



## Motivating Students to Do Internships: A Case Study of Undergraduate Students' Internship Experiences, Problems, and Solutions

Yue Zheng & Stephanie Bluestein  
*California State University, Northridge*

### Abstract

By conducting a survey of 112 graduating senior undergraduate journalism and public relations students in Fall 2017, Spring 2018, and Fall 2018 at an urban public university in the Southwestern region of the U.S., this study explored undergraduates' internship experiences, examined the reasons why most of them were not actively engaged in doing internships, and identified resources they used to acquire internship-related information. The findings generated practical implications for journalism educators in urban public universities that do not require an internship for degree completion, to better motivate students in applying for and conducting internships, and also for media employers to better adapt their routines and requirements to facilitate college interns.

### Introduction

Journalism-related internships in the U.S. date back more than 300 years (Granger, 1974), when young people wanting to learn the printing trade helped produce pamphlets and newspapers in opposition of British control over the colonies. With the assistance of printers' apprentices, colonists received vital information via news stories and passionate editorials that ignited public discontent and, eventually, the American Revolution (Madison, 2014). Today's journalism internships have evolved from "printing" the news to "producing" news content for digital and print pub-

lications. Public relations internships also involve producing content but on behalf of public relations clients. As interns, students perform "tasks similar in nature and skill level to tasks done by entry-level employees in the organization" (Hora *et al.*, 2019, p. 5).

By interning, journalism and public relations students obtain hands-on experience, develop practical skills, gain publication opportunities, build professional networks, increase career motivation, and earn academic credits (Daugherty, 2011; Tsymbal *et al.*, 2020; Valencia-Forrester, 2020). Internships also boost students' self-confidence and dispel self-doubts

**Keywords:** Internship, Journalism Internship, Media Internship, Public Relations Internship, Journalism Education, Communication Education, Communication Pedagogy, Journalism Pedagogy, Journalism Students, Broadcast Students, Public Relations Students

(Riley, 1983), making them better prepared to enter the full-time professional workplace.

Completing journalism-related internships in college has become even more important for students in the second half of the 20th century as evidenced by employer surveys and task force reports (Folkerts, 2014). While a bachelor's degree is the common minimum qualification in the U.S. for a newspaper reporter job (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2020a), media employers usually seek out applicants for full-time positions who have prior work/intern experience (Hilt & Lipschultz, 1996). Therefore, gaining professional experience through interning has the potential to elevate a recent graduate's resume to the top of the stack (Gardner, 2012). Research also shows that students with rich internship experiences are more likely to secure a job with higher pay and are more likely to succeed in their career than those with scarce intern experience (Beard & Morton, 1998; Neidorf, 2008).

Although the importance and benefits of internships cannot be denied, little academic attention has been paid to journalism-related internships. Previous internship-related studies surveyed college students of all majors, rather than focusing on journalism/public relations students (Hora et al., 2019; Johnson, 2020). Some studies only explored one type of on-campus internship – a student-run publication (Madison, 2014) or a social media institute operated by students (Maben & Edwards, 2015). Other previous studies only examined paid or unpaid internships from the educators' perspective, but neglected students' opinions and experience (Senat, Ketterer, & McGuire, 2020). While researching students' overall internship experiences, Daugherty (2011) surveyed only public relations students, and McDonough, Rodriguez and Prior-Miller (2009) accomplished their research more than a decade ago, which makes their outcomes obsolete and unable to generalize to the current media landscape and journalism-related pedagogy.

To fill this research gap, this study surveyed 112 graduating journalism and public relations undergraduate seniors regarding their internship experience, internship information acquisition, and barriers to completing internship(s) in college. The findings also produced practical implications for educators at urban public universities that do not require an internship for degree completion, to better motivate students to apply for internships and complete them, and also for media employers to adapt their routines and requirements to facilitate college interns.

## Literature Review

***Students' General Internship Experience:*** Although the benefits of interning are many, not every college student completes an internship. Figures of journalism and mass communication students who completed at least one internship before graduation continuously hovered around 80% between the 1990s and 2006 (Neidorf, 2008; Madison, 2014). A more recent survey of 10,482 alumni from 22 journalism schools – including many of the top journalism programs in the U.S. – showed that 70% completed at least one internship as an undergraduate (Rosenstiel et al., 2015).

