

## **UW Bothell Internship Report**

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### **Introduction**

This internship report addresses three specific functions outlined in our charge:

1. To develop a baseline of existing internship activities at UW Bothell
2. To gather information about best internship practices for institutions such as ours
3. To develop an operational definition of what constitutes an internship

In addition we also provide recommended next steps to spark future ideas regarding an institutional career readiness strategy for students at UW Bothell.

We embed this analysis within a longer arc of campus research and development in community engagement including a current task force charged by Chancellor Yeigh. Internship and fieldwork practices could be a signature piece of UW Bothell's Community Engagement (CE) strategy, which would be a unique differentiator for the campus. The advancement of strong internship programming is seen as one tactical method within a broader community engagement strategy at UW Bothell and we therefore locate our report within this broader constellation of CE activities and high impact learning possibilities at UW Bothell. This logic is consistent with the recommendations from Holland & Furco (2014) where they note:

*"In considering the campus's strategic plan, we recommend that public engagement not be presented as a separate initiative, but rather be woven into each of the strategic goals. Whatever new strategic action initiatives are implemented to revitalize the institution's strategic plan, public engagement should be seen as an integral strategy that has potential to optimize the initiatives' goals along many dimensions."*(p. 1)

Because internships involve relationships between students and industry and community partners, it is prudent to consider how internships advance this community engagement mission rather than thinking about internships as a stand-alone activity. Additionally, the UW Bothell Career Center offers a career readiness framework to, "Explore, Build, and Connect," throughout its co-curricular services; this framework interacts with a variety of courses and curricula in most Schools, and is further outlined below.

### **Current Landscape**

Data collection for this report included semi-structured interviews with the following stakeholders (a list of interview questions can be found in Appendix A):

4 Academic Deans: David Allen (NHS), Brad Portin (ES), Bruce Burgett (IAS), Elaine Scott (STEM)

Director of Undergraduate Business program: Kim O'Neill (Business)

CUSP Director/ AVCAA: Leslie Ashbaugh

Career Center Staff: Kim Wilson, Evan Carman

Interim Director of CBLR: Kara Adams

Health Studies curriculum chair: Butch deCastro

AVC of Advancement: Melissa Arias

Through these conversations, we identified two broad themes that represent current internship structures and practices at UW Bothell. These include:

- Internships as an *academic learning tool*
- Internships as *pre-professional career preparation*

The graphic below begins to capture the range of field-based curricular activities currently happening on campus and their role in student learning.



*Curricular Examples:*

- |                                      |         |                              |
|--------------------------------------|---------|------------------------------|
| • BCUSP 199: Field Learning          | BIS 495 | BBUS 441: Project Management |
| • BHS 496: Health Studies Fieldwork  | Worlds  | BEE 495 & 496: EE Capstone   |
| • BIS 300: Interdisciplinary Inquiry | of Work | CSS 497: CSS Capstone        |
| • BBIO 495: Investigative Biology    |         | BIS 499: Portfolio Capstone  |

These courses address a range of activities from fieldwork to capstones; further explanation follows.

1. As a **learning tool**, internships are a way for students to:
  - a. explore and gain exposure to new contexts
  - b. discover connections between academic interests and professional possibilities
  - c. clarify their learning intentions

One recurrent narrative that came up in interviews was that internships are a way for students to link field experiences with academic pursuits and vice versa. Here, one goal of internships is internally facing: to help students make meaning of what they can do inside the university through new perspectives gained via intentional context exploration. The inverse is true too: by gaining exposure to content and perspectives generated through coursework, students can mobilize these questions and insights via field experience. The hope is that students build deeper intentionality around their own learning by attaching a relevant context to the academic content they explore through courses. Through field experience and exposure to new contexts, students gain deeper clarity regarding the kind of academic interests, majors, and longer-term careers they might choose to pursue.

