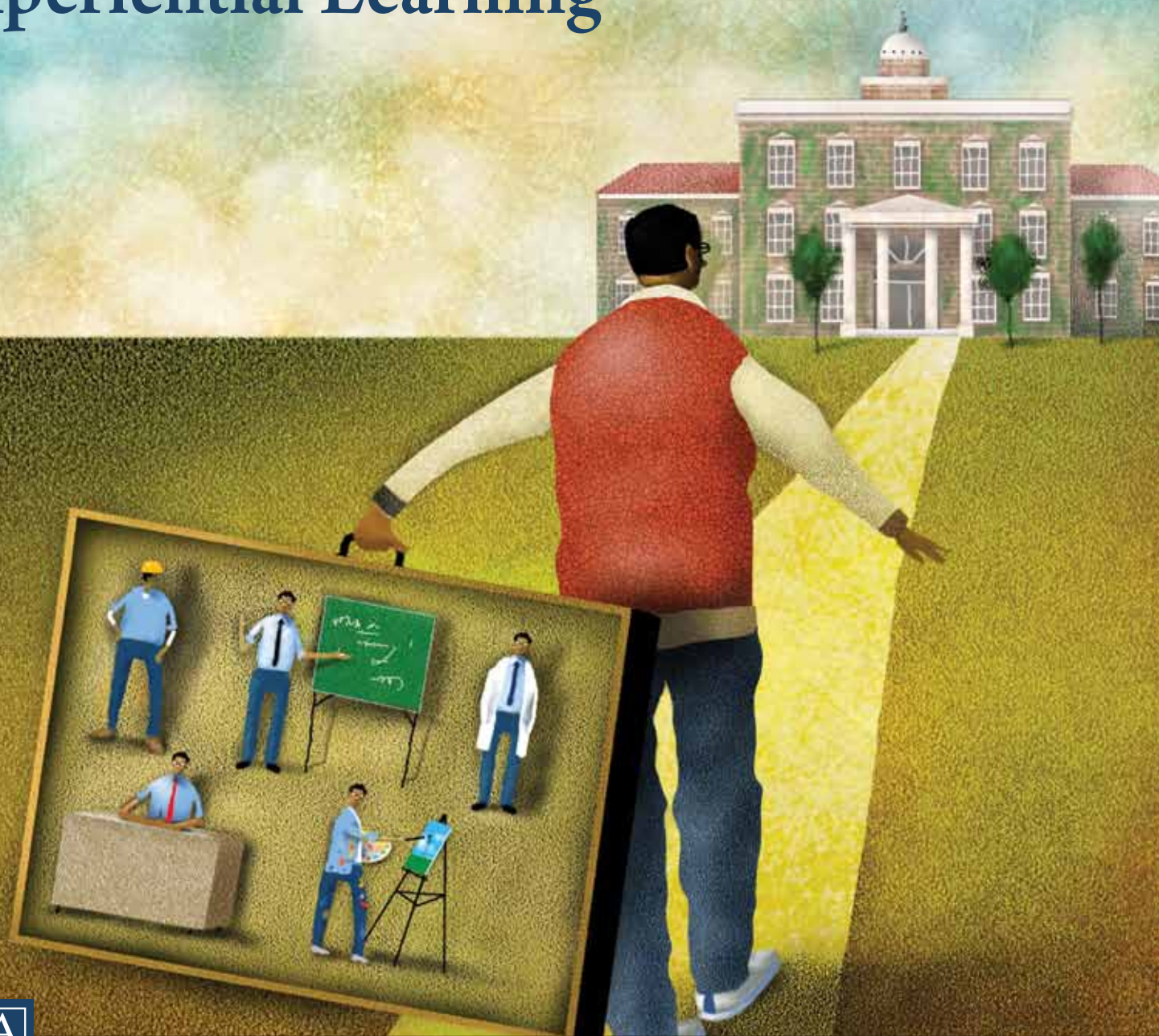


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peerReview

EMERGING TRENDS AND KEY DEBATES IN UNDERGRADUATE EDUCATION

Internships and Experiential Learning



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“Tell me and I’ll forget; show me and I may remember; involve me and I’ll understand.”
—Chinese proverb

Internships and other experiential learning opportunities allow college students to apply and connect, in real-world situations, knowledge learned and skills and ethics developed—their essential learning outcomes. As Janet Eyster explains in her Fall 2009 *Liberal Education* article, “Experiential learning... helps students both to bridge classroom study and life in the world and to transform inert knowledge into knowledge-in-use. [It provides] a process whereby the learner interacts with the world and integrates new learning into old constructs.”

This year, college internships have been a media hot topic, mostly through news stories covering the Department of Labor’s efforts to regulate unpaid internships. While those issues are worth discussion, in these pages we will explore a different aspect of this high-impact practice: how internships and other experiential learning opportunities can allow students both to extend classroom learning and also explore their career paths.

According to the 2009 Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) membership survey, 62 percent of AAC&U member institutions report placing an increased emphasis on internships during the past five years. We know from other research that these real-world experiences are critical once students graduate and head into the workforce. In a 2007 business leaders survey AAC&U commissioned, 69 percent of employers said that they think that “completion of a supervised and evaluated internship or community-based project” would be very effective in ensuring that recent college graduates possess the skills and knowledge needed for success. Furthermore, faculty-evaluated internships ranked highest among a list of assessment practices in which business leaders recommend that colleges and universities invest scarce resources.

InternGuru blogger Matthew Zinman, founder of the nonprofit Internship Institute, recently addressed this topic on his site, stating: “Internships represent an unprecedented opportunity to infuse the economy with an untapped pipeline of student talent. They also ready an emerging workforce to succeed, reducing the widening gap between labor and business competency.”

But as Nancy O’Neill, an AAC&U staff member who once worked as a college career counselor, points out in the article that opens this issue, not all internships are equally valuable for students. “Many students landed in my office precisely because their internships lacked direction and meaningful work. These students, frustrated and disappointed, began to view internships quite cynically as ‘resume fillers’ and ‘door openers’ that needed to be completed in order to land a job after graduation.” Whether students’ internships have a lasting impact greatly depends on the planning and execution of the experience.

Internships at their best are a partnership among students, campus professionals, faculty, and employers. Getting it right on the employer’s end certainly isn’t easy. I speak from experience, based on the summer that our editorial offices hosted a bright young woman as an intern. Since I had benefitted from a wonderful internship working in the public information office of the mayor of the District of Columbia many years ago, I was interested in providing an engaging internship for a college student to learn more about, and have hands-on experience working on, publications in our office. I crafted a work plan for her, and through editing, proof-reading, and writing assignments, I did my best to give her a sense of what working on a professional publication was like. Every day she came to work on time and seemed, for the most part, enthusiastic about working with us. Imagine my surprise when, after the internship was over and we were clearing her computer, I found that she’d spent much of her time with us working on a novel.

In this issue of *Peer Review*, AAC&U National Leadership Council member and Siemens executive Christi Pedra provides cogent advice to employers who, like me, find themselves wanting to craft more engaging internships. Also included in this journal’s articles are best practices from campuses addressing the need to provide strong hands-on experiences for college students as they explore the world in preparation for their lives as productive and educated citizens. In connecting goals and practices, we construct more ‘purposeful pathways’ for students and more intentional institutions in which all units work together to ensure that all students achieve the outcomes they need and deserve.

—SHELLEY JOHNSON CAREY



Internships as a High-Impact Practice: Some Reflections on Quality

► **Nancy O’Neill**, director of Integrative Programs and the LEAP Campus Action Network,
Association of American Colleges and Universities

Before joining AAC&U, I worked at a large university as a program director and counselor in career services, focusing much of my time on helping students identify their interests, figure out the connections between their academic majors and future careers, and test out these interests and connections experientially, most commonly through internships.

The beauty of internships is that they can serve different purposes for different students. For those students just beginning to figure out their choice of major and career interests, an internship can help them to become aware of the many different kinds of organizations comprising “the world of work,” build early professional experience, and sometimes discover what they *don’t* want to do. For those students who are clearer about their career interests and academic pursuits, an internship can help them apply what they are learning in “real world” settings, gain more substantial professional experience, and begin to develop a network of people in fields that interest them.

For both types of students, internships can challenge them to take an active role in charting both their short-term and long-term plans. Following an internship, some students add a second major or use their elective credit to complete a certificate or minor. Some change their majors completely. Regardless of the paths students eventually take, internships can help students understand in a profound way that college is a time to explore their interests, clarify their values, and test their knowledge and skills in new settings.

This is the ideal scenario, anyway. It is true that for a number of the students I worked with, internships provided a high-impact learning experience that integrated learning and real-world experience. At the same time, I also met many students who landed in my office precisely because their internships lacked direction and meaningful work. These students, frustrated and disappointed, began to view internships quite cynically as “resume fillers” and “door openers” that needed to be completed in order to land a job after graduation.

What made these experiences so different? What makes an internship, as an experiential activity, high impact—or not?

WHAT MAKES A PRACTICE HIGH-IMPACT?

The 2008 report *High-Impact Educational Practices: What They Are, Who Has Access to Them, and Why They Matter*, published by AAC&U as part of its LEAP initiative, sparked a great deal of interest among college and university leaders looking to increase student success. In the report, author George Kuh uses data from the National Survey of Student Engagement to demonstrate the positive impact of a set of educational practices on student engagement and success. The practices are familiar to most campus leaders: first-year experiences, common intellectual experiences, learning communities, writing-intensive courses, collaborative assignments and projects, undergraduate research, diversity/global learning, service learning, community-based learning, and capstone courses and projects. Rounding out the list is internships.

Kuh’s argument is that as long as these practices remain marginal to the whole curriculum, there will be insufficient breadth to reach all students and insufficient depth to help students become more sophisticated in their learning over time. His message for increasing student success is simple: “make it possible for every student to participate in *at least two high-impact activities* during his or her undergraduate program, one in the first year, and one taken later in relation to the major field” (Kuh 2008).

Yet there is another, equally important message in Kuh’s report, and it relates to the *quality* of these experiences. In the report, Kuh identifies six common elements across the practices that—*when employed*—make the practices high impact:

They are effortful. High-impact practices “demand that students devote considerable time and effort to purposeful tasks [and] require daily decisions that deepen students’ investment in the



activity as well as their commitment to their academic program and the college.”

They help students build substantive relationships. High-impact practices “demand [that students] interact with faculty and peers about substantive matters... over extended periods of time.” High-impact practices help students “develop a meaningful relationship with another person... a faculty or staff member, student, coworker, or supervisor” and “put students in the company of mentors and advisers as well as peers who share intellectual interests and are committed to seeing that students succeed.”

They help students engage across differences. High-impact practices help students “experience diversity through contact with people who are different from themselves” and “challenge students to develop new ways of thinking about and responding immediately to novel circumstances as they work... on intellectual and practical tasks, inside and outside the classroom, on and off campus.”

They provide students with rich feedback. High-impact practices offer students “frequent feedback about their performance.... [For example,] having one’s performance evaluated by the internship supervisor is rich with opportunities for immediate formal and informal feedback. Indeed, because students perform in close proximity to supervisors or peers, feedback is almost continuous.”

They help students apply and test what they are learning in new situations. High-impact practices provide “opportunities for students to see how what they are learning works in different settings, on and off campus. These opportunities to integrate, synthesize, and apply knowledge are essential to deep, meaningful learning experiences.”

They provide opportunities for students to reflect on the people they are becoming. High-impact practices “deepen learning and brings one’s values and beliefs into awareness; [they] help

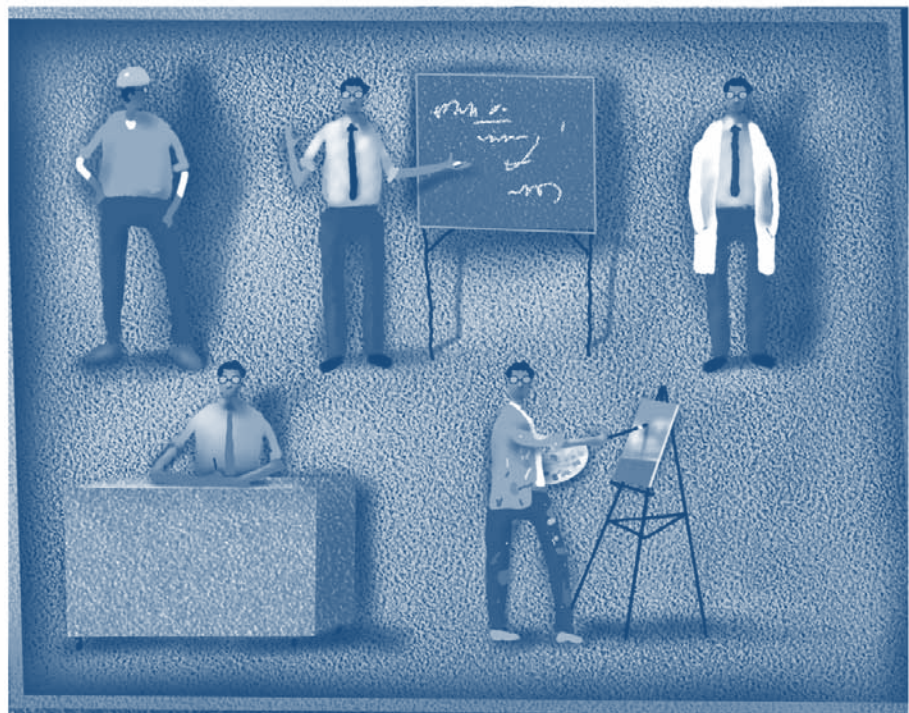
students develop the ability to take the measure of events and actions and put them in perspective. As a result, students better understand themselves in relation to others and the larger world, and they acquire the intellectual tools and ethical grounding to act with confidence for the betterment of the human condition.”

