Sophomore Internships: Critiquing Recruitment Strategies for 21st Century Scholars

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The Sophomore Internship Program (SIP) at IUPUI offers paid internships for 21st Century Scholars, but has experienced low student engagement. The researchers completed interviews with sophomore 21st Century Scholars to explore the factors that influence their decision to participate in internships. Themes that emerged through transcription and coding include: communication, relationships, barriers, and attractive factors. The interviews and themes allowed the SIP coordinator to adjust recruitment strategies for future semesters in order to increase applicants.

The conception of the word diversity as it relates to higher education is deeply rooted in terms of race and ethnicity (Arminio, Torres, & Pope, 2012). However, the language around diversity has evolved to act as a response to the concerns of the quality of students’ experiences on college campuses (Arminio et al., 2012). This can refer to a student service, the university’s demographics, or the university’s commitment to diversity issues (Ahmed, 2012). The Sophomore Internship Program (SIP) at Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI) serves as a function of all the factors listed. Operated through Campus Career and Advising Services, the SIP serves sophomore 21st Century Scholars at IUPUI by providing them with internship opportunities in the greater Indianapolis area.

Defining “underrepresented student” is essential in this study because 21st Century Scholars often hold multiple intersecting identities. According to the Institutional Research and Decision Support report on 21st Century Scholars, as of 2015, 42 percent of 21st Century Scholars identified as Black/African American, Asian, Hispanic/Latino, or two or more races (Hansen, n.d.). While the researchers recognize that many 21st Century Scholars hold multiple minoritized identities such as first-generation college students and racial minorities, among others, this paper will use the term “underrepresented” to refer to the student population of low-income students as socioeconomic status is the main qualifier for participation in 21st Century Scholars.

Institutional Context

IUPUI is a large, public research institution that was the result of a collaboration between two state universities. Indiana University and Purdue University combined based on their commitment to provide downtown Indianapolis with a prestigious higher education experience. Internship opportunities are one component of the transformative higher education experience IUPUI aims to present. IUPUI serves an increasingly diverse population: according to the 2016 IUPUI Diversity Report, the percentage of 21st Century Scholars has doubled over the last five years (Dace, Mitchell, Janik, & Hamilton, 2016).

21st Century Scholars Program

The 21st Century Scholarship is an Indiana-statewide initiative that provides in-state students with up to four years of undergraduate tuition (21st Century Scholars, n.d.). In addition to financial support, the 21st Century Scholars Program at IUPUI provides students with an environment that fosters academic, social, and personal support (IUPUI, 2018a). There
are academic requirements to maintaining one’s scholarship that include achieving a 2.5 GPA in high school and staying in good academic standing in college.

**Sophomore Internship Program**

Campus Career and Advising Services’ intentional choice of focusing on sophomore 21st Century Scholars is guided and supported by literature. According to Vuong, Brown-Welty, and Tracz (2010), the sophomore slump is a phenomenon that is prompted by the underlying assumption that college students do not need further support beyond their first year. However, issues such as “achieving competence, desiring autonomy, establishing identity, and developing purpose” are critical during a student’s second year in college (Vuong et al., 2010, p. 51). Furthermore, low-income students, which is the population the 21st Century Scholars program focuses on, are among the least likely to be retained through degree completion (Thayer, 2000).

Campus Career and Advising Services created the SIP in an effort to provide financial, professional, and social support to students whose identities as sophomores and as 21st Century Scholars intersect. In addition to the internship opportunities, students who participate in the SIP are guaranteed pay of $15 an hour and are part of an internship cohort that engages in reflection together. However, with over 500 sophomore level 21st Century Scholars at IUPUI and only 4 SIP participants, this resource is dramatically underutilized by students. The purpose of this study is to understand the SIP’s recruitment efforts and to gain insight into the factors influencing sophomore 21st Century Scholars’ participation in internship experiences.

**Literature Review**

The field of higher education generally presents student engagement and high-impact practices as ways to increase students’ learning experiences while in college. According to Kilgo, Ezell Sheets, and Pascarella (2014), internships are one of the ten high-impact practices endorsed by the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U). A study by Kilgo et al. (2014) found that internships were a “positive predictor” for several learning outcomes, including “inclination to inquire, lifelong learning... and socially responsible leadership” (p. 13). Although internships and other high-impact practices have positive effects on student learning, internships can only have that positive effect if students are engaging in those experiences.

The identities 21st century scholars hold as low-income—an identity that is likely accompanied with other marginalized identities—have implications that affect their willingness to engage with the campus community. Kinzie, Gonyea, Shoup, and Kuh (2008) discuss the relationship between underrepresented students’ level of campus engagement and persistence in college. Students’ marginalized identities can lead to poor social and cultural capital in both their experience on campus and in their pursuit of pre-professional development experiences. The authors note that, “historically underrepresented students are not able to take full advantage of learning opportunities, especially at predominantly white institutions” (Kinzie et al., 2008, p. 23). Kinzie et al. (2008) also recommend that “efforts to create more hospitable campus environments for underrepresented students must be culturally sensitive and strive to employ engaging educational practices that make a difference to student success” (p. 34). This establishes an important context for the discussion of the SIP, a program that is specifically meant to
engage underrepresented students in a setting that supports them both on-campus, and places them in an off-campus internship.