Every unit on campus currently supports some kind of internship model with a goal of using field experience as a learning tool. Not surprisingly, most internship and fieldwork experiences are tied to academic credit and support national best practices. The following examples offer a snapshot of such offerings:

- **CUSP** offers a 3-credit hybrid 199 course for lower-division students to explore a field-based context and link it with reflective academic exercises. Requirements include attendance at 1-2 community events, a meeting with the course instructor at a quarterly midway point, a short 2-3

page reflective paper and brief presentation with peers. The course is designed to help students hone in on an academic area of focus and is considered an elective option. While this course has been on the time schedule, it has not been widely utilized by students

- **Nursing and Health Studies** describes fieldwork where learning and community reciprocity are key. Community engagement is rooted in the mission of the School and is an explicit goal for many NHS faculty. Fieldwork is described as a form of career development in that students are exposed to a range of career contexts, settings and possibilities. 100% of students in the School engage in some form of community-based fieldwork. One example: Health Studies students take BHS 496 as a 2 credit requirement and have a portfolio project.
- **STEM** defines the learning purpose of internships as largely to develop pre-professional technical skills. BIO 495 is a required course for the major and allows students to conduct project-based fieldwork on campus to apply curricular learning to a context outside the classroom. Projects and industry based field requirements for Chemistry, Physics and Math are currently under development. STEM has an aspirational goal of all students having a capstone (internship, research, or project) within all majors.
- **IAS** supports experiential learning that is mediated by a learning contract in BIS 495. BIS 495 uses anthropological skills to engage students in observation and reflection on “Worlds of Work” and is co-taught by a Career Counselor from the Career Center. This course is intended to help students explore context and scaffold learning via academic methods of analysis of these contexts. A learning contract creates the locus of the experience as embedded in independent sites using reciprocity principles. The IPR requirement requires all students in the School to participate in a high impact experience with meta-cognitive learning through deliberate reflection; internships are one way of connecting learning that is happening across the academic curriculum.
- **Educational Studies** is developing the learning goals for the B.A. degree now. For M.Ed. teacher candidates, fieldwork is a formalized practical experience with a teacher-mentor and students complete 800 hours of student teaching in a classroom.
- **Business** uses an independent study framework that allows students to pursue internships for academic credit in BUS 497. Students are required to obtain a faculty adviser in the student’s academic concentration so that student learning can be defined and evaluated. Students must also complete five core courses in the Business curriculum in order to be eligible for a credit-bearing internship experience; learning is then supervised and the intention is that students have specific curricular knowledge to apply in a fieldwork context.

**Key challenges** related to internships as a learning tool:

- When an internship or fieldwork experience is not tied to a curricular requirement, students

may not gain the full learning benefits that come from exploring new contexts through a career-readiness lens. Many students find an internship through the Career Center, networking contacts, or faculty; however, these opportunities provide experience but do not offer the structured learning environment of a curricular requirement.

- Guided exploration through reflective activities are embedded in discrete courses rather than connected to a longer learning narrative and journey.
- A course has been designed for pre-major students to use fieldwork as an intentional learning tool, however students have not taken advantage of this course to date.

2. As **pre-professional career preparation** internships provide:

- a. Networking opportunities between students and community/industry partners
- b. Technical and interpersonal skill-building opportunities
- c. Valuable evidence of applied workforce skills for student resumes

Examples:

