

FACTORS IMPACTING THE SEARCH FOR AND SELECTION OF A SPORT
MANAGEMENT INTERNSHIP

by

Rebecca O'Donnell-Crews
A Project
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in Partial Fulfillment of
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of
Master of Science
Sport and Recreation Studies

Committee:

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A Project submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of
Science at George Mason University

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DEDICATION

This is dedicated to my mom, my sister, my brother-in law, and the rest of my family, friends, and associates who have assisted and steered me through this process. The road to getting through this has been a long and winding. I do not know if I would have gotten through this time of my life without you. Thank you for your unconditional love, support and guidance.

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ABSTRACT

FACTORS IMPACTING THE SEARCH FOR AND SELECTION OF A SPORT MANAGEMENT INTERNSHIP

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George Mason University, 2020

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An internship is a work experience offered by an employer to introduce students to the working environment and specific industries related to their field of study. In some cases, upon graduation students may be offered a paid position at their internship site. The purpose of this project was to identify factors that impact the search for and selection of a sport management internship. Based on the results of a survey administered to an undergraduate sport management career preparation and professional development class at George Mason University, barriers, constraints, and motivation for an internship site selection are discussed.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

Collegiate internships play a significant role in the student educational experience and society for many reasons. Internships are important to individuals seeking to learn about a specific area, gain experience in a particular field, build connections, and have a competitive edge over those who have not completed such an experience. These internship experiences provide a special opportunity to students, offering them a chance to explore different positions and organizations to determine which are preferable or most desirable for future employment. Participating in an internship can be extremely beneficial to the organization, as well as enhancing the workforce and completion of special projects.

An internship experience can provide insight into a student's possible career or serve as a steppingstone to other opportunities. In essence, the internship is the longest interview a student will have. Internships also may provide the student with academic credit. As explained by Yoh and Choi (2011), "as the most widely used form of experiential learning in sport management programs, internship programs provide a good fit for the vocational qualities inherent in sport management courses" (p. 1).

Undergraduate sport management courses are intended to help prepare a career-ready student. The goal is for the information learned in class to be applied in a real-world situation. The best way to immediately apply the theories and concepts learned is to engage in an experiential learning situation. As stated by Foster and Dollar (2010, p.8), “Many believe getting into the sport industry is nearly impossible. This statement is untrue. There are internships, paid and unpaid, as well as a wealth of positions in this industry. The truth in this statement lies in one’s definition of the industry and personal preparation to establish a strong résumé.” Finding the internship is often a challenge for students. Many factors contribute to the identification of a placement. The purpose of this project was to identify factors that impact the search for and selection of a sport management internship.

Review of Literature

Internships

There are many opportunities in various fields to gain experience through internships. While much research exists about internships as a vehicle for application of student learning, little has focused on *how* the information about specific opportunities is distributed to students. Internships assist in the education process, provide work experience, and facilitate networking. Part of the internship process is to identify an appropriate site by examining available resources. Students find information by researching online, consulting with an advisor, discussing with former interns, or utilizing

the academic and career services unit at the university. According to Ayers (2007), “obtaining an internship can be a difficult and stressful prospect especially when the institution does not engage in placement. One philosophy is to allow students to engage in self-search when it comes to securing an internship.”

The Function

Internships have the potential to impact students’ decisions about what to do after graduation and what not to do, in terms of a career. Ideally, an internship provides students with work experience that is directly related to their major. An internship may not fully meet student expectations, yet the experience in and of itself is beneficial. Newell and Will (1952) explain that the history of internships seems to indicate clearly that the major purpose has been education. While the services the intern renders to the site are generally important, such benefits must result as a by-product of learning experiences. The purpose of internships has not changed in over sixty years; the recognized importance and likelihood of an internship requirement in a degree is greater. It is widely recognized that a focus on resume building and connections are imperative to finding a job. As much as internships help with skill building, they are also extremely helpful in terms of enhancing networking. It is often said that “it is not always what you know, but who you know.” According to Loretto (2015), “the opportunity to meet people currently working in the field, gaining valuable references, as well as getting exposure to the working environment, are three good reasons for students to consider doing one of more internships during college.” The opportunity is to demonstrate the application of

skills and knowledge learned in the classroom while gaining new skills and experiences. Classes provide concepts and skills significant to the students chosen field, while internships allow for these concepts and skills to be applied.

In the sport management field, the job market is vast, competitive, and diverse; taking advantage of internships and gaining experience can assist in enhancing one's job application. Indeed, "there are millions of job seekers nationwide, yet 52% of U.S. companies report difficulty filling positions. Of these companies, 47% say candidates lack the "hard" job skills or technical skills necessary, and 35% say job seekers lack in experience" ("6 Reasons," 2014).

Barriers and Constraints

Finding time to look for an internship during a busy student schedule must be taken seriously. Time should be used wisely to research and apply for internships.

While some internships are paid, students often must bear the challenge of financial obligation (i.e., paying for credits for an unpaid experience). Many students are on a budget while in school and having to complete a credit-bearing unpaid internship may cause added stress.

Proper preparation is paramount to attaining an internship. Being ill-prepared for the internship interview can be stressful so the applicant should give themselves time to get ready: "As students prepare for their internship interview, they should be ready to address the key skills and accomplishments that they have listed on their resume. They should be able to highlight the experience listed on their resume and tell stories that

illustrate their strengths and let the organization know what they have to offer them as a potential new employee” (Loretto, 2019).

Benefits and Advantages

According to the University of Arizona’s Career Services, what stands out to potential employers are those students who also have work experience by the time they graduate (“Benefits,” n.d.). This makes recent graduates far more marketable because they may require less training and are assumed able to be able to handle more responsibilities. Many degree programs incorporate an internship opportunity as a requirement for graduation by giving course credit for the experience, and insuring that graduates have at least one pertinent experience in the field. Other programs have an internship as an elective course for credit.

