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UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT PERCEPTION OF INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS
INTERNSHIPS

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ABSTRACT

Influenced by the challenges of employment in an increasingly global market and heightened demand for employees with global competence, this study examines Penn State business undergraduate student perceptions about international internship programs. The study primarily focused on two different types of international internships: a *traditional international business internship* whereby the student would be carrying out his/her program in another country, and a business-oriented, *international service learning internship* whereby the student provides a meaningful service to the community by applying business skills learned on-site and skills previously acquired through their academic program . A survey format was utilized to assess student interest in international business internships that were either traditional or service integrated. A self-selected sample of 704 undergraduate students at Penn State's Smeal College of Business participated in the assessment with 526 completing all questions. Students reported interest in both internship programs. Cost was a prevalent influencing factor in student decision to consider either program. An overwhelming majority of students did not perceive development of global awareness as a value which is contrary to the importance employers place on global awareness. Service learning internships that offer academic credit may provide an additional option to meet student needs. The author hopes these findings will be incorporated into aiding the development and success of Smeal Global Impact Internships that is currently in development and anticipated to be available for enrollment, November 2010.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Statement of Problem

An internationally focused internship program offers a value-added component in the educational preparation of Smeal undergraduates to compete in today's competitive market place. The global market expects students to have related experiences in their academic field and also to be globally aware. This means aware on the micro level of international trends in their major and also as a citizen of the world.

According to Penn State's Smeal College of Business website, 60% of former Penn State interns in 2008 were hired for full time positions by their internship employer. Domestic internships serve an important role as a platform to help students secure a full time job. However, the additional dimension of international travel, while interning, can serve to augment professional preparation and personal growth to make Smeal College graduates more valuable candidates to employees. While face-to-face experiences between students and potential local employers may be diminished by the international internship, the global competence developed abroad has higher value for the student in the long run.

Following the market's expectation for employees to be globally competent, international internships have increased in popularity. The number of students interning abroad between 2000 and 2008 doubled, according to a survey of approximately 1,500 educational institutions performed by the Institute of International Education (IIE

Interactive, 2010). Firms are aware of the intrinsic benefit provided by international travel in the marketplace. According to a survey of 352 firms evaluating abroad experiences, published by the Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad, senior management and other professionals highly valued an abroad experience with a semester internship or service learning component (Trooboff, Vande Berg, & Rayman, 2007).

In business it is crucial to understand what the buyer wants-this holds true for structuring academic offerings as well. In this particular case, it is important to understand the wants of the Smeal business student; thus, the author carried out the study by applying scientific rigor to assessing student perceptions on international internships.

Overview of Study

Influenced by an increasingly global market and heightened demand for students with global competence, this study examines Penn State business student perceptions about international internship programs. The study primarily focused on two different types of international internships. The first type is similar to a traditional internship a student would have in America; however, the student would be carrying out his/her program in another country. This is referred to, throughout the study, as a *traditional internship abroad*. For example, a student could have a marketing internship for a large corporation in Europe. The second type of internship is a business-oriented, *international service learning internship*. This type of program provides a meaningful service to the community by applying business skills learned on-site and skills previously acquired through their academic program. For example, a student could intern with a non-profit organization in a developing country to assist small farmers in developing a business

plan. The academic concepts of elements of a business plan are applied in the 'real world' to make a difference in the community.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Current Internship Environment

To understand how students perceive international internships, one must first understand the current climate of business internships. Internships are an important adjunct to academic study that enhances learning. Internships improve student marketability to employers by providing an opportunity for the student to showcase their competencies and work ethic. Simultaneously, internships provide a benefit for the employer in that it brings in new energy with fundamental relevant skills at little cost to the organization.

According to the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE), the current economy has resulted in a decrease in the number of college graduates hired by most employers across all sectors of the US economy (as cited by Gault, Leach, & Duey, 2010, p.76). Employers anticipated hiring 7% fewer graduates during 2009-10 than they hired in 2008-09 (NACE Research Job Outlook, 2010). Uncertainty in the economy adds increased pressure on students to strengthen their credibility as a job candidate as they prepare to enter the work force upon graduation (Gault et al., 2010, p.76). Internship programs offer students the valuable work experience needed to help prepare them for entering the work force. According to NACE, 76.3% of employers preferred to hire students with work experience (as cited by Gault et al., 2010, p. 77). Consequently, in 2008 NACE reported in its “Job Outlook Report” that 40% of firms’ new hires had internship experience (Gault et al, 2010, p.85).

Internships provide students with experiential learning, that is to say, learning from experience. Two common types of experiential learning are internships and service-learning programs (Toncar & Cudmore, 2000). There is significant research highlighting the benefit of experiential learning. In Coleman's research from 1976, he stated that experiential learning supplements and enhances material learned in the classroom, increases student motivation, improves longer term retention of material, and results in a sense of self-accomplishment (as cited by Toncar & Cudmore, 2000, p.54). Parilla and Hesser (1998) stated that experiential learning allows the student to absorb material in "new and different ways, enriching previously learned lessons and grounding them in reality (as cited by Toncar & Cudmore, 2000, p.54).

Karns, in a study conducted in 2005 (cited by Gault et al, 2010) found that students ranked internships as adding the most highly to their learning. According to a study done in 2010, internships and experiential education enhance career preparation and marketability to employers (Gault et al, 2010). Gault's study found a positive correlation between participating in an internship and increased marketability of students to employers upon graduation (2010). Internships are a "means of bridging the gap between career expectations developed in the classroom and the reality of post-graduation employment" (Gault et al, 2010, p. 85).

