Internships in the Liberal Arts and Sciences: Extending High Impact Practices at IU South Bend

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Abstract
[150 words]

Internships are a “high-impact” practice that increase rates of student retention and improve student learning. Internships create a bridge between what students learn in the classroom and real world practices. They help confirm students’ choices in their majors and career paths and allow them to begin building their professional networks. Internships allow students to gain the practical skills they need to successfully secure a job and excel in a work environment.

Despite numerous benefits associated with internships, there are no standardized procedures for locating, developing, offering, or assessing internships with the CLAS. We seek a VISION 2020 Grant to coordinate and expand internships in the College. Improving internships in CLAS will further our campus mission to “engaged citizens prepared to build strong communities” as well as our College mission to provide “transformative learning experiences, leading students to become engaged, informed, creative, and adaptive contributors to the local and global society.”
“Having the opportunity to work in one’s field of interest as a college student doesn’t happen all of the time, and I feel so lucky that I have gotten the chance to experience just what I am studying so hard for; it makes all of the tests and papers completely worth it.” IUSB Sociology student intern at a psychiatric center.

“This experience has really allowed me to see the world through the eyes of someone that is disabled…It’s reinforced my decision to pursue my MSW and helped me to realize that I’ve chosen the right profession.” IUSB Sociology student intern at a center serving people with disabilities.

Internships: A High Impact Practice
(1943 Word Narrative)

According to the National Leadership Council for Liberal Education and America’s Promise (2011), internships are a “high-impact” practice that improves student performance and learning. Internships allow students to develop both professional and academic skills through an experiential approach in which educators “purposefully engage with learners in direct experience and focused reflection in order to increase knowledge, develop skills, clarify values, and develop people's capacity to contribute to their communities” (Association for Experiential Education). This kind of experiential learning also encourages students to take ownership over their learning and helps students to clarify their career choices (Neapolitan 1992). Employers recognize the benefits of internships as well; 80 percent of the employers surveyed in one study reported that colleges and universities should “place more emphasis on helping students develop the ability to apply knowledge and skills in real-world settings through internships or other hands-on experiences” (LEAP 2011:25). Even our local Chamber of Commerce recognizes that internships are critical to the vitality of our region; not only do they help students gain work experience prior to graduation, they allow employers to recruit and retain top talent (South Bend Tribune, 2014).

The Challenge

Despite the numerous benefits associated with internships, the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences lacks a deliberate and systematic approach to internships. The College offers internships in Sociology & Anthropology, Criminal Justice, Women’s and Gender Studies, Chemistry, English, Psychology, Computer Science & Informatics, Political Science, General Studies, and History. However, there is virtually no coordination between departments about their internship programs, and no agreed upon standards and practices for internships in the College. As a result, each department starts from scratch when creating an internship program and subsequently develops an internship program through trial and error rather than drawing on the experiences of other departments. The expectations for internships also vary widely across the College. Because the College lacks a comprehensive database of internships, students often spend an inordinate amount of time trying to identify organizations that offer internships and to locate the appropriate contact person in an organization. Consequently, the process of setting up an internship can be time-consuming, difficult, and frustrating for students. Unlike students in professional colleges, those in the liberal arts and sciences often do not have a clear career path
in mind when they select a major and many have difficulty identifying their labor market skills. As a result, they may not know which organizations to approach for internships and how to market themselves when interviewing for internships.

**A Solution**

We seek a VISION 2020 Grant to coordinate and expand internships in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. CLAS is the largest college on campus, generating approximately 60 percent of all student credit hours at IU South Bend. Improving internships in CLAS will further our campus mission to “engaged citizens prepared to build strong communities” as well as our College mission to provide “transformative learning experiences, leading students to become engaged, informed, creative, and adaptive contributors to the local and global society.”

**Goals & Timeline for Year 1:**

1. **Share best practices in the College.**

   We plan to invite stakeholders from all CLAS departments to participate in two half day (luncheon) meetings in the fall of 2014. In the first meeting, we will share what our practices are across the college and discuss their effectiveness. What has been working? How can we learn from our mistakes? In the second meeting, McGuire will share best practices identified by other colleges and universities, and in the literature on high-impact practices. The goal of this meeting will be to identify a set of best practices for our College. Discussion items may include: the recommended number of hours in the field/credit hour, model assignments, background checks, internship contracts, suggested face time with interns, and balancing academic and professional expectations. After we identify a preliminary set of best practices, McGuire & Bennion will present them at a CLAS meeting to obtain additional feedback from the faculty. Preliminary work for these meetings (review of literature and luncheon details) will happen in the summer of 2014.

