

Facilitating Internships at a Distance: A Comparison of Student Responses

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Abstract

Internships have become an important learning experience to the majority of criminal justice programs. Internships can provide valuable information for a criminal justice department. Information can be gathered about the individual performance of your students by an outside professional when your students are close to graduation. This can be especially helpful for the department program assessment. With the increase in online courses, proper supervision by a full-time faculty member can be accomplished without face-to-face or telephone contact. This paper presents an assessment of the system created at Park University and used for facilitation of criminal justice internships at its multiple campuses. Documents and processes actually used will be provided. Additionally, feedback from student interns will be displayed to help evaluate the internship process.

Keywords

Capstone, Internships, Criminal Justice, Distance Education, University Students Employment, Vocational Training

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1. Introduction

Internships are an important form of student work experience in a number of criminal justice programs across the nation. An internship is a formal course undertaken in an academic program under the direct guidance of a field or agency supervisor and a faculty supervisor. During the course of the internship, the student completes a number of academic and agency assignments that introduce the student to the operations of the workplace. Additionally, the student generally has a number of academic requirements that can be accomplished in an effort to integrate the theory of the classroom and the practice of the internship.

Criminal Justice internships were formally introduced in 1968 by the Law enforcement Assistance Administration (LEAA) with the provision of stipends for full-time students to serve in agencies for eight weeks or more (Gordon & McBride, 2008). Though this program was phased out in 1980, the internship components and requirements remain in

most programs. In fact, the majority of criminal justice programs throughout the United States have some type of formal internship offering varying from three to fifteen credit hours at one or more agencies (Stichman & Farkas, 2005). The inclusion of internships as a component of an undergraduate education has been endorsed by the Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences (2005).

The current research is an assessment of the current internship program and internship requirements at a medium-size Midwestern university. In a national survey with 99 institutions responding, it was found that most internship programs (73%) enrolled 20 or fewer students in an average academic semester, required the student be a major (82.6%), have earned a minimum GPA (75.3%) as an eligibility criterion, allowed only juniors or seniors to enrol (81.2%); e.g. earned a minimum of 60 hours of credit, and had a formal application process for the internship (64.3%) (Hiller, et al, 2014). This is somewhat common and normal when compared with a study performed by Stichman & Farkas

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(2005) who found that the majority of internships were an average of 20 hours per week, a total of 150 hours with an agency; and the student earned three semester hours of credit. For some programs, more internship credit hours were allowed. For example, they may vary from six up to twelve hours. Those, for example, that offered six hours of internship, subsequently required at least double the hours of participation, from 240 to 300 hours per semester. Still other programs were found to offer two and four credit-hour courses. Other institutions offered anywhere from one to six credit hours with one credit hour for every 50 hours in the field.

2. Literature Review

Previous research on internships includes, students' attitudes toward their internships (Ross and Elechi 2002), and the advantages and disadvantages to using them (Stone and McLaren 1999). Sgroi and Ryniker (2002) focused on internship preparation as a formal academic course to assist students in experiencing a successful internship, professionally and academically. Seon-Young, Olszewski-Kubilius, and Weimholt (2007) found a strong association between students who participated in applied learning and the level of awareness that the students had of local community issues and in society in general. There is also great consensus among criminal justice educators that experiential learning should be included in the learning process. Bates (2003), as well as other researchers (Bayes, et al, 2005; Stinchcomb, 2004; Parilla & Smilh-Cunnieii, 1997) found internships to be unique and not-replaceable by classroom learning experience. Internships are the most widely used form of experiential learning in criminal justice programs and have been endorsed by the Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences (2005).

In his multiple definitions, Cavanaugh (2004) clarified various types of general- and program-specific internships that varied widely by the types of work-based, work-study, and experiential educational learning programs. All of these serve to transition students from school to work or college. Birzer and Palmiotto (2002) stressed the importance of internships that allow for experiences as practitioners in the criminal justice system. This allows for direct experience in the highly human and interactive system involving social problems, human behaviour, and cultural diversity not found in the classroom experience.

