internship initiative is on the academic affairs "side of the house." There are common assumptions of administrators, faculty, and advisers about "best practices" and learning outcomes for internships, yet it appeared at first glance that oversight was left to happenstance and the learning outcomes from internship experiences are not assessed effectively or reported on, nor are they always communicated to employers (Bull, 2014). Burrows (2015) discovered this happenstance is not typical on the campuses studied. At Messiah College, "we make sure that the employers

understand what our expectations are of them, and those expectations primarily are a clear position description, regular feedback, and a willingness to evaluate the student at the mid-semester point and at the end of the semester" (M. Train, personal communication, Nov. 10, 2014, as cited in Burrows, 2015).

Through the lens of informal learning (Eraut, 2004), the study looked at how internship programs were structured, including systems for establishing learning outcomes, communicating with employers, and articulating the underlying pedagogy guiding the reflective activities through field-work classroom discussions and written reflections. If the internship was credit bearing, as was indicated by 94.1% of survey responses, this lent academic weight and credibility to the experience. The academic components typically associated with earning academic credit, as indicated by 88.2% of survey responses, included some or all of the following components: a learning contract, a face-to-face or virtual class with faculty facilitated peer discussion, written reflections or journals, a learning portfolio, and an oral presentation. Of the survey participants, 48% reported that internships were a graduation requirement, and 76.5% of these internships were graded.

Across the globe, the value in academia of experiential education, service and global awareness has risen in importance and become a more central message in many academic institutions' mission statements.

The structure of internship programming includes the employer's program as well.

The structure of internship programming includes the employer's program as well. In any job, one's supervisor plays an important part of the overall experience of that job. One of the first rules for a successful internship is there has to be somebody on site who is going to be a supervisor, who is a specialist in the student's field, and can provide effective guidance and evaluative feedback that is specific to that discipline. One guideline an adviser communicated is that, "there needs to be someone who's interested in supervision and that's usually the person who has the credentials, who's interested in an active mentoring situation" (A. Botts, personal communication, Oct. 31, 2014, as cited in Burrows, 2015). There are some activities which are particularly beneficial to the learning outcomes of the interns, such as, "sitting in on regular meetings, working with a client to see how a professional reacts when a client says 'I hate this,' and the intern learns what to do and how to handle that" (A. Botts, personal communication, Oct. 31, 2014, as cited in Burrows, 2015).

The structure of the internship programming at all the colleges and universities studied appeared tied to the individuals in charge at that time. Some advisers had developed the systems they were using, others had inherited them, but most processes had not been institutionally initiated. It became clear through the process of the research that

the role of the specific adviser was critical to the way the programs were structured. Summed up in this way by one adviser, "You know how it is in higher education, things change, people leave, I don't want to say it's a revolving door but these programs are changing hands and if someone's in place that might not be as proactive or takes more of a reactive approach in running a program like this I can see where the outcomes are not clearly as rich anymore" (J. Cates, personal communication, Nov. 14, 2014, as cited in Burrows, 2015).

The issue of accountability on the part of all stakeholders is important; it is up to educators, employers, and students, to ensure that educational elements and established learning outcomes beyond the day-to-day tasks are incorporated into internships, and to ensure that the learning experience from an internship can demonstrate a ROI. Employers need to know what is considered legitimate and beneficial and educators need to be comfortable holding employers accountable. Students need to ask good questions and make good decisions as these components are how students develop critical thinking skills, a sought after attribute. Effective communication can play a key role in guiding stakeholders through the changes that arose as a result of the DOL guidelines and the increased demand for a ROI from a college education, including credit bearing internships.

CONCLUSION

The implications of the doctoral study (Burrows, 2015) study established that there are clear linkages between all the themes that emerged from the empirical data (see Figure 6, Burrows, 2015). The way in which internship programming is structured and positioned within the academic institution can ensure an integration of academic rigor into the internship experience, the effective interface with employers, compliance with the DOL guidelines, and an ability to demonstrate a ROI. If centrally positioned institutionally and adequately resourced, internship advisers can focus on maintaining an adequate supply of quality internships for their student body, work on addressing the issue of non-compensation as a serious obstacle for

some students, and ensure that assessment of learning outcomes from internships is institutionalized. For successful cultivation of meaningful, educational internship experiences, which are in compliance with the law (Durrant, 2013), and can demonstrate an ROI, there needs to be a collaborative approach, with clear communications, among academic internship advisers, academic institutional leadership and industry internship supervisors (Bull, 2014).

Figure 1 represents the consistent themes that emerged from the data collected from internship advisers for "Giving and Getting - Examining the Changing Landscape of Unpaid Internships" (Burrows, 2015). The theme most often referenced as critical to quality internships that delivered a ROI was the



figure 1.

structure of internships programs — as outlined earlier in this paper. The participants in the study, while they worked in very different academic contexts, spoke the same language about experiential education. The focus on the learning, along with the commitment to guiding the interns through the internships to ensure maximum benefit gained and demonstrate a ROI, were common threads for all these participants. With an increasing emphasis on global and 21st century competencies to be gained through higher education, along with increasing pressure from many stakeholders for a ROI from a college degree, experiential education will very likely play a larger role in a student's academic plan. It was clear that greater cross-fertilization of ideas between practitioners would be fruitful, and possibly generate more common systems for the administration and assessment of experiential education. There was a sense of frustration expressed by internships advisers that they worked in a silo, not only on their own campus, but also across the spectrum of institutions of higher education. The professional associations, aligned with experiential education — CEIA, WACE, NACE, and NEACEFE — to name a few, all play a role in breaking down these silos and fostering best practices for internship programming, nationally and internationally. Cross fertilization of ideas for assessment processes, positioning experiential education centrally in the institutional mission and infrastructure, promoting experiential education as an integrated, academic experience, which

produce a verifiable demonstration of a ROI — indicate that the learning outcomes from internships are unique to that domain and will have irreplaceable value as part of a college education for the foreseeable future.

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THE IMPACT OF INTERNSHIPS

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Internships during high school helps to ensure post-secondary success through career exploration and other work-based learning opportunities. I remember my first internship during 11th grade in high school. I was excited and anxious when I received the news that I was accepted into the program. However, the excitement turned into nervousness because this was new uncharted territory that I had never entered before as a young person. I always excelled in high school with As and Bs, honor roll, etc., but, this was my first attempt to actually working with business professionals where I was expected to learn and contribute outside of the classroom.

This is the kind of story I share with the interns in our program. **I want them to understand that I once sat where they are. The nervousness, anxiety, and excitement are all normal. This is a chance to learn, explore, and grow before adulthood really kicks in.** You know the “adulthood” that consists of paying bills, raising a family, punching a clock, navigating the world of employment and, in some cases, unemployment.....LIFE.

Growing up in a rough neighborhood and raised by a single parent brought its own challenges. The internship was an opportunity to see something bigger and greater than my surroundings. I had a great rapport with my supervisor and departmental staff. My supervisor (Clare) would always compliment me on the work that I was doing in the Corporate Marketing department of a large insurance company. How could I remember her name and the name of the department so many years later? This is how life changing it was for me. I was given projects where I not only made significant contributions but more so met time sensitive deadlines. This is where I saw my time management skills really come to fruition and be

an extension to my classroom learning. It was during my internship that I learned about W-2s and W- 4s and had my first real encounter with taxes. I was expecting to receive “gross” pay for hours worked but to my surprise then, the net is what I would have received. Quite shocking initially to say the least.

The skills learned during an internship are so valuable that it helps students develop both personally and professionally. In our program students learn about the job application process. They must submit an application and other required paperwork such as I-9 to determine employment eligibility. There is a competitive interview process, frequent check-ins, worksite

visits and employer evaluation at the end. The results of the employer evaluation is shared with each intern as a professional development tool. Similar to our annual evaluations completed at our own place of business. In addition, students learn how to complete and submit timesheets, how to dress for an interview, and how to manage his or her time. Time management is a crucial component as interns juggle academic work, extracurricular activities and internship experiences.

We try to make the experience as real world as possible. Our interns complete career readiness training, produce resumes, participate in workplace tours, mock interviews and other experiential learning activities. We do allow time for reflection to really take in what they have learned over a period of time. Internships is a great tool for career exploration. Like myself, I was unsure of my career path right out of high school. An internship will give you a guide through means of exposure and awareness. From my own internship experience, I knew I did not want to go into the insurance field. I always tell the interns there are two things they will gain from the experience (1) they will acquire skills and hopefully get their interest peeked into an area they had never considered or (2) they will know what field or industry they wish to stand clear of. Either way, it is a *Win-Win* situation.

For me, my current role is full circle. I am a product of the environment in which I was born, raised, educated now currently employed through. I once sat where my interns are with anticipation early

on and then sense of satisfaction when completed. It opened doors for me and I hope each encounter will do the same for them. I encourage them to show up, give each task their best, learn as much as they can along the way, keep their resume updated, create their own network, and explore, explore, explore. Within the 1st year of implementation, our team placed over 300 students in an internship.

Tamara works for Hartford Public Schools as the Assistant Director of Career Pathways, Internships and Business Operations. Tamara is an experienced presenter with expertise in internships, partner development, and community engagement. She regularly presents to teachers, students, parents, and administrators about program opportunities and youth workforce development strategies. Tamara holds a Master's Degree in Business Administration (MBA), O85 School Business Administrator Certification from the State of Connecticut, and Project Management Certification from the University of New Haven. In addition to her role with Hartford Public Schools, Tamara holds an adjunct professorial position in the business department at Asnuntuck Community College where she teaches on campus and within the Department of Corrections. She was recently recognized in the Women of Distinction Magazine as a Leader in her field and received a Community Service Award from a local non-profit agency. Tamara is an Advisory Board Member, an Author, a Philanthropist and Mentor. She spends her time volunteering with various organizations to include community food drives, women empowerment conferences, and fundraising efforts for Cancer Awareness and Juvenile Diabetes. She resides in her hometown with her husband and their children.



A Social Justice Perspective on Professional Development and Work-Integrated Learning: Transformative Experiential Learning (TEL)

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Introduction

The popular and largely accepted conceptions of *professional development* are static, outdated, and largely come to reinforce the status quo. The road to *professionalism* is too often paved with mere résumé development, how to write a cover letter, a LinkedIn demo, maybe a mock interview or two, and a speech on what not to wear. Boxes are checked, young people are ushered off into the “real world,” educators wash their hands, so to speak, and prepare for their next batch of students. Professional development: check. What’s missing from this skeletal model of professional development for college students is everything else that comes along with being a working professional-citizen in a complex, multicultural, global society. >>>

Most specifically, what is missing from our popular notions of professional development (PD) in higher education are diversity and social justice competencies that, when consciously coupled with PD, can broaden student perspectives, expand worldviews, and tear-away at the various unjust paradigms of justice. Through this conscious coupling of professional development and social justice competencies, students will begin to see how this fixed, inert “real world” they’ve come to know is constructed, and thereby malleable. Professional development must be infused with elements of social justice education, and vice versa. There can be a dialectical tension between the two concepts, to be sure, but in the United States of America, in 2016 — we, the educators, professionals, and practitioners should not accept one without the other.

Within this paper, we as practitioners seek to interactively explore this tension: professional development and social justice. A model of work-integrated learning (WIL) called Transformative Experiential Learning (TEL) will be introduced that embraces this dialectic and provides a solution to the outdated notions of professional development for college students across majors and colleges.

Examples from three distinct WIL programs at the University of Cincinnati will be provided for how to develop social justice competencies within a professional development classroom or organization. The three programs that will be discussed

are: The Academic Internship Program primarily for liberal arts students, the Pre-Health Internship Program for science and exploratory students pursuing professional school, and the Cooperative Education Program (Co-op) for engineering students. All three of these programs are housed in the Division of Experience-Based Learning and Career Education. The curriculum from each program includes professional development courses in preparation for responsible engagement beyond the walls of the classroom, primarily in the forms of co-op and internship.

The Integration of Social Justice and Professional Development

Each of the University of Cincinnati WIL programs is purposeful in teaching students about professionalism through a wide, inclusive, socially just lens. Professionalism, in this way, can be seen as committing to more than the day-to-day grind, more than collecting a paycheck, more than simply checking the appropriate boxes, and something more than one’s self-interests. Instead, professionalism becomes about being a part of something bigger and more meaningful — a profession, a tradition, a culture, a craft, a unique history — a new way to engage with and make meaning as a change-agent in the world.

In our courses/programs, when the discussion turns to professionalism and navigating work culture, students will often recite the usual professional development banalities. They suggest professionalism can be defined as respecting the

hierarchical work culture (written and unwritten rules), meeting expectations (rules), having business acumen, and being analytical enough to separate the personal and professional (keeping emotions at bay). This is all well and good, but being a part of something larger than yourself can mean playing by the rules. It also means being able to change rules as society evolves; and this is where social justice and consciousness-raising intersects with professionalism. Cassuto (2015) asserts that, essentially, “professionalism is about conformity.” However, we live in a culture of change. Students in WIL programs at the University of Cincinnati and beyond should be compelled to push the organization forward, to raise consciousness about the meaning of one’s work, how this work will impact communities, and the importance of inclusive leadership.