In general, whether or not college students have done an internship(s) primarily depends on their academic program (Hora et al., 2019). In journalism-related programs, students' intern experience differs across institution types (private university, public urban university, and college town-university), size of the journalism program, whether or not the program is accredited by ACEJMC (Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications), and whether an internship course is required for degree completion (Hora et al., 2019; Neidorf, 2008). Those studies also found that students' demographic characteristics are not as effective as institutional norms in terms of affecting students' internship pursuits (Hora et al., 2019; Johnson, 2020).

Acknowledging the influence of institution/program type, this study focuses on one specific type of journalism program, diving deeper into responses by undergraduate students: A public university located in an urban Southwest region with a small journalism program that does not require an internship for degree completion, which is comprised mostly of first-generation students raised in low- and middle-income families.

***Benefits Obtained By Completing Internship(s):*** By doing a journalism-related internship, students expose themselves to the media industry, become familiar with a fast-paced working environment, figure out the appropriate etiquette to communicate with colleagues and clients, and develop their abilities to think critically, creatively, and independently (McDonough, Rodriguez, & Prior-Miller, 2009). Those soft skills can affect a new employee's success on the job (Schabel, 2014). Students also improve their specific practical skills such as writing, editing, and use of technology (Daugherty, 2011). Additionally, students could receive course credits if enrolled in an internship class.

Besides those immediate rewards, students also

potentially build a better resume, develop professional networks, receive a supervisor's reference for a future job search, and/or earn a full-time employment offer (Daugherty, 2011). Networking is an effective job-hunting tool in the professional world and can provide entry into a company (Schabel, 2014). Indeed, students tend to feel more satisfied and perceive more value of an internship if they receive more attention and support from their intern supervisors (Hora *et al.*, 2019).

However, the above studies were conducted many years ago; it is unknown whether current students' internship experience has changed due to new media technologies. This study, thus, asks its first research question:

**RQ1:** What is the overall internship experience of undergraduate journalism and public relations students?

### **Barriers to Completing Journalism-Related Internships**

Although internships better prepare students for future careers, college students have barriers to conducting, or even applying for, an internship. The main obstacle is the dearth of paid internships, especially since the Great Recession of 2007-2009 (Skowronski, 2009). Some students need or want to use their spare time working a paid job to help cover tuition and living expenses. Most paid internships, however, prefer hiring those who already have some previous internship experience (Neidorf, 2008). It is thus not surprising that students who work fewer hours at their main jobs are more likely to participate in internships (Hora *et al.*, 2019). The fact that students can't afford unpaid internships started to become more common in the 1990s (Ivanova, 2018).

Resistance to the status quo came in 2011, when two unpaid interns working on Fox Searchlight Pictures' 2010 film, "Black Swan" filed a lawsuit claiming they were treated like regular employees, and thus they should be paid. The five years of legal maneuvering, which resulted in a win for the interns, had the causal effect of increased awareness about paying interns for their efforts (Patten, 2016). But then the U.S. Department of Labor made it easier to justify unpaid internships when it updated its Fair Labor Standard Act in January 2018. The new Labor Department rule determined that interns do not need to be paid if the intern will benefit more from doing the internship than the company benefits from the student's work

(Ivanova, 2018). However, unpaid internships in public relations, marketing, and advertising remain commonplace (Gardner, 2012).

Yet another issue affecting internship completion is the cost of enrolling in the internship course itself. Although the course fulfills either a requirement or an elective, some students balk about paying to take an internship course, especially when that internship is unpaid (Wexler, 2016). And in an ironic twist, tuition at many universities is higher in summer, which is the exact time when students might have more time to intern.

Internships might also conflict with students' class schedules, particularly in a newsroom that isn't a 9-to-5 job. Intern reporters might need to cover breaking news throughout the day and night, including during class time (Madison, 2014). Some college students feel like they are not ready for a professional job yet and are not confident enough to apply for an internship (Johnson, 2020). Some interns also feel powerless to ask whether they understand their work correctly or whether they can be assigned to any tasks (Daugherty, 2011).

Several studies identified another possible barrier to doing an internship: a lack of local internship opportunities (Hora *et al.*, 2019; Johnson, 2020). A journalism-related internship has become even harder to get in recent years due to shrinking newsroom staffs and the closure of newspapers (Grieco, 2020). However, almost 30% of journalism-related employment in the U.S. is clustered in five metropolitan areas: New York City, Washington D.C., Los Angeles, Atlanta, and Chicago (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2020b). It is thus unknown whether internship scarcity would become a barrier as well for students in an urban public university located in one of those five metropolitan areas. This study then asks the following research question:

