

**INTERNSHIP PROGRAMS IN CHRISTIAN COLLEGE BUSINESS
DEGREE PROGRAMS:
AN EMPIRICAL EXAMINATION**

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Abstract

In this paper, we report the results of an exploratory empirical study of internship programs in Christian college business schools. We examine the structure, process, and resource characteristics of respondent programs, along with the extent of faith-learning-living integration designed into them. We also examine differences based on demographic variables. We found extraordinary variety among internship programs. We also found a generally low level of financial and administrative support for these programs, along with few intentional faith-learning-living integration methods. We recommend, in general, that the objectives of such programs be clarified, that intentional processes for encouraging the integration of faith, learning, and living be designed into internship programs, and that the level of financial and administrative support be increased.

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Introduction

An “internship” is a common academic and corporate term. It seems that, everywhere you look, whether in brochures, catalogs, or on web sites, both universities and corporations are touting the educational benefits of internship programs. Even though there is a widespread assumption that internship programs are of benefit to both students and corporations, there has been little systematic study of the structure of internship programs. What does an internship program look like? And, more specifically, what does an internship program in a Christian business degree program look like?

This paper has two goals. The first is to define the structure, process, and resource characteristics of internship programs within Christian business degree programs. The second is to determine the level of faith integration designed into these internship programs. Does the structure of the internship program or the level of faith integration vary based on the type of institution, size of institution, size of the business programs, type of business programs, or other demographic or administrative variables?

Review of Relevant Literature

The internship is a long-established fixture in many business schools. This comes as a result of a recognized need for additional experiential training in business schools (McDaniel & White, 1993; Peters & Waterman, 1982; Shipp, Lamb, & Mokwa, 1993). An internship is a “fixed term work experience with clear learning objectives”

(Stanton, 1992). Emphasis is usually placed on the integration of theory and practice in the student's chosen area of interest (Stretch & Harp, 1991). The typical internship is a complex relationship among the student intern, the university, and the employer. Its popularity is due in part to the mutual benefits reaped by all involved parties. Students benefit from internships by learning to think and solve problems (Raymond & McNabb, 1993), earning a paycheck (Stanton, 1992), learning difficult-to-quantify human relations skills (McCombs & VanSyckle, 1994) that are key to professional maturity, gaining an advantage in the post-graduation job search (Pianko, 1996), increasing subsequent academic performance (English & Koeppen, 1993; Knouse, Tanner, & Harris, 1999), and, in some cases, earning college credit for their experiences on the job. Employers benefit by enhancing their recruiting efforts (Pianko, 1996), increasing corporate exposure on campus (Pianko, 1996), maximizing the selection process by minimizing the commitment to a prospective employee (Hazelwood, 2004), and improving public relations (McCombs & VanSyckle, 1994). Universities benefit from expanded networking opportunities (Stretch & Harp, 1991) for consulting, research, giving, and additional student placement, and expanded recruiting power for new students (Celestino, 1999).

The main focus of much of the existing research has been on the relationship between the internship and student learning or employment. Little research has been done on the structure of the internship or the integration of faith into the internship process.

Method

A contact list of business program heads of CCCU member institutions was generated and served as the population for this research. A questionnaire was developed (see attached) and sent via e-mail to those business program heads.

Respondents were invited to respond via email or fax. Eighty-six surveys were sent and 21 useable surveys were returned, resulting in a 24.4% response rate. The questionnaire was designed to obtain information about the requirements for and structure of internships, the administration of internships, and the outcomes of internships. The questionnaire also gathered appropriate demographic information on the institution and the business program head, so that differences based on these variables may be examined.

Results

Requirements and Structure of the Internship

The respondents indicated that internships for undergraduate business majors are far more popular than internships for graduate business majors. Of the respondents, 100% indicated that internships were available to the student. Of that number, 76.2% indicated that the internship was an option, but was not required for graduation. The remaining 23.8% require an internship for graduation. The results dramatically differ when respondents are questioned about graduate business internships. Nearly half (42.9%) of respondent institutions do not offer graduate business degrees, therefore making the question moot. Of the institutions that do offer graduate business degrees, 58.3% do not have a formal internship program. The remaining 41.6% report that an internship option is available, but is not required. None of the respondents indicated that they required an internship for graduation for a graduate business degree.