- **Nursing and Health Studies** All MN students conduct a field-based project; most use these projects for career advancement. RN to BSN students participate in field experiences through BNURS 409. The Career Center is supporting the portfolio development of Health Studies and MN students as a way to showcase academic accomplishments and career readiness.
- **STEM** uses internships and capstone projects as a tool for students to develop professional and interpersonal skills such as communication, project management, problem solving, ethics, etc.; internships are part of the professional preparation of students for careers. Existing capstone courses reflect these goals and four majors currently support field-based requirements: EE, CSS, ME, and Biology. Many of these are industry-based projects and reflect the pre-professional nature of these curricular pathways. CSS, EE, and ME have an existing capstone structure; Chemistry, Math and Physics are under development. The capstone emphasizes significant synthesis between a students' academic major and the application of skills to a specific pre-professional context. Students deliver campus-wide presentations of their learning at an end-of-quarter event. Conversations are on-going as to how the Career Center can best support and become embedded in the STEM curriculum in addition to the individual students served in appointments and workshops.
- **IAS** offers a 499 portfolio capstone course in which students are asked to engage in meta-cognitive reflection of their entire education and tie their skills and experience together to create audience specific evidence (showcase portfolio, cover letter, graduate school essay, and elevator speech). While the 499 capstone course addresses career development skills, it also synthesizes many of the learning goals and outcomes discussed into its structure. The Career Center is supporting all IAS students in the 300 and 499 courses focused on portfolios, networking, and letters of application.
- **Educational Studies** has statewide requirements for teacher candidates to be career ready and qualified. Partnering with the community is integral and essential to the teacher candidate

education. The Career Center supports all teacher candidates through a job preparation event and in-class presentations. Conversations are currently underway to support the B.A. degree.

- **Business** offers a BBUS 441 Project Management course where students work in teams of five on field-based industry projects. Students plan, execute and assess their project, engage in peer evaluations, and receive performance feedback from industry stakeholders. Business also offers other project based courses which allow for the development of technical skills (Business Consulting and Business Process Improvement). The Career Center supports individual students who visit the Student Success Center.

**Key challenges** related to internships as pre-professional career preparation:

- There is concern for the impact poorly prepared or underperforming students have on the community. Career Center staff provide individual consultation and skills development (the *Build* and *Connect* pieces of the framework) to students before they enter the community, however this currently exists as an “opt-in” service and is therefore inconsistent across all students and Schools.
- Individual faculty are largely responsible for identifying industry and community partners for project-based courses and capstones. This has challenging implications for sustainable partnership development. The CBLR office supports faculty in some community engagement partnerships but staffing is limited. The Employer Relations Manager in the Career Center supports employers in developing opportunities for students and provides initial contact and referral for the external community but staffing is limited.
- In STEM, the need for structured industry relations to support capstone projects is unique due to intellectual property law, the interaction with C4C, as well as the need to manage student teams. Both for STEM and all Schools, faculty curricular expertise should be leveraged for project support rather than administrative and industry relations needs.
- Students may not make connections between the value of their academic investment and the applied skills necessary in the field. Reflection and metacognition occurs on an individual basis if students engage in a conversation with faculty, advisers, or career counselors.
- Faculty supervision of individual internships is time consuming, labor intensive, and cumbersome as a sustainable structure. Faculty are not compensated across all Schools in the same way. During summer quarter when students are most likely to engage in an internship, the number of faculty available for individual support and supervision decreases.

### **Best Practices**

To collect information on best internship practices for institutions such as UW Bothell, we investigated three main sources: Education Advisory Board (EAB), National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE), and individual University webpages. Best practice research focused on four areas: (1) student learning, (2) student retention, (3) organizational effectiveness, and (4) faculty support.

1. Internships are identified by AAC&U as a high impact practice where students participate in **active learning**, which leads to greater student engagement.

*Example:* At Hope University, clearly defined broad student learning goals guide internships.

“Internships at Hope are supervised work experiences related to a student's major or vocational interest area for which the student earns academic credit through an internship course in which the student is enrolled concurrent to the work experience. Learning outcomes for student internships include: Apply academic knowledge in a professional setting; Develop professionally relevant competencies and relationships in a professional setting; Gain exposure to a professional field and an understanding of professional etiquette; Observe and begin to understand a professional organizational culture; Evaluate one’s own performance in light of one’s expressed goals and learning outcomes; Compare and contrast one’s self-perception to the professional perception of the site supervisor; Clarify one’s calling through reflection on the internship experience; Critically evaluate the internship experience as an exemplar for the field. Each learning outcome has a description with metric associated to determine if students met the goal. <http://www.hope.edu/academic/intern/Learning%20outcomes.pdf>

*Example:* Case Western Reserve University differentiates between an internship (experiential learning opportunity available to all students to clarify career goals) and practicum experiences (experiential learning collaboration between a student, faculty and employer coordinated by the Career Center). Practicum experiences have a structured student learning outcomes and explicitly stated roles for faculty, employers and students.

