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A Comparative Study Analyzing Undergraduate Internship Participation and the Impact

on Retention and Timely Degree Completion at a Four-Year, Private, Midwest Institution

by

Stefani Schuette

A Dissertation submitted to the Education Faculty of Lindenwood University

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

Degree of

Doctor of Education

School of Education

A Comparative Study Analyzing Undergraduate Internship Participation and the Impact

on Retention and Timely Degree Completion at a Four-Year, Private, Midwest Institution

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This dissertation has been approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

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at Lindenwood University by the School of Education

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Dr. Robyne Elder, Dissertation Chair   11- 15 - 2019
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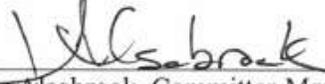
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Dr. Joe Alsobrook, Committee Member   11 - 15 - 2019
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Dr. Sherrie Wisdom, Committee Member   11 - 15 - 2019
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Declaration of Originality

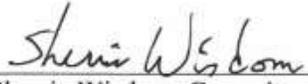I do hereby declare and attest to the fact that this is an original study based solely upon my own scholarly work here at Lindenwood University and that I have not submitted it for any other college or university course or degree here or elsewhere.

Full Legal Name: Stefani Schuette

Signature: _____ Date: 11/15/19

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Abstract

Declining enrollments, rising costs and increasing student debt have caused college administrators, potential students, and outside stakeholders to focus on certain student outcomes, including retention and timely degree completion. Colleges and universities are not only collecting data in these two areas, they are searching for strategies, which might have a positive effect. Research has provided a variety of factors, which contribute to retention and timely degree completion. High-impact practices, such as service learning, student faculty research and internships featured several characteristics that may contribute to retention and timely degree completion. Internships offer several advantages, such as preparation for future careers and skill development. The purpose of this mixed-methods study was to compare undergraduate students who completed internships and those not completing internships to corresponding retention and graduation rates. The quantitative research analyzed the impact of internship participation on retention and timely degree completion. The research question provided insight into the perceptions of internship participants and the connection between their internship experience and retention and timely degree completion.

The statistical analysis found that internship participants are more likely to stay at the institution and to complete their degree. However, the analysis did not prove that internship participation influenced four, five, or six-year graduation rates. The survey of internship participants revealed that students do not view their internship experience as a reason for remaining enrolled at the university or for graduating in four years. Further recommendations for college and university administrators, as well as additional research, were made in regards to internship programs.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Higher education has evolved through centuries, partially due to changes in student demographics and demand. At the time of this writing, colleges and universities face two of their biggest challenges. According to Hanover Research (2018), higher education is experiencing declining enrollments and increasing tuition costs.

With over 4,000 colleges and universities in the United States (Moody, 2018), the pool of prospective students has been declining for the last eight years (Camera, 2019). According to a recent report, spring 2019 college enrollments are down by 300,000 students (Camera, 2019). This is a stark difference from the last 30 years in higher education. Starting in 1970, enrollment in colleges and universities increased 47% by 1983 (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2019, para. 7). The increase in enrollment continued, although not at such dramatic rates, until 2010 (NCES, 2019, para. 2). Due to lower birth rates starting in 2008, experts predicted that enrollment will continue to fall by another 15% between 2025 and 2029 (Barshay, 2019, para. 2).

The decrease in birth rates was not the only reason for declining enrollments. In the last several years, the public started to question the value of higher education. More high school graduates were seeing an advantage to enter the workforce after graduation, especially with a healthy job market and the ability to skip potential student loan debt (Wong, 2016). Employers also started to focus more on the skills potential employees could bring to the job, rather than just the prestige of a college degree (Vander Ark, 2019). There is no denying that college graduates have will earn more in their lifetime than their non-degree counterparts will, but the rising cost of tuition also serves as a deterrent as students consider attending colleges and universities.

Rising costs were a burden to the dream and benefits of earning a college degree. According to Auter (2017), the cost of higher education increased 400% since 1980. In 2018, the average tuition for undergraduate students ranged between $10,230 and $35,830 annually (College Board, 2018). If a student lived on campus, the annual cost increase was between $11,140 and $12,680 (College Board, 2018).

Accompanying increasing tuition costs were costly repercussions for students. The student debt average in the United States tripled since 2005, reaching $1.5 trillion dollars (Hembree, 2018). Furthermore, future salaries no longer outweighed the financial investment required to earn a degree. In "Buried in Debt," Hembree (2018) reported the average student loan debt at $87,500 and average income of $60,000. Accordingly, graduates with student loan debt may question whether the degree was worth the investment (Hoffower, 2019). Increasing student loan debt also caused an increase in loan defaults. According to Miller (2018), students entering college in 2012 had a 10% default rate, but in just a few years, that rate has increase to 16% (para. 3). Furthermore, student loan debt affected the lives of students long after they graduated. Graduates delayed getting married, buying a car, buying a home, and saving for retirement due to student loan debt (Hembree, 2018).

The burden of student loan debt does not just affect those that have completed a degree; it also affects those that do not receive a degree. According to Nadworny and Lombardo (2019), approximately 3.9 million students with student loan debt dropped out between 2014 and 2016 (para. 10). Students must decide between working and school, and employment was often necessary for budgetary reasons. Students with this kind of debt were also three times more likely to default on their student loans than those that

completed a degree (Nadworny & Lombardo, 2019, para. 11). While struggling to pay bills and student loan debt, students were also less likely to try to complete their degrees in the future. For those that defaulted on student loans, they no longer had access to federal student aid, which makes paying for expensive costs even more challenging (Nadworny & Lombardo, 2019). College and university enrollments were already shrinking due to lower birth rates, but it also did not help to add additional barriers to students that might have already finished their degree. Finally, the number of students without a degree could potentially affect the economy. According to Whistle (2019), increasing the number of college graduates had the power to increase wages for all college graduates, lower unemployment, lower poverty rates, and increase tax revenue. Not surprisingly, increases in tuition and student loan debt, and its lasting effects, caused potential students, media, and policymakers to focus on outcomes, including retention and degree completion.

Retention

According to a 2017 report by the Deloitte Center for Higher Education, "The path to graduation is more uncertain then ever: Nearly one-third of undergraduates leave after their first year and many require six years to complete their studies" (Fishman, Ludgate, & Tutak, 2017, para. 1). In 2014, only 30% of students entering college returned for a second year (Fishman et al., 2017). According to Mui and Khimm (2012), students that dropped out of college "have the economic burden of the debt but they do not get the benefit of higher income and higher levels of employment that one gets with a college degree" (para. 4).

While student retention has serious financial consequences for the student, it also affects the institution. According to Raisman (2009), "The churn and burn of continually bringing new students through the front door, and then just watching them go out the back door, was killing college enrollments and individual and institutional futures (para. 2). As a result, institutions were placing increased emphasis on student retention. Matthews (2009) stated, "Improving retention rates is one of the best solutions for reducing cost increases and maintaining revenue streams" (para. 12). Not only does retention maintain revenue, it costs less than recruiting new students. According to Raisman (2009), it could cost thousands of dollars to recruit new students with only some guarantee of student revenue. However, retaining then-current students could result in significant financial benefits for an institution. For example, the cost was an average of $6,000 to recruit a new student (Raisman, 2009), whereas increasing retention by just a few percentage points could result in millions of additional revenue (Swail, 2016). Low retention rates can also potentially affect student recruitment. Organizations publish information on websites to assist families in making decisions about which college or university to attend. U.S. News & World Report (n.d.) published the freshman retention rates of institutions and encouraged families to seek answers if they were considering institutions with low retention rates. The Best Values in School (2014) website noted that higher retention rates were an indication of student satisfaction and graduates were more likely to leave college with less student debt.

Degree Completion

In addition to retaining students, colleges and universities placed increased emphasis on timely degree completion (Cook & Pullaro, 2010). According to Hall,

Smith, and Chia (2008), one of the many challenges colleges and universities faced was not only ensuring students graduated, but do so in a certain amount of time. Witteveen and Attewell (2016) characterized American higher education as widely accessible but with low degree completion (p. 450). Yue and Hart (2017) reported the percentage of undergraduates who persisted to graduation at a four-year institution within four years was 39.4% (p. 24). Minorities experienced an even lower rate of graduation within four years. According to the Nation Center for Education Statistics (2019), only 21% of African American students graduated in four years, and only 32% of Hispanic students. According to Lewin (2014), "Hands down, our best strategy to make college more affordable and a sure way to boost graduation rates over all is to ensure that many more students graduate on time" (para. 6).

Just as with retention, timely degree completion was advantageous to both the student and the institution. Graduating a student equaled additional alumni, which could support institutions by providing additional resources and fundraising opportunities. For students, completing a degree in four years had financial benefits. If an out-of-state student at a public university graduates in four years instead of five, for instance, they have the potential to save approximately $30,000 (Sullivan, 2010).

Internships

The importance of retention and degree completion to both students and institutions of higher education provoked research into a range of supportive measures. For example, Kuh (2008) proposed a collection of high impact practices (HIPs) with benefits that included "enhanced engagement…deep, integrative learning . . . and higher persistence and graduation rates" (Kuh & Kinzie, 2018, para. 1). Each of the high impact

practices identified required student effort, built relationships, created diverse opportunity, provided student feedback, and allowed students to apply what they have learned (O'Neill, 2010, paras. 9-15). Reports established a connection between high impact practices, which included internships, and retention and graduation rates, as well as one of the longstanding purposes of higher education: employability. According to Heyler and Lee (2014),

> The current situation globally is that many new graduates are underemployed and higher education institutions are deploying various measures to increase the employability of their students, such as including more explicit employability focused material within the programmes of study, ranging from embedded or "bolted-on" modules, to ensuring that every student has the opportunity to experience the workplace through real-work projects, work placements, internships and other collaborations with businesses. (pp. 348-349)

According to Stuart (2016),

> College internships, once considered an extra asset in a student's bid for workplace experience and college funds, have today become almost as important as classroom work in helping students successfully "test drive" the world of work and distinguish themselves as the best full-time job prospect. (para. 1)

Additionally, Coco (2000) reported internship programs assisted students with the transition from higher education to the work world and Busteed and Auter (2017) reported graduates who had completed an internship were twice as likely to find a job (para. 7).

The benefits of student internship participation go beyond connecting the classroom to the work world. According to the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE, 2016), employers identified written communication skills, problem-solving skills, and verbal communication skills among the top desirable traits of new hires. Students surveyed about important job related skills also included teamwork and professionalism as top required skills. According to NACE (2018), students that completed internships felt the experience improved their ability to work in a team, their professionalism, and on their oral and written communication skills.

Purpose

The purpose of this mixed-methods study was to compare undergraduate students who completed internships and those not completing internships to corresponding retention and graduation rates. To achieve the purposes of this study, the researcher utilized samples of student data sets from a private, non-profit, Midwestern University to analyze the probability of student retention and timely graduation based on undergraduate internship participation. In addition to this quantitative data, the researcher collected qualitative data through a survey of undergraduate internship participants. The survey was designed to collect information on the perceptions of internship participants, specifically how the experience connected students to faculty, helped them gain job specific skills, and whether students perceived the internship impacted their retention and timely degree completion.

Research Question and Hypotheses

      Hypotheses.

H1: There will be a difference in the proportion of students retained between undergraduates participating in internships and undergraduates not participating in internships at a four-year private institution.

H2: There will be a difference in the proportion of timely degree completion between undergraduates participating in internships and undergraduates not participating in internships at a four-year private institution.

Research question.

RQ1: What are undergraduates' perceptions of the internship experience in regards to retention and timely degree completion?

Rationale

As students of higher education experienced rising tuition costs and declining enrollments, administrators were increasing the focus on retention (Barshay, 2018). As cited in Nadworny (2019), institutions were focusing on retaining students because it was getting harder to find new ones. The increased focus caused researchers to investigate a variety of factors affecting student retention. The factors can be divided into three categories, pre-college, student, and institutional. Pre-college characteristics included high school GPA, test scores, and class rank. Institutional characteristics included class sizes, advising models, and financial aid. Student characteristics included number of credit hours enrolled, GPA, and motivation. One of theories established and still used at the time of this writing is student involvement/student engagement. Astin (1999) established a theory on student involvement and student retention. Astin theorized that the more energy students expended, through a variety of activities, the more likely they would stay enrolled. Students who were more involved would spend more time studying,

more time on campus, and more time interacting with faculty and staff, which builds a

stronger relationship with the institution (Astin, 1999). In addition to Astin's (1984, 1993,

2005, 2012) research, Tinto's (1999) theory attributed student retention to student skills,

characteristics, commitment, intentions, and interaction with the campus community (p.

5). If colleges and universities are able to continuously retain a student, their next focus is

on degree completion.

Retaining students is only one piece of the puzzle. Shrinking enrollments and the

rise in tuition rates also caused colleges and universities to improve completion rates

(Nadworny, 2019). Research on factors related to degree completion were similar to

retention, including GPA, financial aid, class rank, and advising practices. While the

standard measure for degree completion was six years, the rapid increase in tuition and

student loan debt motivated the focus shift to timely degree completion. Researchers

studied a variety of factors related to students completing a degree in four years. The

majority of research concentrated on either pre-college characteristics or academic

characteristics once a student enrolls. Yue and Fu (2017) found a relationship between

timely graduation and several academic factors, including GPA, number of credit hours

enrolled, and summer/winter enrollment (p. 209). While colleges and universities must

understand the factors behind retention and degree completion, they must also focus on

providing an education, which prepares students for future careers.

According to Valbrun (2018), "Many educators have said that the quality of a

college education isn't just about courses completed, but about the kinds of experiences

in which students participate" (para. 11). To this end, the literature included research on a

few of the individual high-impact practices. Yue and Hart (2017), for example, examined

the relationship between service-learning and timely graduation. The literature also included recommendations for additional research related to student engagement, timely degree completion, and relationships associated with all of the high impact practices identified by Kuh (2008).

> While some research has linked individual practices to engagement and learning outcomes, findings from this study question whether those benefits can be directly linked to timely degree completion. Results also indicated that the current consensus about benefits of institution adoption of high-impact practices may be misinformed. (Valbrun, 2018, para. 5)

Accordingly, this study will contribute to the literature on retention and degree completion as it relates to internship participation. The results of this study may also help to inform college and university administrators when making decisions regarding the implementation of internship programs and corresponding requirements.

Definition of Terms

Accreditation: "A review of the quality of higher education institutions and programs. In the United States, accreditation is a major way that students, families, government officials, and the press know that an institution or program provides a quality education" (Council for Higher Education Accreditation [CHEA], 2019, para. 1).

CAMS: An integrated and secure enterprise software that stores all student data, including enrollment, academic, billing, and financial aid information CAMS Enterprise, 2019).

Cohort: For the purposes of this study, the researcher chose to use three cohorts. Each cohort consisted of first time, and full-time freshman enrolled at the research site

beginning in the fall semester. The 2010 through 2012 cohorts were chosen, as all three cohorts were able to report four, five, and six-year graduation rates.

High impact practices: [High-impact practices] share several traits: They demand considerable time and effort, facilitate learning outside of the classroom, require meaningful interactions with faculty and students, encourage collaboration with diverse others, and provide frequent and substantive feedback" (National Survey of Student Engagement [NSSE], 2018, para. 1).

Internship:

A form of experiential learning that integrates knowledge and theory learned in the learned in the classroom, with practical application and skill development in a professional, work setting. Students may earn academic credit, as determined by an educational institution, or there is another connection to a degree-granting educational institution. (Cooperative Education & Internship Association [CEIA], 2015, para. 1)

National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE):

A survey that annually collects information at hundreds of colleges and universities about first-year and senior students' participation in programs and activities that institutions provide for their learning and personal development. The results provide an estimate of how undergraduates spend their time and what they gain from attending college. (NSSE, 2019, para. 2)

Retention: A measure of the rate at which students persist in their educational program at an institution, expressed as a percentage. For four-year institutions, this is the percentage of first-time bachelors (or equivalent) degree-seeking

undergraduates from the previous fall who are again enrolled in the current fall.
(Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System [IPEDS], 2018)

Timely degree completion: For the purpose of this study and according to
research by the Education Advisory Board (Education Advisory Board [EAB], 2016),
timely degree completion is defined as completion of a bachelor's degree in four years.

Summary

"The ultimate accomplishment [of higher education] will be the successful
transition from college to life outside of college" (Busteed, 2016, para. 2). In support of
this perspective, the purpose of the current study was to analyze differences between
undergraduate students who completed internships and those who did not complete
internships to corresponding retention and graduation rates. The quantitative and
qualitative data and information collected aimed to fill a gap in then-current research, as
well as provide college and university administrators with helpful information when
making decisions regarding undergraduate internships. The following chapter reviews the
relevant literature.

Chapter Two: Review of Literature

The previous chapter provided an understanding of the changes in higher education, which culminated into a greater focus on retention, timely degree completion, and internships. At the time of this study, a variety of research existed on the topics of retention, timely degree completion, high-impact practices, and internships. The purpose of this study was to examine the impact of internship participation, a popular high-impact practice, on retention and timely degree completion. The results from this study may provide information helpful to college and university administrators in the decision making process. In addition to understanding the then-current higher education environment, it is also important to understand the existing body of literature. The literature review for this study provides an overview of past and then-current literature related to this study. The sections for retention and timely degree completion include a brief history and a sample of the research, specifically the underlying factors. The high-impact practice and internship sections also include a brief history and a sample of the literature related to the benefits for both.