In the University of Cincinnati’s internship programs, professional development is defined as the exploration of employer performance expectations and the development of strategies and skills for effective participation in the employment process. Purkerson Hammer (2000) says, “you know it when you see it, and you certainly know it when you don’t see it” (p. 455). Some scholars have drawn distinctions between what would ordinarily be considered career preparation and what can be considered professional development (Blau 2013; Bowers 2001; Wessel 2003). Career advising can be understood narrowly or broadly (Carlstrom & Hughey, 2014). The narrow view essentially

addresses finding a major and steps in the process of securing a job post-graduation. For example, Milsom & Coughlin (2015) define career development as “a lifelong process requiring individuals to navigate numerous academic and work-related transitions as they strive to achieve career goals” (p. 5). Résumé development, networking, teaching the standards of business dress and etiquette, and mock interviews are part of the repertoire in most career centers on campus (Blau, 2013; Elrath 2010; Wendlandt & Rochlen, 2008; Wessel, Christian, & Hoff, 2003). The broader view addresses work values which “involve helping students understand and plan for the interaction of work with their other roles as contributors to a meaningful and beneficial life” (Carlstrom & Hughey, 2014, p. 5). This professional development includes applying these skills in WIL opportunities such as paid or unpaid internships, job shadow programs, and cooperative education (Elrath, 2010). It is our contention that this idea should be further extended to include a specific integration of values that lead to an increased understanding of social justice issues, both local and global, that are of growing importance in an already interconnected, global marketplace that recognizes value in diversity and inclusion.

In the three WIL programs mentioned here, the term “social justice” is primarily used because it conveys a “critical” call to action to dismantle unjust systems and move towards equality. The use of the term “diversity” is becoming outdated and often is limited to represen-

tation in the form of quotas for hiring diverse employees. It's time to move beyond simply making a business case for diversity and to move towards helping prepare undergraduate students to be socially responsible — transgressing campus boundaries and extending this ethos into their professional, perhaps even personal, lives. Miller (2003) defines social justice as “the distribution of good (advantages) and bad (disadvantages) in society, and more specifically with how these things should be distributed within society. Further, social justice is concerned with the ways that resources are allocated to people by social institutions” (p. 11). In sum, the term social justice is a better fit than diversity and other descriptors because the long term goal is about teaching undergraduate students to examine their privileges and place in the world, to explore their identity and values, to voice their questions and concerns for politics, economics, and power while working for equity and inclusion.

Integrating a Critical Leadership Perspective

In order for undergraduate students to consider options and choices that challenge the status quo and advance a vision for collective human interests, they need a critical leadership toolbox that can be applied in WIL environments. Students must be empowered to recognize and point out incidents of structural inequity and understand how to enact social justice leadership in a professional way, whether that is leading a diverse workforce or

providing a new form of leadership. The intersection of professional development and social justice places emphasis on leadership values. “They include emphasis on ethical concerns of our leaders, on social justice values fueled by the movements of the 1960’s, on collaborative leadership given our growing recognition of our interdependence in a global society, the need for transformational change based on our vision for the future and on diversity being inclusive and valuing of differences across groups” (Chin & Trimble, 2015, p. 14). Leadership scholars have been advocating for critical social frameworks to be applied to leadership theory to question assumptions related to power and privilege (Dugan, forthcoming 2017). A critical approach assumes structural inequities exist and acknowledges agency within structures. It allows for recognizing whose voice gets heard or whose story is most often told, along with whose gets submerged, marginalized, or untold entirely.

It is important to provide evidence that justifies the need for emergent ways of thinking about the integration of social justice, professionalism, and leadership. Many studies document the gap between employer expectations and the readiness of college graduates for the world of work. In a recent AAC&U employer survey (2015), employers gave students lower scores than students gave themselves on preparedness in a variety of areas. Of particular importance to note were large gaps in perceptions about learning outcomes that related to social justice and professional

development, including “awareness of diverse cultures inside and outside the United States, working with people of different backgrounds, staying current on global developments, and proficiency in other languages.” Only “30% of the class of 2014 said that a diversity of an employer’s workforce is extremely important” (NACE, 2014, p. 3); yet work environments increasingly require regular, ongoing interaction with people from different cultural backgrounds. In short, tensions exist between students’ preparation and the importance the workforce is placing on professionalism and social justice issues. Without a theoretical framework to follow, faculty in WIL programs are left without a critical resource to prepare students for our contemporary global workforce, and student-citizens are left to flounder on the hamster wheel of the socio-professional status quo.

Transformative Experiential Learning Conceptual Model

WIL programs (such as academic internships and cooperative education) assist students in their development as a professional, and also as leaders. Rarely do these programs include a social justice component. Chin & Trimble (2015) assert that while leadership theory has changed over time, it has remained silent on issues of equity, diversity, and social justice. Understanding this limitation, the Transformative Experiential Learning (TEL) model was conceptualized as an alternative to outdated models to consciously

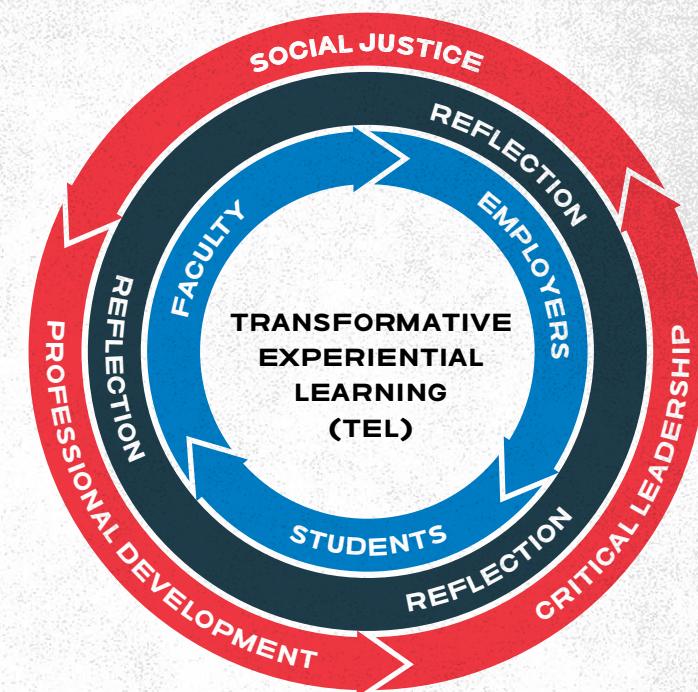


figure 1.

bring together social justice, professional development and critical leadership as integrative concepts that flow together in mutually reinforcing ways forming a theoretical framework that informs praxis (see figure A). They are not intersections with clear boundaries; rather, the concepts flow together and are integrative, you can’t talk about one without talking about the other. In short, TEL is *socially-just* leadership enacted in professional contexts accompanied by an agile reflective model. The model is layered to purposefully showcase the intersecting relationships between the WIL partners — students, faculty, communities, and employers.

Experiential learning has a transformative effect on students (Ono, 2015). In its simplest definition, experiential learning is learning by doing. Transformative Experiential Learning goes beyond this relatively straightforward

TEL is socially-just leadership enacted in professional contexts accompanied by an agile reflective model.

concept. It is intentional about ensuring that undergraduate students engage in discussion about complex social justice issues and learn leadership strategies to engage these issues before they apply these lessons outside the classroom walls in WIL settings like internships and co-ops. The heart of this cyclical model is this unifying of theory, action, and reflection with the goal of transforming the learner and the world of work to be more inclusive and socially responsible.

Transformative Experiential Learning is especially necessary in this context. WIL can sometimes be misperceived as simply job training because in some cases the need for universities to demonstrate that students can find gainful employment after graduation is more paramount than any other outcome. This, however, is a transactional form of higher education where the student is seen as a customer or client (Popli, 2005). Branning (2007) asserts “Universities...must be concerned with transformative learning and education, which is then seen as a

process where students are active participants; not customers, users, or clients ...” (p. 48).

College is often a student’s first real opportunity to experience difference where inequities manifest in a variety of ways. College is also where students articulate a vision for their careers and futures. Reflecting on this exposure to diversity, higher order thinking, and career planning process enhances learning and social identity development. Rogers (2001) defines reflection as the ability to “integrate the understanding gained in one’s experience in order to enable better choices or actions in the future as well as to enhance one’s overall effectiveness” (p. 41). Reflection is at the heart of the TEL model because to create justice minded leaders in the professional workforce, students must practice self-interrogation, introspection, ponder all options in thoughtful ways, and deconstruct paradigms. These critical thinking values are embraced by TEL. Ash and Clayton (2004) assert that guided reflective practices help students examine their experiences critically; enhancing both the quality of their learning and the related co-op or internship they experienced. Furthermore, reflection can help students challenge preconceived notions while opening new perspectives (Hondagneu-Sotelo and Raskoff, 1994).

In the TEL model, students participate in courses where they are introduced to concepts of professionalism, like learning how to prepare and search for a job or create a strong application to

professional school. They are also given the opportunity to gain knowledge before working in a pluralistic professional context by focusing on the opportunity to apply their leadership skills by striving for inclusion in the workplace. These students are more prepared to understand power dynamics and to challenge the dominant discourse compared to students who receive traditional professional development only. Further, one could argue that professional development and WIL programs lacking social justice integration, leadership and professionalism with a reflective component can be perceived as irresponsible. Such endeavors fail to prepare students for today’s dynamic and interconnected workforce.

Transformative Experiential Learning (TEL) Examples in the Real World

The integration of the TEL concepts operationalized in the classroom and the WIL settings for each program manifest differently across programs. The WIL professional development preparation course in each program includes readings, assignments, videos, in-class active learning exercises, etc. intended to develop and raise consciousness around these issues. Critical reflection is incorporated to analyze the student’s experiences inside and outside of the classroom. This reflection is guided, purposeful, and often challenging. It, too, is required and a critical component in the TEL model, creating a more complete synthesis of learning.

Pre-Health Internship Program

The role of healthcare professionals is evolving and health professions curriculums are changing to include content on professionalism. STEM fields have moved from rote memorization of facts to skill building like critical thinking and the application of ideas (Branan, Hart, and Kreke, 2015). “Today, the fundamental components of medicine go beyond the biomedical sciences to include its humanities, legal and management aspects” (Ezekiel, 2006, para. 4). There is an art and a science to medicine, and it is important that the art not get lost. Kirk (2007) made the explicit connection of professionalism to medicine by calling it an “important component of medicine’s contract with society.”

Pharmacy schools are also now incorporating an understanding of diversity and behavior that promotes fair treatment of all people as examples of professional attitudes and behavior (Purkerson Hammer, 2015). In addition, medical schools have been known to prioritize metrics like grades, standardized test scores, and GPA. However, they have also recently shifted to focusing on competency-based assessments to make admissions decisions. The most significant change in medical school admissions though is the revision to the Medical College Admissions Test (MCAT). In January 2015, test content was revised to include psycho-social bases of behavior. “Being a good doctor is about more than scientific knowledge. It also requires an understanding of people,” (Kirch, 2012,

para. 3). It's about time that admissions criteria and health professions curriculums catch up with what is important: focusing on the healthcare professional-patient relationship. All of this ultimately leads to better clinical decision-making and better health outcomes for patients (Rooney, 2016).

Diverse representation within the student body at medical schools is slowing increasing. Tracking research shows that minority physicians are more likely to practice in underserved communities (AMA Wire, 2015). A recent report from the American Association of Medical Colleges (AAMC) reported that the number of black males applying to medical school hasn't changed since the 1970's (Vassar, 2015). Disparities exist and the pre-health internship program addresses why inclusion should be a priority from the time of application to professional school through the time of actual practice with patients.

According to Moore (2013) in a 1966 speech to the Medical Committee for Human Rights, Martin Luther King Jr. said, "Of all the forms of inequality, injustice in healthcare is the most shocking and most inhuman." Learning outcomes have been developed for the pre-health internship program that infuses social justice into professional development. For example, one outcome is as follows: Utilize different points of view to understand the human side of healthcare pertaining to cultural difference, sensitivity, and humility. Student's read the text, *The Spirit Catches*

You and You Fall Down (Fadiman, 1997), a widely referenced book in pre-health advising circles. The book tells the story of a Hmong refugee child, Lia Lee, and her clash with American/Western medical culture. Key terms like "cultural humility" (Tervalon & Garcia, 1998) and "narrative medicine" (Charon, 2007) are introduced so the students can learn how to have conversations about cross-cultural care and begin to see themselves in relation to their customer — the patient. Cultural humility is used over cultural competency because it begs the question of whether someone can actually be competent in another person's culture. Providing students with real patient stories and the language to use is one way to advance the integration of social justice and professional development. In reflection on the text, one student commented, "A young girl's life was compromised due to cultural barriers. It is an important example of how important the roles of a deeper relationship/trust between patient and doctor, cultural humility, and empathy all have on patient care. What seems as trivial as becoming aware and appreciative of one's culture can literally save lives."

Another learning outcome is to recognize and articulate the meaning of health care disparities. Healthy People 2020 (2015) defines health care disparity as "a particular type of health difference that is closely linked with social or economic disadvantage." Students view the documentary, *The Waiting Room*, and

are taken into an emergency department with uninsured and underinsured patients. This type of empathy induction is extremely important for future healthcare professionals. Students become acutely aware of their privilege in terms of access to care when asked to reflect on the film. They begin to see the larger debate around healthcare as a human right and that some people systematically experience greater social and economic obstacles to health than others. One student reflection captured this. She said, "After seeing this documentary, I realize that the lack of healthcare is a HUGE problem in this country. I had never had this experience before. I have always been covered by the military. I see that people lose their jobs and their health insurance is gone. The whole family is affected. It's not just homeless people, it's hard working Americans that have lost their job." Social determinants of health like food deserts, neighborhood pollution, access to transportation, and affordable and safe housing are also addressed. Students are also provided with an opportunity to intern for an organization with the mission of closing these health gaps.

