

College degrees used to be evaluated primarily by their academic content and intellectual depth, when graduating from a university was sufficient to ensure gainful employment. However, as the economy has changed, so too have the requirements for entering the working world and graduate professional schools. Internships have become a key for post-graduation employment, and often an important means for improving the quality and significance of early professional placement. Internships give students an opportunity to acquire useful work experience, and perhaps more importantly, an understanding of the type of career they might wish to pursue after graduation. Although most undergraduates tend to think of all internship programs in similar terms—essentially as work experience-- not all internship programs are the same. This paper examines three different internships programs offered at the University of Southern California (USC), compares the organizational and process components of the programs, and assesses the impact of the programs on the student participants.

Value of Internships

Academic internships programs are very popular with many employing organizations, educational institutions, and students (Coco 2000, Hall et al., 1996, Sides and Mrvica, 2007; Maertz, Stoeberl and Marks 2014, 123). An internship can be defined as a structured, career-relevant work experience obtained by students prior to graduation from an academic program (Taylor, 1988; Maertz, Stoeberl and Marks, 125). “University training programs have relied on internships to immerse students in real world experiences for over a century” (Lehman and Quick 2011, 2). The value of internships for undergraduates is well established. Although students often perform well in their academic courses, there are many things that regular classes cannot teach in order to prepare them for their careers (Kelley and Gaedeke 1990; Kelly and Bridges 2005; Kim, Kim and Bzullak 2011, 696).

Students who participate in internship programs come from all variety of disciplines. Typically, they seek internships in the final year of their degree program with their eyes fixed on a future career. An internship program provides an opportunity for work-based learning, representing a pedagogical shift that has become “part of the landscape of higher education” (Boud & Solmon 2001; Carson and Fisher 2006, 701). Internship experiences provide numerous benefits to students and employers¹. Such programs allow students to develop important skills, apply skills learned in the classroom to real world problems, understand different theories they have learned in the classrooms, and become more familiar with real world practices (Kim, Kim and Bzullak 696; Richards 1984; Gault and Schlager 2000).

A well-designed internship expands the knowledge and skills of candidates while also gauging their ability to apply new learning in authentic settings as they contend with problems that have real world consequences. Built right, the internship becomes a sturdy vessel upon which new practitioners can navigate the swift, unpredictable currents that separate classroom theory and on-the-job reality (Fry, Bottoms, and O’Neill 2005, 3; Shoho, Barnett and Martin 2012, 161).

When offering internship programs, a key concern of universities and faculty is whether students achieve the desired learning outcomes from the internship program (Elkins 2002; Kim, Kim and Bzullak 696). Clearly, faculty must provide input throughout internships to help students develop their interpersonal skills, work habits, dependability, and initiative (Kim, Kim and Bzullak 697; Raymond, McNabb, and Matthaei 1993). The structure of an internship program is an important factor in providing high quality and productive internship experience (Gryski, Johnson, and O’Toole 1987; Kim, Kim and Bzullak 696). Well-planned internship activities prove to be valuable learning opportunities (Brow-Ferrigno & Mult 2004; Lehman and Quick 2).

Assessing Internship Programs

¹ Employers and partner organizations are used interchangeably throughout the paper.

There is little scholarship that systematically assesses internship programs. One reason may be that such programs often emerge and develop to meet the specific needs of the academic institution and student population. Among the small set of studies is Maertz et al.'s, which has identified four organizational variables that help maximize the benefits of internship programs while minimizing its costs. The first of these variables is whether the internships meet the needs of the interns and the employers, while also maintaining academic goals. This criterion reflects the desire of many schools to ensure that the internship requirements and assignments provide a true complement in content and pedagogy to traditional classes (Maertz et al., 132).

A second variable is whether agents of the school are communicating clearly and frequently with employers to foster and cultivate the school-employer relationship. Good communication between providers and the school is essential for creating meaningful internship experiences for students, establishing lasting relationships with providers, full-time job placements, and possible sponsorships. Third, schools must ensure accurate record keeping of data for all participants in the internship. This recordkeeping should include the work content for each internship, faculty and employer evaluations, whether employment was obtained with company either before or after graduation, and contact information for the employer and student. Lastly, to avoid any legal liability, schools should inform employers about their obligations to comply with relevant employment laws (Maertz et al., 135-6).

In our evaluation of the three programs, we use three types of criteria: 1. organizational and process variables; 2. impact variables; and 3. participant satisfaction. The organizational and process variables we use include two of Maertz et al.'s above mentioned variables: The extent to which internships are designed to meet the needs of interns and employers while ensuring that some academic goals are achieved; and level of communication between program staff and participating organizations. We also use a third organizational variable – the availability and nature of professional training and guidance by the internship program.