In 2000, Gault conducted the first empirical study of internships and career success (cited by Gault et al, 2010). This landmark study surveyed 500 undergraduate alumni and found that undergraduates who interned received job offers ten weeks earlier with starting salaries 10% higher than those of undergraduates who had not interned. Alumni with internship experience also reported higher job satisfaction and were

promoted faster to positions with more responsibility than alumni without an intern experience.

The student is not the only party to benefit from an internship program. Organizations hiring student interns reap many benefits, as well. According to Gault in 2000, interns offer an inexpensive, qualified, and usually highly motivated source of labor (cited by Gault et al, 2010). In a 2006 survey by Vault, organizations saved, on average \$6,200, in training costs if they hired someone who interned for them and 16% in total savings over hiring new employees without an internship experience with the organization (as cited by Gault, 2010, p.78).

Choosing to do an internship abroad may potentially limit the benefits discussed above. Due to significance distances from home and potential language and cultural barriers, students may not be as interested in accepting a full-time job offer in a foreign country after an internship abroad. Also, the organization may not be willing to hire an international intern for full-time due to doubts that the candidate would remain satisfied or take a job away from a qualified candidate in the host country. While there are limitations to not having the face-to-face contact with a local office, the benefits of working abroad still provide students with global awareness that is impossible to attain within the confines of a domestic internship.

International Internships

After addressing the important role of internships as a supplement to academic courses and as a preparation for the work arena, it is necessary to describe the environment that cultivates the need and benefit of an international internship. Global

business is a reality in today's economy. In Stephen Kobrin's report, *International Expertise in American Business*, he states "many no longer see themselves as U.S. companies with some overseas business, but rather as multinational companies serving worldwide markets" (as cited by Paulsell, 1991, p.251). For graduates to survive in business today, they must extend their vocabulary and, subsequently, their mindset, to acknowledge we are in a global economy.

Undergraduates could focus on a local internship if all they needed to enhance their resume was experience; however, employers also expect students to demonstrate a global perspective (Rubin, 2009, p. 58). Kobrin states, "'International' is no longer the arcane purview of a small cadre of managers but is rapidly becoming a component of a wide variety of domestic jobs" (as cited by Paulsell, 1991, p.251). Recognizing a need for this global perspective, working overseas is increasing in popularity for students. Between 2003 and 2008, Yale University grew from offering one to 17 programs to work abroad, with internship placements growing from 20 to 250 students (Rubin, 2009, p. 60).

An international internship experience provides international work experience, personal growth, global awareness and a unique resume builder (Toncar & Cudmore, 2000). If a student experiences a traditional internship in a developed European country or a service learning internship in a third world country interviewing villagers to examine the competence of local nongovernmental organization, either way, the student grows by exposure to a local culture that may lead to a powerful personal growth (Rubin, 2009, p.58). International internships provide the opportunity for students to become "aware of their own ethnocentrism and develop a deeper respect and understanding for people,

places, and policies overseas that are neither better nor worse but merely different” (Toncar & Cudmore, 2000, p. 59).

International internships improve student marketability to employers because it indicates an “aggressive, motivated, committed student who worked hard to set himself or herself apart from peers” (Toncar & Cudmore, 2000, p.60). Having student access to an international internship program benefits the basic academic institution, as well, through increased visibility of its graduates and the University (Rubin, 2009, p. 60) through benefits in public relations, recruiting, hiring and retaining faculty (Toncar & Cudmore, 2000).

International internships provide students with varying degrees of international expertise or global competence. Stephen J. Kobrin’s survey of American multinationals, found that “American business professionals rate experience abroad as the single most important factor in the development of international expertise’ (as cited by Paulsell, 1991, p.243). Kobrin explained, “The most important component of international expertise is what they refer to as “‘cultural empathy,’ ‘wearing the shoes of other people,’ sensitivity to differences in the ways places work and they way business is done, knowing where other people are ‘coming from’, and understanding ‘how to live there (as cited by Paulsell, 1991, p.259)’”. It is impossible to achieve cultural empathy without removing a student from the confinement of a life devoid of international travel.

The importance of global awareness is evident in examining past failures of American business professionals. American managers’ lack of global awareness has been blamed for the drop in competitiveness of American business in markets at home and abroad (Paulsell, 1991, p.248). The rate of American business managers who

prematurely return to America from an abroad assignment has historically not improved. A survey done in 1979 by Alison Lanier reported the failure rate to be about 33% (as cited by Paulsell, 1991p. 249) while a decade later a survey done by Gary Hogan and Jane Goodson in 1990 stated the failure rate to similarly range from 25% - 40% (as cited by Paulsell, 1991, p.249). According to the Hogan and Goodson survey in 1990, the average cost for the parent company per each failure was between \$55 and \$150,000 (as cited by Paulsell, 1991, p. 249).

Paulsell refers to Rubin's article, "The Internship Process: A Cultural Model", to enforce the impact that international internships have on "meeting the need for international expertise in the halls of corporate America" (Paulsell, 1991, p.260).

At its best, it (the internship experience) may help the student move from ethnocentrism toward cultural pluralism, an understanding of the benefits and disadvantages of his/her own and other cultures and a commitment to those aspects he/she believes in within each. (as cited by Paulsell, 1991, p.260)

The benefits of international internships stretch beyond the realm of a business oriented advantage. In 2008, Lunn, stated that "it is in the economic, social and cultural interests of nations to ensure that graduates are adequately prepared to function as 'global citizens' who are internationally savvy and equipped with the appropriate skills..."(as cited by Crossman &Clarke, 2009, p. 603). A 2009 study found that international experience helped to develop "open-mindedness, creativity, initiative, the ability to take on responsibility, empathy, respect, being informed, being open to multiple perspectives, having expanded thinking, and humanity (Crossman & Clarke, 2009, p. 608). The act of

enabling individuals to travel abroad and interact with different cultures is important in both the business setting and in acknowledging and understanding the differences amongst human society as well (Paulsell, 1991).

