IBFR

BUSINESS INTERNSHIPS: A PRACTICAL FRAMEWORK

Natalya (Natasha) Delcoure, Texas A&M University – Kingsville
Rusty V. Karst, Texas A&M University – Kingsville
Cynthia A. Longoria, Texas A&M University – Kingsville

ABSTRACT

The importance of business internships is well established in the literature. This paper extends a more practical framework for business internship success, achieved through student professional development, and facilitated via implementation of a step-wise construct process: (1) self-development, (2) on-campus development, and (3) applied development. Our construct model and process framework were developed and carried out in an iterative manner over time, beginning in 2010, in The College of Business Administration at Texas A&M University – Kingsville. Metrics serving as proxies for business internship success indicate overall program success thus far, as well as trended improvement based on iterative changes made from 2010 to present. We thus contend that the finalized framework and model of student professional development is well positioned to improve business internship programs in a more holistic manner, at both student and institution (e.g. college, organization) levels. Iterations, outcomes, implications and limitations of the program framework are discussed.

JEL: A220

KEYWORDS: Business Education, Internship, Desired Skillset, Undergraduate Professional Development

INTRODUCTION

Formally acquired knowledge in a collegiate education is not very effective unless business students learn how to apply it and practice it through integration and experience in a professional setting. Case studies, role-playing, business simulations, capstone courses and other types of assignments provide students only limited exposure to and experience with analyzing and solving contextual problems emanating from intricate business situations –which is precisely what students will face in industry upon graduation. Classroom practice affords only a learning primer of how to combine innate intelligence, resourcefulness, a command of analytical tools, imagination, and unbiased judgement in solving diverse business problems. Understanding that internships provide a more advanced and relevant context for student applied development, internship programs have become a staple component of the undergraduate experience in business schools, although these programs vary widely in their requirements, structure and effectiveness.

Internship programs have existed for over a century, dating back to 1906 (University of Cincinnati), and now span over 43 countries – culminating in a large body of extant research which documents diverse aspects of internships (University of Cincinnati Co-op, 2016). This domain could be broadly divided into three categories: (1) descriptive studies of what individual business schools have accomplished (e.g., Johnson and Hancock, 1983; McCaskey and Fedo, 1985; Hite and Bellizzi, 1986; Dommeyer, Gross, and Ackerman, 2016); (2) studies discussing pros and cons of internship programs in general (e.g., Nevett, 1985; McCarrier, 1986; Krohn, 1986; Henry, Razzouk, and Hoverland, 1988; Coco, 2000; Rothman, 2007;

Divine, Linrud, Miller, and Wilson, 2007; Weible, 2010; Green, Graybeal, and Madison, 2011); and (3) descriptive surveys which are mostly national in scope (e.g., Dovel and Dayan, 1982; Clithero and Levenson, 1986; Kelley and Bridges, 2005; Swanson and Tomkovick, 2011; Wresch and Pondell, 2015; Cook, Stokes, and Parker, 2015).

Single-school descriptive studies usually catalogue positive qualitative internship experiences and position "know-how" practices, yet these studies have the same constraint – their findings are limited to one business school. Pro and con discussions of internship program general components is reminiscent of a case analysis, and these studies usually present a recommendation or two on how to improve the student internship experience. The third group, descriptive survey, provides relatively broad and unbiased information about the state of internship programs around the nation. However, it yields little in the way of tangible direction.

In this paper, we take a more practical approach in the development and implementation of a step-wise construct framework which targets improved business internship metrics/results, and heightened overall program success. We also shed light on the importance of internship timing, as sequentially placed within the framework of our three-phase construct model (self-development, on-campus development, and applied development). In addition, model constructs' antecedent and moderation effects are examined through iterative framework changes, step-wise construct repositioning, and practical application over time. Beyond these contributions, this study: delineates the desired skill set students should develop in order to have a successful internship; examines employer opportunity costs of offering and supervising an effective internship; reports on immediate and iterative internship program results/metrics and anticipated future outcomes based on modifications made; and documents internship program impact on a diverse stakeholder group, to include the community.

The expanded scope of this framework and paper is in response to the ever-increasing accountability faced by institutions of higher education - by current and prospective students, their parents, government oversight, accreditation and funding bodies, employers, donors, alumni, and other stakeholders' opportunity costs and expectations. In the coning sections, we will first provide a relevant literature review, and then position the university-specific context of the program. Next, we will introduce the step-wise framework and process map, as well as the construct model. We will then examine internship program results thus far, and conclude with a discussion of implications, limitations, and suggested avenues for future research and practice.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Professional schools, more than other colleges on university campuses, have long recognized the educational value and relevance of student internships. In business education, Henry, Razzouk, and Hoverland (1988) found that academics cooperated with accounting practitioners for over three decades to provide students with hands-on experience in their field before graduation. They cite interesting findings regarding CPA firms' non-participation in internship programs, with the principal reason for noninvolvement being a lack of time needed to organize a successful internship program.

Henry and associates (1988) recommend a practical framework for the administration of a student internship program, to include: (1) appointing an internship coordinator; (2) consulting with accounting faculty and administration to define the nature and scope of the internship program; (3) developing internship guidelines for participating students and sponsoring organizations; (4) developing a professional brochure emphasizing the benefits of the internship; (5) utilizing accounting faculty to recruit qualified students; (6) informing accounting professionals in the area; (7) giving priority to internships with challenging duties and paid internships; (8) pre-screening potential interns; (9) establishing a contract between the student-intern, the sponsoring form, and department; (10) monitoring the intern; (11) conducting intern and sponsoring-firm evaluations; and (11) adjusting procedures if needed.