<http://students.case.edu/careers/students/jobs/internships/doc/overview.pdf>

2. Internships are a recognized **retention tool**; research shows that students who participate in internships and fieldwork are more engaged with their academic curriculum and tend to persist to graduation at higher rates. In addition, employers who supervise interns note that a strong internship experience often translates as an important recruitment tool for full-time employment post-graduation.

*Example:* A quantitative 2011 dissertation demonstrated business students engaged in internships had a higher GPA post internship and a statistically significant persistence to graduation over peers who did not complete an internship. <http://lib.dr.iastate.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=3026&context=etd>

*Example:* In 2014, NACE reports the conversion rate (internship to full time offer) increased to 51.2%, meaning over half of interns accepted offers of full time employment post-graduation and persisted through graduation. Additionally, employees who completed an internship or co-op program with their employer are more likely to be with the company at both the one-year and five-year benchmarks.

3. Organizational structures that best support career readiness point to a **coordinated approach**, which engages a centralized core Career Services staff with specialized support and networks within each School.

*Example:* An Educational Advisory Board (EAB) report indicated that Career Services directors encourage their internship coordinators to spend time in academic units to increase communication between career services and academic units. Internship coordinators who spend at least one quarter of their working hours in satellite offices located in academic units report an increase in collaboration with

faculty internship advisers. This collaboration occurs through increased in-class career presentations and greater rates of internship data collection. (EAB, 2013)

Internships housed within career centers increase the exposure of internship programs for students from all majors and provide a central point of contact for students and employers. (EAB, 2013)

Contacts suggest that internship offices should be active in nearly every stage of the internship process, from discussing interests with students and guiding their searches to assessing the program's success through rigorous evaluations. (EAB, 2010)

*Example:* The National Association of Colleges and Employers in their annual survey of college career centers reported, 83% of career services offices work with their university's academic departments. Of those, almost 2/3 collaborate to place students in both academic and employer internships. (NACE, 2014)

4. All of the best practices support the need for **faculty** to be an integral part of the internship learning experience for students. Previously referenced material identified the role faculty play in creating learning outcomes, supporting student reflection, connecting to the academic environment, and providing discipline specific expertise.

*Example:* "Across institutions, faculty members receive no added benefits for devising and executing internship seminars. Despite widespread agreement that faculty buy-in is essential, institutions grant no benefits to these same faculty for their hard work on internships. No contact institutions decrease course load, and only one institution maintains a formula that compensates faculty for their internship students. At that institution, the threshold for additional compensation is high enough that few, if any, faculty meet the standards." (EAB, 2010)

## Recommendations and Considerations

1. **Define internships as a specific high impact practice for UW Bothell.**
  - a. UW Bothell has an opportunity to develop more intentionality between internship practices and **student learning outcomes** in ways that address the learning arm of community engagement more explicitly. Defining internship activities as one of a limited number of centrally-supported high impact practices on our campus (alongside Undergraduate Research, CBLR, Global Initiatives, and learning communities) allows us to invest in a high quality experiential learning infrastructure in tandem with campus-community relations.
  - b. **Distinguish internships from capstones.** Differentiate *context* exploration activities (internships) from *content expertise/development* (capstones) and establish distinctive learning goals for each. Consider curricular and structural ways to support students' narrative development and storytelling skills about their own career readiness.
  - c. Continue to **support capstone design and development within Schools** and locate these activities at the upper division levels.

- d. Consider a **campus-level sophomore initiative** that extends the exploration work from Discovery Core activities into coordinated programming across all Schools. Use the CUSP transition to organize 200-level curricular movement around a dedicated community engagement focus for the sophomore year. Use internships (defined as exploratory field placement models) as one entrée into community engagement. A focus on exploratory *context discovery* might sit alongside the build-out of our existing e-portfolio infrastructure, and should include multiple and ongoing presentation opportunities where students iterate, network, interact and learn from each other.