Retention

A wide variety of factors were used to measure the success of colleges and universities. Institutions with financial stability, large endowments, selective enrollment policies, or accomplished faculty members to name just a few. However, the changing landscape in higher education, with declining enrollments and rising levels of student debt, created new areas of focus. While enrolling students will remain a critical activity, retaining students also gained attention (Crosling, 2017). The IPEDS defined retention as,

a measure of the rate at which students persist in their educational program at an

institution, expressed as a percentage. For four-year institutions, this is the

percentage of first-time bachelors (or equivalent) degree-seeking undergraduates

from the previous fall who are again enrolled in the current fall. (IPEDS, 2018,

para. 21)

According to Millea, Willis, Elder, and Molina (2018), "Increasingly, student success in

college is gauged by retention and graduation rates" (p. 209). If colleges or universities

do not take retention seriously, it can have consequences for both institution and for the

student. If students leave before completing a degree it can cost the institution thousands

of dollars in lost tuition, as well as the expense of recruiting a replacement (Millea,

Willis, Elder, & Molina, 2018). For students, failing to persist to graduation can affect

their lifetime earnings and may leave them with large amounts of student debt (Schuh &

Gansemer-Topf, 2012). Additionally, administrators realized that a longer time for a

student to graduate makes retaining that student more challenging (Nadworny, 2019).

According to the National Student Clearinghouse (2018), one in eight students who start

in the fall will transfer to a different institution.

Colleges and universities use a variety of programs and services to address

retention, especially those correlated with student satisfaction, student perception of

institution value, and institutional effectiveness (Hanover Research, 2010). Supiano

(2009) reported universities like Loyola and Xavier were among the first to create new

positions solely in charge of retention on their campuses. Carter (2017) stated that Purdue

University, Emory University, and Trinity University were creating or revamping models

focused on the retention of second-year students.

History. While many colleges and universities are focusing on retaining students, this has not always been the case. The history of higher education spans more than 300 years, yet concern over retention did not really begin until the 20th century (Berger, Ramirez, & Lyons, 2012). During the early years of higher education, retention was not an issue, because there were so few students attending colleges and universities (Berger et al., 2012).

In the late 1800s and early 1900s enrollments in colleges and universities began to increase. The Morrill Act of 1862 allowed the creation of institutions, which focused on promoting areas such as agriculture, science, and technology, rather than the clergy (Kaufman, n.d.). According to the National Center for Statistics (Snyder, 1993), "The number of bachelor's degrees conferred exhibited substantial increases during the 20th century" (p. 67). This increase in enrollments and students seeking college degrees brought the issue of a very different outlook on retention to the forefront in higher education. According to Berger, Ramirez, and Lyons (2012), "The more selective end of the institutional spectrum began to view a certain amount of attrition as a hallmark of success" (p. 18).

While colleges and universities were not concentrating on retaining students, researchers were beginning to study the causes for student attrition. According to Tinto (2006), researchers used a psychological lens to view retention, attributing the causes for leaving to an individual's attributes, motivation, and skills. Higher education underwent a transformation, which would directly affect administrators' views of retention. The beginning of the 1960s saw a rapid increase in enrollment, establishment of new colleges and universities, and a much more diverse student body (Berger et al., 2012). During this

time, several retention theories were published. According to Berger et al. (2012) by the 1970s, retention theory was firmly established with studies by Tinto and Pascarella and Terenzini.

For the majority of the 20th century, college and university enrollment experienced major growth, but this would change. During the 1980s, enrollment became stagnant and the anticipation of a leveling off of potential students drove college and university administrators to focus on attracting and retaining students (Berger et al., 2012). According to Demetriou and Schmitz-Sciborski (2011), literature on retention theories grew, because institutions made retention a focal point of their strategic plans. Early efforts to address retention were often add-on activities and often fell on student affairs professionals. One of those additions was a first year seminar for college freshmen (Tinto, 2006). The 1990s also brought about new research, which focused on the retention of ethnic students and those from disadvantaged backgrounds (Demetriou & Schmitz-Sciborski, 2011).

At the time of this writing, retention was a major issue for colleges and universities, which drew the interest of not just administrators, but also outside stakeholders. According to Berger et al. (2012), retention was a major policy issue entrenched in higher education policy and was a key indicator of college and university success. The importance placed on retention stemmed from many reasons, including the financial burden placed on students, increased competition within higher education, and an increasingly diverse student body (Berger et al., 2012). One of the challenges was the college environment, both academic and social, can seem foreign for many students (Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, & Whitt, 2005). The changing demographics of incoming students

also challenged administrators in higher education (Crosling, 2017). According to

Crosling (2017), "Currently in the context of diverse student cohorts, higher education

institutions are seen to share responsibility for their study persistence, academic success,

and study completion" (p. 1). Accordingly, then-current retention research shifted to

focus not just on retention of all students, but identifying different groups within the

student body and studying the specific reasons for student dropout within those groups

(Tinto, 2006). The next section will examine three major retention theories.

   Theories. Tinto published his first book on student retention in 1987. *Leaving*

College was a study conducted by Tinto using data from the National Longitudinal

Survey, specifically the high school graduating class of 1972 (Tinto, 1987). Tinto's

(1987) theory used the works of social anthropologist Arnold Van Gennep and

sociologist Emile Durkheim, contributing student departure to interaction with the

college community, among others as a foundation (as cited in Morrison & Silverman,

2012). The National Longitudinal Survey showed that 41 out of every 100 students from

the 1972 cohort would leave the higher education system without obtaining a degree

(Tinto, 1987). When departure was examined by ethnicity and gender, researchers

observed higher rates for specific student populations. For example, the Hispanic

population had a 64.6% dropout rate and the African American population had a 54.5%

dropout rate (Tinto, 1987). Tinto theorized several reasons for these departures.

   While Tinto (1987) detailed that certain student attributes and the student's

commitment to higher education were certainly a factor in student departure, he also

theorized how institutional actions could affect retention rates. According to Tinto

(1987), "An institution's capacity to retain students is directly related to its ability to

reach out and make contact with students and integrate them into the social and intellectual fabric of institutional life" (p. 180). Colleges and universities that did not make students feel like part of a campus community were more likely to lose students. Interactions with faculty, staff, students, and alumni, etc., were effective both formally and informally. Tinto (1987) proposed that retaining students was less dependent on formal processes than it was orienting students, which helped them to find activities that helped them interact with the campus. Tinto (2017) also emphasized the importance of creating an environment in which there was no doubt that the institution was there to serve the students.

One of the most important ways administrators could demonstrate commitment to learning was by creating an incredible learning experience for students. According to Tinto (1999), "Students who are actively involved in learning activities and spend more time on task, especially with others, are more likely to learn and in turn, more likely to stay" (p. 6). According to Tinto (2017), institutions must clearly demonstrate how courses connect to future courses, as well as how they are relevant to future careers. Experiences outside the classroom are also beneficial. According to Morrison and Silverman (2012), interactions outside the classroom with faculty and staff, helped students align their beliefs and values with those of the college or university, making them less likely to leave. Tinto (2017) stated that colleges and universities must ensure that informal interactions, such as advising, which were relevant to the then-current and future job market. Earlier, Tinto (1987) proposed that even institutions fully committed to study learning could lose students who did not feel the academic programs were a match to their skills and abilities.

Astin's (1984, 1993, 2005, 2012) student involvement theory, which focused on the impact of the campus environment, expanded Tinto's theory of retention. According to Morisson and Silverman (2012), Astin's (1984, 1993, 2005, 2012) original theories used personal factors, such as past academic grades, study habits, parent's education, and extracurricular activities, as well as experiential factors when entering college, like grades, marital status, and residency as a basis. In an article published in 1984, Astin expanded on some of these factors to develop the student involvement theory. According to Morrison and Silverman (2012), Astin theorized that students who were more involved in the academic and social life of the institution were more likely to persist. Astin (1984) developed his theory based on psychoanalysis and classical learning theory to help guide future research regarding the effect of environmental influences on student development. The portion of Astin's (1984, 1993, 2005, 2012) theory focused on student involvement is comparable to Tinto's theory, with some differences. According to Astin (1999), "The theory of student involvement argues that a particular curriculum, to achieve the effects intended, must elicit sufficient student effort and investment of energy to bring about the desired learning and development" (p. 522). While Tinto focused on how a student interacts with the campus community, Astin focused on the effort a student puts forth in participating in academic and social activities.

In 1993, Astin conducted a study of more than 200 colleges and universities and 25 thousand students who entered as freshman in 1985. This study included student data, as well as student questionnaires, which helped assess the student perspective of the effects of involvement (Astin, 1993). Astin's (1993) study showed that the amount of time a student spent studying had the largest impact on retention, graduating with honors,

enrollment in graduate school, and a number of other student success factors. According to Astin (1999), college and university administrators must consider the processes and policies that are put into place and these could affect how students are spending their time.

Time spent studying was not the only factor affecting student retention. The amount of time students spent with peers and the amount of faculty interaction were also important for student involvement (Astin, 1993). The more time students spent interacting with peers, through fraternities and sororities and other student organizations, the more likely they were to stay at the institution (Astin, 1999). Besides interacting with fellow students, engagement with faculty, specifically outside the classroom, had a positive effect on student satisfaction, GPA, and other student success measures (Astin, 1993). The previous section focused on the retention theory foundation created by Astin and Tinto; the next section will focus on the then-current research on retention.

Research. Higher education is an increasingly competitive industry, and a variety of measures are used to gauge institutional success. According to Millea et al. (2018), "retention and graduation rates have become key metrics for assessing progress and success for colleges and universities" (p. 309). The increased focus on retention, as well as the increasing cost of losing students, led researchers to seek solutions to this issue (Millea et al., 2018). Researchers examined a number of factors, which might lead a student to leave or transfer, but they also analyzed factors that might predict a student's retention. ACT scores and GPA have a positive impact on student success and retention past the first year (Millea et al., 2018; Westrick, Le, Robbins, Radunzel, & Schmidt, 2015). Using over 180 thousand students who took the ACT and entered college between

2000 and 2016, the researchers found a positive correlation between ACT scores, GPA, and first to second year retention, as well as second-to-third year retention (Westrick et al., 2015). In 2014, the Education Advisory Board reported that 45% of students that dropped out after the first year had between a 2.0 and 3.0 GPA (Tyson, 2014). Researchers felt it was important to examine the correlation of other factors, beyond GPA and test scores, which might help colleges and universities identify students at risk for dropping out or transferring.

Researchers in 2004 examined GPA and grades, as well as eight other factors, including gender, smoking, drinking, mental health, and several more (Deberard, Spielmans, & Julka, 2004). This study found a correlation between nine of the 10 factors and cumulative GPA. Only low high school GPA, however, was a factor for retention after the first year (Debrard, Spielmans, & Julka, 2004). According to a 2011 study, high school GPA was the strongest predictor of retention (Crockett, Heffron, & Schneider, 2012). Students with lower than 3.0 high school GPA had a 55% retention rate compared to students with a 3.75 GPA or higher at 87% (Crockett et al., 2011, p. 5). This study also reported ACT scores as the second highest predictor (Crockett et al., 2011). A separate study used grades from the first term transcript, previous schooling, and birth year as predictors (Aulck, Velagapudi, Blumenstock, & West, 2017). The most impactful factors for predicting student retention were grades in English, Psychology, Chemistry and Math Courses, the year in which they enrolled, and their birth year (Aulck et al., 2017). A surprising result was a strong correlation between retention and the year enrolled. The institution was less likely to retain students who enrolled after 1998, regardless of other factors (Aulck et al., 2017). In addition to GPA, changing majors can have an effect on

student retention. According to a 2012 study, students who were considered undeclared at the beginning of the year were more likely to be retained if they declared a major by the second term, by almost 9% (Foraker, 2012, p. 8).

Non-academic factors can also influence student retention. In 2004, researchers found that living on campus made a student more likely to be retained (Dowd, 2004). According to a 2011 study, students who lived on campus were more likely to enroll in their second year (Schudde, 2011). The positive impact of campus residency was limited to students with moderate to high family income, whereas students with a low family income were still less likely to be retained (Schudde, 2011). According to Schudde (2011), low-income students were less likely to engage and benefit from on campus activities.

Researchers have looked at financial predictors for retention. According to Dowd (2004), income was not a significant predictor of persistence, except when taking race and gender into consideration. In a 2006 study, however, first-generation students with a family income of $34,999 or lower were 72% more likely to leave their institution than students with a family income of $50,000 or more (Ishitani, 2006, p. 873). This same study also reported a negative correlation between increased work hours and persistence (Dowd, 2004). While longer works hours had a negative impact on retention, work-study positions can have a positive impact. According to Ishitani (2006), first-generation students were 41% less likely to depart after their first year if they participated in work-study. Ishitani's study was limited to retention of first-year students.

Some researchers also examined institutional factors affecting retention. An institution's ability to provide financial aid funding, provide students' academic support,

maintain physical facilities, and create small class sizes can affect the number of students who will be retained (Lau, 2003; Millea et al., 2018). Institutions have to be purposeful in the aid and support which they provide students, as well as the allocation of finances. According to Gansemer-Topf and Schuh (2006), "If improving persistence and graduation rates is an institutional goal, then securing gifts and grants to enhance scholarships, provide resources to improve instruction, or lower student-faculty ratios is warranted" (p. 636).

The ability of an institution to provide financial aid can also influence student retention. According to Crockett, Heffron, and Schneider (2011), institutions that can meet between 55% and 60% of students financial aid needs were more likely to retain those students. It is important to note this impact is only significant to a certain point. If students' aid increase from 30% to 55% of their need, they are 26% more likely to be retained. Going from 55% to 75%, however, only resulted in a 4% increase (Crockett et al., 2011). For first-generation students, receiving grants made the student 37% less likely to leave an institution after the first year (Dowd, 2004). In a 2001 study, increasing a student's scholarship by $1,000 resulted in a 26.4% increase in likelihood to re-enroll (Singell, 2001, p. 23). Merit and athletic aid can also predict whether a student will be retained (Millea et al., 2018). Merit aid, even in small amounts, can have a large impact on student retention, according to a 2016 study by Olbrecht, Romano, and Teigen. According to the Education Advisory Board (2016), meeting students' financial need, as well as waiving application fees, and loss of scholarship can also affect student retention.

The majority of literature focused on retention of freshman and sophomore students. According to Hunt, Boyd, Gast, Mitchell, and Wilson (2012), "Students who

withdraw from an institution of higher education during a semester of their senior year are a phenomenon that has not received published attention" (p. 737). The study conducted by Hunt et al. (2012) focused on only seniors leaving during their senior year. A variety of reasons were found to cause this kind of attrition, including family issues, stress and anxiety, social involvement, off-campus employment, and upper level advising.

Retention continues to gain importance for students and parents, primarily because it can affect the success and financial stability of both. This section provided an overview of the theories and research available on retention. While being able to retain students is important, it leads to another measure of student success, degree completion. If colleges and universities only strive to understand the reasons for retention, but not the factors that impact getting the students across the finish line, they are solving only half of the puzzle. The following section provides a brief history and overview of the literature on timely degree completion.

Timely Degree Completion

If colleges and universities are able to continuously retain students, degree completion is a natural counterpart. According to a report by the Department of Education (2017), the overall degree completion rate, for the 2007-2011 cohorts, was 61.6% (p. 7). Research on factors related to degree completion is similar to retention, including GPA, financial aid, class rank, and advising practices. While the standard measure for degree completion was six years, the rapid increase in tuition and student loan debt, the focus shifted to timely degree completion. The Department of Education (2017) reported that only 39.3% of student graduated within four years. Researchers

studied a variety of factors related to students completing a degree in four years. The majority of research concentrated on either pre-college characteristics or academic characteristics once a student enrolls. Yue and Fu (2017) found a relationship between timely graduation and several academic factors, including GPA, number of credit hours enrolled, and summer/winter enrollment (p. 209). While researchers studied a variety of factors affecting retention and timely degree completion, some researchers used that research to develop specific initiatives colleges and universities could implement to improve these two outcomes.

History. Utilizing graduation rates as a measure of success was still new at the time of this writing, as was colleges and universities reporting those rates. According to Cook and Pullaro (2010), it was not until 1985 that colleges and universities started collecting graduation rates on a national level. The data that does exist before 1985 illustrates a decline in degree completion rates since the 1970s. According to Bound, Lovenheim, and Turner (2010), while higher education had seen an increase in enrollment, the increase in degree completion rates was not commiserate. The collection of degree completion rates originated for different purposes than those at the time of this writing. The National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) began to collect this data to compare student athletes and the student body on an academic basis (Cook & Pullaro, 2010). Within just a few years, the federal government built on the foundation established by the NCAA. The IPEDS, created in 1993, did not begin collecting graduation rate data from institutions until the 1997-1998 school year (Long, 2018). In 1990, the United States Congress passed the *Student Right-to-Know and Campus Security Act*, which required higher education institutions to publicly report their six-year graduation rates

(Astin, 2005). The legislation included a way to make colleges and universities accountable for submitting this data. In order for institutions to qualify for Title IV funds, they must submit reports to the Secretary of Education, including degree completion rates (Cook & Pullaro, 2010).

The new legislation requiring colleges and universities to report specific data caused related higher education organizations to collect similar data. A result of this legislation was the establishment of the IPEDS in 1985-86 (Aliyvea, Cody, & Low, 2018). Degree completion rates were not originally part of the data collected. IPEDS did not begin collecting graduation data until the *Student Right-to-Know and Campus Security Act* (Aliyvea et al., 2018). Organizations created several more databases for graduation rates over the years. The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2018-2019) also has the Beginning Postsecondary Students database and the National Longitudinal High School and Beyond database. The National Student Clearinghouse collected this data from participating institutions (Cook & Pullaro, 2010). The degree completion data collected in the last 27 mostly focused on six and eight-year graduation rates. Changes in higher education, however, pushed both internal and external constituents to focus specifically on completing a degree in four years.

