Internships or Study Abroad: Influences of Career Decision Making

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Introduction
High Impact Practices

High Impact Practices incorporate several distinctive qualities including:
- Significant application and time
- Enable learning away from a classroom
- Faculty and student collaborations
- Incorporate interactions with various individuals
- Provide fundamental feedback

The National Survey of Student Engagement (2007)
High Impact Activates

• NSSE founding director categorized 10 activates that include:
  • First year seminars and experiences
  • Common intellectual courses
  • Learning communities
  • Writing-intensive courses
  • Collaborative assignments and projects
  • Undergraduate research
  • Diversity/global learning
  • Service learning
  • Internships
  • Capstone courses and projects.

• Suggested that undergraduate students should have the opportunity to participate in at least two different high-impact activities while in college (Kuh 2008).
Purpose of the Study

• The purpose of this study was to examine the differences in students' career decision-making abilities based on their completion of an internship and study abroad experiences.

• Sought to determine if incorporating internships and study abroad can impact students’ career decision-making abilities.

• Assessing the students’ perspectives can help administration create a more unified approach in promoting high impact learning in undergraduate studies.
Taxonomy of Career Decision-making Abilities

Gati, Krausz, and Osipow (1996) Taxonomy of Career Decision-making Abilities
Methodology
Career Decision-Making Difficulties Questionnaire

• The 34 questions within the CDDQ are designed to measure the various constructs students may face when making a career decision.

• The questions are distinguished between three major categories of difficulties which are further separated into 10 specific difficulty categories.

• The items are rated on a 9-point scale of the degree to which the difficulty represented by each item describes the respondent (1 = “does not describe me” and 9 = “describes me well”).
Participants

- Participants consisted of students at a Texas Tech University’s College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources.
- 55 participants completed a duplication of the Career Decision Making Difficulties Questionnaire (Gati, Krausz, & Osipow, 1996).
- Participants were placed into discrete groups by their involvement, or lack of involvement, in study abroad and internships.
Data Collection & Analysis

- Online questionnaire using Qualtrics were distributed to students in a core course for CASNR students.
- A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was utilized for this study.
Results
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• Students who participated in study abroad (p = 0.03) and those students who participated in study abroad and an internship (p = 0.03) reported experiencing a significantly less “lack of information” than those students who did neither an internship or study abroad.

• Students who have participated in an internship experienced less “lack of readiness” than those students who did not participate in an internship or study abroad (p = 0.01).
Conclusions & Recommendations
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• Students who have completed an internship had a significant difference between those who participated in neither an internship nor study abroad program in the lack of readiness category.
  • Students who did not participate in neither an internship nor study abroad program consistently had higher career-decision-making difficulty scores.

• Academic advisors and faculty should continue to promote study abroad and internship programs to undergraduate student.
Conclusions & Recommendations

• Individuals who studied abroad were less likely to have difficulties within the lack of information major category.
  • Study abroad contributes to the growth and development in the following areas amongst students: growth in maturity and individuality, better self-awareness, increased tolerance for differences in people and ideas and growth in interpersonal skills (Cash, 1993).

• Academic advisors should promote students to participate in study abroad experiences.
Conclusions & Recommendations

• Those who completed an internship had a lower indecision score than those who did not participate in a study abroad or internship.
  • The largest difference within lack of readiness is general indecision.

• Promoting internships to students who score highly within the lack of readiness category could help alleviate some of difficulties that obstruct the ability to make a career decision.