A third learning outcome addresses "exploring personal values and ethical guidelines related to complex problems and controversies in health care." Ezekiel (2006) states that the prominence of the Hippocratic oath demonstrates that ethical dilemmas are inherent in medicine. In this lesson, students explore global health ethics abroad and the concept of medical

voluntourism. Melby et al (2016) define medical voluntourism as short-term experiences in global health that "may exacerbate economic and power differentials between provider and host communities" (p. 3). Students are encouraged to reflect on cultural superiority and think through the exploitation of communities that have less resources. As the rules and regulations around shadowing physicians tighten, there has been a recent increase in pre-health students seeking out "hands-on" patient care international experiences in developing countries to impress admissions committees. Evert, Todd, & Zitiack (2015) stated, "Many stakeholders have pointed out that students accessing hands-on patient care under the guise of learning or practicing that is beyond their educational level is unprofessional and a goes against the very social justice principles that concerned students and enabling organizations purportedly aim to address" (p. 61). In the course, guidelines for best practices are shared, as well as stories of students who have violated these recommendations. Students distinguish learning from service while remembering that the patient is a vulnerable. The outcome emphasizes the connection between both ethics and professionalism in a global context.

All of these examples of the TEL model at work allow students to deconstruct stereotypes, bias and oppression in the healthcare workplace and problem solve by restructuring their ideas with these values in mind.

TEL in Co-op

Cooperative Education for Engineering

There is a real need for infusing social justice and transformational leadership education into the engineering curriculum, but most faculty are underprepared. “Many professional development opportunities aimed at helping STEM faculty enhance their teaching practices overlook the role of cultural competence in teaching and learning and fail to inextricably combine cultural sensitivity with advanced pedagogies” (Mack et al., 2015, p. 8).

Johnston (2007) called upon cooperative education faculty and staff to critically analyze our role in how issues of social justice, equity, and inclusion were being addressed in the co-op curriculum. Most co-op preparatory programs, including the majority of the University of Cincinnati’s engineering co-op programs, do not include an in-depth critical analysis of identity, privilege, inclusion, and social justice. There are many reasons for this; the least among them is the questioning of whose role it is to educate students in this way. However, Johnston contends in many ways co-ops can be seen as an “educational model that supports the business and industry status quo” (p. 25). Because of this, Johnston urges cooperative education educators to “more fully consider the risks and responsibilities associated both with introducing, and not introducing, a critical pedagogy to its work preparation curriculum” (p. 26).

At the heart of this debate is the responsibility for educating students on

the mission of higher education that is to be critical thinkers and engaged citizens. This creates a divide between the mission of higher education and role of the university, which is to prepare students for the world of work. Giroux (2003) claims that “Situated within a broader context of issues concerned with social responsibility, politics, and the dignity of human life, higher education should...offer students the opportunity to acquire the knowledge, skills, and ethical vocabulary necessary for critical dialogue and broadened civic participation” (p.189). Johnston (2007) goes on to state, “From a critical perspective, co-op program goals should therefore reflect more than the securing of employment as an outcome, they ought to also reflect the broader educational goals of the institution within which the program operates” (p. 27).

However, as Johnston (2007) contends, most employers, as well as educators, want students to transition successfully to the world of work and not critique or challenge assumptions. This can be very risky as it can have the potential to damage the relationship between the university and the employer or industry partner. It is our responsibility as educators to not only train our students in how to be good workers, but how to be good “worker-citizens” and to “help build the social awareness and capacity within the leaders of tomorrow that could provoke such change...or at the very least explore the possibilities” (p. 28).

Topics for exploration within this new paradigm for cooperative education

preparation may include “corporate social responsibility, worker/management tensions and resulting worker movements, and various workplace practices around justice, equity, and democracy” (Johnston, 2007, p. 27). Others may include multicultural, ethnic, and social identity formation, power and privilege, professional values-based ethics, and transformational leadership.

Infusing Transformational Experiential Learning into Cooperative Education for Engineering

An example of how to integrate the Transformational Experiential Learning Model, which addresses many of the issues presented above with regard to cooperative education, can be seen through the University of Cincinnati’s cooperative education program for Computer Engineering. The variations in this program, in comparison to its counterparts across the College of Engineering and Applied Sciences, are focused within the curriculum of the introductory course students take prior to their first co-op placement semester and a mid-curricular course students take after their second co-op placement semester.

The introductory course for students in the Computer Engineering co-op program touches upon the same objectives as would be for other majors, such as résumé development, interviewing skills, networking skills, the history and philosophy of cooperative education, and general job search strategies. Additionally,

the TEL version of the introductory course includes sections on strengths-based learning and development (Hodges & Clifton, 2004), reflective practice as a form of adaptive leadership (Heifetz, 1994), transformational leadership and teamwork, and courageous followership (Chaleff, 2009). These components serve as a backdrop not only to provide students with an overview of ways in which leadership can be developed in the workplace, but to also provide students the language to be able to articulate strategies on how to create social change. Finally, students in the introductory course in the Computer Engineering co-op program also participate in lessons on social identity and power and privilege. Students are introduced to concepts that for many of them are foreign and uncomfortable. However, through mutual understanding and solidarity, students begin to see how the way they interpret the world around them begins to change.

After their second co-op placement semester, students in the Computer Engineering program participate in a mid-curricular course designed as a crossroads of their professional career and identity. Many students at this point are beginning to determine what kind of professional they want to be and in what ways they want to engage in their professional community. The class is intended for students to reflect upon their co-op experiences and begin to make career-level decisions. In this course, students engage in activities to help them further their knowledge of their chosen

profession and continue exploring their role as worker-citizens. Several topics from the introductory course are reviewed and expanded upon including transformational leadership and teamwork, reflective practice, strengths-based learning, and followership. New concepts of equity and social justice in engineering and engineering for a better world (Clough, 2004) are introduced in this course as well. These final two components serve as the catalyst for preparing students to engage with their profession in ways to bring about social change and to address the inequities and injustices that may be prevalent in the world of work.

To be clear, Transformational Experiential Learning in the context of cooperative education does not have at its core, the role of creating social justice

advocates out of students, but rather gives students the knowledge, awareness, and skills needed if the occasion arises in which they may wish to act. Johnston (2007) put it this way, “The goal is to raise individual consciousness about the self as a social being and, once raised, inspire the individual to see how their beliefs, opinions, self-image, and treatment of others are influenced by dominant perspectives. This self-reflection is intended to result in a changed perspective and perhaps even changed behavior within the individual” (p. 25). Therefore, our role as educators in this context, with cooperative education, is “not [to] present sets of laws but rather present a lens through which to view information and the world in which it, and we, are situated” (p. 25).

To be clear, Transformational Experiential Learning in the context of cooperative education does not have at its core, the role of creating social justice advocates out of students, but rather gives students the knowledge, awareness, and skills needed if the occasion arises in which they may wish to act.

Two examples of the TEL model within this context at the University of Cincinnati, that can be easily adapted in other contexts, have included discussions of the cultural contexts of the “shop floor” and the “office” (i.e. workers vs. management), and a critical examination of women in computing.

Oftentimes when college students return from their first co-op placements they are introduced to the culture and indoctrination of how their profession acts and interacts with others in the profession. This can sometimes be very educationally beneficial, as it is when architecture students work for the first time with construction management professionals or when student computer software developers work with computer software designers (i.e. frontend vs. backend technologies). These interactions are often very positive and provide a significant perspective for students to which they have never had yet to this point in their academic pursuits. However, in some cases the indoctrination of students into the profession can sometimes lead to cultural divides. In one such incident, students learning how to be an engineer were asked to interact with laborers on the “shop-floor” and were told they had to “dumb-down” their language when speaking with shop-floor employees. The students came to class after their co-op term and engaged in a lengthy discussion on public education in America, the rights of workers, unions, and worker movements.

According to Mack, Soto, Casillas-Martinez, and McCormack (2015), “undeniably professions in science, technology, engineering, and Math (STEM) are among the fastest growing occupations in the US economy” (p. 8) however computer science degrees earned by women shrank from 28% to 18% between 2002 and 2012 (NSF, 2015). There is a substantial need within the computing industry to specifically address the masculinization of the discipline. Students in the mid-curricular course were provided articles and other media to help them explore how women in computing are treated and how a lack of diversity can be potentially devastating for corporations.

TEL in Internships

TEL in The Academic Internship Program

Academic Internships are a powerful complement to any student’s undergraduate college experience. Beyond providing students with valuable, hands-on experience and the increased likelihood of employability after graduation (Gault, Redington, & Schlager, 2000), increased confidence and competence as it relates to workplace culture (Narayanan, Olk, & Fukami, 2010), internships matter because they situate one’s academic learning and professional preparation within the context of the “real world” waiting for them after college (Binder, Baguley, Crook, & Miller, 2015). To put it another way, internships matter and hold great capacity to provide the sort of transformational

experiential learning opportunities we as TEL practitioners are seeking for our students.

The Academic Internship Program (AIP) at the University of Cincinnati (UC) is housed in the Division of Experience-Based Learning and Career Education. The program was launched in 2010-2011 academic year to meet the growing demand for meaningful, work-integrated learning opportunities for students in non-co-op majors at UC. In the years that followed, AIP has evolved considerably from its original conception. In the past year, AIP has moved away from course titles like, “Exploring Academic Internships” in favor of more topically inclusive titles like, “Professionalism and Purpose.” The programmatic evolution demonstrates a conscious shift from only preparing students for success on a semester-long internship and the development of certain baseline professional skills (résumé, cover letter, interviewing, and so on). AIP has come to a place where introspection/outrospection, student *mindset*, inclusion and empathy, self-authorship and consciousness-raising, and holistic professional development have become the cornerstones of the program — in addition to maintaining our commitment to academic internships for students. Further, AIP continues to build and grow partnerships across campus with student programs whose PD is often not fully understood or integrated into their curriculum: first-generation college students, student-athletes, and liberal arts majors to name a few.

The Academic Internship Program requires a two-semester commitment from students. The process consists of first, a 3-credit-hour, pre-internship professional development course, *Professionalism & Purpose* or *Exploring Professionals Paths*, then a subsequent semester-long academic internship in which the student is working in a full or part-time internship while also enrolled in an online reflection course facilitated by AIP faculty. The opportunity for students to apply and reflect on their cross-curricular learning while on internship is one of the most valuable aspects of the experience. And by infusing consciousness-raising learning objectives within our pre-internship professional development course, students begin their respective internships more prepared and with eyes open to various social, political, and cultural elements of their new internship environment that otherwise might have been perceived and processed in less productive ways. Through this online reflection course that students enroll in while working in their internship, active and engaged reflection becomes a critical component to the effectiveness of the integration of the TEL model. This is accomplished, documented, and assessed through the production of an e-portfolio — a web-based, self-authored, creative multi-media presentation of the student’s professional, academic and personal narrative.

This nexus of academic inquiry, critical reflection, and the internship experience — praxis — is at the heart of the Academic Internship Program, and

drives the work we do with students across campus at the University of Cincinnati. Committed to placing each student in their internship search through both digital tools and one-on-one/person-to-person attention, to bolstering student employability after graduation, to enhancing career-readiness and success skills through *classic* professional development content (résumé, cover letter, interviewing skills, LinkedIn, etc.), and to creating an academic, pre-professional culture rooted in a socio-political consciousness, reflection, vocational & self-exploration, AIP seeks to provide students with comprehensive and value-added internship experiences that prepare them to be socially-conscious professional citizens in an increasingly complex society.

Active learning exercises are used throughout the term to address these higher-order learning objectives. Notably, the *Global Village*, or *Village of 100*, has proven to be an engaging and effective two-class exercise intended to challenge our assumptions about the world, while revealing where much of our misunderstandings and misconceptions arise from. In this activity, students are placed into groups and challenged to “shrink” the world’s population to one-hundred people, keeping all existing ratios equal, while addressing a variety of prompts revolving around a great many social justice oriented themes. This allows students to more easily manage questions that require groups to numerically breakdown existing ratios of the global population as it relates to gender, race, religion, economics,

politics, healthcare, education, poverty, climate, and more. The results of this exercise, the revelation of our own ignorance, in most cases, is palpable and seized on by students. By paring down seven-plus-billion people to one-hundred, one finds seeing the forest through the trees to be a bit more manageable. Students begin to understand and see the world, often anew, and report as much through dialoguing in diverse groups, reporting-out to the larger class, and in written-reflection that serves as the culminating assignment of this TEL-bolstering exercise.

AIP students are from just about every non-co-op required major on campus. We are a “one room schoolhouse” of sorts, with an interdisciplinary and diversity that is somewhat unique. We have freshmen, sophomores, juniors, seniors, international students, domestic students, first-generation college students, athletes,

The results of this exercise, the revelation of our own ignorance, in most cases, is palpable and seized on by students.

non-traditional students, and exploratory/undeclared students. In other words, we transgress boundaries, identities, and academic disciplines. Accordingly, AIP strives to use this inherent diversity within our program to our advantage through rich dialogue, active-learning classroom engagement, and collaborative projects. Classroom exercises, such as the Global Village and the corresponding multi-level reflection, reinforce to AIP students that their diversity and inclusion is valued within the program, and critical to our collective social justice and well-being in the “real world.”

