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# Internships and the Assessment of Student Learning

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# INTERNSHIPS AND THE ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING

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## ABSTRACT

*The use of internships is a powerful learning tool that allow business students to make connections between their classroom experience and the world of work. If designed appropriately and positioned correctly in the curriculum, they can also be an ideal opportunity to conduct assurance of learning activities related to business school accreditation. This study reports on survey results relating to business schools' use of internships in their assurance of learning efforts and describes one school's successful attempt to use internships as the key platform for its well-developed assurance of learning program.*

**JEL:** M10

**KEYWORDS:** assessment, internships, student learning, experiential learning, business education

## INTRODUCTION

A significant body of literature suggests that people learn most effectively through active learning, when they do something with their knowledge [e.g. Bonwell & Eison, 1991]. Observers both outside and inside the academy have criticized business schools' for providing so few active, practical learning experiences. For example, the Accounting Education Change Commission [1990], and Pearce [1999], both criticize the lack of relevance in business education, especially the lack of practical experiences such as those provided by internships. As we discuss in a later section, internships are an effective, active learning tool in the business disciplines. In addition to the practical experience, internships provide an opportunity to incorporate academic assignments in which students connect their internships to their classroom business curriculum. This linking of theory and work experience can enhance the total business education for students helping to ensure that students see the relevance of their classroom learning. Despite the criticism offered by outsiders and the apparent benefits of internships as an educational tool, research suggests that very few business schools require all students to complete internships [Updyke & Sander, 2005].

In addition to being a relevant and effective educational practice, internships and their attendant academic assignments provide an effective platform on which to conduct assessment activities (called "assurance of learning" or "AOL" in business schools). Revisions to the Accreditation Standards for Business Accreditation from the AACSB International (AACSB) have generated unprecedented interest in AOL activities and nearly all business schools are seeking better methods for demonstrating that their students are, indeed, learning what they intend for them to learn. Students successfully drawing on concepts and skills learned in previous academic experiences and applying them to an actual work situation are more powerful indications of learning than AOL attached to the classroom course in which students first learn those concepts and skills. As outlined in the 1992 American Association for Higher Education Assessment Forum's Nine Principles of Good Practice for Assessing Student Learning [American Association for Higher Education, 1992], schools need to assess not only what students learn at a particular time in a particular course, but also what they can do with what they know through later performance. In other words, AOL should involve evaluating the effects of an entire program on student learning and students' ability to integrate and apply what they have learned. A well-developed AOL

program entails a much broader view than evaluating what students learn in a particular course and assessment connected to internships are an ideal element of that sort of AOL program.

Since the mid-1980s, the Butler University College of Business (COB) has required all students to complete two internships. The faculty has always been adamant that a substantial proportion of the course grade must be based on academic papers and presentations, both of which reflect students' connection of business concepts to their work experiences. The grading structure remains relatively unchanged since the program began, and calls for 30 percent of course grades to be based on supervisors' evaluations, with 70 percent based on instructors' evaluation of written and oral assignments.

While the faculty has always required students to demonstrate their learning through assignments for the purpose of determining their grades, it only recently began using the assignments to measure students' learning across the business curriculum. Internship assignments now are a key component of the AOL program with respect to students' accomplishment of four of the seven learning objectives for business majors: general business knowledge, global issues' importance in business, problem-solving and thinking skills, and communications skills. The objectives of this paper include 1) to review the literature relative to internships and their use in assessing student learning, 2) to report the results of a survey designed to determine the extent to which business schools use internships and related assignments for assessment purposes, and 3) to report how one business school uses internships and connected student assignments for assessment of student learning.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Studies in a wide variety of disciplines emphasize the many advantages of internships and cooperative education experiences [e.g., Maskooki, Rama & Raghunandan, 1998, p. 75; Kelly, 2007, p. 10; Beard, 1998, p. 507-08]. Although cooperative education experiences have different characteristics than internship programs, they both involve a student actively working as a requirement of or a supplement to a program of business study, either with or without academic credit. For purposes of the discussion in this paper, we refer to both types of experiences as an "internship." Internships provide many advantages to students, their business schools, and employers.

