

UNDERSTANDING THE UNDERGRADUATE INTERNSHIP EXPERIENCE

Office of Institutional Effectiveness

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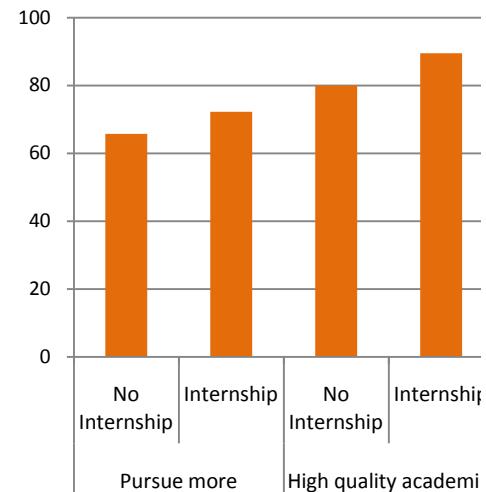
Background

All undergraduate degree programs at Marymount University have an internship requirement. Although possible to waive it, most students participate in an internship as part of their degree program. For the 499 graduates in the class of 2009-10, 462 or 92.6% successfully completed an internship while at Marymount.

Data

Each year the office of institutional effectiveness conducts the *Graduating Student Survey*. This survey gathers information on students' experiences and evaluations of Marymount; as well as information on their future educational and professional plans. In 2009-10, 349 undergraduates completed the questionnaire resulting in a strong response rate of 70%. This year, for the first time, the GSS asked students a series of questions about the specific experiences and opportunities they had as part of their internship.

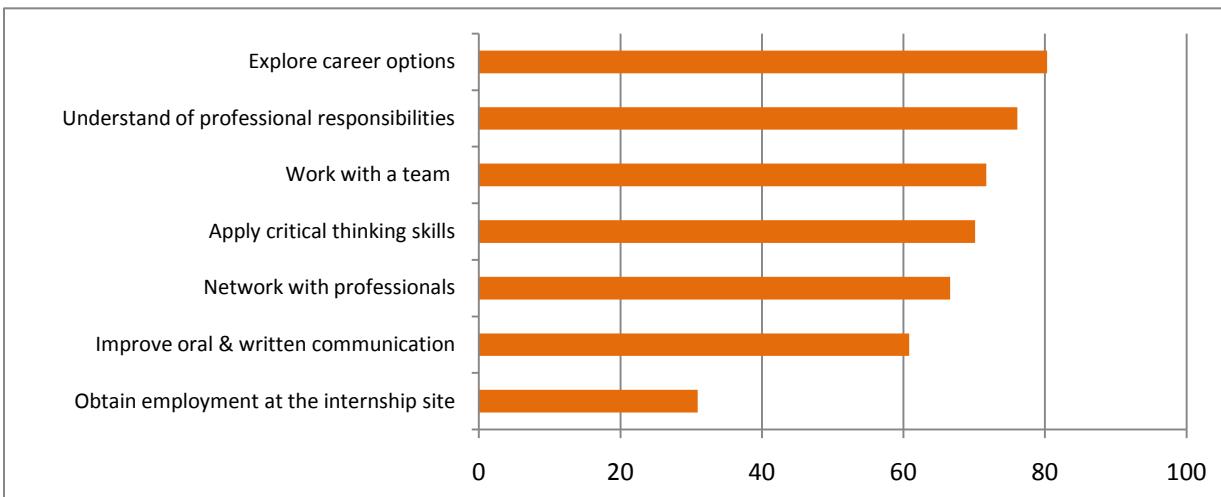
Graph 2: Internship Participaton and Evaluation of the Academic Experience



Internships and Perception of Academic Quality

While undergraduate experiences vary in the internship, the positive association between participating and perceptions of academic quality is clear. (See Graph 2) For students whose education included an internship, 89.5% agree or strongly agree that Marymount provides a high quality academic experience compared to 80% for those without an internship. Additionally, students who had an internship also feel more prepared to pursue further education (72.3%) compared to 65.7% for those who did not.

Graph 1: 2009-10 Graduates' experiences during the internship



The Internship Experience

Enrolling in an internship appears to be most strongly related to developing a professional identity. (See Graph 1) Four out of five (80.3%) undergraduates completing an internship report exploring career options and three-quarters (76.1%) indicate developing a stronger understanding of professional responsibilities. Interestingly, however, only 66% indicate that they networked with professionals in their field.

At the same time, developing core academic skills is less likely reported by students. Those who had an internship are less likely to

indicate that it included opportunities to think critically (70.1%) or communicate (60.8%) in written or oral forms.

Slightly less than a third of undergraduates (30.8%) indicate that they obtained employment at their internship site. There is substantial variation in the percentage of students obtaining a job from the internship by program. In general it appears that students from more applied programs (e.g., Criminal Justice – 53% and Fashion Merchandising - 44%) are most likely to obtain a job.

The overwhelming majority of Marymount's undergraduates participate in an internship during their education. Data from the *2009-10 Graduating Student Survey* suggest:

- Participating in an internship is directly correlated with students' positive evaluation of their academic experience.
- The primary result of internships appears to be to facilitate students' professional growth and development, with academic skills such as critical thinking and communication playing less of a role.
- Monitoring internships to ensure appropriate opportunities to network with professionals in the field may enhance student's overall experience.

The Office of Institutional Effectiveness serves the Marymount University community by promoting systematic, analysis-based decisions, and planning to improve students' educational experience.