The TEL model is deployed in AIP through a variety of methods that reinforce the lessons of the Global Village, while extending this learning into professional and WIL environments. Our learning objectives, assignments, classroom discussion panelists, and dialogue reflect and embody the goals put forth in the TEL model. Specifically, students are encouraged/required to conceptualize, contemplate, know, and eventually share their own unique *story* in our classes — to understand her or his professional narrative that consists of one’s lived, academic, work, and extracurricular experiences. And within this narrative, we embed that appropriate professional development activities and artifacts (résumés, cover letter, interviewing skills, etc.), but students begin to see the *Why* through guided dialogue relating to issues of social justice, the culture of professionalism, and their own unique positionality and development within each these constructs.

Paulo Freire, in *We Make the Road by Walking* (1990), describes this pedagogical process as the “illumination of reality,” and it’s of critical and equal importance to both students, teachers, and the community. “Being engaged in a permanent process of illuminating reality with students, fighting against the opacity and obscuring of reality” (1990) is a critical component of the higher education ethos, especially at the University of Cincinnati. There is no reason this should not be the case in a professional development classroom setting. Further, it is our contention that the PD classroom provides a powerful opportunity to illuminate the social injustices in reality, and to allow students a place to synthesize and apply their cross-curricular learning and lived experience in a “real world” setting through their WIL experience.

Future Directions

The demographics of the United States are changing. The United States is changing. The world is changing. And rapidly. Young people, as opposed to their parents and grandparents, have very different conceptualizations of what they want the world to value. Millennials are recognized the most ethnically diverse generation in American history (Howe & Strauss, 2007). Given this change, it will be important to measure whether students are integrating learning across the domains of social justice, professionalism, and leadership in preparation for the world of work. Not just for profit margins or for the sake of the organization in which one is employed —

but the training, knowledgebase, and socio-political awareness that students leave college with will be utterly critical to the quality of life on this planet for all people and future generations.

Future studies by career services professionals should seek to define specific work readiness competencies associated with the TEL model. A grounded theory research design could be used to do this. Since we know high impact programs like co-op and internships increase college student retention (Ono, 2015), persistence in WIL programs should be measured to show financial implications. Lastly, it is our assertion based on collective lived professional experience that integrating social justice and professional development deepens relationships with students. This is a possible research idea to be explored in the arena of the scholarship of teaching and learning.

Conclusion

Preparing students for the workforce is an essential part of what colleges do. Whether a student is studying liberal arts or STEM disciplines, it is the responsibility of educators to challenge students to engage and examine social justice topics while they grow professionally. This is a revelatory way to develop inclusive leaders — and it deepens student relationships with faculty, the community, and the university. Furthermore, faculty must teach students to develop critical consciousness in preparation for the workplace. To get started, it is important to create social

justice oriented learning outcomes for professional development courses so that assignments can be aligned and assess the student’s understanding professionalism through contextual lens of our contemporary social, political, and economic realities. We are not advocating that professional development objectives be eliminated or watered down, we are however advocating for a more holistic and culturally relevant approach to the instruction of these concepts. At minimum, there could be multiple touch points during the course on particular hot button topics. Teachers have a privileged perspective in the college classroom and should use it to purposefully and with great care to create awareness of how valuing diversity, inclusion, and equity prepares students to be more effective professional leaders and global citizens.

The increase of technology and global interdependence affect the way we prepare colleges students for success in the world of work. Specific skill sets are required. We live in a culture of change, and our students need to be equipped to adapt. We must rise to meet this challenge of embracing a social justice oriented employability imperative or risk that stakeholders, like employers and parents, may take their educational and talent sphere investments elsewhere. While people in general may be hesitant to discuss issues of social justice, effective educational leaders should not be. There is an urgent need for professional development to be consciously connected to social justice awareness to adequately

prepare the 21st century workforce for success. The TEL model allows for disruption of normativity when it comes to preparing students to thrive as leaders, and not just survive in the changing, global professional world. Students become transformative leaders as they dismantle oppressions in the workplace and challenge outdated notions of what it means to be a professional.

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Creating and Presenting Portfolios for Creative Careers – and Beyond

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Most students preparing for a co-op or internship search need to learn traditional job search skills, such as resume writing and interviewing. Students exploring careers in the art and design industries, however, need additional support in developing and presenting a portfolio that conveys their aesthetic, creativity, technical skills, and understanding of design principles. The process of curating and showcasing projects, and presenting work — on paper, online and in person — is integral to the practice of art and design and to success in creative careers. >>>

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Co-op practitioners do not need to be designers or artists in order to coach students for success, as long as they understand the basic principles of portfolio development. As with any discipline, students should be encouraged to consult with subject matter experts, employers, and professors as they refine their work and their strategy in presenting it. While the use of portfolios is expected in certain industries (namely art, design, and architecture), the practice of curating and organizing past experiences and projects, and articulating the thinking that went into them, is an essential skill in any job search. A number of web-based tools (see resource list) make it easier than ever to showcase a variety of projects online.

< What is a Portfolio? >

Employers in most art and design disciplines (e.g. graphic and web design, animation, and studio art) rely on portfolios — collections of a curated work — to assess whether a candidate has sufficient mastery of technique, design principles, and tools to be successful in a job. A strong portfolio also conveys the applicant's personality and design sensibility. In hiring for design positions, employers often invest substantially more time reviewing portfolios than resumes. Typically a resume will include a link to an online portfolio, where art and design projects are featured. If the student is invited to interview, then (s)he may also bring a paper version of the portfolio to share with hiring manager. However, it is more common for the work to be presented

Aspiring artists and designers usually include a mix of assignments from classes, freelance/independent work

digitally during the interview, either on the candidate's laptop or using the company's projection system. Often the primary focus of the interview is to discuss the featured projects and understand the student's creative process and reasoning.

< Components of a Portfolio >

Aspiring artists and designers usually include a mix of assignments from classes, freelance/independent work (such as logos or T-shirts created for clubs or teams), and prior internship or co-ops. Beginners who lack a body of work should be encouraged to create personal projects: for example, an original animation, a poster for an imaginary event, or a set of branded collateral for a new venture. Even for more experienced students, incorporating personal projects can give employers a sense of their interests and artistic point of view. When employers review applications of groups of students from the same institution, they often see the same class assignments again

and again. Creating independent pieces can help a student stand out.

Just as we teach all students to organize their resumes so that their most impressive experiences are prominent, we should encourage candidates

for design positions to choose their best pieces and organize them strategically. It is better to include fewer stronger pieces than a mix of good and mediocre, since the selection is in itself an indicator of a candidate's judgment and taste. Improving upon earlier work is always an option: a student can modify older projects with newly acquired skill and perspective.

The portfolio should have the same look and feel of the resume and cover letter

Portfolio websites should be visually appealing, easy to navigate, and efficient to load

Whenever possible, students should showcase work in its natural context

Students should think carefully about including pieces that could be construed as overly personal or political, and consider whether they would feel comfortable presenting every item in an interview. They should group work into general categories (e.g. digital, print, and fine art). The portfolio should have the same look and feel of the resume and cover letter, and, like any professional artifact; it should be clear, well organized, and consistently formatted.

< Technical Considerations for Online Portfolios >

Portfolio websites should be visually appealing, easy to navigate, and efficient to load. Unless students want to demonstrate their coding or web design abilities, it is not necessary to hand-code their sites. For most students, it is perfectly acceptable to use specialized portfolio platforms (often free or inexpensive) that allow users to upload work using a variety of pre-existing templates, without any knowledge of coding. Ideally a student would establish his or her own domain name (e.g. janedoe.com) to make finding the portfolio simple and fast. The site should look attractive on a variety of monitor sizes, browsers, and platforms.

Most sites should include:

- > A homepage that makes it easy for an employer to find individual projects or project categories
- > An "about" page with a short bio that conveys the student's interests and personality

- > The student's contact information, with a PDF version of her resume
- > Projects with thoughtful captions and explanations

Whenever possible, students should showcase work in its natural context. For example, if the project is a train schedule, show how it looks in a station setting. If it's a menu card, demonstrate how it looks with a restaurant backdrop. If the size of the work is important, include a model or another object that indicates scale. A number of free resources allow candidates to mock up their work: to show what a design would look like if it were produced in real life (for example, what a logo would look like on a billboard, T-shirt, magazine, screen, or mobile device).

< Descriptions vs. Explanations >

A strong portfolio represents not just a candidate's work and judgment, but his or her thinking process and communication skills. Each piece should include a short caption that explains the project and the role the student played in the execution, with relevant attributions. For example:

- > "Multi-media campaign against bullying. Stock images were modified in Photoshop."
- > "Stop-motion film created with a team of animation students. All modeling and texturing was done by me."
- > "Signage for Acme Company's national conference, conforming to existing brand guidelines."

The captions provide a *description* of each project. Including an *explanation*, however, can improve the employer's understanding and appreciation of the work and the thinking behind it. Similarly, incorporating a sampling of sketches and iterations can demonstrate how an applicant's ideas evolve.

For example:

In this class assignment, students were asked to design A1 sized posters promoting a play of their choice; I selected Dark Ages. We were challenged to use two photographic or drawn elements in the design. I chose the hourglass and the digital clock face to convey the contrast between the characters' relationship in the past and present. I created both images in Illustrator. I selected a dark color palette because the play is a tragedy; and I incorporated orange to draw attention to its hopeful aspects. I chose Topknot, a sans serif typeface, because its simplicity contrasts with the elaborate artwork.

< Recommendations for presenting a portfolio during an interview >

Students should be prepared to present their portfolios during an interview, and practice briefly describing each piece, explaining the parameters (the assignment or project guidelines), and identifying their role in the project (if it was a collaboration, or if certain elements were provided by others). In addition, students should be able to talk about the reasoning behind design decisions (e.g. why a particular typeface or color scheme was selected, the meaning of specific imagery, why some iterations were developed and others discarded). Some employers will offer feedback or critique, or ask a candidate to reflect on the less successful aspects of a piece. Students should be

ready to discuss the strengths of their work, as well as areas for improvement. While they should not include weak pieces in their portfolios, it is acceptable — and even desirable — to acknowledge room for growth.

< Coaching Students for Portfolio Success >

As a cooperative learning practitioner, you can provide coaching and critique to students pursuing creative careers in the following ways. Note that most of these strategies are transferable across disciplines. The practice of showcasing and communicating one's work (whether it's through a portfolio, resume, or interview) and seeking feedback from experts is something all students should learn.

- > Provide general portfolio critique, just as you provide resume feedback. Even without a creative background, a co-op practitioner can comment on a site's look and feel, flow, organization, and navigation.
- > Conduct a mock portfolio presentation in conjunction with a mock interview. Ask the student to share her portfolio site and describe a project, making sure she highlights key features of the work, explains the reasoning behind design decisions, and can respond to questions (e.g. Why did you choose this color scheme/layout/typeface? What different options did you explore? If you had a chance to improve this project now, what would you change?). Emphasize that in most interviews, a discussion of a student's work is fairly informal, though very important. While students don't need to memorize a script for each piece, they should feel very confident in conveying key elements, as well as their own thought process.

- > Encourage the student to solicit content-related critique from faculty and industry professionals.
- > Host portfolio reviews: invite employers to provide short individual feedback sessions. Typically students sign up for a 15-minute slot in which they share their work and get input from experts in their discipline. This is an excellent way to promote students' networking while strengthening employer partnerships.
- > Organize student-led portfolio reviews in which more experienced students give feedback to beginners.

Practitioners in the creative industries have a lot to teach us when it comes to showcasing and sharing our work. In most art, design, and architecture programs, students regularly present their projects in class and engage in critique with classmates and professors. In our role as co-op professionals, we can help these students transfer familiar classroom practices to workplace settings, and to teach students in *all* majors how to curate and organize their work and experiences.

While applying for jobs, students pursuing creative careers must learn to articulate their thinking and decision-making as they talk about individual projects and their portfolios overall. This skill, however, is important to the job search in any industry. Whether it's through a cover letter, resume, or an interview response, a candidate needs to describe his or her work and perspective in a focused, thoughtful, and logical way. Students in all majors need to speak confidently and thoughtfully about their experiences, and to communicate the reasoning and perspective that drive their decisions. By helping students practice these skills, we can prepare them for success in the job search — and beyond.

RESOURCES

The following tools are used frequently used by Northeastern students to showcase their work.