Time to degree. The researcher found very little historical data on the average length of a college degree before the 1990s. According to the United States Census Bureau (Suchan, Perry, Fitzsimmons, Juhn, Tait, & Brewer, 2007), just under one in 20 adults (ages 25 and older) completed four years of college in 1940, whereas one in four adults completed at least four years in 2000. According to the National Student Clearinghouse (2018), on time graduation for traditional undergraduate students was

within four years. Some researchers focused on time-to-degree rather than graduation rates. In 1995, Volkwein and Lorang categorized students who took longer than four years to complete as extenders. Varieties of methods also existed for measuring timely degree completion. According to Shapiro et al. (2016), time-to-degree can be measured using elapsed time, from initial enrollment to degree attainment. This definition did not differentiate between enrolled time and stop-out time, which may account for a large number of students who did not complete degrees within six years (Yue & Fu, 2014).

Another method researchers and institutions used to define time-to-degree was measuring the time enrolled. Shapiro et al. (2016) defined time enrolled as the number of weeks enrolled equivalent to an academic year. Yue and Fu (2017) defined time-to-degree differently, using elapsed time, rather than enrolled time, allowing time-to-degree to be measured among various institutions rather than just one (p. 185). This study focused on time-to-degree rather than just graduation rates.

In addition to an increased focus on completing a degree in four years, changes in higher education over the last 20 years also brought increased focus on student debt. According to the Center for Online Education (2019), concern over student loan debt started in the 1980s. However, it was not until the 1900s that data supported the concern. In 1993, the average debt of a bachelor's degree student was $9,000; however, in 1998, i have continued to increase over the years, and according to Friedman (2019), the collective student debt total was over $1 trillion, with 44 million borrowers. In 2017, the student debt average was $28,650 (Friedman, 2019).

The rise in student debt was partially due to rises in tuition. The increase in tuition, incidentally, started about the same time as the increase in student debt.

According to Maldonado (2018), a four-year degree in 1989 averaged $26,120 ($52,982

with inflation), but by 2015-2016 the same four-year degree was $104,480. At a public

university, the average cost per year was $19,000, while at a private university it was

nearly $40,000 (Maldonado, 2018). The value of a college degree was still substantial,

workers with bachelor's degrees earned on average $461 more per week than high school

graduates (Torpey, 2018). The value, however, was less than it was 10 years ago

(Hoffower, 2018). The financial data from the last 20 years made completing a degree in

a timely fashion even more critical, especially considering fewer than 40% completed

degrees in four years (Education Advisory Board, 2019).

On a national level, the push for timely degree completion came in 2013.

President Barak Obama announced the public would have access to a detailed framework

of measurements, including completion rates. (National Association of Independent

Colleges and Universities [NAICU], 2016). The original intention behind the College

Scorecard was to provide information to help families and students, in order to make

informed decisions (NAICU, 2016). The Department of Education continued to update

the data included in the scorecard, although it received criticism when it removed median

rates from the comparison information (NAICU, 2016).

While the federal government made some strides in compiling information, the

biggest initiatives for timely degree completion came from the state level. According to

Yue and Hart (2017), several states started funding initiatives, based on measurable

outcomes; specifically improved degree completion rates. California was one of the many

states that addressed issues on a state level. In 2006, the California Postsecondary

Education Commission published a report that examined specific performance measures

designed to hold higher education institutions accountable. According to this report, "It is critically important to examine how various student populations are progressing toward timely graduation so that policy or program measures can be implement to assist students falling behind in completing their education" (p. 3). The study researched both four and five-year graduation rates and found that 65% of students that maintained a full class load for the first three years graduated in four years, compared to only 46% of students that only took a full course load for the first year (California Postsecondary Education Commission, 2006). Legislation was passed in 2019, which mandated that all students receiving the Cal grant be notified of timely degree completion rates for all California state schools (Tropio, 2019). The reason for this legislation was that students would only be eligible to receive the Cal grant for four academic years (Tropio, 2019).

According to Walters (2012), political pressure from state governments more effectively drives change (p. 35). Experts like Walters felt the state level was the best place to address accountability. Some states used performance-based funding to reward colleges and universities for improved graduation rates. Tennessee used graduation data to implement performance-based funding in 2010 (Walters, 2012). Indiana placed financial pressure on the students with a regulation which required that students complete at least 24 credit hours per year for their aid to be renewed and to be eligible for additional funds (Marcus, 2013). According to Marcus (2013), West Virginia had a similar policy, but required students to complete a minimum of 30 credit hours per year. Many policymakers and organizations focused purely on graduation rates, while others focused on improving timely degree completion. Missouri passed legislation in June 2016 for the "15 to Finish" initiative (Missouri Department of Higher Education, 2019). The

new legislation called for the Missouri Department of Education to develop policies to

promote timely degree completion (Missouri Department of Higher Education, 2019).

Timely Degree Completion Factors/Predictors

      Student characteristics. Researchers studied several characteristics that might

affect or predict a student's time-to-degree. Astin (2005) attributed degree completion

rates to the differences of student characteristics upon entry into a college or university.

Astin and Oseguera (2012) found a correlation between timely degree completion and

high school grades, as well as family affluence and education. Astin and Oseguera (2012)

also noted that standardized admissions tests had little to no effect on degree completion

chances. The Signature Report, published by the National Student Clearinghouse (2016),

analyzed the difference in timely degree completion based on gender, race/ethnicity and

age (Shapiro et al., 2016). Their data showed that women completed their degrees more

quickly than men did. African American students were 59% less likely to graduate within

four years, and Hispanic students were 59% less likely to complete degrees in a timely

manner (Ishitani, 2006). However, when examining smaller subsections, STEM fields

for example, contradicted the National Student Clearinghouse data. Gayles and Ampaw

(2014) studied degree completion in STEM fields and found that women were less likely

to graduate within six years compared to their male counterparts. First Generation

students were less likely to complete a degree in four years by 51%, compared to students

whose parents attended college (Ishitani, 2006).

      Other researchers looked outside demographics for factors that might affect time-

to-degree. In 2005, Astin broke freshman characteristics into three categories: academic,

demographic, and personal. Astin (2005) further explained that factors, such as SAT

scores, foreign language study, parental education level, and emotional health can be used to predict how quickly students will complete their degrees. However, researchers Bound et al. (2010) found test scores predicted time-to-degree, but changes in student demographics were not a factor. Oseguera (2005) found a correlation between high school grades and test scores, although the effect was higher for White students than other ethnicities. Researchers found a correlation between students that completed college credits before enrolling full-time and timely degree completion (DesJardins, Ahlburg, & McCall, 2002). While some research focused on specific pre-college characteristics, others focused on factors during a student's enrollment. Another set of researchers, Yue and Fu (2017), reported the importance of the college experience and the interaction between students and institutions, but emphasized the need to understand the influence of academic preparation and socio-economic background (p. 186).

The study conducted by Yue and Fu (2017) examined degree completion rates based on major choice, enrollment, and academic performance. This study reported a strong relationship between timely degree attainment and academic performance. Similarly, a 2015 publication by the University of California on advising strategies reported that full academic loads — students carrying at least 15 credit hours per term — potentially improve students' time-to-degree. The publication also reported academic major variables and summer/winter enrollment affected time-to-degree. According to Ishitani (2006), students that remained continuously enrolled, with no stop-outs, were 11 times more likely to graduate in four years.

Researchers also examined specific academic factors on a deeper level. While Yue and Fu (2017) reported cumulative GPA as an indicator, other researchers used this

information as a foundation to look more closely at the relationship between GPA and timely degree completion. Gershenfeld, Ward Hood, and Zhan (2016) examined the specific effects of first-semester GPA on graduation rates. This study reported a relationship between first-term GPA and degree completion and identified an at-risk zone for students. These researchers were not, however, able to determine which factors contributed to a lower GPA.

Researchers also studied the relationship between academic majors and timely degree completion. In 2012, Foraker conducted a study on the relationship between changing majors and time-to-degree. The results showed a correlation between changing majors after the second year and longer time to graduate. A 2010 study showed that students with a high interest-major congruence, those that were consistent with their major and enthusiastic about coursework, were more likely to complete a degree in four years (Allen & Robbins, 2010).

Financial resources also affected timely degree completion. According to Letkiewicz et al. (2014), students under financial stress were less likely to graduate in four years. Students with low family incomes were also less likely to graduate in four years. According to Ishitani (2006), students with a family income less than $19,000, or between $19,001 and $34,999, were 41% less likely to graduate in four years. However, Dowd's (2004) study found that scholarship packages given at entrance, including institutional, state, and federal aid, did not affect timely degree completion.

Campus environment. While many studies considered individual student characteristics that affected time-to-degree, others focused on the institutions. Letkiewicz et al. (2014) examined the effect of personal financial characteristics, as well as

institutional environment. The results of their study showed student engagement on campus, because of either residency or work placement, had a strong relationship to time-to-degree. According to Letkiewicz et al. (2014), students that lived on campus were more likely to complete a degree in four years. Living on campus enabled students to be more engaged which led to an increased likelihood of timely degree completion (Oseguera, 2005). While studies found benefits, campus work placement may also have negative effects. Bound et al. (2010) established a relationship between increased hours students worked to help finance their education and increased length of degree completion.

Other institutional factors can affect students' degree completion. In 2014, a study of undergraduate students in Texas found a positive correlation between timely degree completion and student-to-faculty ratio (Cullinane & Lincove, 2014). According to the Education Advisory Board (2016), a lack of course seat availability was a barrier to timely degree completion. In addition, time spent with academic advisors and the visibility of an institution's commitment to timely degree completion was a factor (Education Advisory Board, 2019). According to Oseguera (2004), larger institutions had a negative effect on timely degree completion, while selective institutions had a positive impact. Additionally, students enrolled at private institutions were twice as likely to graduate in four years (Ishitani, 2006). Tuition rates can also influence timely degree completion rates (Dowd, 2004).

This section reviewed the history and development of timely degree completion and reviewed research factors that affected four-year graduation rates. Studies showed a correlation between high impact practices (HIPs) and increases in retention and timely

degree completion. Tinto (1987, 1999, 2006, 2017) and Astin's (1984, 1993, 2005, 2012) theories served as a foundation for the identification of high-impact practices. The researcher felt it was important to create a separate section on high-impact practices to address the body of literature that existed on the contributing factors and benefits of these experiences. The next section provides a brief history and an overview of the research regarding high-impact practices.

High Impact Practices

History. As discussed earlier, Astin (1984) and Tinto (1999) developed student engagement theories, which led to student success. A variety of methods were used to measure college student success. According to Kuh (2008), "Conventionally, educational research has tended to report college student success . . . in terms of access retention, graduation and sometimes grade point average" (p. 2). However, some researchers felt these were incomplete measurements. As Kuh (2008) explained,

> In this context, the long-term college success question encompasses not only whether students have earned a degree, but also whether graduates are in fact achieving the level of preparation . . . that will enable them to both thrive and contribute in a fast-changing economy and in turbulent, highly demanding global, societal, and often personal contexts. (p. 2)

Kuh (2008) identified a set of practices that not only supported retention and graduation, but also student learning outcomes. The practices included first-year seminars and experiences, common intellectual experiences, learning communities, writing-intensive courses, collaborative assignments and projects, undergraduate research, diversity/global

learning, service learning, internships, and capstone courses. Definitions for each of these

practices are included in Table 1.

Table 1

High Impact Practices (HIPs) and Definitions

High Impact Practice	Definition
First-year Seminars and Experiences	Many schools now build into the curriculum first-year seminars or other programs that bring small groups of students together with faculty or staff on a regular basis.
Common Intellectual Experiences	A set of required common courses or a vertically organized general education program that includes advanced integrative studies and/or required participation
Learning Communities	The key goals for learning communities are to encourage integration of learning across courses and to involve students with big questions that matter beyond the classroom.
Writing-Intensive Courses	These courses emphasize writing at all levels of instruction and across the curriculum, including final year projects.

Table 1. Continued.

Collaborative Assignments and Projects	Collaborative learning combines two key goals: learning to work and solve problems in the company of others, and sharpening one's own understanding by listening seriously to the insights of others, especially those with different backgrounds and life experiences
Undergraduate Research	The goals is to involve students with actively contested questions, empirical observation, cutting-edge technologies, and sense of excitement that comes from working to answer important questions.
Diversity/Global Learning	Many colleges and universities now emphasize courses and programs that help students explore cultures, life experiences, and worldviews different from their own.
Service Learning	Field-based "experiential learning" with community partners is an instructional strategy and often a require part of the course.
Internships	The idea is to provide students with direct experience in a work setting – usually

	related to their career interests-and to give them the benefit of supervision and coaching from professionals in the field.
Capstone Courses and Projects	Whether they're called "senior capstones" or some other name, these culminating experiences require students nearing the end of their college years to create a project of some sort that integrates and applies what they've learned.

Note. Adapted from "High-Impact Practices: What They Are, Who Has Access To Them, and Why They Matter," by G.D. Kuh, 2008, Association of American Colleges and Universities, p. 8.

Each of these practices had several characteristics in common; each one required a considerable amount of time and effort, facilitated learning outside the classroom, required frequent and meaningful interactions between faculty and students, exposed students to a diverse population, encouraged collaboration, and required substantive feedback (Kuh, 2008). After the publication of these practices, colleges and universities either began to consider or began redesigning programs, based on high impact practices and the student experience (Finley & McNair, 2013).

The reach of high impact practices continued to spread, especially into assessment and accreditation. The NSSE was established in 1999 (NSSE, 2018). According to the NSSE website, over 1,600 colleges and universities participated in The College Student Report and over six million students participated since 2000 (NSSE, 2018). This report gathered data from first-year and senior undergraduate students about their participation in activities their colleges or universities provided for learning and personal development

(NSSE, 2018). In 2013, NSSE adopted an updated survey, including breaking out high impact practices into its own section (NSSE, 2018). According to the 2018 survey, 49% of first-year students participated in at least one high impact practice and 63% of senior undergraduates participated in at least two high-impact practices (NSSE, 2018). Other important findings included students studying biological or physical sciences being more likely to participate in research with a faculty member, while those in education and social sciences were more likely to participate in service learning (NSSE, 2018). The report also noted that participation in high-impact practices did not vary by gender, but variations still existed for students of color, specifically in the areas of study abroad, internships, and research with faculty (NSSE, 2018).

In addition to helping colleges and universities assess effective student engagement practices, accrediting agencies were also measuring programs by similar standards. Accreditation was important to institutions for a variety of reasons, including federal and state funding and institutional reputation (CHEA, 2018). In the United States, higher education institutions were accredited by reviewing the quality of programs at the institution (CHEA, 2018). Several criteria were established by these agencies, and some criteria had similar characteristics to high impact practices. For example, the Higher Learning Commission (HLC, 2018) had five criteria; the third was Teaching and Learning. One of the core components for this criterion was defined as "demonstrates that the exercise of intellectual inquiry and the acquisition, application, and integration of broad learning and skills are integral to is educational programs" (Higher Learning Commission [HLC], 2018, para. 39). One of the requirements in the third criterion was that the institution demonstrated "the education offered by the institution recognizes the

human and cultural diversity of the world in which students live and work" (Midwestern University, 2018, p. 59). Criterion three also required institutions to demonstrate "the faculty and students contribute to scholarship, creative work, and the discovery of knowledge to the extent appropriate to their program and the institution's mission" (Midwest University, 2018, p. 59).

Colleges and universities seek accreditation, not only as an institution, but also for individual degree programs. For example, The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) emphasized that, "quality business education cannot be achieved when either academic or professional engagement is absent, or when they do not intersect in meaningful ways" (AACSB, 2013, p. 2). The use of high impact practices as accreditation evidence had even entered the classroom. A syllabus for an Assessment, Accreditation, and Accountability course at Arkansas State University (n.d.) listed an entire section devoted to high impact practices. The implementation of high impact practices affected students, as well as the institution.

After Kuh (2008) established high impact practices and the initial results, researchers continued to analyze their effect on student learning outcomes. In 2014, Kilgo, Ezell Sheets, and Pascarella sought to understand the relationship between high impact practices and liberal educational outcomes. The study included 17 institutions from across the country, although it was noted that liberal arts institutions were overrepresented in the study (Kilgo, Ezell Sheets, & Pascarella, 2014). Only two of the high impact practices, active and collaborative learning and undergraduate research, related positively to all of the liberal educational outcomes (Kilgo et al., 2014). Several practices, such as study abroad and capstone courses were positively linked to lifelong

learning (Kilgo et al., 2014). The researchers also found that two practices were

negatively linked to some outcomes. Service learning was negatively linked to lifelong

learning and capstone courses negatively related to critical thinking (Kilgo et al., 2014).

According to Seifert, Gillig, Hanson, Pascarella, and Blaich (2014), the frequency of

interactions with faculty and student affairs professionals had a negative impact on

critical thinking for fourth-year students.

Additional research studies examined the effect of high-impact practices (HIPs)

on specific student groups. According to Kuh (2008), college can affect students

differently, with different populations benefiting more from certain practices. This

original study in 2008 proved that specific populations, African-American, Latino, and

students with low ACT scores, benefited the most from HIPs (Finley & McNair, 2013).

In 2013, Finley and McNair conducted additional research on underserved populations

and HIPS. In addition to studying racial and ethnic impacts, the researchers included

transfer students and first generation students (Finely & McNair, 2013). The study found

that students from these specific populations who participated in multiple HIPs reported

higher levels of student engagement and perceived learning was much higher (Finely &

McNair, 2013). For example, Hispanic students reported engagement in deep learning

and perceived gains 10% higher than average if they participated in one or two high-

impact practices, 17% higher with three or four, and 26% higher with five or six high-

impact practices (Finely & McNair, 2013). African American, first generation and

transfer students saw similar results (Finley & McNair, 2013). According to McCormick,

Kinzie, and Gonyea (2017), students from underrepresented populations that participated

in high-impact practices felt more supported, creating a better overall experience, which may be why the perceived gains were higher for these populations.