For example, internships introduce many students to the world of work and the necessary work habits and values that are necessary to succeed in the world of work. Moreover, they provide students the opportunity to gain valuable practical business experience and insights that might be otherwise absent from the business curriculum [e.g., Gabris & Mitchell, 1989, p. 485]. Internships also allow students to connect their practical experiences in the workplace with the theoretical constructs that they have explored in the classroom [e.g., Clark, 2003, p. 472-73; Young, Wright & Stein, 2006, p. 131]. In addition, students become more engaged in their classroom work and become better students when they are better able to understand the relevance of the theoretical models. Some studies have noted improved student classroom performance upon their return from internship experiences. [e.g., English & Koeppen, 1993; Clark, 2003, p. 473]. When properly monitored, many internships offer students significant educational benefits even when no formal effort is made to link the experience to classroom activities.

Through their professional work experience, students receive an "inside track" in finding post-college employment, which is becoming an increasingly significant factor in a depressed job market for recent, inexperienced college graduates. [e.g., Knemeyer & Murphy, 2001, p. 17; Knouse & Fontenot, 2008]. An internship, even if it is unsuccessful for the student, can help students discern career direction. Finally, although an increasing proportion of internships are unpaid in a down economy, students are often able to earn some money to help offset their educational experiences [Hall, Stiles, Kuzma & Elliott, 1995, p. 43-44]. Internship programs also provide numerous benefits for business schools and employers. For example, they can provide regular points of contact between businesses and business schools and their faculty [Maskooki, Rama & Raghunandan, 1998, p. 74]. Internship programs allow employers to

evaluate potential employees over an extended period without any formal commitment to hire the students permanently [e.g., Knechel & Snowball, 1987, p. 800; Hall, Stiles, Kuzma & Elliott, 1995, p. 43-44; Employers Rate Internship Programs as Most Effective Recruiting Tool, 2004]. Finally, subject to the requirements and limitations of the Fair Labor Standards Act and appropriate norms of business ethics, internship programs can serve as a source of inexpensive, educated, highly motivated labor for employers [Bell, 1994, p. 481].

These advantages have led many business schools to institute internship programs and provide academic credit for the programs [e.g., English & Koeppen, 1993, p. 292; Lipka, 2010]. However, few business schools have made internships a universal requirement. In an earlier survey of AACSB institutions, Updyke and Sander [2005] found that of 133 respondents, 114 offered internship programs. Of those 114, only 12 required internships for all business majors, while another 16 required it for some programs. Beard [1998] reported comparable findings.

In its standards for accreditation, the AACSB establishes detailed standards for the acquisition and maintenance of accredited business programs. Many business schools view AACSB accreditation as representing a signal of quality to their prospective students and other stakeholders and aspire to either achieve or maintain accreditation. AACSB touts its standards as being “mission driven,” allowing for a variety of different types of educational institutions to respond to various types of missions and markets, rather than a “one size fits all” method of evaluation modeled on premier research institutions. The standards emphasize quality delivery of the institution’s stated mission, assurance of student learning, and continuous improvement—all goals which should resonate with business faculty. However, the standards convey some relevant general mission expectations:

*In general, appropriateness for higher education for management implies learning experiences and career preparation that goes well beyond skill training. It conveys an expectation of education about the context within which management careers develop, as well as capacities for direct applications of functional skills. Students should comprehend the “why” of business activity as well as the “how.” [AACSB International, Eligibility Procedures..., 2010, p. 18]*

Moreover, the Standards emphasize that “...students also are responsible to take an active role in their learning experiences. Passive learning should not be the sole, or primary, model for collegiate business education.” [AACSB International, Eligibility Procedures..., 2010, p. 30] As the advantages of internships cited above make clear, a well-managed internship program could integrally contribute to the achievement of these expectations.