< Tools for Creating Online Portfolios >

Squarespace	Issuu
Carbonmade	Vimeo
Format	BandCamp
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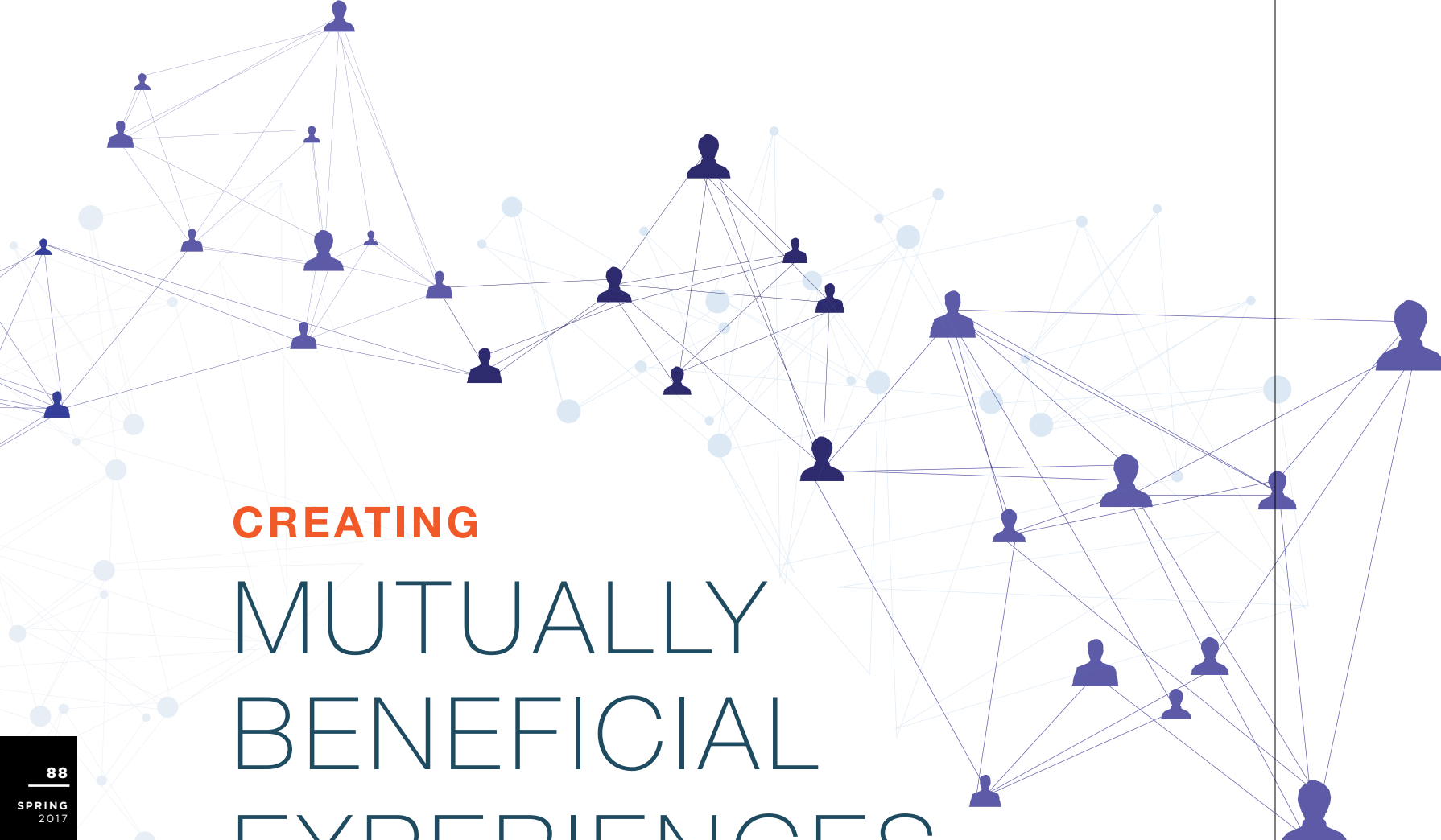
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CREATING MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL EXPERIENCES — THE 3PS TO EFFECTIVE INTERNSHIPS

Catherine Smith MacDermott, Professor // St. Edward's University in Austin

Let's face it; not all internships turn out the way the intern or the intern supervisor may have hoped. It seems that the two most important stakeholders in an internship, the intern and the intern supervisor, often enter the relationship with differing goals, occasionally leading to a less than beneficial experience on the part of both stakeholders. But wait; it doesn't have to be that way! As a college professor who has facilitated business internships for over 20 years, I wanted to find ways to help stakeholders create mutually beneficial internship experiences. To guide me in this process, I conducted a 3-year internship satisfaction study that has led me to offering the 3Ps of effective internships. >>

This article will share the results of this study and provide recommendations for internship best practices as companies develop, enhance, and implement mutually beneficial intern experiences for both the intern and the organization.

METHODOLOGY

The three year Internship Satisfaction Study took place from 2012-2015 and involved 300 supervisors and their business interns from a private, liberal arts university ranked among the 2017 top 15 Regional West Best Colleges according to U.S. News & World Report Rankings. The main focus of the study was twofold (1) to better understand what determined internship satisfaction from the student perspective and (2) to better understand what determined internship satisfaction from the employer perspective.

The subjects of this study included intern supervisors primarily from mid to small businesses in the south-central region of the U.S., and their junior or senior level university business intern(s), majoring in one of eight business areas: business administration, finance, international business, digital media management, marketing, management, accounting, or entrepreneurship. This study took place year round and included fall, spring, and summer internships.

While the interns and the supervisors took part in an on-line survey at mid point in the internship and at the end of the internship, interns also participated in a general survey that was given prior to the start of their internship. During the initial period interns were asked to rank their level of preparedness as it applied to the level of knowledge, skills, and attributes they possessed in order to be successful in the workplace.

At mid point in the internship and at the end of the internship, interns were asked about their satisfaction levels in the following areas:

- Opportunities to develop soft skills, for example, oral and written communication skills, team skills, problem solving skills, decision making skills, critical and creative thinking skills, conflict resolution skills and professional etiquette skills
- Opportunities to gain knowledge in their field of interest
- Opportunities to be engaged in what they considered meaningful work as it related to their field of study
- Opportunities to develop network systems
- Opportunities to apply classroom learning
- Training, supervision, mentorship, and feedback provided during the internship.

At mid point in the internship and at the end of the internship, supervisors were asked about their satisfaction levels in five major areas. They were asked about their levels of satisfaction in:

- The intern's preparedness for the internship (e.g. business knowledge, skills, and attributes)
- The intern's ability to receive feedback and make the necessary corrections
- The quality of the intern's overall performance
- The contribution the intern made to the organization, and
- The value of the intern program

RESULTS

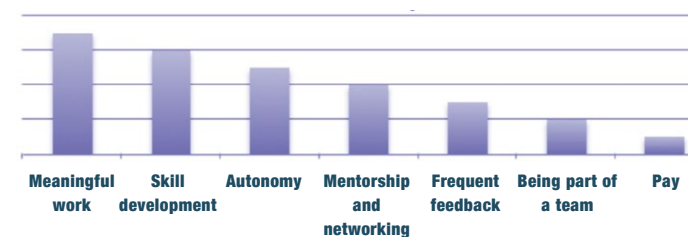
Supporting previous research (D'Abate, Youndt, & Wenzel, 2008; Narayanan, Okl, & Fukami, 2010), the results of the 2012-2015 Internship Satisfaction study indicate that there is a correlation between internship effectiveness and internship satisfaction. The results of the Internship Satisfaction study not only answered the question, "What determines internship satisfaction," but more importantly perhaps, it revealed the answers to "What makes internships effective?" In reviewing the results of previous studies (D'Abate, Youndt, & Wenzel, 2008; Narayanan, Okl, & Fukami, 2010) and of the 2012-2015 Internship Satisfaction study, it

became evident that two significant stakeholders are involved in determining internship satisfaction, and subsequently, internship effectiveness: the intern and the intern employer. Each stakeholder enters the internship with specific goals, and the extent to which these goals are aligned influences overall internship satisfaction and effectiveness.

The Intern

The 2012-2015 Internship Satisfaction study revealed the following seven factors that determined internship effectiveness from the intern perspective.

Factors determining positive internship outcomes as rank ordered by interns



Meaningful and challenging work was overwhelmingly the most important factor in determining internship satisfaction for interns. Work that is meaningful to interns was defined as having significance to the organization, a variety of challenging tasks that comfortably stretches interns outside their comfort zone, has a clearly defined scope and expectations, and is relevant to their academic learning experiences.

The second most important factor, skill development, is of particular interest in light of the interns' self-reported skill preparedness levels at the onset of the internship. Prior to commencing their internships 80% of the students reported they felt they possessed the necessary skills to do well in their internship. In addition, 70% of the respondents reported that they felt confident in their ability to communicate effectively with supervisors, co-workers, and customers. However, at mid point in the internship, 66% of the interns said they were NOT as prepared as they felt at the onset of the internship and DID NOT possess the skills they needed to be successful in the workplace. Specifically, they pointed to deficiencies in soft skills like written and oral communication, professional workplace etiquette, problem solving and critical thinking skills, and team skills. This concept was summed up well when one student said, "I did not know what I did not know until I entered the workplace."

These results echo similar findings (Harris-Chegg Foundation, 2013; Zimmer, 2014; Valenter, 2015; Hart Research Association, 2015) that indicate students tend to feel more confident in their abilities prior to engaging in the workplace. Once recognizing this limitation, it is understandable that the opportunity

to develop such critical skills is highly valued in an internship.

Autonomy, the third factor determining a positive outcome for interns, did not necessarily mean working independently. Instead, autonomy was described as having a project or task of significance for which the intern had complete responsibility and a defined deliverable.

The fourth factor impacting a positive intern outcome was the degree to which interns were mentored and had the opportunity for professional networking. Given the fact that the Millennial generation has been coached their entire lives (Howe & Strauss, 2007), it was not surprising to see this factor ranked so highly among this stakeholder group. Interns commented on how grateful they were for opportunities to shadow professionals in various positions within a company and for a mentor with whom they could confide in, ask questions of, and count on for guidance. Without guidance, Millennials report that work doesn't seem fulfilling, purposeful, or on track in helping them reach their career objectives (Wells, 2015).

The fifth and sixth factors are also indicative of what research tells us about this generation of interns. Similar to the findings of Millennial generation researchers Howe & Strauss, (2007) and Jones (2012),

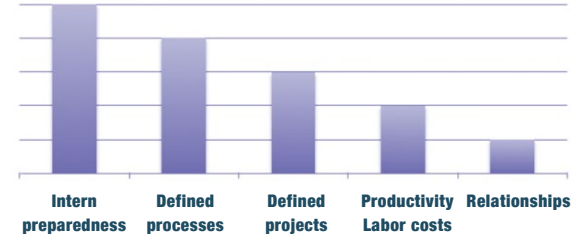
the results of this study indicate the importance of supportive feedback to assist interns on their learning path as well as their preference to work on teams in a collaborative structure that promotes creativity. A common theme among the respondents was well summarized when one student said, “I appreciate being asked for my input, and the opportunity to offer ideas that may impact a project or even a management decision.”

While the number of working students has grown as college enrollment and tuition has increased (Gault, Leach, & Duey, 2010), the need to repay college loan debt is a looming nightmare for many students. Despite facing an average loan debt of \$37,000 (Elvery, 2016; Josuweit, 2016) students rank internship pay, the final factor, as important, but not as important as the other factors previously discussed. Intern respondents who were paid noted they could be more flexible with intern hours than non-paid interns who often were limited in the number of hours they could devote to the internship.

The Intern Employer (Supervisor)

Factors determining internship satisfaction from the employer’s perspective centered around intern preparedness, increased productivity and reduced labor costs, as well as clearly defined intern processes and projects.

Factors determining positive internship outcomes ranked by intern employers



First and foremost, employers wanted interns who were not only academically prepared for the internship, but who were also job ready and possessed the soft skills needed to be effective in the workplace. It is interesting to note that of the supervisors surveyed, those who were most satisfied with the overall performance of their intern also ranked their intern as strongly to very strongly “job ready.” Additional factors determining positive outcomes for employers included:

1. Having clearly defined hiring, training, supervising, evaluating, and mentoring processes in place, and
2. Having clearly defined intern projects outlined prior to selecting an intern.

Having these clearly defined processes and projects in place allowed the company to effectively articulate expectations in a well-written intern job description. Those internships that provided clearly articulated internship opportunities and expectations were more likely to ensure a good match

for both the intern and the company. A good match also seemed to relieve supervisors and other company personnel of less demanding duties and responsibilities that could readily be taken on by capable interns. This resulted in increased productivity at lower labor costs.

The final factor determining a positive outcome for the employer was the ability to establish and maintain a relationship with university’s internship program directors and facilitators. Not only does this relationship ensure a steady flow of well prepared interns, but it also provides a partner who can help turn a challenging situation into a learning opportunity for both parties. Such partnerships may yield an overall improvement in the intern program.

THE 3P’S TO EFFECTIVE INTERNSHIPS

The results of this and previous studies lead to offering an internship program model based on best practices centered on program development, promotion, and pay.

Program Development

The Internship Satisfaction study revealed that clearly defined processes and projects are key components in setting up the structure of an effective internship. While this begins with the employer, university career center staff or faculty intern facilitators can aid in

this process. Universities can provide employer-training resources at the company site, through webinars, or through employer summits held on university campuses.

Program development includes having a structure in place that answers a variety of questions; however, the following specific questions stem from both intern and supervisor survey responses from the Internship Satisfaction study.

1. Why does the company want or need an intern? What is the objective of having an intern?
2. What will the intern’s daily responsibilities be?
3. What short and long-term projects will the intern participate in or be responsible for?
4. How will company orientation and training be set up for the intern program? How will employees within the company learn about the intern program and the onboarding of interns each semester?
5. Who will supervise the intern? Does this person have the time, resources, and personality to manage a college intern, provide mentorship, and offer frequent feedback?
6. How will the intern be evaluated?
7. Who will serve as the liaison between the organization and the university?

8. What exit strategy will be put in place should a need arise to abort the program?

Fully addressing these questions *before* writing the internship job description, announcing the opportunity on college campuses, and interviewing candidates, will ensure that a well-defined internship structure is in place and the right candidate will be chosen.

Promotion

Meaningful and challenging work is overwhelming the biggest draw for potential interns. Interns who tend to make the most important contributions to companies choose what *they* consider to be the most quality internship programs. This concept may lead to the following question: “How will interns know which internship programs are top notch and ones students would consider quality opportunities?”

The answer lies with the intern posting, often found on university career center websites.

Internship job descriptions and postings shed light on what students can expect from the internship.