**RQ2:** What hinders undergraduate journalism and public relations students from doing an internship?

### **Internship Information Acquisition**

Initiative and motivation are needed to take the first step in applying for an internship. Prior studies found that a professional network is more effective in job hunting than a general search on the internet or via a university job hub. College internship advisors either introduced them to a job directly or endorsed them as references (Neidorf, 2008). However, it is still

unknown whether recent social media and LinkedIn have changed the way students gather intern-related information and hunt for internships. This study, thus, produces the following final research question:

**RQ3:** How do undergraduate journalism and public relations students usually acquire internship-related information?

### Methodology

To answer the research questions, a survey was developed and approved by the Institutional Review Board of the authors' university before data collection began. *Pretest:* To develop the survey instrument, the authors conducted a pretest in February 2017, by interviewing 18 undergraduate students in one of the author's upper-division public relations classes. The authors then analyzed the students' answers, identified major themes, and incorporated them into the survey instrument that was used in the subsequent three semesters (Appendix I).

RQ1 asked students how many internships they completed during college and whether they were paid or unpaid. Students were also asked whether they enrolled in an internship-related course(s) and if not, they were asked to explain why. For those who did an internship(s), they were asked what skills they improved upon.

RQ2 asked students without an internship if they had applied for any internship and if not, why they didn't apply. For those who applied but didn't do an internship, they were asked to explain why.

RQ3 asked students if they were familiar with campus internship resources and how they found information about internships. And lastly, students were asked what internship-related workshop topics they preferred.

*Data Collection and Analysis:* To research undergraduate students' overall college internship experiences, the researchers employed the purposive cluster sampling technique to select a cluster: all senior undergraduate students who were in their final semester of a journalism program at an urban public university in the Southwestern region of the United States.

Near the end of the Fall 2017, Spring 2018, and Fall 2018 semesters, the researchers distributed printed questionnaires to students in an upper-division capstone class. Among the total 192 senior graduating students over three semesters, 112 students (58.33%) completed the voluntary survey. The authors employed SPSS for data cleaning and analysis.

### Results

Of the total 112 graduating senior undergraduate students who completed the survey, 26.79% ( $n = 30$ ) had a curricular focus in public relations, 39.29% ( $n = 44$ ) were focused on broadcast, 25.89% ( $n = 29$ ) were focused on print/digital (i.e., newspapers, magazines, and websites), and 8.04% ( $n = 9$ ) were unknown.

Regarding the total number of internships students completed during college, 35.71% ( $n = 40$ ) students had no internship, 30.36% ( $n = 34$ ) completed one internship, 22.32% ( $n = 25$ ) did two internships, and 11.61% ( $n = 13$ ) completed three or more internships. One-way ANOVA ( $F = 3.68$ ,  $df = 2$ ,  $p < .05$ ) found that public relations students did more internships ( $M = 1.63$ ,  $SD = 1.43$ ) than broadcast students ( $M = .98$ ,  $SD = .90$ ), and print/digital students ( $M = .93$ ,  $SD = 1.16$ ).

Among the 72 students who completed internships during college, 65.28% ( $n = 47$ ) had an unpaid internship, 25.00% ( $n = 18$ ) did one paid internship, and 9.72% ( $n = 7$ ) did more than one paid internship.

Table 1 shows the skills students improved upon during their internship(s), in addition to other enhanced skills that included networking, social media, and professional telephone skills.

Among those who did at least one internship, 36.11% ( $n = 26$ ) took the department's internship course, which counts as three of the 12 required upper-division elective units, and 5.56% ( $n = 4$ ) enrolled in an online internship class offered by the state university system.

The 46 students who did an internship(s) but didn't take the department's internship course explained why they didn't enroll. (They could check more than one reason): Some did not know about the course (30.43%,  $n = 14$ ), their internship(s) was paid and thus didn't feel the need to enroll (13.04%,  $n = 6$ ), they didn't meet the course prerequisites (8.70%,  $n = 4$ ), they started their internship too late in the semester (8.70%,  $n = 4$ ), or they didn't complete the course paperwork (4.35%,  $n = 2$ ). Other reasons included "My internship was during summer," "Internship was in political science," and "I am not gonna pay for a class (to do an internship)."

Among the 40 students who didn't do an internship, 57.50% ( $n = 23$ ) never applied for one, 52.94% ( $n = 9$ ) applied but weren't contacted, (17.65%,  $n = 3$ ) were interviewed but not offered an internship, 5.88% ( $n = 1$ ) were offered an internship but rejected it, and 23.53% ( $n = 4$ ) had other unspecified reasons. Table 2

shows the reasons why students didn't apply for any internship. One comment illustrated a student's misconception about internship duties: "I don't believe in internships. They just make you get snacks."

