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Students' Search Behaviors and Career Alignment for Internships

Michael Odio

Abstract

The present study explores the internship search behaviors of undergraduate sport management students at three public universities, including how much time is spent looking for internships, what resources are used for searching, and what criteria are used when deciding on an internship. The findings affirm previous research that factors such as compensation, location, timing, and career goals are important, but also reveal how students weigh these factors and how it affects when, where, and how they search for internship opportunities. This information is beneficial for employers interested in understanding the student's perspective of the internship search in order to increase the size and quality of their candidate pool.

Keywords: *Sport management internships, recruiting, intern compensation*

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Scholars and practitioners tout the benefits of internships to the careers of students (Narayanan, Olk, & Fukami, 2010) and to the organizations that host them (Maertz, Stoeberl, & Marks, 2014). Despite their prevalence, the parameters of internships in undergraduate sport management programs can vary widely in terms of duration, number of hours per week, responsibilities and duties, and whether or not academic credit is required (Brown & Willett, 2015). Finding an internship is a unique challenge for students since they must navigate a competitive market to find an opportunity that coincides with certain academic parameters. Even more difficult is finding an internship that also aligns with their plans for graduation or risk, at the very least, delaying graduation.

When searching for an internship, some of the major decision-making factors include a mix of professional and personal variables. In the sport management literature, Stratta (2004) found compensation, location, timing, and networking may all matter for deciding where to intern. Although the factors were presented in aggregate, Stratta (2004) highlighted some challenges that stem from the parameters of many sport management internships. For example, the study found that many students based their decisions on which internships to pursue on whether compensation was offered as well as whether it aligned with their academic schedule and plans for graduation (Stratta, 2004). Still, the study provided little insight into how these factors compare to each other and how they are balanced with other considerations, including graduation requirements and timing to determine how students select their internship.

Knowledge about factors that affect how students seek and choose internships is not only informative for educators, but can benefit employers who hire interns. The process of hiring interns can be very different from hiring traditional entry-level employees. Since many interns are unpaid and technically not considered employees, the hiring of interns may not include standard human resource procedures in all organizations, making it less formal and potentially difficult for students to navigate. As an example, some organizations do not advertise their internship positions, while others create internships for students when they inquire rather than having a formal internship program (Foster & Dollar, 2010; Shanley, 2007; Streufort, 2016). Moreover, while many students see senior internships as a “stepping stone” into an entry-level job, perhaps even with the same organization, others may have different plans for after the internship such as graduate school or another employment opportunity that has already been arranged (Odio, Sagas, & Kerwin, 2014). With these added complexities in mind, the purpose of this study is to provide a better understanding of how students search for internships. This information will benefit people on both employers and educators. More specifically the purpose is to 1) examine specific search behaviors through objective and descriptive accounts of the search such as the timeline, resources used, and number of applications submitted; 2) discern how students weigh certain criteria

(e.g., compensation, location) when deciding where to intern; and 3) probe for additional factors relevant to the internship search process.

Method

Twenty senior undergraduate students across three sport management programs at public research universities with required senior, capstone internships (12–13 weeks) were recruited using email and in-class announcements to participate in the study. All participants had already secured their internships for the next semester by the time they were interviewed by the primary researcher. Sampling at the first university (University A) was done until saturation of the data and a sufficient diversity of internship sites was reached. That is, until no new patterns emerged from the participants' responses. Participants from University B and C were recruited to provide additional diversity to the sample. The participants are labeled by university and numbered so as to provide confidentiality (see Table 1 for a list of participants).

The interviews ranged from 20–40 minutes and contained a structured and a semi-structured portion. The structured portion collected demographic and objective information about each participant's search behaviors. The semi-structured portion of the interviews focused on how their internship search unfolded, including their initial preferences, any changes in preferences that occurred in the process, their career aspirations, and anything that restricted or otherwise influenced their search. Several questions were aligned with previous literature to assess the role of location, cost, and career planning in the internship search process (Stewart & Stewart, 1996; Stratta, 2004; Williams, 1994). Additional questions in the semi-structured portion were meant to elicit each participant's narrative account of their experience and explore any factors that had not been uncovered by previous research.