21st Century Scholars Program

The SIP’s target population is sophomore students in the 21st Century Scholars program. The 21st Century Scholars program was created in 1989 as a way to assist low-income students in Indiana with the cost of obtaining college degrees as well as for students who meet income eligibility (Toutkoushian, Hossler, DesJardins, McCall, and Gonzalez Canche, 2015). Students may enroll in the program as early as 7th grade and matriculate through to college (Indiana Commission for Higher Education, 2018).

Successful matriculation to the 21st century scholars program awards students up to four years of undergraduate tuition at any public university or college in the State of Indiana (Indiana Commission for Higher Education, 2018). Students may also choose to enroll in a private institution within the state and be awarded the equivalent tuition amount of a public university. The program is a last dollar program, meaning after all federal and institutional financial aid is considered, the state will award 100 percent of tuition and fees to attend a public state school for up to four years (Toutkoushian et al., 2015). When considering the obstacles that prevent students from entering college, such as financial constraints and anticipated loan debt, the 21st Century Scholars program eliminates many of these barriers for students who may not have had the opportunity to attend any institution of higher education without financial assistance (Toutkoushian et al., 2015). Since these students have an economic disadvantage before coming to college, their participation in internship programs and other high-impact practices is necessary for their needs to be met in college. This research informs the already adverse conditions a 21st Century Scholars participant may be facing as they enter college, thus providing contextual evidence for the importance of participation in internship programs.

Sophomore Students

Considering the SIP is a sophomore-exclusive program, it is important to establish a context for the unique struggles and goals of sophomore students. Schaller (2010) discusses the impact of the second year of college on students, which is a “unique and important developmental period when students are examining their life purpose” (p. 13). While some specific sophomore support programs do exist at institutions across the United States, sophomores remain an under-researched population (Schaller, 2010). The intense focus researchers and administrators place on the first-year student experience and retention leads to a lack of support for sophomore students who are assumed to already be adjusted to college (Schaller, 2010). Thus, sophomore students end up with a unique set of unmet needs. Issues sophomore students face include major choice and self-efficacy in their academics, career development, contact with faculty and staff, motivation and values, social integration, and financial issues (Schaller, 2010).

Examining the issues sophomore students face is especially interesting when also considering socioeconomic class, which is the primary identity marker that indicates if students qualify for 21st Century Scholars. Schaller (2010) notes that, “academic and social integration... may be a particular challenge for lower SES [socioeconomic status] students. In the sophomore year, when institutions provide fewer support programs, this is of particular concern” (p. 26). This is similar to Kinzie et al.’s (2008) assertion that underrepresented students are
less likely to take advantage of engagement opportunities. The 21st Century Scholars program is one support program that addresses these intersecting issues—having access to more resources and support during the sophomore year could help increase the academic and social integration and lead to higher retention and graduation rates for these students (Schaller, 2010).

Career development is one specific sophomore struggle that is particularly relevant to this research. The SIP aims to provide a means of career exploration and development to its’ participants by including opportunities for students of all majors to participate and reflect on their internship experience in relation to their career goals (M. Rust, personal communication, September 27, 2018). This aligns with Gore and Hunter’s (2010) assertion that students are making important career decisions during their sophomore year. According to Gore and Hunter (2010), “campus-sanctioned internships, externships, and cooperative programs are excellent ways to promote student socialization into specific disciplines” (p. 110). This means that involvement in the SIP would not only give students another means of social and monetary support, but could also help them make major and career decisions during a critical time in their college careers.

Culturally Engaging Campus Environments

Museus’s (2014) Culturally Engaging Campus Environments (CECE) model is the theoretical foundation for this research. After recognizing the limited nature of the existing theoretical frameworks for minoritized college student success, Museus (2014) identified nine CECE indicators to evaluate supportive environments for college students. The nine indicators encompass elements of campus environments that promote success among racially diverse populations and provide a tool used to address potentially negative environments. The model “posits that undergraduates who encounter more culturally engaging campus environments are more likely to (1) exhibit a greater sense of belonging and (2) be more likely to persist to graduation” (Museus, 2014, p. 210). When looking at the population of students the researchers addressed, three CECE indicators are especially relevant to influencing the student experience: proactive philosophies, availability of holistic support, and humanized educational environments (Museus, 2014). The CECE model presents ideas that are congruent with the findings of Kinzie et al. (2008) and Kilgo et al. (2014), while also tailoring its’ theory to underrepresented students. The researchers examined how the CECE indicators could be applied to the SIP environment to better recruit and support the target underrepresented student population.

Research Questions

Although the SIP addresses many of the barriers both sophomores and 21st Century Scholars face, engagement numbers for this program are very low. Why, then, do sophomore 21st Century Scholars students choose not to participate in the SIP? What are their opinions on internships in general? How could the SIP adjust its recruitment tactics to show this population that this is a good opportunity for them? Reflecting on these issues led the researchers to the following research questions to be addressed in this study:

1. What factors influence sophomore 21st Century Scholars students’ participation in the Sophomore Internship Program (SIP)?
2. What are strategies that can be employed to increase participation among sophomore 21st Century Scholars students?
Methods

The methods in assessing the SIP were sensitive to the stakeholders involved in the research; thus, intentionally including them in the assessment process to promote positive change or to reaffirm practices was important. Since the SIP includes vulnerable populations, the researchers were intentional about avoiding misinterpretation and objectification of the participants’ voices and experiences. The methods were structured to ensure that participants’ voices came through as the most pertinent part of this research.