When crafting intern job descriptions, consider that an intern’s primary objective is to be engaged in meaningful work that will provide learning opportunities and the forum to acquire specific skills necessary to be effective in today’s workplace.

A program without meaningful work is rendered meaningless to the intern.

The internship job description should be exciting, informative, and help future interns better understand what they will gain as a result of working with an organization, what skills they will hone or develop, how their work will impact company stakeholders, and what they will be working on. In a nutshell, internship job descriptions should sell the company, sell the internship, and highlight requirements.

Equally important to effectively promoting the internship to potential interns, is promoting internships inside the company. This will help ensure a smooth transition for not only the intern, but for employees who may benefit by the intern.

Managers, department leaders, and other employees should be informed about the presence of interns and the objectives of the intern program.

Interns want to feel part of a team and having employees welcome them and include them in conversation and even projects will help ensure an effective internship for all stakeholders.

Being recognized by others in the organization helps interns feel more comfortable if assistance is needed. Ultimately, it lessens the intern’s learning curve, increasing productivity rapidly.

Pay and Other Benefits

Companies need to give some thought to how they might attract qualified interns with some incentives. Interns have said, “it’s not about the pay; it’s about the meaningful work experience.”

More than may be imagined, extras like monthly intern lunches, free donuts or breakfast tacos, or designer coffee drinks in the company lounge, can be seen as appreciated perks. Bonuses such as these can boost morale by communicating to interns their value to the company.

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It is important to note that pay is not always in the form of a direct paycheck. There are ways a company can help students develop the critical soft skills that are important to success in today’s workplace. Interns want the opportunity to contribute their ideas orally and in writing. They want to help solve problems and hone their critical and creative thinking skills. Employers can invite interns to make presentations to management teams

or contribute through company newsletters, blogs, or periodic written reports. Millennials are craving, screaming, and downright begging for professional development opportunities at work!

CONCLUSION

Whether paid or not, the bottom line is to make the internship mutually beneficial. While pay is important and appreciated, it is not the primary factor that determines internship satisfaction or internship effectiveness for the intern; it is the valuable work experience that matters the most. As students near graduation and seek full-time employment, they understand the importance of gaining experience and the skills critical to workplace success and in demand by so many employers. It is through clearly defined internship projects that provide opportunities to apply classroom theory, build soft skills, and navigate challenging, real-world business problems that determine meaningful internship experiences and give soon-to-be graduates an edge over their competition. Meaningful internships provide an insider’s view to a career path and opportunities to develop a professional network system as students move from the classroom to the boardroom.

Likewise, clearly defined internship projects and processes allow the organization to find the “just right”

intern and reap the benefits of a well-facilitated intern program. Employers commented on the opportunity to “test-drive” future employees, take advantage of short-term support that freed up employees to accomplish higher level tasks, and the company exposure gained in colleges and universities. Perhaps mentioned most were the fresh, innovative ideas, and knowledge in all the latest technology, apps, and specialized computer software that comes so easily to this generation.

While both stakeholders contribute to the creation of a mutually beneficial internship experience, it seems that the process starts with the company. Once an organization has determined its internship goals, it can move forward with a well-defined internship structure that will support interns as well as employees working with interns. These elements provide the foundation for clearly articulating meaningful intern projects, tasks, and expectations to potential interns. This information will allow potential interns to align with organizations that share their goals and provide a pathway to a destination that will be beneficial to both parties.

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CREATING A “CO-OP CULTURE”

IN THE LIBERAL ARTS:

LESSONS FROM A FORMER

COMMUNICATION STUDENT

Annie Straka, Assistant Professor // University of Cincinnati

I can remember the feeling of anxiety in my belly before going home for Thanksgiving break during college as I anticipated the dreaded questions about my future that would come from my well-meaning relatives. Our conversations would go something like this:

“SO WHAT IS YOUR MAJOR?” they’d ask.

“COMMUNICATION,” I would reply with a nod and a smile, trying to sound confident.

“HM. SO WHAT EXACTLY WILL YOU DO WITH THAT? BE A BROADCASTER ON THE NEWS?”

“UM, YEAH, NO, I’M NOT TOTALLY SURE. CAN YOU PASS THE GREEN BEANS?”

As a communication major, it took time for me to find my professional path and feel confident in my ability to articulate the value of my liberal arts education to those who are unfamiliar with the communication field. I always envied the nursing majors and the accounting majors whose career titles were explicitly named in their degree. Somehow telling people I was going to be a “communicator” when I grew up didn’t sound quite as impressive. After graduating with my bachelor’s degree in communication, I went on to graduate school (also in communication), and have since found my place in an academic career where I apply my communication degree every day.

I no longer change the subject when I’m asked about my communication roots. I am a proud advocate of the true value of a liberal arts education — and I am particularly biased toward communication. I believe that as a student of communication, I have a better understanding of myself, and my world, and I attribute my relational orientation in the workplace to my communication background. So you can imagine my delight when I had the opportunity to develop a cooperative education program in my home discipline at the University of Cincinnati.

“COMM CO-OP” AT UC: PROGRAM STRUCTURE AND CURRICULUM

As the founding institution of cooperative education, we have a robust history of experiential learning at UC. Because of this history, I felt confident designing the comm co-op program with our existing, successful co-op program structures in mind. In particular, we were able to anticipate some of the challenges of an optional co-op program based on past experiences. That being said, the comm co-op track is a unique offering at our institution and its structure and curriculum are unlike any other program in several ways.

The comm co-op program was designed as a competitive, optional track within the communication baccalaureate degree. Students apply and are accepted into the program using a split cohort model, meaning we accept two groups of students per year from roughly the same class year and those students enter the program on a staggered basis. This split model allows for increased flexibility in the program and provides more consistency for employers because half of the students in the program are available to work and the other half are in classes during every term. Once the

students are accepted, the cohort enrolls in a professional development course to prepare them for the professional world and support them in their job search for their first co-op rotation. From there, the students complete three, full-time, paid co-op rotations before they graduate (the intention is that students rotate back and forth between full-time work and full-time school, though some may complete a back-to-back work or school rotation due to employer needs or class schedules). During each co-op rotation, students are enrolled in an online course that includes reflection and assessment assignments and that are completed by both the student and their supervisor. A final defining element of the program is that the students enroll in an in person reflection seminar during the semester immediately following their first co-op rotation to share and process their experiences in community with their peers.

The program launched during the 2015-16 academic year, with the first cohort enrolled in the professional development course during spring semester 2016 and working their first co-op rotation during summer semester 2016, so the program is very much in the infancy stage. However, in just the first several months of the program,

I have learned more than I could have anticipated about what is needed to establish an experiential learning culture and how to support liberal arts students in their career education. The program is ever-evolving for the better and I am excited about what’s to come, but I have to admit that I went into this work expecting things to go smoothly, just as we planned, and instead — perhaps for the better — it’s been a year of surprises and changes. I’d like to humbly share a few of the lessons that I believe will be relevant to others who are engaged in similar work at their own institutions. I thought it only appropriate that these lessons reflect many of the foundational building blocks of the communication discipline.



**RELATIONSHIPS
AND INTERACTION
MUST BE AT THE
CENTER.**

Regardless of how experiential learning or career education is structured on your campus, whether its centralized or embedded in the

departments, mandatory or optional, nothing can be achieved without strong relationships at the center of your work. Truly meaningful transformation happens through interaction. As an alum of the UC communication master's program, I was uniquely positioned to develop mutually beneficial, trusting relationships with the department. However, building such relationships on campus in a performance-based budgeting environment can be quite challenging and we continue to navigate these challenges collaboratively. Commitment to a shared mission has allowed us to work toward our goal without getting discouraged when things didn't go as we planned. Cultivating trusting relationships with students and employers is also critical. I made assumptions about my students' level of preparedness and understanding of their professional selves prior to having them in class and advising them during their job search. When I took the time to really get to know my students to try to understand the life experiences they were bringing to the classroom, I was better equipped to support them as many of them dipped their toes into the professional world for the first time. I found that they needed clear, consistent feedback in addition to emotional support during class and

during their job search. This kind of relationship can only be accomplished through interaction and shared-meaning making. Additionally, open dialogue with employers is essential for supporting liberal arts students in the job search. I found it helpful to ask employers directly for feedback about my students as they interviewed for positions and we had some challenging discussions about the subjective nature of job search materials. I learned that my students needed more writing practice and as a result, I implemented a writing sample assignment into my course.



**LANGUAGE
AND
FRAMING
MATTERS.**

I mentioned that I made some assumptions about my students that turned out to be inaccurate. I have since learned to assume nothing and always be explicit in stating my expectations so as to work toward clearer, shared understanding with my students. As I continue to redesign the comm co-op curriculum and develop ways to better prepare

my students for the professional world, I continue to be reminded of the importance of language. For example, the fact that the comm co-op track is framed as an optional program affects the students' commitment to completing the requirements. One of the primary challenges I have faced in these early months is retaining students in the program, especially those students who struggle or experience a slow start during the job search. This is where language and framing becomes critically important from a program management perspective. For the second cohort of students, I was more intentional in my choice of language and I framed the program as an opportunity and a commitment rather than an option. I described my role as the instructor and advisor using specific language that emphasized the supportive nature of my work so as to make sure students understood that I was not able to "place" them in a co-op position if they didn't hold up their end of the bargain. They had to take responsibility for their own destiny and we would work in partnership to connect them with professional opportunities. I continue to think about how to frame the program to ensure that students understand what will be required of them to truly enhance

their undergraduate experience through structured experiential learning.



**STUDENTS NEED
TOOLS TO
ADVOCATE FOR
THEMSELVES.**

I've found that one of the greatest challenges for liberal arts majors is that many lack the tools to communicate their skills to potential employers with confidence. As communication theory reminds us, those who have access to discursive tools can achieve greater agency and power. The tools needed by students are both discursive and material, and as professional development/experiential learning educators, it is our responsibility to arm students with these tools. In my case, I found that the communication students needed tools that would allow them to showcase their work and illustrate their well-roundedness. I chose to integrate an e-portfolio into the program so as to offer students a more interactive, creative space

beyond the paper resume or cover letter for showcasing their skills. Integrating this as a major assignment in the course allowed me to provide guidance and structure for my students as they compiled their materials to share with potential employers. Additionally, I try to be more intentional when I talk to students about the unique value of their communication lens. I found it helpful to work with students collectively and individually to articulate the ways in which a communicative outlook on the world can benefit an organization. We worked as a class to put the benefits of a communication lens in writing and from that list, students were able to integrate those discursive tools into their job search materials and draw from them during interviews. In the liberal arts at large, it is important for career educators to prepare students to describe their degree and their skills with confidence. As Albert Einstein (who was a student of the liberal arts himself) reminds us, “if you can’t explain it simply, you don’t understand it well enough.” How can we expect our students to advocate for themselves in a competitive job market if they can’t simply explain the value of their degree?



**EXPECT
MESSINESS
AND EMBRACE
CHANGE.**

Like the process of human communication itself, creating a “co-op culture” in the liberal arts is not a simple, transactional task. I (naively) expected the first year to be fairly smooth sailing, largely because of the strong co-op culture at UC. The first year has been messier than I anticipated, and I have learned to embrace the iterative, recursive nature of building a new program. At first, I felt frustrated and discouraged. We experienced some early student attrition and I worried that the program wouldn’t survive. I had to critically reflect on my own assumptions and expectations and I keep reminding myself that one must be resilient and humble when doing something new for the first time. One particularly difficult lesson is that some student attrition in an optional program may be inevitable and should be expected. That doesn’t mean that we shouldn’t work diligently to identify and remove

potential barriers to student success, but it does mean that we don’t dwell on the past and instead work confidently toward the future. Expecting messiness instead of being surprised by setbacks and embracing change instead of resisting it allows us to be adaptable and to continually improve our program. Students at every institution and in every discipline are unique and we should focus our energy on creating pathways that support our students in the best way possible. This cannot be accomplished if we approach our work with rigidity and hold too tightly to our preconceived visions of what success looks like.

I am certain that these lessons will continue to grow and evolve and there will be additional new lessons that arise as we move the program forward. In spite of the messiness, I am proud that nearly thirty UC communication students will have completed at least one full-time, paid co-op rotation by the end of the first year of the program. These experiences will undoubtedly have a significant impact on the professional and personal development of these students. And at the very least, it is my wish that they will sit down at their respective Thanksgiving tables feeling a little more confident, ready to answer questions about their future with pride.

BUILDING AN EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING CENTER

Rhonda Eaker // Metropolitan State University of Denver

I am not proud to say it, but I can reduce any pleasant social gathering to awkward silence. As the Director of the Applied Learning Center, all I have to do is mention my job title and conversation comes to a screeching halt. You see, nobody outside of academia has a clue what an Applied Learning Center is and most people don't even know how to ask what it means.

After a suitable number of head nods and “hms”, someone will generally steer the conversation in another direction and the crowd will thankfully move on to another topic.

It was much easier when I could say that I worked at the Internship Center. Internship is a word people know and understand. People would share their own internship stories or talk about interns they have supervised. Conversation would continue and flow from there. Sometimes I even got new employers for our students from these conversations.

Five years ago our internship program was reimagined into a comprehensive experiential learning center and renamed the Applied Learning Center. This is the story of that change along with thoughts on what others might learn from our experience. Spoiler alert: the end of the story is that it was a widely successful change. So, despite the personal social discomfort, I wouldn't change a thing.