While researchers found that minority populations who participated in high-impact practices had higher levels of student engagement and perceived learning, they also chose to look at the exposure of those populations to these practices. In 2013, Sweat, Jones, Han, and Wolgram hypothesized that white students had more high impact practice exposure than minority students. The results showed that while some practices, such as First-Year Seminars, Learning Communities, and Service Learning saw equal exposure, others, such as undergraduate research, internships, capstone courses, and writing intensive courses were not equal (Sweat et al., 2013). In addition to exposure, this study also looked at high-impact practices as a predictor of student engagement between white and minority students. The results showed that these practices did predict indicators of student engagement between both groups, Learning Communities, however, seemed to have the most impact for minority students (Sweat et al., 2013). According to Andrews (2018), students that delayed entry into college, between six months and two years after high school graduation, were less likely to have participated in any high-impact practices. Specifically, 58.4% of the sample had not participated, compared to 31.2% of students that had not delayed college enrollment (Andrews, 2018). This study also showed that delayers were less likely to participate in specific high-impact practices, particularly internships and study abroad programs (Andrews, 2018). The American Association of Colleges and Universities conducted a study exploring the utilization of high impact practices by first generation students. The study showed that first generation students participated in fewer high impact practices than their counter parts, averaging 1.24

compared to 1.45 (Salvadge, 2019, para. 9). While this population was less likely to participate in these experiences, the study showed that when they engaged in deep learning, perceived gains were 11% higher than non-first-generation students (Salvadge, 2019, para. 10). In fact, the more experiences they participated in, the larger the difference in gains between the two groups (Salvadge, 2019).

In addition to student engagement, researchers examined the effects of high-impact practices on students post-graduation. In 2017, researchers studied the connection between high-impact practices, career plans, and early job attainment (Miller, Rocconi, & Dumford, 2015). This study utilized data from NSSE's Senior Transitions module to generate a sample of 31,000 seniors from 126 baccalaureate institutions (Miller et al., 2015). Internships, service learning, and capstones had a positive relationship with job attainment after graduation (Miller et al., 2015). In addition, leadership experiences and undergraduate research with faculty had a positive relationship to continuing on to graduate school (Miller et al., 2015). The researchers acknowledged that quality of programs and individual student characteristics might have influenced these results (Miller et al., 2015).

The literature discussed included studies that examined high impact practices as a group. The next section reviews literature specifically focused on one high impact practice, internships.

Internships

History & definition. Internship programs in higher education are rooted in the apprenticeship programs of the 11th and 12th centuries (Spradlin, 2009). Apprenticeships lasted for many years, as young learners began with menial tasks until they graduated to

more advanced duties and better pay (Spradlin, 2009). Some literature identified the first college-endorsed internship program at the University of Cincinnati, more than 100 years ago (Weible, 2010). Apprenticeships and early programs had little resemblance to the programs used at the time of this writing. It was not until the late 1960s that programs began to be structured similarly (Spradlin, 2009). During the 1970s and 1980s, more programs became established when faculty members began to hear about them from their colleagues (Spradlin, 2009). According to the National Association for Colleges and Employers,

> An internship is a form of experiential learning that integrates knowledge and theory learned in the classroom with practical application and skills development in a professional setting. Internships give students the opportunity to gain valuable applied experience and make connections in professional fields they are considering for career paths; and give employers the opportunity to guide and evaluate talent. (Position Statement, 2011, para. 7)

Other names existed which can be used interchangeably with internship, such as co-ops or practicums, although there were slight differences. Co-ops were usually structured paid programs that included a formal relationship between the employer and the academic institution, and usually lasted for a longer period of time (Weible, 2010). Internship programs can be paid or unpaid and many were used for academic credit (The University of Utah, 2017). In contrast, Macalester College only required three-to-four hours per week during a semester in order to earn one credit hour (Macalester College, 2017). The amount of credit hours granted can vary between institutions. Colleges and universities sometimes chose to record internship experiences, even if they were worth

zero academic credits. Other institutions allowed students to apply internship credit hours towards their degree programs. The University of Utah, for example, would award up to six credit hours for an internship based, on the number of hours a student worked each week. For example, students received one credit for working 10 hours in a week. In addition to the variety of credits a student can earn, internships were not limited to specific academic schools. Internship programs enhanced the content of any degree program. According to Spradlin (2009), the formal internship programs recognized at the time of his writings did not start until the late 1960s. The number of colleges and universities that offered internships increased from 200 to 1,000 between 1970 and 1983 (Haire & Oloffson, 2009). Although the number of programs increased, internships were still rare in the 1980s (Spradling, 2009). During the 1980s only one out of 36 students participated in an internship (Hurst, Thye, & Wise, 2014). According to Spradlin (2009), "As demand for knowledge workers increased, so did the importance of the internship" (para. 10). By 2010, 92% of employers surveyed by NACE expected to hire interns (National Association of Colleges and Employers [NACE], 2011), and a survey of college students in 2014 revealed that 61% of students utilized internships (NACE, 2014). In recent years, internship participation became an expectation of students and employers, rather than just a benefit, which may be a factor in the increase in internship participation. One employer survey found that 78% of employers thought that internships had the potential to improve student education (Hart Research Associates, 2013).

Student Benefits

Internship experiences are studied for the variety of benefits they provide, especially for the student.

Skill development. Internships provided a different setting for students to develop "soft skills," such as written and verbal communication, critical thinking, and leadership skills. According to Smith (2013), the term soft skills, originally known as "social intelligence," were often used interchangeably with phrases like "people skills," "human skills," or "noncognitive skills" (p. 812). According to Donohue (2016), communication, leadership, and organizational skills were the most frequently requested by employers. Donohue (2016) provided techniques colleges and universities can use to address this skill gap, and emphasized internships helped to develop leadership skills for students.

Employers identified additional soft skills desired for future employees. Finch, Hamilton, Baldwin, and Zehner (2013) conducted a study to determine which employability factors were most important. Researchers divided the 17 factors into five categories, which included soft skills, problem-solving skills, pre-graduate experience, functional skills, and academic reputation. Of the 17 individual employability factors measured, five of the six highest-ranked factors were from the category of soft skill (Finch et al., 2013). Employers ranked listening skills, interpersonal skills, verbal communication, and professionalism as the most important among this group of employers. The researchers concluded that for universities to stay competitive they must put more emphasis on soft skill development (Finch et al., 2013). Students who were able to focus on soft skill development would also be more valuable to employers. Research that indicated employers placed greater importance and value on soft and problem-solving skills suggested compared to job-specific skills or functions (Finch et al., 2013). A separate study confirmed that employers wanted colleges to put more

emphasis on skills such as critical thinking, complex problem solving, written and oral communication, and applied knowledge (Hart Research Associates, 2013). Although employers agreed that soft skill development was crucial, a separate study of 185 employers found that career preparation for 13 different skill areas was the same between students that participated in internships and those that had not (Gault, Redington, & Schlager, 2000).

Besides soft skills, students were able to hone or develop other skill sets. Students that participated in internships were sometimes able to work with culturally diverse teams (CoCo, 2000). Being able to work with a diverse group of people, in a global economy, was a skill that made graduates more competitive. In 2013, Hart Research Associates surveyed employers about their priorities for college learning and student success. A majority of the surveyed employers (96%) rated intercultural skills, specifically the ability to work with customers and colleagues of diverse cultural backgrounds, as important.

Students looking to gain a competitive advantage may also pursue experiences that allow them to work with a variety of cultures and backgrounds. Study abroad programs, another high impact practice, exposed students to different cultures. Colleges and universities were beginning to implement international internship programs, combining the benefits of both practices. These short-term immersion opportunities might not offer the same benefits of traditional academic programs, but they can provide cultural and language immersion using hands-on experience which can connect to academic and career interests (Gates, 2014). These shorter, real-world experiences may be a better fit for students in demanding and busy degree programs. Many of the skills

that students developed were not new skills, but applying skills in new environments.

Students were able to take skills learned in the classroom, such as problem solving in

broader and real-world contexts (Ambrose & Poklop, 2015). Internships can provide the

opportunity to develop skills, but it does not serve as a guarantee.

The literature also suggests it was important to provide students with

opportunities to build a broad skill set, including hard skills or "technical knowledge and

competencies" (Smith, 2013). Students identified other skills they developed during

internships, such as confidence and computer skills (Pernsteiner, 2015). Employers did

not rank these skills as highly as soft skills, but experiences that helped students develop

these skills were still important. Although Finch, Hamilton, Baldwin, & Zehner (2013)

valued soft skills above hard skills, they noted that for graduates to be successful job

applicants these skills were also important.

Professional experience. One of the leading disadvantages faced by college

graduates was a lack of job experience. Employers were increasingly looking for

experienced personnel and college graduates found it hard to compete in this market

(Coco, 2000). Although many students hold jobs while attending college, internships

presented another opportunity to gain job experience connecting to their degree program.

Job experience is one of the primary components for college graduates to remain

competitive in the employment market and internships are one of the best ways to gain

that experience (Volpi, 1998). Students were often reluctant to participate in internship

opportunities, as they were often unpaid opportunities. Although they may not be

benefiting financially from the internship, students were gaining valuable job experience

that would make them more competitive (Coco, 2000). The experience gained during

internships not only created a competitive advantage, but may also play a role in improving a graduate's future job performance (Gault, Leach, & Duey, 2010).

      Career preparedness. Colleges and universities often have career development centers that provide services and support helping prepare students for future careers. Beyond mock interviews and career assessments, internships offer students the opportunity to gain real world experience in their future career. Students viewed internships as the best opportunity to gain hands-on experience and experience the reality of their chosen career paths (Scott, 1992). In addition, students felt they were better prepared to begin their careers than those with just academic training (Gault et al., 2000). Part of preparing students for careers was helping students decide which career they want. Hurst, Thye, and Wise (2014) found that internships helped to confirm career choice for 69% of the students surveyed. Many students chose a degree or future career based on classroom learning, but internships allowed students to bridge the knowledge gained to real-world experience (Hurst et al., 2014). Determining whether a chosen career really fit a student's interests and qualifications could be difficult. Internships allowed participants to decide whether a career was a good fit for their qualifications and interests (Billet, 2009). A recent study by Gallup found that over half of working adults would change one aspect of their educational paths, most likely their degree program (Marken & Auter, 2017). Students that participated in internships gained first-hand knowledge on prospective career paths, which is why some institutions, like Endicott College, required internship participation before a student's junior and senior year (Saltikoff, 2017). Internships also allowed students to determine what they did and did not want in a position (Gault et al., 2000). The knowledge students gained during an internship

experience may make it easier for them to filter through available positions. Many students chose a degree program, but had not chosen a career path. Internships were an opportunity for students to experience different occupations that may spark an interest (Coco, 2000).

Students often chose not only a specific career, but many times also had an idea of a company in which they wished to be employed, and participating in an internship at a particular company can serve as a trial run for students (Coco, 2000). If students want to make an informed decision about a company, an internship is a good start, but it needs to be the right kind of internship. Programs that exposed interns to the entire organization, not just a particular department, were more effective than those that did not (Scott, 1992). Student interns can use these opportunities to explore different careers. In addition, internships resulted in students' exposure to different organizations and companies that were not on their radar screen before the experience (Bay, 2006). Exposure to different organizations may also help prepare students before entering the real world. Students with opportunities to observe and learn about organizational culture were more likely to propose changes and solutions when faced with future issues (Bay, 2006).

Although students can use internships as an opportunity to gain real career experience, the type of internship experience can have an effect. Internships that only allowed students to perform secretarial tasks rather than tasks directly related to the position were less likely to feel that the experience contributed to their career choice (Jackson & Jackson, 2009). Graduates entering the workforce were expected to engage and blend in a professional setting immediately (Billett, 2009) and graduates that participated in internships may be better prepared for the job market. According to

Jackson and Jackson (2009), students participating in internship programs gained insights on professionalism and the importance of work habits.

Employability and compensation. Internships were beneficial for graduates in many ways, one of which was increasing job opportunities after graduation (Knouse, Tanner, & Harris, 1999). A study found that seniors who participated in an internship were two and a half times greater more likely to find a job, compared to those that had not completed an internship (Miller et al., 2015). A separate study conducted by Gallup found 71% of employed college graduates participated in an internship opportunity (as cited in Seymour & Ray, 2014). The data suggested that students who completed internships during their college career were more likely to find a job. In addition, the data illustrated that the advantage for these students existed, no matter gender, race, or type of institution (Seymour & Ray, 2014). Research found 63% of graduates who participated in an internship found a position, compared to only 35% of graduates who had not participated (Day, 2016, para. 7). This further confirms the benefits of internships. In addition, graduates were more likely to find a position, and more quickly (Knouse, Tanner, & Harris, 1999). This same study noted this advantage disappeared six months after graduation.

A contributing factor to graduate success is that organizations are more likely to hire interns. According to Hart Research Associates (2013), "Employers express the greatest confidence in the following practices to help students succeed beyond graduation . . . complete an internship or community-based field project" (p. 10). In a study by the NACE (2017a), 56% of employers surveyed indicated a preference for candidates with internship experience. The advantage granted to graduates with internships was due in

part to the fact that many internships resulted in full-time employment offers. In a study

of accounting internships, the organization offered 52% of the interns a position once the

internship was completed (Pernsteiner, 2015). As students plan their education and

experiences it might be useful to consider completing more than one internship. In a

recent study, 55% of employers stated an expectation of at least two internship

experiences from college graduates (Gardner, 2013, p. 6).

Graduates that enter the job market with internship experience were not only

likely to find a job more quickly, but a monetary benefit as well. One study found

graduates who completed internships received higher entry-level compensation (Gault et

al., 2000). Colleges and universities could use this to help mitigate concerns over

accepting unpaid internships. Higher compensation might be the result of employers

viewing internships as work experience; and as a result, employers were rewarding them

accordingly. Another contributing factor could be that these graduates spent less time in

the job market (Coco, 2000). The study clarified that employers who offered interns full-

time employment would only reward those interns that exceeded expectations with higher

salary (Gault et al., 2010).

Employer benefits. Interns could serve as a much-needed resource and allowed

companies to implement and complete projects that may otherwise be difficult to

complete (Worchester Business Journal, 2012). According to the NACE (2017b)

internship and co-op report, 75% of employers that facilitated internship programs did so

to recruit college graduates, and employers offered 67% of their interns full-time

positions. Internship programs provided companies with the opportunity to observe

potential employees for extended periods and with little risk (Coco, 2000). These types of

programs not only allowed for an evaluation period for potential employees, but also had the potential to save the company money. Employers could save on recruiting costs by using the candidate pool created by internship programs (Gault et al., 2010). Research established that the relationships companies built with colleges and universities provided access to an excellent source of employees. Companies strove to maintain internship programs even during economic downturns and slow hiring periods, because it allowed them to maintain visibility for future potential employees (Gault et al., 2000). Employers utilizing internship programs can also increase their diversity. Collaborating with colleges and universities that had large female and minority populations could open up a diverse pool of candidates for employers (Kuhl, 2018). Students who participated in an internship program may also gain inside knowledge of the company and the position itself. Companies that hired interns to continue roles they were already filling saved time and money training a brand new employee (Scott, 1992). Furthermore, employers that choose to hire employees with internship experience, not just those that have completed internships with their companies, are often better employees. Engaged employees, those with a connection to the organization, were involved and enthusiastic about work were more likely to be graduates who participated in internship programs (Seymour & Ray, 2014).

University benefits. College and academic administrators created internship programs to benefit student participants, institutions also experienced advantages from these experiences. The majority of colleges and universities offered internship programs, but few were capitalizing on the potential benefits (Weible, 2010). In order to facilitate internship programs, colleges and universities needed to build relationships with

companies. The relationships institutions fostered through internships at local businesses enhanced the potential for those businesses to become corporate sponsors (Gault et al., 2010). In addition, internship programs served as both new fundraising sources and a recruiting tool. Placement directors, students, and graduates identified internship programs as the most effective recruiting strategy (Gault et al., 2000). The services and opportunities colleges and universities provided to make students more competitive in the job market were attractive to potential students. One study showed that 81.6% of prospective students were more likely to enroll in colleges and universities with internship programs (Weible, 2010). Higher education institutions may also benefit from using internships as a recruiting tool, especially in a shrinking pool of eligible prospects. Further, colleges and universities with strong internship programs had access to high-caliber students (Gault et al., 2000). In order to stay competitive, higher education must continually adapt to the new needs of its students. Internship programs could serve as a source to help these institutions update their programs (Coco, 2000). In addition to updating programs, colleges and universities can use internships as evidence for accreditation requirements. The Accreditation Council for Business Schools and Programs (ACBSP) offered specialized business accreditation for all degree levels, recognized by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation, and accredits 1,000 programs across the globe (ACBSP, 2016). One of the requirements for accreditation was a program's ability to demonstrate faculty's participation in "activities that enhance depth, scope, and currency of knowledge related to their discipline and instructional effectiveness" (ACBSP, 2019, p. 38).

Issues and challenges. Students, graduates, employers, and colleges/universities all experience advantages from internship programs, but not without issues. Internships were not required course work in academic programs. Even with the benefit for students, colleges and universities had to market in order to get students to participate. According to Knouse et al. (1999), employers reported that institutions should do better job advertising benefits using brochures and websites, specifically targeting freshman. This highlights a different problem for internship programs. Encouraging students to participate is more difficult with a lack of faculty support. Many educators did not understand the integration of experiential learning with academic coursework; and therefore, did little to support these programs (Billett, 2009). Concerns were exacerbated when colleges and universities did not take the time to establish learning goals for internship students (Jackson & Jackson, 2009). A lack of faculty support was often combined with a lack of university support (such as funding and personnel), which made it harder to develop a successful program (Bay, 2006).