All 112 respondents were asked what internship resources they were aware of and had used (Table 3).

Table 4 shows how students found out about internships and other sources including the PRSSA (Public Relations Student Society of America) webpage, and flyers posted in the department's office, hallways, and classrooms.

Students also ranked the importance of internship-related workshop topics: Preparing a resume and cover letter ( $M = 4.75, SD = .74$ ), prepping for a job interview ( $M = 4.53, SD = 1.01$ ), succeeding in an internship and first full-time job ( $M = 4.5, SD = .94$ ), seeking internship information ( $M = 4.42, SD = 1.04$ ), and enrolling in the department's internship course ( $M = 3.8, SD = 1.32$ ).

A variety of suggestions for faculty were offered when students were asked what additional support the department could have provided. Some suggestions centered around the course itself, which at this university is offered as an elective that can only be taken once. One student thinks the course should be mandatory. "It will help push students to really look for an internship," while another student said they should be allowed to take the course multiple times (That student missed out on an internship in their last semester because they had already taken the elective course and couldn't afford to enroll in a course at a community college). Another student suggested the prerequisites be removed, which, at this university, are two semesters of news-writing courses plus a third semester of either broadcast writing, public relations or

feature writing.

Some students said they wanted more support from professors and the department. One student, who thinks the requirements were confusing, said, "The department should make more efforts to support us landing an internship." Others asked for class time to be devoted to applying for internships under their professor's guidance. Students also wanted help with resumes, leads on paid internships, and suggestions on how to follow up on an internship application.

**Discussion**

By conducting a survey of 112 graduating seniors in an undergraduate journalism and public relations program in Fall 2017, Spring 2018, and Fall 2018 at an urban public university in the Southwestern region of the U.S., this study explored undergraduates' internship experiences, examined the reasons why one-third of them did not complete an internship during college, and identified the resources they used to acquire internship-related information. The findings generated practical implications for both journalism educators in urban public universities that do not require an internship for degree completion, as well as industry professionals, to better motivate and facilitate students to conduct internships.

The first research question explored the overall internship experience of the 65% of journalism and public relations students who did at least one internship during college. The primary "hard skills" students gained were oral communication, research ability, and use of technical equipment and software, which are all very practical skills regardless of their future journalism-related profession (Table 1). It is interesting to notice the low ranking of news/public relations writ-

**Table 1. Skills Improved Upon During Internship(s) (n = 112)**

Skills	Mean	SD	Skills	Mean	SD
Working under pressure	4.46	.82	Creativity	4.13	1.05
Time management	4.38	.75	Sensitivity to diversity	4.07	1.02
Oral communication	4.34	.93	Visual communication	4.0	.97
Problem solving	4.22	.90	Ethical decision-making	3.97	1.04
Research abilities	4.21	.99	News/PR writing	3.79	1.23
Use of equipment and software	4.17	1.10	Understanding of First Amendment/legal issues	3.40	1.13
<i>Note.</i> 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree					

ing, which is somewhat consistent with prior research (McDonough, *et al.*, 2009). The reason is likely due to interns not being given enough opportunities to write. At media outlets, interns are commonly conducting research and fact-checking, and if they do get to write, it's typically a news blurb. At public relations agencies, interns might be allowed to write emails and public relations pitches but often don't get the chance to write formal news releases.

Journalism and public relations students also gained many valuable interpersonal "soft skills," such as enhancing their ability to work under pressure, time management, and problem solving, which again confirms a prior study (McDonough, *et al.*, 2009). That means, while new media technologies have been developed quickly in the past decade, the core content, duties, and "take-aways" of journalism-related internships haven't changed much compared to the pre-social media era.

The second research question, which inquired about what prevents undergraduate journalism and public relations students from doing an internship. Consistent with prior research (Gardner, 2012; Ivanova, 2018), the inability to afford to do an unpaid internship was the most common reason cited by students, followed by not having enough time to do an internship (Table 2). The demographics of this study's department means that some students work part-time, or even full-time jobs to pay for their tuition and expenses (Pell Grant-eligible students in this department totaled 61.63% in Fall 2017, and 56.61% in Fall 2018). Working an unpaid internship is considered a luxury for many, who need to be paid for their time spent away from studies and family responsibilities.

Contrary to previous studies (Hora *et al.*, 2019; Johnson, 2019), this study didn't find any response

about insufficient intern opportunities being a problem, which is not surprising in an urban area. That means journalism scholars should primarily consider the nature and location of institutions as a main factor in doing future internship-related research. Media educators and professionals should also develop different strategies to engage students who are studying and living in different locations in doing future internships.