An added bonus of completing an internship is the possibility of earning money (i.e., a paid internship). There is current controversy regarding labor and wages for internships that will be addressed in this review of pertinent literature. College students clearly prefer paid internships to a non-paid experience. Some students enter college with an idea of a major or career path; most change their minds and majors. Exploring is a very important part of the academic progression, and gaining a work experience is an ideal way for students to familiarize themselves with a field they are considering.

According to Braccio Hering (2010):

Besides getting a foot in the door with a potential employer and looking good on a résumé, internships have other advantages:

- The opportunity to test drive a career (Would I be happier in marketing or advertising? Am I more comfortable working with patients or in a lab?)
- Chances to network
- Establishing relationships with mentors
- Possible college credit or certification
- An introduction to the field's culture and etiquette (Are clients addressed by their first name? Are jeans appropriate for Casual Friday?)
- Accumulating new skills
- Gaining a “real world” perspective on an occupation (How much overtime do employees really work? How much time is spent behind a desk versus in the field?)

These benefits include many skill sets that will enhance a students’ trajectory to and in their chosen career.

By graduation, students are expected to be confident that the degree they are receiving is the right one for them. Student interns are surrounded by professionals in the industry to which they are seeking access. It is more than just about getting a grade, earning credit, or making money. Internships provide an opportunity to learn from others, ask questions, and impress superiors. Internships supervisors and agency staff may, in turn, become future colleagues. Students are often happy to be offered a position in the organization after the internship has concluded. Regardless of whether a direct job is offer is made, it is in the students’ best interest to end the internship on good terms. The

numerous connections may become key colleagues and serve as references throughout ones career.

The benefits of completing an internship are individualistic. Some students are looking for certain qualities or experiences from an internship while other may just want to use it for networking purposes. A few students simply want to explore the field they may enter and use the internship as a way to explore their options.

Controversies

As previously noted, there is major controversy regarding paid vs. unpaid experiences. According to the United States Department of Labor (2018):

The Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) defines the term “employ” very broadly as including to “suffer or permit to work.” Covered and non-exempt individuals who are “suffered or permitted” to work must be compensated under the law for the services they perform for an employer. Internships in the “for-profit” private sector will most often be viewed as employment, unless the test described below relating to trainees is met.

The legal issues regarding internship programs, specifically the appropriateness of unpaid work, are considerable and, at most times, confusing even for the court system.

In “The Student Worker Dilemma: The Employer Perspective”, Stilz Ogden and Kordecki (2013) discuss the issue facing academic institutions and organizations during hard economic times. The authors discuss “what is the appropriate classification of workers—if not employees, then volunteers, or independent contractor, or something else?” (p. 109). In one example, a student is participating in an accounting internship.

There is only a senior level person in the position, overwhelmed with work. The employers, assuming that the student had prior experience, assigned the overload to the student. While the student made mistakes, they also gained knowledge and learned valuable lessons. The student walked away without a job offer. Using interns can be seen as a way to save on money, especially during hard economic times; but the practice can also open an organization to liability. The intensity of labor, hours worked, or duties performed must be in accordance with the Fair Labor Standards Act. To avoid such issues, academics and “employers” should define responsibilities and maintain an open dialogue between supervisor and intern.

Kozlowski (2010) discussed the increasing number of unpaid internships and federal and state official concerns regarding the illegal use of internships as free labor. The review made mention of how many employers failed to pay even though the internships did not fulfill the seven federal legal criteria that must be satisfied for internships to be unpaid. According to the Wage and Hour Division of the U.S. Department of Labor (2018), “courts have used the “primary beneficiary test” to determine whether an intern or student is, in fact, an employee under the FLSA. In short, this test allows courts to examine the “economic reality” of the intern-employer relationship to determine which party is the “primary beneficiary” of the relationship. Courts have identified the following seven factors as part of the test:

1. The extent to which the intern and the employer clearly understand that there is no expectation of compensation. Any promise of compensation, express or implied, suggests that the intern is an employee—and vice versa.

2. The extent to which the internship provides training that would be similar to that which would be given in an educational environment, including the clinical and other hands-on training provided by educational institutions.
3. The extent to which the internship is tied to the intern's formal education program by integrated coursework or the receipt of academic credit.
4. The extent to which the internship accommodates the intern's academic commitments by corresponding to the academic calendar.
5. The extent to which the internship's duration is limited to the period in which the internship provides the intern with beneficial learning.
6. The extent to which the intern's work complements, rather than displaces, the work of paid employees while providing significant educational benefits to the intern.
7. The extent to which the intern and the employer understand that the internship is conducted without entitlement to a paid job at the conclusion of the internship.

Kozlowski concludes, "it would be inappropriate to offer any general conclusions as to how these "seven criteria" might necessarily relate to the myriad of situations involving unpaid student interns and public parks and recreation agencies" (p. 7).

An employer may use an internship program as a means for identifying potential employees. At times, however, employers use such programs to reap the benefit of "free" labor. As such, the questions surrounding the use of interns in an organization vary from how to structure compensation to the employer's handling of complaints of

discrimination and harassment. There are various legal requirements that an organization must consider when deciding whether to offer a paid or unpaid internship.

An organization faces legal obligation under the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) to provide eligible employees with at least the federally mandated minimum wage. The United States Department of Labor (2018) provides a fact sheet to explain Internship Programs under The Fair Labor Standards Act.