For the assessment of impact, prior research suggests that in evaluating the outcomes of experiential learning it is useful to assess several different areas including personal growth, employment, and civic contributions (Conway, Amel, &

Gerwein, 2009; Raman & Pashupati, 2010). In order to evaluate program impacts in these areas, we conducted a comprehensive survey of students in the three programs. The survey was sent to a total of 365 current and former USC students who participated in one of the programs between January 2015 and December 2017.² The survey was administered online between February and March 2018, and the replies were anonymous. We received a total of 100 completed surveys following three email requests (no incentives were offered).

Following the assessment of impact, we assess participant satisfaction using questions from our survey. The questions refer to student satisfaction from the internship program, the organization they interned with, and overall student satisfaction with the internship experience.

The paper first discusses key features of the three USC internship programs, and then provides an evaluation of the programs based on organizational and process variables, impact on students, and participant satisfaction.

Three Internship Programs

i. General Description

For several decades, the Jesse M. Unruh Institute of Politics at the University of Southern California has offered a traditional internship program in which the Institute acts as a facilitator for students to gain political internships in and around the Los Angeles area. Students come to the Institute and are evaluated by the staff for their experience and areas of interest. The staff is then able to match the students' qualifications to several internship providers that work with Unruh. After resumes and cover letters are prepared by the students and in consultation with the staff, the Institute applies on behalf of the student to one or more internships. Upon completion of a brief interview and acceptance by the provider, the student is then

² An estimated 40 students have taken a program more than once. Due to the anonymous nature of the survey we had to limit each respondent to one response. Respondents were instructed to refer to their most recent internship if they had enrolled more than once. Of the 365 students invited to take the survey, only about 180 were still enrolled at USC at the time of the survey.

registered into an internship class (Political Science 395) and is able to obtain academic credit for the time they spend at the internship along with meeting several other academic requirements. After offering these traditional internships to students for many years, the staff came to recognize students' interest in internships focused on intensive research on a particular public policy area, such as education, environment, criminal justice and the like. The Institute therefore created a guided internship program that facilitates policy research. The program is also beneficial to students who cannot travel off campus for an internship. Students are admitted to the program following an interview, and are able to obtain academic credit in the same way as students in the traditional internship program.

The third program we examine is the USC Environmental Internship Program, which was created in 2015 in response to a growing interest among students in the Environmental Studies Program in internships that focus on environmental work. The program facilitates internships with environmental government and non-governmental organizations dealing with environmental policy and advocacy, environmental science, environmental education, and sustainability. The program is fairly small, admitting about 15 students each semester. Most of the internships are especially designed for students in the program, and are not publically available, as they are developed in collaboration between the internship program and partner organizations. The faculty director meets with student applicants to discuss their qualifications and areas of interest, and matches the students to internship providers. After resumes and cover letters are prepared, the program helps the students apply for an internship. Following an interview with the partner organization and once they are accepted into an internship, students then register for ENST 492 and obtain academic credit for the time they spend on the internship and other academic requirements.

The Environmental Internship Program differs from the two Political Science programs in its substantive focus and in how internships are developed jointly with partner organizations. The environmental internships are mostly specifically designed for students in the program, in collaboration between the program director and partner organization. Both the environmental internship program and the

political science research internship programs are relatively small, while the political science traditional program is significantly larger. Another structural difference between the environmental internship program and the two political science programs is that since the program has no staff, students receive guidance and advice from the program director, who is a faculty member. Finally, the political science research internship program features more independent work, and remote working environment

ii. The Internship Providers

The first major hurdle to cross in creating a successful internship program is identifying internship providers who will offer meaningful internships and work with students over the course of a semester. In the case of the traditional political science internship program, a list of more than 200 potential employers in the Los Angeles area was created, which includes political consulting firms, City and County Council offices, and political campaigns. The program has ongoing contact with most of these organizations, and had many repeated placements with them over the years. This gives program directors better information about the quality of the internship experience, and offers students consistent supervision.

For the research internship program, which is significantly smaller, the main challenge was to identify intensive research projects. Initially, USC had been approached by Project Vote Smart (“PVS”) to have USC students assist in their research.³ However, after 18 months, the university and PVS ended their relationship and the need for a research internship provider continued. The following year, the Unruh Institute reached out to California Strategies, LLC, a public strategy firm who works on a number of policy areas that include energy, environment regulations, green technology, health care, land use, water use and the like. After a series of conversations, a model was established in which three groups of student interns (5 students per group) worked directly with three principal partners at California Strategies on different policy areas. Following initial meetings to develop the

³ PVS is a non-partisan, non-governmental organization that works at educating the American public on the political stances of candidates running for public office.

research agenda, the partners meet with their students on a monthly basis for progress checks, with students having continued access to their partners via e-mail and/or phone conversations. After running the program during the 2012 – 2013 academic year, other research partners were added over the years. Having multiple partners has reduced the burden on the organizations and has allowed for greater sustainability in the future.