Recruiting Students and Sampling Strategies

Due to the nature of this qualitative study, the researchers employed a sampling strategy that aligned with the purpose, available resources, research questions, and any constraints (Schuh, Biddix, Dean, & Kinzie, 2016). Considering the students interviewed had to be sophomores and 21st Century Scholars, the researchers employed criterion sampling (Schuh et al., 2016). In the Student Success Collaborative (SSC) Campus online system, the researchers utilized the texting and email features to personalize forms of communication for each student.

Additionally, intensity sampling was employed as students were identified that would give thoughtful insight (Schuh et al., 2016). This helped the researchers better understand the phenomenon of why these students were not applying to internships as often as their non-21st Century Scholars peers on campus (IUPUI, 2018b). After obtaining permission from Senior Executive Director of Campus Career and Advising Services, Matthew Rust, to ensure access to the target population, the researchers collaborated with other stakeholders in order to communicate with students (Creswell, 2005). Additionally, collaboration with the 21st Century Scholars Director, Phyllis Washington, and the Student Success Coach, Emily Hunnicutt, was established to send the initial email contact to sophomore 21st Century Scholars. By asking these two professionals who have a closer connection to the students, the researchers were able to recruit students through people they already knew and trusted, serving as a way of trustingly handing students off (Patton, 2006).

Framework: Narrative Design

This research is grounded in Narrative Design. The researchers utilized the participants’ lived stories to gain a certain level of trust and respect while, at the same time, enriching the assessment of the SIP. According to Connelly and Clandinin (1990), narrative research designs "describe the lives of individuals, collect and tell stories about people’s lives, and write narratives of individual experiences” (as cited in Creswell, 2005, p. 474). By discussing the meaning of those lived experiences with the individuals interviewed, the researchers avoided misinterpretation and objectification of their voices and experiences. The narrative design took the form of individual interviews, the content of which was then examined through the theoretical lens of the CECE model. The CECE model falls in line with the SIP’s mission statement of “inspiring IUPUI undergraduate student success through high-quality, structured internship experiences that encourage career exploration, skills development, and professional growth” (M. Rust, personal communication, September 27, 2018).

Data Collection

Data was collected through a series of in-person interviews with participants which covered a designated list of questions
The interviews were conducted with a semi-standardized questionnaire in order to bring “consistency and credibility to an external audience” (Schuh et al., 2016, p. 151). Dependent upon the participant’s answers, the interviewers asked additional questions to gain further perspective from the participant. As Schuh et al. (2016) states, the advantage of interviewing participants lies in “build[ing] a rich understanding of a person, setting, or situation through the perspective of those experiencing it” (p. 117). The semi-structured questionnaire format allowed the researchers to hone in on specific topics intended to answer the research questions while also bringing student voices to the forefront of the study. The aim was to “understand the lived experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience” (Siedman, 2006, as cited in Schuh et al., 2016, p. 116). Through a series of interview questions designed to garner the participant’s understanding of what an internship entails, what their perception is of recruitment strategies, their specific student experience, and what factors affect their decision to/to not participate in internship programs, the researchers were able to draw conclusions regarding recruitment efforts for this program, which are discussed in-depth in future sections of this report.

**Interview Protocol**

The interviews were conducted in the University Library at IUPUI to allow a familiar, accessible, and neutral meeting place for both researchers and participants. Acknowledging that an inherent power dynamic exists between researchers and participants, two researchers were present at each interview with one individual student in order to build rapport and avoid intimidating students. Interviews were approximately 30 minutes each.

The themes that emerged after conducting in-person, semi-structured interviews with six sophomore 21st Century Scholars are detailed below. While each participant had both sophomore standing and a 21st Century Scholar designation, each differed in terms of major, experience with internships, and future aspirations. Out of the six participants, each one has had experience with internships, two participants are in the SIP currently, two participants have specifically applied to the SIP, and two participants have no affiliation with the SIP. Interviewing a variety of individuals with differing perceptions and experiences with internships allowed for different insights and perspectives to emerge that were pertinent to the SIP at IUPUI. Detailed in Appendix D are participants’ area of study, career intention, their chosen pseudonym, and affiliation with the SIP. The researchers specifically chose not to identify demographic factors, such as race, ethnicity, or gender, in order to avoid misrepresentation of a group due to the low number of students interviewed.

The interview questions were designed to elicit general feelings, perceptions, and processes behind internship experience both generally and at IUPUI. Thirteen total questions were asked of each participant and were broken down into four subject areas: **communication, work experience, internship familiarity, and influential factors.** Regardless of a participant’s affiliation with the SIP, the questions elicited key information regarding internship programs’ recruitment methods of sophomore 21st Century Scholars. After reviewing the transcriptions and emerging themes of all six interviews, more specific response categories were identified in line with the participants’ responses. These included: **communication, relationships, barriers, and attractive factors.**
received information and how they preferred to receive information about opportunities at IUPUI. Relationships provided insight into the relationships that helped to guide the participants to internships. Barriers pertained to the tangible items that prevented participants from pursuing or taking internships. Finally, attractive factors were the pieces of an internship that enticed the participant to apply and sustain the role.