The presence of a student in a foreign country will not automatically lead to language proficiency and an “intercultural understanding” (Paulsell, 1991, p.246). Paulsell states that “changes in attitude do not follow automatically from mere exposure to another culture (p.245)”. Cross-cultural psychologist Stephen Bochner has suggested, “an unprepared and unmonitored internship experience may in fact increase hostility, suspicion, and tension in the new culture” (as cited by Paulsell, 1991, p.245).

Student expectations of an international internship may be not be aligned with the actual experiences in the host country. There can be a discrepancy, often related to cultural differences. According to Holly Rivers from the University of Notre Dame, if a student has an internship in a developing country, the host nationals “don’t always know what to do with a 20-year-old from the United States who has the mentality that time is very important and you need to be very efficient and work hard” (as cited by Rubin, 2009, p. 62).

Students may choose not to participate in an international internship because of the additional psychological and emotional demands and challenges to communicate in a non-English speaking country (Rubin, 2009, p. 66).

Cost is an additional barrier to students electing an interning abroad experience. As Laura Bayne from the Education Abroad Office at University of Texas explained, the current state of the socio-economic profile of students interning abroad is: “medium-

income students often get squeezed out, while the neediest get aid and the wealthy can afford the fees”(as cited by Rubin, 2009, p. 67).

Service Learning

John Dewey is heralded as the father of service learning; he believed that learning from experience not only helps expand knowledge, but enables people to develop skills, habits, and attitudes that could then be applied to solving similar problems (Terry & Bohnenberger, 2007, p.6). Furco (1996) stated that the intention of service learning is to, ... equally benefit the provider and the recipient of the service and ensure equal focus on both the service being provided and the learning that is occurring... service-learning programs must have some academic context and be designed in such a way that ensures that both the service enhances the learning and the learning enhances the service.

To illustrate the many different interpretations of service learning, Sigmon created a typology that compared different ways to combine service and learning. Table 2-1 illustrates the different goals and outcomes of each classification (as cited by Furco, 1996).

Table 2-1: A SERVICE AND LEARNING TYPOLOGY	
Service-LEARNING:	Learning goals primary; service outcomes secondary
SERVICE-Learning:	Service outcomes primary; learning goals secondary
Service learning:	Service and learning goals completely separate
SERVICE- LEARNING	Service and learning goals of equal weight and each enhances the other for all participants

There are a range of definitions to describe the growing field of service learning. Sigmon defined it as a type of “reciprocal learning” where those who provide a service and those who receive a service learn from the experience; it occurs when there is a balance between learning goals and service outcomes (as cited by Furco, 1996)

The Commission on National and Community Service in 1993, crafted a common standard of educational service learning programs:

- a. Under which students learn and develop through active participation in thoughtfully organized service experiences that meet actual community needs and that are coordinated in collaboration with school and community;
- b. That are integrated into the students’ academic curriculum or provides structured time for a student to think, talk, or write about what the student did and saw during the actual service activity;
- c. That provide a student with opportunities to use newly-acquired skills and knowledge in real-life situations in their own communities; and
- d. That enhance what is taught in school by extending student learning beyond the classroom and into the community and helps to foster the development of a sense of caring for others. (as cited by Kraft, 1996, p. 136).

To better understand the concept of service learning it is necessary to draw the distinction between common terms associated with service learning- volunteerism and community service. Volunteerism consists of students participating in activities where the focus is on the service being provided and the “intended beneficiary is clearly the service recipient; community service is similar to volunteerism but it is more structured and requires more student commitment” (Furco, 1996). Volunteerism differs from service learning because there is a concentration on service without the learning component (Kraft, 1996, p. 136).

Generalizing a main goal or specific definition of service learning is difficult because service learning encompasses a very broad area. It is challenging to define because comparing different service learning programs can be like comparing “apples to oranges” (Terry & Bohnenberger, 2007, p.11). Service learning programs and studies range from emphasizing personal and professional development (Gullahorn, J. E. & Gullahorn, J. T., 1966) social growth, civic responsibility, psychological development, moral and ego development to the most difficult area to examine: intellectual, cognitive, and academic effects (Kraft, 1996, p.143).

There are a wide range of benefits from service learning. According to the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education(The Roll of Service-learning Programs, 2005) students typically benefit from a service learning experience in the following ways,

Developing the habit of critical reflection; deepening comprehension of course content; integrating theory with practice; increasing understanding of the issues

underlying social problems; strengthening sense of social responsibility; enhancing cognitive, personal, and spiritual development; heightening understanding of human difference and commonality; and sharpening abilities to solve problems creatively and to work collaboratively (The Roll of Service-learning Programs, 2005).

International Service Learning

The focus of this study examines student perception of traditional and service learning internships in an international context. Thus, one must understand the concept of *international* service learning. The history of international service programs can be traced back to early advocates of experiential education and religious commitment to service (Grusky, 2000, p.859). International service learning consists of organized trips to both foreign countries and cultures where students can live with local families, experience local cultures, work and serve the local communities and experience a world outside their own (p. 859).

There are potential differences in expectations between students and the host communities in regards to international service learning programs. Students may be motivated to participate to travel, seek adventure or romance, satisfy altruistic yearning, improve language proficiency, cultural curiosity, heighten global awareness, or by career motivated interest (p.860). However, the hosts of the service learning site may have different expectations. For example, the hosts may hope to improve their public image, bring in tourist revenue, gain a network of contacts, or collect donations for their cause

(p.860). This mismatch of expectations should be acknowledged from the beginning in order to minimize confusion.