Undergraduate students who complete an internship are usually given significant choice when scheduling the term in which they complete the internship. Seventy-one percent of respondents indicated that internships were scheduled at the discretion of the student, rather than forcing the internship into a specific term. The vast majority (95.2%)

of respondent institutions give college credit for a completing an internship. Most commonly (71.4%), a standard 3 hours of credit is given for the internship. Nearly two thirds (61.9%) of institutions allow the student to repeat the internship for credit. Most commonly, institutions allow the student to repeat the internship twice. Some respondents assign variable credit (as opposed to fixed credit) for the course. In this case, repeating the internship is expressed in terms of total credit hours earned rather than times the internship may be repeated. When asked to identify how the internship was graded, an even two-thirds (66.7%) indicated the internship was graded on a letter grade basis, with the remaining 33.3% grading on a pass/fail basis.

Respondents were asked to refer to last year's internships and identify both the percentage of internships obtained by the university or the student, and whether the internships were paid or unpaid. On average, students obtained 64.2% of internships, with the university obtaining 35.7% of internships. However, the range was 95 in both cases and the standard deviation was large at 30.15. Similar variance was reported in the responses regarding payment for the internships. Respondents indicated 62.1% of internships were paid, with 36.1% being non-paid. Again, the range was large (100.0) as was the standard deviation (32.9).

While it was clear that the School of Business is responsible for administering the internship (90.5%) and that either a business faculty member or the Business Dean should be individually responsible for the administration of the internship (90.5%), there was considerably less agreement as to how a faculty member should be compensated for supervising or administering the internship. Only 42.1% of respondent institutions give a teaching load reduction to the supervising faculty member. Other respondents indicated that they either gave no consideration to the faculty member, or that the faculty member was paid an overload rate for the work. Most often, the amount of

compensation was directly related to the number of interns supervised in a given term or academic year.

Common Requirements of Internships

Since the availability of internships does not seem to be driven by any common process or need (e.g., accreditation), the design of an internship's components, and thus its evaluation methods, differed greatly across the respondents. The following table ranks the most popular components listed as requirements of internships.

Table 1

Internship Evaluation Components by Descending Popularity

Internship Component	Common %
Supervisor Performance Evaluation	76.1
Final Written Report by Student	61.9
Written Journal of Student Work Activities	33.3
Completion of a Stated Minimum # of Work Hours	19.0
Completion of Preliminary Internship Proposal Form	14.2
Written Book Report or Readings Report	14.2
Project Analysis or Problem Solving	14.2
Resume	9.5
Professional Portfolio	9.5
Weekly Written Reports	9.5
Instructor Evaluation	9.5
Self Evaluation	4.7
Class Attendance	4.7
Attendance at Internship Meetings	4.7
Class Participation	4.7
Oral Presentation	4.7
Final Exam	4.7
Workbook Completion	4.7

Every respondent reported requiring a significant writing assignment on the part of the student. The assignment came in different forms (final written report, book report, daily journal, weekly reports, etc.), but most internships required multiple methods. The single most popular evaluation method was the site supervisor's evaluation of the intern. These were reported as being collected in via different methods. Standardized

evaluation forms, open-ended written evaluations, telephone conferences, personal visits with site supervisor, and online evaluation forms were all methods used to elicit the site supervisor's comments. Most internship programs do not require a classroom presence on the part of the student. However, some did require such a presence, and thus different evaluations requirements (such as class attendance and final exams) are demanded.

Integration of Faith in Internship

Respondents were asked to describe how faith is integrated into the internship experience. Even though the question was open-ended, the responses clustered around three main structural themes. The first integration theme is passive and revolves around student behavior on the job. There is an expectation that the student will exhibit Christian faith and character and integrate those into the tasks of the internship. Some respondents indicated that while this was an expectation, they did not readily evaluate the outcome. Other respondents require the intern to submit a variety of written assignments (e.g., journals, papers) as a vehicle to evaluate the intern's faith integration experiences. One respondent stated that despite efforts to make the evaluation of the intern more objective, it remains "an inexact science." The second integration theme was more proactive in that the School of Business developed close relationships with a few employers who have been carefully screened on the basis of their Christian faith and Christian employment atmosphere. Some programs screen on the basis of having a Christian supervisor. Interns are then placed exclusively with these employers. One program even mentioned assigning the intern to a specific professional mentor within the host company. The final integration theme is one in which there is no attempt to integrate faith with the internship experience. Most respondents in this category

indicated that faith integration in the internship was “Not applicable,” or “Not really a factor.” One respondent indicated that “someone else handles this.”