Data Analysis

All interviews were recorded with an audio recording device for transcribing and coding purposes. According to Schuh et al., “coding refers to the process of grouping data according to a typology or category system” (2016, p. 120). Furthermore, the objective of the coding process is “to make sense out of text data, divide it into text or image segments, label the segments with codes, examine codes for overlap and redundancy, and collapse these codes into broad themes” (Creswell, 2015, p. 243). Random member checks were conducted in order to ensure interpretations were consistent with students’ experiences. After the interviews were transcribed and coded, two participants were randomly selected to review their interview transcriptions and summaries of dominant themes that emerged; feedback was encouraged on behalf of participants but not required (Museus, Shiroma, & Dizon, 2016).

According to Schuh et al. (2016, p.55), confidentiality is a foundational element of the “respect for persons” principle. All participants were provided a study information sheet that explained the researchers’ efforts at keeping all personal information confidential. In order to maintain confidentiality, participants were asked to choose their own pseudonyms that the researchers used throughout transcriptions and all other documents referencing the participants. A key was used to indicate which pseudonyms denoted which participants as well as demographic data that was voluntarily provided by participants. All interview transcripts and recordings were also kept in a secure server separate from the pseudonym key. All materials were promptly destroyed upon completion of the study.

Findings

Four themes were consistent throughout the six participant interviews: communication, relationships, internship barriers, and attractive factors. The students’ responses provided important insight into internship attributes that influenced student participation.

Communication

Participants were asked how they typically hear about programs at IUPUI, then secondly how they preferred to hear about programs. While the responses were specifically related to their favored method of communication, certain commonalities were identified when examining all six responses. Five participants indicated that email was the most commonly used form of communication on campus and therefore was their preferred method. Additionally, Kristen noted “there was one [email] that was sent out a while ago, and I kinda disregarded that one, but there was [another email] that came a couple weeks ago I believe. That one I took and I applied.” Kristen felt that it was consecutive emails that reminded and convinced her to complete the application.

A vast majority of participants also referenced word of mouth as being effective in circulating information. Half of the participants noted this in response to one of the questions in the communication section. The source of the information varied among participants such as: professors, peers, and a
21st Century Scholar Success coach. Some participants furthered their claims by noting that information through word of mouth felt more personal and provided an opportunity for clarifying questions.

**Relationships**

When describing their involvement with an internship or other work-related experience, a theme emerged wherein participants talked about a mentor, faculty member, or professional staff member that either encouraged them to participate or supported them through the process. Specifically, when asked if the participant considered internships to be important for their major or career path, participants indicated that mentors who emphasized the importance of an internship were influential in their decision to participate. Selena stated, “so, the fact that my scholar success coach reached out to me specifically and other 21st Century Scholar students who kind of felt like, you know, this is something that makes me feel a little bit more important than the other people on campus.” Many participants drew a connection between the trust and responsibility that existed in their mentoring relationship and the direct introduction of an internship opportunity.

The response from participants was overwhelmingly positive regarding being encouraged to participate in internships by their mentors, professors, and other campus stakeholders. It was evident in the participants’ responses that the opinions of university constituents were influential in students’ perceptions of internships. Kristen stated, “I think mostly it’s my advisors that pushed me to take internships. They said wherever you can just to get experience because it looks good on a resume. That is a really important thing.” This reinforces the impact higher education professionals have upon students’ choice to pursue different experiential learning opportunities.

**Barriers**

When asked to identify any factors that may or may not have prevented them from pursuing an internship, about half of the participants referenced feeling underqualified, that they have the perception that the word “internship” means they need certain qualifications. Three participants specifically expressed that some internships look for candidates with experience in the field. Bobby felt “really new to internships” and Kristen said, “a lot of internships look for a year of experience in a specific thing.” The participants’ perception that they are underqualified for internships was a clear barrier to their decision to apply to internships, highlighting the impact that the overall perception of internships can have on a student’s decision to pursue these experiences.

Additionally, five participants struggled to balance the busy schedules of a sophomore student workload and lack of reliable transportation to and from an internship off-campus. Some participants said that many of their peers do not have cars and it is an immediate concern when thinking about fitting an internship into their schedule. Jessica specifically talked about the necessity for internships on-campus noting, “Not everybody has transportation, especially sophomores, that is still pretty early on. I know sophomores that live on campus and don’t have vehicles so finding companies that are close by [is important].” Jessica points to the wide disparity of access to transportation that is necessary to consider when offering internship opportunities. Tina referenced the difficulty of scheduling an internship as a college student, noting, “internships, sites, companies have hours between Monday through Friday eight to five, and as college students it is hard to schedule a whole chunk of your time even though it is only 10 hours
per week because your classes are sometimes spaced out…” Here, both transportation and scheduling were highlighted as barriers to their participation in an internship.