Dixon et al. (2005) examined factors related to effective organizational commitment in undergraduate interns. Although the employee and employer both must understand that the internship is not an assurance of future employment, growing intern commitment is important. It is good for the employer to understand the benefits they receive as well as their responsibilities to the intern: “By showing interest in an employee and communicating the organization’s valuing of him or her, a supervisor can help build the employee’s commitment to that organization” (p. 175).

There is no question as to why internships are highly valuable to a sport management student, but the legal implications may be quite problematic. Schoepfer and Dodds (2010) examined whether legal implications of experiential learning should result in the elimination of the sport management internship. They concluded:

Experiential learning through internships has been at the core of college and university sport management programs since their inception. As noted, internships provide a student with a valuable learning opportunity not found in other classroom or educational settings. However, over time and after analysis, many legal issues regarding these internships have come to light. Whether the focus is

tort liability, harassment, discrimination law, or the most recent FLSA scrutiny, sport management internships present complex legal challenges. While experiential learning opportunities should remain present in sport management programs, requiring students to complete an internship that subjects the intern, college or university, and host organization to liability may not be wise. (p. 104)

Sport Management Internships

Sport management students have great latitude to pursue careers after graduation. The sports industry is one of the fastest growing fields in the world. According to Collignon and Sultan (2014), “the market for sporting events is now worth \$80 billion per year, and in countries such as the France, the United Kingdom, and the United States, it is growing faster than GDP. For the major players in the sports industry—leagues, clubs, media partners, and brands—there is a significant opportunity to capitalize on this impressive growth.” Internships are highly recommended and now generally required in order to graduate from many sport management programs. Students are encouraged to network, gain experiences in the field, and use the knowledge they have learned. These experiences will, in turn, help students find a career.

The potential long term benefit to a student is continued support of the university or college throughout the internship or experiential learning opportunity. The experiences are best when there is university site supervision and clear products (e.g., project). Such structure facilitates learning and professional development.

Saint Leo University (Florida) offers “4 Steps to Finding a Sport Management Internship.” The page begins by saying, “Do internships turn into permanent positions? Sometimes. But even if they don’t, the experience is invaluable” (Erskine, 2014). The webpage explains the top four ways students locate an internship in sport management; specifically, getting involved, networking, knowing where to look, and to apply, apply, apply.

George Mason University Opportunities

At George Mason University, the College of Education and Human Development Sport Management Concentration requires both a practicum and an internship experience before an undergraduate student is allowed to graduate. All programs within the college require such experiences: such is not the case across campus where internships may be required or recommended among other types of experiential learning such as study abroad, community service learning, course field trips, and other field study opportunities. In Sport Management, the internship requires 10 to 12 weeks of full time employment or 400 hours, a log of activities done, a project, and a presentation with a mid-term and final evaluation.

To facilitate student internship site selection, University Career Services (UCS) at George Mason (careers.gmu.edu) assists students with resume building, interview techniques, and networking sessions. According to Mason UCS: “71% of employers reported that the primary purpose of having an internship program is to convert students into full-time, entry-level employees” (“Career Readiness Resources,” n.d.). It is generally recommended that each student complete one internship, if not more, prior to

graduating in order to be better prepared for the professional world. The University Career Services website has links that provide techniques for finding an internship, how to earn credit for an internship, how to best afford an internship, and ideal timing for scheduling an internship.

George Mason University is committed to producing career ready graduates. In the article, “Mason Committed to Being a Leader in Producing Career-ready Graduates,” Cristodero (2015) describes how George Mason goes above just providing an excellent education: “universities must also work to help connect students with potential employers. At Mason, that happens through internships, job fairs, networking events and cultivating relationships with businesses.”

The career readiness of college graduates is an important issue in higher education and in the labor and job market. The National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE), through a task force of college career services and human resource professionals, has developed a definition and identified eight competencies associated with career readiness. The NACE website defines career readiness as “the attainment and demonstration of requisite competencies that broadly prepare college graduates for a successful transition into the workplace” (“Career Readiness Defined,” 2019).

The eight competencies are then listed:

Critical Thinking/Problem Solving: Exercise sound reasoning to analyze issues, make decisions, and overcome problems. The individual is able to obtain, interpret, and use knowledge, facts, and data in this process, and may demonstrate originality and inventiveness.

Oral/Written Communications: Articulate thoughts and ideas clearly and effectively in written and oral forms to persons inside and outside of the organization. The individual has public speaking skills; is able to express ideas to others; and can write/edit memos, letters, and complex technical reports clearly and effectively.

Teamwork/Collaboration: Build collaborative relationships with colleagues and customers representing diverse cultures, races, ages, genders, religions, lifestyles, and viewpoints. The individual is able to work within a team structure, and can negotiate and manage conflict.

Information Technology Application: Select and use appropriate technology to accomplish a given task. The individual is also able to apply computing skills to solve problems.

Leadership: Leverage the strengths of others to achieve common goals, and use interpersonal skills to coach and develop others. The individual is able to assess and manage his/her emotions and those of others; use empathetic skills to guide and motivate; and organize, prioritize, and delegate work.

Professionalism/Work Ethic: Demonstrate personal accountability and effective work habits (e.g., punctuality, working productively with others, and time workload management, and understand the impact of non-verbal communication on professional work image). The individual demonstrates integrity and ethical behavior, acts responsibly with the interests of the larger community in mind, and is able to learn from his/her mistakes.

Career Management: Identify and articulate one's skills, strengths, knowledge, and experiences relevant to the position desired and career goals, and identify areas necessary for professional growth. The individual is able to navigate and explore job options, understands and can take the steps necessary to pursue opportunities, and understands how to self-advocate for opportunities in the workplace.

Global/Intercultural Fluency: Value, respect, and learn from diverse cultures, races, ages, genders, sexual orientations, and religions. The individual demonstrates openness, inclusiveness, sensitivity, and the ability to interact respectfully with all people and understand individuals' differences.

