



EVENT SUMMARY

First Annual Symposium on College Internship Research

Friday, September 28, 2018 | 8:30am – 6pm

Pyle Center AT&T Lounge
University of Wisconsin-Madison



Wisconsin Center for
Education Research
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

On September 28, 2018, a group of scholars, practitioners, employers, students, and policymakers gathered for an inaugural symposium to discuss critical issues surrounding college internships in the U.S. The Symposium on College Internship Research was organized by the Center for Research on College-Workforce Transitions (CCWT) to provide an interdisciplinary venue for interdisciplinary professionals to discuss the current state of the research on internships.

To introduce the event, Dean Diana Hess of the University of Wisconsin-Madison School of Education highlighted the critical need for synthesis between researchers and practitioners to tackle issues related to the development and sustainability of high-quality internships in undergraduate education. Reiterating this message, Matthew T. Hora, Founding Director of CCWT, noted that one of the center's goals was to centralize college students' voices and perspectives in research and policy analysis in order to improve their experiences during college-workforce transitions.



Matthew Hora, CCWT Director shares his opening remarks

To do so, CCWT recently launched the College Internship Study to survey and examine the experiences of students, educators, and employers across different academic institutions to address the following research questions: i) does participation in internships vary by students' race, major, and socioeconomic status?; ii) to what degree are characteristics of internship programs (e.g., adequate pay) associated with student satisfaction and vocational adaptability; and iii) are institutional resources and procedures sufficient for supporting high-quality internship programs? As Hora spotlighted the diversity of panelists and audience members, he called for future collaborations to uncover the spectrum of benefits and challenges associated with the implementation of college internships.

The event featured seven sessions that were comprised of three research panels, a student panel, an employer panel, a program design session, and a breakout session. In this report we provide a summary of the presentations and discussion topics that emerged in the question-and-answer sessions following each panel.

Research Panel #1 – Colleges and Internships

PRESENTERS

Carrie Shandra, Associate Professor, State University of New York-Stony Brook with results from study of integration of internships w/academic coursework.

Elizabeth Zachry Rutschow, Senior Research Associate, MDRC with results from evaluation research of 33 colleges' new internship program design and implementation.

Carrie Shandra presented findings from a recent mixed-methods study to identify trends in what employers sought in interns and how internship courses were integrated into curricula. She found that employers have increasingly sought higher skills and credentials (e.g. level of education) in interns within the last decade, and that academic institutions have encountered an exponential increase in offerings for-credit internship courses across departments. Through interviews with career center professionals and employers, Shandra noted that career centers are often underresourced and that at times, employers misremember the educational objectives of an internship and the expenses incurred by students to obtain these experiences (e.g., paying for course credits). She further noted the need for researchers and practitioners to address ways to build effective internship infrastructures that center students' learning.

Elizabeth Zachry Rutschow presented initial findings from an evaluation of the Career Readiness Internships project that was implemented across 33 colleges and funded by the Great Lakes Foundation. The project was intended to provide part-time, semester-long paid internships to low-income juniors and seniors. Among other benefits, findings indicate that 88% of colleges had created 20 or more internships as a result of the project and that these schools have successfully targeted underrepresented students with financial need (e.g., 60% eligible for Pell grants, 40% first-generation students). Both students and employers also reported gaining skills and positive experiences. However, Zachry Rutschow noted that only 20% of eligible students had participated, indicating that there is potential for increasing student engagement.

QUESTION AND ANSWER SEGMENT

The discussion was centered around the following questions:

- How are educational institutions ensuring the continuity of internship programs that were initially funded through grants?
- How can practitioners and researchers help employers understand the educational value of internships? Relatedly, how are career centers and institutions building strong relationships with prospective employers to ensure that internships are educational for students (and not exploitative)?
- What is the role of federal or state legislature in supporting internship given that workforce development has attracted the attention of politicians and policymakers?

Research Session #2 – Government/Employers and Internships

PRESENTERS

Patrick McHugh, Associate Professor of Management, George Washington University with results from international comparison of French/US internships with focus on government regulations.