Lastly, two participants felt that there was a lack of diverse topic areas offered as SIP internships. When asked if they had any other pertinent information or recommendations regarding internships, Jessica stated, “I would maybe attempt to expand the amount of majors covered [in the positions offered].” Another participant reflected that many of the internships offered by the SIP were more relevant to liberal arts majors than other major areas offered on campus.

**Attractive Factors**

When asked what factors would influence their decision to participate and what program resources might attract them to positions, all participants referenced transferable skills and learning about different career opportunities. Jocylen described that an internship can “help benefit you in the future” and “give you experiences that you wouldn’t really get in a classroom setting.” Participants also disclosed that their motivation when doing an internship is to network, gain hands-on experience, and learn expectations of professional settings. More specifically, Tina said “all of the stuff that I am learning right now and the stuff I learned in my past internship are very important skills for me to carry through if I want to create my own practice” in reference to her future career goals.

Five participants also expressed that their interest in internships comes from a motivation to widen their breadth of options for careers. Some participants wanted an internship to closely align with their major, whereas others wanted internships that were entirely different experiences, and one even desired positions outside of the IUPUI network. Kristen said she was “very indecisive so [she didn’t] know exactly what path [she] want[ed] to go to so [she] like[d] trying out different things…” She also noted, “I think I just want to try a couple of different things before I settle on one specific thing that I want to do for the rest of my life.” For all participants, internships were an opportunity to try something, learn, and apply that experience in their future endeavors. Tina furthered Kristen’s notion by stating, “My mindset was that during my junior and senior year I would like to go into more internships that I know I am interested in. I think these earlier years are better for me to explore more.” This describes Tina’s perception that internships can provide further clarification on students’ career interests.

Three of the participants discussed the importance of having a paid position while participating in an internship. Jocylen stated that she would not be interested in participating in an unpaid internship. The hourly wage was what originally drew Jessica into applying, referencing the compensation for the SIP, saying, “… first thing I saw was the $15 an hour because I had a job last semester and it paid $10.15 …” The participants who discussed funding unanimously mentioned that getting paid for their internship experience was an extremely attractive and almost essential factor to participate.

**Discussion**

The results show that centering these students’ unique experiences and opinions regarding internships provides insight into why sophomore 21st Century Scholars students choose to apply or not apply for internships. These results point to what the SIP is currently doing well to recruit these students to their program, as well as how
they could enhance their recruitment in the future to provide an internship experience designed around these students’ unique needs. Connecting back to the theoretical frameworks for this study, namely Museus’s (2014) CECE Model, gives way to the researchers’ recommendations for the SIP’s future recruitment strategies.

The results of this research are consistent with the literature reviewed in a variety of facets. Kinzie et al. (2008) asserts that underrepresented students are unable to take advantage of many learning opportunities at the collegiate level; this assertion is reflected in the participants’ responses. The participants consistently cited finances and transportation as barriers to why they might not apply to an internship. They also perceived themselves as underqualified for these positions, perhaps due to a lack of resources in understanding what an internship entails (Kinzie et al., 2008). Kinzie et al. (2008) also mention that “culturally sensitive” methods to recruitment and retention of these students must be employed in order to ensure their success; the SIP’s revisions to recruitment strategies will help make the program more culturally sensitive, especially to the needs of 21st Century Scholars’ students.

Just as Kinzie et al. (2008) discuss culturally sensitive methods for recruitment, Museus’ (2014) theoretical perspective also pushes educators to create campus environments that assist the unique needs of underrepresented students. According to Museus’ (2014) critique of Tinto’s integration theory, “the ways that institutions structure campus environments and college educators approach their work can and do, in fact, play a role in shaping the failure or success of their undergraduates” (p. 197). This is especially pertinent to traditionally underrepresented students because they are less likely to possess the support and capital needed for progressive educational outcomes (Museus, 2014). The SIP serves as a means of fostering success for traditionally underrepresented students by integrating a humanized environment into participants’ internship experiences, offering participants holistic support, and promoting proactive philosophies in their approach to serving 21st Century Scholars (Museus, 2014).

Participants shared the importance of having mentors and success coaches mention internship opportunities to them. This is consistent with the need for institutional agents who are committed to developing meaningful relationships with students in order to create culturally engaging environments (Museus, 2014). Museus (2014) also characterized “caring, commitment, and relationships” as essential to the success of undergraduate students (p. 213). The demonstration of care was a positive result of students’ interactions with mentors and success coaches. A prominent theme amongst participants was the idea of those institutional agents knowing which internships are relevant to them. Participants cited relationships, particularly relationships with mentors and success coaches, as being influential in their decision to participate in internships. The SIP is currently strategically leveraging relationships at IUPUI by encouraging the 21st Century Scholars office to promote the opportunity to their students, which can help make use of previously established relationships to assist with SIP recruitment.

Attainment and persistence increase for underserved students when faculty and staff make proactive attempts at bringing support and information to them (Museus, 2014). Regarding communication of internship opportunities, there was an overwhelmingly positive attitude towards hearing about internships through “word of mouth.” When mentors bring up experiences
that are relevant to students, it prevents students from having to “always… go to somebody else or look online [them]self,” which, according to Bobby, had a negative impact on his experience. Participants also mentioned multiple communication strategies, such as several emails, were helpful in their consideration of pursuing internships opportunities. Based on Museus’s model, faculty and staff should provide that support and information for students by using multiple forms of outreach and tailoring their communication to students who qualify for the SIP.