Based on these elements, we can posit that an internship is more likely to be “high impact” for students when it is intentionally organized as an activity that leads to particular learning outcomes; when students apply what they have learned in courses to work experiences, reflect on these experiences, and receive feedback that helps them to improve; when students build mentoring relationships with supervisors, faculty, and peers; when students are exposed to differences across people and in ways of thinking; and when students are asked to use their experiences to clarify their values, interests, and personal goals—including, in this case, their values, interests, and goals related to careers.

Campus leaders examining any of the “high-impact” practices on the list may find instances where a practice exhibits fewer of these characteristics than one would hope. Yet one could imagine that internships, more than many of the other practices included in the report, have a *higher degree of variability* in terms of their learning potential. I believe there are several reasons for this, beginning with how an institution defines an internship.

WHAT IS AN INTERNSHIP?

An Internet search of “internship definition” yields more than fourteen million responses, with many from campus websites. Definitions found on campus sites have some commonalities but also some interesting differences. One large university’s arts and sciences career services webpage describes an internship as something that “*integrates career related experience into an undergraduate education through participation in planned, supervised work.*” A smaller university’s center for experiential





education website describes an internship as “a supervised discipline-related work experience [involving] an intentional experiential learning strategy, an emphasis on professional development, performance assessments, and reflection and acknowledgment.”

Moving to a community college, a cooperative education department web page describes an internship as something that “engage[s] students in a process of active learning that links work experience with opportunities for critical analysis and reflection.” A small liberal arts college’s career development web page describes an internship as “a pre-professional opportunity within a specific career....It is specific, project-based, and allows the intern to gain exposure to the kinds of duties of an entry-level person in that career. An internship has a supervision component where an experienced professional will provide guidance and exposure to areas of that career.” Finally, a large university’s career center web page describes an internship as “a real world experience related to your career goals and interests. It may, but does not have to be related /connected to your academic major or minor.”

Commonalities across the definitions include a reflection component, onsite supervision/guidance, and gaining exposure to a career or furthering one’s interest in a career. Across the definitions, internships are characterized as “experiential,” “active,” and “real world.” Projects and reflection are mentioned, and one definition references assessment. Important for the discussion here, some of the descriptions refer to a student’s academics—the discipline or academic major or minor or undergraduate education generally. One description mentions a specific learning goal, critical analysis. However, in one case the connection to academics is optional, and in another case there is no mention of academics at all.

This comparison underscores the point that internships can easily vary *even before a student takes a step to become involved in one.*

It also suggests that whether an internship is high impact may depend as much on the standard that an institution sets for those engaged in developing internships.

A comprehensive standard comes from the Council for Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS), a consortium of thirty-five professional associations “concerned with the development and promulgation of professional standards and guidelines for student learning and personal development support programs” in higher education (www.cas.edu). In its standards for internship programs, CAS describes internships as becoming “an integral part of a college education” over the last forty years due to two forces: efforts to make learning relevant in order to “solve societal problems” as well as “demand by students and parents for a more career-oriented curriculum.” The standards note that:

What distinguishes internships from other forms of active learning is that there is a degree of supervision and self-study that allows students to “learn by doing” and to reflect upon that learning in a way that achieves certain learning goals and objectives. Feedback for improvement and the development or refinement of learning goals is also essential. What distinguishes an intern from a volunteer is the deliberative form of learning that takes place. There must be a balance between learning and contributing, and the student, the student’s institution, and the internship placement site must share in the responsibility to ensure that the balance is appropriate and that the learning is of sufficiently high quality to warrant the effort, which might include academic credit.

The CAS standards emphasize that an internship should be framed and developed as a *learning activity*. An internship should be “a deliberative form of learning” that involves “doing,” reflection, and “feedback for improvement”—all in support of “learning goals and objectives.” According

to the CAS statement, this would happen whether the internship is part time or full time and whether it is for credit or not for credit.

The quality of internships also is affected by how well the experience is developed and implemented. AAC&U argues that a main reason for variation in quality has to do with a lack of consistent intentionality on the part of institutions:

Students today have many opportunities for “learning in the field,” including service-learning courses, internships, cooperative education, and community-based research....While all these experiences present rich opportunities for connecting knowledge with choices and action, too many are essentially “add-ons” in which students are left to their own devices for any insights gained. Students perform service on their own time; they find jobs and even internships independently of their academic studies.... (AAC&U 2007)

What CAS calls for in being “deliberative” about internships, AAC&U pinpoints in its call for campuses to be “intentional” about integrating experiential learning, such as internships, “into the curriculum”:

To apply knowledge productively in field-based settings, all students should experience in-depth questioning from faculty, staff, and other mentors about their assumptions, analyses, conclusions, and actions. Learners also need both guidance and feedback, from mentors and peers, as they probe the facets of a complex issue and test their own insights against both theory and the experiences of others. (AAC&U 2007)

In other words, internships provide a location in which students can test out theories and methods learned in courses, but they also contribute rich material to students’ academic experience that they can and should draw on in the context of their learning with faculty, staff, and peers. What then, can campuses do better ensure



that internships are integrated into the curricular experiences of students?

SOME RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CREATING INTERNSHIPS

Strengthen how internships are defined. Some of the campus definitions made clear the connection between an internship experience and the student's undergraduate education, but not all did. Not all campuses or academic departments will require internships of their students or offer course credit for all internships that students complete, and this is not an argument for that to occur. Rather, if we follow the CAS philosophy that all internships be anchored to learning objectives, there is utility in thinking about ways in which students could be asked to draw on their internship experiences (and other experiential learning) in their courses—even traditional courses that don't have community-based components themselves. Moreover, students also can be asked to articulate their learning and career development from internship experiences—credit or noncredit—through an e-portfolio or some other mechanism designed to help them to integrate the variety of classroom and nonclassroom based experiences they will have in college. What is critical is to have students enter a process where faculty, staff, and peers ask them to reflect, challenge their assumptions, test theories, and make connections across different sites of learning.

Distinguish between learning goals and career development goals—and include both. Again, as witnessed in some of the campus definitions, internships can be framed in a way that speaks very little to what *college learning* could and should take place through the activity. Yet internships can be designed by faculty/advisers, students, and site supervisors with specific learning goals in mind. For example, AAC&U has articulated a set of learning outcomes related to personal and

social responsibility that includes ethical reasoning, taking seriously the perspectives of others, and striving for excellence. One could imagine crafting an internship with a student, or an entire internship course, that included goals related to exploring ethical decision-making in the workplace, reflecting on what “striving for excellence” means vis-à-vis developing as a professional in a particular field, or consciously including multiple and competing perspectives as part of solving a problem in the field.

An internship should be “a deliberative form of learning” that involves “doing,” reflection, and “feedback for improvement”—all in support of “learning goals and objectives.”

At the same time, this internship or internship course can and should *also* have a set of career development goals. These could include clarification of work-related interests and values; exposure to several types of work settings within an industry; the development of contacts in a particular field; or the creation of work samples that can be shared with future employers.

Address departmental reluctance to do “vocational education.” A study of sociology graduates recently presented at the meeting of the American Sociological Association indicated that among 2005 sociology graduates, “70 percent were satisfied with their major when they were seniors. By 2009, asked whether they were satisfied with their major after having been in the world of work or graduate school for a few years, only 40 percent were satisfied.” The reason for this, according to an article covering the meeting, is that “generally, sociology graduates... give very low marks to their programs for career (or graduate

school) preparation. And graduating seniors tend to say that they learned the least about the skills they perceive may help them the most when it comes to getting jobs.”

Why is there so little focus on career development in an academic discipline? The article continued:

At the same time, scholars said that they were proud of their intellectual traditions and didn't want to sacrifice them...The [ASA] has just released a resource guide for departments on

helping their students get ready for jobs. The guide and the discussion about it here dealt with a mix of packaging vs. curricular change—and speakers stressed that these changes did not involve watering down the curriculum.

The idea that addressing career development in the context of the major would “water down” the curriculum is a powerful one, with deep roots. It reveals a common reaction in academia against anything that smacks of vocationalism or apprenticeship. What suffers, as a result, are things like hands-on learning, developing marketable skills, or “learning by doing”—exactly what internships can provide. Yet internships organized as learning activities can also encourage application of sociology concepts and methods to complex problems, critical thinking, strong communication and interpersonal skills, and personal and social responsibility.

The fact is that the vast majority of undergraduate majors will not go on to



become PhDs in an academic discipline; they will become editors, branch managers, research analysts, correspondents, lawyers, and dozens of other things. Students ultimately will respond to this antivocationalism by protesting with their feet—changing majors or transferring institutions—or by later expressing dissatisfaction when they should be serving as ambassadors for a discipline and for a particular program. Professional programs typically give more attention to real-world capacities than the traditional arts and sciences disciplines, though a recent *New York Times* article indicates that even philosophy

Setting standards for internship programs will establish for administrators, faculty, and staff a set of benchmarks that identify what a quality internship program on a college campus should be.

programs are now increasingly focusing on the discipline's relevance for careers and for making sense of complex, contemporary issues—and drawing record numbers of majors.

Improve collaboration and communication between career services professionals and faculty. One of the side effects of antivocationalism in the academy is the tendency to relegate career development to student affairs, which stereotypically deals with the “lesser” (i.e., nonacademic) aspects of students' lives. Yet all of the high-impact practices identified by Kuh, including internships, would benefit from collaborative designs developed between student affairs, faculty, and academic administrators, particularly at the dean level. Consider an internship course where a department wanted to strike a balance between career development and learning goals. The course could be team-taught by faculty and career services professionals or could feature

embedded career development modules offered through a campus career center that could then be woven back into the course and addressed in student reflections.

Departments could also partner with career development professionals to develop ongoing relationships with a variety of employers, keyed to the interests of students in a particular discipline. This practice has a long history, again, in preprofessional and professional programs, including cooperative education programs in engineering and architecture.

With regard to internships, it is worth noting that CAS deliberately crafted its

standards for internship programs to include both student affairs and academic departments:

Of considerable significance is the... notion that an internship program is not the sole purview of a career center or off-campus programs office... Setting standards for internship programs will establish for administrators, faculty, and staff a set of benchmarks that identify what a quality internship program on a college campus should be [and it assumes] that there is sufficient communication between [these entities] so that the appropriate expertise can be utilized across divisions and throughout the campus.

Mid- to senior-level academic and student affairs administrators, in particular, have an important role to play here. There must be a willingness on the part of an institution to remove or reduce barriers to collaboration and communication, including the formal

and informal ways in which individuals, especially faculty, are rewarded for *not* collaborating within and across departments and units.

CONCLUSION

Are internships high-impact educational experiences? This is a question individual campuses and departments will need to answer for themselves. In this issue, readers will learn about the high degree of the intentionality with which several colleges and universities are designing or redesigning internships. This issue is particularly timely, given the worldwide economic downturn and the need for employees to have broad and flexible skill sets in order to evolve within a highly volatile work world.

To fulfill this “high-impact” potential, everyone—faculty, advisors, career development professionals, and employers—must agree to help students set and fulfill explicit learning *and* career development goals for internships. Whether students complete an internship for credit or not for credit, or closely connected to or tangential to their majors, it is critical that they no longer “be left to their own devices” in developing, completing, and utilizing these experiences to further their learning and professional development. ■

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Making the Most Out of Internships:

An Interview with Christi M. Pedra, Senior Vice President for Strategic New Business Development and Marketing, Siemens Healthcare

► **Laura Donnelly-Smith**, staff writer and associate editor, Association of American Colleges and Universities

Laura Donnelly-Smith, associate editor and staff writer at the Association of American Colleges and Universities, interviewed Christi M. Pedra, senior vice president for strategic new business development and marketing at Siemens Healthcare. Pedra discussed the internship program she developed and administered at Siemens Hearing Instruments, as well as her advice for how students can ensure their internships are meaningful and communicate clearly the learning outcomes they gain.