The host community may provide a service to the student by enlightening him or her to “social realities and developmental and organizational challenges that may be invisible in his or her daily life” (p.861). The idea that the host is offering the student a service instead of the student offering a service to the host, is a reality that may help students to “overcome arrogance, paternalism, or simplistic ideals of charity” (p.861). Incorporating service learning with an international component may expose students to conditions such as extreme poverty or hunger that leave them feeling unsettled and frustrated at the enormity of unsettling world issues (p.866). It is through this “discontent” and “search for answers” that students gain insight into a need for change and create the groundwork for “global understand and global action” that would not be possible with a traditional, domestic experience (p.866).

An international service learning experience may cause students to be overwhelmed by thought of experiencing an intercultural exchange and being exposed to a foreign land and people. A way to help guide students is through the developmental model of intercultural sensitivity, a model of change called DMIS (Merrill & Pusch, 2007, p.25). According to Bennett, DMIS guides students in two stages: 1) ethnocentrism, when the student goes through denial, defense, minimization (recognizing superficial cultural differences); 2) ethnorelativism, when the student goes through acceptance, adaptation, and integration (as cited by Merrill & Pusch).

According to Paige, there are many aspects that affect a student’s exposure to an intercultural experience; these factors are referred to as *intensity factors*. The following

are common intensity factors: cultural difference, ethnocentrism, language, cultural immersion, cultural isolation, prior intercultural experience, expectations, visibility and invisibility, status and power and control (as cited by Merrill & Pusch, p.27).

Review of International Internship Programs

Many academic institutions and organizations realize the importance and demand for international internships. This niche market for students to work abroad is met by programs implemented by academic institutions and third party providers who facilitate internship placement.

As an example, Florida State University's (FSU) International Internship program, at <https://international.fsu.edu/types/Internships/Internships.aspx>, offers four international undergraduate internship opportunities: Panama City, Republic of Panama; Valencia, Spain; Florence, Italy; and London, England. The Panama internship option is FSU's longest running program and has been in place more than 50 years. To ensure the credibility of the internship placements, FSU has staff on site at each international location to meet potential companies. According to the FSU International Program's website, FSU offers both full and part-time internship placements (Internship Information, 2010). Students enroll in credit hours which vary depending on the semester, location, and discipline. The program also consists of planned travel excursions.

FSU's international internship program is similar to its study abroad program. Both programs have common start and end dates, they are both a full semester long, both are housed in FSU-owned flats, and both receive pastoral support from the study center.

What is offered in each study center varies depending on the country; however, the centers may offer student housing, computer labs and a library, administrative offices, and classroom space. Study abroad and intern abroad students share housing.

According to cite Kathryn Fowler (personal communication, March 4, 2010), at FSU's International Internship Programs, students have an intern supervisor to help them with a range of things, for example, navigating a difficult route to work. One hurdle for FSU's intern program is the language barriers. London is the largest program for FSU because most students who intern only speak English. For example, a past spring semester consisted of 24 students interning in London, two in Valencia, one in Florence, and one in Panama. According to Fowler, the largest challenge FSU faces is living up to student expectations, "Some go in thinking they'll be the CEO of a company, we try to communicate with them to establish realistic expectations."

The cost of FSU's international internship programs vary depending on the semester and country. According to FSU's international program website, the following costs are based on a spring, 2010 internship placement: London: \$13, 200; Florence: \$13,200; Panama: \$8,575; Valencia: \$12, 875.

Yale is another academic institution with an established international internship program, Yale's International Bulldogs Programs. The International Bulldogs program began in 2003 with British Bulldogs in London and Bulldogs in Beijing in the summer of 2005 (International Internships, 2010).

Yale does not select where each student will be interning, instead they gather several potential student candidates for each company, and the companies choose the best fit. The internships are generally full time work taking place for about nine weeks in the

summer. They may or may not be paid internships. Students are closely supervised in the host company or organization and have an intern project along with their daily workload.

According to the Yale undergraduate career service, for summer 2010, the Bulldog Program offered two month international internships in the following locations: Kampala, Uganda; Beijing, China; Hong Kong, China; Shanghai, China; Singapore; Athens, Greece; Brussels, Belgium; Copenhagen, Denmark; Istanbul, Turkey; London, England; Madrid, Spain; Tel-Aviv, Israel; Jerusalem, Israel; Monterrey, Mexico; Buenos Aires, Argentina.

The cost of each program varies depending on location; the spring 2010 costs were estimated to range from \$3,160 to \$6,960 (International Internships, 2010). Select international internships have language proficiency requirements. Housing is provided to students in a central location with close access to public transportation. In addition to the International Bulldogs Program created by the University's career services, Yale also offers other resources for students to intern abroad. Additional programs include: Unite for Sight Internship program, where students can intern in Ghana or India for the nonprofit organization, Unite for Sight; Yale-China Association summer internship program, where students can study or work for nonprofit organizations, private companies, or institutions throughout China; and resources to create an independent summer international internship program (International Internships, 2010). All internship opportunities are open to all Yale College students who are not in their last year of school.

International internship programs are often provided by third party vendors such as CDS, International. CDS is a nonprofit organization that was established over 40

years ago. They promote “intercultural understanding through professional development programs in Argentina, Germany, Russia, Spain and the United States” (Internships Abroad, 2010). CDS’s International mission for exchanges is to “help strengthen global cooperation and understanding amongst individuals, businesses, organizations and communities” (Internships Abroad, 2010).

According to CDS, International website, the program duration varies ranging from 3-12 months. CDS places students in the internships. Internships are generally unpaid but students can apply for scholarships. Cost for students varies depending upon factors such as placement location and duration. The specifics of each program vary depending on the city and country of the program. For example, the Argentinean internship program offers housing for students with a host family or in student residences. There are two different options for Argentina internships: a 4-week Spanish language course with an 8-week internship or a 12-week internship.