2. **Create a list of organizations with whom our student interns have worked, including supervisor contact information and website addresses.**

   Because we do not have a database of internships for CLAS students, many departments aren’t aware of the many places in which their students could intern. Students also spend a ridiculous amount of time trying to identify organizations that accept intern and trying to identify the appropriate contact people within organizations. In McGuire’s experience, students can spend weeks just trying to find the right person to talk to in an organization, which can interfere with students’ ability to begin their internship on time. This list of internship organizations would be available on the CLAS website and regularly updated by our work study student. This work would begin over the summer and a preliminary database would be available in the fall of 2014.
3. **Expand the number of organizations that use our interns.**

While the internet has allowed us to obtain and process information efficiently and quickly, it cannot replace the importance of face-to-face connections in work organizations. Informal social ties are critical for building trust and enduring relationships, which is why McGuire and Bennion will use their personal contacts in local organizations to expand the number of organizations using CLAS interns. We also hope to increase the number of departments within large organizations, like Memorial Hospital, that accept our interns. These face-to-face meetings would occur over the summer of 2014.

4. **Collect basic data on current internships in CLAS**

In order to set realistic goals for our project and to assess our effectiveness in meeting those goals, we need to collect some basic information on internships in the College. While we know which departments theoretically offer internships, we do not know how many interns each department has actually had each semester and their number of credit hours. This work would be accomplished over the summer of 2014.

**Assessment**

We will assess the extent to which we have met both short-term (year-one) and long-term (end of year-three and beyond) goals.

Year-one goals: (1) to host two luncheons to discuss common practices and best practices; (2) to conduct, present, and post literature review of best practices; (3) to present a list of proposed best practices for the College based on our meetings with colleagues and review of the literature; and (4) to meet with at least 30 prospective internship supervisors.

Assessment of our year-one goals is very straightforward. We will simply record: (1) the dates on which the two fall luncheon meetings took place and the key themes that emerged during these meetings; (2) the date on which the literature review is completed and posted to the CLAS website; (3) the date on which our suggested best practices are presented to the CLAS faculty; and (4) the dates, times, locations, and results of our meetings with prospective internship supervisors in the community. Because we are interested not only in completing these tasks, but also in providing useful information to colleagues that result in long-term institutional change, we will also assess our colleagues’ reactions to our work. Faculty reactions to the literature review and the best practices report will be solicited on the website, via email, and at the CLAS meeting. We will also administer a brief survey at the conclusion of each of the two luncheon meetings to determine whether participants found the experience to be useful and to uncover suggestions for future work. In year-two and year-three, we will also have developed a standardized student survey and reflection exercise for all students completing internship in the College.

In order to assess our long-term goals, we will consider a number of factors: (1) the number of organizations accepting our student interns; (2) the number of students completing internships;
(3) the number of CLAS departments that place students interns every semester; and (4) the development and institutionalization of a robust infrastructure for internship placement and development – including a common College database and an annual Community-Internship Luncheon. In each case we will compare the data we collect during the summer of 2014 with the data collected each summer for the next three years. Data will be collected directly from academic departments. And, because we are not simply interested in increasing the number of internships, but, rather, in increasing the number of high-quality, high-impact internships, Bennion will compare year-two internship guidelines and forms to year-one forms for all department to see if best practices are being implemented at the program level. To assess the quality of students’ internship experiences departments will be encouraged to use the collaboratively developed CLAS post-internship survey and written reflection activity, along with a site supervisor evaluation form. Departments will also be encouraged to add questions unique to their own program goals.

By year-three, we will also start collecting data regarding who is completing internships, how they compare with other students in terms of demographics, persistence, and four-year graduation rate, and job/graduate school placement. Our preliminary review of the literature tells us that internships are a high impact practice that improves student learning, retention, and job placement. However, by year-three we will be able to more systematically track the internship experiences, academic success, graduation rates, and career placement of students completing a CLAS internship. This data will then be collected annually, through exit surveys with all graduating students who completed internships and by post-graduate interviews with our alumni. In addition, in year three we will organize focus groups with local non-profits so that faculty and advisors can better advise CLAS student on how to market their degrees. While our year two and three plans are particularly exciting, even completing our year-one tasks will create a significant improvement in our College’s understanding and practice of high-quality, high-impact academic/community internships.