The objective, or quantitative, information from the structured portion of the interviews was compiled using Microsoft Excel for basic analysis. The data from the semi-structured portions of the interviews were analyzed using a general inductive approach (Thomas, 2006). This approach allows for a researcher to extract concepts and themes from raw data so that can be established between the research objectives and data. Unlike more sophisticated methods such as grounded theory, discourse analysis, or phenomenology, the general inductive approach is less focused on theory building and more focused on finding and describing the key themes relevant to the research questions (Thomas, 2006).

Following Thomas' (2006) recommended procedures the interview transcripts were organized based on responses that corresponded with each research objective, coded by the researcher, and then analyzed by the author for any emergent categories and links between categories. The inductive analysis includes a close reading of the text, creation of categories, checking for overlapping coding and uncoded text, and continuing revising and refinement (Thomas, 2006). Since

Table 1
Participants' Internship Site, Search Duration, and Site Information Sorted by Number of Applications Submitted

Participant	# Apps	# Interviews	# Offers	Search Length (months)	Compensation	Internship site	Location
A10	35	5	1	6	No	NFL	New location
A9	30-35	7	1	7	No	College ticket office	College town
A3	25-35	5	4	8	Yes	Visitor's bureau	College town
A2	25-30	7	1	6	No	Minor league baseball	Four hours from home
A1	25+	5	1	2	Yes	Events company	College town
C1	25+	5	3	2	Yes	Hospitality	College town
C2	10-15	5	1	3	No	Event company	College town
B3	11	5	3	1	No	Regional event	Two hours from college town
B4	9	2	2	2	Yes	Hospitality	College town
B1	9	3	1	1	No	Local Special Olympics	One hour from college town
A11	7	4	3	1	Yes	College ticket office	College town
C3	5-6	3	2	3	Yes	College athletics venue	College town
C4	5-6	3	1	2	Yes	NHL	New location
A7	2	2	1	12	No	Minor league hockey	College town
A6	2	2	1	11	No	Minor league baseball	College town
A4	2	2	2	8	No	College football equipment room	College town
A8	2	1	1	5	No	College athletics events	One hour from college town
B2	1	1	1	8	Yes	Theme park	One hour from college town
B5	0	1	1	12	No	Entertainment company	Spouse's location
A5	0	0	1	4	Yes	Golf apparel retail store	Home town

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the content of the interviews were relatively straightforward, the majority of the analysis was simply finding the emergent patterns across participants.

The validity of the data and conclusions was confirmed through member checking (Cho & Trent, 2006; Creswell & Miller, 2000). Member checking is a well-established process of establishing the validity of the data and its interpretation by involving the participant (Creswell & Miller). At the conclusion of each interview, the content and interpretation of the participant's statements were read back to and discussed with them. On several occasions this led to participants adding further insight into their search process.

Findings

Search Behaviors

Search timeline and applications submitted. As seen in Figure 1, some students beginning their search as early as 12–16 months before the scheduled start of their internship, while others waited until four to five months prior to the start date to begin their search. The search duration (time from start of search until they officially chose an internship) also varied widely, with some searches only lasting one month, to others where a participants searched for a full year before finding an internship. Table 1 shows that there was also a broad range in the number of applications submitted in the search process with some clusters emerging. Six participants submitted between 25 and 35 internship applications, seven submitted between five and 11, and seven participants submitted two or