Conclusion

Pennsylvania State University’s Smeal College of Business offers opportunities for students to study abroad, as indicated on their website (<http://ugstudents.smeal.psu.edu/study-abroad>). However, there is limited infrastructure within the business school for students to have an internship abroad. The Smeal Student exchange website states indicates that there are internship opportunities within programs that are offered for students electing the Smeal International Business minor to supplement a study abroad program. However opportunities for an internship abroad, separate from taking classes, are limited.

Pennsylvania State University's Smeal College of Business excels at connecting students with domestic business internships. Currently, however, Smeal College of Business does not have a comparable structure to support student interests with opportunities for international internships as is in place in the Yale University example noted above. Offering international business internships that are both traditional and service integrated would offer Smeal students a global awareness that will resonate long after college and set them apart in a job market that requires distinction.

The purpose of this project was to ascertain student interest in international business internships. A survey format was utilized to query if students were interested in international business internships that were either traditional or service integrated. The survey aimed to identify common factors that influence students' participation in such programs. The overall goal is for this data to be used to help implement the structure for successful international business internship programs that will meet the needs and interest of students.

Chapter 3

Methodology

The purpose of this exploratory research is to provide information to University decision-makers to help implement the structure for successful international business internship programs to help meet the needs and interest of students.

The author constructed a survey to ask the overall question if students were interested in international business internships that were either traditional or service integrated. The survey questions were constructed by the author based on critical elements in internship education and elements identified by students through a focus group. The survey aimed to distinguish overall factors that persuade or influence students from participating in such program.

This research study utilized a 16-question, five point likert scale survey to examine student perceptions of international internships, specifically, traditional business internships and service learning programs- “a business-oriented, service learning international internship”. For ease of interpretation, the likert scales below were collapsed, combining the two highest and two lowest values. Chi- squared analysis was used to test whether the observed frequencies of responses to select survey questions differed significantly from expected frequencies, that is to say, the differences in responses were not due to chance alone with a significance level of $p < .05$.

Assumptions of questions regarding traditional internships and service learning programs on the survey reflected perceptions of a hypothetical program that did not require students to enroll in a specific course while interning. However, in internships,

students are expected to apply knowledge and skills previously acquired through their academic preparation and also gain business skills through the business-oriented service activities performed.

A focus group consisting of eight Smeal undergraduate students, including both upper and lowerclassmen, was convened to discuss international internships. The eight members were selected by voluntary participation. The purpose of conducting a focus group was to get a broad idea of student interest, issues and needs related to international opportunities for both traditional and service integrated internships. The reaction from the focus group was used to tailor survey questions to produce meaningful, substantive answers. The focus group served as expert opinions (expert validity) as to undergraduate considerations for international business internships at Pennsylvania State University.

The focus group indicated that improving a resume was one of the most important reasons for participating in an internship. Students were generally not interested in traveling to countries with unfamiliar cultures and languages - mainly anywhere outside of the UK. Expense was cited as major factor in determining if they would consider participation in an international internship. Also, focus group participants believed that freshmen and sophomores would be a better fit for business oriented, service learning internships that were not major-specific while upperclassman would be best for the traditional, major- specific internships. Focus group participants discussed the overall benefit of a domestic internship as yielding an increased likelihood of resulting in a full time job offer after graduation. Students expressed personal safety concerns and voiced the value of a Penn State representative on site overseas. These issues were incorporated into the survey instrument.

The survey was distributed primarily through the Career & Corporate Services roster for students enrolled in Symplicity, Smeal's Career Management System.

Respondents were self-selected. It was emailed to students enrolled in Symplicity. The survey was also posted on the Smeal Career Services facebook page at

<http://www.facebook.com/#!/group.php?v=wall&ref=search&gid=22606138259>.

Completion of the survey was also offered as five points extra credit in the course, BA297A, Career Planning Strategies.

The survey was formatted and analyzed by the online survey software provider, Qualtrics, at www.qualtrics.com. The survey was distributed through the online link, http://qtrial.qualtrics.com/SE?SID=SV_e10uNFdSDFkyTVW&SVID=Prod; a hardcopy can be found in the Appendix.

There are several drawbacks to this design. There is limited validity support for the survey instrument, so the author cannot be assured that it is testing what was intended. Respondents self-select to participate. If there are systematic variations between responders and non-responders, this is an unknown and threat to interpreting findings. Additionally, responders may systematically vary on any of the variables which, again, was not tested, in this exploratory research. The sample size was driven by willingness of students to participate. Analysis was not conducted to determine sample size necessary to increase the likelihood of showing differences across the likert scale. On further review, the author's intention for option two on question ten for the survey was not clearly executed. The author intended to indicate a service *learning* internship which may have impacted the results from that question.

Chapter 4

Findings

The population sampled was undergraduate students from the Smeal College of Business. There were 704 respondents with 526 of the respondents completing all questions. Each question was analyzed based on total number of respondents answering that specific question.

Gender of respondents was fairly evenly distributed, while the class breakdown of respondents was a majority of upperclassmen, 68%. Table 4.1 displays the gender, undergraduate class, and major within the Business School of responders.