Internships provide a non-classroom experience which is a beneficial training experience to the criminal justice student. The internship training allow for a focus on specific job skills. This allows for the student to fully experience 'the job' and to "develop a general spirit of inquiry," and to

"cultivate/enhance a mental attitude of probing exploration" (Eskridge, 2003). Academic internships are three-way partnerships among an institution of higher education, the internship site, and the student. Westerberg and Wickersham (2011) duly noted that the internship provides an extremely important role in the liberal arts degree program that provides hands-on learning opportunities. Although, the vast majority of internships are unpaid monetarily, they allow students to collaborate closely with faculty, and strengthen ties between the college and the community.

Internships can provide valuable added information to a criminal justice department curriculum. Information can be gathered about the individual performance of your students by an outside professional, when your students are close to graduation. This can be especially helpful for department program assessment. Internships allow for the integration of theory and practice (McBride, 2016). The formal educational goals for most criminal justice programs center on gaining information on criminal justice theory and practice (ACJA, 2005). The internship has been found to generally meet the educational goals of knowledge acquisition, knowledge application, skills development, personal development, and professional development (McBride, 2016; Gordon & McBride, 2008).

With the increase in online courses, proper supervision by a full-time faculty member can be accomplished without face-to-face or telephone contact. This paper will address the system used at Park University and its many campus centers. Additionally, feedback from both students and internship work supervisors will be addressed to help evaluate the approach to internships

3. The Present Study

Because of the relatively limited amount of research in this area, the study began with an assessment of the requirements of the internship program and students from the institution of focus were surveyed. Once enrolled in the internship, the student is required to complete 135 hours of work for three hours of credit and 270 hours for six hours of credit. Students were required to keep a weekly journal that documented their internship and participate in a weekly online discussion board with their internship classmates participating in a variety of internships. Additionally, student interns are required to write a specific research paper related to their internship. Finally, and most importantly, intern supervisors submit a rating and validation of the intern's performance.

The current study was driven both from the requirement to assess the current program for the upcoming Higher Learning Commission assessment. Further, it was the intent of the researcher to compare the requirements and findings with

past research on internships and current criminal justice program internships. This included a survey of students completing the internship and a follow-up survey of the same students to determine internship effects, to measure the achievements of the goals and objectives of these internships, and the strengths and weaknesses encountered of the internship program.

The university criminal justice program offers bachelor degrees in four specific tracks: law enforcement, corrections, courts, and security. Additionally, the criminal justice department offers a certificate in homeland security. An important capstone course of the program is the internship that provides students an opportunity to work in a supervised position in a desired and/or anticipated occupation in the corrections/courts, juvenile justice, human services/social services, law/legal, loss-prevention/ security, or policing/law enforcement. A number of military students are currently working in these areas and able to earn credit while working in their current position and participating in class-related assignments. This is also applicable for a number of students working in the various position mentioned.

Park University is somewhat unique in that it serves students from the main campus in Parkville, Missouri with 43 campus centers located in 21 states. The university is a liberal arts university. Internships within liberal arts departments should emphasize pedagogy that allows students to apply what they have learned in the classroom to their lives in the “real world” (Hiller, et al, 2014). Criminal justice courses are offered at 18 campus centers. Additionally, there are over 50,000 online annual enrollments. There are over 600 criminal justice majors attending courses in a face-to-face, blended, and online format. The centralization of the management and facilitation of the internship program at the main campus allows students to coordinate their internship agency and location anywhere in the United States (and there are some located outside the U.S.).

The individual interns are supervised at their location by their agency supervisor; and, the course facilitator can interact personally with the student-intern, as a group in the online discussion board, and through a series of journal submissions, and a final paper. The intern supervisor manages the intern at the work setting and submits a detailed evaluation at the end of the internship. This method has resulted in a savings of management manpower, consistency in facilitation, and an extended ability to allow students to participate in a valuable internship.