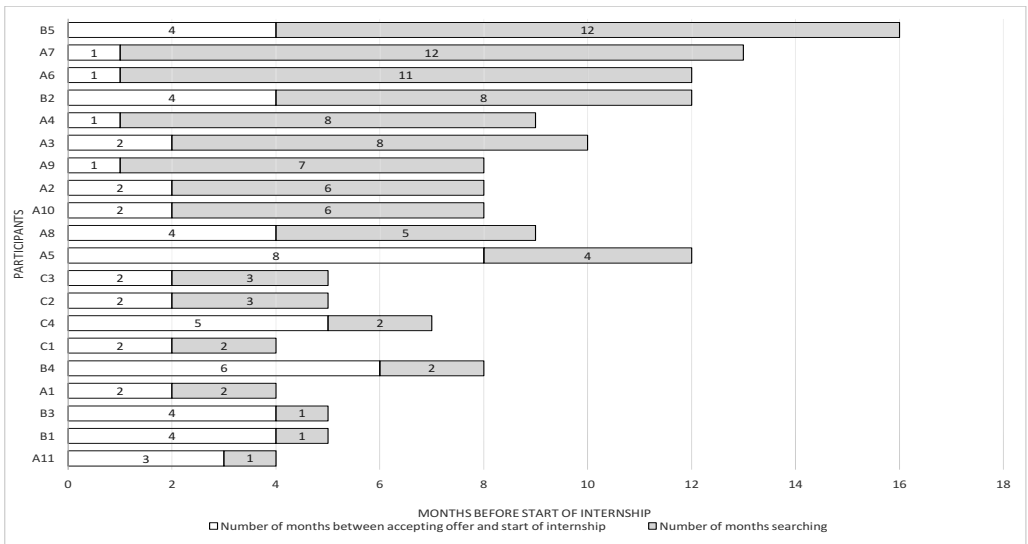


Figure 1. Timeline for each participant's search sorted by number of months spent searching. Number of months searching encompasses when each participant first began actively seeking internship opportunities.

fewer applications. Interestingly, two participants in the latter group did not submit any formal applications since they received unsolicited offers.

Search resources. Participants drew from a variety of resources during their search. Although many stuck to more traditional methods and channels for internship postings, such as different search engines, others were more targeted, contacting organizations directly and/or visiting their website. Table 2 provides a breakdown of the most common search resources cited, sorted by the number of applications submitted.

Among the more broadly yfocused resources used were online search engines and job forums such as Google, Monster.com, Indeed.com, and Internships.com. One sport-focused search engine in particular, TeamWorkOnline, was cited by a number of participants as a major resource. In fact, six participants mentioned using this site almost exclusively for their online searches. Altogether, every one of the participants from the cluster with over 25 applications submitted, and all but one of the participants from the middle cluster (i.e., 5–15 applications submitted) used TeamWorkOnline or another job search engine. In contrast, only four of the seven participants from the lowest cluster (two or fewer applications) mentioned using these resources.

For the more narrowly focused approach, the opposite was nearly true. That is, of the 13 participants who said they went directly to the websites of organizations they wanted to intern for to gather more information, only two from the top cluster used this more direct route. Though this pattern does not signify a very strong correlation, it is suggestive that students with different foci may exhibit different online search patterns.

Other common approaches were the use of networks and resources provided by the university. As seen in Table 2, eight participants claimed much of their guidance and information on internships came from their professors and advisors, and 11 used their former and/or current job and internship supervisors as resources. Only five participants did not use any personal or university resources. For example, B2, who had a very narrowly focused search compared to most, explained how she went straight to the websites of the organizations she was interested in, bypassing the university resources at her disposal, and relied on a friend in her network to provide information and assistance.

A4 and A5, who began their searches with offers in hand also admitted not using all the resources they knew they could. For A4, his search process began with an unsolicited internship offer from the supervisor of his campus job during his junior year. He searched for other internships but only applied to one other opportunity and ultimately accepted the offer from his supervisor to move from a part-time student-employee to a full-time intern. Similarly, A5, a varsity athlete who wanted to graduate on time in order to begin his professional athletic career, was offered an internship by a previous employer from a summer job. His search was slightly more involved, including some discussions with classmates, professors and industry professionals who were guest speakers in his classes, but he did not

Table 2
Search Tools used by each Participant

Participant	# Apps	Search Engines	Teamwork Online	Org Websites	Cold Calls	Personal Network	Advisor/Professor	Social Media
A10	35		X	X		X		X
A9	30-35	X	X	X			X	
A3	25-35	X	X			X	X	
A2	25-30		X					X
A1	25+	X	X			X		
C1	25+	X					X	
C2	10-15		X	X			X	
B3	11	X		X				
B4	9			X	X			
B1	9		X	X	X	X		
A11	7	X	X	X				
C3	5-6	X		X		X	X	
C4	5-6		X	X		X		
A7	2		X			X	X	
A6	2	X					X	
A4	2			X		X		
A8	2	X		X		X		X
B2	1			X		X		
B5	0			X				
A5	0					X	X	
Total		10	10	13	2	11	8	3

find another internship that fit his criteria and timeline and accepted the initial offer months after it was made.