(“Career Readiness Defined,” 2019)

These competencies enable college students to have the necessary skills to enter and become part of a strong and industrious workforce.

Summary

There are many factors that go into selecting internships and deciding whether to be an intern (if optional). Academic programs must decide how best to include internships in the curriculum while understanding legal ramifications. The process of selecting an internship site is based on the student's needs, motivations, barriers, and constraints, as well as the employer's needs, constraints, and opportunities. It is clear that experiential learning is highly beneficial.

Many universities encourage or require internships so as to give the student a chance to become familiar with the field they will enter and prepare them for a potential career path. University career centers are now ubiquitous. All offer various services for obtaining internships and placing students at internship sites. These resources are just one of the many ways students collect internship information along with various websites, discussions with professors and advisors, conferring with former interns, and networking.

In a world where it is not all about what you know but who you know, internships are a key part of learning and networking process. The research in this project was intended to identify how internship sites are selected and what is entailed in the search for the “perfect site.”

CHAPTER TWO: METHODOLOGY

Design and Data Collection

The purpose of this project was to document the factors (e.g., motivation and perceived constraints) and processes that influence students' selection of their internship site. A self-administered questionnaire was distributed to students at George Mason University. Prior to the start of data collection, an introduction letter, consent forms, and a preliminary questionnaire were submitted to and approved by George Mason University Office of Research Protection.

After securing approval, the researcher contacted the instructor for the SPMT 475 – Professional Development Seminar offered during Spring 2015 to explain the research project and ask permission to use the course and students for the study. Once consent was granted, the researcher arranged an appropriate day and time to distribute the survey instrument. All of the students preparing to enter their internship were required to complete this course.

The researcher informed the participants that there were no potential risks and that participation was voluntary. After getting approval from all students, the survey instrument was distributed during a class session. As individuals completed the instrument, they were asked to raise their hand and the surveys were then collected. The

survey took no longer than twenty minutes to complete. After all of the surveys were collected, the respondents were thanked.

Subjects

The researcher used a census sample which included 19 undergraduate students enrolled in the SPMT 475 – Professional Development Seminar at George Mason University during the Spring 2015 semester. [Note: The researcher had previously taken this course]. This class is a requirement for all undergraduate Sport Management concentration students. According to the course description, Professional Development “is a seminar format in which students synthesize and apply theories, concepts, and practices in the leadership and management of sport organizations” (SPMT 475: Sport Management Professional Development Seminar, n.d.).

Instrumentation

The survey instrument was an extension of one used by Batty (2011) in a study of the role of motivation, perceived constraints, and constraint negotiation strategies in students internship selection experiences. The instrument was previously shown to be both valid and reliable; some additional questions were included by the researcher. The self-administered questionnaire was developed, in part, using constructs from the theoretical frameworks of Hubbard and Mannell (2001). This theoretical framework was selected based on the leisure behavior literature and its relevance to this study. Beyond using the constructs from Hubbard and Mannell and Batty, additional questions were included based on the review of literature. The survey comprised five sections which included a series of scales to help assess Sport Management students' anticipated barriers,

constraints, and information sources in obtaining a senior year capstone internship. Student respondents were asked to provide standard demographic information (e.g., gender, major/concentration, grade point average). Using a 5-point Likert scale, students were asked to provide agreement with items for each of the following constructs (i.e., factors that motivate internship selection, limitations, types of experiences, and the factors that will likely influence the student's decision).

Influencing Internship Choice

Modifying a scale used by Batty (2011), the first section of the questionnaire was used to address what factors influence determination of the internship site (See Appendix). The scale was followed with Likert-scale question which asked, "How motivated are you to explore potential internship sites?" Students were then asked to explain what may influence their selection. They were also asked before deciding on their final internship site, how many sites they would consider before making a final decision.

Internship Constraints/Barriers

Twelve statements comprised the scale focusing on intrapersonal, interpersonal, and structural constraints. Students were introduced to the Likert scale with the following statement: "Listed below are several statements that describe potential constraints or barriers you may face in the process of selecting your internship. Please read each of the following statements carefully. Using the 5-point Likert scale provided, circle the number that best represents the extent to which each statement is true for you in limiting your internship choices." The Likert scale ranged from 1 (Not a Barrier) to 5 (A Significant

Barrier). Following these items, students were asked to explain other barriers or constraints that were not listed.

Demographic information

To describe the students involved in the study, participants were asked to indicate when they would do their internship, major option/track, gender, and hometown. These results were useful to determine differences among subgroups with regard to information, constraints, and decision making.

Analysis

Data were descriptively analyzed using SPSS. Differences between demographic categories were assessed. Using the Likert-scale, the information was analyzed. .

CHAPTER THREE: RESULTS

The purpose of this project was to document the factors impacting student search for and selection of a sport management internship. This chapter presents the results of the data analyses including a description of the respondents, and key variables.

Participant Profile

A census sample was selected comprising 19 undergraduate students enrolled in the SPMT 475 – Professional Development Seminar at George Mason University during the Spring 2015 semester. Of the 19 subjects, 12 were male and 7 were female; one student was a Sophomore, 4 were Juniors, and 14 were Seniors. One of the students had already completed an internship, while twelve were expecting to do their internship in Summer 2015, three Fall 2015, one in Spring 2015, one in Summer/Fall 2016, and one in Summer 2016. All students were sport management students, while one of the nineteen double majored in Recreation Management.

Of these respondents, 14 permanently reside in Virginia, one in Washington D.C., one in Bowie, Maryland, one in Charleston, South Carolina, and two were international students (Sweden and England). When asked if the students were currently employed, 3 were employed full time, 13 were employed part time, and 3 were not employed. Three out of the 19 responded that they have multiple jobs.