Sample

All student respondents were in their junior or senior year of study and at least 21 years of age. Park University criminal justice student are required to take CJ440 - Internship as part

of the bachelor’s degree requirement. Those unable to do so are granted a waiver and take CJ441 – Senior Writing Project. The enrollments for the last four academic years are depicted in Table 1. The internship was centralized in the school year AY2014 – 15. This has resulted in an increase in the percentage of internships versus those taking the writing course (CJ441). The percentage ratio increased from 60.5 percent in AYs 2014 through 2016. This is compared to 52.3 percent in the previous two academic years AY2012 through AY2014.

Table 1. Enrollments in CJ440 and CJ441 by Academic Year.

AY / Course	AY2012 – 2013	AY2013 – 2014	AY2014 – 2015	AY2015 – 2016	Total
CJ440	115	128	136	130	509
CJ441	107	114	90	84	395
Total	222	242	226	214	904

Methodology

As part of a larger study to assess the benefits of the Criminal Justice Internship Program, an inquiry utilizing a student survey was distributed to students to allow appraisals of their internship experiences was undertaken. Questionnaires were mailed to criminal justice students that had completed an internship. Each had completed a minimum of 135 clock hours of participation at criminal justice agencies in the academic terms from fall, 2012 until summer 2016. Two hundred and sixty surveys were e-mailed to respondents using Survey Share an online survey platform. Eighty-four surveys were completed and used in the final analysis for a return rate of 31.6 percent. The Likert-type scaled survey sought to measure perceived benefits of the internship experience in the intern students.

Through descriptive statistics and analysis, the data supported the participation in the internship resulted in a perception by the majority of students (70%) that they had an increased knowledge about the criminal justice system. This was unique from the knowledge attained strictly in the classroom. Conversely, 82 percent stated that they received preparation and training during their internship. Of those responding, only five percent were working –in or completed a paid internship. Only 21 percent of respondents reported that their internship placement was in the type of field in which they currently worked.

Student appraisals were generally high and positive in all areas. 36 males and 48 females completed the survey. The students were asked to rate their internship participation on a one to five scale (1=low to 5 – high)in the major categories of personal impact, interpersonal (social) impact, academic (learning) impact, employer support, employment (job specific) impact, and civic impact. Each of the specific areas is discussed below.

4. Findings

Students' ratings were consistently high when considering statements that addressed the personal impact benefits of the

internship program. Personal impact assessments are those related to personal likes and dislikes, strengths, weaknesses, and needs for satisfaction.

Table 2. Personal Impact Ratings of Internship by Degree of Impact.

Personal Impact	1- Not at all	2 - Slightly	3 - Moderately	4 - Quite a bit	5 - A great deal	n	\bar{X}	σ_x
I have a sense of satisfaction in doing something worthwhile	0 (0.00%)	3 (3.57%)	8 (9.52%)	20 (23.81%)	53 (63.10%)	84	4.46	0.81
I believe in my ability to make a difference.	0 (0.00%)	4 (4.76%)	5 (5.95%)	24 (28.57%)	51 (60.71%)	84	4.45	0.81
I am open to new experiences.	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	5 (5.95%)	19 (22.62%)	60 (71.43%)	84	4.65	0.59
I have gained the capacity to be more productive.	3 (3.57%)	3 (3.57%)	9 (10.71%)	26 (30.95%)	43 (51.19%)	84	4.23	1.02
I can recognize my personal strengths.	1 (1.19%)	0 (0.00%)	9 (10.71%)	29 (34.52%)	45 (53.57%)	84	4.39	0.78
I can recognize my personal weaknesses.	1 (1.19%)	0 (0.00%)	11 (13.10%)	29 (34.52%)	43 (51.19%)	84	4.35	0.8

As shown in Table 2, student agreement was highest (84 percent) when responding to whether the *internship opened them to new experiences* (Mean = 4.65, SD = 0.59). Intern students believed quite a bit or a great deal (Mean = 4.46, SD = 0.81) that their internship *provided them with a sense of satisfaction in doing something worthwhile*. Similarly, the intern experience resulted in a belief in the intern's *ability to make a difference* (Mean 4.46, SD = 0.81). Interns agreed or strongly agreed that they were able to recognize their personal strengths (88.1 %, Mean = 4.39, SD = .78) and their personal weakness (85.7%, M = 4.39, SD = 0.78). This allows for a point to interns to recognize important needs for future employment and assess the benefits as related to their

internship. This follows that the majority of students were working in a new field and out of the classroom. Finally, they learned from their internship a capacity to me more productive.