Technology and online resources were relied upon by most participants but so were university, professional, and personal networks. Although no definitive trend can be claimed, those with broader searches seemed to gravitate towards online search engines, and those with more narrow searches used more targeted resources for finding information and open positions. Overall, the resources participants used during their search appeared driven as much by their circumstances as by the availability and access to those resources.

Search Criteria

The criteria a student uses when searching for and ultimately accepting is reflective of their goals, aspirations, and resources. During the interview, the participants were asked to comment on how they weighed each of their criteria during their search, when appropriate. Responses mostly involved the content of the internship, location, and compensation, but personal factors weighed very heavily in some instances.

Location. One of the most common criteria participants discussed was the geographic location of the internship, a criteria that often took precedence over the content of the internship. The strictest example of this was B5, who constrained her search to a specific location in order to stay near her spouse. The rest of the participants varied on how strongly they valued location, with five participants (A2, A8, A10, C3, and C4) explicitly saying they would or preferred to take an internship away from their home or college town. A10 perceived the market for internships in his college town was no favorable and had planned for years to pursue an internship away from his college town:

[My classmates] all want to try to land something in [our college town]. It's kind of saturated... I love my [local] sports but I feel like there are so many more opportunities all over the country. So from day one I've always wanted to go out...so I've been saving up money since sophomore year so I could get out.

On the other hand, six participants (A5, A6, A7, A9, A11, and B5) strongly preferred to complete their internship in their home or college town. A9 perceived a disadvantage in pursuing internships away from his home or college town and was selective in applying to internships away from those locations:

I looked at several [internships] around the country... However, it was very hard to get those interviews given that I don't already have housing in those areas. So looking from an interviewer's perspective, I might not be very reliable if I accept the offer if housing fell through. So I tried to keep it local, but I did apply for others.

Three others (B1, B2, and C1) said they were willing to travel but only a short distance, such as a big city near their college town. C1 explained that she initially prioritized staying in her college town over finding a beneficial internship despite knowing it might have affected her career prospects, she explained how her thought process evolved during the search:

[My priorities] changed a little along the way because I kind of stopped looking at ones [in the nearby big city] for a while and just centralized to [my college town] and the surrounding cities but for the most part it stayed about the same when I started hearing back from places around here because I realized I had a chance to stay here... I did [look at places beyond my home town and college town] a little bit. And that was me trying to be a little adventurous and see what else is out there... but I knew from the beginning that I was never going to accept that because location was very important to me.

Location was an important consideration for about half of the participants, for many different reasons ranging from personal preference to rigid necessity. Interestingly, few of the location preferences appeared motivated by career goals. However, several searches were influenced by the participants' financial circumstances, leading to a discussion on compensation.

Compensation. Almost half of the participants found paid internships. Like location, compensation took priority over the content of the internship for several participants (i.e., A3, A9, B2, and C4) or highly influenced their search (A7, A8, A10, B3, B4, C2, and C3). At first glance, it is easy to assume that for college students earning money is always preferable to not earning money, but the individual narratives of how much the issue affected their search reveals an assortment of perspectives shaped by the circumstances and previous experiences of the participants. The responses included outright refusal summed up by B2:

I wanted a paid internship. I wasn't going to do a nonpaid internship. I've done one of those before, and I recently had an experience where I did a [large retail chain's] internship experience last summer and it was paid quite well and I got used to that. I feel I was more focused, I guess. Like, I wasn't like slacking off because I actually had a job to do while learning, so I felt that that was going to keep me on track.

Another participant, A9, who prioritized compensation reluctantly accepted an uncertain situation after a difficult search.

I asked my boss about paid internships and he said the budget is very tight. And that he would look into it. Most students would start off as unpaid workers, and if they demonstrate their work ethic, do a great job, they would eventually move into an hourly, paid role at minimum wage.