How students acquire internship-related information was the focus of the third research question (Table 4). The most common method was a job-search website. Professors were also common sources of leads on internships, as well as friends, colleagues and family members. This result is different than prior research that found personal networks were more effective than general internet search (Neidorf, 2008); that could indicate that job search sites have gradually replaced the traditional network-based recruiting, which facilitates students who have zero intern experience and a weak professional network. It is interesting that LinkedIn, as a novel professional social media platform, did not rank among the top three sources, which means while it is a good platform for students to showcase their profiles, it might not be very effective in gathering intern information. Perhaps that is because LinkedIn is not as user-friendly as job search sites for employers to share information or because students are not aware of the information posted on LinkedIn.

To conclude, some undergraduate journalism and public relations students are not actively engaged in doing internships. That makes those internship-free students unable to apply the classroom knowledge in practice and thus unable to meet realistic industry expectations after graduation as well (Cole, Hembroff, & Corner, 2009). By knowing their obstacles and

**Table 2. Reasons For Not Applying For An Internship (n = 23)**

Reasons	n	%	Reasons	n	%
Couldn't afford to do an unpaid internship	10	43.48%	Didn't understand how to apply	3	13.04%
Didn't have spare time for an internship	9	39.13%	Couldn't finish application materials	2	8.70%
Didn't feel prepared to succeed	9	34.78%	Couldn't afford transportation to internship site	1	4.35%
Didn't understand importance of internships	5	21.73%	Already working in the field	1	4.35%

*Note.* Students could check more than one reason

**Table 3. Awareness of Internship-Related Resources (n = 112)**

On Campus Internship-related Resources	Never Heard About It		Heard About It		Heard About And Ever Sought Information Or Assistance From It	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Department's Weekly Newsletter	56	50%	33	29.46	18	16.07
Department's Social Media	45	40.18%	44	39.29%	19	16.96%
Department's Internship Workshops	31	27.68%	59	52.68%	17	15.18%
University Career Center	7	6.25%	70	62.50%	29	25.89%

**Table 4. Sources Used to Get Leads On Internships (n = 112)**

Sources	<i>n</i>	%	Sources	<i>n</i>	%
Job-search website	53	47.32%	Guest speaker	18	16.07%
Professor(s)	42	37.50%	Department's weekly newsletter	14	12.50%
Friend, colleague, or family member	38	33.93%	University Career Center	12	10.71%
Company's website or social media	37	33.03%	Department's social media	7	6.25%
LinkedIn	29	25.89%			

*Note.* Students could check more than one sources

information acquisition behaviors, both journalism educators and media professionals could adapt their teaching and working routines to facilitate and engage students in doing internships, by considering the following practical implications.

#### **Practical Implications for Journalism Educators**

A work-around to combat the dearth of paid internships, suggests that journalism educators should primarily tell students in the early stage of college that they might need to start with an unpaid internship before they can move on to paid internship. Students then should be advised to put aside money early in their college career so they can afford to do at least one unpaid internship during college, much like creating an "internship nest egg" that they can tap into when they do an unpaid internship or pay for an internship class.

Another possible solution to combat the inability of some students to do an unpaid internship is to encourage journalism students to self-publish on blogs or social media as a way of building up their resume credentials, and encourage public relations students

to increase publicity on behalf of "convenient" clients, such as a friend's or relative's family-run business, a religious institution, and/or a cause they care about. Perhaps students will be more motivated to provide free services for their own publications or people they know or admire.

Surprisingly, several students reflected that they were willing to do a "cool" internship with trendy YouTube, Instagram, or TikTok influencers, even if it was unpaid. That suggests educators should encourage students to integrate their true passions into internships and also adapt their school's internship criteria to current pop culture, rather than sticking to the old-fashioned requirements of students doing internships in a newsroom or a public relations agency.

Given the lack of spare time was another major reason hindering students from applying for internships, educators should encourage students to look for internships on/around campus, in the local community, or for remote internships to save travel time and expenses. When most in-person internships shifted to a remote arrangement during the COVID-19 pandemic, internship advisors were forced to reconsid-

er their internship criteria and, oftentimes, be more accepting of remote internships. If remote internships become more plentiful – and acceptable – in a post-pandemic world, then students in smaller cities will have more opportunities if they are allowed to do a remote internship. Thus, this study will be more applicable to them, too.