Likewise, internship programs provide the opportunity to measure student learning in an academic program and “to assist the school and faculty members to improve programs and courses. By measuring learning, the school can evaluate its students’ success at achieving learning goals, can use the measures to plan improvement efforts, and (depending on the type of measures) can provide feedback and guidance for individual students.” [AACSB International, Eligibility Procedures..., 2010, p. 58]

The AACSB standards require that schools establish programmatic learning goals, that they monitor student performance to make sure that these goals are met, and that they use these measures of achievement as a continuous improvement tool to make programmatic changes, i.e., “close the loop.” [See generally, e.g., Martell, 2007; Interview/Kathryn Martell, 2007]. The standards note that these goals could include general knowledge and skills, such as communication skills, problem-solving ability, critical thinking, etc., as well as management-specific skills, ethical and legal responsibilities, financial theories, etc. The AACSB accepts that schools may assure learning outcomes by selection (which arguably does not assure any learning at the particular institution at all), course-embedded measurement

tools, or by stand-alone testing or performance. The standards make it clear that indirect measures of student learning, such as surveys of employers or alumni, can supplement but not supplant direct measures of learning. Although many schools seem to be using a stand-alone test, such as the Educational Testing Service (ETS) Major Field Test, to assess overall business knowledge [Kelley, Tong & Choi, 2010, p. 300], such a measurement provides virtually no information to assess many specific programmatic goals [e.g., Pritchard, Saccucci, & Potter, 2010], particularly those related to general knowledge and skills. The standards indicate that a capstone course, such as a “capstone business-strategy course” might be an appropriate place to imbed the measurement of achievement of more integrative goals. We suggest that an alternative place to assess achievement of student learning and accomplishment of programmatic goals is in an internship course, which, by definition, is tied to a student’s experience in the messiness and ambiguity of the business world. In fact, for this reason, we argue that internships provide a superior context in which to assess accomplishment of programmatic goals compared to the capstone business strategy course. Although universities are experimenting with a wide variety of educational approaches and measurement techniques [e.g., Weldy & Turnipseed, 2010, p. 268-69; Pringle & Michel, 2007], we have found no previous published reports of attempts to use internships for formal programmatic assessment for AACSB.

## **SURVEY DATA AND METHODOLOGY**

To investigate the question of how domestic AACSB accredited business schools use internship programs in their undergraduate AOL programs, we constructed a survey. In addition to basic demographic information, the survey items explored the characteristics of the respondents’ internship programs, the stated learning objectives that were connected to the internship programs and the types of AOL methodologies employed in the internship programs. The key survey items themselves appear in Tables 1 through 6, which also display results. The target respondents for the survey were associate deans at AACSB accredited business schools in the U.S. In July 2010, we downloaded a list of all accredited schools from the AACSB website. This resulted in a list of 599 colleges and universities. We eliminated schools that are not located in the U.S. or that do not offer undergraduate programs in business. We found the email contact information for the associate deans at the remaining 427 schools by examining the websites for each school. The target respondents were sent an email inviting them to participate in the survey by clicking on a link to the survey, which was housed on Survey Monkey. After 2 weeks, non-respondents were sent a second invitation. Ultimately, we received 107 responses (a 25% response rate), although respondents were permitted to skip questions and the results show that some of them did so.

## **SURVEY RESULTS**

For the schools that responded to the survey, the average university enrollment is 13,703 while the average business school enrollment is 2,143. For most of these schools, internships are an elective component of their programs. Only four schools (3.7% of respondents) require internships for all major programs, and only 16 schools (15% of respondents) indicate that one or more internships are required for at least some of their programs. Typically, schools award 3 semester hours of credit for an internship, and while that was also the maximum credit awarded for a single internship experience for the majority of the schools, five schools award up to 12 semester hours. Fifty-five percent of those responding to the question about grading systems indicate that internships are done on a pass/fail basis. About 43 percent indicate that internships receive a letter grade and the rest indicate some combination depending on circumstances. The vast majority of respondents indicate that students in their internship programs are required to complete reports, reflections, or academic assignments as part of the course grade (letter grade or pass/fail) in internships, with approximately 90 percent reporting that student work is evaluated by business faculty. Table 1 indicates the types of activities schools require.