Still, other participants were even more accepting of unpaid internships saying that they did not need compensation and it did not influence their search (A1, A2, A5, A6, A11, B1, B5, and C1). One participant, B1, went as far as saying she would have taken extra steps such as taking out a loan in order to not allow the issue of compensation to affect her search had she been offered an internship that aligned with her career goals. In her words:

I think had I [been hired as an intern with a major professional team] I would've taken out a loan because I do want to go more into private practice and [my internship] is a nonprofit and public-oriented and I think professional leagues would've been more in line with what I want to do in the future.

Other participants also commented on compensation being needed under certain conditions, primarily if the internship was not local. Six participants (A1, A3, A4, B3, B4, and C2) noted that compensation and location were important and they would only consider internships in a new city if it were a paid opportunity. When asked to explain how these two factors were weighed the participants explained what drove their decision-making. For example, A4 commented that he could only accept a paid internship outside of his college town because he could not afford to break his apartment lease. B4 and A7 had similar barriers explaining that accepting an unpaid internship in their college town was easier since they could keep their part-time jobs. In B4's case, she had originally wanted to leave her college town in favor of a city where she wants to live long-term, but the issue of finances affected her search:

I hate to say that I'm staying comfortable by taking an internship here, but I am just in terms of finances. And that's not me at all. But just to be financially secure, I'm doing my internship here [in my college town]. I wanted to maybe to go to [a larger nearby city], because I see my future there...but once again, just calculating the relocating fees plus, you know, the rent and living expenses there...it's more expensive than staying here.

Alignment and Timing

Two additional factors that played major roles were: 1) the alignment between the career goals of the student and 2) the content of the internship, and the timing of an internship, or whether a desired internship was able to fit within the students' plan for graduation. As expected, career alignment mattered for most participants, but there was a wide range in how highly participants prioritized it. For instance, B2's internship was a perfect alignment since it was her intent to work with that same organization after graduating. On the other hand, B4 was willing to accept an internship that was not an exact fit to her career aspirations saying, "I definitely would've taken a different internship even if I thought it was a lot worse than this one just so that I could get it done and start working." She then clarified that she

might have delayed if she could not get a paid internship that fit her schedule, showing that she prioritized compensation over timing and fit.

Timing was a somewhat related factor, while some were prepared to delay graduation, others were willing to take a subpar internship that did not align with their career goals. For instance, A9 had already delayed graduation by a semester in order to find a quality internship, he eventually found one that fit his criteria but commented that he had reached his limit saying, "I didn't receive any offers from the places I interviewed. Some of them were not the ones I wanted anyways. I didn't want to settle, but I was pretty much willing to take anything." On the other hand, because of his aspirations as a professional athlete, A5 was not willing to delay graduation. Since he had received an offer far in advance he never had to make the decision but would have been willing to take almost any internship to graduate.

Emotions during the Search

The participants' narrative accounts of their internship searches often included insight into their state of mind during the process. The characteristics of the searches appeared to only differ slightly between the three clusters of participants. Among the six participants who submitted over 25 applications, three (A3, A9, and C1) described high levels of stress or anxiety. A9 explained he resisted becoming discouraged despite constantly being turned down for several internships:

It was very long. There were a lot of downs, obviously. I tried not to get discouraged if I heard the word 'no' and I did not receive the offer. It really stung for the first day after I heard it but I was always still actively searching. I never gave up throughout the process, no matter how bad... it didn't look good. I persevered I was able to get an internship. It was just a very long process for me.

C1 described the experience as chaotic as he began prioritizing finding an internship over his current school or work commitments:

Chaotic, probably, a lot of chaos, and to be honest some anxiety in there... I've never had a semester where I've put something outside my school work first and [my internship search] came before a lot of it. I think just having the pressure of 'I need this internship in order to graduate'... It was a lot of pressure in the beginning because I realized how quickly time was going but as I started hearing back it got a little less chaotic. Pressure was off a little more because I felt that someone was actually interested in me, which is a good confidence boost.

Other emotions or descriptors for the process included lucky (A1), methodical and exciting (A10), and consistent (A2).

