Mar 26th, 10:00 AM - 10:45 AM

Internship as High-Impact Practice: How to Make a Better Internship in Half the Time

Jennifer Dobbs-Oates
Purdue University - Main Campus, jendo@purdue.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.georgiasouthern.edu/sotlcommons

Part of the Curriculum and Instruction Commons, Educational Assessment, Evaluation, and Research Commons, Educational Methods Commons, Higher Education Commons, and the Social and Philosophical Foundations of Education Commons

Recommended Citation
https://digitalcommons.georgiasouthern.edu/sotlcommons/SoTL/2014/51

This presentation (open access) is brought to you for free and open access by the Conferences & Events at Digital Commons@Georgia Southern. It has been accepted for inclusion in SoTL Commons Conference by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons@Georgia Southern. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@georgiasouthern.edu.
Internship as High-Impact Practice: How to Make a Better Internship in Half the Time

Jennifer Dobbs-Oates, Ph.D.
Clinical Assistant Professor
Department of Human Development and Family Studies
Purdue University
Acknowledgements

• Dr. Natasha Watkins, Clinical Assistant Professor
• Dr. Cezanne Elias, Visiting Assistant Professor
• Funding from the Provost’s Summer Instructional Innovation Program
Internship as High-Impact Practice

• High-impact educational practices defined by Kuh and the AACU
• Increased rates of student retention, engagement, and learning
• High-impact practices:
  – First-year seminars and experiences
  – Common intellectual experiences
  – Learning communities
  – Writing intensive courses
  – Collaborative assignments and projects
  – Undergraduate research
  – Diversity/Global learning
  – Service learning, community-based learning
  – Internships
  – Capstone courses and projects
What makes internships “high impact”?  

- Students “devote considerable time and effort to purposeful tasks.”
- Students “interact with faculty and peers about substantive matters, typically over extended periods of time.”
- Students “experience diversity through contact with people who are different from themselves.”
- Students receive “frequent feedback about their performance.”
- Students get to “see how what they are learning works in different settings.”
- Students gain understanding of “themselves in relation to others and the larger world.”  

(Kuh, 2008)
Human Services Internship Program

- Internship is required for human services majors

- Characteristics:
  - An academic, capstone experience
  - Students have a site supervisor and a university supervisor
  - Students complete regular assignments for their university supervisor

- Initial structure:
  - 12-credit internship
    - 40 hours/week, 16-week semester
  - 6-credit internship – plus 6 credits of additional upper-level coursework
    - 20 hours/week, 16-week semester
Examples of Placements

- United Way
- YMCA
- Big Brothers/Big Sisters
- Child welfare
- Community mental health centers
- Autism treatment centers
- Community centers/afterschool programs
- Senior centers and assisted living communities
- Probation and other court services
- Advocacy and fundraising organizations
The Re-Design

• Supervision journal assignment
  – Goals:
    • Increase frequency and timeliness of communication
    • Increase emphasis on *two-way* communication
  – Assignment:
    • Students must make at least one journal entry each week about a significant internship experience
    • University supervisor responds
    • Student responds
  – High-impact: This increases students’ interaction with faculty and provides them with more frequent feedback
The Re-Design

- Weekly reflection assignment
  - Goals:
    - Increase reflecting on connections to past learning and future goals
    - Increase expectations
  - Assignment changes:
    - Assignment was rewritten to reduce overlap with supervision journal and increase focus on connection to previous learning and impact on future
    - Evaluation rubric was rewritten to be more specific and more rigorous, while still allowing for efficient grading
  - High-impact: Increased the students’ ability to make connections between their learning and the “real world”; they also experienced feedback with higher expectations
The Re-Design

- **Virtual site visits for distant placements**
  - **Goals:**
    - Increase sense of connection between university supervisors and students completing their internships at a distance
    - Increase communication/connection between university supervisors and distant site supervisors
    - Catch any problem situations earlier by monitoring student performance and internship appropriateness more effectively
  - **Changes:**
    - Emphasis on using appropriate technology (Skype, web conferencing, etc.) to conduct a face-to-face virtual site visit
  - **High-impact:** Quality of faculty interaction and feedback is improved
The Re-Design

• Summer Schedule
  – 8 weeks (half the length of typical semester)
  – Changes:
    • Had students set goals earlier and more often
    • Maintained two professional development days on campus
    • One site visit (instead of two)
  – High-impact: We maintained many of the high-impact advantages, while compressing them into a shorter time period that offered new placement opportunities
Outcomes

- Spring vs. summer
- 53 spring interns; 14 summer interns

* $t = 1.869$, $p = .066$
Outcomes

- Spring vs. summer
- 53 spring interns; 14 summer interns

\[ t = -2.315, p = .025 \]
Outcomes

- Summer vs. Fall
- 14 summer interns; 14 fall interns

Supervision Journals*

\[ *t = 2.168, p = .039 \]
Outcomes

- Local interns vs. distant interns
- 68 local interns; 13 distant interns

Old Procedures

New Procedures
Summary

• A well-run internship can be a high-impact practice
  – Important to focus on:
    • Frequent and meaningful student interaction with faculty
    • Frequent and timely feedback for students
    • Requiring students to make connections between classroom learning and the “real world”

• An 8-week summer internship can be a high-quality experience
  – Student performance was largely unchanged
  – Internship sites that hosted summer interns were eager to do so again

• Possible disadvantages of distant internship placements can be minimized through the effective use of technology to increase communication and relationship-building