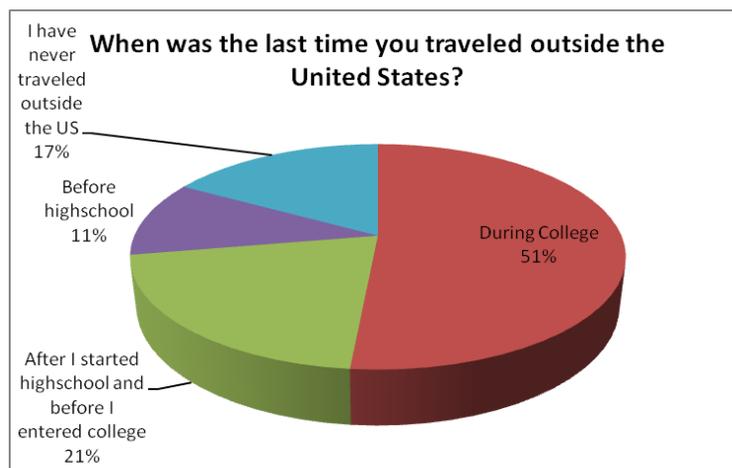
Table 4-1: Survey population

Gender	N	Percentage
Female	276	52%
Class	N	Percentage
Freshman	29	6%
Sophomore	127	24%
Junior	172	33%
Senior	187	35%
Other	12	2%
Major	N	Percentage
Accounting	93	18%
Actuarial Science	26	5%
Finance	124	24%
Management	48	9%
Marketing	103	20%
Management Information Systems	17	3%
Supply Chain Information Systems	77	15%
Economics	36	6%
Undecided	5	1%
*other	39	7%
* students expressing interest in international internships not included in above majors		

Over 80% of students participating in this study had prior international experience with half traveling outside the United States throughout college. The subset of students with prior international internship experience yielded 1% or 4/558 respondents which was too small of a sample to make meaningful conclusions.

Figure 4-1 depicts the breakdown of students who have never traveled outside the US, students who traveled before high school, students who traveled between the start of high school but before entering college, and those whose most recent trip abroad was during college.

Figure 4-1: Student travel outside the United States



International Internships: Service Learning vs. Traditional

Responders indicated they would consider both the traditional and service learning internships. Table 4.2 represents student interest in either a traditional or business-oriented, service learning international internship.

Table 4-2: Interest in internship options

Intl. Internship Options	Yes	No or I don't know
Traditional International Internship	80%	20%
Business oriented, Service Learning International Internship	78%	22%

Based on a Chi Square analysis, there are gender differences in the appeal of international internships. Generally, 10% more of the females, would consider participation in either international internship program. More females (87.32%) than males (78.49%) cited “Yes” to considering a traditional internship abroad ($X^2 = 9.03$, $df = 2$; $p=0.01$) while, again, 84.02% of females and 74.53% of males cited “Yes” to considering a business oriented, international service learning internship ($X^2 = 6.29$, $df = 1$; $p=0.01$).

Upperclassmen indicated a stronger inclination to consider a traditional internship abroad as 87% of seniors and juniors indicated they would participate in a traditional international internship while only 68.97% of freshman and 73.23% of sophomores indicated they would consider a traditional international internship. There was no statistical difference between class and consideration for a business oriented,

international service learning internship ($X^2=8.88$, $df=4$, $p=.06$). Table 4-3 shows a cross tabulation on how each class indicated consideration for a traditional internship abroad. The percentage of students saying yes, no, or I don't know in each class is indicated underneath each individual total. Based on a Chi Square analysis, a traditional international internship was not equally appealing between freshman, sophomore, junior and senior undergraduates ($X^2 = 26.30$, $df = 8$; $p=0.00$).

Table 4-3: Class consideration of traditional internship abroad

		Would you consider doing a TRADITIONAL INTERNSHIP abroad? The definition of a traditional internship...			Subtotal	Total
		Yes	No	I don't know		
Please indicate your class.	Freshman	20 68.97%	3 10.34%	6 20.69%	29 100.00%	29 100.00%
	Sophomore	93 73.23%	21 16.54%	13 10.24%	127 100.00%	127 100.00%
	Junior	150 87.21%	10 5.81%	12 6.98%	172 100.00%	172 100.00%
	Senior	163 87.17%	17 9.09%	7 3.74%	187 100.00%	187 100.00%
	Other	12 100.00%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	12 100.00%	12 100.00%
	Subtotal	438 83.11%	51 9.68%	38 7.21%	527 100.00%	-
	Total	534 75.85%	73 10.37%	59 8.38%	-	704 100.00%

Students reported similar interest in both an international service learning internship that had a concentration on individual majors and international service learning internships with an overall business focus. Table 4-4 depicts the level of student interest in each type of service learning internship.

Table 4-4: Types of service learning internships

Question	Not Interested & Slightly Interested	Neutral	Interested and Very Interested
A business oriented, international SERVICE LEARNING INTERNSHIP	20.62%	23.39%	56%
A SERVICE LEARNING international internship that is focused on my major.	20.26%	19.34%	60.41%%

Students reporting non-interest in a traditional, international internship program were asked a follow-up question to examine why they would not consider this program. Table 4-5 indicates that respondents not interested in a traditional, international internship cited most often expense, strategic rationale to intern in an office more likely to offer them a position, and being uncomfortable with international travel. Students indicated that family opposition to interning abroad would not, generally, be a dissuading factor from participating in a traditional, international internship.

Table 4-5: Respondents not considering traditional, international internship

Question	Strongly Disagree & Slightly Disagree	Neutral	Agree & Strongly Agree
I want to work in America because I hope to ultimately work in the same office in which I intern.	9.56%	24.34%	66.1%
I am not comfortable with international travel.	47%	27%	26.1%
I am not interested in international travel.	53.9%	23.48%	22.61%
My family would not support me going abroad.	70.43%	9.6%	20%
I think it would be too expensive to go abroad.	15.65%	17.39%	67%

Students reporting that they were not interested in a business oriented, international service learning internship were asked a specific question to examine why they would not consider this program. Table 4-6 indicates that students not interested in a business oriented service learning internship program cited most often an interest in developing focused business skills related to specific major, preference for a corporate over service setting, expense, and concern that a traditional internship would look better

on a resume. Students indicated that being uncomfortable or uninterested in international travel and opposing family wishes were not important factors in not considering an international service learning internship.