For the seven participants who submitted between five and 11 applications, experiences were varied widely, but with some similarities to the participants who

applied to more internships. Much like A1, B4 and C4 saw their experiences as very lucky. Meanwhile, B1, C2, and C3 felt stressed by the wide net they had cast in their search. However, while B1 and C3 invoked this as a negative, C2 claimed to be stressed “in a good way” saying that although he was often unorganized and had a lot of internet browser tabs open at once searching for opportunities, progress was being made. For C3, having previous experience made him feel that the process was much easier than it could have been, and although he felt stressed, it was more so due to the plethora of opportunities available to him.

The seven participants who applied for two or fewer positions had a more narrow range of emotions in reflecting on their searches, but for many different reasons. A7 described his search as “simple and safe,” eventually taking an internship with a local organization he was familiar with. B5 felt “lucky” having found an opportunity that fit her very limited criteria, similar to A6 who was also limited how many applications she could submit based on geographic criteria.

Discussion

By gaining objective information and descriptive accounts of students’ searches, the findings of this study generally support those of previous research (e.g., Stratta, 2004) indicating that compensation, location, timing, and career alignment are relevant factors in students’ internship search. However, the present study illustrates how differently students may weigh these factors when searching for internships and ultimately choosing a site. This section provides context for the study’s findings and practical implications for industry practitioners whether they hire interns as a means of identifying and recruiting future talent for the organization, or hire interns to provide mentorship for future professionals that add to the organization by bringing new knowledge and ideas.

Search Behaviors and Timeline

Regarding the participants’ search timelines and behaviors, the findings show major variations, with searches ranging in duration from one to 16 months, and number of applications submitted ranging from zero to over 25 applications. Furthermore, it is clear that many students are consciously searching for internships up to a year before it takes place, even though most do not accept the internship until two to four months before the start date. Based on the long time frames and low number of applications of many participants, organizations should consider advertising internships up to a year in advance. This would expose students to the opportunities early on, attract their attention, and allow them to plan their final semesters of coursework accordingly. However, seeing as how seven of the 20 participants in this study had not begun searching more than six months before the start date, organizations should be cautious of hiring too early as well. According to this evidence, advertising internship opportunities a year in advance and making hiring decisions four to five months before the start of the internship would be a reasonable strategy for maximizing applications across all students.

Participants also varied on what resources they used during the search. While those participants with narrowly-focused searches tended to rely on personal networks and visited the websites of specific organizations they were interested in, others used online search engines to cast a wide net. Organizations should consider whether they are seeking interns with specific interests and goals, or whether they should aim to recruit students with broader skills and still undefined interests. For example, a small-town sports commission may need to advertise its internship more aggressively on search engines since they may be harder to find compared to a major professional sports franchise that likely attracts far more traffic directly to its website. Nevertheless, it is prudent to advertise internships through all of the channels major channels such as online search engines, on the organization's website, and directly to universities.

Search Criteria

In addition to this issue of timing is the reality that students often make trade-offs between the criteria they use when evaluating internships. As already known, location is an important consideration as is compensation. Some students want to stay close to their friends and enjoy the college experience as much as possible. However, evidence from this study also suggests that for many the decision on whether to pursue internships away from their home or college town is not just about preference, but about finances. Many students are not willing or able to sacrifice living in their college or hometowns with available housing or part-time jobs to work unpaid in another city. Some students in this study had one or more part-time jobs and an apartment lease they could not afford break while also incurring relocation, and living expenses in a new city.

This reinforces the increasing consciousness of the impact of unpaid internships on people from lower socioeconomic backgrounds (e.g. Odio, 2017; Solman, 2013). In short, the growing prevalence of unpaid internships largely benefits students from wealthier backgrounds who have more freedom to network and search for internships, and can afford to take on unpaid opportunities even in different cities. Meanwhile, students with fewer resources have less free time to search for internships and often continue working one or more part-time jobs while taking on full-time unpaid internships. Employers should be aware of this trend and understand the larger impact of unpaid internships and offer compensation when possible. Unpaid internships would likely draw fewer diverse applicants, and would mostly attract local students and/or those of higher means.