Raymond and McNabb's (1993) study found that both students and employers value internships because they provide practical experience, sharpen students' critical thinking, communication and interpersonal skills, and give students an opportunity to apply knowledge previously learned in the classroom. In reference to the interview process, Green, Graybeal, and Madison (2011) demonstrated that employers and students are often not aligned in the level of importance each places on specific traits, and by extension which traits receive the most focus in an interview. Understanding this misalignment underscores the need for business faculty to additionally mentor students, with increased emphasis on their transition from academic to professional careers. Faculty-student mentorship helps align perspectives and better prepares students for the internship, and beyond. Additionally, Green and associates (2011) positioned core competencies that graduates should develop, considering them to be essential in the hiring process by employers. For example, employers place significantly greater value on the importance of a strong work ethic, interpersonal skills, and personal traits.

Swanson and Tomkovick's (2011) study of 352 companies who provide academic internships revealed that employers placed highest value on positive attitude, effective communication skills, strong work ethic, and willingness to learn. They also discovered that, over time, companies build relationships with professors and other key contacts within colleges and universities. Thus, students should be motivated and prepared to perform in their internship, because both companies and colleges would be interested and motivated to create and maintain a "win-win" relationship. Weible (2010) found that institutions of higher education use internships as an effective undergraduate student recruiting tool, and by offering an internship program, their reputation in the community is enhanced.

A longitudinal study conducted in 2015 by Cook, Stokes and Parker examined students' attitudes toward specific elements of internship programs. The sample included 816 student-interns from 25 different colleges and universities and their findings corroborate earlier conclusions drawn by Green et al. (2011), namely that employers consistently place highest values on technical and interpersonal skills among business graduates. In addition, interns are seen as the most valuable by companies when completing internships during the junior or senior years. The work of Knouse, Tanner, and Harris (1999) supports the notion that students who complete an internship are more likely to find full time employment upon graduation. Gauldt, Redington, and Schlagar (2000) arrive at a similar conclusion, reporting that students with internship experience find employment quicker when compared to those who did not participate in an internship program. Furthermore, students with internship experience earn higher salaries and have higher levels of job satisfaction relative to those who do not intern.

It is understood that the relationships developed from the internship experience (volunteer or mandatory) impact students, employers, colleges/universities, and the greater community (Rothman, 2007; Divine, et al., 2007; Knouse and Fontenot, 2008). For example, Knouse and Fontenot (2008) recommend that both students and employers be actively involved in creating positive internship experiences, by setting clear expectations and engaging in activities such as mentoring and journaling as part of the internship process. D'Abate, Youndt, and Wenzel (2009) add that student satisfaction levels arising from internship experiences influence overall satisfaction levels from their college academic experience as a whole, because students view the internship as a fundamental part of their learning.

In order to further close the gap between the skills employers expect of freshly minted graduates and the skills taught in academia, it became more customary among business schools to include instruction of a variety of etiquette skills (Kelley, 1992), business protocol (Lazorchak, 2000), job-search etiquette (such as appropriate interview behavior), and use of "thank you notes", among others (O'Briant, 2000; Mood, Stewart, and Bolt-Lee, 2002). Further, business schools also focus on student self-marketing skills (McCorkle, Alexander, Reardon, and Kling, 2003), career development skills (Kelley and Bridges, 2005), engagement in a professional business student club/association, attendance to business association/club meetings, as well as participation in professional career fairs (Wresch and Pondell, 2015).

Legal ramifications of business internships are important to both employers and schools (e.g. Kaplan, 1994; Moorman, 2004; Swift and Kent, 1999). Questions arise specific to 'employment' status, payment of wages, workers' compensation eligibility, as well as liability (school and employer) for student injuries sustained in the workplace. In general terms, answers vary based on interpretation of applicable federal and state statutes, as well as based on the context of the particular internship. Regarding employment status, several factors are considered in determining if a worker is an employee or an independent contractor. Although employment laws do not directly use the word "intern", according to the defining characteristics used, an intern cannot be considered an independent contractor and thus is considered an employee, with all associated rights and legal protections (Kaplan, 1994; Swift and Kent, 1999).

Employers do not have to pay intern wages if the intern can be categorized as a "learner/trainee" under the Fair Labor Standards ACT (FLSA) in accordance with criteria established by the Department of Labor (DOL). Court rulings seem to support that student interns do not qualify as employees for purposes of wage and hour law. This is largely due to the logic behind why internships exist - that they are predominantly for student benefit and are being prescribed as part of the school's curriculum and educational process. Further, due to the underlying premise and intent of workers compensation laws, it is in the best interest of employers to include interns as employees for these rights and coverages. Lastly, answers as to whom may be liable (employer or school) for intern injuries sustained (non-workers' compensation) are found in negligence theory and underlying tenets of duty to care, breach of said duty, student fault, and other aspects of negligence. Schools have been found liable, based on specific circumstances of the case (e.g. Nova Southeastern University, Inc. v. Gross) (Kaplan, 1994).

BACKGROUND ON TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY - KINGSVILLE

Texas A & M University–Kingsville (TAMU-K) is located in south Texas approximately 100 miles north of the U.S.–Mexico border. Established in 1925 as South Texas State Teacher's College, TAMU-K draws its student population primarily from south Texas and its students reflect area demographics. Of the total TAMU-K student population (9,271 – fall, 2016), 60% are Hispanic, 4% are non-Hispanic, 14% are white, and about 19% are international students.