What was your motivation for developing a new internship program in 2007 when you were CEO at Siemens Hearing Instruments?

I learned a lot about internship programs simply from talking to my kids and my nieces and nephews. They were my best source of information, and they and their friends had some horror stories from college internships. In the Siemens hearing division, in the past, there had been an informal internship program. There was really no rhyme or reason to how the high school and college kids were selected, and it just kept them busy. Essentially, I said, if we're going to have interns here, it'll be because we have meaningful work for them to do, so that they can build their résumés. But money was tight. So we told all the department managers that we would approve between ten and fifteen paid interns for the summer, and managers would be awarded an intern based on the job they would propose for the intern to do. The scope for the work had to be a project that could be accomplished in ten weeks that had a measurable outcome and impact on the business, and could be done by a student. The best submissions won. On the student side, interns had to be juniors, seniors, or graduate students

Internship Best Practices

What can companies and organizations hosting interns do to ensure that an internship experience is mutually beneficial? Siemens Healthcare vice president Christi Pedra's advice:

1. **Develop a plan for a structured internship experience.** If possible, incoming interns should start together, in a cohort, so they can share ideas and interact across departmental or office boundaries. Where start dates are staggered throughout the year, it is beneficial to develop intern clusters, to accomplish the same effect. Weekly or monthly seminars or lunch meetings with company executives can provide multiple perspectives, and should allow time for questions.
2. **Give interns significant, goals-focused assignments.** Intern assignments should be closely tied to the student's area of study or the company's core expertise, require communication and collaboration, and have a measurable outcome. Keep administrative/ clerical tasks to a minimum; allow interns to focus on tasks relative to their projects.
3. **Provide interns a platform to demonstrate their learning.** A capstone presentation or demonstration for an audience of employees, executives, and other interns at the end of the internship allows students to gain confidence talking about their learning.
4. **Help interns describe their experience.** Counsel interns on using active, task-related language to describe their internship on resumes and in cover letters. Remember to highlight the five Cs: Communication, Collaboration, Culture/diversity, Capital systems, and Context.





with at least a B average. Each prospective intern would be interviewed, selected from the candidate pool, and would work from June to early August. The interns would get work experience that would benefit their field of study, or business in general. We did this program three times—in 2007, 2008, and 2009.

What distinguishes a good internship program? Are there specific elements that should be present?

One important thing we did was to organize the interns to start and end together and to be a formal class, a cohort. It's important to orient them to the company with a few days of classes and group activities. Every intern got a mentor in addition to the person who was his or her supervisor. We used the mentoring assignments as a developmental management tool for emerging talent within

our organization. The internship must have a measurable project—so software engineers did research and development, marketing interns did marketing plans. One of our marketing interns worked on a video news release for a product. She did the planning, taping, and editing, and the release was distributed to media outlets. We've had interns do pricing analysis and help improve our pricing methodology. Another intern created user manuals for new software. It's incredible the kind of projects interns can do! We redesigned our manufacturing line in light of some work a group of engineering interns did. The one thing they were *not* doing was filing or clerical work. We also did trainings on presentation skills, because at the end of the internship, as a capstone, each intern did a presentation about the project he or she had completed. And every Friday, we'd have a different executive team member

host a “lunch and learn” so students could ask career questions and get to understand another aspect of the business.

What can a student do if she finds herself in an internship that isn't effective—all “busywork,” or not tied to career or educational goals? Can the student turn the experience around?

Absolutely! I always say “Don't let your first boss ruin your career.” Even if the job is not what you thought it would be, anything is bearable if you have a vision. The vision is about gaining the most experience from interacting with as many people as possible. Set up exploratory meetings in different departments to learn more about the business. If you hate your summer job, how can you look at the environment around you and capitalize on the assets? If you're not happy, look to the right and left with the organization and find what's

Intern Voices

Donnelly-Smith also interviewed two former Siemens Hearing Instruments interns who parlayed their internships into full-time jobs.

Sapna Swamy, who was an information systems major, is an online marketing specialist at Siemens Hearing Instruments. She started as a full-time summer intern in 2008 and also completed part-time semester internships at Siemens in fall 2008 and spring 2009. After her graduation from Stephens Institute of Technology, she was hired as a full-time employee in June 2009.

What advice do you have for students starting their own internships?

I have heard from friends who are doing data entry [at their internships], and tell them to find out how they can help the company in other ways. We can always look for ways to improve certain processes. In my fall internship, I was working on both the US and Canada websites, and in the spring, I picked up the e-mail communications campaigns and started tracking analytics. I didn't take it all on at once—I gained more experience over time. Interns should also always try to track and measure their results. They can present what they've done later, and often numbers speak more strongly than words. In my summer internship, they had presentation classes, where they gave tips on how to present what you've learned. And we were given opportunities to meet interns from other divisions to share ideas and experiences. That was great.

Jason Scherr, who double majored in international business and media communications, is a sales support specialist at Siemens Hearing Instruments, where he manages a customer loyalty program. He completed a summer internship in 2007, after his graduation from Muhlenberg College.

What advice do you have for students starting their own internships?

I would say that basically, you need to focus on the task you're assigned. There might be one small part of it that really interests you. You can take that and make it your own, and use it to help the organization. Hopefully that can turn into a project you'd be proud of. Find something and make it your own within the realm of responsibility you're given. And being able to communicate with lots of different people is really helpful. At another company, an intern might never get to talk to the VP of sales. [Pedra], who was the CEO, was really visible. I definitely learned to communicate with the higher-ups.

How can college career offices help prepare students to succeed as interns?

The best thing that my college did was to hold a seminar about preparing for an interview. Even if you didn't have a specific interview lined up, they'd help prepare you. There were mock interviews so you could role-play and make sure you'd know how to handle yourself, and you were required to do a certain number of seminars and practice interviews before you were allowed to interview with any of the recruiters who came to campus.



interesting to you, and then volunteer for jobs outside your initial area of responsibility once you've completed your core assignments. Everyone in the company becomes part of the student's network, and they need to make a favorable impression on everyone. This applies for students who have to make money over the summer, too—if you can't find a paying internship, your summer job should still be something where you can do something that benefits you in the long term. Even if you're tending bar, you're able to make that job about timeliness, customer orientation, teamwork, trustworthiness, etc. It's about marketing yourself. From that job, you'll have the experience, skills, and competencies that you can bring into another situation—that are transferable.

As an employer, when you're looking at recent graduates' résumés, what stands out? Is simply having an internship enough, or are there specific elements that impress you?

When I see internships on a résumé, what I really want to understand is not the job title, but what were the tasks and what was accomplished? What did they actually do? The other thing is that I look for is whether students were in an environment where they had to work in a team. Did they have to col-

laborate? Did they work in one-on-one, one-to-many communication situations? I look for these in the context of every role. I spend a lot of time speaking with young people and helping them make the leap from college to career, and a lot of time it's just about helping them articulate clearly what they have done. It doesn't come naturally. I have three kids, two out of college, one in, and I've helped rewrite twenty-plus résumés of friends and family, even after they've been to career centers. Students need to be able to illustrate on the résumé the five Cs: *Communication, Collaboration, Culture/diversity, the Capital system of business, and Context*. That often doesn't come through in résumés. I helped a friend's daughter work on her résumé—she had a 3.8 GPA in marketing. But on her résumé, it had things like babysitting and teaching gymnastics. I suggested she drop the babysitting, and instead of just putting "taught gymnastics," I had her explain how she developed a plan to organize and run gymnastic events. I want to see specific tasks and what they've accomplished. They've been told to put their courses and GPA on the résumé, and that doesn't make sense. Course titles and the content vary from school to school. It's not the course, but what you derived from it, and how you applied the skills from classes that matters. ■



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AAC&U ANNUAL MEETING

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March 24–26, 2011
Miami, Florida

SUMMER INSTITUTES INSTITUTE ON GENERAL EDUCATION AND ASSESSMENT

June 4–8, 2011
San José State University, California

INSTITUTE ON HIGH-IMPACT PRACTICES AND STUDENT SUCCESS

June 14–18, 2011
The University of Vermont

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July 13–17, 2011
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The University of Vermont

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Curriculum to Career

- **Megan Pierson**, assistant director for Internships and Experiential Learning in the Career Development Center, Mount Holyoke College
- Marie Troppe**, director, Nexus and 21st Century Scholars, Mount Holyoke College

Internships have served as an educational tool for many years. What’s different about them now? In a culture of increasing fragmentation, how do we capture students’ attention and imagination so that they can facilitate their own deep learning? How can liberal arts colleges build internal institutional collaboration to provide students with an interconnected lens for viewing their academic, professional, and personal experiences? While internships may have been deemed effective in and of themselves in the past, internships embedded within a curricular pathway that facilitates students’ integration of academic knowledge and professional knowledge are what is called for today.

Students do not benefit as much from mastering vast quantities of content as they do from learning how to synthesize and contextualize that knowledge.

MODELING COLLABORATION ACROSS CAMPUS

Like all liberal arts colleges, Mount Holyoke views the liberal arts as the best preparation for sustained career and life success. We seek to develop students’ general knowledge and intellectual capabilities before specialization. We believe students do not benefit as much from mastering vast quantities of content as they do from learning how to synthesize and contextualize that knowledge. Given the contingency of knowledge and skills in a rapidly changing world, we want students to practice integrative thinking within and across disciplines. If we want to enable students to make intellectual connections, we should model that by collaboration across campus, across disciplines and departments, and even beyond the curricular and the cocurricular.

To further these goals and Mount Holyoke College’s long history of experiential education, a new interdisciplinary experiential minor called Nexus: Curriculum to Career was launched in 2009 with support from the Mellon Foundation. This article will describe the process of developing this minor—the unique collaboration, as well as its opportunities and challenges.

Mount Holyoke’s Nexus minor provides a sequence of coursework, experiential learning and critical reflection (see fig. 1). Nexus students participate in one of seven interdisciplinary tracks, which reflect likely career choices (Art and Society; Education and Society; Global Business; Journalism, Media, and Public Discourse; Law and Public Policy; Nonprofit Organizations; and Sustainable Development). Students take two introductory academic courses relevant to the track theme and a preexperience course; they then elect an experiential component, such as an internship, research project, or summer employment. Upon their return, students take a postexperience course to integrate their professional experience into their academic pathway. Students give a public presentation at a campuswide symposium, and then conclude with an advanced academic course.

The flexibility built into the Nexus structure serves students well. Through intentional preparation and reflection at the personal, academic, and professional levels, students learn not only to develop but to identify and articulate transferable skills valued by graduate schools and employers. Nexus enables students to meaningfully link their liberal arts education with their career goals. For example, Lucy wants to be the media relations director for a museum such as the Smithsonian’s National Museum of African American History and Culture. She decides to pursue the



Nexus minor in Journalism, Media, and Public Discourse and so begins her Nexus track with English 202—Introduction to Journalism, and Sociology 216—Intellectuals, Media, and the Public Sphere. Next she enrolls in Ready for the World, the internship preexperience course. In the summer she conducts research for the Media Education Foundation. Upon her return, she enrolls in Tying it all Together. To synthesize all that she has learned, she enrolls in English 301—Journalism History and Ethics. In another example, Nshunge wants to be an immigration lawyer. For the Law and Public Policy Nexus, she fashions her academic path by starting with Politics 247—International Law, and Sociology 230—Sociology of Immigration. After taking the preexperience course, she lands an internship with the Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition in Boston the following summer. When she completes the internship, she registers for the postexperience course. As her capstone course, she takes Politics 353—The Politics of Work.

FIGURE 1. NEXUS STRUCTURE—SIXTEEN-CREDIT ACADEMIC MINOR

- Two 200-level, four-credit courses in topics fundamental to the student's Nexus track
- One two-credit preexperience course (Ready for the World) or a suitable social science methods course (such as Research Methods in Cultural Anthropology, Survey Research and Data Analysis, or Research Methods in Psychology)
- An experiential component such as an internship, research project, or summer job
- A public presentation at the annual fall symposium
- One two-credit postexperience course (Tying it all Together)
- One 300-level, four-credit course in a relevant topic

Before we summarize the development of Nexus, let us briefly consider Mount Holyoke's unique institutional profile and student population. Mount Holyoke College, located in a small town in western Massachusetts, is the oldest women's college in the world. Considering our student body of 2,200, we have an unusual number of international students, students with high financial need, and first-generation college students. Students at Mount Holyoke are, therefore, confronted with financial and cultural barriers in accessing internship opportunities and have an increased need for financial support. Mount Holyoke continues to support the philosophy of its founder, Mary Lyon, who believed that a Mount Holyoke education should be available to any talented woman who could benefit from it.

Not only do we want to make a college education accessible to all students, but we also want to make opportunities, such as internships, which are proven to be high impact, accessible to all students. One way we try to meet financial need is through a centralized funding process administered by the Career Development Center. Students from all academic disciplines apply for merit-based internship or research fellowships issued annually from the college. Departments across campus collaborate and agree upon merit terms and student selection. Each year the college provides nearly \$500,000 in funding to approximately two hundred students for internships or research projects. While the fellowships do not meet the totality of student demand, they provide access to critical internship and research opportunities.