The environmental internship program was created in 2015 in order to develop opportunities for students for gaining rich internship experiences in a variety of environmental areas. Prior to the academic approval of the program, the director worked with local environmental government and non-governmental organizations to design new internships for students. The organizations had high needs for interns, and were therefore interested in creating a partnership with the USC program⁴. Initially, the program worked with a handful of organizations, but within a few years the program expanded and now works with more than 15 organizations. Many of these internships are open only to students participating in the USC environmental internship program. The program has placed students repeatedly with most of these organizations. These continued relationships have facilitated effective communications and matching of candidates, as well as consistent mentoring.

iii. Selecting the Interns and Setting the Internship Plan

The political science traditional internship program is not capped in terms of how many students can participate in any given semester, and usually has 40 to 60 participants every semester. However, the research internship program is currently capped at 10 students per semester with 5 students assigned to each policy partner. Applications are accepted in the first three weeks of the semester and students are selected based upon several criteria, including, their area of interest, year in school, grade point average and availability to conduct the research required. Once students are selected and accept their policy group they can register for the class.

⁴ Increasingly, both governmental and non-governmental organizations are required/choose to hire interns who receive academic credit for their internship, often due federal/state funding restrictions.

In the first week after the research interns are selected, the interns are required to attend a research skills seminar run through the USC library, focusing on various Internet search engines and other library resources. In addition, partner organizations often put students in touch with people working within regulatory agencies and/or within a particular industry in order to gain valuable information. Thus, the combination of traditional research conducted through the library and/or the Internet along with additional sources from the policy partners lays the basis for students' research. The partners along with the Unruh staff and students then craft a research agenda with the overarching goal that students will conduct individual research as part of a broader research question. Students are also required to include a field research component, such as personal interviews or large-scale surveys, into their research agenda.

The environmental internship program conducts the admission process prior to the beginning of each semester. Students meet with the program director to discuss their interests and possible internships options. The director guides the students on the applications, which are then forwarded to one or two organizations. Conducting the application process prior to the beginning of the semester allows all students to begin their internship on the first week of classes and have a full semester experience in the internship. This makes a big difference for the partner organizations.

Once they begin their internships, participants in all three programs have regular meetings with program faculty and staff to discuss their progress, and related professional development issues. In the research internship program, students receive more specific assistance in refining the nature of the research and in order to ensure that the students have necessary direction on the project. At bi-monthly meetings, each student gives an update both orally and in writing in terms of their progress of their research. Students also meet with the research partner organization approximately halfway through the semester, to discuss the progress of their research and to receive additional suggestions.

In the environmental internship program, students have several required class meetings in which they report about their work and progress, and the class discusses issues related to the students' internship experiences. The class meetings

allow student to learn about other internships and the experience of students in different types of organizations. In addition, at least one meeting is devoted to professional development issues, usually including a guest speaker from one of the partner organizations. As in the political science research internship program, participation in the meetings counts towards a portion of the students grade in the class.

Presentations and Final Reports

As the semester starts to move toward its conclusion, the research interns begin to prepare for their final presentation of the research and policy recommendations. The final presentation is conducted in a very professional manner with the students preparing a 30 - 40 minute power point presentation in which they summarize their research to an audience that includes their partner along with the other students in the program as well as the Unruh staff. It is not uncommon for research partners to invite special guests to sit in on the presentation, as the research may be relevant to those persons. After the presentation, students field questions from the partner and audience members for the remaining time.

In addition to the final presentation, each student in the research program is required to write an 8-10 page final policy report based on the research they conducted throughout the semester along with any policy recommendations being offered on the research question. The reports follow the typical format found in such writings, including an abstract, introduction, findings, conclusion and policy recommendations. The providers are given all of the reports created by the students.

Interns in the political science traditional program and in the environmental internship program also have writing assignment, including a research paper and reflection papers that are designed to reinforce their internship experience. In the environmental internship program students give a comprehensive presentation at the end of the semester on their internship work and experience, and on the organization they worked with. In all three programs, the presentation and final papers account for a significant portion of the student's grade.