TAMU-K has five colleges: Agriculture, Natural Resources and Human Sciences, Arts and Sciences, Business Administration, Education and Human Performance, Engineering and Graduate Studies, collectively offering 56 undergraduate degree programs. TAMU-K offered its first business courses in 1925 and established the College of Business in 1929 (TAMU-K, n.d.a.). Ethnically, students attending the College of Business Administration (The College) reflect area and university demographics (60% Hispanic, 20% white, 10% African American, and 6% international). The College offers five undergraduate degree programs in business (i.e., accounting, finance, general business, information systems, management, and marketing) and a Master of Business Administration.

Texas A&M University-Kingsville business majors are required to broaden their education by gaining additional skills and global competencies through participation in an ***immersion experience*** (students can choose from internship, study abroad, or faculty/student collaborative research project). Students must first successfully complete the Student Professional Development Program (SPDP) as a prerequisite for the immersion experience. The SPDP and Immersion Experience have been graduation requirements for all College undergraduate majors since 2010. However, they were more routinely enforced starting spring, 2014.

The SPDP was designed and iteratively modified to provide learning experiences which help students develop personal and professional skills – with the end goal of giving students a competitive advantage in the job market and beyond. SPDP has traditionally been instructional and interactive in nature, focusing on development of student skills in these four workshops: Career Planning (becoming a business professional),

Professional Appearance (do's and don'ts of business dress), The Job Campaign (developing your professional profile), and Professional Etiquette (dinner and social opportunity). These workshops are completed in addition to the student's degree plan (not offered for course credit) and originally were designed and taught by The College management faculty. However, faculty turnover and budgetary constraints led The College to re-design the format of its SPDP workshops and outsource some of them (Professional Appearance and Professional Etiquette) to the Office of the Career Services (Career Services). Career Services operates in an umbrella manner at the University level and is not housed or dedicated to The College.

In spring, 2014, University administration restructured Career Services, streamlining its services (e.g., it now offers self-assessment, career planning, major selection, resume and cover letter writing, interviewing, internship, and job search), and hiring additional qualified personnel. All internship and job positions are to be posted by employers on Career Services' website. In fall, 2014, to better align with University Career Services, The College designated one faculty member and one undergraduate adviser to oversee and facilitate The College SPDP and serve as liaisons between The College and University Career Services.

The College redesigned the Job Campaign workshop to add networking aspects – as a result of indirect program assessment, the Dean's Leadership Board feedback, employers' feedback, and alumni survey feedback. SPDP workshops were offered once a month, after class hours (usually early afternoon), and were taught by the designated faculty member (i.e. SPDP Faculty Coordinator). Students had to pay a moderate fee $15-$20 per workshop. The College and University Career Services had to keep the cost of workshops moderately priced because the vast majority of the students attending TAMU-K and The College have very low price elasticity (e.g., approximately 80-85% of the students attending TAMU-K receive some form of financial assistance and are Pell-grant eligible). In addition to completing SPDP within The College, business students are required to register with University Career Services (e.g., create a personal online profile, have an updated resume' on file) and attend the semi-annual University Internship and Career Fair.

Beginning fall, 2016, The College added an on-line self-development component of SPDP (4 courses) which must be completed prior to attending workshops. As a result, undergraduate business students participate in professional self-development through a combination of on-line courses (through Bloomberg/Peregrine Academic Services) and workshops facilitated by College faculty. By applying themselves in the program workshops (Discovering Your Option; Sculpturing Your Value Proposition; Selling Yourself; and Activating Your Plan), business students develop a balanced portfolio which reflects their academic, professional, and career readiness objectives. The evolved SPDP is unique to The College and is a student's unique resource in gaining a competitive advantage over other qualified job candidates. The College focuses workshops on personal development, industry and career knowledge, emotional intelligence, networking, and professional image enhancement. The "Job Campaign," an interactive session with a panel of leaders from a diverse mix of business organizations, concludes the SPDP, which is a collective prerequisite requirement to the immersion experience (i.e. business internship).

DATA AND METHODOLOGY

To better equip undergraduate business students for internship success, a framework was built around a step-wise professional development process (Figure 1). Three essential constructs and phases constitute the framework: (1) Self-Development, (2) On-campus Development, and (3) Applied Development. Figure 1 depicts this framework process map, which illustrates these three constructs in a phase-oriented progression, with individual construct components located below each construct. Students must complete the program in sequence. For example, all of Phase 1 (Self-Development – Career Readiness) must be completed before Phase 2 (On-campus Development – Networking) and Phase 3 (Applied Development – Immersion Experience) can be undertaken. Further, within Phase 1 the four component courses must be taken in sequence, and only upon successful completion of Course 1 may a student advance to Course 2, and so on.

Framing the process in this manner helps students stay on track over the tenure of their undergraduate experience, and facilitates increased preparedness for internships, as part of the immersion experience.