Table 1: Academic Requirements for Internships

<b>Survey item: The following types of student reporting, reflection and academic assignments typically are required for internship credit (check all that apply):</b>		
<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Response Percent</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
Summary of activities on periodic basis	81.3%	65
Personal reflection on professional or skill development related to work duties	83.8%	67
Project and report related to work duties	68.8%	55
Academic papers that require application of concepts from the business curriculum	33.8%	27
Industry or company analysis	21.3%	17
Oral presentations based on work experience	22.5%	18
Mock interviews based on work experience	2.5%	2
Interactive group exercises based on work experience	0.0%	0
Other	11.3%	9

*This table shows the percentage and count of respondents reporting various kinds of academic requirements associated with internships courses.*

A key question in the survey concerns whether schools use internship activities in their AOL programs. The results, with 28 respondents choosing not to answer this question, are shown in Table 2. It is clear that many schools have not recognized internships for their AOL potential.

Table 2: The Use of Internships for AOL

<b>Survey item: Does your business school use exercises or academic activities associated with internships for AOL purposes?</b>		
<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Response Percent</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
Yes	22.8%	18
No	77.2%	61

*This table shows the percentage and count of respondents reporting whether academic activities are used for assessment (AOL) purposes.*

We then asked business schools to rate the importance of AOL efforts done in connection with internship activities relative to their entire AOL programs. Table 3 contains these results. With only 13 respondents indicating that internships are moderately or very important parts of their AOL programs, it seems safe to conclude that, for the majority of business schools, the academic work done by students during internships are an untapped resource for AOL activities.

Table 3: The Importance of Internships in the AOL Program

<b>Survey item: Relative to the entire AOL program at your school, how important is the use of exercises or academic activities associated with the internship course?</b>		
<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Response Percent</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
Not important	57.0%	45
Somewhat important	26.6%	21
Moderately important	10.1%	8
Very important	6.3%	5

*This table shows the percentage and count of respondents reporting the importance of academic activities for AOL.*

We further explore how schools use internships in their AOL programs by asking them to indicate what learning objectives they attach to internships and which of those they attempt to assess in the internship course. The results in Table 4 show that a variety of student learning objectives can be connected with internship experiences and yet, even when identified as such, many schools do not follow up by performing AOL activities. The response to this item is not perfectly consistent with the responses shown in Table 1 in which only 18 schools indicate that they use assignments from internships in their AOL programs. For example, in this table, 22 schools claim to use internships to assess problem-solving skills. That may be due to some confusion on the part of some respondents, however the general results still seem consistent. Relative to the number of schools offering internship programs, not many schools use internship assignments in their AOL programs.

Table 4: Internship Learning Objectives and AOL Efforts

<b>Survey item: Here are some student learning objectives that may be associated with the internship course. Please indicate if each is applicable to your school's internship experience and whether you attempt to assess that student learning objective for AOL purposes in the internship course.</b>		
<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Development of this aspect is a student learning objective of our internship course.</b>	<b>We assess this student learning objective in the internship course.</b>
	<b>Response Count</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
Skills in professional writing	30	21
Skills in professional oral communication	26	20
The ability to apply concepts from the core business program	38	20
The ability to apply concepts from the specific major	37	20
Skills in the use of information technology	18	13
Skills in problem solving	34	22
Skills in ethical reasoning	21	16
Understanding of global business issues	13	10
Understanding of social issues	11	9

This table shows the number of respondents reporting various learning objectives and whether they are used in AOL.

For those schools that conduct AOL in the internship course we asked what AOL methodologies they employ. Table 5 shows that assessment of writing samples and exit interviews were the most popular of specific methodologies named in the survey. The majority of the “Other” responses mentioned use of employer feedback as the preferred methodology. We note that employer feedback is an indirect, and therefore a less valuable, assessment of student work.

Table 5: AOL Methodologies in Internship Programs

<b>Survey item: Which of the following AOL methodologies do you employ with work that students are doing for internships?</b>		
<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Response Percent</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
Embedded AOL questions in an exam	0.0%	0
Embedded AOL problem or required analysis in internship assignments	12.8%	6
Assessment of writing samples	38.3%	18
Assessment of oral communication samples	21.3%	10
Internship exit interview with student	27.7%	13
Other (please specify)	51.1%	24

This table shows the percentage and count of respondents who report applying various AOL methodologies to student internship assignments.