Additionally, journalism educators should pay more attention to newspaper and broadcast students, since they fall significantly behind their public relations peers in doing internships. Perhaps newspaper and broadcast students over-rely on student-run campus media in lieu of a formal internship. Educators should emphasize the benefits that students can gain from real internships but can't obtain from working in student-run media, such as networking opportunities and the access to other professional resources. Also, media employers might consider campus media experience as a required class activity, rather than real professional experience.

Taking a closer look at students' sources of gathering intern-related information, while none of the official educational sources (department newsletter, department workshops, or university career center) ranked among the top three, "professors" ranked as top two in this survey. That means professors and internship advisers should increase their efforts to alert students of specific internship opportunities, free campus services, and the internship class that allows students to earn course units.

Besides regular announcements in class, media educators should also offer internship-related workshops since some other popular reasons for not applying for an internship was that students "didn't feel prepared to succeed," "didn't understand the importance of an internship," and "didn't understand how to apply." Also a few students said their GPA was too low to get a recommendation letter from a professor, but it might be too late for them to improve their grades. That means even for graduating senior undergraduates, students differ a lot in terms of the internship progress. Therefore, educators should develop different internship topics targeting students who don't care about internships, students who are preparing application materials and interviews, students who have problems registering for the internship course, and students who already have an internship and want to thrive there. Educators should also consider developing workshops specialized for different majors, considering the different routines of newspa-

per, broadcast, and public relations.

### **Practical Implications for Media Employers**

Knowing a lack of spare time for an internship ranked as the second most-important reason for not applying, media employers should thus be more flexible in scheduling internship opportunities in spring and fall to avoid possible schedule conflicts, and provide more full-time summer internships. Robust remote internships should be created to allow students with time and/or transportation issues to do an internship from home. If an employer can find the budget to pay an intern, they should because they will likely attract a higher caliber of applicants and those chosen might be more reliable, loyal, and dedicated.

Besides posting ads on a company's website and various job search websites, media employers should try to schedule a college visit to speak about their internship offerings and to talk about their expectations. If they aren't able to travel to campus, they could create a short informational video to be shown in certain classes to spark discussion. Employers are also encouraged to use trendy social media, like LinkedIn, to recruit from the younger generation. Finally, employers need to be more aware of academic calendars so their recruitment efforts coincide with semester or quarter start/end dates. Looking for an intern to begin in the middle of the semester is unproductive for both students and employers.

### **Limitations and Future Study**

While contributing insightful ideas, this study had several limitations. Firstly, this study focused on only one university's academic program that does not contain advertising nor marketing courses. Although the findings can apply to urban universities and colleges that do not require an internship for degree completion, the sample size is not big enough to represent a broader population of American undergraduate journalism and public relations students. It is also unknown to what degree the COVID-19 pandemic and the increasingly popular work-from-home routine have changed the general media landscape and specific requirements of college interns. Therefore, future studies should consider replicating this survey in more journalism and public relations programs across the United States, including both public and private schools.

According to recent informal discussions with the authors' colleagues at peer institutions, at one



university that does not require an internship, 43% to 49.4% of journalism students completed an internship during the three semesters of this study; however, at another university, after an internships were made compulsory, the number of students who took an internship class increased from about 20 each semester when it was optional to 68-96 students each semester after it was required. Future research should also examine whether a mandatory internship course can actually improve students' internship experience and benefit their future careers, and whether it should be included in the journalism curriculum.

Also, this study's sample size and descriptive questions could not test the correlational relationships among different variables. Future examination could conduct a longitudinal study to measure the correlational relationships among student demographics, motivations, expectations, and benefits that students gain from their overall internship experience.