PREPARING STUDENTS FOR INTERNSHIPS

To return to the development of Nexus, we note that it was the eventual outcome of years of discussion among the faculty. In 2008, the dean of faculty invited a

group of faculty to meet in a seminar to consider ways to better prepare students for internships and research projects. In a positive coincidence of timing, Mount Holyoke had recently received a curricular development grant from the Mellon Foundation to support this new faculty work. The deans of faculty and the college shepherded what emerged as the Nexus minor through the curricular process. At different points in the multiyear planning process, crucial contributions from all parts of the curriculum, the Career Development Center, the Community-Based Learning program, the McCulloch Center for Global Initiatives, the Miller Worley Center for the Environment, the Speaking Arguing and Writing (SAW) program, the Weissman Center for Leadership and the Liberal Arts, and the deans ensured a sense of ownership across the curriculum.

In developing the two required pre- and postexperience courses, faculty and staff asked themselves: What knowledge and skills do students need before they embark on internships and research projects? How can we teach those skills to students going to dramatically different sites in the United States and abroad? The group proposed two courses, a preexperience course, Ready for the World: Preparing for Your Internship and Research Project, and a postexperience course, Tying it all Together: Curriculum to Career. These courses provide multiple opportunities for critical reflection, linking the coursework to the experience and integrating theory and practice, all the while keeping an eye on long-term career goals.

The pre- and postexperience courses are structured around common topics relevant to all disciplines, project types and locations. Some topics in the preexperience course include successful research and interview methodologies, class and power dynamics both within and between organizations, and ethical considerations



in the workplace. The postexperience course focuses on presenting one's experience and making intellectual connections among different contexts. What seems to be emerging as the great strength of these two courses is that faculty and staff from various academic departments, the Career Development Center, the SAW Center, and the academic centers have all contributed to the design and teaching of the courses. Students agree that the course enriches their internship and research experiences (see fig. 2).

The culture of collaboration at Mount Holyoke enabled us to address another need: student presentation skills. A fall symposium provides students returning from summer internship and research projects with an opportunity to reflect critically on how their learning experiences outside the classroom connect to their coursework at Mount Holyoke, and how they have shaped their academic,

FIGURE 2. STUDENTS COMMENT ON "READY FOR THE WORLD" COURSE

1. "I had never thought about connecting my academic work to my extracurricular interests and internship/research projects until I took Ready for the World."
2. "I have done internships prior to this one. During the earlier internships, I hadn't had a good idea of how to ask for and get what I wanted from the internship experience. This time, I did feel better prepared. . . . Most helpful [in the Ready for the World class] was the chart where we planned our internship goals. It gave me a framework to apply to my internship."
3. "I believe that I would have felt less prepared for the experience if I had not taken the Ready for the World class, because it gave me the assurance that I had thoughtfully planned my experience."
4. "Ready for the World provides an extremely helpful and useful way of preinternship coaching by teaching us about working environments and work relationships."

professional, and personal goals. The symposium is open to all students at the college, and it is a requirement for Nexus students, who prepare for it as part of the Tying it All Together course.

Despite significant successes in the development of the Nexus minor, there are some challenges that still need to be addressed. Course designers wrestled with several problems: (1) how to make a course relevant to students pursuing dramatically different projects in a wide range of settings; and (2) how to provide reading assignments, essay questions, and reflective writing appropriate for such a heterogeneous set of experiences. We continue to struggle with issues of timing and sequence. The course is primarily effective if taken in the spring once students have summer internship or research project offers in hand. Unfortunately, many students do not receive offers until shortly before the summer begins, making it difficult for the students to fully conceptualize their upcoming experience and to make the course assignments applicable and specific to their upcoming project. For students who spend their junior year studying abroad, there will be an undue lag time between taking the preexperience course, doing the internship or research project, and taking the postexperience course.

HELPING STUDENTS TO BECOME INTENTIONAL ABOUT THEIR FUTURE CAREERS

Colleagues at other institutions often ask us how we developed faculty buy-in for Nexus. Initially, plenty of faculty resisted the idea of this program. Some worried that Nexus would compete with other interdisciplinary programs; others worried that our liberal arts mission would become too preprofessional. For multiple reasons, this initiative has worked nonetheless. First, Mount Holyoke enjoys a long history of internships and support to

make internship opportunities accessible. Since the 1950s, Mount Holyoke faculty have identified internships for students and the college has provided some financial support for the opportunities. In recent years, the college has provided increasingly more financial support. Second, an existing interdisciplinary minor called Complex Organizations attempts to link the liberal arts with social and economic aspects of organizations, both for-profit and not-for-profit. Third, the concern about inadequate student preparation for work abroad persuaded faculty to support a more systematic preparation for students.

Nexus essentially arose from the faculty, and faculty concerns were focused and supported by the dean of faculty. As more faculty were brought in to develop specific tracks, skeptical faculty joined in the conversation and, in some cases, became supporters of the idea. While there are still skeptical faculty, principled opposition (primarily about fears of diluting our liberal arts mission) seems to be waning. Fourth, faculty are beginning to recognize how students returning from these summer experiences deepen discussions in their classrooms.

Our hope is that in the increasingly difficult economy of the twenty-first century, students and their families will understand that an investment in a liberal arts education provides the best possible chance for a successful career and future. Nexus is helping students to become intentional and proactive about their future careers, to recognize their progress toward career goals, and to understand the power of leveraging a liberal arts education. ■



Connecting the Classroom with Real-World Experiences through Summer Internships

► **Lisa Gavigan**, senior associate director of career services, Wheaton College (Massachusetts)

At Wheaton College in Norton, Massachusetts, summer is a time for learning, a time for connecting the classroom with experiences that inform post-graduate career paths. It is a time to explore industries, build workplace skills, and gather information from professionals in the field. For one student, summer learning takes place while working at a camp for children with cancer. For another, an interest in water use leads to a summer spent at the Nile River Basin researching the potential for conflict among the countries that share the basin. At Wheaton, a student does not sit alone in front of a computer and select an internship from a database. Instead, it's a collaborative process with a career adviser who helps the student to not only recognize the opportunities that are available, but also possible because of the college's commitment to funding these summer experiences.

Wheaton feels so strongly about the value of the "connected" summer experience that the college dedicates more than \$400,000 for student internships, research, and travel each year. Students annually receive summer funding through Wheaton's Merit Scholar, Mars Student/Faculty Research Partnerships, Wheaton Fellows, and Davis International Fellows programs. These programs provide students with \$3,000 to \$5,000 to undertake unpaid, non-credit-bearing summer learning experiences ranging from internships and service placements to independent student-initiated research with members of the Wheaton faculty or on campuses around the world. These stipends motivate students to think outside the box when designing internships, and enable the staff in Career Services to assess student learning outcomes. For more than twenty years, we have been supporting and tracking students' summer experiences—linking them to successes in admissions, retention, donor satisfaction, and student postgraduate achievement.

HISTORY

Wheaton students have been exploring "career fit" since the late 1970s Oil Crisis. In an effort to conserve energy during the oil shortage, Wheaton closed for an extended winter break. Students were encouraged to use this time to investigate possible career choices by arranging for January internships with organizations across the United States. Alice Emerson, president of what was then a women's college, was eager for young women to be exposed to both the nonprofit and corporate worlds that awaited them. Sharon Howard, executive director of Alumnae/i Relations and Annual Giving and then assistant to the president, remembers,

President Emerson seized the moment as an opportunity for Wheaton women to gain critical experience in the world of work. The Office of Career Planning was charged with the exciting task of working closely with young women, first-year students, as well as graduating seniors, to design internships suited to their potential career interests. The program was an instant success. Internships were designed in local and national legislative and congressional offices, in corporate and not-for-profit settings, in human services and the health professions, as well as in law offices and social service agencies. Not only were alumnae approached to serve as intern sponsors, but many offered space in their homes for a month in cities across the country, not limiting the students to their own geographic area.

Hannah Goldberg, Wheaton's provost in the early 1980s, continued the college's commitment to the idea that students should understand the connection between their academics and the world of work. A major result of this commitment was changing the Office of Career Planning and Placement to the Filene Center for Work and Learning—Goldberg's intention being "to educationalize work, not vocationalize learning." A \$400,000 grant from the Charles A. Dana Foundation enabled the new center



to sponsor students for both summer and January stipends. Subsequent grants from corporations and trusts as well as a string of alumnae/i donations earmarked for summer stipends guaranteed fifteen to twenty-five Wheaton Fellow awards a year. The Davis International Fellows program, established in 1994, came out of one alumna's deep desire to link her dedication to globalism with experience-based learning. Dan Golden, former Filene Center director, comments, "The Davis investment in global learning put more students than ever before out into the world for a wide range of learning activities that link to our curriculum, our institutional values and to the aspirations of a cohort of imaginative, dedicated, and thoughtful young people."

For more than twenty years, the Merit Scholarship program has enabled Wheaton to recruit and retain some of the best and the brightest high school graduates each year by also providing summer stipends for out-of-classroom learning experiences. Members of this cohort are followed by their academic and career advisers and guided through the summer planning process. Across campus, there is a team approach in helping these students connect the in- and out-of-classroom experiences that will facilitate graduate studies, the attainment of national fellowships and scholarships, and career satisfaction. And as the ranks of successful, satisfied graduates grow, so too do the ranks of alumnae/i who want to make similar experiences possible for current students, either through financial donations or by providing internship positions.

FACULTY INVOLVEMENT IN CAREER SERVICES

Incorporating the Filene Center into the provost's division of the college began a beneficial partnership with the faculty. The faculty were brought into the summer internship planning process

when a grant from the Consortium for the Advancement of Private Higher Education sought to bring the "work and learning" message to the academic departments. Faculty fellows worked collaboratively with career services staff to develop off-campus 'learning sites' and designed 'learning guides' to be used by students as a tool for academic and career reflection. This tradition of the faculty fellow continues, and was solidified in 2007 when the Filene Center for Work and Learning was renamed the Filene Center for Academic Advising and Career Services. The work of these fellows has helped to integrate experiential learning components into more than sixty courses in the Wheaton curriculum.

Grace Baron, the first faculty fellow, says,

Ask a colleague to name the moment they knew they really loved their chosen discipline, first felt the tug toward their eventual career choice, or could first envision their future professional selves. Most often, the moment is a classroom field activity, an internship or research adventure. With continued respect and even awe of traditional scholarship, we faculty know the value of actual engagement with the material and methods of our disciplines to enliven learning, spark career choice, and live life well. It is the same for our students. Our teaching comes alive when our students experience the disciplinary translations of liberal arts learning into action....in the lab, in the field, on the job and in service to others. Increasing student experiential learning opportunities is a goal shared by the faculty and career services, making collaborative efforts between the two groups very successful.

FOUR YEARS, THREE SUMMERS

At Wheaton, career success does not happen by accident—it happens by

design. Each new class brings with it a diversity of backgrounds, interests, talents, and career goals. It is our job as career advisers to help students reflect upon their skills, talents, and interests, search for experiences that will inform their academic and career decisions and, ultimately, begin to build career paths for which a liberal arts education serves as the foundation. How do we do this? Like many colleges, we have a four-year plan. Wheaton's Career Curriculum maps out a set of learning goals and expectations for each year.

We work closely with students through one-on-one conversations over the course of four years, asking them over and over again, Why? Why do you like that class? Why did you choose to be a biochemistry major? Why did you dislike your internship at the hospital? We pepper the student with questions until she is able to understand and articulate her learning style, preferred work culture, applicable skills, passions and career goals. In some circles this is called reflection, in others, self-assessment. Regardless, it is a simple concept: urge students to think about who they are, what work they want to do and why they want to do it. Some students simply fall into majors and then again into jobs. We encourage students to go through these steps with intentionality. Says Aaron Bos-Lun, a senior, "I am a big believer in experiential learning and one of the main reasons I was drawn to Wheaton was the Filene Center and Wheaton's institutional emphasis on internships, enriching one's education through practical application and personal exploration."

Wheaton's four-year Career Curriculum strongly encourages students to use their three summers to "try on" potential careers, to see what fits and what doesn't. The first summer might be used to explore a new interest, the second summer to connect an academic interest to a related field, and the summer between the junior and



senior year to focus on a specific position as a springboard for the senior job search process or graduate school. In addition to learning about summer funding opportunities, we encourage all of our students to visit the career services office early and often. All students are provided with an internship planning timeline in the fall of each year. They are encouraged to meet with a career adviser to discuss how they would like to use their upcoming summer. When students plan on accessing their Merit Scholar stipends or competing for fellowships, it is even more important that they embark on the process early, because the selection committees strictly adhere to application requirements, procedures, and deadlines.