The NACE established guidelines for colleges and universities that facilitated internship programs. The experience must be an extension of the classroom experience, skills, and knowledge gained and must be transferrable to other careers. Furthermore, it had a defined beginning and end that included a detailed job description, professional supervision with expertise and educational background in the field, and routine feedback required by supervisor, and the host employer provided resources, equipment, and facilities that supported the learning outcomes (NACE, 2016). While this provided a foundation for institutions, it was not required to use them when developing or facilitating a program. Colleges and universities were able to tailor programs to an

institution's specific need; it also created inconsistency in the experiences students would have.

The responsibility of providing a positive and engaging experience for interns does not rest solely with the college or university. Organizations often engaged in practices that made the experience less valuable and satisfying for the student. In order to have a successful program, employers must not only engage the interns in meaningful work, but also supply the students with mentors (Coco, 2000). These students were often new to the working world and employers needed to provide them with a resource to guide and support the student through the program. Interns should receive feedback on their performance. This will allow students to focus on these areas, whether through academic programs or additional internship opportunities. Providing the opportunity for students to provide and receive feedback was not the only area where organizations could improve. Although most employers provided interns with valuable experiences that included assignments that contributed to the organization, some treated interns poorly and provided unrewarding experiences. Unfortunately, some employers treated students unfairly and took advantage of free labor (Coco, 2000).

Students are also responsible for the quality of their internship experience. Although many students view internships as opportunities to explore different careers and companies, some view it as just completing a requirement. According to Spradlin (2009), the popularity of internships led some students to pursue internships solely to gain work experience, which was not related to their degree program or desired career. These students were often unmotivated and viewed these opportunities as a way to "check off a box" (Spradlin, 2009).

A major debate about internships is over whether to pay interns. The Department of Labor established criteria for internships to determine when these positions qualify as unpaid "learner/trainee" positions, or whether it should be a paid position (Kaplan, 2000). Employers must carefully design and designate which programs in which interns participate. Positions that allowed interns to use independent judgment in completing non-clerical work or with advanced field knowledge, or computer programming or analyst positions, did not fall under this category (Kaplan, n.d.). The Department of Labor governed unpaid positions for decades, but enforcement of these rules was not a priority until recently (Rhoads, 2016). This may not raise specific concerns for students, but companies found in violation of these standards may be required to issue back pay. These regulations should also be of concern to institutions that enroll international students. Colleges and universities should be very cautious when placing international students in internships. If the Department of Labor ruled the internship did not meet the requirements, it may be determined that the student violated their immigration status and risked deportation (Rhoads, 2016). A study by NACE (2016), found that unpaid internships negatively correlated with student salary and employment. Additionally, students were less likely to be satisfied with their first job (Crain, 2016). Surprisingly, unpaid interns rated understanding of academic coursework much higher, than students that had a paid internship (Crain, 2016). Unfortunately, skill development negatively correlated with unpaid internships (Crain, 2016).

Summary

The literature reviewed in this chapter covered several areas, including retention, timely degree completion, high-impact practices, and internships. Each section contained

a brief history of the topic, followed by a summary of existing research. This chapter does not include all of the literature for each topic, but a sampling of research the primary investigator found important to the gap underscoring this study. Chapter Three includes details for data collection and the quantitative and qualitative tests used in the study.

Chapter Three: Research Method and Design

The purpose of this study was to compare undergraduate internship participation and non-internship participation to correlating retention and timely degree completion data. This study generated information on the perceptions of undergraduate internship participants, specifically related to interactions with faculty, preparation for their careers, and the impact of their experiences on their retention and timely degree completion. This section focuses on the study design, including where it was conducted, the participants, and how the data were analyzed.

Research Site

In order to understand the study design, it is helpful to understand more about where the study took place. The research site was a mid-sized private university, located in the Midwest. The university was a doctoral granting institution, serving undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral students. Students enrolled at the university were able to complete an undergraduate degree in two formats. The university offered a traditional undergraduate program, with students enrolling in semesters during the fall, spring, and summer. Students were also able to enroll in a winter break term (referred to as J-Term) during the 2010-2012 years. In addition, the university offered an accelerated degree program that consisted of 12-week quarter terms. This accelerated program, with classes in the evening, targeted working adults, rather than the traditionally-aged higher education student.

Between 2010 and 2012, the university served approximately 8,500 traditional undergraduate students per year. The university had seven academic schools and over 100 degree programs. Two of the academic schools, Business and Education, had degree

programs requiring internships. The remaining five schools encouraged internships as part of the student experience; but participation was voluntary. The following table illustrates the breakdown of internship participants by academic school.

Table 2

Internship Participants by Major

	Internship Participants
Arts, Media & Communications	22.5% (96)
Business & Entrepreneurship	36.1% (154)
Education	0% (0)
Health Sciences	25.4% (108)
Humanities	7.7% (33)
Sciences	5.2% (22)

During the time of this study, each individual school managed internships, and students could visit the Career Services Office for help in finding internship opportunities. During the study, the researcher was an employee at the institution. All of the data used for the quantitative analysis were de-identified. The survey conducted did provide the researcher's identity, but the Associate Provost for Curriculum and Experiential Learning distributed the survey to avoid any undue influence or conflict.

Participants

It is important to understand not only the environment in which the study took place, but also the participants in the study. For the purpose of this study, the researcher

chose to use traditional undergraduate students. This was consistent with other research conducted on internships, as well as retention and timely degree completion. According to Yancey Guley (2016), a traditional undergraduate student was between the ages of 18 and 24, and enrolled full-time. In addition, working adult students were less likely to participate in internships, as they already had a career while they were completing their undergraduate program. According to Sisselman-Borgia and Torino (2017), adult learners were required to balance raising a family, finances, and a career, and were often prevented from participating in experiential learning, such as internships.

The student records used for this study were from the 2010-2012 cohorts. The 2010-2012 cohort was chosen, as it allowed analysis of four, five, and six-year graduation rates. The samples consisted of first-time, full-time freshmen, which were chosen for two reasons. First, organizations that collected national data, such as IPEDS, used first-time, full-time freshmen. Second, this allowed for accurate measurement of degree completion, without tracking down records from multiple institutions. The initial data were a random sample of 3,189 first-time, full-time freshmen from the 2010-2012 cohorts. For the purpose of this study, traditional undergraduate students enrolled in semesters and were to complete a maximum of three semesters per year. The retention samples consisted of 100 internship participants and 100 non-internship participants. The timely degree completion samples also included 100 internship participants and 100 non-internship participants. Fraenkel, Wallen, and Hyun (2015) suggested a minimum of 30 per group for comparative studies (p. 103).

Table 3 described the racial/ethnic demographics for both the internship and non-internship participants. As discussed in Chapter Two, demographics were important,

considering the research on the differences in retention and graduation rates, as well as high-impact practices participation for different ethnic/racial backgrounds.

Table 3

Racial/Ethnic Demographics of Student Participants

	Non-Internship Participants	Internship Participants
American Indian/Native American	0	0.4% (1)
Asian	0.4% (1)	1.2% (3)
Black/African American	3.6% (9)	4.4% (11)
Hispanic	4.4% (11)	3.2% (8)
White	74.8% (187)	74.4% (186)
International	10.4% (26)	12% (30)
Two or More	4% (10)	2.8% (7)
Unknown	2.4% (6)	1.6% (4)

Table 4 describes the gender demographics for both the internship and non-internship participants. Similar to ethnicity and race, Gender demographics are important considering the research on the differences in retention and graduation rates, as discussed in Chapter Two.

The third sample for the student survey consisted of undergraduate students who completed an internship during the summer 2018 or fall 2018 term. The researcher chose students from these two terms because their internship was recent, making it easier for the students to answer the survey questions accurately.

Table 4

Gender Demographics of Student Participants

	Non-Internship Participants	Internship Participants
Male	48% (120)	40.8% (102)
Female	52% (130)	59.2% (148)

The data provided included 309 student records. The research prospectus specified 25 participants for the student survey; however, after three e-mails, only 16 students participated in the survey. According to Fraenkel et al. (2015), "In qualitative studies, the number of participants in a sample is usually somewhere between 1 and 20" (p. 104). The next section discusses the collection and analysis of data.

Data Collection

The university's Institutional Research department collected the data utilized for this study. After receiving IRB approval, the researcher met with the Director for Institutional Research and dissertation chair to discuss the data required to complete this study and to receive permission to utilize employees within the department to retrieve the data. After receiving approval, the researcher followed institutional procedure, by submitting three tickets specifically requesting the data. For the retention and timely degree completion portion of the study, the researcher requested a random student ID, major, course enrollment, grades, enrollment status, gender, ethnicity, and degree conferral date. The university did not have a standard identifier for internship courses, so the researcher also requested a list of courses the university identified as internships. During the time of this study, since no standard identifier for internships existed, the Associate Vice President for Student Academic Support Services worked with the

individual school deans to identify classes as internships. The Associate Vice President was required to meet with the individual deans to discuss the definitions of internships versus experiential, as well as the characteristics that defined each (Personal Communication, 2019). The Office of Institutional Effectiveness maintained the list of identified internship courses used for this study, which can be found in Appendix B. The study required four samples, two for the retention analysis and two for the timely-degree completion analysis. The Institutional Research department pulled the data from the student information system utilized by the university. This system was a password-protected database that stored academic and financial information for students. An analyst for the Institutional Research department provided 3,189 records from the 2010-2012 cohorts.

The researcher requested data for the student survey from the Institutional Research department. The ticket for this data requested a random student ID, gender, ethnicity, and student e-mail address (encoded without student names). The same Institutional Research analyst also pulled this data from the student information system, but provided the information to the Associate Provost who used the data in order to distribute the survey. The survey developed by the researcher included seven Likert Scale questions and two open-ended questions. The researcher chose to use *Qualtrics* as the survey tool. The institution had a subscription to *Qualtrics*, an online tool in which surveys were developed and responses recorded. The survey responses gathered in *Qualtrics* were anonymous and access to the results was limited to the researcher, because the survey tool was password protected.

After the researcher built the survey in *Qualtrics* and created an HTML link for e-mail distribution to internship participants, and after receiving IRB approval and the student records, the researcher worked with the Associate Provost to distribute the survey. The Associate Provost distributed an e-mail, which included a consent form developed by the researcher, as well as a link to the survey. After the researcher sent the initial e-mail, the Associate Provost sent two more e-mail reminders, approximately two weeks apart, to the participants. The information provided to the researcher did not include the student e-mail address, which prevented the researcher from identifying individual students. The de-identified data allowed for demographic breakdown by gender, ethnicity, and major.

Statistical Procedures

Quantitative analysis. In order to analyze the impact of internship participation on retention and timely degree completion, the researcher performed a quantitative statistical analysis. The purpose of this study was to compare the impact of internships on retention and degree completion. During the time of this study, little research existed on this topic, so the researcher decided to compare the retention and degree completion rates of internship participants and non-participants. In order to determine if a difference existed between the two samples, the researcher chose to utilize the two-sample *z*-test for difference in proportions. According to the website Statistics How To (2019), in order to use a two sample *z*-test for difference in proportions, the two samples must be independent of each other, the sample sizes should be greater than 30 and close to equal, and be randomly selected from a population. The samples created for this study met each of these criteria. The researcher chose the two-sample *z*-test for difference in proportions

to compare retention rates and timely-degree completion rates for both internship and
non-internship participants. In addition to four-year graduation rates, the researcher also
chose to compare five- and six-year degree completion rates to create a complete picture
of graduation rates for internship participants and non-participants.

Qualitative analysis. The student survey developed by the researcher gathered
information on student perspectives of their internship experiences. The intention of the
student survey was not to influence the quantitative results, but instead to provide
perspectives to support or refute the quantitative results, as well as to provide insight into
students' perceptions regarding their internship experiences. The survey consisted of
seven Likert Scale questions and two open-ended questions. The Likert Scale questions
addressed specific benefits for internship participants, including career preparation,
bridging classroom learning to real-world experiences, connection with faculty members,
and the impact of the internship experience on retention and timely-degree completion.
The open-ended questions asked students to provide, in their own words, expanded
perceptions of whether their internship participation affected their decision to stay at an
institution and to graduate in four years. Appendix A has the distributed questionnaire.

The researcher grouped the Likert Scale questions by response and divided by the
total responses to calculate a percentage. The researcher grouped the "agree" and
"strongly agree" categories and the "disagree" and "strongly disagree" categories
together. In order to code the open-ended questions, the researcher developed themes and
coded the answers accordingly. Portions of the responses are included in the results
section of the dissertation.

Null Hypotheses and Research Question

The null hypotheses were as follows:

$H_0 1$: There will not be a difference in the proportion of students retained between undergraduates participating in internships and undergraduates not participating in internships at a four-year private institution.

$H_0 2$: There will not be a difference in the proportion of timely degree completion between undergraduates participating in internships and undergraduates not participating in internships at a four-year private institution.

The research question for this study was as follows:

RQ1: What are undergraduates' perceptions of the internship experience in regards to retention and timely degree completion?

Data Analysis

The researcher merged the data received from the analyst in Institutional Research into two Excel spreadsheets to allow for easier analysis. The student records received from Institutional research included a random sample of full-time freshmen from the 2010-2012 cohorts. This included students that stopped out and those that did not make it past freshman year. The data also showed that the majority of students who completed an internship did so during their junior or senior year. In order to create comparable samples, the researcher removed any student that stopped out and any student that completed four terms or less. The researcher used a pivot table and sorted the student records by unique ID, then first term enrolled, and finally by term (this included the term of each class in which the student enrolled). The researcher started by analyzing individual student records to identify those not continuously enrolled, those enrolled in quarter classes

instead of semester, and those that enrolled in four semesters or less. As discussed in the research site section, students were able to enroll in fall or spring semesters, as well as summer or winter break terms. For the purpose of this study, the researcher did not count J-Term towards the enrollment total, as it is a bridge between the fall and spring semester and only used for extracurricular or general education courses. Summer courses counted if taken after the fourth semester. For example, if a student's first semester enrolled was fall semester 2011, and they completed a summer course in summer 2013, they were included in the sample. The researcher recorded each unique ID, which met one of the reasons listed above, and then erased those records from the spreadsheet. The process of creating the four samples required began after the removal of those student records.

The first step was to code the student records as participants and non-participants. The researcher used the course list provided by Institutional Research to identify internship participants. If a student completed a course from the provided list, they were coded as one. Students not coded as one indicated non-internship participants and received a zero for designation. After the completion of the coding, the researcher separated the internship participants from the non-participants. The researcher also chose to remove any student that participated in an internship, but did not complete the class. If the student received an AF (Attendance Failure), W (Withdraw), or WF (Withdraw Failure), the records were removed from the sample. Since the student would not have completed the internship in these instances, the researcher felt it was appropriate to remove them from the sample. Stratified sampling was used to create the four samples needed for the study. According to Fraenkel et al. (2015), systematic sampling is "selecting every nth individual in the population list" (p. 98). "The number chosen is

selected by dividing the population size by the desired sample size" (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2015, p. 99). After coding and separating the data, 426 student records were coded as participants and 1,958 were coded as non-participants. Following the formula listed above, the researcher started with the internship participants, taking 326 and dividing it by 100. The researcher selected every fourth student in the internship list for the retention sample. In order to create the timely degree completion sample, the researcher divided the remaining total of student records, 326 by 100, therefore selecting every third. The researcher used the same process for the non-internship participants, divided 1,542 by 100, therefore using every 15th student. Finally, for the non-internship participant timely degree completion sample, the researcher used the remaining student record total, 1,442 and divided it by 100 to determine using every 14th student.

In order to analyze the retention sample, the researcher used the degree completion field and coded students that were retained by the institution and those who were not. If the degree completion field contained a date, the student was coded with a two, and if no degree completion date was listed, the student record was coded as one. After the retention sample was coded, the researcher was surprised to find that the retention rate was considerably higher than the retention rate in the 2016 census report. To ensure validity, the researcher chose to pull another 50 student records for both internships and non-internships. In order to identify the additional student records the data analysis tool in Microsoft Excel was utilized. Once the additional records were coded, the researcher than generated a count for internship participants that were retained and those that were not retained, as well as a count for non-internship participants that were retained and those that were not retained. A two-sample z-test for difference in

proportions was used to analyze the data. The researcher used an alpha of .05 to

determine the significance level for differences between the two samples.

To compare the internship participants and non-internship participants, the

researcher again used the degree completion field for coding. The second set of samples

also used the graduation date field for coding, using 1 (100%) to indicate graduation in

four years, 1.5 (150%) to indicate graduation in five years, and 2 (200%) to indicate

graduation in six years. This coding system was based on a 2017 graduation rate study by

the NCES (as cited in Ginder, Kelly-Reid, & Mann, 2017). As the student records were

for first-time, full-time freshmen, time-to-degree completion was calculated from the

time of enrollment to their completion date. For example, if a student was part of the

2010 cohort, enrollment beginning in fall 2010 and their graduation date was May 2014,

the student will be coded as 1 for graduation within four years. Additionally, if a student,

for example, completed a degree in 4.5 years, they were categorized as a 1, because it

took less than five years for degree completion. The same categorization was used for 5.5

years, coded as 1.5, and for 6.5 years, coded 2. Finally, students that completed their

degree in less than 3 years or in 7 years or more were considered outliers and not tested.

Once each sample was coded, the researcher calculated the number of internship

participants that completed degrees in four, five, and six years, as well as non-internship

participants in the same categories. The researcher analyzed the data using a two-sample

z-test for difference in proportions for four, five, and six-year degree completion rates.

An alpha of .05 was used to determine the significance level of the difference between

internship and non-internship participants.

Summary

      This chapter focused on the methodology for this study. It included how the study was designed, including information on the research site and participants, data collection, and the statistical analysis used. Chapter Four will focus on the results from both the quantitative and qualitative analysis the researcher performed for this study.