Table 4-6: Respondents not considering business oriented service learning internship

Question	Strongly Disagree & Slightly Disagree	Neutral	Agree & Strongly Agree
It is important to me to have an internship that is specific to my major as opposed to overall business oriented.	15.79%	13.68%	70.53%
I would rather focus on developing business skills in a corporate setting than in a service setting.	10.53%	18.42%	71.05%
A traditional internship would look better on my resume.	18.42%	28.42%	53.12%
I am not comfortable with international travel.	62.11%	23.68%	14.21%
I am not interested in international travel.	68.42%	17.37%	14.21%
My family would not support me going abroad.	66.32%	22.11%	11.58%
I think it would be too expensive to go abroad.	19.47%	26.84%	53.68%

Students cited that traveling to a foreign country and experiencing a foreign culture were encouraging factors to intern abroad while distance from home and exposure

to a foreign language discouraged them. Table 4-7 indicates factors that dissuade or encourage consideration of an international internship.

Table 4-7: Factors that dissuade or encourage consideration of international internship

Question	Strongly Dissuades & Slightly Dissuades me from interning abroad	Neutral	Slightly Encourages & Encourages me to intern abroad
Being in a country to which I have never traveled.	11.11%	19.1%	69.81%
Being exposed to a foreign culture.	6.5%	13.84%	79.7%
Being exposed to a foreign language.	32.29%	18.63%	49.1%
Distance from home.	39.74%	44.73%	15.53%

Table 4-8 indicates that respondents strongly value cost, safety and receiving a wage in considering an international internship.

Table 4-8: Strong factors for consideration of international internship

Question	Not important	Slightly Important	Important & Very Important
Cost of program	1.2%	6.6%	92.12%
Safety/Security of Program	1.1%	3.8%	95%
Receiving a wage/salary	1.1%	3.8%	95%

Students cited personal growth and work experience as the most important value-adding factors to an international internship experience. However, students indicated that a travel abroad opportunity and opportunity to build their resume was more important than developing global awareness. Table 4-9 depicts the importance of resume builder, global awareness, providing a meaningful service, personal growth, work experience, travel abroad opportunity, and foreign language proficiency in an international internship experience.

Table 4-9: Value-adding factors to international internship experience

Question	Not Important & Slightly Important	Neutral	Important & Very Important
Resume builder	3.8%	8.7%	87.5%
Developing global awareness	6.2%	14.23%	79.81%
Providing a meaningful service	5.6%	16.92%	77.88%
Personal growth	2.5%	6.3%	91.15%
Work experience	2.3%	5.6%	92.12%
Travel abroad opportunity	2.7%	11.35%	85.96%
Becoming more proficient in a foreign language	18.46%	24.62%	59.92%

When evaluating the importance of global awareness among students who cited “Yes” to being interested in either the traditional internship abroad or the business oriented service learning internship abroad, these students were more likely to indicate that global awareness was an important or very important value added factor to an international internship. 85.39% of students citing “yes” to considering the traditional internship abroad indicated developing global awareness was either, very important, or important ($X^2=83.75$, $df=8$, $p=0.00$). Additionally, 89.04% of students citing “yes” to considering the business oriented, international service learning internship indicated that increased global awareness was either very important or important ($X^2=86.97$, $df=4$, $p=0.00$).

Chapter 5

Discussion

Offering international business internships that are both traditional and service integrated will offer Smeal students a global awareness that will resonate long after college and set them apart in a job market that requires distinction. The act of enabling individuals to travel abroad and interact with different cultures is important in both the business setting and in acknowledging and understanding the differences amongst human society as a whole (Paulsell, 1991).

This study ascertained student interest in international business internships. The culture at Smeal is successful in conveying the value of internships and international internships as this is translated into 80% of students reporting an interest in considering either type of international internship program.

Students not interested in a traditional international internship generally view expense, strategic rationale to intern in an office more likely to offer them a position, and being uncomfortable with international travel as barriers to an international program. Students not interested in a business-oriented service learning internship program are generally dissuaded by wanting to develop focused business skills related to specific major, preference for a corporate over service setting, expense, and concern that a traditional internship would look better on a resume.

Concern about the cost of international internship programs is a prevalent factor and is reported a major factor influencing student participation. In our nation's current economic state, it is hard for expenses to not be an influencing factor. This concern could

be mitigated by creating a scholarship fund specific for international business internships and soliciting donor support, creating a student subsidy; or educating students about the program cost break down thus the large total will seem less ominous when drilled down into components.

Student interest reflected the employer expectation for a globally competent employee as students' view traveling to a foreign country and experiencing a foreign culture as encouraging factors to intern abroad.

Students believe personal growth and work experience to be the most important value-adding factors to an international internship experience. The literature reviewed in this report indicates that participating in an international internship provides personal growth and relevant work experience. The study sample in this report, however, indicated that a travel abroad opportunity and opportunity to build their resume were more important than developing global awareness. This lack of perceived value for global awareness contrasts to the value to employers of globally aware employees. It seems students are so overwhelmingly focused on the place that they do the internship and their hope for a subsequent job offer that they can't see beyond that. Thus if students take eight weeks to do an internship, it is eight weeks that they are not working at a place that may hire them; the disconnect between students and employers in valuing global awareness is competing priorities.

Respondents reporting an interest in international internship options had a more favorable perception of the importance of global awareness than respondents not expressing an interest in an international internship option. Thus, the importance of

developing global awareness as an important value has been adapted by some, but not all, of undergraduate students sampled.

Generalizability of study findings is limited to the study sample. The financial barriers to interest in an international business-oriented internship may be more viewed as more important to students at a state-supported university compared to a private university. No attempt was made to establish the comparability between Penn State Smeal students to other Penn State students or to business students at other universities. Construct validity or other strategies to promote validity support for the instrument were not performed in this exploratory study. It is recognized that the strength of support for the validity of the instrument utilized is a driver for generalizability of findings. Therefore, the current findings are limited to the sample but of interest to those in the Smeal community.