Discussion

Limitations of the Study

Before drawing conclusions from this research, it is necessary to acknowledge two major limitations of the study. The first is the exploratory nature of the research. The questions used in questionnaire were written to explore the nature of business internship programs within CCCU institutions, and thus do not easily lend themselves to statistical analysis. The second is the relatively low sample size. While the return rate was acceptable for this type of research, the resulting sample size (N=21) was fairly small. This limits the generalizability of the research.

While it is important to acknowledge these limitations, it is also important to note that this research was able to gather useful information from a relatively large number of CCCU business programs, and thus the results and conclusions should add to the existing body of knowledge and should prove useful to other Christian college business programs.

Suggestions for Future Research

There are several ways in which this research could be expanded. First, it would be helpful to increase the response rate and the resulting sample size, which would then provide insights from a larger number of institutions. Second, a sample of similar-sized secular institutions could be gathered and compared to the CCCU sample, which might provide insights into whether secular institutions are handling internship programs in ways that could be helpful to CCCU institutions. Third, a sample of larger business programs could be gathered, which might reveal important size distinctions (or even

important accreditation distinctions, as this group would likely contain many AACSB schools).

Implications for Deans and Chairs

Based on our research, internships appear to have a Cinderella-like problem: There's beauty there, but it hasn't been discovered yet; there's a diamond there, but it's still in the rough. Most of the respondents seem to feel that internships are a good thing, but the level of development and the level of support appears to be lacking, in many cases. Internships provide students with real-world experience, opportunities to earn money, and the potential for full-time job offers—all of which are valuable to students. They provide business schools with linkages with the business community and job opportunities for graduates. And they provide businesses with good workers and the opportunity to try someone out before offering him or her a full-time job. It's a win-win-win situation—and one that appears to need to be developed more fully.

First, there appears to be a need to develop well-defined objectives for internship programs. What exactly are internships supposed to accomplish for the student, for employers, and for the business school? What are the learning objectives for an internship, and how can these be assessed?

Secondly, for Christian business schools, the integration of faith with learning and living is paramount. As shown in our research, however, faith-learning-living integration is rarely an intentional component of the internship process. Undoubtedly opportunities for faith-learning-living integration occur in most internships; these lead to both successes and failures on the part of the students. Without some method for encouraging reflection on these events, however, learning from these successes and failures may not occur. There must be an intentional process for chronicling faith-learning-living integration events and learning from them. At the least, these events

should be captured in the student's journal and reflected upon in the final paper. The employer evaluation might also attempt to assess the success of faith-learning-living integration, though perhaps in the guise of "ethics," to avoid problems with secular employers.

Third is the challenge of administrative support for internships. Our research revealed that most internships are administrative orphans. The oversight of internships is not included in faculty load, and often is not compensated by overloads, either. If internships are required for all students in a business school, then they will likely generate a substantial number of credit hours; yet, in most cases, few of those revenue dollars are making their way back into administrative support of the internship program. Given the incredible positive benefits of internships for the student, the institution, and the community, it appears that more substantial levels of financial support are warranted.

Conclusions

The issues mentioned in the previous discussion may be related to each other. The lack of well-specified objectives for internship programs, the lack of intentional mechanisms for encouraging faith-learning-living integration, and the lack of administrative support may all be symptoms of the same problem.

It would be tempting to say, "well, with little financial support or rewards for administering an internship program, it's no wonder that we haven't found the time to specify the objectives or to strengthen mechanisms for faith-learning-living integration in internships." But this may be one of those "chicken and egg" situations. Is it possible that some investment into strengthening the internship program might lead to documented results that could be used to campaign for additional funding? Or perhaps grant monies could be secured to improve the internship program, thus giving it higher

status and visibility, which might eventually lead to increased support from top-level administration.

Our research indicates an extremely-wide degree of variation in the way internship programs are structured and administrated in Christian college schools of business. There appears to be a need, therefore, to share best practices among CCCU schools in regard to internship programs. Clearly there are opportunities to learn from each other, and to encourage each other concerning these highly-beneficial programs.