Figure 1: Framework Process Map
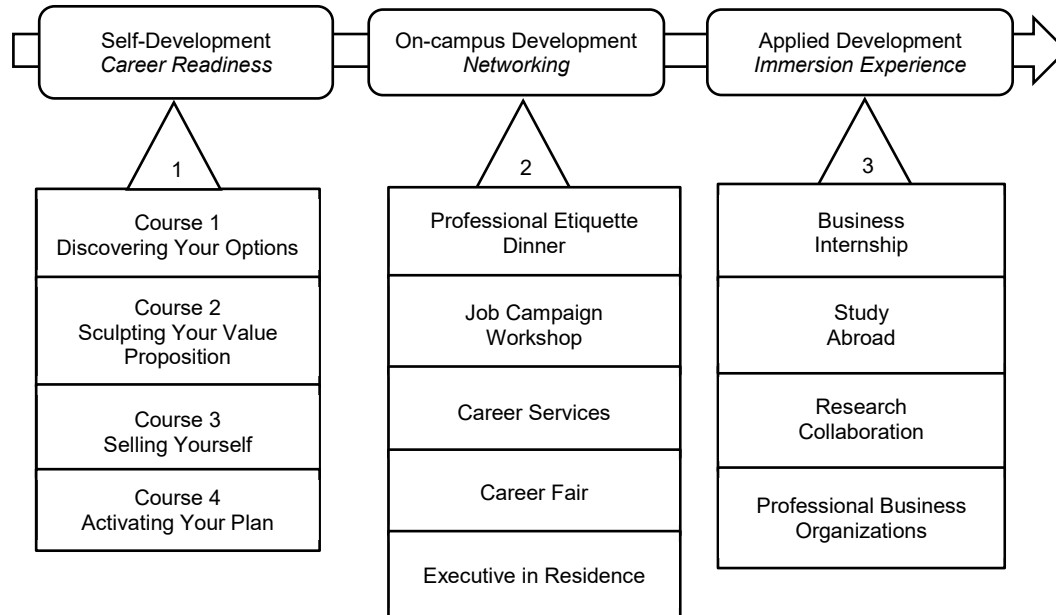
This figure presents the framework of constructs (Self Development, On Campus Development, and Applied Development) and step-wise process map of undergraduate student professional development as antecedent to student business internships. Process numbers (in triangles) indicate the order in which students complete each developmental construct.

Student Orientation and Registration. Prior to beginning the step-wise development process (Figure 1), all students attend an orientation and registration session jointly facilitated by the CBA Faculty Coordinator and Staff Coordinator The purpose of this session is to: orient students to the overall program, get them registered, provide a schedule of dates and deadlines for courses, workshops etc., and motivate them to invest quality effort and dedicate necessary time into the program to achieve results.

Phase 1 Construct: Self-Development – Career Readiness. This construct and phase centers on helping students with self-discovery, and through that, build a foundation and professional profile which they can carry forward throughout their professional lives, beyond their undergraduate experience. Four courses are taken in sequence (Figure 1). Courses are both reflective and formative in nature, helping students discover their strengths and interests, learn how they will add idiosyncratic organizational value, and articulate how to better sell themselves. Course 4 has capstone characteristics in that it leads students through an integration process and provides methodology for formalizing and activating their plan, in accordance with individualized goals.
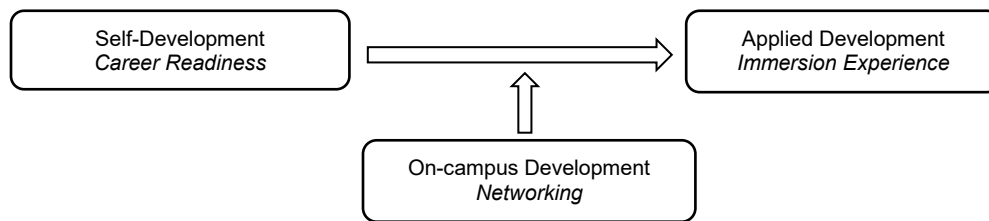
Phase 2 Construct: On-campus Development – Networking. This construct and phase builds upon the foundation laid in Phase 1, through provision of specific on-campus interactive and networking opportunities/experiences with industry leaders, discipline-specific managers, and recruiters. In addition, students participate in practical workshops centered on building professional profiles, professional etiquette, job campaigning, and branding themselves via networking opportunities.

Phase 3 Construct: Applied Development – Immersion Experience. This construct and phase helps students realize the fruits of their program efforts thus far, in practical application. Applied Development is the

culmination of the entire program and thus serves as our internship framework and model criterion construct.

Iterative evaluations of program effectiveness for the time period 2010 to 2016 led to modifications of existing constructs, the addition of a new construct, and repositioning of constructs in the current model (Figure 2), all for the purpose of improving our criterion construct, Applied Development (i.e. business internship success). Figure 2 illustrates the current relationship model of the three constructs depicted in our framework process map (Figure 1) (i.e. Self-Development, On-campus Development, and Applied Development).

Figure 2: Construct Relationship Model

This figure models relationships of the three framework constructs introduced in Figure 1. We determined through the iterative process of program development that On Campus Development positively moderates the relationship between Self Development and Applied Development.

It was understood that On-campus Development, as antecedent construct, had a direct positive relationship with Applied Development. We posited, however, that this relationship could be strengthened by introducing a new construct, Self-development: Career Readiness, as antecedent, and repositioning On-campus Development as a moderator between Self-Development and Applied Development. In combination, adding a new construct, delineating the three constructs more robustly (Figure 1), and arranging the presentation of constructs to students with more specificity (Figure 2), would serve to increase relationship effects on the criterion construct Applied Development. In practical terms, we believed that by introducing networking opportunities (On-campus Development) post self-discovery/self-development, this would improve business internship (Applied Development) success. These construct changes were thus implemented in fall, 2016.

