



Developing High Impact Practices (HIPs) in University Internship Courses

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As a land grant institution, the university serves the state through teaching, research, and service initiatives to help improve the quality of life of the citizens of the state, based upon the Morrill Act of 1862 (Duemer, L.S. 2007), which created access to higher education to those who lacked the means to attend college. One of the eight guiding priorities of this university is advancing student success which includes the seamless transition of students into careers or further education. This leads into a second guiding priority of promoting student success through innovative teaching and course redesigns.

Students face real the reality of a professional career soon after graduation. High impact practices (HIPs) that promote experiential learning and develop competencies to facilitate job readiness upon graduation have become essential to the student experience (Ortiz, L. A., & MacDermott, C. 2018). HIPs are important co-curricular educational experiences in post-secondary education, as they promote learning, development and persistence among students. Research has shown that HIP participation is a significant predictor of future career plans and early job attainment and can give students a career-related advantage through skill development, engagement in learning opportunities and information for potential employers (Miller, A. L., Rocconi, L. M., & Dumford, A. D. 2018).

The implementation of several HIPs in an apparel merchandising and product development curriculum fosters a comprehensive learning environment resulting in graduates who can be more competitive with peers from other institutions. One such HIP is the completion of an internship, typically between the junior and senior year. An internship offers the student on-the-job training before they graduate. Students have the opportunity to experience a real life situation, before they are held accountable in that position. HIPs in curriculum are developed to prepare students for internships which can result in higher paid skilled jobs for students upon graduation. This allows students to have more expertise in their discipline, be more productive on the job and gain experience in workplace. A well-structured internship program will cover a broad base of information in addition to on the job training. Students are required to learn all aspects of a business by performing hands on tasks related to the various components of the business operation while on the job. These activities are guided through structured internship coursework. This practical experience in a retail store or in a work situation related to the apparel industry allows students to gain insight into the field of apparel merchandising and operations.

To build upon the internship experience and HIP, a pre-internship class was developed and implemented in the apparel program. Internship courses across universities and colleges share certain characteristics and learning objectives, with the end goal of preparing students for success in the workplace. This class is a study of job descriptions, responsibilities at the management level, structural operations, work procedures, job performance evaluations, job application, resume and portfolio development in preparation for the internship. Networking with professionals from the apparel industry round out this professional development pre-internship course. Students are required to complete an intensive professional development program through a partnership with the university career development center, which includes online sessions of the professional development components of the course. In addition, weekly face-to-face class meetings are held with employers who relate practical insights for working successfully on the job. Contact information from previous internship locations is shared with the pre-interns to aid in their job search. This course has proven to be a critical component of the job search process for students since it was implemented in 2012 and is now offered twice a year to sophomore level students to prepare them earlier for the internship search.

A portfolio is a sales tool that sets an individual apart from others and should include samples that reflect the best efforts indicating a range of skills and expertise. A portfolio showcases both student achievement and student learning over time. A digital portfolio is a computer-based collection of work over time making classroom and on-the-job learning and experiences more accessible to companies looking to fill internship or other positions and is considered another high impact practice for a job search. A digital portfolio platform, www.wixsite.com was used as the basis of development of digital portfolios for the internship search.

Another innovative HIP implemented was the inclusion of a video blog or VLOG, created by the student intern while on the job, to give a brief overview of (1) the internship company and location; (2) how they located their internship; (3) learning opportunities they will take away from the internship; and (4) a piece of advice to future interns. Previously, students would submit a PowerPoint slide and present this information in a face-to-face group setting to pre-interns. Due to the increasing number of interns, this mode of presentation became ineffective from a time and location standpoint. The VLOG offers a video capture of the student intern sharing meaningful information about their internship experience in the environment they are working and sharing at a more personal level. Students preparing to search for internships can view the live action video for a better understanding of what the job entails. In addition, these VLOGs can be shared in the pre-internship class as students search for internships.

The use of vlogs was piloted in spring 2018 with a smaller group of interns who successfully presented their internships electronically. Students were pleased with this

method of presentation, the only difficulty being the size of the file which tended to be too large to send electronically. Incorporating the use of Kaltura, an electronic video submission software has improved the delivery of the VLOGs, allowing students to upload their VLOGs seamlessly without the issue of a file being too large. Kaltura software has tools for capturing, creating, recording, uploading, editing, and more to videos. This use of a personal capture tool allows students to create video recordings and upload the videos to the Kaltura Platform through an app on their smart phone. (Kaltura 2014).

A last HIP that has been implemented in 2019 is the development of the online delivery of the internship course for students who are working off site on the job. In the past, notebooks were prepared in the pre-internship class for students to use to collect assignments while interning. Students were required to submit the physical notebook for grading, which required personal or postal delivery to campus. The online delivery of the internship allows students to submit these assignments online for a much smoother transfer of the required information, giving students more flexibility in preparing and submitting their work. In addition, the VLOGS are much more seamless as they can be submitted using Kaltura on the online website.

The impact of the internship is far reaching. It provides a practical experience in a workplace situation affording an opportunity for the application of classroom fundamentals. It also provides industry with strong additions to their management staff with the objective of increasing sales and profit. The internship affords the students an opportunity to experience varied phases of a retail career prior to graduation and potential employers can evaluate possible additions to their executive training program. Lastly, the internship gives the student a more competitive start at an opening level executive position. Advancing student success through internships provides a more seamless transition into careers ultimately impacting the quality of life and economy for the citizens of the state and the greater community. It is the ultimate responsibility of the student to complete their college requirements, including an internship. It is the responsibility of the institution to provide a seamless delivery of the information students need to be successful. These high impact practices utilized in a college curriculum enable students to have the best possible scenario for job success.

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