Part 1: Factors Influencing Your Internship Choice

Participants were asked to respond to several statements regarding their motivations for choosing an internship site. The participants were asked to use the Likert-scale with values ranging from 1 (Not at all) to 5 (Very Much). The top five factors influencing an internship choice, based on the mean scores were: to complete my graduation requirements (M=4.74, SD=.65); to experience something new (M=4.53, SD=.61); to apply my skills (M=4.37, SD=1.01); to develop better communication skills (M=4.26, SD=.73); and to develop better problem – solving skills (M=4.16, SD=.83). As specified, most of the responses appear to be internal motivations that focus on self-improvement.

When asked overall, how motivated they were to explore potential internship sites, the mean was 4.11 on the 5 point scale, indicating that they were highly motivated overall. For nearly a third of those surveyed (31.6%), money was a factor that would influence their site choice. Before deciding on their final internship site, they were asked how many total internship sites they planned to consider. The range was 2-30 sites with an average of 7.1 sites per student.

Part 2: Internship Selection Constraints/Barriers

Participants were asked to respond to several statements regarding constraints or barriers that they may face when choosing an internship site. The participants were asked to respond using a Likert-scale with values ranging from 1 (Not a barrier) to 5 (A significant barrier). The top five constraints and barriers based on the mean scores were: “Internship sites may not pay or offer a stipend to their interns” (M=3.21, SD=1.27); “I

am concerned that I won't have enough skills to do a good job at my internship" (M=2.74, SD=.1.28); "Internship choices may be too far away from my hometown" (M=2.53, SD=1.30); "My family may not like my internship choices" (M=2.53, SD=1.26); and the "Internship may not provide a housing fee" (M=2.47, SD=1.21). As specified, most of the responses appear to be concerns about money, distance, and lack of support or confidence. No specific additional barriers or constraints were identified.

Part 3: Strategies Used to Overcome Constraints/Barriers

Participants were asked to respond to several statements that reflect strategies that may be used to overcome difficulties when selecting an internship site. The participants were asked to use the Likert-type scale with values ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). The top five strategies for overcoming difficulties when selecting an internship based on the mean scores were: "I will update my resume before selecting an internship site" (M=4.63, SD=.597); "I will make selecting a good internship a priority" (M=4.42, SD=.607); "I have taken classes to improve my communication skills for being an effective intern" (M=4.32, SD=.749); "I plan to set aside enough time to look for an internship" (M=4.21, SD=.713); and "I will perform research on different internship sites" (M=4.11, SD=.875).

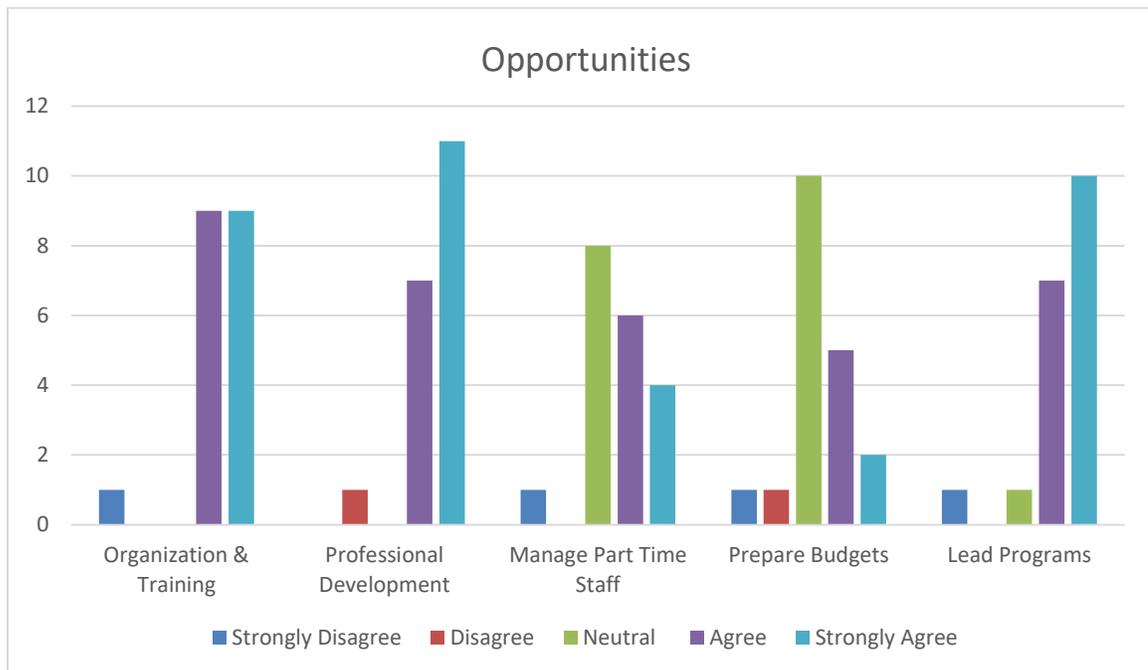
Part 4: Improving Internship Experiences

Participants were asked what roles they believe their internship site will have in providing certain experiences. The participants were asked to respond on the Likert-scale included values ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree) (see Figure 1).

Participants were asked if the internship should provide organization and training. Nearly all (94%) agreed or strongly agreed with the remaining six percent strongly disagreeing. Participants were then asked if the internship should provide opportunities for professional development for internships. Again, the majority (94%) agreed or strongly agreed, while six percent disagreed. Participants were asked if internships should provide opportunities for interns to manage part time staff. There was greater variation to this factor, where 53% agreed or strongly agreed, 42% were neutral, and 5% of the respondents strongly disagreed.