RESULTS

Analysis of AACSB Academic Institutions

In spring, 2017, we reviewed 519 academic institutions and aggregated comparative information/data on internships (requirements and program structure) and career centers (location and structure) (Table 1). As sample, we included academic institutions (public and private) with business schools who are AACSB accredited. Most information was acquired from the AACSB website, supplemented by individual institution websites/homepages. Specifically, Table 1 depicts information gathered on the following internship and career center characteristics: (1) state or private institution, (2) mandatory or optional internship program offered, (3) business internship offered as part of degree plan or stand alone, and (4) career center included within the business school structure or separate from the business school.

Table 1 reports information separately for state and private institutions, in order to facilitate more accurate and relevant comparisons. In aggregate for all institutions reviewed, only 11.2% (58 of 519) require mandatory internships, and for state institutions this number drops to 7% (25 of 354). In aggregate for all institutions surveyed, 72.4% (375 of 519) offer an internship for credit as part of a degree plan, and 36.2% (188 of 519) house a career center within their particular business school.

Table 1: AACSB Academic Institution: Internship Program and Career Center Data

	State Institutions	Private Institutions	All Institutions Combined
Number of Institutions	354 (68% of total)	165 (32% of total)	519
Require Mandatory Internships	25 of 354 (7%)	33 of 165 (20%)	58 of 519 (11.2%)
Have Optional Internships	329 of 354 (93%)	132 of 165 (80%)	461 of 519 (88.8%)
Offer Internship as Part of Degree Plan	269 of 354 (76%)	107 of 165 (65%)	376 of 519 (72.4%)
Offer Internship Outside of Degree Plan	85 of 354 (24%)	58 of 165 (35%)	143 of 519 (27.6%)
Career Center is Part of Business School	138 of 354 (39%)	50 of 165 (30%)	188 of 519 (36.2%)
Separate Career Center	216 of 354 (61%)	115 of 165 (70%)	331 of 519 (63.8%)

This table depicts our research of 519 academic institutions with respect to the following components: (1) state or private institutions; (2) mandatory or optional internship; (3) internship as part of degree plan or stand-alone; and (4) career center as part of business school or separate from business school. Research conducted by the CBA, Texas A&M University – Kingsville.

Texas A&M University Outcomes

As an outcome of the revised SPDP and internship program, students have clearer line of sight between phased constructs and better understand how framework sequencing directly supports and facilitates their professional development, and increases their internship opportunities (i.e., internship selection and successful completion). Phase 1 Construct (Self-development: Career Readiness) serves as the student's indoctrination into the program; the framework and process are introduced in an orientation session led by faculty and staff program coordinators. Initial indicators of program success (Figure 3 and 4) are beginning to show that Phase 2 Construct (On-campus Development: Networking) positively moderates the relationship between the Phase 1 Construct (Self-development: Career Readiness) and the Phase 3 Construct (Applied Development: Immersion Experience). Students are better prepared for networking opportunities availed through the program. They are more confident in communicating their strengths, value proposition, and in selling themselves – which ultimately leads to a more successful internship experience (i.e., landing an internship and successfully completing it).

Specific to internship success, the evolution of our student professional development program (SPDP) has revealed a core prerequisite need, namely that student success and overall program success hinges on following a specified framework and process as antecedent to the internship itself. Stepwise individual student preparation (i.e. following the framework process) better prepares students to secure and successfully complete an internship, and in so doing represent both themselves and their university to the best of their ability.

Through the iterative program changes made over time (2010 – present), it has become increasingly clear that two components are critical to internship program success: (1) student professional development preceding the internship itself, and (2) meeting/exceeding organizational internship needs and objectives. As such, success of our internship program is defined according to these two components. Implementation of the revised internship framework process (Figure 1) and model (Figure 2) has resulted in immediate positive returns, in that internships are increasingly being pursued by students (Figure 3).

Located along the mainline of the Union Pacific and US 77 (designated as future I-69), Kingsville is adjacent to a power corridor that features rail, highway, fiber optic, power transmission and water transportation infrastructure of world-class quality. Corpus Christi International Airport is a 30-minute drive time from Kingsville, the same time to travel from the south side of Corpus Christi to the airport. Kingsville has a pro-business environment supported by local public entities. The Kingsville Enterprise Zone, created in 1999, is an economic development tool that allows the community to partner with the state on local and state tax regulatory benefits.

Many of the College students intern locally with small businesses. The following companies are the most frequent employers of CBA business interns: H-E-B; IBC Bank; First Community Bank; Independent School Districts in Kleberg County and Nueces County; Texas A&M University-Kingsville (CBA provides workforce for Business Office, Department of Marketing and Communication, and Procurement Department); Texas A&M University-Kingsville Foundation and Office of Alumni Relations; Texas A&M College of Pharmacy; Bay Ltd.; Local Chambers of Commerce; Mike Shaw Toyota; Aramark; Corpus Christi Port Authority; and Celanese Corporation.

Figure 3 illustrates internship program percentage growth - measured by number of students completing an internship on an academic yearly basis, with 2013/2014 set as the baseline against which 2014/2015 and the academic years following are compared. In addition to growth in the number of student internships secured and completed, the number and diversity of organizations participating in SPDP and the internship program is also increasing. For example in 2014/2015, 55 students secured and completed a business internship, which is reflected in Figure 3 as an internship program growth of 103.7% (rounded to 104%) over the prior year (2013/2014), which had 27 students completing an internship.