## 2. Reframe Career Services.

- a. We recommend mapping the Career Center's "Explore, Build, Connect" framework across internship practices in each School and CUSP to see where gaps exist, and to **design more connections between and across programs**.
- b. Leverage the 3C's to reimagine career services activities:
  - i. Position staffing to serve as community connectors among students (meet ups rather than workshops), among industry partners (building sustainable networks), and among faculty (to leverage projects through curriculum design and project based learning models). This implies a **networking model in which career counselors move outward**, rather than asking students, faculty, and industry/community partners to move inward. A "hub and spoke" model for career services to support all Schools might draw on lessons from UW Libraries.
- c. Encourage deeper **staffing partnerships and collaborations in the Student Success Center** to support high impact practices as pivot points for internship and field placements. Design organizational pathways that enable SSC staff to track and assess learning *and* career readiness metrics across these experiential learning nodes.
  - i. **Build faculty capacity to support career readiness work.** Create a structure where faculty are supported and rewarded for doing community engaged work, including supporting fieldwork and internships. Conduct an inventory of existing faculty needs and practices for establishing (and sustaining) campus-community projects and partnerships. Faculty research and scholarship that is in partnership with the broader community provides deep and meaningful learning contexts for students. Build deeper capacities among faculty to leverage the Career Center's "Explore, Build, Connect" framework throughout curriculum so all students have the opportunity to engage in each of these developmental steps. Creating an innovative faculty engagement model alongside community engagement efforts can serve as a distinction among our peers (Holland & Furco, 2014).

## 3. Establish a measurement plan.

- a. Create a **centralized tracking mechanism** for all internship activity on campus as part of a broader community engagement database. Schools should submit regular internship activity to a central hub or database. This database should interact with Advancement and inform external relations work. All assessment activities should align with the 3C's metrics currently under development and align with goals for exploratory *context discovery* elements of internship practices.
- ii. Data collection will allow evaluation of efforts as well as the ability to **link student retention**

**efforts with internship engagement**, degree completion, and time to degree measurements.

- 4. Pilot a stand-alone career readiness intensive program.** Koru and Fulbridge have both created intensive career-readiness models that teach high demand technical skills to college graduates, provide networking opportunities and create job placements for student participants. We suggest partnering with one of these providers through a small pilot in order to “train-the trainers” and learn how to build such a model in-house. Rather than paying for these services indefinitely or passing the cost along to students, building out the Career Center framework, utilizing expertise on campus, and creating a unique Bothell experience gives us the opportunity to meet student and employer needs at a lower cost.

## **Conclusion**

In summary, internships are part of the broader campus community engagement strategy and are a best practice to engage the community. Based on the current landscape, internships serve to meet academic learning goals and also provide pre-professional career training. There is a distinction between internships for context exploration (including interests, skills, and majors) and content development (pre-professional skills) that are aligned with capstone courses.

Best practices indicate internships are a high impact practice for student learning and retention. Using a coordinated model of centralized and specific support will meet School, faculty and community needs associated with internship, fieldwork and capstone growth.

We recommend UW Bothell adopt a broad definition of internship: as a learning tool for students to connect field experience with curricular structures and academic development; which allows for career exploration and skill development; and is embedded in broader retention and community engagement strategies.

## Appendix A

### Interview Questions

How do you define internship?

How is this similar/different than academic internship, co-op, or other formalized practical experience for students?

How many current students participate? When do they participate?

How do you see internships interacting with undergrad curriculum? Graduate?

What are your current needs related to supporting internships? (administrative, faculty advising, teaching a course, site visits, etc.)

How do you see the growth of your School impacting internships? What are the future (5yr) goals related to internships?

How does your internship definition interact with community engagement interests/efforts?

How do you see internships as a learning tool for students?

What do current learning outcomes look like?

What other thoughts/concerns/goals do you have related to internships?