Participants were asked if internships should provide opportunities for interns to prepare budgets. Approximately one-third of respondents (37%) agreed or strongly agreed, while over half were neutral (53%) and 5% of the participants strongly disagreed. The participants were asked if there should be opportunities for interns to write grants. Over one-quarter (26%) agreed or strongly agreed, 64% were neutral, and 5% strongly disagreed. The last question of this section asked if there should be opportunities for interns to lead programs. The majority (90%) agreed or strongly agreed, 5% were neutral and 5% strongly disagreed. The participants were asked to indicate other experiences they would like their internship to provide. Only one participant noted networking and experiencing different fields.

Figure 1



Participants were then asked what role they believe their university/internship coordinator has in making the internship selection process better (see Figure 2). The participants were asked to indicate level of agreement on a Likert-scale with values ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree).

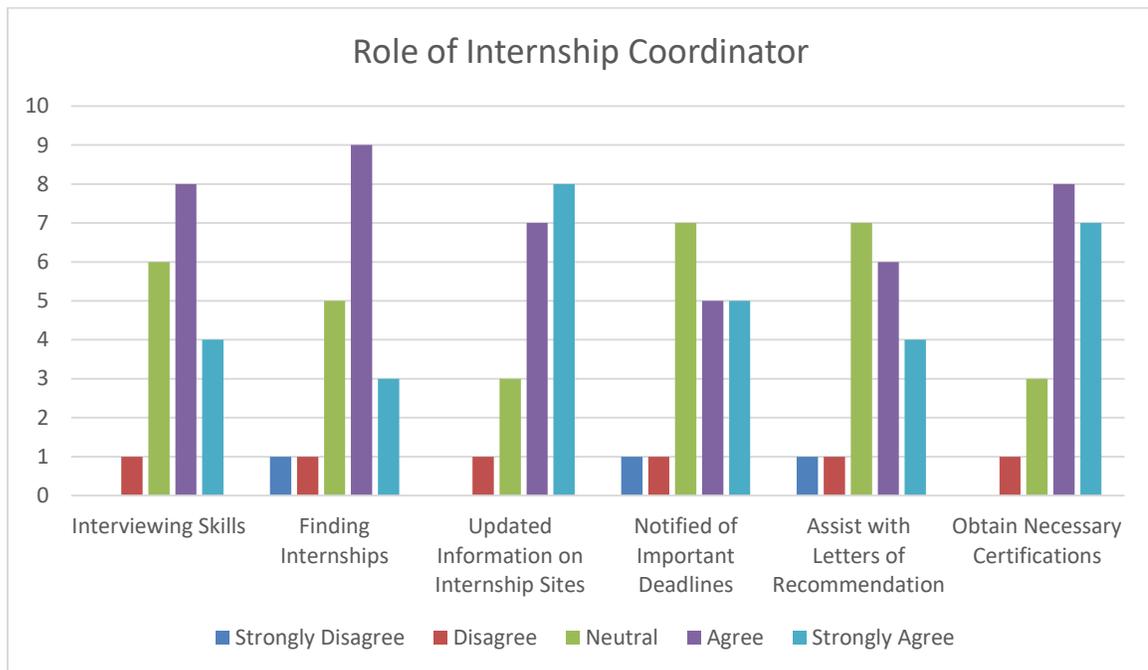
The participants were asked if they believe their university/internship coordinator should help with interviewing skills, to which two-thirds of participants (63%) agreed or strongly agreed, 32% were neutral, and 5% of participants disagreed. The participants were asked if they believe their university/internship coordinator should help finding an internship, to which 64% agreed or strongly agreed, 26% were neutral, and 10% disagreed or strongly disagree. The participants were asked if they believe their university/internship coordinator should help keep updated information on internship

sites to which nearly 80% agreed or strongly agreed, 16% remained neutral, and 4% disagreed.

The participants were then asked if they believe their university/internship coordinator should help remind the participant of important deadlines, to which over half (52%) agreed or strongly agreed, 38% were neutral, and 10% disagreed or strongly disagreed. The participants were asked if they believe their university/internship coordinator should help write letters of recommendation on the behalf of the participant so they can get the internship they want to which over half (52%) agreed or strongly agreed, 37% were neutral, and 10% disagreed or strongly disagreed. The participants were asked if they believe their university/internship coordinator should help the participant get the necessary certificates required by their university site, to which 79% agreed or strongly agreed, 16% were neutral, and 5% strongly disagreed.

When participants were asked if, prior to the first semester as a college undergraduate, they expected an internship would be part of their undergraduate education, half responded yes and half no. When asked what resources they would use to select their internship, 79% responded faculty/professors; 74% the SPMT program; 68% with search engines (e.g., Google, Internet Explorer, Yahoo); 63% friends/peers; 58% University Career Services; 58% internship portals; 47% family; 42% responded academic advisor, and 16% posters/flyers on campus. In addition to these resources, participants noted they would also use the internet, mentors, and coaches.

Figure 2



Fifteen participants felt that they had been given a sufficient amount of information to find an internship. For those who felt internship information was inadequate, students responded that they had not been in the proper class yet to provide preparation or were pushing it back. Fifty-seven percent of participants were willing to take an internship that is not directly in their field of study; specifically, students noted the areas of business, events, marketing and facility management, sales and sport sales, and videography.

Finally, participants were asked how likely (based on requirements) each of the following factors were in considering an internship on the 5-point Likert scale from 1 (not required) to 5 (required). The specific factors included resume/CV building; skill

development; relevance to major; workforce preparation; meaningful/challenging assignments; salary; mentoring relationships; and a recognizable company name. In addition, one student indicated money. Over half (58%) of participants indicated the most important factors in preparation for selecting an internship were resume/CV building, skill development, and networking.