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Christian College/University Business Internship Survey

Thank you for completing this survey. When complete, please return the survey by fax to **918-335-6258** or you may return it by mail using the enclosed pre-paid envelope.

Requirements and Structure of the Internship

1. What is the role of internships in your undergraduate business program?
 - An internship option is available, but not required for graduation.
 - An internship is required for graduation.
 - We do not have a formal internship program

2. What is the role of internships in your graduate business program?
 - An internship option is available, but not required for graduation
 - An internship is required for graduation
 - We do not have a formal internship program
 - Not applicable; we do not offer graduate business degrees

3. When is the internship usually completed?
 - During the Fall term
 - During the Spring term
 - During a Summer term
 - At the discretion of the student

4. Does the student intern receive college credit for the internship?
 - Yes. How many credit hours? _____
 - No

5. Is the internship repeatable for credit?
 - Yes How many times? _____
 - No

6. How is the internship graded?
 - Letter grade
 - Pass/Fail

7. How many internships are required for graduation?
 - 1 semester
 - 2 semester
 - More than 2 semesters (specify)_____

Please refer to last year's internships to answer the following two questions:

8. What percentage of internships are obtained:
 - A. By the student? _____
 - B. By the university for the student? _____

9. What percentage of internships are:
 - A. Paid? _____
 - B. Unpaid? _____

10. Please describe how faith is integrated into the internship experience.

11. How is the intern evaluated by the institution for the purposes of assigning a grade (methods)?

12. What type of documentation do you require from the employer to facilitate the internship?

13. Does the student have an option to complete an international internship?
 Yes
 No

If Yes, briefly explain how it is facilitated.

Administration of Internships

- 14. What part of the university is responsible for administrating the business internship program?
 - The business department, division, or school
 - Another area of the university (specify)_____ (go to #16)

- 15. Within the business department, division, or school, who is responsible for administering the internship program?
 - A business faculty member
 - a Dean or Chair
 - A staff member, such as an internship coordinator (go to #17)

- 16. Does the faculty member supervising the internship program receive a load reduction from his/her teaching load, or overload compensation?
 - Yes, the faculty member receives a load reduction of _____ credit hours
 - Yes, the faculty member receives overload compensation
 - No, the faculty member does not receive a load reduction or overload compensation

- 17. Over the term of the internship, what is the average number of contacts the internship coordinator has with the intern's employer via each of the following methods?
 - Telephone _____
 - U.S. Mail _____
 - E-Mail _____
 - Face to face _____
 - Other _____

The Outcome of the Internship

- 18. At the conclusion of the internship, what percentage of last year's interns received an immediate job offer from the employer?
_____ %

- 19. At the conclusion of the internship, what percentage of last year's interns received a promise of a job offer at graduation from the employer?
_____ %

- 20. At the conclusion of the internship, what percentage of last year's interns received a promise of a significant job interview from the employer?
_____ %

Demographic Information

- 21. What is the organizational structure of your business programs (choose one)?
 - College of Business
 - School of Business
 - Division of Business
 - Department of Business

- 22. What is the enrollment in your business programs at these various levels?
 - "Traditional" undergraduate business _____
 - "Adult" or "Nontraditional" undergraduate business _____
 - Total enrollment in all graduate business programs _____
 - Total enrollment in all business programs _____

23. Estimate the population of the metropolitan statistical area (MSA) where your college/university is primarily located _____
24. Is your college/university currently regionally accredited?
 Yes No
25. If yes, by whom?
 North Central Association New England Association
 Southern Association Middle States Association
 Western Association Northwest Association
26. Are your business degree programs currently professionally accredited?
 Yes No
27. If yes, by whom?
 American Assembly of Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB)
 Association of Collegiate Business Schools and Programs (ACBSP)
 International Assembly for Collegiate Business Education (IACBE)
28. If no, are you currently seeking professional accreditation?
 Yes No
29. If yes, by whom?
 American Assembly of Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB)
 Association of Collegiate Business Schools and Programs (ACBSP)
 International Assembly for Collegiate Business Education (IACBE)
30. If no, why not?
31. What is the average annual teaching load for business faculty members? _____ hours
32. What is the average annual teaching load for the business dean? _____ hours
33. Does a Business Advisory Group/Council/Board exist for your business programs?
 Yes
 No
34. If yes, what percentage of the members of the business advisory board are involved in offering internships to business students?
 _____%

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