Criticisms of Unpaid Internships

"Colleges and universities have become cheerleaders and enablers of the unpaid internship boom, failing to inform young people of their rights or protect them from the miserly calculus of employers. In hundreds of interviews with interns over the past three years, I found dejected students resigned to working unpaid for summers, semesters and even entire academic years – and, increasingly, to paying for the privilege."

Ross Perlin, 2011

http://www.nytimes.com/2011/04/03/opinion/03perlin.html

65% of students participate in an internship

60% of internships are paid

56% of students completing an internship have a job offer
"...[While] past and ongoing research clearly supports the proposition that experiential education helps college graduates when they leave academia and enter the workforce there are nevertheless continuing questions about the relationship between experiential education experiences and their impact on graduate career outcomes. One of the most prominent of these questions involves whether there are differential consequences associated with whether or not the internship experience is a paid experience. NACE research has posited that...students seeking a full-time position with an unpaid internship experience in their background are less likely to receive a job offer than are students with a paid internship experience."
Project Overview

- Part I: Examining Existing Internship Data at UGA
- Part II: Surveying Recent Grads and Connecting Their Responses to Outcomes Data
- Part III: Qualitative Interviews with Paid/Unpaid Internship Participants

*Methodological Note: "Employment" in this study is defined as full-time work
*Limitations
Theoretical Framework

David Kolb
Experiential Learning
concrete experience, active experimentation, reflection, abstract conceptualization, connecting classroom to work

Albert Bandura
Self-Efficacy
ability to set and attain meaningful career goals

Donald Super
Career Self-Concept
career exploration, crystallization, and specification
UNPAID
Understanding the Implications of Internship Compensation

Part I: Student Survey

Part II: Alumni Survey

Part III: Qualitative Data

Why Study Unpaid Internships?

Andrew Crain
The Institute for Higher Education
The University of Georgia
UGA's Part-Time Jobs and Internships Survey

- Examined survey results from Fall 2010 - Fall 2014
- 32% of internship participants were unpaid
- 85% of unpaid interns rated their experience as "Extremely Beneficial" of "Very Beneficial"
- Sampled 1,024 participants who reported an internship experience the year prior to graduation

2,800+ survey participants annually

22% participants reporting internship experiences
Results

Statistically **LESS** likely to participate in unpaid internships:
- Men (8%)
- Minority students (9%)
- Students in higher percentile math scores on the SAT/ACT (0.4%)
- Transfer students (10%)

**Median income** (based on zip code) was borderline significant, suggesting more affluent students are less likely to participate in unpaid work.

Unpaid interns were 10% less likely to select the top rating for their experience ("Extremely Beneficial")
Results (cont'd)

Students completing an unpaid internship the year prior to graduation were significantly more likely to report "Still Seeking" employment on the Career Outcomes Survey (63%)

Unpaid interns also earned an average of $7,000 less after graduation - after controlling for race, gender, GPA, functional area and other factors
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Alumni Survey

Examined activities for recent graduates who completed the Career Outcomes Survey from 2013-2015

Respondents rated their involvement in a number of activities:

- Unpaid Internships
- Paid Internships
- Greek Life
- Professional or Social Organizations
- Part-Time Work (on and off campus)
- Study Abroad
- Intramurals

12,220 recent graduates sampled

348 respondents

Discussion
Survey Design

Graduates were asked to provide detailed feedback on three key experiences:
- 645 total experiences were reported
- 103 paid internships, 101 unpaid internships

The following outcomes were explored using a 5-point Likert Scale:
- Goal-setting
- Confirming or rejecting a field of interest
- Professional skill development
- Academic performance
- Quality of supervision
- Networking
- Job search success

- Overall benefits and satisfaction with first job were also assessed
Results

More likely to pursue **UNPAID** internships:
- Grady College of Journalism & Mass Communication
- College of Family & Consumer Sciences

More likely to pursue **PAID** internships:
- Men
- Business students
- Agriculture students

Students in political science and international affairs also reported more intense engagement with unpaid internship work.