John Nunley, Professor of Economics, University of Wisconsin-La Crosse with results from a study of employer demand for internships (resume audit study).

Patrick McHugh presented results from a quantitative study that compared differences in national contexts (France vs. the U.S.) on students' perceptions of the value of their internship experience. Although U.S. respondents reported higher perceived value of their internship and greater intent to pursue employment compared to their French counterparts, these differences were accounted for by the differences in students' ratings of supervisor support and mentoring. In other words, the relationship between national context on students' perceived value and intent to pursue employment were fully mediated by supervisor support and mentoring.

Based on an analysis of internship advertisements posted on a popular job website, **John Nunley et al.** found that most internships were part-time and that 60% of them were unpaid. He further noted that students were more likely to be paid if their internships specified requirements that more closely matched similar job positions. Students were also more likely to be unpaid for their internships in states with higher minimum wages. In a resume audit study, the team found that Black men received callback rates that were 30% lower than White men, but that GPA moderated against the effects of racial discrimination.

[Click here for a copy of presentation slides.](#)

QUESTION AND ANSWER SEGMENT

The discussion was centered around the following topics:

- Clarification on study presented by Nunley et al. (e.g., how are internships classified as such on website that was used, how did researchers manipulate resumes to signal race differences of fictitious applicant?)
- Are researchers including clinically-oriented and teaching practicum experiences when examining students' experiences of internships?
- Are researchers assessing ways through which institutions can better support students in facilitating their career development during internships (e.g., how to engage effectively with supervisors)?



Audience members discussing with each other

Student Panel

Students from Madison College and UW-Madison discussed their internship experiences and provided recommendations for internship programs.

Four students who completed internship programs in the fields of journalism, community wellness, IT security, and zoology described their application processes and internship experiences. All panelists reported seeking online postings and participating in career fairs to help them identify potential internship opportunities. Some of the benefits gained included increased self-confidence, improved skills (e.g., “real work experience”, job interviewing, technical skills), and unique opportunities to develop projects that were meaningful and relevant to their studies. They cited challenges such as the unpaid status of their internships and how these positions would not have been feasible had other funding sources (e.g., scholarships from institutions) be unavailable, and the limited preparation of navigating social dynamics

(e.g., gender-based discrimination) during internships. The students also highlighted the need for institutions to attend to the financial barriers that may prevent fellow students from taking unpaid positions.

QUESTION AND ANSWER SEGMENT

Audience members primarily asked students if there were structured activities that assisted them in reflecting on their internship experiences. The students noted having had a broad range of tasks and activities that were associated with their course. These included: weekly readings with discussion posts, for-credit course (including an informally executed one) that supported internship experience, assignment to on-site mentor.

Research Session #3 (ITP Sponsored Translational Research Session):

Panelists discussed how research on internships can best meet the needs of practitioners and policymakers based on questions from audience members. They were: **Tim Strait (Coordinator, Department of Workforce Development's Wisconsin Internship Initiative)**, **Janice Kenyatta (Experiential Learning/Internship Manager, Northampton Community College)**, **Carrie Shandra (Associate Professor, State University of New York-Stony Brook)**, and **Matthew T. Hora (Director, CCWT; Assistant Professor of Adult and Higher Education, University of Wisconsin-Madison)**.

1. How can we make internship and educational objectives complementary?

- Tim: When we have strong partnerships between policymakers, academics, employers, and the wider community. We are attempting to do so with the Wisconsin Internship Initiative and we can succeed by explicitly discussing goals and expectations of internships among all parties (employers, schools, students).
- Janice: As a practitioner, I believe that this issue boils down to the lack of cohesiveness in our definition of an internship – what is it?
- Carrie: This can be a challenge because students often see workplace and classroom learning as distinct from each other. Furthermore, faculty members are typically not compensated to mentor or support students through their internships.
- Matt: Based on my research in China, I found that professors viewed internships as the only opportunities for hands-on learning and that their roles as instructors were centered around lecturing didactic material.