A COLLABORATIVE EFFORT

Wheaton is not alone in providing funding to students for summer internship experiences, but it is unique in its mission and methodology. Students are not given stipend checks in the junior year and told to find internships or placed in slots for existing internships. The genesis of the funded fellowships came out of an educational philosophy that rather than “getting” an internship, students need to identify opportunities, apply and interview for those positions, and design proposals for why they should be awarded the funding. This proposal process requires that students think about career aspirations, articulate what they hope to learn specifically from their internship experiences, and demonstrate their ability to learn.

When planning these experiences, students are encouraged to look beyond the summer itself and think of ways in which the contacts and practical experience can help them later. Anna Schulz, a 2002 graduate, competed for and received a Davis International Fellowship as she was finishing up a study abroad semester in Switzerland. The Davis Fellowship enabled her to use contacts she had made

in Geneva during her junior year to set up an internship in Africa focused on the Nile River Basin and the potential for conflict among the countries that shared the basin. She traveled to Zambia, got practical experience and access to pertinent documents, and returned her senior year to write an outstanding thesis on the water use conflicts in the Nile River Basin. She was then successful in not only being awarded a Fulbright Scholarship to Zambia to study cross-boundary water rights, but afterward was accepted to the premier master’s program in the United Kingdom to study under one of the preeminent world scholars on water use. Currently, Anna is a doctoral student at the Fletcher School for Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University. She is today on the fast track to becoming a superlative world scholar on global water use issues. These summer experiences are not disparate parts of a student’s education, but connected in very individualized ways.

From the very start, Wheaton’s summer funding programs are a collaborative effort of student, staff, faculty, and often

We help students to see the major as a foundation for the future not a label that will define them or their career path.

alumnae/i. Cross-campus conversations are ongoing. It is common practice for faculty members, academic deans, and career services staff members to pore over students’ fellowship applications, noting exceptional promise in particular fields and shepherding students to reach their highest potential.

When students decide to take advantage of these stipends, they are encouraged to work closely with career advisers, faculty members, and writing tutors. As career advisers, we know that develop-

mentally, students can be very concrete in their thinking, not able to see all of the possibilities open to them. How many of us have met with the history major who loves history but doesn’t want to be a teacher—the only vocation, in the mind of that student, open to history majors? It is up to us, through a series of one-on-one conversations, to tease out students’ academic interests, workplace skills, preferred work environment, to name a few, and help them weave these components into a short-term career plan. It is up to us to help history majors learn not only about related careers such as historic preservationist or museum curator, but also tangentially related careers like lawyer or urban planner. We help students to see the major as a foundation for the future, not a label that will define them or their career path.

THE PROCESS

Once students have secured summer experiences, they are asked to submit a well-written, persuasive statement of interest in which they articulate what

they propose to do. The essays should contain evidence of the students’ strengths, qualities, and the skills they bring to the proposed experience as well as how these have been developed through coursework, prior internships or jobs, and cocurricular activities. They are asked what they expect to learn and how this learning will occur throughout the summer experience. The students also need to present convincing rationales explaining why these particular experiences are important to them at that particular time in their Wheaton education,



to their academic learning, and/or to their developing career interests. Applicants who plan to engage in an overseas experience must also demonstrate language and cultural competency as well as a rationale for their specified region of the world.

Each year, an average of 120 students enters the competitive stipend process. Copies of the student essays are distributed to a group of eight staff and faculty members who then choose approximately forty recipients. Although the students have access to the money in the beginning of June, this is not the end of their commitment to the process. The students are strongly encouraged to keep a weekly journal of their experiences. Although most students see internships as entries on resumes, we help them to understand that these summer experiences are so much more than that. Internships, study abroad experiences, summer jobs, and independent research projects are intended to provide opportunities for reflection on one's values and interests. When students engage on a deeper level with a field of study and reflect on these experiences, they can process this new information and think about how their interests and values may shift and change. Some of the prompts the students are given:

1. What was your most exciting experience or learning that occurred? Why?
2. What activity engaged you fully, made you feel more energized? How did this activity connect with your values?
3. What activity were you doing that you disliked and frankly would never choose to do again?
4. Did you surprise yourself with how good you were at a particular task? What was that task? Did you enjoy doing that task? Why?
5. What challenges did you face? How did you handle them? What did you learn from the experience? Knowing what you know now, how would you handle things differently?

6. What skills have you utilized? What skills are you in the process of developing?
7. Are you meeting people who could serve as possible mentors? What qualities do you admire about them?
8. What observations have you made about this particular culture (workplace and/or living environment)? How have your encounters with this culture changed your perspective about yourself and this culture? Have you changed any of your preconceived ideas?

REFLECTION

We encourage students to periodically review their log and highlight important or recurring themes, ideas, or thoughts. This log is a beneficial resource for further discussion with career and faculty advisers as students make deci-



sions about future courses, internships, and career options. When the students return to campus for fall semester, they are required to write a reflection essay on their experience and to participate in our Internship Showcase. The Internship Showcase is an opportunity for students to share their summer experience (occurring on six continents this past summer) with the Wheaton community as a whole. The faculty have a chance to see what their students are doing outside the classroom and how they are connecting their learning to the world of work, parents get to see their students' practical application of a liberal arts education, and fellow

students are motivated by their peers' experiences.

Last year was Wheaton's first showcase, so we are still learning and assessing. We used our fairly large physical office space as opposed to the more often used student center. Our intention was to bring students who do not access our services to the Filene Center and reinforce the connection between the Career Services office and these wonderful student experiences. One of our biggest challenges was in getting faculty members to attend the showcase. To meet this challenge, we scheduled the event on the same day as a faculty meeting and requested that the meeting be relocated to a lecture hall in our building. The showcase became almost inescapable, as members of the faculty were able to meander through the showcase on their way to the meeting.

Of the forty students who participated last year, we had everything from poster presentations to short films to a fashion show put on by Hispanic studies major Griffin Patria, a junior. Inspired by his first-year seminar, *Fit for a Queen*, Griffin researched powerful women and created dresses based on what he learned. "I spent the summer researching Eva Perón, Jackie Kennedy, Grace Kelly, Marie Antoinette, and Queen Elizabeth to figure out what they wore, and how they got to power by using their feminine images. I improved my sewing skills immensely and I learned a lot about period costume and historical fabrics and patterns."

THE VALUE ADDED

The value of the internship experience coupled with the reflection piece cannot be understated. It is really the only opportunity for students to "try on" a career, to apply and strengthen what they have learned in the classroom, to validate a chosen major or career path and, sometimes most important, to reflect and change directions while time allows.



Recently, an economics major who interned with a microfinance organization in South Africa said, “I need to take a chemistry and a geology class before I graduate because scientists from those two disciplines were on every project we developed.”

The faculty understand the value of and encourage summertime experiential learning opportunities—especially those who benefit from students engaging in summer research. “Summer research experiences are an invaluable part of a Wheaton experience, especially for our students with graduate school plans; for many, this is the first time that they work on a project that demands correctness—that matters! Summer projects expose them to a graduate research school environment as they participate in and present actual work,” says Marc LeBlanc, a computer science professor. The Wheaton community as a whole recognizes that with the integration of academics and field experience, we can accomplish so much.

Many summer funding recipients would not be able to engage in such learning experiences without financial support. Those students who do not have summer stipends have to choose between summer jobs and internships or have to divvy up their summer hours to meet both financial and academic needs. Professor of political science Darlene Boroviak says,

Political science and international relations majors over the years have received summer support via Davis International Fellowships, Wheaton Fellowships, and the Merit Scholar programs. This support enabled them to take risks and do things they normally would not have been able to do, if they had to think only about earning money in the summer. In some cases, the experiences they were able to have were life-transforming experiences,

opening new career paths or enabling a student to pursue a research interest. In all cases, students returned from the challenging internships that they were able to undertake because they had summer support from Wheaton with an enhanced self-image, more self confidence, and both academic and practical skills that contributed to their on campus academic work and helped them as they defined what their life after Wheaton might be.

In the past ten years, Wheaton students have won more than 121 highly competitive scholarships and fellowships. Seventy percent of these award winners had the benefit of at least one funded summer experience. We recognize that funded summer experiences have given Wheaton the chance to “grow” many of our national scholarship winners, including Rhodes, Fulbright, Truman, and Watson winners who came to the table of international competition with superior field experiences. Miles Sweet, a 2002 graduate, for instance, was more competitive as our first Rhodes Scholar because the Davis Fellow summer stipend enabled him to research at the Marie Curie Institute in Paris. For Megan O’Sadnick, a 2009 Fulbright Scholar, funded summer experiences contributed greatly to her understanding of the field of glaciology and the building of a career path in that field. Megan spent her sophomore summer in Alaska at the Juneau Icefield Project and the following summer at the Center for Remote Sensing of Ice Sheets at the University of Kansas. A research scientist at the Norwegian Polar Institute where Megan will be spending her Fulbright year comments, “Megan’s previous experiences... put her in an excellent position to assist our work, and provide valuable cross-fertilization with our goals for this project.” Of the rising seniors who, at the time of this writing, are intent on entering this year’s national

award competitions, all have benefitted from a funded summer experience.

MOVING FORWARD

The term “program” has been used loosely throughout this article because for many years the priority of the funded summer was the student experience. More recent demands for assessment and outcomes in all areas of higher education have motivated our office to see the connection between our work and the larger issues of student admissions, retention, and success. We have begun to pull numbers from across campus, working closely with Alumnae/i Relations, Student Life, and Institutional Research to compile and assess reports detailing the correlation between summer experiences, graduate school acceptance and national award winners. We have realized we will not reach every student, but we can improve our services to the ones with whom we do work, and that the summer funding programs provide a captive audience. Of these students, we can expect participation in career-focused workshops they may not have otherwise attended. We can require that students inform us of their summer plans (sometimes the black hole of career-planning offices), and we can anticipate that students will be reflective learners in these out-of-classroom experiences. We know that we have all the components of a successful internship program. Our goal now is to tie it together such that our services are more visible to the Wheaton community, that students recognize the added value of working with our staff early and often, and that soon, our Career Curriculum, inclusive of three summer experiences, is seen as inescapable by our students. Student success should not happen by accident, it should happen by design—their design. ■



Cooperative Education at the University of Cincinnati: A Strategic Asset in Evolution

- **Kettil Cedercreutz**, professor, associate provost, and director, Division of Professional Practice, University of Cincinnati
Cheryl Cates, professor, director, Center for Cooperative Education Research and Innovation, University of Cincinnati

Cooperative Education (co-op) was developed at the University of Cincinnati (UC) in 1906 by Herman Schneider, a young, dynamic dean. Co-op is today defined as an educational methodology in which periods of classroom instruction alternate with periods of paid discipline-related work experience (Cates and Cedercreutz 2008). Co-op students typically participate in a school-work rotation that may span over as many as three academic years throughout their undergraduate education. While Schneider had proposed this concept a few years earlier as a professor at Lehigh University, his ideas did not resonate with the institution. However, in Cincinnati, he found the ground to be fertile, and the building blocks for the program were already in place. The city of Cincinnati, with its largely German population, had a large number of successful machine tool companies that were gearing up their production to meet the demand of the emerging automotive industry. The Midwest was headed for an era of historic growth, creating high demand for qualified engineers at an accelerated rate. *The Cooperative Method of Education* was Herman Schneider's response to the escalating demand. Schneider capitalized on the presence of a strong manufacturing industry, a well-established engineering school, and the intrinsic appreciation the German culture held for apprenticeships. According to campus tradition, the skeptical University of Cincinnati Board of Trustees gave Schneider the right to "try this cooperative idea of education for one year only, for the failure of which they would not be held responsible."

The rest is history. Schneider started with twenty-seven students. The next year, more than eight hundred students applied to participate in the program. The "Cincinnati Plan," as the program

was initially coined, soon took off as a transferrable concept. In 1909, Northeastern University announced its co-op program. This was followed by the University of Pittsburgh in 1910, the University of Detroit in 1911, and Georgia Institute of Technology and Rochester Institute of Technology in 1912. Drexel University would join ranks in 1919. Within twenty years, co-op programs had been adopted by more than a dozen institutions, including Harvard and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. For many of these institutions, cooperative education has provided a sustainable competitive advantage that is still a vital part of their academic strategy today. From Cincinnati, co-op has grown to be adopted by as many as nine hundred universities worldwide. In September 2005 (University of Cincinnati 2005), the UC Board of Trustees tongue in cheek issued a proclamation that contained the following statement: "We, the Board of Trustees of the University of Cincinnati, hereby declare the trial period of one hundred years of cooperative education officially ended, for the success of which we will assume full responsibility." In September 2010, UC President Gregory H. Williams emphasized in his investiture speech the generation of new models of co-op, internships, and service learning as a top UC priority (Williams 2010).