Evaluation of Internship Programs

In this section we examine the three programs using the following three sets of variables: 1. Organizational and Process variables 2. Impact variables 3. Participants' satisfaction.

Organizational and Process variables

A central aspect in evaluating internship programs is the extent to which internships are designed to meet the needs of the interns and the employers, while ensuring that some academic goals are achieved. The three programs we examine emphasize the integration of the internship into students' academic program of study. While the research internship is built on a combination of employers' needs and student research, the other two programs use several campus-based academic components including pre-internship orientations, internship seminars/workshops, academic readings, written assignments, class meetings, and regularly scheduled meetings between intern and faculty mentors or internship director. Academic assignments in all three programs include progress reports, research papers, and evaluative and self-assessment essays.

With more resources and staff, the traditional and research internship programs offer more organized professional development workshops and activities, while the environmental internship program offers valuable group and individual mentoring. Students in the three programs are required to participate in several professional training events to help prepare them for life after graduation. In the traditional and research programs, students attend an Interview Skills Workshop that brings in professionals from political offices, political consulting firms and non-governmental organizations. After a 30-minute moderated discussion, a series of mock interviews takes place so that the students can get sense of how interviews are actually conducted. Students are also required to attend a Job Forum Workshop in which professionals from various employment sectors come together in an intimate setting. Participants typically work within politically elected offices, government agencies, political consulting firms and non-governmental organizations. After a 45-minute moderated panel discussion, the participants break-out into different parts of

the room and the students are then allowed to speak with the participants in an informal setting gaining information about how one gets involved in certain types of work from those who work within those areas. The overarching goal of this program is simple, educate students about how one gains employment in various work sectors.

A third element of professionalization in the traditional and research internship programs is mentoring. The Unruh Institute is fortunate to have enlisted approximately 30 professionals from both the public and private sectors who volunteer their time to work with students. The individuals, known as the “Unruh Fellows,” often participate in panel discussions on campus regarding various political issues of the day. In addition, the fellows also meet once a semester with a small group of students and speak with them over coffee about the type of work that they are involved in.

The final element of the research internship program requires the interns to attend two political events during the semester and submit a short memorandum regarding what the nature of the event, who spoke, what was said and their personal perspective on the topic. The goal for this aspect of the program is to ensure that students are not solely learning within the classroom but engaging in policy issues that affect them and others.

The environmental internship program, being a smaller, newer program with limited resources, offers less structured professional development opportunities. Yet, every student in the program participates in several professional development events/discussions. Furthermore, most of the internships in the program require academic knowledge in the focus area of the environmental organization, and provide significant one on one mentoring. For example, students who intern with the Council for Watershed Health in Los Angeles, often participate in water quality testing and analysis. Supervisors thus offer specific professional training and ongoing feedback. Since the program admits only about 15 students each semester, students also receive considerable individual mentoring by the program including meetings with the program director to discuss the student’s work experience and future professional goals. In addition, since students intern in different types of organizations, they share their work experiences in class meetings. The director also holds a three-hour class

meeting dedicated entirely to professional development issues. In this meeting student raise questions and discuss work related challenges and experiences. Additionally, every semester a guest lecturer from one of the partner organizations meets with the students to discuss the transition from internship to full time employment. Students are also encouraged to participate in other professional development opportunities on campus.

On-going communication between the internship program and participating organizations is critical for the success of interns. Such communication contributes to designing a meaningful work plan, setting expectations, and improving intern performance. The three programs use different models of communication with participating organizations. The research internship program has a well-structured system of periodic communication with partner organizations. The traditional political science internship program has a dedicated staff member who reaches out to the internship providers to check on availability of internships in any given semester and to also check on the intern progress during the semester. In the environmental internship program, the program director communicates directly with supervisors in the participating organizations during the semester. Because the environmental internships are mostly specifically designed for students in the program, the input from the program ensures a rich professional experience and consistent mentoring by the partner organization.

Impact Analysis of Internship Programs

Internship programs provide unique opportunities for students to explore possible career paths and gain valuable professional experience while in college. Internships have also become a fairly standard part of students' resume as they begin to seek employment or pursue professional graduate degrees. Naturally, internships vary on many dimensions including how closely their content relates to a student's academic degree, the range of responsibilities of the intern, and how much creativity and initiative are encouraged. A key aspect of evaluating internship programs, is the nature and extent of the impact of an internship on the student. In our analysis we

focus on three main aspects of the internships' impact: personal effects, professional and employment effects, and civic effects.

Personal growth outcomes center on an individual's knowledge, self-improvement, and inter-personal skills. Conway, Amel, and Gerwein (2009) showed that personal outcomes can change as a result of service learning.