2. How can we make internships equitable for students?

- Janice: Students are looking for paid internships – I think this is an important equity issue.
- Matt: I would echo that and also highlight the barriers for students with disabilities in securing internships and also the expensive networks that some students (e.g., business school students) have more than others that allow them to gain internships.
- Carrie: Similarly, I would echo that payment for internship work would be helpful as well as protections in employment for individuals with disabilities.
- Tim: The Wisconsin of Workforce Development is attending to this issue as it relates to all parties.

3. Whose job is it to push for equity here? How can we encourage shared responsibility?

- Tim: As mentioned, in the WI Internship Program, we are advocating for equity through affirmative action and we are available as a resource for parties involved in internship programs.
- Janice: First, we have to be communicating with each other explicitly about how to achieve equitable internship programs which then will encourage shared responsibility between groups.
- Carrie: I think we need to have more conversations in higher education about how to assess and work together to build effective and equitable internship programs for students.

- Matt: I think that it is important for policymakers to think about what it means in practice when we make internships mandatory for students in order to obtain a diploma. For companies, we need to be mindful of the implicit and explicit biases held and how employers can address the disparities in society with their hiring and training processes. Educators need to be mindful about where they are sending students for internships so that students are protected and are learning.

4. How do career advisors help under-achieving students find internship?

- Janice: I typically use a GPA of 2.5 as a benchmark. For students who fare below that, I rely on my relationship and knowledge of the student as well as my relationship with a potential employer to make those connections (e.g., being transparent that the student is not a high flyer but they are willing to learn in other ways).
- Carrie: From a student development perspective, I think it would be helpful for internship programs to identify concrete ways that their placements can meet their learning objectives.
- Matt: Again, based on my research in China it appears that internships are tracked as (a) pipeline for eventual employment; and (b) employers' service to university. Students who are high performers are sought after for the first type of internships that would include more sophisticated tasks.
- Tim: I think it would be helpful for career services to develop strong relationships with employers to address this.

5. How do we take this information to stakeholders/decision-makers to make these changes?

- Tim: We encourage advocacy at the legislative level. For example, we have heard from small sized companies who struggled to find interns which has partly shaped the WI Internship Initiative.
- Matt: We must educate decision-makers about how difficult internships can be in practice. For example, budget cuts in our education system such as that in Wisconsin make it even more challenging to design and support programs that are of high quality for our students.
- Carrie: There is limited research data regarding internship experiences and programs – to date, there is no internship-specific question in our current population-based surveys or student surveys that are nationally representative. More of such information would be helpful to inform policymaking.

6. How important is research in improving internship programs?

- Tim: We want more research – it's scattered across disciplines at this point but it would have a large role in policy making.
- Janice: In building the internship office in Northampton Community College, I relied heavily on research to design our programs and support.
- Carrie: Many research communities operate in silo and moving forward, we need to think about how to start bringing all our voices together to integrate our research.
- Matt: I think integration just happening now, but I think not as much with practitioners to identify research questions (as I would like). This is a slow step for many researchers.

7. Is there a standardized definition of internship?

- All: No

8. What are the questions that you would like researchers to address to advance policy and practice?

- Tim: First, what is the return on investment (e.g., economic benefit) of an internship for employers? Second, how can we reduce discrimination/bias in internship hiring and training?
- Janice: First, are educators educating students what they need to thrive in the workplace? Second, are students being prepared sufficiently for their work through their internships?

Breakout Sessions

A. REMEMBER ME: THE IMPACT OF INTERNSHIPS ON FIRST-GENERATION, MINORITY STUDENTS

Presenters: **Dr. Eunika Simons, Direct of Field Education, Assistant Professor, Benedict College;** **Mr. Jesse C. Outen, Director of Experiential Learning, Assistant Professor, Benedict College**

Quality internship experiences are an integral part of successful student matriculation and post-graduate success. The impact of engagement in internships is especially critical for first-generation, minority students. Unfortunately, the proliferation of these identified students who are not participating in internships or not as successful as their counterparts when they do participate, put them at a considerable disadvantage when being considered for permanent career opportunities. Ensuring that all of our students are successful in their career transition is not only high stakes for the students but for the institutions that are producing the talent that companies and businesses are looking to employ.