Interpersonal (Social) Impact

Students' ratings were consistently high when considering statements that addressed the interpersonal impact benefits of the internship program. As shown in Table 3, student agreement was highest (91.6 percent) with those that felt strongly that the internship had *contributed to their ability to work cooperatively with others* (Mean = 4.5 SD = 0.78).

Table 3. Interpersonal Impact Ratings of Internship by Degree of Impact.

Inter-Personal (Social) Impact	1 - No Not all	2 - Disagree	3 - Neutral	4 - Agree	5 Strongly Agree	n	\bar{X}	σ_x
I demonstrated concern for the welfare of others.	1 (1.20%)	1 (1.20%)	6 (7.23%)	18 (21.69%)	57 (68.67%)	83	4.5	0.78
I can be understanding and appreciative of people with diverse backgrounds.	2 (2.44%)	1 (1.22%)	6 (7.32%)	14 (17.07%)	59 (71.95%)	82	4.55	0.78
I have the ability to work cooperatively with others	2 (2.38%)	0 (0.00%)	5 (5.95%)	13 (15.48%)	64 (76.19%)	84	4.63	0.88
I have the ability to communicate effectively (listen and articulate ideas).	2 (2.41%)	0 (0.00%)	6 (7.23%)	12 (14.46%)	63 (75.90%)	83	4.56	0.80
I have increased my ability to be a leader.	3 (3.57%)	5 (5.95%)	10 (11.90%)	22 (26.19%)	44 (52.38%)	84	4.18	0.82
I feel more connected to my community.	3 (3.61%)	5 (6.02%)	13 (15.66%)	19 (22.89%)	43 (51.81%)	83	4.08	1.09

Ninety percent of intern student respondents believed the internship contributed to their *concern for the welfare of others* (90.4%; Mean = 4.5, SD = 0.78); and, to their *ability to communicate effectively (listen and articulate ideas)* (90.4%: Mean = 4.56, SD = 0.80). Eighty-nine percent felt their internship was effective in *working with people of diverse backgrounds* and 79 percent felt the internship had *contributed to their leadership skills* which indicate that few were placed in leadership roles as interns.

Learning and Academic Skills

Respondents were asked to respond to relate the benefits and

effects of their internship based on the internship being facilitated online. The online centralization of the internship has allowed for both a consistency in the facilitation process, but also increased the accessibility by students from many different locations nationwide. Another benefit has been an increase in internship annual enrollments. Table 4 reveals approximately 84.7 percent of respondents felt they had *acquired knowledge from the job duties performed*. Similarly, nearly 84 percent expressed strongly that the online format had increased their *desire to stay in college and complete their degree*; and, they realized an *ability to work and learn independently* (84.3%).

Table 4. Learning and Academic Skills Acquired by Degree of Impact.

	1 - No Not all	2 - Disagree	3 - Neutral	4 - Agree	5 Strongly Agree	n	\bar{X}	σ_x
I have acquired knowledge from the job duties I performed.	1 (1.18%)	6 (7.06%)	6 (7.06%)	18 (21.18%)	54 (63.53%)	85	4.39	0.98
I have broadened my critical thinking skills (reasoning, problem solving).	3 (3.53%)	4 (4.71%)	12 (14.12%)	20 (23.53%)	46 (54.12%)	85	4.2	1.08
My GPA improved.	15 (17.86%)	6 (7.14%)	18 (21.43%)	16 (19.05%)	29 (34.52%)	84	3.45	1.48
I desired to stay in college or complete a degree.	5 (5.95%)	6 (7.14%)	3 (3.57%)	16 (19.05%)	54 (64.29%)	84	4.29	1.2
I had the ability to work and learn independently.	2 (2.41%)	2 (2.41%)	9 (10.84%)	22 (26.51%)	48 (57.83%)	83	4.3	0.94
I felt my classroom learning was enriched.	7 (8.54%)	7 (8.54%)	8 (9.76%)	21 (25.61%)	39 (47.56%)	82	3.9	1.3
I had the ability to connect academic subject matter to the "real world".	2 (2.38%)	7 (8.33%)	8 (9.52%)	20 (23.81%)	47 (55.95%)	84	4.23	1.08