Improving professional and employment outcomes are, for many students, the primary goal of the internship. As students move from a consumer of academic knowledge toward a professional career, participating in an internship program provides a unique opportunity to experience a real world career setting.

Civic effects of internships focus on one's sense of citizenship and awareness of social problems. Several studies suggest that students who participate in applied learning tend to score higher on civic responsibility (Myers-Lipton, 1998; Seon-Young, L., Olszewski-Kubilius, P., Weimholt, K., 2007).

We will evaluate the impact of internships on personal growth, professional development and employment, and citizenship by analyzing student responses to questions on these issues, using a survey we conducted of students who participated in at least one of the three programs between January 2015 and December 2017.

Survey Design

The study was conducted at the University of Southern California between February and March 2018. In order to assess the effects of internships on students, we contacted 365 students who participated in at least one of the three internship programs we examine. The survey was sent by email from the respective directors of the programs to all students who participated in one of the three programs between January 2015 in December 2017. Following the initial email request, two additional reminders were sent to participants.

The questionnaire included 24 questions, and had three parts (see appendix 1). In the first part, the questions focused on participant information, including during what year in school did they participate in the program, whether this was their first internship, and how many weekly hours did they spend in the internship. The second part focused on the impact of the internship on personal growth, employment-related

effects, and civic effects. The third part included questions on level of satisfaction from the internship experience, the partner organization, and the internship program.

Survey Results

We received 100 responses to the survey (27%). We should note that a majority of the participants who received the survey request already graduated from USC, and that no incentives were offered for filling out the questionnaire.

The first part of the survey provided information about the participants. Eighty-five percent of all respondents were in their junior or senior year when they participated in the internship program (45% seniors and 40% juniors). This was the first internship for about one third (34%) of respondents, of whom only 21% were in their senior year. More than 70% of respondents were female. A majority of the respondents (56%) participated in the traditional internship program (which is the largest of the three programs), 28% participated in the environmental internship program, and 16% in the research internship program. More than 80% of respondents used the resources of their respective programs to find and secure their internship, but there was some variation across the programs, with over 90% of participants in the environmental internship program having found the internship through the program, compared with 73% of participants in the traditional internship program.

Students in the three programs engaged in a variety of internship positions at different types of organizations. We asked participants about the content of their internship work (allowing them to choose up to two options from the following):

Graph 1

A large majority of students (69%) noted research and writing as a main aspect of their internship work, while administrative tasks were also included by a majority of students. In addition, about a quarter of respondents said their work involved primarily communication and social media related tasks, and about 21% (all

of whom participated in the environmental internship program) referred to education work.

In the second part of the questionnaire, we asked students a series of thirteen questions in order to evaluate their internship experience and its impact. The respondents used a five-point Likert scale (Yes, Somewhat, Neutral, Not Enough, and No) to rate their experiences. Given the importance of on-site guidance and supervision, students were asked whether they received appropriate guidance from the site supervisor in the beginning of the internship, and whether the supervisor or other co-workers were available to answer questions throughout the internship. Slightly more than 90% of respondents answered positively to both questions (72% and 79% respectively answered Yes, and 19% and 11% respectively answered Somewhat).

Students were then asked about the impact of the internship. Three of the questions referred to personal impact:

Graph 2

Large majorities of students from all three programs felt that they benefitted from the internship in terms of personal impact. About 85% of respondents felt they gained new knowledge and skills, and a similar percentage felt improvement in their ability to work with others. Furthermore, a similarly large majority of students felt they gained a better sense of their personal strengths and weaknesses as a result of their internship experience.

The Participants of the three programs were then asked about the influence of the internship on their career prospects. When deciding to participate in an internship program, advisers often hear from students that they are seeking to clarify to themselves possible career paths, and that they hope the internship will improve their employment potential. High proportions of participants in all three programs felt they achieved these goals, at least to some extent. When asked whether the internship helped them gain a clearer sense of their career goals, 52% answered Yes, and 30% said Somewhat. Asked whether they thought the internship experience strengthened their employment opportunities, 79% answered positively (53% Yes

and 26% Somewhat). The rate of positive responses differed somewhat across the programs, with 86% of participants in the environmental program answering positively, 80% in the traditional program, and 60% in the research internship program.

Graph 3

An important aspect of the programs is creating a meaningful connection between the internships and the students' academic background and experience. When asked about this issue, 74% of respondents across the three programs indicated they were able to apply knowledge and skills from their academic studies to the internship to some extent (42% Yes, 32% Somewhat).