**Unpaid internships remained correlated with delayed timelines to full-time employment - as well as being 11% less likely to express satisfaction with their first job after college.**
Results (cont'd)

Outcome Variable (Employment Time)
- 0 = Employed prior to graduation
- 3 = Employed 0-3 months after graduation
- 6 = Employed 3-6 months after graduation
- 9 = Employed 6-9 months or more after graduation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Coeff.</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No Internship</td>
<td>0.00660</td>
<td>(0.864)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-Time Work (On-Campus)</td>
<td>0.00941</td>
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<td>Part-Time Work (Off-Campus)</td>
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<td>Paid Internship</td>
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<tr>
<td>Job Shadowing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research</td>
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<td>(0.493)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Intramural Sports</td>
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<td>(0.491)</td>
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<td>Non-Greek Social Organization</td>
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<td>Leadership Position(s)</td>
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<td>(0.573)</td>
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<td>Study Abroad</td>
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<td>(0.472)</td>
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<td>Service Learning</td>
<td>-0.650</td>
<td>(0.549)</td>
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<td>Arts (Music, Theater, Dance, etc.)</td>
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<td>(0.980)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Field Experience</td>
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<td>(1.246)</td>
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<td>Co-Op</td>
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<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>0.383</td>
<td>(1.312)</td>
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</table>

Observations: 118  
R-squared: 0.458

Standard errors in parentheses  
*** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05
**Results (cont'd)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Salary Outcomes Relation to Campus Engagement</th>
<th>Coeff.</th>
<th>Std. Err.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>RESEARCH</td>
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Salary outcomes suggest a dual effect - declines related to unpaid internships and increases related to paid internships. The total range is a difference of over $6,250.
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Qualitative Interview Highlights

Interviewed 6 recent grads who had completed **both** paid and unpaid internships

Conversations with students portray complex pathways through internships and other experiences on campus – these elements are difficult to isolate even on a single campus.
Internships as Cultural Experiences

"So I was really really grateful that both of those internships happened, because I felt like I figured out culture stuff quickly, figured out like how I wanted to be able to interact with colleagues (and hopefully, friends), but I also learned that it’s really important to me to care about the actual product that I’m representing...Like, I wanted to do a good job so that the team could do a good job and, I guess, so the company could succeed a little bit more. But it wasn’t because of the product, it wasn’t because I truly believed in it, it was because I happened to be there and working on it. Yeah, so I realized that was really important to me too."

Sarah
Internships as Cultural Experiences

Well, I’m kind of country, even though I live in downtown Atlanta, which is my own living hell a little bit. But D.C., like...nobody drives up there, everyone’s pretty much broke. Like senior staffers are barely making their rent. It’s all this big flurry of anger and then everybody goes to happy hour and then drinks it all off. Whereas like in state politics, we get a phone call about a busted water main in some city I’ve never seen – and then the next day’s news we see that it’s fixed. That’s a really quick example, but its things like that where you see stuff happening. D.C., I was up there a month and half and I didn’t see one bill get voted on, except the Veteran’s Care Act, which was unanimous, and it just seemed like everybody was yelling the whole time. I mean, it’s definitely fun, but...I knew I could do Atlanta. I wasn’t going to go up there and slum it out. If I was on a campaign that won its way to D.C. I would love to go up there, but I’m not going to go job-hunting in Washington...the day I got back I was like 'I’m knowing what I’m doing before I ever consider going up there again’...But without an internship I probably would have just packed up the truck and went to D.C."

- Michael
Discussion and Conclusions
Comparative Benefits of Paid and Unpaid Internship Experiences

- **Unpaid Internships**
  - Understanding Academic Coursework

- **Paid Internships**
  - Professional Skill Development
  - Job Search Success

- **Both**
  - Confirming or Rejecting Career Interests, Setting and Attaining Career Goals, Quality of Supervision, & Networking
Discussion

1. Could unpaid internships be re-conceptualized as exploratory/academic experiences?


- **Apprehension:** concrete experience
- **Intension:** reflective observation
- **Comprehension:** abstract conceptualization
- **Extension:** active experimentation
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Unpaid Internships
"tangible, felt qualities of immediate experience"

Paid Internships
"active manipulation of the external world"
Discussion

2. What potential gains could be made on our campus from this information?

- How can we enhance paid internship opportunities in journalism, communication, or family and consumer sciences?
- How can we support our students in navigating the risks and benefits of unpaid internships?
- What can we do to improve internship opportunities for minority and transfer students?
Questions?

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