Finally, to ask the all-important “closing the loop” question, we included an item concerning feedback to faculty and resulting curricular changes based on internship AOL activities. Table 6 shows the results. Although several schools say that they report the AOL findings on internship activities to faculty, only a couple of respondents provided examples of how faculty might have incorporated the results into courses or programs. Several said they review and use feedback to try to enhance students’ communication and professional skills, and one said the feedback from employers resulted in incorporating more Excel work into an upper level course.

Table 6: The Use of AOL in Internships to Effect Change

<b>Survey item: Have AOL results based on internship activities been:</b>			
<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Don't know</b>
Communicated to the faculty periodically?	26	20	6
The impetus for curricular or program changes?	18	26	7

This table shows the count of respondents who report whether AOL results are communicated to faculty and used to drive curricular or program changes.

Through this survey, we wanted to learn 1) about business schools’ use of internships, and 2) about the use of academic work by student interns for AOL purposes. The findings indicate that most schools offer

internships as an elective, but few schools require internships of all students. While it appears that a number of schools are using internship activities for some assessment purposes, the number is just a fraction of the total that offer internships. By not requiring internships, schools may recognize that any assessment of learning for those students would be done on a biased sample and therefore not appropriate. Whatever the reason, and despite their suitability as a platform for AOL activities, internships appear to be severely under-utilized as part of the AOL program.

### Internships and Assessment at Butler University

The COB implemented its current internship program in the mid-1980s. With a campus-wide undergraduate student body of just over 4,000 students, the COB has about 700 undergraduates in its six majors. Faculty are adamant that to award three hours of academic credit for each of the two required internships, the grading structure must include a significant academic component. Students normally complete the first internship in their junior year or during the summer after their junior year and the second during their senior year. To enroll in the first internship, students must achieve junior status, finish at least 12 hours of upper level business courses, and earn at least a C- in the first upper level course in their major. While the academic component has undergone changes over the years, it has always comprised 70 percent of the course grade, with the supervisor's evaluation of the student's job performance comprising the remaining 30 percent.

The COB faculty has identified seven general learning objectives for its undergraduate business programs. Students should understand 1) general business concepts, 2) functional business concepts, and 3) global issues and how they affect business. In addition, students should develop competency in 4) communication, 5) problem-solving and critical thinking, 6) teamwork and leadership, and 7) ethical and legal knowledge and skills. Based on the general student learning objectives for the program, the faculty established several student learning objectives specifically for the two internships. Students should be able to identify, integrate, and apply both general business concepts as well as technical knowledge from their majors to their job environment. In addition, students should be able to demonstrate their proficiency in professional communications, through papers and oral presentations.

They should also be able to articulate how their work experience has enhanced their professional, academic, and personal growth, as well as their career development. Finally, in the second internship, students should be able to demonstrate their awareness and understanding of global issues relative to business. Students complete several assignments to accomplish the course learning objectives described above. In both the first and second experience, they write a paper in which they analyze the organization, in terms of its mission, structure, competitive market environment, financial condition and structure, and its marketing strategy. For both experiences, this is the key assignment and it is completed about midway through the experience. In the first experience, an introductory assignment first has students identify, explain and apply two business concepts to their organizations, at least one of which is from the student's major. They conclude the semester with an oral presentation, during which they describe and analyze a problem either they or their organization encountered. In the second experience, students study and report on global issues relative to their organizations, and also write a problem-solving paper, in which they describe and analyze the results of a problem they or their organization faced. Table 7 contains a summary of the assignments for each of the two internship experiences in the order in which students complete them.