Figure 3: Internship Program Growth
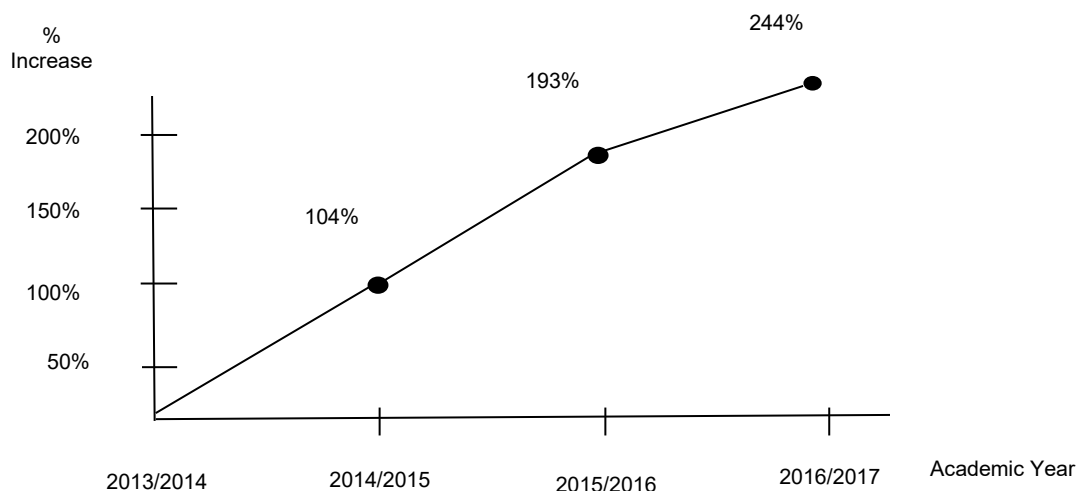
This figure illustrates internship program percentage growth measured by number of students completing an internship on an academic year basis. 2013/2014 is set as the baseline against which 2014/2015 and the academic years following are compared.

The College currently has five student led and faculty sponsored professional business associations and clubs: Accounting Society; Financial Management Association; Association of Information Technology Professionals; Delta Sigma Pi; and Javelina Marketing. In addition, as a result of program success and growth, The College is creating a new student chapter of The Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM). An additional indicator of the step-wise framework and internship program success is that more students have joined and become more engaged in these professional business associations/clubs. As student membership in professional business associations/clubs rises, so does their successful selection and completion of business internships.

Figure 4 depicts student engagement growth, reflected as a percentage of students engaged in (members of) professional business associations/clubs during a given semester, compared to (divided by) BBA degrees awarded at the end of that semester. For example, in 2013/2014, 26 students were engaged in business professional associations, compared to (divided by) 56 students who graduated with BBAs that semester, which represents 46.4% (rounded to 46%). In 2015/2016, 63 students were engaged in business professional associations, compared to (divided by) 88 students who graduated with BBAs that semester, which represents 71.6% (rounded to 72%).

Figure 4: Student Engagement Growth
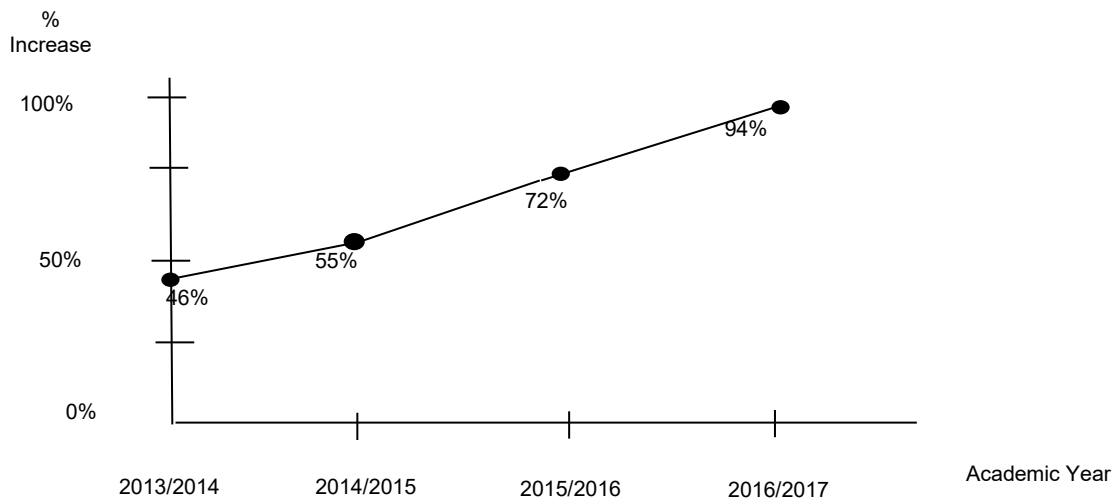
This figure depicts student engagement in business professional associations/clubs as a percentage of BBA degrees awarded. In other words, for all students graduating with a BBA degree, this percentage were engaged in business professional associations/clubs. (Senior Survey)

The SPDP and Internship Program significantly benefit from vested faculty and staff engagement. Having designated faculty (management) and staff (undergraduate adviser) assigned to this program (development, implementation and maintenance) helps streamline and facilitate communication between companies and The College, as well as University Career Services. It also helps reinforce the program framework and step-wise completion process in that the faculty and staff coordinators set clear expectations of all participants, ensure proper reporting, keep lines of communication and feedback channels open, and assist with managing employers' opportunity costs (i.e., offsetting costs by improving business intern skill-sets). We further find that additional value is created in the internship program for all parties, by pre-screening students after their junior year, implementing a well-structured internship project (individual) mentored by a dedicated company representative, and having clear goals and deliverables for all parties.