### References

- Cole, R., Hembroff, L. A., & Corner, A. (2009). National assessment of the perceived writing skills of entry-level PR practitioners. *Journalism & Mass Communication Educator*, 64(1), 9-26. <https://doi.org/10.1177/107769580906400102>
- Beard, F., & Morton, L. (1998). Effects of internship predictors on successful field experience. *Journalism & Mass Communication Educator*, 53(4), 42-53. doi:10.1177/107769589805300404
- Daugherty, E. L. (2011). The public relations internship experience: A comparison of student and site supervisor perspectives. *Public Relations Review*, 37(5), 470-477.
- Folkerts, J. (2014). History of journalism education. *Journalism & Communication Monographs*, 16(4), 227-299. doi:10.1177/1522637914541379
- Gardner, P. (2012). Reaction on campus to internship controversy. Retrieved from: <http://www.ceri.msu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2009/10/Reaction-on-Campus-to-the-Unpaid-Internship-Controversy-Whitepaper.pdf>
- Granger, B. (1974). Review of A Sweet Instruction: Franklin's Journalism as a Literary Apprenticeship, by James A. Sappenfield, *Early American Literature*, 9, 204-05.
- Grieco, E. (2020). U.S. newspapers have shed half of their newsroom employees since 2008. Pew Research Center. <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/04/20/u-s-newsroom-employment-has-dropped-by-a-quarter-since-2008/>
- Hilt, M. L., & Lipschultz, J. H. (1996). Broadcast newsroom hiring and career preparation. *Journalism & Mass Communication Educator*, 51(1), 36-43. doi:10.1177/107769589605100105
- Hora, M, Chen, Z., Parrott, E., & Her, P. (2019). Problematizing college internships: Exploring issues with access, program design, and developmental outcomes in three U.S. colleges. (WCER Working Paper No. 2019-1). Retrieved from University of Wisconsin-Madison, Wisconsin Center for Education Research website: <http://www.wcer.wisc.edu/publications/working-papers>
- Ivanova, I. (2018). It's now easier for businesses not to pay interns, so one company started a shaming campaign. <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/its-now-easier-for-businesses-not-to-pay-interns-so-one-company-started-a-shaming-campaign/>
- Johnson, C. G. (2020). Evaluating the barriers to completing a college internship: A senior honors project, Honors College at East Carolina University.
- Maben, S., & Edwards, J. (2015). Social media internships: A case study of a student-run social media institute. *Teaching Journalism & Mass Communication*, 5(1), 69.
- Neidorf, S. M. (2008). Wanted: A first job in journalism—An exploration of factors that may influence initial job-search outcomes for news- editorial students. *Journalism & Mass Communication Educator*, 63(1), 56-65. doi:10.1177/107769580806300105
- McDonough, K., Rodriguez, L., & Prior-Miller, M. R. (2009). A comparison of student interns and supervisors regarding internship performance ratings. *Journalism & Mass Communication Educator*, 64(2), 139-155. doi:10.1177/107769580906400202
- Madison, E. (2014). Training digital age journalists: Blurring the distinction between students and professionals. *Journalism & Mass Communication Educator*, 69(3), 314-324. doi:10.1177/1077695814532926
- Patten, D. (2016, July 12). Fox Settles "Black Swan" Interns Lawsuit After Five Years. Deadline Hollywood. Accessed from <http://deadline.com/2016/07/black-swan-intern-lawsuit-fox-settles-1201785666/>
- Riley, S.G. (1983). Some student assessments

of newspaper internships. *Journalism & Mass Communication Educator*, 38(1), 8-10. doi:10.1177/107769588303800102

Rosenstiel, T., Ivancin, M., Loker, K., Lacy, S., Sonderman, J. & Yaeger, K. (2015). Journalism and communication grads' experiences with school, student media, and internships. American Press Institute. <https://www.americanpressinstitute.org/publications/reports/survey-research/education-student-media-internships/>

Schabel, D. (2014). *Promote yourself: The new rules for career success*. St. Martin's Griffin.

Senat, J., Ketterer, S., & McGuire, J. (2020). Between a rock and a hard place: Attitudes and practices of mass communication programs regarding unpaid student internships. *Journalism & Mass Communication Educator*, 75(2), 177-195. doi:10.1177/1077695819882565

Skowronski, W. (2009). Priceless? Fewer newspapers are offering paid internships to journalism students. *American Journalism Review*, 31(2), 16+. <https://link-gale-com.libproxy.csun.edu/apps/doc/A199122134/EAIM?u=csunorthridge&sid=EAIM&xid=3b22b9e3>

Tsymbol, N. A., Savchuk, N. M., Avramenko, V. I., Sichkar, S. A., & Denysiuk, I. A. (2020). Mass media internships in vocational training of students majoring in journalism. *International Journal of Learning, Teaching and Educational Research*, 19(6), 238-250.