We use three of the academic assignments to assess students' performance on the COB programmatic learning objectives. Students in all six majors take about 60 hours of common business courses, so we use the Organization Analysis paper to assess senior students' performance on the "core" business concepts of marketing strategy, economics, and global issues, among others. Through the Global Issues assignment, we assess students' ability to identify contemporary, global macro-environmental trends and



issues, and determine the opportunities and threats they present to business. Through the Problem Solving papers, we evaluate students’ ability to apply their critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Also through the Problem Solving papers and presentations, we evaluate students’ ability to communicate both orally and in writing. All of these assessments, with the exception of the assessment of oral communication, are done during the second internship, when students are seniors. Since the oral presentation is during the first internship, students are generally beginning their senior year. Course embedded assessment in the senior year allows us to make programmatic judgments about the extent of student learning with respect to both general knowledge and skills as well as management specific skills.

Table 7: Academic Assignments for COB Internships

<b>The assignments shown in <i>italics</i> represent those on which teams of COB conduct AOL evaluations independent of the course grading.</b>	
<p><b>Business Internship I</b></p> <p>Career Goals Paper – Identify and discuss goals for your career and internship experience.</p> <p>Business Concepts Paper – Identify, explain, and apply curricular business concepts to the work environment.</p> <p>Organization Analysis Paper – Provide a comprehensive analysis of the condition, performance, structure and strategies of the work organization.</p> <p>Problem Solving Oral Presentation - Define a problem or opportunity related to the work organization and use a problem solving process to explore alternative solutions.</p> <p>Written Reflections and Portfolio – Provide personal reflections on your work and academic experience and samples of your work product.</p>	<p><b>Business Internship II</b></p> <p>Career Goals Paper – Identify and discuss goals for your career and internship experience.</p> <p>Organization Analysis Paper – Provide a comprehensive analysis of the condition, performance, structure and strategies of the work organization.</p> <p>Global Issues Paper - Identify contemporary, global trends and issues, and determine opportunities and threats they present to the work organization</p> <p>Problem Solving Paper - Define a problem or opportunity related to the work organization and use a problem solving process to explore alternative solutions.</p> <p>Written Reflections and Portfolio – Provide personal reflections on your work and academic experience and samples of your work product.</p>

*This table shows the assignments required in the Business Internship I and Business Internship II courses.*

The internship instructors employ a common rubric while evaluating student work for calculating the internship grade. However, for assessment purposes within business disciplines, we provide a sample of the papers to a team of faculty members in that discipline. For example, a team of marketing faculty members assesses student performance using a rubric designed specifically to assess student learning in marketing. The AOL activities are conducted independently of the grading activities.

The following paragraphs describe examples of what we have gleaned about students’ learning from the evaluation of these assignments, and the responses the faculty decided on to “close the loop.” The first paragraph describes how the Marketing faculty came to make some fairly straightforward modifications to a core marketing course. The second paragraph recounts how the COB determined that it needed to make substantial, sweeping changes to how it integrates global business issues into the undergraduate program. In a portion of the Organization Analysis paper, students are required to describe the marketing strategy of their organizations, and then analyze whether they believe the strategy is appropriate and successful in helping to meet organizational objectives. The marketing faculty rated 37 percent of the responses as unsatisfactory. While evaluators found that students mostly used the correct terminology and concepts, students failed to demonstrate their understanding of the application of the concepts. For example, they could describe the four Ps of a marketing strategy (Price, Product, Place, and Promotion), but they had little idea of how that marketing strategy was implemented in their organizations. They offered no evaluation of the effectiveness of their organization’s strategy and failed to discuss how it compared to competitors’ strategies. In light of the results, the faculty concluded that three basic changes to delivery of certain principles in the marketing course all COB students take would help alleviate students’ low performance. First, all instructors agreed to standardize coverage across all sections. Second, they all agreed to emphasize the use of frameworks versus *ad hoc* methods in marketing decision-making. Finally, they all agreed to coordinate the emphasis on marketing terminology and concepts across the three freshmen, sophomore, and junior-level business courses. In two years, when

students have encountered these improvements in the curriculum, the faculty plans to conduct the assessment again to measure improvement in student learning.