During this session, presenters identified and discussed:

- Challenges that prevent first-generation, minority students from participating in internships
- Strategies to engage first-generation, minority students to participate in internships and ensure that they are successful when onsite
- The impact on students, institutions, and businesses when first-generation, minority students actively engage in internships



Dr. Eunika Simons (top) and Mr. Jesse Outen (bottom) facilitating a session on the impact of internships on first-generation minority students.



B. A COMPARISON OF UNPAID AND PAID INTERNSHIPS: JOB DESIGN, SATISFACTION, AND VOCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Presenter: **Sean Edmund Rogers, Ph.D., Spachman Professor of Human Resources and Labor Relations, University of Rhode Island College of Business**

Dr. Rogers presented findings from recent research comparing the experiences of paid and unpaid interns. During summer 2017, survey data were collected from a Qualtrics panel of 367 college student respondents who completed a paid or unpaid internship between 2012-2017. 183 were unpaid interns, and 184 were paid interns, and the sample represents a wide range of fields including liberal arts, natural and life sciences, business, public administration, health sciences, and others.

As predicted, unpaid interns in the sample reported lower job design quality in the form of less task, knowledge, and social structure than did paid interns. These findings have implications for internship research, for students and college administrators, and for employers.

C. PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS FOR INTERNSHIPS THAT BENEFIT STUDENTS AND COMMUNITY

Presenter: **Natalie Furlett, Executive Director, Illinois Campus Compact**

In 2018, Tyson Foods provided grants to Campus Compact and United Way to test a new model of support for high-quality internship experiences. In its pilot summer, the program funded and supported 60 internships at different organizations in 5 communities spanning three states. Furlett shared about this model and its potential to impact a broad range of community needs and workforce challenges. Tips and strategies for structure, recruitment, and making the most of learning opportunities and publicity were also discussed. Attendees had the opportunity to consider how to institutionalize effective nonprofit internships as part of their portfolio through private partnerships.

D. YOU'RE GOING TO BE A LUCKY DOG AT INTERNSHIP DRAFT DAY

Presenters: **Linda Bartelt, Executive Director, Northeast Wisconsin Educational Resource Alliance; Ann Franz, Executive Director, Northeast Wisconsin Manufacturing Alliance**

Internship Draft Day is an innovative college talent program focused on the recruiting and hiring of student interns. This unique event, now in its fourth year, connects college students to hundreds of internship opportunities with businesses in northeast Wisconsin. The program is based on a strategic partnership between the Northeast Wisconsin Educational Resource Alliance (New Era - neweraonline.org) and the Northeast Wisconsin Manufacturing Alliance (New MA - newmfgalliance.org).

The strategic partners - New Era, is an alliance of publicly supported higher education institutions whose mission is to drive educational attainment for the betterment of the 1.2 million people who live and work in the region. New MA is an alliance of over 190 manufacturers working with educators, workforce development, and state organizations to promote manufacturing. The vision of the Alliance is that every northeast Wisconsin manufacturer will find the talent it needs. The legendary home of the Green Bay Packers, Lambeau Field brings the spirit of competition and leadership to Internship Draft Day as students compete through interviews and networking for internships. In a special closing ceremony, Mark Murphy, CEO of the Green Bay Packers, announces the top draft picks – students who have earned points for their interview effectiveness, hard work and professionalism. Scholarships are awarded to the number one and two overall draft picks and businesses are recognized for their commitment to student success. Each student takes home an official Game Day jersey. Internship Draft Day video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uzvq1WhNuek>