Like all innovators, Herman Schneider was a product of his time. He had a passion for linking theory and practice together in a meaningful way. He could move from manufacturing to Shakespeare whenever he recognized that his students needed a wider spectrum of intellectual stimulus. Schneider's thinking had many parallels with the thoughts of John Dewey. In his "learning by doing" philosophy, Dewey, in essence, brought practice into the classroom.



Schneider's approach to problem solving was to bring the students out to work, to make them contributing citizens in the real world. Philosophically, these men had a lot in common. But Dewey was a prolific writer, whereas Schneider was a "doer" who wanted to maximize his effect on students' lives and the industrial world around him.

Over the years, co-op has seen a number of shapes and forms at the University of Cincinnati. During the initial years, co-op was equivalent to a week-by-week alternation of school and work. As the university grew, and the commutes became longer, the work terms followed suit. After the Second World War, the university followed a seven-week, split semester co-op calendar. In 2012, the university is moving from a quarter to a semester calendar, taking the work terms from thirteen to seventeen weeks. The increase in the length of the work term supports increased participation in out-of-state and overseas co-ops.

SECRETS OF SUCCESS

The core secret of success for co-op at the University of Cincinnati is explicitly value based. Co-op gave the university a competitive advantage, positive identity, and an enhanced goodwill within the community. Through its initial success, co-op developed to become an intrinsic part of the culture of the institution. Experiential learning forms a core academic value, and the learning benefits offered by co-op are well understood on every level.

In order to become a high-volume program, co-op had to be formalized and regimented. The first supporting operational issue was to develop a calendar that guaranteed full industry coverage twelve months of the year, thus allowing employers to develop their operations to rely upon co-op. Participating companies were able to create meaningful jobs that were conducive to developing the professional skills of the students.

The second key attribute was to require that all co-ops be paid. The obvious financial benefit of this arrangement was that it helped students offset their tuition bills and living expenses. Still, the deeper pedagogical rationale was more significant. Co-op was designed to mimic real-world conditions in which students were also employees. The saying, "The key to any employment contract is an honest day's wage for an honest day's work," soon evolved into a cornerstone of the program. This motto, which has kept companies from hiring beyond their needs, also ensured that students in co-ops always had meaningful work. It was evident that getting paid, being involved, and learning the profession were all linked to one another.

The third key attribute was assessment. The fact that students were assessed by supervisors and faculty, and that they had the opportunity to confidentially assess the employer, made it possible to maximize student engagement and learning.

The above attributes have stood the test of time, and still today form the foundation for cooperative education at the University of Cincinnati.

LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT

Learning and assessment are an obvious part of cooperative education. It is not difficult to convince anyone that eighteen months of a professionally related work experience prepares a student for a smoother transition to a career. It is also easy to recognize that when theory and practice are interlaced within the curriculum, the two approaches to problem solving support one another. A co-op curriculum is simply easier to digest than one that does not involve practice. Co-op takes students *further faster*. This fact is well understood by the 1,500 employers who participate in the UC co-op program annually. A few of these employers have been with the university since 1906, but a dynamic economy brings approximately

20 percent new employers to campus each year. Faculty recruited to the university from other prestigious engineering schools are often surprised that UC seniors outperform the graduate students enrolled at their previous universities.

One aspect of a cooperative education program that is a bit more concealed is the effect co-op has on the faculty body as a whole. One can say, a little bit tongue in cheek, that faculty members in a UC mandatory co-op program have not been able to fool the students since 1906. As early as 1908, it was noted in the minutes of the Cincinnati Metal Trades Association that "the professors now face a sort of reversed quiz in which the students put the professors on the rack and many find this very uncomfortable." Faculty have, over the years, learned to draw from the fact that students are exposed to the latest industrial trends, and bring the collective knowledge of the group into the classroom. Over a hundred years, these dynamics have developed into a pedagogical culture that has a strong blend of theory and practice.

In mandatory co-op programs, the work experience boosts the academic evolution of the entire class. When co-op is optional, the academically stronger students typically gravitate toward co-op. This becomes a challenge to faculty as heterogeneous groups tend to be more difficult to address. Co-op is most effective when all students in a cohort are involved equally in the alternation of school and work. At the University of Cincinnati, this is the case for the twenty-three majors offered by the Colleges of Engineering and Applied Science (CEAS) and the College of Design, Architecture, Art and Planning (DAAP). Co-op has, as an example, contributed to the stellar rankings of several DAAP programs. The dean of DAAP, Robert Probst, proudly emphasizes the link between a roster of strong co-op employers and the fact that



the baccalaureate program in interior design has been ranked number one by *Design Intelligence* eleven out of the past twelve years.

In addition to rankings, the measurement of learning outcomes has become a staple in American higher education over the past two decades. ABET was one of the first accreditation bodies to develop fully outcomes-based assessment criteria. Most regional accreditation bodies soon followed suit. This evolution presented a golden opportunity for cooperative education. Could the efficacy of a specific curriculum be measured in the context of work, and the results fed back to the classroom for continuous improvement purposes? Encouraged by initial findings at Georgia Institute of Technology (Hoey, Marr, and Gardener 2002) and Iowa State (Hanneman et al. 2002), the authors embarked on a four-year research project to explore this relationship. Financed by the Fund for Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE) this \$1 million project (federal funding: \$555,000), *Developing a Corporate Feedback System for Curricular Reform*, yielded very positive results. The project involved twenty faculty members from the Engineering and Applied Science, DAAP, Business, and Education colleges, resulting in a feedback system that is now a part of the standard operating procedure of the university. The methodology documents the evolution of student skills throughout the curriculum by contrasting up to six chronological performance assessments completed by supervisors at the end of each co-op work term.

This methodology, adopted first by UC, brings with it a lot of advantages. Primarily, faculties now have access to contextual and blind student work performance data. The data show which abilities various student cohorts exhibit uniformly, and in which cases improvement is required. The methodology has intensi-

fied the dialogue between employers and faculty, and has revealed a variety of educational measures that can be used to affect student work performance outcomes. The results are robust, as they are based on 200,000 data points generated by 2,500 supervisors on an annual basis. UC today has the unique opportunity to catch a deficiency in curriculum and rectify it before a specific cohort graduates. The methodology continues to be advanced by the Center for Cooperative Education Research and Innovation (CERI), led by author Cheryl Cates. The center's objective is to develop several software products that will make the methodology available for a wide array of universities engaged in various forms of experiential learning.

EVOLUTION IN PROGRAMMATIC OFFERINGS

The past years have seen an evolution in a number of co-op offerings to serve a variety of constituencies. The International Co-op Program (ICP) offered at the University of Cincinnati prepares students for a co-op experience in Japan or Germany through 300 hours of language and cultural instruction. The programs are very effective in that students are required to develop conversational skills in German/Japanese through intensive language training before their overseas work assignment.

The Research Co-op Program, pioneered by Dean Montemagno at the College of Engineering and Applied Science, allows students to get exposure to research throughout their undergraduate years. The program builds on a solid tradition of research placements developed at the university over a century. During the past nine years, the college has also developed several Accelerated Engineering Degree (ACCEND) programs that allow students to complete five quarters of co-op while earning a com-

bined BS/MS degree in just five years. Cross-college ACCEND programs that combine a BS and an MBA degree from the College of Business are also getting increasingly popular.

Another recent development is an Experiential Explorations Program that allows students to substitute one co-op quarter with a non-paid experience such as volunteer work for not-for-profit organizations, travel and study abroad programs, and unpaid academic research opportunities. Given the increasing social consciousness of today's students, this option allows them not only to meet their career-related aspirations through co-op, but also to fulfill their need to contribute through service.

As large scale co-op is only offered in three of UC's twelve colleges, the Center for Cooperative Education Research and Innovation is developing an academic internship program providing less time-intensive experiential learning opportunities to students campuswide. The academic internship program is, however, based upon very similar pedagogic principles to that of cooperative education. The program is supported by the fact that 74 percent of students admitted to UC name co-op and internships as a *very important* factor influencing their choice to attend the university.

EFFECTS BEYOND THE CURRICULUM

Popular belief holds that co-op links theory and practice by reinforcing things learned in the classroom within the context of work. A value analysis pursued by the UC Division of Professional Practice in 2004, however, shows that the effects of co-op go far beyond the scope defined by the curriculum. Co-op exposes students to life situations that are much more complex than could ever be covered in a classroom. Encouraged by these findings, Division of Professional Practice staff



developed an online competition called *100 Cool Co-ops*. The web-based competition allowed students to upload anecdotes from their co-op experiences. These submissions were later subject to a popular online vote. The initial competition yielded more than 250 submissions, and attracted in excess of 65,000 online votes. As a result, UC now has a good grasp of student values as related to co-op.

COMMUNITY IMPACT

Cooperative education integrates campus life with the business and civic community in a very effective way. While co-op has been a signature characteristic of the University of Cincinnati since 1906, Greater Cincinnati has, over the same period, grown to become one of the most diverse metropolitan areas in the Midwest, outpacing Minneapolis, Chicago, Cleveland, and Columbus in economic diversity according to informal research by UC's Director of the Economics Center for Education and Research, George Vredevelde (Vredevelde, pers. com.).

While the co-op program enhances the attraction of Greater Cincinnati as a business location, the effect of the program on the competitiveness of the institution should not be underestimated. UC students, over their 5,200 annual co-op terms, earn an aggregate of \$37 million, which significantly enhances the competitiveness of the institution. In fact, should UC desire to replace co-op earnings with scholarships, the university would need an additional one billion dollar endowment to allow a similar level of support.

Over the past eight years, co-op at UC has grown from 4,200 to 5,200 placements, keeping pace with enrollment numbers that have grown from 32,000 to 40,000 students. In 2010, the University of Cincinnati uniquely combines a high research profile (externally funded research: \$377.9 million) with high-volume participation in experiential learning.

STATE LEVEL IMPACT

The UC success in cooperative education has not gone unnoticed on a state level. In the strategic plan launched in 2007, the University System of Ohio (USO) was charged with more than doubling co-op placements to 100,000 by 2017. To support this goal, the state launched the Ohio Cooperative Education and Internship Program (OCIP) in 2009, which allocated \$50 million per year over five years toward the development of statewide offerings. The grant drew a number of proposals from all corners of the state. The University of Cincinnati, together with partner institutions, participated with a number of major specific proposals, as well as a proposal to build an educational system to promote the statewide implementation of co-op programs. In addition, UC proposed the establishment of an innovation corridor with the objective of attracting more than one billion dollars of industrial investment to the southwest corner of Ohio by 2025, using the infrastructure of cooperative education as a significant competitive advantage.

The OCIP program was cancelled due to budget cuts following the recession, but a new approach to reinstate the funding through casino licensing fees was approved by the legislature in 2010, with a goal of initiating requests for proposals in 2011.

LOOKING AHEAD

In 2010, the University of Cincinnati is going through a major pedagogic restructuring as a result of the semester conversion that will go into effect in the summer of 2012. Under semesters, co-op will in effect follow a trimester structure. The beauty of this system is that the placement cycle will allow longer industrial placements, as well as the possibility for each student to see all seasons, both on campus as well as at work.

At the same time, the institutional strategic planning process is moving rapidly

ahead. The arrival of President Gregory H. Williams has brought an explicitly results-oriented approach to the strategic planning. The arrival of Provost Santa J. Ono in September 2010 has already initiated a thorough academic dialogue on UC's academic goals and ambitions. Simultaneously, the Council of Deans is proposing to incorporate "innovations in multidisciplinary collaborative education and research that leverage UC's relationships with the business, civic, and professional communities found in our urban environment" into the university strategic plan. There is no question that the vibrant discussion brought about by these initiatives will propel UC's cooperative education program and its new academic internship program to a new level of excellence. ■

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Learning by Doing: The Wagner Plan from Classroom to Career

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- Natalie Johnson**, director of career development, Wagner College
- Todd Alan Price**, associate professor, Wagner College

In September 2009, faculty, students, staff, and administrators at Wagner College gathered for a two-day symposium to revisit the Wagner Plan for the Practical Liberal Arts. Implemented in 1998, The Wagner Plan provides a curricular and campuswide framework for all institutional activities focusing on Wagner's core mission and values. Since its inception, the Wagner Plan has grown and evolved, so campus leaders designed the 2009 symposium to review its development. Recognizing the need to include a wide variety of stakeholders in the conversation, the symposium brought together faculty, students, staff, and administrators to discuss the plan's past and to begin developing its next iteration: The Wagner Plan 2.0.

One of the insights that came out of the symposium was a recognition of how well faculty and staff have been working together to provide true support and mentoring for our students' career development. As a result of the symposium, the Career Development staff began to explore how the Wagner Plan reinforces our objectives of preparing students for their eventual careers, what we can learn from our students in order to improve our services and, given current economic conditions, what new efforts will be required to enhance our students' ability to discover their life's work.