As a practical example of internship program success and company-specific opportunity cost offset, one of the companies in our program, Bay Ltd., implements 50% of student-intern projects, as facilitated under the mentorship of a dedicated company representative, who is also an adjunct lecturer at The College. Consistent and timely student job search, although improving, remains a challenge for The College, largely due to cultural influences of the surrounding demographic. Current business students and/or recent graduates may turn down a repeat internship, a paid internship or an out-of-town job offer because of the strength of family relationship ties and traditional routines, thus limiting themselves to local professional opportunities only.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

This paper extends a practical framework and model of student professional development which positively influences business internships. Within our study, business internship success is operationalized in both academic institution and student specific terms/metrics. We outlined just how the step-wise framework was created and implemented in our college specific context, and documented the iterative process whereby improvement was attained. The model and step-wise framework consists of three constructs – (1) Self-Development – Career Readiness, (2) On-campus Development – Networking, and (3) Applied Development – Immersion Experience – which was developed and tested over time in practical application, using as sample all undergraduate business students. We have full participation of all undergraduate students because this is a mandatory program, but is not offered for credit hours as part of their degree plan.

Metrics serving as proxies for business internship success indicate overall program success at both the individual student and academic institution levels. For example, the number of students who successfully secured and completed an internship more than tripled over the three year period of this study, from 2013/2014 to 2016/2017. This was further positively influenced by the dramatic increase (46% to 94%) over this same three year time period in the number of students engaged in business professional associations/clubs, relative to the number of BBA degrees awarded during the same timeframe.

Students advance through the program (i.e. framework process) as a cohort, which helps them share learning experiences and personal development stories with one another. This helps them stay on track and keep motivation levels higher on the collective. Practical implications can be viewed from diverse perspectives: student, student family, program, college, university, organization, and community. Certain benefits are self-evident, in providing a practical framework for student professional development. For first-generation college students, however, these benefits may be additionally important for themselves and their families. Resources directed by The College toward creating, modifying, and maintaining this program are paying dividends in the form of improved internship results (increased student completion rate, increase in number of participating organizations, improved student development and preparedness, and increased program visibility in the community).

Organizations likewise benefit from employing graduates whom have had the opportunity to complete this program. Upon graduation, students may be less likely to leave initial employment because they have learned more about themselves as a result of program completion (through self-discovery program components), and may have a greater understanding of how their strengths add specific organizational value. This may have a two-pronged benefit in reduced turnover and increased organizational identity and commitment. Academic institutions may benefit from our experiences and the iterative changes made to this program over time. Using the framework process and construct model as a road map may help other institutions further develop their own programs, and do so in an expedited manner.

Certain study and paper limitations are self-evident. Development of this practical framework for student professional development and business internship success is both formative and reflective in nature, based on particular study idiosyncratic characteristics (e.g. student demographics) and context (e.g. university, college and community demographics). The program on whole thus may not fully generalize to institutions with divergent characteristics and contexts. In these instances however, we contend that specific benefits can be found in certain component constructs, phases and aspects. To assist with comparisons, we examined 519 AACSB accredited academic institutions and aggregated information on internship programs and career centers (Table 1). Future research would benefit from examining this construct model and step-wise framework in other academic contexts, and possibly not limited to business schools only.

The overarching goal of our program, as reflected in this study and paper, is to afford all undergraduate business students with a practical and time-bound framework for their development (self-development, on-campus development, and applied development), and in so doing better prepare them for a successful internship experience, as well as a rewarding professional career of their choosing. We believe others may benefit from our experiences, iterative modifications, and resulting model and framework, as positioned in this paper.

REFERENCES

Clithero, J.B. and L.A. Levenson (1986) "Successful internship requires appropriate interaction between school, firm and student," *Marketing Education*, vol. 5(3), p. 3.

Coco, M. (2000) "Internships: A try before you buy arrangement," *SAM Advanced Management Journal*, vol. 65(2), p. 41-47.

Cook, S.J., A. Stokes and R.S. Parker (2015) "A 20-year examination of the perceptions of business school interns: a longitudinal case study," *Journal of Business Education*, vol. 90(2), p. 103-110.

D'Abate, C.P., M.A. Youndt and K.E. Wenzel (2009) "Making the most of an internship: an empirical study of internship satisfaction," *Academy of Management Learning and Education*, vol. 8, p. 527-539.

Divine, R.L., J.K. Linrud, R.H. Miller and J.H. Wilson (2007) "Required internship programs in marketing: benefits, challenges and determinants of fit," *Marketing Education Review,* vol. 17, p. 45-52.

Dommeyer, C.J., B.L. Gross and D.L. Ackerman (2016) "An exploratory investigation of college students' views of marketing internships," *Journal of Education for Business*, vol. 91(8), p. 412-419.

Dovel, T.D. and Y. Dayan (1982) "The use of experiential learning techniques in marketing education," *A spectrum of contemporary marketing ideas*, edited by J.H. Summery, et al., p. 285-288.

Gauldt, J., J. Reddington and T. Schlagar (2000) "Undergraduate business internships and career success: are they related?" *Journal of Marketing Education*, vol. 17, p. 45-52.