Results/Impact of Internship Draft Day

Internship Draft Day is a unique, creative, and original program to connect college students interested in internships with employers wanting to hire highly motivated, skilled talent. All of the internships offered at Internship Draft Day are paid internships at a competitive rate. The uniqueness of the program is that it is more than an event. Why? First, students interested in internships complete a profile highlighting career pathways and a description of their strengths and career interests, such as “my strengths range from being a good team player to being able to take a leadership role when needed”. These value statements provide the students an opportunity to uniquely describe their capabilities, skills, and aspirations. Second, employers benefit from seeing these profiles on the Internship Draft Day website and can prepare some very interesting interview questions based on the student’s values. Employers now know more about the intern candidate which creates a high quality, in-depth discussion in the interview. And finally, students learn more about organizations in northeast Wisconsin, their products and services, and employers learn more about the vast talent in our colleges and universities.

The impact of Internship Draft Day is the acceleration of student internships in the region. Now, with Internship Draft Day there is awareness and visibility of a successful talent recruiting and hiring method for organizations. After three years, the uniqueness and quality of the program is recognized at the state level by the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC) and the Wisconsin Internship Initiative, www.internshipwisconsin.com.

Program Design Session

Presenters: **Janice Kenyatta (Experiential Learning/Internship Manager, Northampton Community College)** and **Tim Alft (Coordinator of Student Employment Services, Waukesha County Technical College)** discussed how they have approached the design and implementation of internship programs in their institutions. Broadly, they shared the importance of:

- Capturing and using data to inform practices
- Understanding your role and collaborating with other campus constituents when developing internship programs
- Building meaningful and lasting relationships with employers
- Integrating flexibility into internship programming (e.g., allowances for students to drop internship course credit without penalty to financial aid status)

Additionally, they encouraged fellow professionals who are attempting to develop an internship program to connect with similar institutions to learn about their effective strategies and challenges, and to also “start small” with pilots and assessments to finetune new programs.

QUESTION AND ANSWER SEGMENT

The discussion was centered around the following topics:

- Insights around working with adult learners
- Advice for how to effectively collaborate with faculty who have connections with employers, while being transparent about the division of responsibilities that may overlap with other campus partners (e.g., career services) who are tracking students’ participation in internships
- Information regarding the scale of services provided by the presenters’ offices (e.g., the number of internship programs managed)
- Presenters’ approaches to identifying high quality internship positions from employers and disseminating information to students in a creative manner



Janice Kenyatta shares insights on designing and implementing internship programs.

Employer Panel

Panelists:

Valerie Leeck, VP of Human Resources, Banker's Bank

Tim Casey, Director of State Compliance, Skyward

Lisa Hirchert, HR Manager, Aprilaire

Nate Schumacher, Project Leader, Midwest Prototyping

1. What would you like to see from academic and policymakers regarding supporting internship programs in your community?

- Tim: We've worked closely with local colleges to help build their curriculum e.g., identifying and contributing to the curriculum of relevant computer programming language that wasn't being taught in the college at that time.
- Valerie: Invite employers into your classroom or organizations so that we may provide career advice.
- Lisa: Having guidance and resources to help me design the best type of internship program in order to be competitive and to offer the best experience for the students that would hopefully become future employees.
- Nate: Education has always been a gap in our industry -- specifically, the knowledge of 3D printing. But we've seen more and more schools develop 3D printing in the curricula and we developed a youth apprenticeship program for high school students and internships for college students.



Employers sharing information regarding internship practices and partnerships with schools

2. How formal, structured, or specialized is your internship program?

- Lisa: Our engineers have suggested for us to offer interns rotations among different managers and projects.
- Nate: We try to structure it as best as we can and also rotate our interns throughout each of the 7 technologies. However, we also allocate interns to specific areas according to our workload and assign a unique summer-long project to each student.
- Valerie: We rotate our interns through different areas to prepare them for different work areas so they can also be hired by other community banks.
- Tim: We are flexible in placing internships in different departments if there's a better fit elsewhere; however, our programming and development areas are more specialized. In general, we welcome movement within our company so it is common for full-time employees to rotate as well.