Located on Staten Island, Wagner College's proximity to Manhattan has been a long-standing attraction for students interested in research, community service, and internships. Capitalizing on location and placing a premium on "Learning by Doing," the Wagner Plan integrates several high-impact educational practices into a robust curriculum: learning communities for first-year, intermediate, and senior students; experiential learning in various forms, including service learning, practica, internships, and community based research; and reflective tutorials (RFTs), where students

use structured reflection to amplify and connect the learning experience.

The Wagner Plan provides students with a solid foundation for becoming lifelong learners and active members of their professional communities. First-year students participate in a First-Year Learning Community, a set of three courses linked by a common theme. Faculty incorporate a thirty-hour experiential learning component that engages the students in the local community through research and service or field trips, and orients students to New York City's many resources. The Intermediate Learning Community (ILC) encourages students to make connections between different disciplines. Two courses are combined to challenge students to increase their breadth of understanding across disciplines. These courses allow students to further understand that a career path may not be linked with a specific major or discipline. The Senior Learning Community integrates academic development and career preparation through a capstone course in the major and a second course, a reflective tutorial (RFT) that integrates a 100-hour field-based experience in the discipline. For seniors, the offices of Alumni Relations, Career Development, and Residence Education have created the Bridges Program, which provides students with programming aimed at making connections between alumni and employers.

LEARNING FROM OUR STUDENTS: NSSE DATA

During spring 2009, Wagner participated in the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE). Findings of four survey items clearly demonstrate the effectiveness of the Wagner Plan for career preparation (the figures below indicate the total percentage responding "very much" and "quite a bit"):



- Wagner College seniors participate in internships, practica, and research at significantly greater rates (96 percent) than their peers at comprehensive master's institutions (76 percent), and all participating institutions (76 percent).
- Wagner College seniors report that their experiences contributed to their knowledge, skills, and ability to contribute to the welfare of their community in similar measure (66 percent) to their peers at comprehensive masters institutions (52 percent), and significantly greater than peers at all participating institutions (48 percent).
- Wagner College seniors have conversations about their career aspirations with faculty members or other advisers in significantly greater numbers (61 percent) than their peers at comprehensive master's institutions (45 percent), and all participating institutions (42 percent).
- Wagner College seniors perceive that they acquire job or work-related knowledge or skills in similar measure (69 percent) to their peers at comprehensive masters institutions (77 percent), and all participating institutions (73 percent).

After reviewing the data, we sought input from faculty and administrators in order to identify and understand the specific factors that led to these impressive results.

PARTICIPATION IN INTERNSHIPS, PRACTICA, AND RESEARCH

The design of the Wagner Plan ensures that students do not just participate in, but also recognize the benefits of, experiential learning opportunities. Wagner students may elect to take an internship for one unit (105 hours), two units, (210 hours) or solely for experience. In some majors, the number of hours students spend in the experiential component of the first-year (30 hours) and senior learning communi-

ties (100 hours) frequently exceeds the required minimum, which suggests that students not only recognize but also seek out the opportunities that the Wagner Plan has integrated into curricular and cocurricular life. One such major is arts administration.

Nationally, there are fewer than twenty-five undergraduate degree programs in arts administration that prepare students for leadership and management in arts-related organizations. Students pursuing this degree are required to complete a capstone course and a full-time internship. Associate professor Todd Alan Price explains that “by working full-time, students undertake important projects that could not be handled in a part-time position. The students gain a realistic perspective on what a position in this industry might entail.

The classroom is a safe opportunity for students to discuss what they are experiencing and learning at their sites.

Since the arts administration curriculum is based on real-world applications as a teaching method, this internship has been well received by students and the arts community.”

Simultaneously, the arts administration capstone seminar “provides the student the opportunity to reflect on his or her internship experience through a variety of techniques. Students meet regularly in small groups to discuss relevant issues in the workplace. Faculty members then meet with small groups and lead discussion[s] to analyze student experiences for all to reflect and comment. The classroom is a safe opportunity for students to discuss what they are experiencing and learning at their sites. Any business practice not understood or personnel issues facing students can be a source of great classroom learning for all involved.”

Price observes, “In exit surveys with our students, the internship is often mentioned as the single most meaningful experience in their college careers. Since students in the full-time internship report being treated as regular full-time employees, they experience great satisfaction in their workplace. The poise and confidence that students gain from this opportunity is often evident in the final assignment in class: an oral presentation detailing personal and professional insights students have gained. When evaluating this presentation, faculty members often comment that the transformative experience of the internship is clear to all.”

In addition to internship opportunities within easy reach of campus, students—especially those with limited free time or financial means—can benefit from internships on campus. For some, a

campus internship may be the student's first exposure to careers in higher education, including those in admissions, alumni relations, development, student life, information technology, and career development. For students in professional programs such as accounting, an internal internship in the business office can lead to future employment. John Carrescia, an alumnus, returned to Wagner after working four years at KPMG, one of the “big four” accounting firms. In addition to serving as the Wagner controller, he taught undergraduate accounting and auditing and advanced auditing for the MBA program. Students from the accounting program intern in the Wagner business office. Reflecting on this approach to offering students real-world experience, he says: “I [select] three or four of our top accounting students each year and they work in the



middle of the action in the business office. This experience allows the student to see the total picture of the financial operations of the college, and they get hands-on experience on the internal accounting process.”

During the internship, Carrescia coordinates office assignments with coursework so that students can apply their new knowledge in the workplace: “I often try and link the textbook materials to some of the tasks that I give them so they can apply what they learn. For example, the students vendor and process accounts payable checks, they assist with bank reconciliations, I ask them to do analysis similar to the work they will do when they complete their accounting degree.”

Ultimately, the work of the internship leads to increasing responsibility: “Each year the college is audited by KPMG, and I allow my student workers to assist with the audit preparation. They actually get to see first-hand what the auditors do, which is what they will be doing, and they get to see both sides of the process.”

Students’ lives have been directly affected by this program; for the past four years, it has resulted in jobs after graduation. Carrescia explains, “The KPMG manager has been so impressed with my interns, that each year one or more of them have been given interviews and awarded full-time positions upon graduation. Currently, there are six of my former interns working for KPMG and they got their foot in the door through their internship in the business office.”

In addition to internships in corporate and nonprofit settings, the federal government provides another avenue for career exploration. Call to Serve, a program of the Partnership for Public Service, seeks to inform, inspire, and involve college students and alumni with the federal government. In addition to webinars and workshops, Call to Serve can assist campuses with making connections to federal employees. Our office placed an announce-

ment in *Wagner Magazine* inviting alumni, parents, and friends with experience in the federal government to assist us in locating opportunities for our students. Two alumni from the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), Dennis Guilfoyle, a pharmaceutical microbiologist, and Kent Hermann, the assistant to the director of Northeast Regional Laboratory (NRL), responded to our request. As a result, Nimrod Phillipe, a current Wagner microbiology major, was hired for summer employment at the NRL in Queens, NY. Phillipe learned about this opportunity through a presentation on the FDA by Guilfoyle. As Phillipe recounted:

There were several Wagner alumni at the lab and they were all welcoming and surprised that I commuted from Wagner to Queens each day. They were supportive, helpful and it was fun working alongside them because we tended to have conversations about Wagner then and now, like what teachers are still teaching, the new residence hall, policies and how Wagner courses like learning communities functioned. An additional benefit of having students intern with alumni is that they are often able to bridge the alumni’s experience with the current academic and cocurricular activities. Alumni, in turn, test and refine students’ academic knowledge in meaningful ways.

In a piece for *Liberal Education*, Debra Humphreys reports, “Only 10 percent of BA degree holders currently work in the nonprofit sector and only 20 percent work in the public sector....Economists warn that future shortages of workers will be proportionally larger in the public and nonprofit sectors (U.S. Census Bureau). We can and should encourage students in government and nonprofit organizations” (Humphreys 2009). As a comprehensive master’s college combining the liberal arts with selected professional programs, Wagner actively promotes internships and practica in all sectors of the economy.

CONTRIBUTION OF EXPERIENCES TO KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, AND ABILITY TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE WELFARE OF THEIR COMMUNITIES

Through the Senior Learning Community, students engage in one hundred hours of field-based experience as part of the course requirements. Business administration majors often complete a practicum at a for-profit corporation to fulfill this course requirement; however, through Wagner’s Civic Innovations program, each semester one of the senior learning communities in the business administration department is linked with a local community organization. Students engage in work that has a direct positive effect on the local community.

Mary Lo Re, associate professor and chair of the business administration department, is one of the faculty members teaching in a senior learning community that is tied to the Civic Innovations program. Lo Re reflects, “...that any experiential learning endeavor not only enhances student learning but also provides students with a foundation for active social and civic involvement and instill[s] in them a sense of responsibility.”

In a survey assessing the St. George Action Plan, Lo Re asked students to explain how the experience deepened the student’s knowledge of business. One student responded: “I learned how important it is to be able to listen to what people are saying and the importance of getting out there and getting to know the community around you.”

Through the Civic Innovations program, Frank DeSimone, an assistant professor who directs the senior learning communities in business administration, teaches a section of marketing in which students engage in a team assignment involving the YMCA. DeSimone sees the sometimes unintended consequences that result from students’ inexperience as teachable moments: “One group of students



learned the hard way that the fundraising prize they chose for their assignment has to be meaningful to the target audience. While they sold raffle [tickets] to raise funds for the YMCA at a Wagner theatre presentation, they did not earn enough in donations to pay for a free membership to the YMCA.”

In an effort to contribute to their community these students learned a valuable lesson in marketing and working in the community: “To select their target audience more carefully and to make sure the raffle prize is attractive to the target audience selected.”

Students in a number of disciplines engage in community-based practicum experiences. Lori Weintrob, associate professor and chair of the history department, notes, “As we increase civic engagement, an increasing number of students are going into public service fields, including public history, not-for-profit organizations, and political work after doing their internships or placements in these fields.” Weintrob cites the example of alumni Vincent Lenza, a history student who, in the late 1990s, participated in a practicum as a precursor to the Wagner Plan. He completed his experience at the Staten Island Museum, an extended two-year internship. His experiences encouraged him to seek further engagement in the community through a full-time position with the Staten Island Economic Development Corporation where he assisted in the launch of Staten Island’s first international film festival. Lenza has since founded the Staten Island Not For Profit Association (SINFPA), a consortium of one hundred organizations, of which he now is president.

Like nonprofits, newspapers are crucial to a community. In addition to developing their knowledge and skills, students interning at the *Staten Island Advance* gain new perspectives about the community. Students work with Wagner alumnus Claire Regan, associate managing editor

of the paper and associate professor of journalism, who notes that

“an internship...at the *Advance*...teaches students to be curious about the world around them and gently pushes them out of their comfort zone. An assignment at the *Advance*, for example, could send an intern to the St. George Ferry terminal in search of comments from commuters about an impending fare hike. Or to Port Richmond for reaction to a bias incident. Or to Rosebank to interview an eight-year-old Iraqi boy undergoing treatment after losing an arm and a leg to a roadside bomb. Students explore neighborhoods they’ve never been to, approach people they’ve never met, learn about topics and issues that never occurred to them.”

Reflecting on her involvement in the internship program, Regan states, “In my dual role as faculty member and onsite supervisor, my goal is to mentor and empower. I look out of my office and see a dozen success stories—interns who became full-time hires. In the classroom, it’s exciting to watch self confidence blossom as students explore a new role and discover they can thrive in the real world.”

CONVERSATIONS WITH FACULTY AND OTHERS ABOUT CAREER ASPIRATIONS

As we spoke with faculty, it became clear that they are instrumental in referring students to the resources of the career development staff. Many faculty members provide opportunities for students to work directly with career development staff through class visits and by assigning their classes to attend career development programs. Additionally, faculty seek information from and invite career development staff to department meetings, learning community meetings and individual consultations. During the department chairs’ spring meeting, Provost Deborah Lieberman invited career development

staff to facilitate a conversation regarding internships.

Within the Senior Learning Community, faculty also used the practicum experience to assist students in career exploration, but recognized the resources available beyond the classroom. As one senior faculty member shared “I chose the career which had the most interest and meaning for me. If a student wants to prepare for an academic career, I can help. Beyond that, I send them to you when they express interest in careers with which I am unfamiliar.” Faculty realize that they are subject matter experts in specific disciplines and supplement their advice by referring to the career development office’s resources. Faculty members’ willingness to work collaboratively with college staff is evident in their regular promotion of and consultation with the Center for Academic and Career Development.

We believe what is most important for students is a faculty member’s desire to support and challenge students during the exploration of careers. Jeff Kraus, associate professor of government and politics and associate vice provost, worked closely with Wagner alumnus Laura Graham. A native Staten Islander, Laura attended Wagner on a softball scholarship. Kraus recalls that as a student she was

“very bright but also very quiet. She did her work. You could see from her papers and exams that she was very bright. That’s why I encouraged her to apply for the internship [at the White House]. When she didn’t get it on her first application and was ready to give up, I told her ‘NO! NO! Apply again! A lot of people get it on the second application.’”