Green, B.P., P. Graybeal and R.L. Madison (2011) "An exploratory study of the effect of professional internships on students' perception of the importance of employment traits," *Journal of Education for Business*, vol. 86(2), p. 100-110.

Henry, L.G., N.Y. Razzouk and H. Hoverland (1988) "Accounting internships: a practical framework," *Journal of Education for Business,* vol. 64, p. 28-31.

Hite, R. and J. Bellizzi (1986) "Student expectations regarding collegiate internship programs in marketing," *Journal of Marketing Education*, fall, p. 48-52.

Johnson, H.G. and W.O. Hancock (1983) "Planning for successful business internship," *Evolving Marketing Horizons*, edited by I. Bergiel, et al., p. 181-187.

Kaplan, R.K. (1994) "The Legal Side of Internship Programs," *Journal of Career Planning & Employment*, vol. 55(1), p.47-49.

Kelley, C.A. (1992) "Educating marketing students in the art of business etiquette." *Journal of Marketing Education*, vol. 14(2), p.34-38.

Kelley, C.A. and C. Bridges (2005) "Introducing professional and career development skills in the marketing curriculum," *Journal of Marketing Education*, vol. 27(3), p. 212-218.

Knouse, S.B., J.T. Tanner and E.W. Harris (1999) "The relation of college internships, college performance, and subsequent job opportunity," *Journal of Employment Counseling*, vol. 36, p. 35-44.

Knouse, S.B. and G. Fontenot (2008) "Benefits of the business college internship: a research review," *Journal of Employment Counseling*, vol. 45, p. 61-66.

Krohn, F.B. (1986) "Time to blow the whistle on internships," *Marketing Educator*, vol. 1(2), p. 1-2.

Lazorchak, S.A. (2000) "Business protocol and etiquette: Preparing students for the global business environment," *Journal of Family and Consumer Sciences,* vol. 92, p. 100-103.

McCarrier, J.T. (1986) "Intern program yields dividends to students, firm," *Marketing News*, July 18, p. 10-11.

McCaskey, P.H. and D. Fedo (1985) "Modern day apprenticeships: marketing the internship program," *Marketing: The Next Decade,* edited by D.M. Klein and A.E. Smith, p. 91-93.

McCorkle, D.E., J.F. Alexander, J. Reardon and N.D. Kling (2003) "Developing self-marketing skills: Are marketing students prepared for the job search?" *Journal of Marketing Education*, vol. 25(3), pp.196-207.

Mood, J., B. Stewart and C. Bolt-Lee (2002) "Showing the skilled business graduate: expanding the till kit," *Business Communication Quarterly*, vol. 65, March, p. 21-36.

Moorman, A.M. (2004) "Legal issues and the supervised internship relationship: Who is responsible for what?" *Journal of Physical Education, Recreation & Dance,* vol. 75(2), p.19-24.

Nevett, T. (1985) "Work experience: the essential ingredient in British programs," *Journal of Marketing Education,* spring, p. 13-18.

O'Briant, E. (2000) "Job-hunting etiquette," *IIE Solutions*. Vol. 32, May, p. 28-32.

Raymond, M.A., D.E. McNabb and C.F. Matthaei (1993) "Preparing graduates for the workforce: The role of business education," *Journal of Education for Business*, vol. 68(4), p.202-206.

Rothman, M. (2007) "Lessons learned: advice to employers from interns," *Journal of Education for Business,* vol. 82(3), p. 140-144.

Swift, C.O. and R. Kent (1999) "Business school internships: Legal concerns." *Journal of Education for Business*, vol. 75(1), p. 23-26.

Swanson, S.R. and C. Tomkovick (2011) "Perspectives from marketing internships providers," *Marketing Education Review*, vol. 21, p. 163-176.

University of Cincinnati Co-op (2016) "Historical Information on Internships," Accessed May 10, 2017, at http://ceas.uc.edu/future_students/Coop.html.

Weible, R. (2010) "Are universities reaping the available benefits internship programs offer?" *Journal of Education for Business*, vol. 85(2), p. 59-63.

Wresch W. and J. Pondell (2015) "Assessing cocurricular impacts on the development of business student professionalism: supporting rites of passage," *Journal of Education for Business*, vol. 90(3), p. 113-118.

BIOGRAPHY

Dr. Natalya (Natasha) Delcoure is a Professor of Finance and Dean at the College of Business Administration, Texas A&M University-Kingsville. Dr. Delcoure's current research interests include international diversification, portfolio analysis, firm capital structure, dividend policy, and issues in business education. She serves as an Editor for *Investment Management and Financial Innovations Journal* and as Associate Editor for the *Journal of Eastern European and Central Asian Research.* She is a Board Member of AACSB International.

Dr. Rusty V. Karst is an Assistant Professor of Management in the College of Business Administration at Texas A&M University-Kingsville. Dr. Karst has published in journals such as *International Business Review* and his current research interests include institutional influence on multinationals, complex systems, SHRM and issues in business education. He is the Faculty Coordinator of the Student Professional Development Program for his college and draws upon two decades of industry leadership and management experience, coupled with his Ph.D. in Management from University of North Texas.

Mrs. Cynthia A. Longoria is an Academic Advisor IV for the College of Business Administration with the Center for Student Success at Texas A&M University-Kingsville. Mrs. Longoria also serves as the Internship Coordinator and Student Professional Development Administrator for the College of Business Administration and is an active member of NACADA and serves as a Business Commissions Mentor.