The majority of participants in this study were not willing to travel far for an internship and even fewer were willing to travel anywhere to receive a quality internship experience. Many participants were not willing to leave Virginia and perhaps that was due to the numerous opportunities that exist in the Northern Virginia area or they were not willing to travel far from areas that are familiar or in which they have other obligations (e.g., housing, jobs, family, school).

Also, students were willing to try at least two internship sites if not more. In some cases, money was a factor while others stated that it would not influence their decision; while money may be a motivator, it would not limit options if money were not offered. It is obvious that many of these students believe money is a motivator, but would not limit themselves if money was not offered.

CHAPTER FOUR: CONCLUSION

The purpose of this project was to research factors that impact the search for and selection of a sport management internship, the researcher believes that the main factors for deciding on an internship came down to distance, money, and lack of support or self-assurance.

Selecting an internship takes time; thus, students need to recognize early on in the selection process the types of experiences they would like to have and available locations. In order to help students initiate their entry into a chosen career, universities should provide a fieldwork opportunity as part of the program's curriculum. Additionally, a course that prepares students for the internship and search process (e.g., what to expect, roles and responsibilities, types of organizations) should be implemented, and the course should be offered in the semester prior to that in which the search process begins (or two semesters before the internship). This will address the reality that students tend not to give themselves enough time to consider options and make decisions. . Finding an ideal site takes time.

Students are looking for internship experiences that allow them to practice new skills and apply ones they may have learned in the classroom. Additionally, when agencies are held accountable by the university for ensuring the effectiveness of an internship program, the intern is more likely to succeed and exceed performance

expectations. Therefore, one recommendation is to insure that organizations provide interns a variety of experiences within many units or functional areas. Financial constraints, due to paying for course credit and earning no stipend or financial compensation, are an issue for many students. Although some agencies may not be prepared to compensate their interns, they should at the very least consider providing other benefits such as housing, parking or transportation costs. Many students in this project indicated a preference to stay local. Thus, a recommendation for future study may be to look at what kinds of information and benefits are necessary to persuade an intern to identify a broad range of agencies and locations for consideration.. Students are looking for internships that may provide a transition into a job after their internship so any and all experiences have some benefit.

This project provides material that can help future exploration in regards to the students' internship selection experience. More specifically, the study can be used to inform future research that considers the role of motivation and perceived constraints on internship site selection. Additionally, this study could be replicated in a variety of settings, on a larger scale, and over a longer period. Replicating this project for internships in other fields may also be of value. The findings of this project may provide useful information for university personnel who help coordinate and assist agencies that provide internships. While this study has addressed many issues it has also raised many possibilities for future study.

The purpose of this project was to determine factors that impact the search for and selection of a sport management internship. This study did not consider overall

satisfaction with the internship site and experience, although this is a valuable area for future study. Future research should consider sport management faculty perspectives and the relationship to student experience.

Since this study was conducted, the university and School of Sport, Recreation and Tourism Management have invested significantly into resources that facilitate student internship identification and selection, including communications, opportunities, and financial resources (e.g., resume assistance, teamwork online, career social, Handshake, career fairs, newsletters, clubs and honor society presentations). Also, the university routinely invites industries on campus for job and internship fairs and interviews. Overall, experiential learning opportunities continue to be an essential and well sought-after part of the student academic experience, career identification, and professional development.

APPENDIX

Your Proposed Internship

As part of your undergraduate program of study, you are required to participate in two fieldwork experiences: a sophomore-level Practicum and a *senior year capstone synthesis Internship*. This questionnaire is about your anticipated senior year capstone synthesis Internship. I am interested in learning more about your expected internship selection process; and how, when, and where you plan to gain information about internship opportunities.

Below, you will find a series of questions that ask about your possible motivations and challenges that you may experience and strategies you may use in making your internship choice.

Part 1: Factors Influencing Your Internship Choice

1. Listed below are several statements that may indicate your motivations for choosing an internship site. Please read each of the following statements carefully. Using the 5-point Likert scale provided, circle the number that best represents the extent to which each motivation will likely influence your decision.

Motivation	Not at All		Somewhat		Very Much
To apply my skills	1	2	3	4	5
To make new friends	1	2	3	4	5
To develop better communication skills	1	2	3	4	5
To develop problem solving skills	1	2	3	4	5
To complete my graduation requirements	1	2	3	4	5
To experience something new	1	2	3	4	5
To get a future job at the internship site	1	2	3	4	5
To satisfy my long-term career goals	1	2	3	4	5
To contribute my ideas	1	2	3	4	5

2. Overall, how motivated are you to explore potential internship sites?

Not at all
motivated

1

2

Somewhat
motivated

3

4

Extremely
motivated

5

Are there other factors that may influence your internship site choice? Please explain.

3. Before deciding on your final internship site, please estimate how many total internship sites you plan to consider. _____ sites

Part 2: Internship Selection Constraints/Barriers

1. Listed below are several statements that describe potential constraints or barriers you may face in the process of selecting your internship. Please read each of the following statements carefully. Using the 5-point Likert scale provided, circle the number that best represents the extent to which each statement is true for you **in limiting your internship choices**.