A different indicator of the effectiveness of an internship is civic impact. While large majorities of students seek internships for career reasons, many internships expose students to non-profit or other public interest organizations. Indeed, Knapp, Fisher, and Levesque- Bristol (2010, p.7) have argued that service learning can strengthen students' commitment to future civic engagement. In our survey, an overwhelming majority of participants in the three programs (86%) indicated they felt that their internship contributed to an important cause (63% Yes, 23% Somewhat). An even higher majority of respondents (88%) said the internship made them more aware of social issues or community problems (71% Yes, 17% Somewhat).

Graph 4

On a separate question, 62% of respondents stated their work was important for the operation and goals of the organization, and another 20% answered Somewhat on the same question. These results suggest that the internships in the three programs may have significantly contributed to a sense of social empowerment among a large majority of participants.

Taken together, the survey results suggest that internships in well-organized programs can provide a variety of benefits, including personal growth opportunities and civic empowerment, in addition to career related advantages. Based on our

survey, internships in the three programs discussed here have had high impact in all of these three areas.

Participant Satisfaction

The last section of the survey focused on student satisfaction. We asked participants about their level of satisfaction from the organization they worked with, the internship itself, and the internship program. Students in all three programs expressed very high satisfaction levels on all three measures. On average across the three programs, 85% of students said they would highly recommend or recommend the organization they interned with to other students. An even higher majority of respondents (96%) said they would either highly recommend or recommend the internship program to other students. And overall, 93% of respondents said they were either highly satisfied or satisfied from their internship experience.

Graph 5

We noticed some difference in participant satisfaction across the programs, with high satisfaction from the overall internship experience at 48% in the political science traditional program, 47% in the research internship program, and 57% of respondents in the environmental internship program. Satisfaction levels from partner organizations also varied across the program, with 57% of participants in the environmental internship program being highly satisfied, compared to 48% in the traditional program and 27% in the research internship program. The intensity of satisfaction from the internship program varies similarly, with 82% of respondents in the environmental program saying they were highly satisfied with the program compared with 61% in the traditional program and 40% in the research program. Overall, while there were some differences across the programs in the intensity of satisfaction, very high levels of satisfaction were recorded in all three programs.

Discussion

The paper evaluates three internship programs that differ in size, resources, focus, and length of time they have been in operation. All three programs serve the

same population (USC students, mostly in their junior and senior years), and emphasize individual mentoring, integration of academic background and goals, regular communications, and continued relationships with partner organizations. Professional development activities were more extensive in the traditional and research internship programs than in the environmental internship program, while the latter emphasized designing and tailoring of internships in collaboration with partner organizations, as well as individual matching of students to specific internships.

More than 90% of participants in the three programs expressed satisfaction with their internship experience, the partner organization, and the internship program. These very high levels of satisfaction clearly demonstrate that different models of internship programs can produce high satisfaction levels.

The survey data indicate significant benefits to student populations from participation in a variety of internship programs. Many believe that internship programs are primarily valued by students for post-graduate employment purposes. Our survey shows that importantly, more than 20% of participants were offered employment in the organizations they interned with following their internship. However, our data also points to additional benefits beyond career advantages. The vast majority of the participants came away with greater knowledge of policy issues, learned how to work with others, gained a better understanding of their own strengths and weaknesses, and enhanced their sense of civic engagement. In light of these findings, it should come as no surprise that more universities are incorporating internship opportunities in their undergraduate curriculums. Looking forward, one would anticipate a continued growth in the integration of well-organized internship programs into a variety of academic programs. Such programs should adopt some of the key features of the USC programs we discuss, including linking internships to academic background and career goals, meaningful professional development, and carefully selected inspiring partner organizations.

Conclusions

Our comparison of the three internship programs and the analysis of the survey results suggest several general conclusions. The three programs we examined in this paper demonstrate successful programs can be developed with varying levels of institutional resources. We compared an internship program led by a single faculty member (the environment internship program), a second program organized by one faculty member with the assistance of one staff member (the research internship program), and a third program that was operated by a faculty member with multiple staff (the political science traditional internship program). Internship programs can and should be customized, and should not be regarded as a one-size fits all. In other words, such programs can be appropriately scaled according to available faculty and staff support and institutional resources.

Second, internships programs should not be considered to be limited to any particular disciplines. Historically, certain academic programs gravitated toward creating internship experiences, such as majors in business, politics, and science. Now, undergraduates demand opportunities to gain meaningful work experience, no matter the major. For this reason, more disciplines should consider expanding their offerings to include internship programs, and colleges should encourage and support programs that have not traditionally offered internships. When students are able to gain internship experience, they may see the job-related value of those majors, allowing disciplines to grow in number. As a corollary, undergraduates increasingly require internship experience in order to be more competitive seeking employment in the working world. When undergraduates enter the workforce with more experience, they clearly have a leg-up on both obtaining their first job as well as thriving in that position. In the end, the graduates benefit from obtaining gainful employment and employers win by hiring graduates with greater skill sets.