Chapter Four: Analysis

The purpose of this study and the analysis in Chapter Four was to explore the impact of internship participation on student retention and timely-degree completion of undergraduates at a private, four-year university. In addition, the analysis sought to understand the perspective of internship participants and the impact of their experiences on retention and timely-degree completion. The researcher utilized a mixed-methods approach, including both de-identified data and survey results. Student records from the 2010-2012 cohorts were pulled from the student information system. The data were coded for internship and non-internship participation and then the researcher used systematic sampling to create four separate samples. The researcher also utilized online survey results for undergraduates who participated in an internship during the summer or fall semester of 2018. The survey was designed to capture the student perspective on key areas of the internship experience, as well as their perspective on whether the internship impacted their decision to remain at the university or graduate in four years. The researcher analyzed the Likert-scale questions and coded the responses to the open-ended questions for common themes. In Chapter Four the researcher presented the hypotheses and research questions as described in Chapter Three, with the quantitative and qualitative data analysis.

Null Hypotheses and Research Question

The researcher investigated the following null hypotheses for the study:

N_01: There will not be a difference in the proportion of students retained between undergraduates participating in internships and undergraduates not participating in internships at a four-year private institution.

N_02: There will not be a difference in the proportion of timely degree completion between undergraduates participating in internships and undergraduates not participating in internships at a four-year private institution.

The research question for this study was as follows:

RQ1: What are undergraduates' perceptions of the internship experience in regards to retention and timely degree completion?

Quantitative Analysis

As discussed in Chapter Three, the samples for each hypothesis consisted of undergraduate student records from the 2010-2012 cohorts. For the retention analysis, the separate internship and non-internship participant samples were coded using the degree completion field: if the field contained a date, the student was retained; if the field did not contain a date, the student was not retained. The degree completion field was also used to code the samples for the timely-degree completion analysis; 1 indicated four years, 1.5 indicated five years, and 2 indicated six years. The researcher used an alpha of .05 to determine significance.

Null Hypothesis 1: There will not be a difference in the proportion of students retained between undergraduates participating in internships and undergraduates not participating in internships at a four-year private institution.

The researcher ran a two-sample z-test for difference in proportions to determine if the retention rate between the two samples was different. The analysis revealed that the retention rate of internship participants (n = 142, 94.7%) was significantly different from that of the non-internship participants (n = 116, 77.3%; $z = 4.343$, $p \leq .0001$). The

researcher rejected the null hypothesis and concluded that the proportion of students retained was different between internship and non-internship participants.

Null Hypothesis 1a: The proportion of retained students will not be higher for internship participants than non-internship participants.

The researcher ran a two-sample z-test for difference in proportions to determine if internship participants were more likely to be retained than non-internship participants. In order to determine significance, the researcher utilized a left-tailed p-value rather than the two-tailed value used during the first statistical test. The analysis revealed that the retention rate of internship participants (n = 142, 94.7%) was significantly higher than the retention rate of non-participants (n = 116, 77.3%; $z = -4.343$, $p \leq .0001$). The researcher rejected the null hypothesis and concluded internship participants were more likely to be retained than non-internship participants.

Null Hypothesis 2: There will not be a difference in the proportion of timely-degree completion between undergraduates participating in internships and undergraduates not participating in internships at a four-year private institution.

The researcher ran a two-sample z-test for difference in proportions to determine if the rate of timely degree completion between internship and non-internship participants was different. The analysis revealed that the timely degree completion rate of internship participants (n = 63, 63%) was not significantly different than that of non-internship participants (n = 54, 54%; $z = -1.292$; $p = 0.197$). The researcher failed to reject the null hypotheses and concluded that the rate of timely degree completion between internship and non-internship participants was not different.

Null Hypothesis 2a: There will not be a difference in the proportion of internship participants and non-internship participants completing a degree in five years.

The researcher ran a two-sample z-test for difference in proportions to determine if the five-year graduation rate between internship and non-internship participants was different. The analysis revealed that the five year graduation rate of internship participants (n = 9, 9%) was not significantly different from the non-internship participants (n = 15, 15%; $z = 1.306$; $p = 0.192$). The researcher failed to reject the null hypothesis and concluded that the five-year graduation rate of internship and non-internship participants was not different.

Null Hypothesis 2b: There will not be a difference in the proportion of internship participants and non-internship participants completing a degree in six years.

The researcher ran a two-sample z-test for difference in proportions to determine if the six-year graduation rate between internship and non-internship participants was different. The analysis revealed that the six-year graduation rate of internship participants (n = 2, 2%) was not significantly different from the non-internship participants (n = 6, 6%; $z = 1.443$; $p = 0.149$). The researcher failed to reject the null hypothesis and concluded that the six-year graduation rate of internship and non-internship participants was not different.

Null Hypothesis 2c: There will not be a difference in the proportion of internship participants and non-internship participants completing a degree. The researcher ran a two-sample z-test for difference in proportions to determine if the rate of degree completion between internship and non-internship participants was different. The analysis revealed that the degree completion rate for internship participants (n = 98, 98%)

was significantly different from that of the non-internship participants (n = 79, 79%; $z =$ 4.21; $p \leq .001$). The researcher failed to reject the null hypothesis and concluded that the rate of degree completion was significantly different for internship participants.

Null Hypothesis 2d: The proportion of students completing a degree will not be higher among internship participants from non-internship participants.

The researcher ran a two-sample z-test for difference in proportions to determine if the rate of degree completion was higher for internship participants than non-internship participants. Similar to the testing for null hypotheses 1 and 1a, the researcher used a right-tailed test and the *p*-value to determine significance. The analysis revealed that the degree completion rate for internship participants (n = 98, 98%) was significantly higher than that of the non-internship participants (n = 79, 79%; $z = 4.21$; $p \leq .001$). The researcher rejected the null hypothesis and concluded that the rate of degree completion was significantly higher for internship participants than non-internship participants.

Qualitative Analysis

The statistical analysis provided valuable data, but the researcher felt it was important to also have a better understanding of how internship participants felt about their experience and its possible impact on their decision to stay at the institution and to complete their degree in a timely manner. The researcher authored a survey, including Likert-scale questions and open-ended questions, to provide a better understanding of the perspectives of internship participants and key internship experiences, as well as the impact of their experiences on retention and timely degree completion.

Research Question 1: What are undergraduates' perceptions of the internship experience in regards to retention and timely degree completion?

The researcher developed four Likert-scale questions and two open-ended questions to answer the research question (see Table 5).

Table 5

Likert Scale Questions: Retention and Timely Degree Completion

Q4: As a result of my internship, I am more likely to continue enrollment at this university.
Q5: Due to other factors and not the internship experience, I am more likely to continue enrollment at this university.
Q6: As a result of my internship, I am more likely to complete my degree in four years.
Q7: Due to other factors and not the internship experience, I am more likely to complete my degree in four years.

Note: Survey was authored by researcher.

In the prospectus, the researcher stated that 25 survey responses would be gathered. As discussed in Chapter Three, after three attempts, the researcher was only able to gather 16 responses. According to Fraenkel et al. (205), "In qualitative studies, the number of participants in a sample is usually somewhere between 1 and 20" (p. 104). The participants were asked to choose the response which best fit their perspective from a Likert scale of 1 to 5; 1 equaling strongly disagree and 5 equaling strongly agree. The results of the questions, related directly to the research questions, are listed in Table 6.

Based on the survey results, the researcher determined that only 6.25% of internship participants perceived their experience as the reason for staying at the university; 25% of the participants disagreed that the internship experience impacted their retention; and 68.75% were neutral about the impact.

Table 6

Likert Scale Survey Results: Retention and Timely Degree Completion

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Question 4	1	0	11	2	2
Question 5	5	4	4	2	1
Question 6	1	4	8	2	1
Question 7	4	4	7	1	0

The student perspective on the internship experience impact on timely degree completion was slightly different based on the survey responses. The researcher determined that 50% of students agreed that the internship experience impacted their timely degree completion; 6.25% disagreed that the internship impacted their timely-degree completion, and 43.75% were neutral about the impact.

In addition to the Likert scale questions, the researcher also asked two open-ended questions in order to understand the student perspective further. The open-ended question simply asked students to expand on their responses to Q4 and Q5, and to Q6 and Q7. The researcher coded the responses according to emerging themes.

Retention. Participants provided further insight into their responses by sharing their thoughts on how their internship experiences impacted their decision to stay at the university. One student stated, "I do not feel my internship kept me at [university name] rather it aided to enhance my educational experience, while another student stated, "It had no bearing." One student did note, "A good or bad internship experience definitely has the potential to affect university enrollment, but it didn't directly affect mine." One

student noted reasons outside the internship experience were the reason they stayed, stating, "The only thing that has kept me at [university name] after my sophomore year was the connections I made in organizations I was a part of and Student Involvement."

A pre-existing commitment to remaining at the university began to appear in some responses. One student stated, "I wasn't planning on leaving at all, my decision wasn't affected; another student stated, "My plan the entire time was to complete my degree with [university name] and no further schooling was wanted." Lastly, some students identified the timing of the internship to be a reason why the experience did not affect their retention. One student stated, "I was in my last year of school so while the internship was great, it was not the reason I continued my education." Another student stated, "I completed by internship at the end of my time at [university name] I continued by enrollment for 1 more semester until I graduated." The researcher noted that none of the responses to the open-ended retention survey indicated a connection between the internship experience and the student's choice to remain at the institution.

Timely degree completion. Participants also provided further insight into whether they perceived their internship experience had an impact on timely degree completion or not. One student stated, "My internship did not affect my time enrolled;" while another student stated, "unless a person is consistently taking summer and or/extra classes a semester, this is not truly helping anyone graduate faster." Similar to retention, a pre-internship commitment to completing a degree began to appear in student responses. One student stated, "I would be graduating in four years regardless;" while another student stated, "My four-year plan has been the goal all along, there wasn't any other ideas;" and finally one student said, "In my degree, it is extremely difficult to

complete it in less than four years. I never considered taking over four years as an option. My internship experience had not effect on this." The researcher noted that none of the survey responses regarding degree completion indicated a connection between the internship experience and the student's ability to complete a degree in four years.

Internship Experience Questions

The researcher also included three questions in the student survey related to aspects of the internship experience (see Table 7). The additional survey questions were designed to gather internship participant perspectives on key aspects of the internship experience, including career preparation, relationship to course work, and engagement with faculty.

Table 7

Internship Experience Questions

Q1: I feel that I am better prepared for a career after my internship experience.
Q2: As a result of my internship experience, I have a better understanding of concepts, theories, and skills in my course of study.
Q3: During my internship I was continuously engaged with a faculty member at the university.

Note: Survey was authored by researcher.

The participants were asked to choose the response which best fit their perspective from a Likert scale of 1 to 5; 1 equaling strongly disagree and 5 equaling strongly agree. Table 7 lists results from questions directly related to the research questions.

Table 8

Internship Experience Survey Results

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Q1	10	4	1	1	0
Q2	8	4	1	3	0
Q3	1	3	8	1	3

The researcher concluded that 87.5% of internship participants agreed that the experience helped prepare them for a career; while 6.25% of participants were neutral or disagreed with the statement. Additionally, the researcher concluded that 75% of internship participants felt they had a better understanding of concepts and theories learned in the classroom after their experience, while 6.25% were neutral about the connection and 18.75% disagreed with the statement. Finally, the researcher concluded that 25% of internship participants agreed that they engaged continuously with a faculty member during their experience, while 50% were neutral on the connection and 25% disagreed that their experience included continuous engagement with a faculty member.

The open-ended responses provided additional insights into the internship and student experience. One student stated, "My internship made me want to finish school so I could make money;" while another student stated, "If anything, these internships made me realize just what I was missing at [university name]." A lack of support in finding internships began to appear as a theme. One student stated, "I picked the internship myself, so I would probably picked as well in another university," while another student stated, "My internship, I got it myself back home because the ones offered here are not international students[sic] sensitive". Another student identified some additional negative

experiences associated with an internship. One student stated, "The busy (useless) class work and extra cost for the internship made me consider not even taking the summer course."

Responses provided both positive and negative insights into general career preparation by the university. One student stated, "The university gave me the tools I needed to succeed and that helped me land the jobs I have had while attending and for post graduation;" while another student stated, "The curriculum I feel has not prepared me at all for a field in HR." Additionally, the responses provided positive and negative perceptions about support for timely-degree completion. One student stated, "The school gave me a clear path on all the classes I needed to get by degree and let me make my own schedule so I could figure out how to work in all the things I had to do in order to graduate on time;" while another student stated,

> At this point there are many people who do not graduate in four years and I personally blame this on the loss of J-Term and the lack of core classes available during J-Term when it was around, and the lack of core classes in both semesters and the summer semester.

The qualitative participant responses did not support the statistical analysis, but did provide the researcher with insight into the internship experience.

Summary

The researcher presented findings and analysis for both null hypotheses and the research question in Chapter Four. The quantitative analysis generated evidence that students who participated in internships were more likely to stay at their institutions. Additionally, the analysis generated evidence that internship participation did not affect

four-year, five-year, or six-year degree completion. However, the researcher concluded

that internship participants were more likely to complete their degree than non-

participants were. The qualitative data provided insight into the perspectives of internship

participants. The analysis generated evidence that students did not feel internships

influenced their likelihood to stay at an institution or to complete a degree in four years.

The analysis also generated evidence that students felt their internship experiences

prepared them for a career and created a better understand of classroom coursework.

Chapter Five discusses suggestions for the researched university to utilize the findings for

decisions regarding internship programs, retention, and timely degree completion

initiatives, as well as recommendations for further study.

Chapter Five: Discussion

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to investigate the impact of internship participation on undergraduate student retention and timely-degree completion. The researcher's goal was to provide data, as well as student perspectives, which would help inform administrative decision-making regarding internship programs and retention or timely-degree completion initiatives. In order to accomplish this goal, the researcher used a mixed-methods study. The researcher utilized de-identified student records from the 2010-2012 cohorts to perform a quantitative analysis. The study included four samples, the first two consisted of 150 student records for the retention analysis and the second two consisted of 100 student records for timely-degree completion. For the qualitative section, the researcher developed a survey consisting of seven Likert Scale questions and two open-ended questions. The responses gathered provided the perspectives of internship participants from summer 2018 and fall 2018 and the impact of their experiences on their retention and timely-degree completeion. The following section discusses the results of each hypothesis and the research question.

Discussion

Retention. The first statistical analysis revealed that there was a difference in the proportion of internship and non-internship participants from the 2010-2012 cohorts retained at the university. This clarified that internship participation does affect the student retention rate. The researcher decided to run an additional test to determine if retention of internship participants was more likely than retention of non-internship participants. While it was helpful to understand that a difference did exist between the

two samples, the researcher was curious whether internship experiences had a positive impact on retention. Using a second statistical analysis, the researcher rejected the null hypothesis, revealing that internship participation does positively influence student retention. However, the perceptions of internship participants did not support the findings of the statistical analysis. The survey respondents indicated that they made their decision to stay at the institution before their internship participation and the experiences had nothing to do with their decisions. Only 6.25% of internship participants agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, "As a result of my internship, I am more likely to continue enrollment at this university." The researcher also asked the participants a qualitative question about their internship experience and its impact on retention. One student stated, "I do not feel my internship kept me at, . . . rather it aided to enhance my educational experience." This student recognized the positive impact an internship experience had on their education, but did not recognize a connection between that experience and the internship. The student might feel differently if they had a bad experience. One student did acknowledge the potential impact, "A good or bad internship experience definitely has the potential to affect university enrollment, but it didn't directly affect mine." The survey responses indicated that students found value in internships; however, one of those benefits did not include retention. The majority of the students for this study did not complete an internship until their junior or senior year, and it is possible they were so far along in their education that transferring would be difficult and would require additional time and money in order to complete their degrees. It is also possible that students see certain benefits associated with internships, such as skill development or the connection between classwork and their careers, but did not feel more

engaged on campus. When students think about internships, it may not seem natural that these experiences might provide a deeper connection to the university, as the experience will likely take them away from campus. If they were not able to develop a deeper connection with a faculty member during this experience, it would be easy to understand why they did not recognize the potential impact. While internships statistically have a positive impact on retention, participants do not necessarily see the connection. The next section will review the findings for timely-degree completion.

Timely degree completion. The researcher ran several statistical analyses to determine any difference in timely-degree completion, five-year degree completion, six-year degree completion, and general degree completion. The first statistical analysis examined any difference between internship and non-internship participants and a four-year graduation rate. However, the analysis did not reveal a difference in the timely-degree completion rate of internship and non-internship participants. Before beginning this study, the researcher assumed that internship participants would be more likely to graduate in four years. Since the majority of students were not required to complete internships and they must find the opportunities on their own, the researcher felt they would be more organized and purposeful in completing a degree in four years. The qualitative responses received in the survey also seemed to indicate this conclusion. At least two students specifically noted that graduating in four years was always the intention or plan.

In addition to timely-degree completion, the researcher also felt it was important to examine five and six-year graduation rates, as they were the standard measurement for higher education. However, once again, there was not a difference in the five and six-year

graduation rate of internship and non-internship participants. In regards to the five-year degree completion rates, not only was there not a difference, the data showed that more of the non-internship participants competed their degree in five years. This may not seem to be of any consequence, but it does at least tell the researcher that internship was not penalizing students with extended time-to-degree. Finally, the researcher examined whether a difference in degree completion existed between internship and non-internship participants. The statistical analysis revealed that a difference did exist between the two populations. The researcher ran a second statistical analysis to determine if internship participation had a positive impact on degree completion. The researcher rejected the null hypothesis and determined that internship participants were more likely to complete their degree than non-internship participants were. The researcher could conclude that internship participants were more likely to complete their degree than non-internship participants were. Earlier in the section, the researcher discussed the assumption that organization and motivation to complete a degree in four years were characteristics of internship participants. While the statistical analysis did not support that assumption, the researcher could support that this additional analysis showed the drive of internship participants in completing a degree, no matter the length of time.