	Not a Barrier		Somewhat a Barrier		A Significant Barrier
My family may not like my internship choices	1	2	3	4	5
I am concerned that I won't have enough skills to do a good job at my internship	1	2	3	4	5
My friends may not think my internship choices are right for me	1	2	3	4	5
My advisor/internship coordinator may not think my internship choices are right for me	1	2	3	4	5
Internship choices may be too far away from my hometown	1	2	3	4	5
Internship sites may not pay or offer a stipend to their interns	1	2	3	4	5
I may not give myself enough time to consider enough options for my internship	1	2	3	4	5
A current job may limit my choices of an internship site.	1	2	3	4	5
Being near my significant other may limit my internship choices	1	2	3	4	5
No other students have interned at the internship sites that I may consider	1	2	3	4	5
The climate (weather) of the internship location might be too cold or too hot	1	2	3	4	5
The internship site may not provide free housing	1	2	3	4	5

2. Are there other barriers or constraints to selecting your internship site? Please explain.

Part 3: Strategies Used to Overcome Constraints/Barriers

- Listed below are several statements that reflect strategies you may use to overcome difficulties in selecting your internship site. Please read each of the following statements carefully. Using the 5-point Likert scale provided, circle the number that best represents the extent to which each statement is true for you **in selecting your internship choices**.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
I plan to set aside enough time to look for an internship	1	2	3	4	5
I will make selecting a good internship a priority	1	2	3	4	5
I will perform research on different internship sites	1	2	3	4	5
I will practice my interviewing skills before selecting an internship site.	1	2	3	4	5
I have taken classes to improve my communication skills for being an effective intern	1	2	3	4	5
I will update my resume before selecting an internship site	1	2	3	4	5
I will speak to other students who have completed internships to get their opinions	1	2	3	4	5
My family will help me with my decision for selecting an appropriate internship site	1	2	3	4	5
I will ask for advice from my advisor or internship coordinator about selecting an internship	1	2	3	4	5
I plan to save enough money in preparation for my internship	1	2	3	4	5
I am planning to borrow money from family or friends in order to complete my internship	1	2	3	4	5
I will live with family or friends during my internship in order to save money	1	2	3	4	5

2. Are there other strategies you may use in selecting your internship site? Please explain.

Part 4: Improving Internship Experiences

1. What role do you believe your internship site will have in providing certain experiences? Using the 5-point Likert scale provided, circle the number that best represents your level of agreement with each statement.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Internships should provide:					
Organization and training to interns	1	2	3	4	5
Opportunities for professional development for internships	1	2	3	4	5
Opportunities for interns to manage part-time staff	1	2	3	4	5
Opportunities for interns to prepare budgets	1	2	3	4	5
Opportunities for interns to write grants	1	2	3	4	5
Opportunities for interns to lead programs	1	2	3	4	5

2. Are there other experiences you expect your internship will provide? Please explain.

3. What role do you believe your university/internship coordinator has in making the internship selection process better for you? Using the 5-point Likert scale provided, circle the number that best represents your level of agreement with each statement.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
I believe my university/internship coordinator should:					
Help me with my interviewing skills	1	2	3	4	5
Help me find an internship site	1	2	3	4	5
Keep updated information on internship sites	1	2	3	4	5
Remind me of important deadlines	1	2	3	4	5
Write letters of recommendation on my behalf so I can get the internship I want	1	2	3	4	5
Help me get the necessary certifications required by my university site	1	2	3	4	5

4. Are there other roles you believe your university/internship coordinator should play? Please explain.

5. Prior to your first semester as a college undergraduate, did you expect an internship would be part of your undergraduate education?

- Yes
- No

6. What resources will you use to select your internship? (Check all that apply)

- University career services
- SPMT department e-mail/list
- Friends/peers
- Family
- Search engines (e.g., Google, Internet Explorer, Yahoo)
- Internship portals
- Faculty/professors
- Posters/flyers posted on campus
- Academic advisor
- Other _____
- Other _____

7. Do you feel you have been given a sufficient amount of information to find an internship?

- Yes
 - No
- If not, please explain

8. Are you willing to take an internship that is not directly in your field of study?
- Yes
 - No
- If so, in what areas?
-

9. How important are each of the following to you when considering an internship? Using the 5-point Likert scale provided, circle the number that best represents the necessity of each factor when selecting an internship.

	Not Required		Desirable		Required
Resume/CV Building	1	2	3	4	5
Skill Development	1	2	3	4	5
Networking	1	2	3	4	5
Relevant to Major	1	2	3	4	5
Workforce Preparation	1	2	3	4	5
Meaningful/Challenging Assignments	1	2	3	4	5
Salary	1	2	3	4	5
Mentor Relationship	1	2	3	4	5
Recognizable Company Name	1	2	3	4	5
Other: _____	1	2	3	4	5
Other: _____	1	2	3	4	5

Part 5: Information About You

The following questions are about you. All responses will be held confidential, and only used for aggregating information.

1. What is your academic standing?
 - Freshman
 - Sophomore
 - Junior
 - Senior
 - Other _____

2. When will you do your internship?:
 - I have already completed my internship
 - I will do my internship in Summer 2015
 - I will do my internship in Fall 2015
 - Other (please indicate the semester/year) _____

3. Which of the following best describes your major/concentration? (check all that apply if you have a dual major/concentration).
- Sport Management
 - Recreation Management: Parks and Outdoor Recreation
 - Recreation Management: Therapeutic Recreation
 - Tourism and Events Management
 - Other _____
4. What is your gender/sex?
- Male
 - Female
 - Other: _____
5. Where is your permanent residence? (City, State)
- _____
6. What is your current GPA?
- _____
7. How far are you willing to travel to your internship site from your residence?
- _____ miles
8. What type of job do you hope to secure after graduation?
- _____
9. Are you currently employed?
- Full-Time
 - Part-Time
 - Multiple Jobs
 - Not Employed

Thank you for your time in completing this questionnaire.

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BIOGRAPHY

Rebecca O'Donnell-Crews graduated from Pompano Beach High School, Pompano Beach, Florida, in 2005. She received her Bachelor of Arts in Secondary Education with a concentration in English from Saint Thomas University in 2009 and Bachelor of Science in Health, Fitness and Recreation Resources with a Concentration in Sport Management from George Mason University in 2013. She enjoys day trips and going to sporting events.