Knowledge acquisition is the type of goal that helps the student-intern to develop knowledge in the areas which they have either not taken courses or focused on topics about which they want to apply what they have learned or learn more. Establishment of goals related to specific topical areas

through a discussion with the faculty advisor or agency supervisor would assist in the development of a reading list of books, journal articles, and/or agency materials relevant to the internship. Any knowledge gained will add in the student becoming a self-directed learner.

Table 5. Learning and Communication Skills Perceived and Acquired by Degree of Impact.

	1 - No Not all	2 - Disagree	3 - Neutral	4 - Agree	5 Strongly Agree	n	\bar{X}	σ_x
I received sufficient support from my criminal justice instructor	1 (1.18%)	3 (3.53%)	6 (7.06%)	17 (20.00%)	58 (68.24%)	85	4.56	0.87
I was able to communicate often with my criminal justice instructor	1 (1.19%)	5 (5.95%)	4 (4.76%)	19 (22.62%)	55 (65.48%)	84	4.45	0.92
I found the weekly discussion boards very helpful	5 (5.95%)	8 (9.52%)	10 (11.90%)	17 (20.24%)	44 (52.38%)	84	4.04	1.26
I found the weekly journals to be very useful	4 (4.71%)	8 (9.41%)	10 (11.76%)	13 (15.29%)	50 (58.82%)	85	4.19	1.23
I was able to communicate, learn-from, and assist other students	4 (4.76%)	9 (10.71%)	11 (13.10%)	20 (23.81%)	40 (47.62%)	84	3.99	1.22
I felt there was a good cooperation and communication with my criminal justice instructor	1 (1.18%)	3 (3.53%)	8 (9.41%)	17 (20.00%)	56 (65.88%)	85	4.51	0.89
I felt that it would be useful to take the internship earlier in the criminal justice degree program	14 (16.67%)	13 (15.48%)	12 (14.29%)	9 (10.71%)	36 (42.86%)	84	3.48	1.56
I felt there was a need to take more than one internship	37 (44.05%)	7 (8.33%)	8 (9.52%)	10 (11.90%)	22 (26.19%)	84	2.68	1.72
I felt there should be more assistance provided by the university in arranging criminal justice internships	17 (20.73%)	7 (8.54%)	8 (9.76%)	17 (20.73%)	33 (40.24%)	82	3.51	1.58
I felt there was a good working relationship between my internship agency and Park University	11 (12.94%)	6 (7.06%)	12 (14.12%)	21 (24.7%)	35 (41.2%)	85	3.79	1.4

To this end, seven of ten respondents felt their internship enriched their classroom learning. Sadly, albeit not surprisingly, only about half of the respondents felt that their participation in an internship in this format positively affected their GPA (53.5%). The centralization of the internship program has streamlined the enrolment process and allowed for more students to interact with each other during the internship through online discussion boards. This has been much more convenient than the former method of face-to-face discussions with the faculty facilitator. Additionally, online weekly discussion boards allowed up to twenty interns at a time to interact, share their experiences, offer advice, and learn from other students currently serving internships. This type of interaction simply did not take place when internships were geographically coordinated and/or at separate campus centers. Basing internships at the separate campus centers additionally restricted many students who were not geographically located from participating. This particularly restricted military students. The online

coordination format has allowed for internships in every state, as well as a number of military service members stationed overseas.