Third, undergraduates gain valuable professional experience when they intern in the working world. As noted earlier, 59% of respondents indicated they completed administrative tasks during their time in the internship while 69% of respondents indicated their internship experience focused on research and writing. While the latter may be more directly related to the student's academic area of interest and encourage their pursuit of higher education, learning how to undertake

administrative tasks also helps undergraduates make the transition to the workforce environment. In addition to the substantive content learned during the internship experience, interns learn how to work in an office space, cooperate on projects with colleagues, and gain self-awareness of both their strengths and weaknesses that allows for personal development. Each of these experiences assists students as they transition into the next stage of their career.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, internships assist undergraduates to determine the type of work they want to do after graduation. Internships not only allow undergraduates to gain experience in a line of work before they officially begin working in that field. but also help interns can discover whether they actually want to pursue a career in that area. Helping interns to narrow their focus for future employment is a significant benefit to both students and employers alike.

This paper has identified a number of generalizable principles that go beyond the particular internship programs studied here. By applying these principles to different disciplines and educational contexts, colleges across-the-board will reap the substantial benefits of internship programs. However, what is abundantly clear is that universities and undergraduate students can benefit from different types of internship programs. In light of this valuable dynamic, universities should support internship programs of various forms, and devote resources for periodic evaluation of such programs.

All of the above is not to say that weaknesses do not exist in the three programs discussed above as well as in internship programs in general. Although each of the programs we discuss has varying degrees of academic guidance, in most programs the internship providers are the ones who craft the type of work done and the experience had. Additional involvement by the academic institution may help create richer experiences, though internship providers may not be receptive to such input. A second challenge is the attempt to have the academic portion of the internship course re-enforce the internship experience. The work done at a typical internship does not always lend itself to an academic framework. It is therefore imperative that interns work closely with their academic faculty in order to weave the work experience into a productive academic assignment (McHugh 2016). While internship

programs vary far and wide in terms of the intern experience and academic integration, it is clear the key to any successful internship program is creating an interactive structure, advance planning, and an academic orientation. As with any academic initiative, periodic review of these programs should take place to facilitate change as needed.

References

Boud, David, and Nicky Solomon. 2001. *Working-based Learning: A New Higher Education?* Buckingham, UK: The Society for Research into Higher Education and Open University.

Brew, Angela. 2010. National Teaching Fellowship Final Report: Enhancing Undergraduate Engagement Through Research and Inquiry. Australian Teaching and Learning Council.

Browne-Ferringo, Tricia, and Rodney Muth. 2004. "Leadership Mentoring in Clinical Practice: Role Socialization, Professional Development and Capacity Building." *Educational Administration Quarterly* 40:468-94.

Conway, James M., Elise L. Amel, and Daniel P. Gerwien. 2009. "Teaching and learning in the social context: A meta-analysis of service learning's effects on academic, personal, social, and citizenship outcomes". *Teaching of Psychology*, 36(4), 233-245.

Elkins, Teri J. 2001. "Academic Internship with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission: An Experiential Approach to Teaching Human Resource Management." *SAM Advanced Management Journal* 67(3): 40-7.

Fry, Betty, Gene Bottoms, and Kathy O'Neill. 2005. *The Principal Internship: How Can We Get It Right?* Atlanta, GA: Southern Regional Education Board.

Gault, Jack, John Redington, and Tammy Schlager. 2000. "Undergraduate Business Internships and Career Success: Are They Related?" *Journal of Marketing Education* 22(1): 45-53.

Gryski, G.S. G.W. Johnson, and L.J. O'Toole. 1987. "Undergraduate Internships: An Empirical Review." *Public Administration Quarterly* 19(1): 31-41.