A LITTLE BIT OF HISTORY

Metropolitan State University of Denver (MSU Denver) was founded 50 years ago as an open enrollment, public undergraduate institution designed to serve metropolitan Denver. Early in the college history, the Internship Center was founded as a centralized unit to coordinate work-based learning experiences across campus. The center grew rapidly in size and number of students served for 15 years and then entered another 15-year period of relative stability. By 2010, however, that stability was beginning to feel like stagnation as the number of students

served gradually declined. Retirements and a layoff reduced the internship coordinator staff from six to four. The remaining staff started discussions of how to limit or reduce our services. We were a valued office, but a very small one with little clout. Sinking ship is not the right metaphor, but we were definitely a ship that wasn't going anywhere very fast!

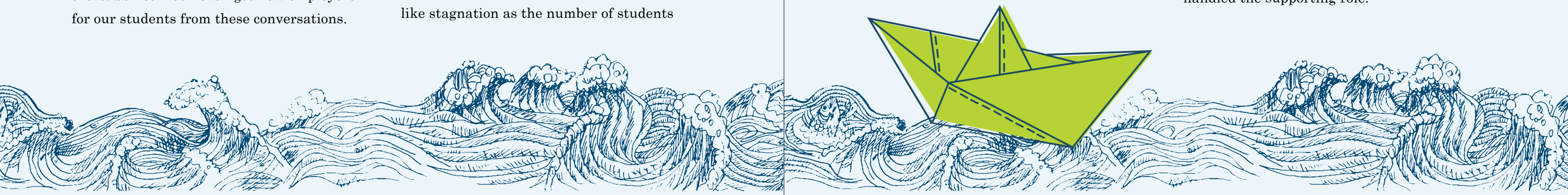
But, the tide was changing. New ideas related to experiential learning were growing on campus. There was interest in involving our students in undergraduate research projects and our president was heavily invested in creating an institution that was more community focused. Task forces were formed and community engagement, service learning and undergraduate research emerged as programs that MSU Denver wanted to develop.

As a public institution struggling to adjust to declining state support, the issue was how to develop new programs with limited money. A visionary Associate Vice President and Provost began to see a way forward. What about using the existing infrastructure of the Internship Center as a structural home for these new programs?

WHAT DO WE HAVE IN COMMON?

The proposals to create service learning, undergraduate research and community engagement initiatives on campus emerged shortly after the American Association of Colleges and Universities published its work on High Impact Educational Practices (Kuh, 2008). Our campus leadership had recently ordered and read the AAC&U publication so this work was fresh in their minds. Undergraduate Research, Service Learning and Internships were all on the list of “high impact practices”. These programs also represent experiential or hand's-on learning. The high impact nature of the programs along with the experiential component provided the conceptual basis for combining them. A neighboring institution had an Experiential Learning Center that combined similar programs so we knew there was some precedent for the idea.

Nevertheless, the fact is that the idea to combine internships, service learning, community engagement and undergraduate research was a marriage of convenience. It was a practical and low cost way to start new programs. It was not the result of research into best practices or the outcome of a carefully crafted strategic planning process. Faculty on reassigned time ran the new initiatives and the Internship Center staff and existing budget handled the supporting role.



Still, there was some logic in the decision and the connections between these new programs became instantly clear. Internships, service learning and community engagement all work with a lot of the same community partners. Research projects often grow out of research internships and vice versa. Tracking service learning placements turns out to be a lot like tracking an internship placement. Many of the resources used by internship supervisors are useful for service learning faculty and research faculty mentors. Campus events and activities focusing on student work outside of the classroom easily fit together into common events.

Students also move seamlessly between the programs. My favorite early success story is of a student in a service learning class project who was selected for an internship as a result of his work on that project. The internship later turned into a paid job. The experience gained in that job eventually landed him in a professional graduate program.

In academic time, the transition was very quick. Just a year after the idea was first proposed we concluded that “Internship Center” was no longer an appropriate name. The Applied Learning Center (ALC) was born.

WHERE WE ARE NOW

The Applied Learning Center was successful in initiating the new programs at MSU Denver in a quick and cost effective way. But it ended

up being more than simply an expedient way to start some new programs. The ALC initiated a new level of growth and visibility for experiential learning at MSU Denver.

Although we started with only the original internship staff, the success of our new initiatives brought enough visibility to the program that new positions were quickly created. Senior leaders became champions for various initiatives and found ways to make sure that we had the staff needed to continue those initiatives. Currently, the ALC has doubled the original staffing levels.

With increased staffing, the need for space became critical. Although the Internship Center space was not ideal, it served the needs of a smaller staff but there was no space for new staff. After a couple of years of spreading new people around across campus our plight became dire and we were offered a new, custom designed space for the ALC. We designed a welcoming lobby with workstations for front desk staff. We have a full sized classroom with Smart Board for orientations, trainings and meetings and an intimate conference room for smaller gatherings. These spaces have been used in a variety of ways by the various programs. Community engagement and service learning have used the space to host community-focused planning groups such as Campus Compact or the Engaged Faculty Institute. The rooms have been used for lunch and learns and workshops that target both

students and faculty for all of our programs. Internship employers have used them for information sessions.

To meet internal needs coordinators for all of the programs have private offices to meet with students and faculty. The Civic Engagement Program office has an extra workstation for Alternative Break Leaders. We even designed a workspace and storage in the kitchen specifically for prepping for events, conferences and open houses.

We have more name recognition and visibility on campus that we have ever had. The Internship Center had strong relationships with a number of departments on campus, but in most cases we worked with a single faculty member in each department. Faculty in the department who didn’t supervise interns typically didn’t know much, if anything, about what we did. However, with multiple programs we have engaged far more of the faculty. Faculty who never supervised interns may be mentors to research students or they may teach service learning classes. The ALC has found strong faculty support among a much broader range of faculty than we had in the past.

Finally, but perhaps most importantly, we are serving larger numbers of new students. As our visibility on campus has grown, more and more students seem to be finding us. We are also reaching them in new ways. Although most students who walk in our door still come to us because they want an internship, we are using our orientation to introduce them to other ways

of gaining experience. We now have students who are heavily engaged with our office in ways other than internships.

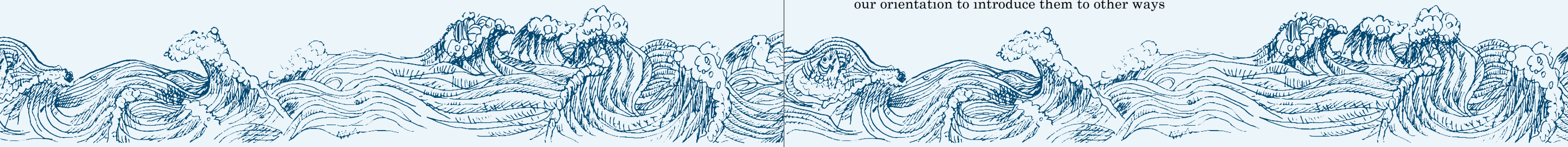
Now is the perfect time to look back and share with others what made it all work and what we have learned.

SMOOTH SAILING: WHAT WE DID RIGHT

Faculty Involvement

They key to the early success of the ALC was the use of Faculty Associates. We started with a Service Learning Faculty Associate and two Undergraduate Research Associates. These were full time faculty who were offered reassigned time to work on the new programs.

An initial reason for this structure was the fact that it cost the institution very little extra money, but the advantages to this arrangement ended up being far more valuable than just saving money. Having respected faculty as champions for the new programs gave instant credibility to the programs among other faculty. They had access to Faculty Senate, faculty meetings, chairs meetings and other venues that administrators don’t usually have access to. We created advisory boards with heavy representation of faculty. These boards set the agenda and priorities for the new programs. The partnership between the faculty associates, advisory boards and ALC staff meant that the new programs and initiatives had the input and buy in needed to succeed.



Start with a Bang!

One of the first priorities for the Faculty Associates for Undergraduate Research was a desire to initiate a campus-wide Undergraduate Research Conference. There had been small departmental events that showcased student work, but a campus-wide conference would be a great way to build immediate value and visibility for the idea of undergraduate research at MSU Denver. The Faculty Associates spent most of their first year eliciting support for the conference and building interest. They didn't start small, but proceeded with plans to make it a full-fledged, professional-style event. It was a tremendous success and instantly became a signature event for the campus.

This early and very visible success had immediate benefits.

- It put the Undergraduate Research Program on the map. Faculty who may not have even known that MSU Denver had an internship program were involved in the conference. This spread awareness of the new ALC quickly.
 - It gave us a reason to ask for new funding. The conference was expensive and if it was to happen again, it needed a budget.
 - Perhaps most importantly, after putting in many long hours planning the first conference, the faculty associates joined with me in pointing out that a conference of this magnitude could not be sustained without additional staffing. The direct result of the
- Host an annual Open House for the ALC to introduce the campus to our office
 - Create a series of awards that represent achievement in areas related to all of the ALC programs and host an Awards Banquet to celebrate those achievements
 - Develop an ALC public relations campaign that includes joint brochures and a website for the ALC
 - Develop a joint database in which all of the ALC activities can be tracked so that overlaps in community partnerships and faculty involvement can be easily identified

first research conference was the addition of the ALC's first new staff position.

Visibility

The Undergraduate Research Conference started the ALC off with a bang during its very first year. But, the other programs had a slower start. Service Learning was still trying to get its footing and Civic Engagement wasn't conceptualized fully. During our second year, the ALC initiated its first strategic planning process. The overriding question: how do we take the infrastructure of the Internship Program and the newly generated excitement of the Undergraduate Research Program and use it to build momentum for this new entity called the Applied Learning Center? The answer was more integration of programs and more joint marketing. Specific goals included:

I had been describing the ALC as an "umbrella" infrastructure for separate and distinct programs that each operated independently. The key to our future together, however, needed to be built on a reputation as a single unit with the common purpose of introducing students to experiential learning and high impact educational practices.

With increased visibility came increased clout. The ALC is much more widely known on campus now that the Internship Program ever was. Rather than only having support from faculty who supervise internships, we have support from faculty who mentor researchers, and faculty who teach service learning classes. More visibility and awareness on campus means we are reaching more students.

It's All about Attitude

So here is the picture: An office that has experienced declining staff is being asked to take on new programs, including putting on a campus-wide conference, with no additional regular staff or budget. Student employees found themselves making nametags for the conference instead of sending resumes to employers. Conference schedules, rather than position descriptions, were being printed on the internship office printer. The already insufficient office space became a conference staging area. **Sounds like a scenario ripe for complaints and grumbling . . . right?**

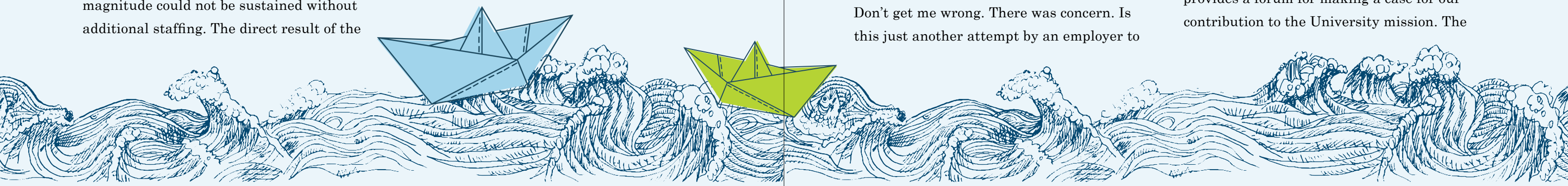
Don't get me wrong. There was concern. Is this just another attempt by an employer to

ask employees to do more work with no additional resources? Should we be worried that this change was just going to take our focus away from internship students? Those were possibilities, but the desire to be part of something bigger provided hope. Staff went along with it, perhaps grudgingly at first, but with an attitude that we would do our best. That attitude paid off. The relationships built with the faculty associates and the success of the early endeavors proved that it could work.

Support the University Strategic Plan

It is common advice to make sure that any office on campus can support the overall campus vision and mission. While internships alone can certainly fit into the strategic plan at MSU Denver, the expansion of our programs provides a stronger connection to the strategic plan. MSU Denver's strategic plan specifically mentions our desire to create "civic-minded" graduates. Although I could argue that internships support that goal, our Civic Engagement Program and Service Learning Program both have clearer and more direct relationship to that particular goal. Internships and Undergraduate Research, on the other hand, more directly support the goal of creating graduates who are "ready to meet career and/or graduate school expectations".

The yearly annual report for the ALC has provides a forum for making a case for our contribution to the University mission. The



ALC has also been active in creating learning outcomes for our programs and attempting (sometimes successfully and sometimes not!) to measure those outcomes. An annual report rich with data and assessment information has been a useful document for making the case for the value of the ALC to the university.

CHOPPY WATERS: LESSONS LEARNED

Looking back, there is little doubt that building a full-fledged experiential learning center out of a declining internship program was a good move. In retrospect, the adjustment went surprisingly well. Still, there were lessons learned.

Lesson: it is worth extra time and effort to develop a clear vision of each position

As new positions were added to the staff, sometimes we didn't have a clear vision of what the new person would actually be doing. The positions evolved and changed considerably after hires were made. Some of the early new hires didn't stay as long as we would have hoped, in part due to a disconnect between the person hired and the position as it evolved. New positions in a new office can be nebulous at first. Still making an extra effort to find the right fit and build a strong staff are well worth the time.