The COB faculty has developed the following student learning objective for undergraduate students: they should be able to identify contemporary, global macro-environmental trends and issues, and determine opportunities and threats they present to business. We assess the outcome through an assignment in the second internship in which students must demonstrate their understanding and application of these concepts. We evaluated student performance and obtained poor results. Students were unable to draw on the terminology and basic concepts of international business to provide insight or explanation of issues they encountered in their internships. In response, the dean funded a work group of faculty that spent the summer studying the extent of global business in the curriculum. The group wrote an extensive report, and recommended several paths for the COB to take. These recommendations included developing additional area studies courses, creating more study trip opportunities for students, and providing development funds to support faculty as they globalize their courses and their research. The COB faculty approved the report, which then served as the basis for a grant application to the Department of Education. The grant was funded for \$175,000 and the recommendations are being implemented. We expect that the implementation of these activities to improve students' awareness of global business issues and their ability to evaluate business issues from that perspective.

The COB is in an advantageous position to require internships, mainly because of its location in a relatively large metropolitan area and the relatively small student body. Universities existing in smaller communities or having a larger student body might not be able to ensure that all students would be able to find one internship, much less two of them. Recall that respondents reported average business school enrollment of 2,143. Still, even smaller schools do not often require internships. Thirty-one respondents reported business school enrollment of 1000 or fewer, but only three of those schools require an internship for even some of their programs. While most universities report offering elective internships to students in some or all majors, they may require students to find their own internship positions or impose strict prerequisites on who may participate, such as a minimum cumulative grade point average.

Why don't more schools require at least one internship for one or more of their programs? Anecdotally, a colleague from a similar sized university also located in a metropolitan area once marveled at Butler's requirement. He told one of the authors, "I wouldn't trust a lot of our students to represent us in the workplace!" Perhaps he underestimates his students. For 25 years, we have been very successful in requiring two internships of every student graduating from the COB. We have not found academic performance, as evidenced by cumulative grade point average, to be a good predictor of students' performance on their internships. Embarrassing incidents are few and far between. In fact, the average employer evaluation of our interns has been around 95 percent for years. Internships are important to all students and their learning, and should be more widely required.

If internships were more widely required, they would be ideally suited to AOL efforts, as we have tried to demonstrate. Schools that offer only elective internships still might be able to incorporate assessment activities if they can find a way to insure an unbiased sample. We recommend required internships because of their value as a learning tool, but the additional benefit is that they provide one of the best possible platforms on which to conduct unbiased AOL activities.

## **CONCLUDING COMMENTS**

In this paper, we reviewed an array of literature, much of which strongly supports the use of internships as a powerful learning tool. We also presented the results of a survey documenting the use of internships by business schools, and the use of academic components of internships as a formal part of the AOL program. We found that most schools offer internships on an elective basis, but relatively few schools

require them even for some of their programs. Perhaps not surprisingly then, few schools rely very heavily on internships for AOL purposes. The results seem to suggest good opportunities for schools to improve their programs. Finally, this paper presented a description of one school's successful attempts to incorporate AOL activities into its required internships.

One area for further research could be on the effective design of internship programs and their academic components. The nature and volume of the assignments that we require has changed over the years, but we still wonder if we might be able to improve them in order to better help students learn how business concepts apply in practice and how to integrate those concepts into a more meaningful understanding of the business world. We also suspect that we might be able to adjust the assignments to provide a better opportunity for additional AOL activities in the internship program.

Further research into best practices in the assessment of business programs and the best program elements on which to conduct AOL activities also seems warranted. Many business schools rely heavily on the ETS and its Major Field Test (MFT) for assessment of student learning, which raises two issues. The first relates to concepts covered by the MFT and whether they coincide with those included in student learning objectives established by business schools. The second issue is that the MFT is limited to assessing students' knowledge, rather than their ability to integrate and use that knowledge to make business decisions. We have suggested that internship assignments assess both students' understanding of concepts as well as whether they can apply them to real-world situations. The MFT is more limited in that regard, but there may be additional program elements that lend themselves particularly well to conducting AOL. The continued importance of AOL in the AACSB accreditation process suggests that all business schools should be seeking those opportunities.

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