



The College Internship Study

The Center for College-Workforce Transitions (CCWT) at the University of Wisconsin-Madison is excited to announce the launch of The College Internship Study, the first mixed-methods longitudinal study of internship programs and their impacts on student success in school, life, and work.

Work-based learning is currently one of the most influential ideas in public higher education and workforce development policy around the world, and internships are often touted as being a win-win-win situation:

- Students can get real-world job experience and establish professional networks,
- educators get their students opportunities to translate theory into practice, and
- employers get inexpensive and educated workers that may turn into new hires.

But what do we really know about internships and their impacts on student outcomes such as wages, employment status, and career satisfaction? What are the most important design characteristics of an internship that lead to positive student outcomes, and which ones could contribute to negative student and employer experiences? Do internships – especially those that are unpaid – serve to reproduce inequality by limiting these “high-impact” practices to those with ample and officially sanctioned forms of financial, cultural and social capital?

The College Internship Study aims to document the effects of internship participation and program characteristics (e.g., compensation, duration, task quality) on student outcomes such as college completion, employment and earnings, and career adaptability. The Study includes an online survey administered to all students nearing graduation, focus groups with students, and interviews with career services and area employers. Additionally, an “institutional map” documenting the present state of internship opportunities will be compiled for each campus.

Within months, the CCWT will prepare a technical report for each institution with actionable recommendations for how each campus can improve its internship programs.

The first round of this study launched in April 2018 at three institutions: a Historically Black College and University (HBCU) in South Carolina, a technical college in Wisconsin, and a 4-year comprehensive university in Wisconsin. The second phase of the study will include research at a 4-year comprehensive and 3-year vocational college in North-eastern China, and in the Fall of 2018 CCWT will be administering the online survey component of the study on a national level with interested colleges and universities.

If you and your campus are interested in participating in The College Internship Study please contact us:

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