When students feel like someone from the university community “think[s] of [them] first,” this increases their chances of educational success. In conjunction with proactive philosophies, availability of holistic support posits that when students have access to one or more institutional agents that connect them with broader support networks, they are more likely to succeed (Museus, 2014). Mentors and success coaches are crucial components of that support network and contribute to increasing their capital. The SIP’s collaboration with the 21st Century Scholars program also contributes to holistic support by ensuring that students have multiple contacts with whom to discuss internship interest.

Toutkoushian et al.’s (2015) article highlights the host of obstacles that face 21st Century Scholars students before and when they enter college; these obstacles are the ones that the SIP attempts to tackle in order to provide holistic support to underrepresented students. One of the main obstacles Toutkoushian et al. (2015) discuss are financial constraints, including potential loan debt, that prevents students from entering or continuing in college. Many of the participants talked about the importance of money to them and how finances are a significant factor in their decision to participate in internships. The SIP guarantees students $15 per hour for the 10-15 hours they work per week, but most participants did not express knowledge of this fact (M. Rust, personal communication, November 7, 2018). Participants also indicated that they understood that some internships pay well and some do not, so one area where the SIP may need to improve their communication to students is in their discussion of the financial benefits of participating in the program. This will be discussed in the future recommendations below.

Schaller (2010) discusses how sophomore students are often not provided resources to succeed in academics and extracurriculars because student affairs educators assume that they have gained that knowledge as first-year students and are now fully adjusted to college. Schaller (2010) also indicates that sophomore students need more opportunities for development during this crucial time in their college careers. The participants’ responses indicated that they perceive internships as not being meant for them or as something for which they are not yet ready. In combination with Schaller’s (2010) ideas about sophomore student development, these results could lead to their lack of application and participation in the SIP. These developmental opportunities are being provided, but if students are not given the resources to understand their relevance and availability to them as sophomores, they will not be motivated to apply.

Finally, Gore and Hunter (2010) focus on the importance of career development during a student’s sophomore year of college. They assert that sophomores need to have various extracurricular experiences to further their major and career development during this critical time. Participants in this study indicated that transferable skills and professional
development were extremely important to them when deciding whether or not to apply for an internship. They cared about being able to gain experience both inside and outside of their current major field in order to explore many areas for potential career development. Participants’ interests in internships both inside and outside the field of their chosen major indicate that they expect internships to provide a complex level of career development. This aligns with Gore and Hunter’s (2010) idea that internships, co-ops, and other extracurricular involvement can help students socialize into specific disciplines while gaining first-hand experience.

**Future Recommendations**

Based on these findings, the researchers offer several recommendations for the SIP administrative team to build upon its work and enhance its recruitment strategies to better connect with sophomore 21st Century Scholars. This research emphasizes the importance that students place on their relationships with professionals on campus. Many students alluded to relationships with faculty, staff, and student mentors as transformative in their internship experience. The researchers recommend that the SIP administrators continue to leverage personal relationships with their student-facing colleagues so they can help recruit students. By informing students individually of the SIP, professional staff can help students feel connected and supported while they are going through the application process and, ultimately, participating in the SIP.

Another communication recommendation comes from students’ assertions that multiple communications were helpful to catch their attention about an opportunity. While recruiting students for this study, the research team utilized a web-based tool at IUPUI called SSC Campus, which allows for personalized text messages to be sent to each student that fit certain criteria. This is not a tool the SIP team currently uses for recruitment, but should be considered because of how easy the system makes it for students to respond and because the majority of students have quick access to their smartphones. This recommendation stemmed from the successful response rate using the SSC texting feature when recruiting students for this study. Many students initially responded to the text messages about more information on participating in the study; therefore, the researchers anticipate that using the texting feature could contribute to increased interest and access to the SIP.

In regards to the barriers students face, the research team recommends that the SIP, along with internship providers, be more explicit in addressing students’ misconceptions about internships. This can include being intentional about stating expectations of an internship and how the SIP supports each student through the process in recruitment materials. In addition to addressing the misconceptions of internships, the research team recommends highlighting the hourly wage of $15 per hour in their messaging to directly address student concerns regarding pay. Additionally, participants mentioned having busy academic schedules and struggling with reliable transportation to a position off-campus. The researchers recommend placing the travel time to each internship site from IUPUI in the recruitment materials, as well as which sites are located within walking distance, to give applicants an idea of what they should expect in terms of travel.

Finally, one thing that should remain in the internship recruitment materials is the emphasis on professional development. This study illuminates the importance students
place on transferable skills and professional development received from participating in an internship. The SIP provides resume critiques, interviewing workshops, and continuous support throughout the experience, and continuing to inform students of these opportunities may make them more likely to participate in the experience. Additionally, emphasizing the variety of employers seeking various types of majors would help motivate students who want to develop their interest in different areas through experiential learning. Since the study focuses on recruitment methods for the SIP, further research should examine how this recommended targeted messaging addresses perceived barriers, and whether this leads to more sophomore 21st Century Scholar student engagement with the SIP.