U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2020a). Occupational outlook handbook: Reporters, correspondents, and broadcast news analysts. Retrieved from: <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/media-and-communication/reporters-correspondents-and-broadcast-news-analysts.htm#tab-1>

U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2020b). Occupational Employment and Wages, May 2020. Retrieved from: [https://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes273023.htm#\(1\)](https://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes273023.htm#(1))

Valencia-Forrester, F. (2020). Models of work-integrated learning in journalism education. *Journalism Studies*, 21(5), 697-712. doi: 10.1080/1461670X.2020.1719875

Wexler, E. (2016). Paying to work: New twist in the debate over unpaid internships and whether colleges should charge tuition for them. <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2016/05/17when-students-pay-tuition-work-unpaid-internships>

### Appendix I. Internship Survey for Journ 498 Students

Q1. What practicum class did you take?  
Public Relations Agency\_\_\_\_ Broadcast Station\_\_\_\_  
Newspaper\_\_\_\_

Q2. How many internships did you have in total during college, including any internships you're currently doing this semester?  
0 (Skip to Q8)\_\_\_\_ 1\_\_\_\_ 2\_\_\_\_ 3\_\_\_\_  
More than 3, specify\_\_\_\_

Q3. How many of your internships were paid?  
\_\_\_\_\_

Q4. What did you improve upon from your internship(s)? (1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neutral, 4=Agree, 5=Strongly Agree)

	1	2	3	4	5
News/PR writing					
Visual communication					
Oral communication					
Use of equipment and software					
Research abilities					
Time Management					
Ability to work under pressure					
Problem solving					
Creativity					
Sensitivity to diversity					
Ethical decision-making					
Understanding of First Amendment/legal issues					
Other skill, please specify					

Q5. Did you enroll in the CSU Entertainment Initiative online class (an internship class provided by the university system)?  
Yes\_\_\_\_ No\_\_\_\_

Q6. Did you take the Journ 494 AEE/BEE (an upper-division journalism internship course)?  
Yes (Skip to Q11)\_\_\_\_ No\_\_\_\_

Q7. Why didn't you take Journ 494? Check all that apply:

- Didn't know about the class
- Didn't meet the prerequisite(s)
- Didn't finish the paperwork
- Started internship too late in semester
- My internship was paid and thus I didn't feel I needed the class
- Other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_

Q8. If you didn't do any internship, did you apply to any internships?

Yes (Skip to Q10) \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

Q9. Why didn't you apply to any internship? Check all that apply.

- Didn't know of any internship opportunity
- Didn't understand the importance of internship
- Didn't understand how to apply
- Couldn't finish the application materials
- Didn't feel prepared to be successful at any internship
- Couldn't afford to do an unpaid internship
- Couldn't afford the transportation
- Didn't have the spare time to do an internship
- Already working in the field so I don't need an internship
- Don't plan to go into journalism or PR after I graduate
- Other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_

Q10. If you applied but didn't do an internship, what was the reason?

- A. Wasn't contacted by the company
- B. Interviewed, but wasn't offered an internship
- C. Was offered an internship but I rejected it
- D. Other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_

Q11. Are you familiar with the following services?

	Never heard about it	Heard about it	Heard about and ever sought information or assistance from it
Journalism Department's Weekly Newsletter			
Journalism Department's Social Media			
Journalism Department's Internship Workshops			
University Career Center			

Q12. In general, how did you find out the internship information? Check all that apply.

- From a job searching website
- From LinkedIn
- From the company's website or social media
- From a professor
- From a guest speaker
- From a friend, colleague, or family member
- From the Journalism Department's Weekly Newsletter
- From the Journalism Department's social media
- From University Career Center
- Other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_

Q13. Please indicate the importance of the following workshop topics to you (1=Not Important at All, 2=Somewhat Unimportant, 3=Neutral, 4= Somewhat Important 5=Very Important)

	1	2	3	4	5
How to seek internship information					
How to prepare my resume and cover letter					
How to prepare for my job interview					
How to succeed in my internship and my first full-time job					
How to enroll in Journ 494 AEE/BEE					
Other, please specify					

Q14. What else could the Journalism Department have done to help your internships?

*Yue Zheng, Ph.D., is an assistant professor at the California State University, Northridge, Department of Journalism. Zheng's teaching and research interests primarily explore strategic communications, with a focus on nonprofit public relations, new media technologies, and international communications. Before she earned her Ph.D. in Mass Communications from the University of South Carolina in August 2016, she obtained her B.A. in Journalism from Renmin University of China in June 2008 and then obtained her M.S. in Journalism and Mass Communications as well as a statistics minor from Iowa State University in May 2012.*

*Stephanie Bluestein, Ed.D., is an associate professor at the California State University, Northridge, Department of Journalism. Bluestein's teaching and research interests primarily explore journalism pedagogy, internships, academic integrity, and mid-20th century journalism. She earned all of her degrees from California State University, Northridge: a B.A. in Journalism in May 1988; her M.A. in Mass Communication in December 2007, and an Ed.D. in Educational Leadership in May 2012.*

© Yue Zheng and Stephanie Bluestein 2021.  
Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported License.