Lesson: Physical location matters

Once new staff members were hired, we had to find a place for them. At one point we had staff spread out in three different locations

across campus. This led to a lack of early group cohesion, which considerably slowed the process of integrating the various programs and activities. We were finally offered new space large enough for all of us. Once we moved in together, the difference was immediate. We began thinking and working as a single unit rather than disparate programs that just happen to report to the same director.

Lesson: Have something to offer

One of the first initiatives of the Service Learning Program was to try to find out what kind of service learning was already happening on campus. But, attempts to gather information were met with resistance. Faculty had no reason to tell us about their service learning activities and some were a little distrustful about our motives for asking. So, we stopped asking. Instead, we hired someone who had the expertise to help faculty develop and revise Service Learning curriculum. We now have expertise and assistance to offer faculty rather than just asking them for information. Once we have a relationship with faculty we find that often they are happy that someone is interested in what they are doing and are far more willing to share information about their service learning activities.

Lesson: Simplify the message

Just like my dinner party companions, students and faculty aren't always sure what an experiential (or applied) learning center might do. Despite the success and visibility of our various

endeavors, many people on campus will still revert to calling us the Internship Center when introducing us to their students or to new faculty because "internship" is a concept almost everyone understands. Even as staff of the ALC we have struggled to define what we do.



The MSU Denver Career Services office provided a breakthrough. They designed a simple graphic

with three words: **Explore, Experience and Execute**. They tell students that their office helps students "Explore" their career goals and "Execute" their career plans, but that for "Experience" the students should check out the ALC. This simple graphic and explanation put our office in terms that students easily understand. We are the "place to get experience" to enhance your education and career preparation.

UNCHARTED WATERS

On a regular basis, we find more and more ways to integrate the various initiatives of the ALC. Our most recent change was to replace our longstanding "internship orientation" with a more generic orientation. The premise of the new orientation is that we are going to introduce students to a variety of ways that they can enhance their resumes with career related experiences and not limit ourselves to just talking about internships. Drawing on our creative juices, the ALC staff developed our own graphic (figure 1) showing the "ivory tower"

and the "real world" with a great chasm in between. During the orientation, we proceeded to "fill in" the chasm with boulders representing various types of experience.

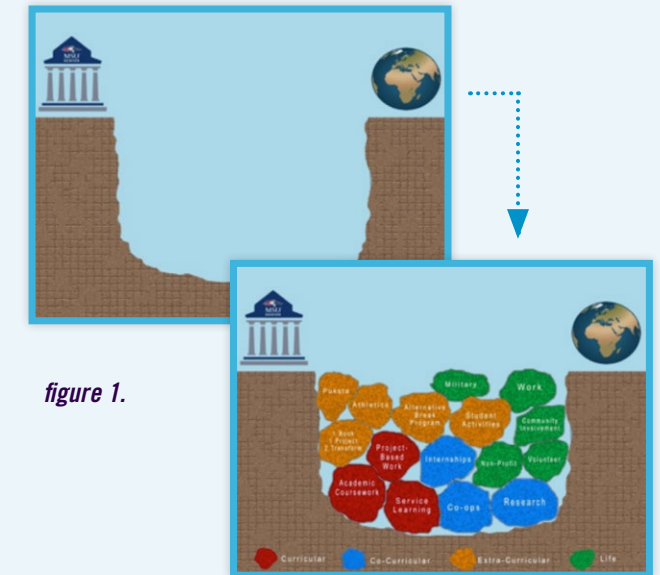


figure 1.

Corny, but it makes the point. Students come to the Applied Learning Center and we provide a variety of resources for them to gain experience, apply their learning and enhance their career preparation.

I am sure that we will continue to find new ways to take advantage of the synergies between our various experiential activities as the years go by. No longer limited to internships or co-ops we have so much more potential for new programming in the Applied Learning Center at MSU Denver.

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Experiential Learning through Community Service: Training Teens as Child Educators

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ABSTRACT

Enhancing young children's knowledge about healthy eating and exercise is an unmet need in many urban, low-income communities. In this paper, we summarize a unique partnership between a community service organization with service-learning programming for high school students (the Mayerson Foundation in Cincinnati, Ohio), a Boys and Girls Club in the downtown area of Cincinnati, and a professor in Health Promotion and Education at the University of Cincinnati. This program was designed to prepare high school students to implement health- and nutrition-related programming at an urban Boys and Girls Club. Teenagers learned how to coach young children about healthy eating and the importance of daily exercise. In this paper, the authors describe the program and training of high school coaches in an effort to share information about the program with others who may want to implement similar programs.

INTRODUCTION

Improving young children's knowledge about healthy eating and exercise is an unmet need for many African American children residing in urban areas (Kumanyika et al., 2014; Taveras et al., 2013). Economically disadvantaged children may benefit from exposure to healthy eating and exercise instruction, and summer programs offer unique opportunities to provide health education without interrupting the school day. Through community collaborations, it is possible to provide educational programming inexpensively, and to address unmet needs. This paper describes the implementation of a healthy eating and exercise program in which high school students served as nutrition and exercise coaches to children at a local Boys and Girls Club. The high school coaches were trained to use motivational interviewing to engage children in developing goals to improve their healthy eating and exercise behaviors. Motivational interviewing is a client-centered approach used to enhance intrinsic motivation through exploration of roadblocks to personal change (e.g., the children's daily goals) and ideas for overcoming these roadblocks to achieve progress in reaching one's goals (Resnicow, Davis, & Rollnick, 2006). Having children develop their own goals and improving their self-confidence for reaching their goals was an important component to a program philosophy hinging on the importance of child agency and their voices as being important as they develop their behaviors and construct their actions in the world (James & Prout, 1997; Morss, 2002).

The teenagers who were coaches for children were participating in a service program conducted by a local community service organization, the Mayerson Foundation in

Cincinnati, Ohio. A staff member from the Mayerson Foundation (the third author) teamed with a professor from the University of Cincinnati (the first author) and a graduate student (the second author) to develop the Children's Healthy Eating and Exercise Program (CHEE Program, Nabors et al., 2012, 2013, 2015) to be delivered to elementary school-age children at a local Boys and Girls Club in an urban area over a short summer camp program. The professor and director of the service program met through the Service Learning Coordinator at the University of Cincinnati. They discussed ways to implement the CHEE Program to help children in the community. Dr. Nabors has expertise in child health and had been implementing the CHEE Program for the past four years and the second and third authors have expertise in service-learning programming and implementing health programs with children. We partnered with the director and staff at the Boys and Girls Club through a series of meetings and staff at the Boys and Girls Club approved the new program and provided feedback at the end of the program.

The program consisted of eight hour-long modules in which the teen health coaches led group activities and exercise sessions. They also provided health education and worked individually with the children to develop daily nutrition and exercise goals. The healthy eating goals were developed to "fit" with the healthy foods she children had in their refrigerators and pantries. Exercise goals were developed after learning what was feasible for the child and family. Two sets of teen coaches implemented the program; with each group providing four modules. A total of 47 teenagers and 65 children participated.



THE CHILDREN'S HEALTHY EATING AND EXERCISE PROGRAM

As mentioned, the CHEE Program was developed by the first author and her and colleagues (Nabors et al., 2012; 2013), and was adapted cooperatively by first and third authors of this article into a short manual for the high school coaches. The manual addresses the need for healthy eating and reviews the "Stop or Traffic Light Diet" (Epstein, 2005). This diet was developed by a national expert, Dr. Leonard Epstein, and it was designed to teach children to limit their intake of "red" or high fat and sugar foods; to eat "yellow" foods with moderate levels of fat and sugar in moderation; and to eat "Green" foods (which include many fruits and vegetables) frequently (Epstein, Gordy, et al., 2012; Epstein, Wing, et al., 1984; Epstein & Squires, 1988). The manual also incorporates information about portion sizes, how to review food labels and MyPlate (<https://www.choosemyplate.gov/>). The high school coaches also taught the children about the importance of 60 minutes of exercise per day and participated in physical activities with them every day. The revised manual is available from the first and third authors.

During the first week of the program, twenty-three teenagers from four high schools taught the children about the Stop Light Diet or Traffic Light Diet (Epstein, 2005). Children reviewed magazine pictures to identify red, yellow, and green foods. They drew pictures to represent the contents of their families' refrigerators, and then they discussed with their coaches what healthy foods they could eat at home and different exercises they could do at home. Children completed a healthy food maze and talked with coaches about healthy eating as they completed it. This health

coaches also taught the children how to set a daily healthy eating and exercise goal and checked in on their progress toward the goal each day. During physical activity time the children and teenagers played large-group games such as tag, relay races, and kickball. The children really enjoyed the activity time and asked to repeat games and play each day.

Beginning in Week II, a new set of twenty-four teenage instructors began their experience at the Boys and Girls Club. During the first lesson the children at the Boys and Girls Club reviewed what they had learned about healthy eating with their new coaches (twenty-four new high school coaches from four different local high schools) and got to know each other. Other lessons reviewed in week two involved learning about healthy and unhealthy snack foods, the importance of eating healthy snacks, how to eat a healthy breakfast, ideas for ordering a healthy meal at a restaurant, a review of MyPlate, ideas to reduce television and "screen" time, and ideas about key food groups (e.g., grains and proteins). There were a variety of physical exercises including tag, basketball, jump rope, dodge ball, and several types of relay races. During inclement weather, indoor games (such as Telephone or Duck, Duck, Goose) were substituted. The teenagers mentioned that they really enjoyed the activities and opportunities to lead a program while, themselves, learning new tips about eating more fruits and vegetables.

THE HIGH SCHOOL COACHES AND THEIR TRAINING

The volunteer health coaches were participating in a summer service learning program that focused on poverty and homelessness. Volunteering with the children attending the Boys and Girls Club was one stop in their

all-day service program, which included stops at multiple nonprofit locations. Their supervisors from their high schools and the director of the project from the Mayerson Center had time to discuss key issues related to diversity, equity and service learning at the start and end of the teenagers' service as well as each night at the end of daily activities.

High school coaches prepared for coaching and training by reviewing the entire manual with the first and third authors as group leaders before the project began. The university instructor and program lead from the service organization went over the activities for the day with the high school coaches each day for a 30 minute period before they worked with the children. The supervising teachers and the authors were available to support and provide information for the teenagers as they worked on activities with the children.

Each high school coach worked with one to three children. During their lessons, the high school coaches consulted the manual, and the first and third authors and supervising teachers were also present for questions or support. In addition, four to five staff for the Boys and Girls Club were available on site. As the week progressed, the volunteers became proficient at coaching and the staff members from the Boys and Girls Club were able to focus their attention elsewhere. In fact, the staff members and director mentioned that a key benefit of having the program "on site" was freeing up their time for collaboration and planning. The staff at the Boys and Girls Club reported that they valued the program, and invited the team back the next summer to deliver the program. The staff at the Boys and Girls Club mentioned that the teenagers were

very "real" and "important" figures for the children, providing role models for the importance of helping others.

LESSONS LEARNED DURING PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

It was important to teach the coaches additional games and activities for working with the children, should they finish an activity early. The high school students reported that they needed extra games to keep active youngsters engaged while they waited for other peers to finish. It also was important to encourage high school coaches to take ownership of the curriculum so that they could deliver the lesson. The teenagers stated that they benefitted from and enjoyed their leadership roles. Many of the high school coaches emphasized that having ice breakers (games to get to know one another and have fun) was important for each lesson to allow them to re-establish a positive and fun relationship with the child before they began talking about healthy eating. Roughly 50% of the high school coaches participating in this project reported that they learned new things to improve their own eating habits. Thus, learning about healthy eating was important for improving teenagers' health as well as helping them learn to coach the children about eating nutritious snacks and meals. Fifteen to thirty minutes of debriefing followed the teaching sessions with the children. Allowing the high school coaches time to debrief and process the lesson, immediately after working with the children, also was critical as this allowed the high school coaches to reflect on what the service meant to them and about their relationships with the children they coached.

DISCUSSION

This healthy eating and exercise program allowed the teenagers to have a structure and a purpose when interacting with the children. The teenagers reported really enjoying leading the program. Emphasizing a spirit of owning the program and making it their own allowed the teenagers to feel more confident in their role as coaches. Ultimately, we believe it fostered relationship building with the youth and allowed the teenagers to feel comfortable and have a purpose for their role with the children. Both the children and the teenagers reported learning more about nutrition and becoming more “psyched” or motivated to engage in daily physical activity. Programs, such as the one described in this paper, can be run on a shoe-string budget, and are a mechanism for providing critical services to youth and fulfilling service opportunities for teenagers. The university professor donated her time and the graduate student received a

Allowing the high school coaches time to debrief and process the lesson, immediately after working with the children, also was critical as this allowed the high school coaches to reflect on what the service meant to them and about their relationships with the children they coached.

small stipend for her efforts. The high school supervisors received a stipend and the leader of the program from the Mayerson Center completed her activities as part of her position at the center. The Mayerson Center paid for supplies and transporting the children and the university professor also donated supplies for

this project. Staff members at the Boys and Girls Club were compensated, but they felt that the program was successful and held a staff meeting toward the end of the program, because they had confidence in the volunteers. Having different groups of teenagers was not stressful for the children. They bonded with teenagers each week. Also, the children enjoyed teaching the coaches for week two about the Traffic Light Diet and the other things they had learned about healthy eating and exercising. The staff at the Boys and Girls Club said that they had confidence in the teenagers and their supervisors and their abilities to work with the children. Ultimately, the partnership between universities, community organizations, and high school service programs can fill a gap in services for children during summer programs, benefiting all involved.

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