Similar to the retention analysis, the perceptions of internship participants did not support the statistical analysis. While more of the internship participants agreed or strongly agreed, their internship experience was the reason for completing a degree in four years, 50% to be exact. The qualitative responses, however, did not support the results from this question. One student stated, "I would be graduating in four years regardless," and another student stated, "I never considered taking over 4 years as an

option." These responses indicated that the decision to graduate in four years was always the goal and not influenced by any of the experiences. Again, similar to retention, students that participated in internships may have been more purposeful in planning and executing their degree programs. While internships are an opportunity to connect classroom learning and the real world, as well as engage with a faculty member, the exposure to life after college might also provide motivation for the student to finish their degree. One of the internship participants stated, "If anything these internships made me realize what I was missing at [university name]." The researcher did find it interesting that none of the students felt that their internship experiences created an obstacle in order to graduate in four years. The results of both the statistical analysis and the qualitative research provided the researcher with insight on the impact of internship participation and its impact on retention and timely-degree completion. The following section discusses how the results could affect administrative decision making for the university.

Implications

The purpose of this study was to provide data and information on internships that will assist university decision makers in providing better experiences for their students. As the researcher discussed in Chapter One, an increased focus was being placed on retention and timely-degree completion; in fact, it was being used as a measure of success for institutions. In addition, students, parents, employers, and society expected colleges and universities to prepare students for future careers. According to Scott (1992), students viewed internships as the best opportunity to gain hands-on experience and experience the reality of their chosen career path. This section discusses the implications of the researcher's findings and recommendations for the university.

Demographic information. In Chapter Three, the researcher broke down internship and non-internship participants by both ethnicity and gender. An unexpected finding in the demographic breakdown of the data was that women were more likely to complete an internship, 59.2% compared to 40.8%. The data showed that the university was doing well in making sure that women, as well as men, were participating in internships. However, this could be partially due to the overall makeup of the university. The ethnic breakdown of internship and non-internship participants was consistent with the demographic makeup of the university. However, the researcher was surprised to find that the percentage of African Americans was higher for internship participation than for non-participation. The percentage of Hispanic internship participants was lower than that of non-participants. The university needs to put specific initiatives in place to encourage both Hispanic and African American students to complete internships and other high impact practices. According to Finely and McNair (2013), Hispanic students report higher engagement in deep learning and perceived gains when they participate in one or two high-impact practices, with African American students seeing similar benefits.

Internships. While this study focused on the potential impact of internship participation on retention and timely-degree completion, the researcher was able to gather important data on the internship experience at this university. The intention of the first three survey questions was to address specific areas of the internship experience, career preparation, connection between degree courses, and engagement with a faculty member. The researcher was not surprised to find that 87.5% of internship participants felt that the internship experience felt more prepared for a career. This is consistent with then-current

research on internships; as discussed earlier, this is the reason why many students seek colleges and universities that offer or require internship experiences (Weible, 2010).

The researcher was also surprised to find that only 75% of students felt they had a better understanding of their course work after their internship experience. While this is still a majority of the respondents, it does mean either that the internship experience did not relate to their course work, or that their course work is not compatible with the working world. The researcher concluded that internships are important to career preparation, but if the university is not providing course work that is also relevant, students will be less likely to be successful after graduation. One student stated, "The curriculum, I feel, has not prepared me at all for a field in HR." According to Roberson (2013), students were less likely to engage in class or be motivated outside of the classroom, if the material is not relevant. It is recommended that the university consistently examine course content to make sure it is relevant, not only to the current working environment, but also helps prepare students for future careers, as well.

During the design phase of this study, the researcher was required to gather information about how the then-current internship program was structured. It was surprising that, while internships were offered, no consistent policy existed on what constituted an internship. The School of Business had a list of requirements for an internship, but this was not university wide. Students did not have to complete the same amount of hours, or have the same amount of contact with a faculty member, or have the same opportunities to reflect upon their experience. According to NACE (2016), internships should have a defined beginning and end, a detailed job description, professional supervision, required feedback from a supervisor, and provide resources,

equipment and facilities that support learning outcomes. The inconsistency of not having a policy that is continually reviewed and updated to meet the demands of the changing work environment could lead to fewer students seeking internships or being satisfied with the experience. From 2010-2012, academic schools coded their courses differently, making it harder to identify internship courses for analysis. The institution would have been able to do some research, but without a consistent policy or coding, the results would have been limited. In addition, the fact that the university is not consistently monitoring the types of internships or the companies for which students are interning may put the university at risk if a student runs into a legal issue. Tracking where students complete internships might also help the university provide additional opportunities for other students. If the university monitored where students are completing internships, they could potentially build relationships with those companies; and therefore, provide additional resources for other students seeking internships.

Inconsistency is not the only issue facing the then-current internship program. When Kuh (2008) identified the high-impact practices, one of their benefits was deeper engagement with the institution. One of the key areas of opportunity for additional engagement in an internship was with the faculty member overseeing the internship. The university had no consistent policies in place, which means it also did not require students to check in consistently with a faculty member regarding their experience; and therefore, loses the opportunity for further student engagement with a faculty member. The survey included the question, "During my internship I was continuously engaged with a faculty member at the university." Only four, or 25% of the internship participants agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. The researcher recommends that part of the

new internship program structure include regular opportunities for the student to check-in with the supervising faculty member. Discussions should include how a reflection on the students' internship experiences, connections they are making between their academic studies and experiential learning experience, what skills they have learned, and how their experiences have or not changed their outlook on future careers. Creating this requirement will benefit both the students and the university.

The qualitative portion of this study also revealed some insight into the then-current program. One student stated, "My internship, I got it from myself back home because the ones offered here are not international students sensitive," while another stated, "I picked the internship myself." These responses indicated that students might be largely responsible for identifying internship opportunities with little support from the university. The first student comment is presumably from an international student. Although the demographics for this study showed that 12% of internship participants were international students, this comment illustrates the importance of designing internship programs specifically for international students. At the time of this study, international students face additional restrictions when working the United States. According to Rhoads (2016), an international student's immigration status is put at risk if they participate in an unpaid internship without proper authorization, which the court determines met the qualifications for a paid position. The researcher recommends that universities have support and policies in place to help international students understand their options, whether that be an unpaid internship or finding international options. Universities need to establish relationships with companies that have international locations or opportunities to help provide these experiences to international students.

While international students will need additional support, it is also important that domestic students also have appropriate resources for internship opportunities. The university not only needs to create university-wide internship policies, it also needs to create an area where any student, no matter the degree program, can seek help with locating an internship. The researcher would recommend specific personnel be responsible for creating these relationships and providing additional resources, in conjunction with faculty members from each school. These partnerships will allow these employees to understand the degree coursework and use faculty resources to find new internship opportunities. If the university is able to make it easier for students to identify and complete internships, they will be more likely to participate and enjoy the experience.

Internship experiences are important as the university continues to prepare students for future careers. The study revealed some positive and some negative aspects of the then-current internship program. While internship participants feel better prepared for a career, a consistent university policy, increased contact with faculty members, and additional resources to help students identify internships will improve the student experience and make internships even more valuable. The next section will specifically discuss the impact of internships on retention and timely-degree completion and the researcher's recommendations.

Retention. This study provided the researcher with interesting information regarding the connection between internship participation and retention. This supports Kuh's (2008) theory that high-impact practices affect retention. It is important to note that internship participants for the 2010-2012 cohort would be completing at least two

high-impact practices, which is with Kuh's (2008, 2018) recommendation that students

participate in at least two high-impact practices. All first-time, full-time freshmen during

this time were required to complete a Freshman Experience course (C. Rodgers, personal

communication, 2019). This means that each internship participant would have

completed at least two high-impact practices, leading the researcher to question whether

internships and retention are connected, or if the completion of two high-impact practices

is the link.

The researcher found the responses from the survey interesting as well, as they

directly contradicted the statistical analysis. When asked whether students felt their

internship experiences affected their decision to stay at the institution, only 6.25%

agreed. The qualitative information gathered supported this data. One student stated, "It

had no bearing", while another stated, "I do not feel my internship kept me at [university

name]." There could be several reasons why students had this perception, one of which

being the timing of the internship during their education. Students were able to complete

an internship at any time during their education; however, the majority of the participants

were either juniors or seniors during their internship. There is very little research

connected to the reasoning behind the retention of juniors and seniors, most of it focused

on freshman and sophomore students. The researcher recommends conducting further

research to provide a better understanding of why internship participants stay. A further

discussion occurs later in the chapter.

While the statistical analysis showed the likelihood of internship participant

retention, the researcher was surprised at retention numbers from this sample compared

to the university's retention rates. Among the sample of 150 non-internship participants,

the proportion of students retained was only 14%, or 21 students. According to the 2016

Census Report published by the university, the rate of retention for the 2011 cohort, to

the fourth year, was only 49.9%. It is likely the higher retention rate of these students is

due to pulling just a sample of the population.

      Timely degree completion. The purpose of this study was not only to explore the

impact of internships on retention, but also on timely-degree completion. The researcher

chose to use four years as the measure of timely degree completion, as well as analyze

five and six-year degree completion rates, as this is the national measurement standard, as

well as degree completion in general. The researcher was surprised to find there was not a

significant difference between internship and non-internship participants' timely-degree

completion rates. As supported by the survey respondents, the researcher believed

internship participants would be more likely to complete a degree in four years. While the

researcher was surprised, this does provide useful data for the university. Students

participating in internships may not be more likely to finish in four years; the experience

does not affect their ability to graduate in four years. Further support for this conclusion

is the analysis of five and six-year graduation rates. Fewer internship participants

graduated in five and six years compared to non-internship participants. This means that a

student is able to plan a class schedule and voluntarily complete an internship without it

elongating their time-to-degree. If the university decided to change the then-current

internship model or was interested in making internships required, they would need to be

purposeful designing programs to ensure it does not hinder a student from completing a

degree in four years.

In addition to how long it took students to complete a degree, the researcher also explored differences in degree completion. The statistical analysis found that internship participants were more likely to complete a degree than non-internship participants were. Similar to retention, the researcher is not able to conclude the sole impact for this difference. The data pulled for degree completion was also from the 2010-2012 cohorts, meaning that all of the students would have completed a Freshman Experience class. Based on the data gathered for this study, the researcher cannot differentiate between the impact of two high-impact practices and internships. It would however be useful for the university to conduct further research in order to make additional conclusions.

The researcher identified several outliers and excluded those records from the data set. The sample of internship participants for timely degree completion was 100 student records. The researcher was surprised that 23 of the students completed their degree in three years. The university does not publish three-year graduation rates, but the researcher was curious that almost 25% of the sample graduated in three years, especially since the four year graduation rate for the university is only 31% for the 2010 cohort, 34.6% for the 2011 cohort, and 37.1% for the 2012 cohort (Census Report, 2018, p. 3).

Limitations

The researcher acknowledged several limitations to this study. The location of this was a mid-sized, private university, so the data and results were likely to differ at private institutions that are larger or smaller, or at public institutions. The researcher finds some of the results presented compelling; however, not all institutions may find them applicable. The researcher also did not control for participation in other high-impact practices. The purpose of the study was to understand the impact of internships, but

without fully understanding what other high-impact practices in which students participated it is difficult to make conclusions. As discussed earlier, the researcher is curious about the classification of first-time, full-time freshmen. It is possible that many of the student records included in this study completed college courses during high school before enrolling at the university. This may have affected time-to-degree for all of these students. After compiling the breakdown of internship by majors, the researcher noticed that no participants were from the School of Education. All education majors at this institution were required to complete student teaching, which qualifies as an internship experience and is included on the list of classes identified as an internship or experiential learning opportunity. The exclusion of this entire school, while not purposeful, may have affected the student records available for the internship sample; and therefore, affected the numbers for retention and degree completion, as well.

Further Research

The purpose of this study was to explore the impact of internship participation on timely-degree completion. Based on the data provided and the then-current research available on this topic, the researcher concluded there are several opportunities for further research. As discussed in Chapter Two, several studies were conducted to examine high-impact practices to determine the benefits they provide. Additional studies need to be conducted to determine if individual high-impact practices influence students' retention or timely-degree completion or if multiple practices are required. This will help college and university administrators determine which practices to implement or how to delegate resources in support of these programs. The researcher noted that all of the students during this period participated in two high-impact practices. This means that the results

did prove benefits based solely on internship participation. Research examining the impact of internships by focusing on students that have not participated in other high impact practices, but solely internships, may provide additional insight. A study of this nature would allow researchers to conclude whether internships really affect retention and timely-degree completion.

The reasoning behind juniors and seniors leaving an institution is also an area for further research. This could take several forms, including whether students have certain characteristics that make them more likely to leave if financial reasons are the cause, or if the relationship between the student and the university plays a role. According to Hunt et al. (2012), understanding the phenomenon of students leaving after committing so much time into their degree might help stop this trend. While degree completion rates are on the rise, higher education cannot afford to accept or ignore students leaving so far into their education.

The researcher also has several suggestions for further research specific to the university. Initially, the university needs to conduct more qualitative research to understand the student perspective on internship experiences at the university. The data presented in this study was only 16 students, and a larger sample may provide more insight to help design a more effective and rewarding internship program. It is also important to understand some of the qualitative responses provided in this study. Several students stated that internships had no impact on their retention or timely-degree completion, because there was not another option. Another researcher might choose to explore whether internship participants are more purposeful when choosing classes, more likely to take larger class loads, or have more grit than those that do not participate.

While the data from this study provided some useful insights into internships, exploration of other areas of the internship experience would be beneficial. The researcher chose to use data from the 2010-2012 cohorts, which was only a small set of students. In the last two years, the institution implemented a new strategic plan with one of the initiatives being an increase in internships and experiential learning. It would be useful for the university to continue to track the retention rates and timely degree completion rates for these students. Administrators should also consider tracking how many students are utilizing internships and if particular majors or degree programs are more likely to have internship participation. The breakdown included in Chapter Three was based on the then-current academic schools, which have changed since the 2010-2012 cohorts. It would be interesting to see if the breakdown is similar or if it is changed. Students in the health sciences or business school are probably more likely to participate in internships, but with data by school, the university could assess whether other schools should be providing additional resources for their students.

In addition to examining the internship experiences of first-time, full-time freshmen, the university should explore whether first generation students and transfer students are participating in internships. According to a study by the American Association of Colleges and Universities, first generation students are less likely to participate in internships or find paid experiences (Salvadge, 2019). However, first generation students are more likely to be deeply satisfied with those experiences, were more likely to seek a career aligned with their internship experience, and reported a higher global/cultural fluency than their non-first generation counterparts (Salvadge, 2019). The university needs to track the success of these student groups and understand

any emerging trends in order to ensure their success. This information may also help administrators understand the kinds of resources needed to support these students in identifying and seeking internship opportunities. Another population the university should examine is international students. The rules and legality of internship experience for international students are much more complicated than domestic students. If the university had data on how many international students are participating in internships, as well as understanding the student perceptions on the barriers to completing internships, administrators would be able to better structure programs for these students. Finally, the university used for this study had a large student athlete population. These students have busier schedules with classes, practice, and sometimes outside positions. Administrators need to understand whether these students are participating in internships. The university should use the identified gaps when designing internship opportunity structures specifically for this student population.

The researcher would also be interested in specifically examining the internship participants who still chose to leave the institution. As most of these students are juniors or seniors during their internship program, understanding if financial circumstances, extraordinary family circumstances, or the internship experience was a cause for the student leaving would be insightful into a population that receives little focus. Administrators might also examine if those internship participants that left were resident students or not. As discussed in Chapter Two, students living on campus are more likely to be retained. The connection established by living on campus may also negate the effect of spending a large amount of time at an off campus internship. In addition to understanding why a student leaves, administrators may also benefit from research

revolving on whether students stay in their chosen major after an internship experience. If the university identified a trend showing students changing majors after an internship experience, administrators should consider encouraging completion of an internship earlier in the academic program.

Besides understanding the demographic makeup of internship participants, the university should continue to try to understand the student perspective. Conducting surveys, focus groups, and interviews with internship participants can help the university understand the ways in which students are interacting with faculty during their experience, how their internship connects or provides deeper understanding with their class work, and if the student faced any challenges or barriers during their participation. This information will help the university make necessary changes to the internship structure or degree content in order to stay relevant to the changing work environment. This additional research should also help identify what specific skills the students are learning during their experience, the researcher would recommend identifying specific soft skills, such as critical thinking, teamwork, communication, etc. and conducting before and after surveys. While understanding the internship experience is important, the university should also consider tracking the outcomes for these students after graduation. Are the university's internship participants more likely to be employed and are they ending up with the company where they completed an internship? The university could use this information as a recruiting tool for attracting new students. Overall, this study provided some interesting insight into the impact of internships, but it also revealed a number of areas for further research.

Conclusion

The changing landscape of higher education will continue to require colleges and universities to adapt to changing demographics, increasing costs, and a changing workforce. Increased completion for a shrinking pool of candidates no longer allows administrators to dedicate only meager resources to career preparedness and student outcomes. Colleges and universities that collect and analyze data, strive to understand why students leave, as well as characteristics, which motivate students to complete a degree in a timely manner will be more successful. Administrators must also focus on available opportunities, such as internships, and their effect on student outcomes.

While current research is beneficial, higher education leaders need to focus on such student outcomes such as retention and timely-degree completion, just monitoring the numbers is not enough. Administrators also need to understand the student perspective in order to create a complete picture of the student experience. Colleges and universities must adopt a culture of continuous assessment and improvement in order to offer a relevant curriculum and produce a prepared workforce.