Implications for the future

It is important to note that, as stated in the literature review by Paulsell (1991) “changes in attitude do not follow automatically from mere exposure to another culture (p.245)”. Thus, one cannot expect future students who participate in these programs to *automatically* develop a life-changing global competence. It is important for students and faculty to view these programs as a give and take relationship. Students must give up their preconceived notions to broaden their cultural horizon. Although the literature states the importance of global awareness for students, it is important to note that students must first travel with their eyes open in order to see what is in front of them.

Perhaps there should be a credit-bearing, academic component attached to the service learning internship. Service learning can be integrated into and reflected in an academic curriculum. As stated by Bringle & Hatcher, “Service learning, with the incentive of academic credit for service associated with the classroom, provides an important means for increasing student participation in community service and enhancing community service experience for those already involved” (1996).

The overall goal is for this data to be used to help implement a structure for successful international business internship programs to meet the needs and interest of students. The author hopes these findings will be incorporated into the development and implementation of the Smeal Global Impact Internships that is scheduled to be available to students in November 2010 (M. Handley, personal communication, April 14, 2010).

Appendix

International Internship Survey

This short survey is to help with the completion of my senior honors thesis. If you have any questions about this survey please contact Molly Anolik (mla5044@psu.edu). Thank you for your time and comments.

Q1

When did you last travel outside of the United States?

I have never traveled outside the United States

The last time I traveled abroad was during college

The last time I traveled abroad was between the start of high school and the summer after graduating high school

The last time I traveled abroad was before I entered high school

Q2

Please indicate the reason for your last trip abroad.

Vacation

Internship

Class trip

Volunteer work

Study abroad

Other

Q3

Have any of the following people in your life lived abroad for a period of 3 months or longer? Choose all that apply.

Friends

Family members

Classmates

I do not know anyone who has lived abroad

Other

Q4

Thinking about last year, how often do you participate in volunteer work?

At least once a week

At least once a month

At least once every few months

At least once a year

I participate less frequently than once a year

I do not participate in community service or volunteer work.

Q5

Would you consider doing a TRADITIONAL INTERNSHIP abroad?

The definition of a traditional internship abroad is a business internship that you could have in America; however, you would be carrying out your program in another country.

For example, a student could have a marketing internship for a large corporation abroad.

Yes

No

I don't know

Q6

Please indicate your agreement or disagreement with any of the following reasons for NOT considering a TRADITIONAL international internship.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I want to work in America because I hope to ultimately work in the same office in which I intern.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am not comfortable with international travel.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am not interested in international travel.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My family would not support me going abroad.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I think it would be too expensive to go abroad.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Strongly disagree Disagree Neither Agree nor Disagree Agree Strongly Agree

Q7

Would you consider doing a business oriented, international SERVICE LEARNING internship?

The definition of a business oriented, international service learning internship is a program that provides a meaningful service to the community by using business skills learned on site and also skills previously acquired through school.

For example, a student could intern with a non-profit organization in a developing country to assist small farmers in developing a business plan.

Yes

No

× I don't know

Q8

Please indicate your agreement or disagreement with the following reasons for NOT considering a business oriented, international SERVICE LEARNING internship.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
It is important to me to have an internship that is specific to my major as opposed to overall business oriented.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I would rather focus on developing business skills in a corporate setting than in a service setting.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
A traditional internship would look better on my resume.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am not comfortable with international travel.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am not interested in international travel.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My family would not support me going abroad.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I think it would be too expensive to go abroad.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

□ Q10

Please indicate your level of interest or disinterest in the following types of internships.

	Not interested	Slightly Interested	Neutral	Interested	Very Interested
A TRADITIONAL INTERNSHIP for a large corporation located abroad	<input type="checkbox"/>				
A business oriented, international SERVICE INTERNSHIP.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
A SERVICE LEARNING international internship that is focused on my major.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
A business internship for a non-profit organization in the Washington, DC area with an international focus.	<input type="checkbox"/>				

Q11



If you were to consider an international internship, how important are the following factors to your decision?

	Not important	Slightly important	× Neutral	Important	Very Important
Cost of program	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Safety/Security of Program	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Receiving a wage/salary	<input type="checkbox"/>				



Q12

If you were to consider an international internship, please indicate how important or unimportant the following aspects are to the experience.

	Not important	Slightly important	Neutral	Important	Very Important
Resume builder	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Developing global awareness	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Providing a meaningful service	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Personal growth	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Work experience	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Travel abroad opportunity	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Becoming more proficient in a foreign language	<input type="checkbox"/>				



Q13

If you were doing an international internship, which location would you prefer?

Please rank YOUR TOP 3 LOCATIONS in order of preference, 1 being MOST preferred.

- Europe
- Africa
- Latin America
- Middle East
- Asia
- Australia/ New Zealand
- Canada
- Other

Q14

Please indicate your gender.

Female

Male

Q15

Please indicate your class.

Freshman

Sophomore

Junior

Senior

Other

Q16

Please indicate your major.

Accounting

Management

Supply Chain Information Systems

Actuarial Science

Marketing

Undecided

Finance

Management Information Systems

Other

Q17

If you are currently taking the class BA297A with Meg Handley or Shaun Knight please enter your full name below to receive extra credit.

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Pennsylvania State University Leadership Award in Fall 2008

Presentations/Activities:

Alternative Spring Break in Israel, Jewish National Fund, March 2010
Smeal Internship Night, selected to present my internship experience to underclassmen
Alpha Sigma Alpha, National Sorority
University Park Allocations Committee