**Limitations**

The criterion sampling employed resulted in a sample size that may not be proportional to all 21st Century Scholars students at IUPUI in terms of gender, ethnicity, and undergraduate degree being pursued. The small sample size (n = 6) accounted for about 1% of the sophomore 21st Century Scholar population (n = 580) and may not be representative of all student experiences. Since the SIP was in its first year at the time of the study, and the study was conducted over a limited time period, the researchers were not able to investigate longitudinal effects. Students’ perception of internships could change over time and the breadth and depth of the study could change if the study were more longitudinal.

While the researchers explicitly stated in their recruitment messaging that this study was separate from the SIP’s recruitment of interns for the Spring semester, some participants misinterpreted the purpose of the interview. As a result, some students believed this interview would result in an actual interview for an internship and curtailed answers to sound more positive about internships rather than giving their objective points of view. Most of the participants were very familiar with internships and may have been more willing to reach out to us for an interview. Therefore, students who are not familiar with internships may not have felt qualified to participate in an interview, even though the recruitment communications specifically stated they did not need to have prior internship experience.

**Conclusion**

The interviews with participants helped answer the research questions and provided insight into future changes that could be made to the SIP to improve student engagement with their program. This research primarily focused on identifying factors that were influencing sophomore 21st Century Scholars students’ decisions to apply to and participate in internship programs. The student participants provided perspective into some main factors that influence their decision to participate in internships while in college, including communication, relationships, barriers, and attractive factors to internships. The responses ranged from hearing about programs from mentors to ensuring one’s financial stability while participating in an internship, and all of the responses revealed what affected a student’s decision to apply or not apply to the SIP. The responses helped the researchers offer recommendations as to how the SIP should move forward in their successful recruitment of sophomore 21st Century Scholars at IUPUI.

As a result of this research and the research team’s recommendations, the SIP experienced a 258% increase in applications from sophomore 21st Century Scholars from
the fall 2018 semester to the spring 2019 semester, further emphasizing the need for high-impact internship experiences for this student population. It is particularly important for high-impact practices to provide experiences that serve the intersecting identities and varying personal and social circumstances students face. Likewise, more research is needed that addresses how a single high-impact practice can mediate several student issues. The SIP is a unique program that focuses on the success of sophomore 21st Century Scholars that is influencing and empowering IUPUI students to develop skills and secure financial assistance, all while realizing their academic and personal objectives.

Andrea D. Jarquin is a native of Miami, Florida. She received her Bachelor’s degree in Communication and Sociology from Florida Gulf Coast University in 2017. While completing her Master’s degree at IU, Andrea served as a Student Success Advisor and as the Coordinator for the STAR Program (Reinstated) at IUPUI.

Jorge L. Lopez (Hammond, IN) helped design and launch the Sophomore Internship Program as its Coordinator at IUPUI. He also held an internship with Indiana LSAMP and a practicum at Ivy Tech Community College. Outside of school and work, Jorge enjoys spending quality time with his growing family and being active outdoors.

Alexandria Miskus is a native of Dyer, Indiana and graduated from Indiana University Bloomington in 2017 with a degree in journalism. During her time in the IU HESA program, Alex worked at the Academic & Career Development Center at IUPUI as an Student Success Advisor.

Anna C. Priore is originally from Cleveland, Ohio, and graduated from Bowling Green State University with a BA in English in 2017. During her time at IU, Anna worked as a Student Success Advisor in University College at IUPUI.

Sophie C. Stewart is originally from Northern Ireland, but grew up in Indianapolis, IN. She is a 2016 graduate of Xavier University with degrees in Psychology and Spanish. While in HESA, Sophie held her assistantship at Butler University with the Office of Residence Life as an Assistant Community Director.

References

21st Century Scholars. (n.d.) Retrieved from https://scholars.in.gov/


IUPUI. (2018b). *First Destination Survey* [Data file]. Retrieved from https://tableau.bi.iu.edu/t/prd/views/FirstDestination2016/CareerOutcomesGroup?iframeSizedToWindow=true&%3Aembed=y&%3AshowAppBanner=false&%3Adisplay_count=no&%3AshowVizHome=no#1#1


**Appendix A**

**COMMUNICATION WITH PARTICIPANTS**

*Initial Contact:*
SUBJECT: SOPHOMORES! Cookies and Internships
Have you thought about your future career?
Because of your status as a sophomore 21st Century Scholar, we would love to hear about your pre-professional experience. The purpose of this study is to examine your experience with internships (i.e. Sophomore Internship Program) at IUPUI. All are welcome to participate, regardless of previous internship experience. These will be 30-minute long interviews and all your responses will be kept confidential. Your responses will create an instant impact on this campus!
If you are interested in participating, please respond to Andrea Jarquin at ajarquin@iu.edu for further details.

Cookies will be provided for all interviewees.

Warmly,
Andrea Jarquin, Jorge Lopez, Alex Miskus, Anna Priore, and Sophie Stewart

If you no longer wish to receive communication regarding this opportunity, please respond to this email.