Alignment and Timing

Another major consideration is that many students are willing to take internships they are not interested in simply to graduate on time. While it has been shown that students' career goals may change during an internship (e.g., Cunningham, Sagas, Dixon, Kent, & Turner, 2005; Odio & Kerwin, 2016) a lack of interest (i.e., alignment) from the onset may be the biggest challenge for

employers who use internships as a mechanism for making long-term hires. That is, employers are at risk of hiring interns that were never truly interested in the organization or their future within it. To address the issue of interns not interested in the organization for the long-term, organizations can use in depth interviews, smaller field experience opportunities before the internship, and collaboratively plan the internship with the student.

Interviewing students to determine their interests during the interview process or interacting with them prior to the internship through other means, can be helpful in understanding their motives, which helps in recruiting them and assessing their fit. To this end, employers should consider asking prospective interns about their career aspirations and how they plan to capitalize from the internship experience. Moreover, offering job shadowing or other field experience opportunities that acquaint students with the organization in the years before they begin applying for internships could serve to give the student and organization a mutual understanding of each other. From the study, it was apparent that prior experience with the organization can influence the decision-making process. Two participants said they were offered internships before they even began looking for one, further showing the benefits of interacting with students earlier in their academic careers.

Still, employers should not necessarily discount potential interns who are either unclear or undecided about their future career, or if the student's future does not include the organization. Research from Odio et al. (2014) shows that many students are still undecided about their future even as they enter their internship, and even those who may think they are secure may change their minds. Good practice for internships would be to develop a detailed plan for what the student will accomplish throughout the experience and including time for career mentoring and planning. This helps provide students the guidance they need as they transition from their academic to their professional careers and can help organizations get a better sense of whether the intern would make a good addition to the organization.

Moreover, this detailed planning of the internship can be effective for working with interns who already have plans for after the internship that do not involve the organization, and for organizations that do not have the means to offer students employment after their internship. One participant in the study, A5, had plans to begin a professional athletic career after graduation and had no interest in pursuing a full-time job with the organization. The organization also understood this but was not deterred from bringing on the student. In cases such as this, a detailed plan for the internship can allow the student to still focus on worthwhile outcomes for the internship, giving them something to care about even if they may not be staying with the organization. The organization can also gain from having the student in their organization even if they were not planning on staying long-term. Stemming from the broader management literature, people who leave an

organization are some of the best advocates and spokespersons for that organization (Shipp, Furst-Holloway, Harris, & Rosen, 2013). These “organizational alumni” have credible knowledge of the organization and can help identify new talent for the organization in the future. This research has also identified trends in these organizational alumni returning as employees in the future and becoming some of the top workers (Shipp et al., 2013).

Emotions

Finally, it is important for employers to understand this process can be very stressful for students. Even the most capable students are weighing personal and financial factors in addition to finding an internship that helps launch their career, while often still figuring out what their career will be. Moreover, the internship is a time of transition and discovery for them. The internship search is a different experience than a typical job search where the applicants are guaranteed some sort of salary once they are hired and are not worried about graduation requirements and paying tuition.

Being cognizant of the challenges that students are facing can help organization better recruit and subsequently mentor and manage them. Working to align the skills and needs of the student with the goals and resources of the organization benefits any organization, whether they are seeking to hire students after the internship or not. By having explicit and detailed information about the internship and a time line that fits the academic requirements of most universities, organizations can make good impressions on prospective interns and maximize the benefits to the student and the organization.

Conclusion

The present study adds some clarity to the internship search process for senior-level undergraduate sport management students. The objective search behaviors and direct insight from students yielded useful information for practitioners and educators especially in students’ timelines and how they weigh search criteria. Although further research is warranted, we also now have more insight on the role of internship alignment and timing, and the emotional components of the search.

Clearly, students’ tendencies for how, what, and when they search for internships can vary greatly, something that future researchers and practitioners who recruit interns should be mindful of. Practitioners looking to field a deep and diverse pool of candidates should also note that the factors of location and compensation appear to interact strongly in many cases, where students are not willing to relocate for unpaid internships. Indeed, students weigh many factors when searching for internships and can have widely different goals for what they are seeking to gain from the experience. Having a carefully detailed description for

the internship and interacting with students before the internship through other means (e.g., shadowing, short-term field experience) could help in identifying and selecting the best internship candidates.

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