- Jackel, Daniel, "Evaluating the Effectiveness of an Internship Program". 2011. Masters Theses & Specialist Projects. Paper 1117. <http://digitalcommons.wku.edu/theses>
- Jenkins, Alan, and Mick Healey. 2010. "Undergraduate Research and International Initiatives to Link Teaching and Research." *Council on Undergraduate Research Quarterly* 30(3): 36-42.
- Kelly, Craig A., and Ralph M. Gaedeke. 1990. "Student and Employer Evaluation of Hiring Criteria for Entry-Level Marketing Positions." *Journal of Marketing Education* 27(3): 6471.
- Kelly, Craig A., and Claudia Bridges. 2005. "Introducing Professional and Career Development Skills in the Marketing Curriculum." *Journal of Marketing Education* 27(3): 212-8.
- Kim, Eyong B., Kijoo Kim, Michael Bzullak. 2011. "A Survey of Internship Programs for Management Undergraduates in AACSB-accredited Institutions." *International Journal of Educational Management* 26(7): 696-709.
- Knapp, Timothy D., Bradley J. Fisher, and Chantal Levesque-Bristol. 2010. Service-learning's impact on college students' commitment to future civic engagement, self-efficacy, and social empowerment. *Journal of Community Practice*, 18, 233-251.
- Lehman, Lynn and Marilynn Quick. 2011. "Crossing the Line: A Qualitative Study of Administrative Interns' Experience." *International Journal of Education Leadership Preparation* 6(4): 1-15.
- Maertz Jr., Carl P., Philipp A. Stoeberl and Jill Marks. 2014. "Building Successful Internships: Lessons from the Research for Interns, Schools, and Employers." *Career Development International* 19(1): 123-42.
- Myers-Lipton, Scott J. 1998. "Effect of a Comprehensive Service-Learning Program on College Students' Civic Responsibility". *Teaching Sociology*, 26, 243-258.
- Raman, Pushkala, and Kartik Pashupati. 2002. "Turning Good Citizens into Even Better Ones: The Impact of Program Characteristics and Motivations on Service-Learning Outcomes." *Journal of Nonprofit and Public Sector Marketing*, 10, 187-207.
- Raymond, M.A., D.E. McNabb, and C.F. Matthaei. 1993. "Preparing Graduates for the Workforce: The Role of Business Education." *Journal of Education for Business* 68(4): 202-6.
- Seon-Young, Lee, Paula Olszewski-Kubilius, and K. Weimholt. 2007. "Service-learning for gifted students". *Journal for the Education of the Gifted*. 31(2), 165-197.

Shoho, Alan R., Brace G. Barnett, and Peter Martinez. 2012. "Enhancing 'OJT' Internships with Interactive Coaching." *Planning and Changing* 43(1/2): 161-82.

Appendix 1.

Participant Questionnaire

I. Background Information

1. Year in school (during internship):
Senior ___ Junior ___ Sophomore ___ Freshman ___
2. Gender:
Female ___ Male ___ Other ___

3. Which internship program did you participate in? (choose one)
 POSC 395 (traditional) ____
 POSC 395 (research team) ____
 ENST 499/492 ____
4. Was this your first internship?
 Yes ___ No___
5. How was your internship arranged? (Choose one answer that best describes the process)
 I found the internship and contacted the organization directly ____
 I was given a list of internships by the Internship Program and chose one from the list ____
 The Internship Program matched me with an organization that suited my interests ____
6. During a typical week, approximately how many hours did you work in your internship?
 6-8 ____ 9-12 ____ 13 or more ____
7. Did your internship work involve primarily (choose one or two categories as appropriate)
 Administrative tasks ____ Research/writing ____ Communication/Social Media ____
 Lab work ____ Education ____ Other____

II. Please rate the following statements regarding your internship experience (chose one answer for each question):

((answer categories for this section-- Yes Somewhat neutral Not enough No))

8. Did you receive appropriate guidance from site supervisor at the *beginning* of the internship?
9. Were your site supervisor or co-workers available to answer your questions?
10. Was your work important for the operation and goals of the organization?
11. Were you able to apply knowledge and skills from your academic studies to the internship?
12. Did you have opportunities to take the initiative beyond the basic requirements of the internship?
13. Did you gain new knowledge and/or skills during my internship?
14. Do you feel you have improved your ability to work with others?

15. Did you gain a better sense of your strengths and weaknesses?
16. Do you feel that your college learning experience was enriched by the internship?
17. Do you have a clearer sense of your career goals following the internship?
18. Do you feel that the internship experience strengthened your employment opportunities?
19. Did the internship made you more aware of social issues or community problems?
20. Do you feel that your internship work contributed to an important cause?

III. Satisfaction and Summary questions

21. Overall, how satisfied are you about your internship experience?
Highly satisfied ___ Satisfied ___ Not satisfied ___
22. Would you recommend the organization you interned with to other students?
Highly recommend ___ Recommend ___ Not recommend ___
23. Would you recommend the internship program you were enrolled in to other students?
Highly recommend ___ Recommend ___ Not recommend ___
24. Were you offered a part-time or full-time position in the organization you interned with following your internship?
Yes ___ No ___