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Appendix A

Internship Participant Questionnaire

Rate the statements below using the following key:

5 = Strongly Agree   4 = Agree   3 = Neutral   2 = Disagree   1 = Strongly Disagree

1. I feel that I am better prepared for a career after my internship experience.
2. As a result of my internship experience, I have a better understanding of concepts, theories, and skills in my course of study.
3. During my internship I was continuously engaged with a faculty member at the university.
4. As a result of my internship, I am more likely to continue enrollment at this university.
5. Due to other factors and not the internship experience, I am more likely to continue enrollment at this university.
6. As a result of my internship, I am more likely to complete my degree in four years.
7. Due to other factors and not the internship experience, I am more likely to complete my degree in four years.

Open-ended

Please expand on your choice for Question 4 and 5.

Please expand on your choice for Question 6 and 7.

Appendix B

List of Identified Internship Courses

Department	Course	Name	
AMC	43000	Arts Entrepreneurshp	Experiential_learning
ART	48912	Study Abroad: Design Internship	Experiential_learning
ASC	41600	Advertising Competition I: The Campaign	Experiential_learning
ASC	41700	Advertising Competition II: The Pitch	Experiential_learning
AT	25000	Clinical Practicum I	Experiential_learning
AT	26000	Clinical Practicum II	Experiential_learning
AT	28300	Clinical Experience I	Experiential_learning
AT	35000	Clinical Practicum III	Experiential_learning
AT	36000	Clinical Practicum IV	Experiential_learning
AT	38300	Clinical Experience II	Experiential_learning
AT	38400	Clinical Experience III	Experiential_learning
AT	38500	Clinical Experience IV	Experiential_learning
AT	42800	Clinical Experience V	Experiential_learning
AT	42900	Clinical Experience VI	Experiential_learning
AT	43900	Athletic Training Integrating Experience	Experiential_learning
AT	45000	Clinical Practicum V	Experiential_learning
AT	46000	Clinical Practicum VI	Experiential_learning
AT	38700	Football Experience	Experiential_learning
CJ	20500	Criminal Justice Observation	Experiential_learning
CJ	46000	St. Louis County and Municipal Police Academy	Experiential_learning
CJ	45000	Practicum in Criminal Justice	Experiential_learning
COM	44420	Interactive Media and Web Design Firm I	Experiential_learning
COM	44444	Interactive Media and Web Design Firm II	Experiential_learning
COM	301XX	Applied Learning (varies) Repeatable	Experiential_learning
COM	30800	Applied Journalism, Newspaper	Experiential_learning
COM	30900	Applied Journalism, Internet	Experiential_learning
CSC	44700	Project Management and Practice	Experiential_learning
DCS	48000	Digital Content Strategy Capstone	Experiential_learning
EDU	410000	Student Teaching	Experiential_learning
EXS	29001	Special Topics: Practicum in Exercise Science	Experiential_learning
EXS	29006	Special Topics: Elderly Fitness Programming & Implementation	Experiential_learning

Department	Course	Name	
EXS	39003	Special Topics: Program Assessment & Design, Clinical Therapy Setting	Experiential_learning
EXS	39004	Special Topics: Exercise Science Practicum	Experiential_learning
EXS	43000	Physical Activity for Specific Populations	Experiential_learning
HFS	32000	Adapted Sports and Therapeutic Recreation Activities	Experiential_learning
HFS	40000	Adapted Physical Education	Experiential_learning
HIST	30100	Applied History	Experiential_learning
HP	54400	Foundations of Therapeutic Recreation	Experiential_learning
HP	64200	Program Design and Assessment in Recreation Therapy	Experiential_learning
NUR	43000	Leadership and Management	Experiential_learning
NUR	45000	Community Health and Health Promotion	Experiential_learning
NUR	47000	Nursing Capstone	Experiential_learning
NUR	51850	Patient Care Practicum	Experiential_learning
NUR	51900	Nurse Educator Practicum	Experiential_learning
NUR	53900	Practicum in Outcomes Management and Patient Safety	Experiential_learning
PARA	22000	Emergency Medical Technician	Experiential_learning
PARA	38800	Clinical Practicum I	Experiential_learning
PARA	38900	Clinical Practicum II	Experiential_learning
PARA	41000	Clinical Practicum III	Experiential_learning
PE	42052	Practicum in Coaching Baseball/ Softball	Experiential_learning
PE	42053	Practicum in Coaching Track and Field	Experiential_learning
PE	42054	Practicum in Coaching Volleyball	Experiential_learning
PE	42055	Practicum in Coaching Soccer	Experiential_learning
PE	42056	Practicum in Coaching Weight Training	Experiential_learning
PE	42057	Practicum in Coaching Wrestling	Experiential_learning
PE	42058	Practicum in Coaching Aquatic Sports	Experiential_learning
PE	42059	Practicum in Adaptive Sports	Experiential_learning
PHS	48100	Capstone Seminar and Project I	Experiential_learning
PHS	48200	Capstone Seminar and Project II	Experiential_learning
PSY	45000	Psychology Practicum	Experiential_learning
REC	31000	Inclusive and Therapeutic Recreation	Experiential_learning
REC	31100	Processes & Techniques in Therapeutic Recreation	Experiential_learning
REC	33300	Program Design and Assessment in Recreation Therapy	Experiential_learning

Department	Course	Name	
REC	38200	Practicum in Recreation, Sport, & Tourism Management	Experiential_learning
SOC	21100	Introduction to Applied Sociology	Experiential_learning
ACCT	41095	Internship	Internship/practicum
ACCT	51089	Internship	Internship/practicum
ACCT	51093	Special Topics in Accounting: Internship	Internship/practicum
ACCT	51094	Special Topics in Accounting: Internship	Internship/practicum
AEM	45000	Internship	Internship/practicum
AEM	55000	Internship	Internship/practicum
ANT	39107	Special Topics: Coroner's Office Internship	Internship/practicum
ANT	45000	Internship in Anthropology	Internship/practicum
ART	46500	Art Internship	Internship/practicum
ART	46500	Art Internship	Internship/practicum
ART	48912	Study Abroad: Design Internship	Internship/practicum
ARTH	46500	Art History Internship	Internship/practicum
ARTH	46500	Art History Internship	Internship/practicum
ASC	45000	Adv and Strategic Comms Internship	Internship/practicum
BSC	39003	Special Topics: Zoological Internship	Internship/practicum
BSC	39006	Special Topics: Biological Internship	Internship/practicum
BSC	49002	Special Topics: Biology Internship-USACE	Internship/practicum
CHM	48000	Chemistry Internship	Internship/practicum
CHM	48000	Internship	Internship/practicum
CMS	45000	Internship	Internship/practicum
COM	45000	Communications Internship	Internship/practicum
COM	45000	Communications Internship	Internship/practicum
COM	49883	Special Topics: Secondary Internship	Internship/practicum
COM	58400	Media/Communication Internship	Internship/practicum
CSC	45111	Internship	Internship/practicum
CSC	45211	Internship	Internship/practicum
DAN	47500	Professional Internship in Dance	Internship/practicum
ECON	43095	Internship	Internship/practicum
EDA	64000	Educational Administration Internship (Advanced Principal)	Internship/practicum
EDA	64100	Educational Administration Internship (Superintendency)	Internship/practicum
EDA	64200	Instructional Leadership Internship	Internship/practicum
EDA	74100	Educational Administration Internship	Internship/practicum
EDA	74800	Instructional Leadership Internship	Internship/practicum

Department	Course	Name	
EDAM	63900	Seminar with Internship I - Numbers and Operations	Internship/practicum
EDAM	64500	Seminar with Internship II – Geometry and Measurement	Internship/practicum
EDAM	65500	Seminar with Internship III – Algebraic Reasoning	Internship/practicum
EDAM	66500	Sem w/Internship IV-Data Analysis, Statistics, & Probability	Internship/practicum
EDM	53900	Seminar with Internship I - Numbers and Operations	Internship/practicum
EDM	53900	Seminar with Internship I - Numbers and Operations	Internship/practicum
EDM	54500	Seminar with Internship II - Geometry and Measurement	Internship/practicum
EDM	54500	Seminar with Internship II - Geometry and Measurement	Internship/practicum
EDM	55500	Seminar with Internship III - Algebraic Reasoning	Internship/practicum
EDM	55500	Seminar with Internship III - Algebraic Reasoning	Internship/practicum
EDM	56500	Sem w/Internship IV-Data Analysis, Statistics & Probability	Internship/practicum
EDM	56500	Sem w/Internship IV-Data Analysis, Statistics & Probability	Internship/practicum
EGR	49000	Special Topics: Engineering Internship	Internship/practicum
ENGL	28205	Special Topics: Internship or Magazine Internship	Internship/practicum
ENGL	38201	Advanced Topics in English: Magazine Editorial Internship	Internship/practicum
ENGL	38205	Special Topics: English Internship	Internship/practicum
ENGL	49000	Special Topics: Internship	Internship/practicum
ENGL	49000	Special Topics: English Internship	Internship/practicum
ENTR	47595	Internship	Internship/practicum
ENTR	57589	Internship	Internship/practicum
EXS	44000	Internships	Internship/practicum
EXS	44000	Internships	Internship/practicum
EXS	44100	Research Internship	Internship/practicum
EXS	44100	Research Internship	Internship/practicum
FD	46500	Fashion Internship	Internship/practicum
FD	46500	Fashion Internship	Internship/practicum
FD	46500	Fashion Internship	Internship/practicum
FIN	42095	Internship	Internship/practicum
FIN	52089	Internship	Internship/practicum
FRE	49000	Special Topics: French Translation Internship	Internship/practicum

Department	Course	Name	
GAM	46500	Game Design Internship	Internship/practicum
GD	46500	Internship	Internship/practicum
HIS	45000	History Internship	Internship/practicum
HIST	40100	History Internship	Internship/practicum
HIST	40100	History Internship	Internship/practicum
HP	54100	Internships	Internship/practicum
HP	54100	Internships	Internship/practicum
HRM	46595	Internship	Internship/practicum
IBA	45000	Business Administration Internship	Internship/practicum
ICM	45000	Communications Internship	Internship/practicum
ICM	45100	Media Internship	Internship/practicum
ICM	58850	Media Internship	Internship/practicum
ICM	58855	Communications Internship	Internship/practicum
IGE	50000	Gerontology Internship	Internship/practicum
IHM	50000	Healthcare Administration Internship	Internship/practicum
IHM	50000	Healthcare Administration Internship	Internship/practicum
INTL	48095	Internship	Internship/practicum
INTL	58089	Internship	Internship/practicum
IPC	62000	Counseling Internship	Internship/practicum
IPC	62001	Internship Extension	Internship/practicum
IPC	62700	Internship in Diagnostic Assessment	Internship/practicum
IPC	62701	Internship in Diagnostic Assessment Extension	Internship/practicum
IR	19001	Sp Top: Internship in International Relations	Internship/practicum
IR	19001	Special Topics: Internship in International Relations	Internship/practicum
IR	39001	Sp Top: Internship	Internship/practicum
IR	39001	Special Topics: Internship	Internship/practicum
MGMT	46095	Internship	Internship/practicum
MGMT	56089	Internship	Internship/practicum
MGMT	56095	Special Topics in Management: Internship	Internship/practicum
MRKT	45095	Internship	Internship/practicum
MRKT	55089	Internship	Internship/practicum
MRKT	55093	Special Topics in Marketing: Internship	Internship/practicum
MTH	48000	Mathematics Internship	Internship/practicum
MUS	48900	Internship	Internship/practicum
MUS	48900	Internship	Internship/practicum
NPA	45000	Internship	Internship/practicum
NPA	45100	Nonprofit Leadership Alliance Internship	Internship/practicum
NPA	58700	Nonprofit Administration Internship	Internship/practicum
NPA	59800	Nonprofit Administration Internship	Internship/practicum

Department	Course	Name	
NPA	59800	Special Topics: Nonprofit Administration Internship	Internship/practicum
PARA	41100	Paramedic Field Internship	Internship/practicum
PE	29826	Special Topics: Physical Education Internship	Internship/practicum
PE	29826	Special Topics: Physical Education Internship	Internship/practicum
PS	45000	Government Internship	Internship/practicum
PS	45000	Government Internship	Internship/practicum
PS	45000	Honors Government Internship	Internship/practicum
REC	48200	Internship in Recreation, Sport, & Tourism Management	Internship/practicum
REC	48200	Internship in Recreation	Internship/practicum
REC	48200	Internship in Recreation, Sport and Tourism	Internship/practicum
SOC	45000	Internship in Sociology	Internship/practicum
SPMGT	47095	Practicum in Sport Management	Internship/practicum
TA	46500	Professional Internship	Internship/practicum
TA	46500	Professional Internship	Internship/practicum
TA	46500	Professional Internship	Internship/practicum
TA	56500	Professional Internship	Internship/practicum
TA	56500	Professional Internship	Internship/practicum

Vitae

Stefani Schuette

Lindenwood University

Chief of Staff/Assistant Secretary to the Board of Trustees   **April 2019 - Present**

- Manages the operational, administrative and fiscal affairs of the Office of the President
- Leads the operationalization of strategic initiatives for the President
- Analyzes policy issues and identifies university wide impact
- Prepares and/or contributes to the preparation of reports, proposals, briefings, and presentations in response to institutional strategic issues
- Serves as a liaison to the Board of Trustees
- Accurately represents the President's position in internal meetings and discussions to help drive understanding and move decision-making forward
- Facilitates needs of senior staff in raising issues to the President
- Interacts with members at all levels of the community for the purpose of defining, advancing and assessing the work of the Office of the President to ensure its continued effectiveness
- Supervises Executive Assistant to the Office of the President and Manager of Special Events

Executive Assistant to the President   **June 2015 – April 2019**

- Prioritize and manage President's Calendar
- Prepare President's correspondence
- Identify opportunities for President to build relationships with various constituents
- Research and compile projects assigned by the President
- Serve as a liaison of the President's Office to the Board of Trustees and Vice Presidents
- Provide research and background for meetings with outside vendors and constituents
- Manage the administrative staff of the President
- Research and assess critical issues to bring to President's attention
- Organize and prepare monthly credit card statement
- Arrange travel for president and guests
- Create and maintain a positive environment for guests
- Develop and maintain relationships with Vice Presidents' assistants
- Identify and research opportunities to become more efficient, i.e. Director's Desk

Assistant Chief Business Officer   **March 2009 – June 2015**

- Assist in supervising personnel, managing day to day operations and troubleshooting problems
- Interact with undergraduate and graduate students regarding explanation of billing statements, processing of tuition payments, accurate distribution of financial aid refunds and appeal process outcomes
- Review and authorize weekly student refunds

- Implement new systems to assist student billings, i.e. peer Transfer
- Assist with interview process for all Graduate Assistants and Temporary Employees
- Develop and evolve positive working relationships with all campus personnel
- Evaluate university-wide financial processes, then collaborate with various staff members to brainstorm and accurately implement necessary improvements
- Manage website content and updates using Cascade Server
- Manage a collection list of over 1600 NCAA and Student Life Sports athletes
- Oversee various special projects, i.e. redevelopment of webpage
- Member of Student Engagement and Retention Committee
    - Committee is charged with suggesting academic initiatives in order to engage and retain students
    - Advise committee on financial implications for new initiatives
- Member of Student Services Committee.
    - Committee conducts a yearly student survey, uses information to suggest and implement improvements to student services offices, such as Business Office, Student Development, Financial Aid, etc.

AXIS Integrated Solutions Inc.   **September 2007 - September 2008**

Office Manager

- Maintained 5 Sage Software consultants and CEO calendar
- Arrange all consultants' travel, including air, car rental and hotel accommodations
- Prepare, process and edit all consultants' travel expense reports
- Created a positive customer experience by answering phones and greeting customers
- Coordinate end user sessions (customer training sessions) and company events
- Responsible for maintaining and ordering marketing material
- Reviewed customer billing statements for correct charges and work descriptions

Downtown St. Louis Partnership   **February 2007 - September 2007**

Event Planner

- Executed planning for 5 Downtown St. Louis Partnership events.
- Organized participant registration for all events
- Tracked patron invoices and payments to ensure correct and timely remittance
- Negotiated room rates and menus with hotels and caterers for event services
- Handled all communication with event patrons and sponsors

Missouri Historical Society   **October 2006 - January 2007**

Receptionist/Office Assistant

- Answered all incoming phone calls
- Greeted all employees and guests as they arrive in the Executive Office
- Responsible for sorting of incoming and outgoing communication

- Worked with Patty Long Catering executive luncheons for staff, board members, and major donors

National Event Director   **November 2005 - October 2006**

- Executed all planning for 6 day *Lewis and Clark: Currents of Change*
- Managed event budget; tracked all accounts payable and receivables
- Updated web site using Dreamweaver, created site content and made all site updates
- Coordinated eight committees dedicated to different components including Public Ceremonies, Entertainment, Symposium, Executive, etc.
- Organized registration for 2 day symposium and 3 days of tours
- Coordinated all speakers, presenters, and entertainers for 2 day symposium and 3 public ceremonies using committees and Osage Tribal Council
- Worked with all rental and production companies to
- Worked with hotel event managers to plan meals and setups
- Oversaw design and production of brochures, advertisements, and signage for event marketing
- Prepared reports for committee members on progress of event

Administrative Assistant   **July 2004 - November 2005**

- Advised teachers on museum education programs appropriate for their needs
- Acted as liaison between other departments and education department
- Facilitated numerous teacher events and workshops
- Worked with Patty Long Catering for all department needs
- Coordinated travel for division head and school services coordinator
- Created new databases and refined current mailing list databases
- Prepared monthly e-newsletter via Microsoft Outlook
- Responsible for proofreading Education section of annual program booklet and presentations/layout
- Coordinated updates of website, both intranet and internet

Education

Missouri Valley College
Degree Conferred May 2003
Bachelor of Science in English
Minor in Speech Communications

Lindenwood University
Degree Conferred December 2014
Master of Business Administration, emphasis in Management