Goals & Timeline for Years 2 & 3:

- Offer training on best practices for internships through UCET: Years 2 & 3.
- Continue personal outreach efforts by Bennion and McGuire to increase number of organizations that accept our interns: Years 2 & 3
- Create promotional materials for CLAS internships directed at employers and students: Year 3.
- Invite local employers to our campus for a luncheon in which we showcase our interns and internship programs. The goals of this luncheon are to expand the number of organizations that accept our students as interns and to educate organizations about the skills that CLAS students have to offer: Years 2 & 3.
- Work with Alumni Affairs and draw on resources from Citizen Alum (http://www.citizenalum.org/) to identify CLAS alumni who could help the College place their interns: Years 2 & 3.
- Organize focus groups with local non-profits so that faculty and advisors can better advise CLAS students on how to market their degrees: Year 3.
**Expected Outcomes by the End of Year 3:**

- Increase the number of organizations accepting our student interns by 30% [we can’t provide an exact number until we know the number of organizations in which we currently place interns]
- Increase the number of CLAS students who have taken an internship by 30% [we can’t provide an exact number until we know how many interns we have in CLAS]
- Increase the number of CLAS departments that place student internship every semester by 30% [we can’t provide an exact number until we examine the enrollment data for CLAS]
- Provide high-quality internships for at least 50 students per year; with a majority of both students and site supervisors reporting high levels of satisfaction.
- Have the Chancellor agree to finance a yearly Community-Internship Luncheon to showcase our student interns and to inform local organizations about the benefits of CLAS interns.

**Budget for Year 1**

Summer Salary for McGuire ($2000+$540 fringe benefits): $2540
- Organize two fall meetings/luncheons with CLAS stakeholders
- Review existing literature to identify “best practices” for internships in the liberal arts & sciences
- Meet with 15 organizational representatives

Summer Salary for Bennion ($2000+$540 fringe benefits): $2540
- Collect internship materials from existing CLAS programs
- Collect basic data on CLAS interns
- Meet with 15 organizational representatives

Compensation for Work Study Student (40 hrs @$2.50/hr): $100
- Create CLAS internship database
- Collect assessment data

Two Luncheons: 15 people/meeting @ $10/person: $300
*(will request funds from participating departments)*

Total Cost $5480
Amount Covered by CLAS Departments: $480
**Total Amount of Vision 2020 Request:** $5000
**Budget for Year 2**

Summer Salary for McGuire ($2000+$540 fringe benefits): $2540
- Organize community luncheon with local employers and CLAS stakeholders
- Update literature to identify “best practices” for internships in the liberal arts & sciences
- Meet with 15 organizational representatives

Summer Salary for Bennion ($2000+$540 fringe benefits): $2540
- Collect updated internship materials from existing CLAS programs to look for changes in departmental policies and guidelines
- Plan UCET best practices training session
- Work with alumni affairs to identify alumni who could help the College place interns; contact 15 prospective site supervisors

Compensation for Work Study Student (40 hrs @$2.50/hr): $100
- Update CLAS internship database
- Assist Drs. Bennion and McGuire, as needed
- Collect assessment data

Community Luncheon: 50 people/meeting @ $10/person: $500
*(will request funds from participating departments)*

Total Cost $5680
Amount Covered by CLAS Departments or ICC Grant: $680
**Total Amount of Vision 2020 Request:** $5000

**References**

Association for Experiential Education: [http://www.aee.org/membership/FAQs](http://www.aee.org/membership/FAQs)


Fosmoe, Margaret. February 8, 2014. “Businesses Offered Tips for Intern Programs.” *South Bend Tribune.*
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Project Title:
Internships in the Liberal Arts & Sciences: Extending High Impact Practices at IU South Bend

Amount of this request:  $ 5,180

Type of Proposal:
☐ Faculty Research Grant
☐ Curriculum Development
☐ Seed Grant
☐ Research Project Initiation Grant
☐ Regional Research Grant
☐ Other  Vision 2020

Brief layman's description of project:
We seek a Vision 2020 Grant to coordinate and expand internships in the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences (CLAS)

Special Needs:
☐ Human Subjects
☐ Animals
☐ Biosafety:  ☐ Pathogenic agent
☐ Human tissue or fluids
☐ Recombinant DNA

APPROVALS:

Project Director: _________________________  Date: _________________________  Comments: _________________________

Chairperson: _________________________  Date: _________________________  Comments: _________________________
(If applicable)

Dean: _________________________  Date: _________________________  Comments: _________________________