In the spring semester of her senior year, Laura left Wagner to intern at the White House. Following the internship she was hired by the Clinton administration; she has gone on to become the COO of the William J. Clinton Foundation and



chief of staff to President Clinton. Kraus's ongoing encouragement played a key role in her path to success.

STUDENTS' PERCEPTION THAT THEY ACQUIRE JOB OR WORK-RELATED KNOWLEDGE

Creating internships that are meaningful to both the student and hosting agency will become more imperative in this economy. Internships are no longer a "make work" proposition. According to a September 13, 2010, article in the *Wall Street Journal*, increasing numbers of employers are utilizing internships as auditions for future employment. While this practice has been standard in fields with summer associate programs such as accounting, it is becoming prevalent in other industries. An internship can provide an employer with a semester's worth of evidence of a student's ability to make the transition from intern to full-time employee.

While many of our students demonstrate an ability to identify job and work-related knowledge, we know that the current economic conditions are changing both the knowledge and skills required of our graduates. As Phil Gardner, director of the Collegiate Employment Research Institute at Michigan State University, and Larry Hanneman, director of Engineering Career Services at Iowa State University, warn, "The starting job of five or ten years ago no longer exists" (2010, 5). They also say: "Even though the new employee may bring an array of skills into the workplace...success in this first position was predicated on a few key skills: quickly converting college-acquired learning to the workplace, writing effectively, working effectively in a team, acquiring new knowledge as quickly as possible to carry out job functions, being able to grasp the realities of the workplace (how the organization explicitly and implicitly operates, often referred to as organizational socialization) and demonstrating initiative" (2010, 4).

Following his summer employment, Nimrod Phillippe is currently volunteering at the FDA during the academic year. Speaking of his summer experience, he says,

As a super lab, there were interns from all over the city and beyond. It was great networking not just working with students from different schools and locations, but different majors as well since we would often discuss class and work we were doing in our individual labs. As employees, we initially watched the researchers as they did their work. We were then allowed to work with them and eventually we were assigned tasks to complete individually. The microbiological knowledge used was very specific, which was a huge contrast to the general information we learn in class. I learned what it takes to be a researcher and about health related issues impacting the United States and the world.

For Phillippe, this out-of-the-classroom experience has been instrumental in helping him develop his work-related knowledge.

Recognizing that the workplaces our students will inhabit will be drastically different from our own has prompted some new alliances on campus. After sharing the NSSE data with the Office of Financial Aid, our offices agreed to collaboratively redesign and launch a new College Work Study program in fall 2011.

The goal will be to intentionally use CWS to develop work-related knowledge and skills. We know that revamping the CWS application process in order to prepare students for internships and future employment will require the involvement of our entire campus and believe it is an opportunity to educate Wagner community stakeholders about the workplaces our students will be entering.

COMPREHENSIVE PROGRAMS FROM CLASSROOM TO CAREER

The experiences of our faculty and students provide powerful testimony to

the contribution of internships, practica, and research to the development of these learning outcomes. In turn, these learning outcomes foster the development of students' emerging professional identities. Students learn to assess organizational cultures, develop a more nuanced understanding of their intended professions, network with peers and supervisors, and gain clarity on their career aspirations. As faculty and staff, we see students' heightened confidence as they successfully engage within diverse communities and expand their sense of self, as well as what they are capable of contributing. ■

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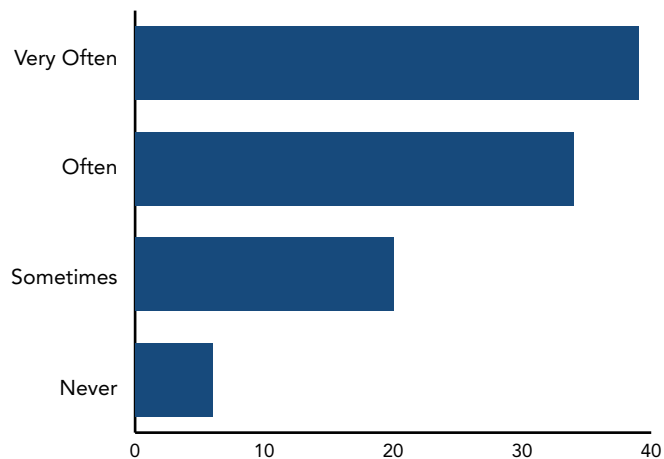
New Research on Internships and Experiential Learning Programs

We know anecdotally that internships and other experiential learning activities foster student success in the classroom and in students' future work endeavors, but what does research say about student's experiential learning activities? Below are findings from studies by three groups—the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE), and the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U)—that document students' experiences and employers' views.

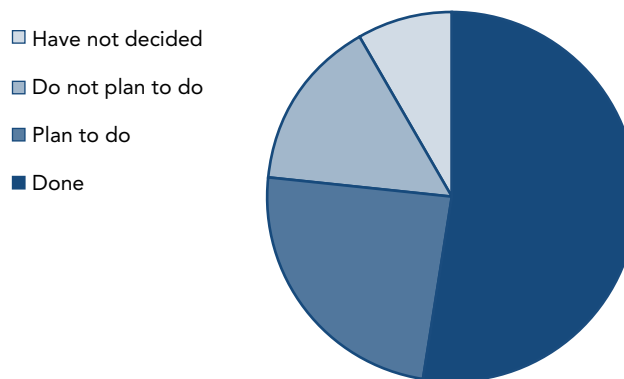
NATIONAL SURVEY OF STUDENT ENGAGEMENT (NSSE)

- More than half (52 percent) of all senior respondents have participated in a practicum, internship, field experience, co-op experience, or clinical assignment.
- More than a third of all senior respondents (42 percent) in the NSSE 2009 survey have talked about career plans with a faculty member or adviser.
- Nearly three-quarters (73 percent) of all senior respondents perceive that they acquire job or work-related knowledge or skills in college.
- Nearly half of all senior respondents (48 percent) report that their college experiences contributed to their knowledge, skills, and ability to contribute to the welfare of their community.

NSSE 2009: SENIOR RESPONDENTS WHO PERCEIVE THAT THEY ACQUIRED JOB OR WORK-RELATED KNOWLEDGE/SKILLS IN COLLEGE



NSSE 2009: SENIOR RESPONDENTS WHO HAVE PARTICIPATED IN A PRACTICUM, INTERNSHIP, FIELD EXPERIENCE, CO-OP EXPERIENCE, OR CLINICAL ASSIGNMENT





NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF COLLEGES AND EMPLOYERS (NACE)

- Employers taking part in the NACE 2010 Internship Survey reported that 44.6 percent of their Class of 2009 hires came from their own internship programs.
- The study also found that 42.3 percent of the seniors who had internship experience and applied for a job received at least one job offer.

ASSOCIATION OF AMERICAN COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES (AAC&U)

- Nearly three-quarters of employers (73 percent) surveyed would like colleges and universities to emphasize more the ability to apply knowledge and skills to real-world settings

- through internships or other hands-on experiences (*How Should Colleges Prepare Students to Succeed in Today's Global Economy?* AAC&U/Peter D. Hart Research Associates, 2007.)
- More than four in five employers believe that completion of a supervised and evaluated internship or community-based project would be very or fairly effective in ensuring that recent college graduates possess the skills and knowledge needed for success at their company. (*How Should Colleges Assess and Improve Student Learning? Employers' Views on the Accountability Challenge*, AAC&U/Peter D. Hart Research Associates, 2008).
 - More than two-thirds of employers (67 percent) believe that a faculty

- supervisor's assessment of a student's internship or community-based project would be very or fairly useful to them in evaluating college graduates' potential for success. (*How Should Colleges Assess and Improve Student Learning? Employers' Views on the Accountability Challenge*, AAC&U/Peter D. Hart Research Associates, 2008).
- Four in five employers (79 percent) want colleges to place more emphasis on internships or community-based field projects that teach students to apply knowledge and skills in real-world settings. (*Raising the Bar: Employers' Views On College Learning in the Wake of the Economic Downturn*, AAC&U/ Hart Research Associates, 2010). ▪

Recent Publications from the Association of American Colleges and Universities

Five High-Impact Practices: Research on Learning Outcomes, Completion, and Quality

By Jayne E. Brownell and Lynn E. Swaner

This monograph examines what educational research reveals about five educational practices: first-year seminars, learning communities, service learning, undergraduate research, and capstone experiences.



The authors explore questions such as: What is the impact on students who participate in these practices? Is the impact the same for both traditional students and those who come from historically underserved student populations? The monograph includes a foreword by George D. Kuh, "High-Impact Practices: Retrospective and Prospective," and recommendations for how to improve the quality of high-impact practices. (2010)

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High-Impact Educational Practices: What They Are, Who Has Access to Them, and Why They Matter

By George D. Kuh



This publication defines a set of educational practices that research has demonstrated have a significant impact on student success. George Kuh presents NSSE data about these practices and explains why they benefit all students, but also benefit underserved students even more than their more advantaged peers. (2008)

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A Tale of Two Internships

► **Carrie Johnson**, assistant director, marketing and media relations, Association of American Colleges and Universities

There were two internship experiences that influenced my learning and professional development. The summer before my senior year at Otterbein University, I was a marketing and communications intern at the Ohio State Fair. The fair internship was an incredible experience. At the fair, I ascertained how to incorporate public relations tactics with what I had learned in my college courses. The internship that followed—at a small public relations agency in Washington, DC—taught me very different lessons.

In the beginning of the first internship, I wrote press releases about the fair's discount admission days, and highlighted activities in the fair's air-conditioned buildings. Using the written and oral communication skills that I had learned in my public relations and journalism courses, I also wrote articles for the staff newsletter. During this time, I built relationships with broadcast reporters in Columbus.

The fair began in August, and I worked twelve-hour days, but everything ran smoothly. I escorted reporters to various events, including the rib cook-off, livestock competitions, and concerts. Unfortunately, a week into the fair, while one of the spinning rides was in motion, one of the cars flew off the ride's arm. The car's two riders landed face-down on the ride platform. At that moment, my

colleagues and I became crisis communicators. The critical thinking skills that I learned as a result of my liberal education at Otterbein became essential.

The next day, all three broadcast affiliates arrived at 4 a.m. to set up for the early morning live shots. I was alone on the fairgrounds at the ride accident scene with the news crews. Suddenly, one of the cameramen and his reporter demanded to enter the accident scene. "If you don't let us in, we'll sue the fair!" they said. I took five seconds to reflect on what I had learned about crisis communications in my public relations courses at Otterbein. Then, I calmly told him not to cross the police tape. The other reporters present tried to calm the angry cameraman. After the incident, the cameraman and the reporter apologized to me. This incident reinforced to me that although journalists and marketing professionals work together closely, it can be a tense relationship.

Once the fair ended, I traveled to Washington, DC, for a semester-long program that incorporated my journalism courses with an internship at a small public relations agency. At the beginning of the internship, the agency hosted a large meeting for international business leaders. I was responsible for the meeting registration for business leaders and the media. After the meeting, I was asked to compile the media clips about the event

into a report, noting key article mentions and including the estimated circulation for all news stories. The time came to turn in my report, and my supervisor said, "I think you're missing some media coverage—you need to add in some stories, and increase the circulation total." I was being asked to inflate the media circulation numbers and add in media mentions that did not exist. I had learned from discussions in my marketing and journalism ethics courses that unethical behavior exists in business, but I never thought I would experience it firsthand. While I wanted to please my supervisor, her request challenged my strong sense of values. My final decision was to refuse to inflate the media coverage in the report. My angry supervisor assigned the media report to another intern, who completed the report with the information, as assigned. And consequentially, my supervisor was rather brusque to me during the final months of the internship.

Both the fair internship and the agency internship taught me things that I now apply to my personal and professional life. From the fair, I learned that an optimistic and calm demeanor leads to a better work-day. My agency internship experience taught me to take responsibility for the integrity of my work—and to stay focused on this as I encounter challenges each day. ■



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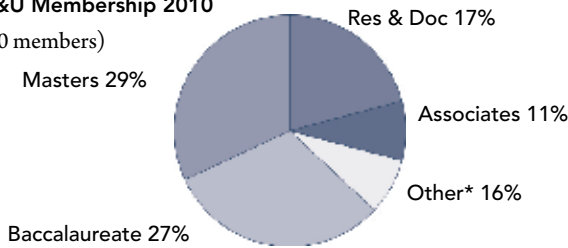
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AAC&U functions as a catalyst and facilitator, forging links among presidents, administrators, and faculty members who are engaged in institutional and curricular planning. Its mission is to reinforce the collective commitment to liberal education at both the national and local levels and to help individual institutions keep the quality of student learning at the core of their work as they evolve to meet new economic and social challenges.

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