*Reminder Message:*
Hello!
As a friendly reminder, you’ve been identified to participate in a 30-minute interview because of your status as a sophomore 21st Century Scholar. We would love to hear about your pre-professional experience. The purpose of this study is to examine your experience with internships (i.e. Sophomore Internship Program) at IUPUI. All are welcome to participate, regardless of previous internship experience. Your responses will create an instant impact on this campus!
If you are interested in participating, please respond to this email for further details.

Cookies will be provided for all interviewees.

Warmly,
Andrea Jarquin, Jorge Lopez, Alex Miskus, Anna Priore, and Sophie Stewart

If you no longer wish to receive communication regarding this opportunity, please respond to this email.

*Text Message:*
Hey 21st Century Scholar! Researchers at IUPUI want to chat with you about internships, even if you’ve never had one. Your response matters! Text back for info!

*Campus Advertisements:*
Appendix B

Interview Questions
Communication

1. Have you heard of the Sophomore Internship Program at IUPUI? If you have, how did you hear about it?
2. How do you typically hear about programs and events that interest you at IUPUI?
3. As a student, how do you prefer to hear about new opportunities at IUPUI?
Work Experience
4. Have you worked before in college?
5. How do you think that’s affected your career development?

Internship Familiarity
6. In your own words, define what a college internship is and what it means to you.
7. Have you had an internship before and, if so, can you describe what it was like?
8. Do you consider internships to be important for your major and career path?
9. Do you view working on or off campus differently than an internship?

Influential Factors
10. What factors would influence your decision to participate in an internship?
11. What program resources would attract you to participate in the Sophomore Internship Program?
12. Are there any barriers preventing you from participating in an internship as a sophomore?
13. Is there anything else you’d care to share regarding internships?

Appendix C

INDIANA UNIVERSITY STUDY INFORMATION SHEET FOR
Sophomore 21st Century Scholars Student Opinions on Internships
You are invited to participate in a research study of identifying factors that contribute to students’ decision to participate in the Sophomore Internship Program for 21st Century Scholar student at Indiana University – Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI). You were selected as a possible subject because you are currently enrolled in IUPUI, have between 30 and 59 credit hours completed, and participate in the 21st Century Scholar program. We ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

The study is being conducted by Dr. Gary Pike, Andrea Jarquin, Jorge Lopez, Alexandria Miskus, Anna Priore, and Sophie Stewart with Indiana University’s Higher Education and Student Affairs program.

STUDY PURPOSE
The purpose of this study is to identify factors that contribute to students’ decision to participate in the Sophomore Internship Program for 21st Century Scholar student at IUPUI.

PROCEDURES FOR THE STUDY:
If you agree to be in the study, you will do the following things:

Participate in one 30 interview with two researchers listed above. Interviews will be recorded via audio and transcription. All interviews will be conducted in a private library room at the University Library at IUPUI. You may be randomly selected to have the option of reviewing a transcript of your interview to ensure accuracy. If you are randomly selected, you are not required to complete this task.
RISKS AND BENEFITS

The risks of participating in this research are minimal. The primary risk is discomfort in answering interview questions.

There is also a risk of loss of confidentiality.

There is no direct benefit to participation but we hope that the possible benefit of participating in this research is contributing to enhanced recruitment strategies by the Sophomore Internship Program.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Efforts will be made to keep your personal information confidential. We cannot guarantee absolute confidentiality. Your personal information may be disclosed if required by law. Your identity will be held in confidence in reports in which the study may be published and databases in which results may be stored. Only Andrea Jarquin, Jorge Lopez, Alexandria Miskus, Anna Priore, and Sophie Stewart will have access to tape recordings of interviews. These recordings will be used for data analysis purposes and will be destroyed by November 30th.

Organizations that may inspect and/or copy your research records for quality assurance and data analysis include groups such as the study investigator and their research associates, the Indiana University Institutional Review Board or its designees, and (as allowed by law) state or federal agencies, specifically the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP), etc., who may need to access your research records.

PAYMENT

You will not receive payment for taking part in this study.

CONTACTS FOR QUESTIONS OR PROBLEMS

For questions about the study, contact the researcher Dr. Gary Pike at (812) 856-8391.

For questions about your rights as a research participant or to discuss problems, complaints or concerns about a research study, or to obtain information, or offer input, contact the IU Human Subjects Office at (317) 278-3458 or (800) 696-2949.

VOLUNTARY NATURE OF STUDY

Taking part in this study is voluntary. You may choose not to answer any question. You may choose not to take part or may leave the study at any time. Leaving the study will not result in any penalty or loss of benefits to which you are entitled. Your decision whether or not to participate in this study will not affect
your current or future relations with the 21st Century Scholars program, IUPUI, or the Sophomore Internship Program.

This research is intended for individuals 18 years of age or older. If you are under age 18, do not participate in this study.

Appendix D

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Pseudonym</th>
<th>Area of Study</th>
<th>Career Intention</th>
<th>Affiliation with the SIP</th>
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<td>Tina</td>
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<td>Dermatology</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kristen</td>
<td>Marketing &amp; Management</td>
<td>Brand Management</td>
<td>Applied</td>
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<tr>
<td>Selena</td>
<td>Medical Humanities</td>
<td>Healthcare Administration</td>
<td>Currently in the SIP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jessica</td>
<td>Interior Design</td>
<td>Hotel Design</td>
<td>Currently in the SIP</td>
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