3. Where do the internships fit in your corporate culture? What were some of the things you thought about in your leadership team?

- Valerie: We think about how we can onboard interns quickly since they are typically here for 3 months. We try to incorporate them as an employee, but also have to think about our scope of activities so that they can add value to our processes.

- Tim: We're rapidly hiring and our internship program has been great for recruiting. We sell our interns on our company culture: treat them as a full-time employee from the first day and emphasize that we are a family-owned and -operated business.
- Lisa: One of the things I am concerned about as I start an internship program is how we can ensure that managers adhere to the program and make it meaningful for the students.
- Nate: Culture is very important and so, we assess whether interns are good fits as prospective employees. Many of our interns also ask about our company culture.

4. What were the most helpful resources you received from colleges when developing your internship program?

- Nate: By being connected to a local technical college's model-making program and being able to contribute to the curriculum.
- Tim: Simply meeting with academic departments to discuss ways to update the computer programming languages that were being taught.
- Valerie: It's nice when schools can make it as easy on us as possible – for example, UW-Oshkosh hosts a great internship night where students and employers are invited to mingle so that you have the opportunity to get to know their students.

5. What are your best strategies to incorporate inclusion and diversity and make sure that it's actually working?

- Tim: It's tough because of our location in Central Wisconsin. We do have more success in our Dallas/Ft. Worth location and continue to work more closely with local institutions.
- Valerie: I agree – it is a challenge being in the Midwest
- Lisa: We are at the early phase of altering our company's image into something different from an "old boys' club."

6. Do you have any experience hiring international students?

- Nate: Last summer, we hired our first international student and it is something we're open to. We are gradually learning about the legal process involved.
- Lisa: We've had a few people start on an OPT visa, and then went to H1-B and subsequently to the green card. We are definitely open to hiring international students.
- Tim: We have our first two international interns right now.
- Valerie: I have no experience thus far – we do not screen out international applicants but I do restrict internships to applicants who are students.

Conclusions

In closing, we asked the audience to share topics and questions they wish to see addressed in future research or writing. These comments were also reflected in the evaluations of the symposium provided by attendees. **Here is a summary of research questions/topics that audience members felt should be pursued in the future:**

- What are the best practices for translating learning from the classroom into the workplace?
- Which research questions do we need to address in order to increase policymakers' support for laws that prioritize internships?
- Which organizational factors retain interns as full-time employees?
- What do we know about the internship experiences of graduate students?
- How can we better address employers' lack of attention to student diversity? How can we enhance our practice and support of diverse students (e.g., non-traditional college students, veterans, graduate students)?

Here is a summary of perceived challenges in developing robust internship programs:

- What are the thoughts or misconceptions of employers that are preventing them from hiring international interns? Why are they hesitant to do so?
- How can we better support students who are completing online programs in their internship search and application process?
- How can institutions in communities with fewer employers (i.e., rural, under-resourced) build successful internship programs?
- How can we address the financial concerns and barriers of unpaid internships on students who may identify as low-income?

Resources and Next Steps

The 1st Annual Symposium on College Internship Research was a resounding success and the CCWT team is currently reviewing evaluations of the program and consulting with colleagues and the Center’s Advisory Board about next steps. We hope to build upon the energy and new connections made at this meeting to support a network of scholars, practitioners, policymakers and students engaged in studying and improving college internships in the future. Stay tuned!

[Click here for a copy of presentation slides.](#)



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The mission of The Center for Research on College-Workforce Transitions (CCWT) is to conduct and support research, critical policy analysis, and public dialogue on student experiences with the transition from college to the workforce in order to inform policies, programs, and practices that promote academic and career success for all learners.

Center for Research on College to Workforce Transitions (CCWT)

1025 West Johnson Street, Madison, WI 53706

For more information contact us: ccwt@wcer.wisc.edu or 608-265-2860.

ccwt.wceruw.org