Students were asked specific questions about their perceptions of the internships being facilitated from a central location, utilizing an online platform for weekly communication via the discussion boards and e-mails, weekly journal entries, and final paper submissions. The responses in Table 5 reveal that nearly 88 percent (88.2%) of respondents were in agreement that they *received sufficient support from their instructor*; and, they felt there was good *cooperation and communication with their instructor* (85.9%). Approximately three-fourths (71.4%) percent felt they *communicated and received support from their online classmates in the internship forum*. The requirement for internship participation is that students complete a minimum of 60 hours of their degree program prior to starting an internship. To that end, only 53.5 percent felt that it would be useful to *take the internship earlier in their degree program*.

Only 38.1 percent fully agreed that there is a need to *participate in more –than– one internship for college credit.*

Technical and Vocational Skills Perceived and Acquired

Table 6 displays student perceptions related to technical and vocational skills perceived and acquired through their internship. The type of learning that is fostered by internships is experiential. It is active learning that is based on doing, on “what works” and in which experience is central (Webb, Metha, & Jordan, 1992). It is learning in the community, in the real world and in actual work situations. Nearly eight in ten respondents (78.3%) felt their internship provided them an *opportunity to explore a specific career.* Likewise, there was strong agreement (78.6%) that the internship *broadened their future employment possibilities.* Similarly, respondents felt strongly that the internship *enhanced their vocational development (77.4%).*

Internship participation benefits have included increased motivation for community engagement (Lipton, 1998) and a

greater awareness of local community issues (Seon-Young, et al., 2007). Another, similar study found that when students volunteer during an applied learning experience, they combine student civic engagement after the leave college (Misa, Anderson, & Yamamura, 2005). Student perceptions related to civic engagement are displayed in Table 7. When asked about the perceived civic impact of their internship experience, students were less likely to strongly agree. Less than half or just over half agreed or strongly agreed that their internship *resulted in their dedication of more time to volunteer work (47.5%); or, stayed current with local political news (55.9%); or stayed current with national political news (57.8%).* They were most likely to *develop an awareness of community problems or social concerns (86.7%).* Also-, approximately 8 in 10 felt they have *gained the capacity to contribute to society (79.5%); or, developed a commitment to making a difference in their community (78.5%); or have the intention to work on behalf of social justice (67.8%).*

Table 6. Technical and Vocational Skills Perceived and Acquired by Degree of Impact.

	1 - No Not all	2 - Disagree	3 - Neutral	4 - Agree	5 Strongly Agree	n	\bar{X}	σ_x
I developed specialized technical skills for a specific job function(s).	7 (8.43%)	4 (4.82%)	12 (14.46%)	26 (31.33%)	34 (40.96%)	83	4.02	1.18
I feel my vocational development was enhanced.	6 (7.14%)	4 (4.76%)	9 (10.71%)	28 (33.33%)	37 (44.05%)	84	4.11	1.21
I broadened my future employment possibilities.	7 (8.33%)	2 (2.38%)	9 (10.71%)	23 (27.38%)	43 (51.19%)	84	4.12	1.17
I received an opportunity to explore a specific career.	5 (5.95%)	4 (4.76%)	10 (11.90%)	22 (26.19%)	43 (51.19%)	84	4.1	1.24
I developed realistic ideas about the work world.	7 (8.43%)	2 (2.41%)	11 (13.25%)	19 (22.89%)	44 (53.01%)	83	3.85	1.37
I narrowed my future possible career choices.	10 (12.20%)	4 (4.88%)	11 (13.41%)	20 (24.39%)	37 (45.12%)	82	4.95	1.27

Table 7. Civic Awareness by Degree of Impact.

	1 - No Not all	2 - Disagree	3 - Neutral	4 - Agree	5 Strongly Agree	n	\bar{X}	σ_x
I developed a belief in becoming a better citizen.	8 (9.52%)	3 (3.57%)	12 (14.29%)	23 (27.38%)	38 (45.24%)	84	3.95	1.27
I developed an awareness of community problems or social concerns.	2 (2.41%)	4 (4.82%)	5 (6.02%)	22 (26.51%)	50 (60.24%)	83	4.32	0.97
I developed a commitment to making a difference in my community.	4 (4.76%)	7 (8.33%)	7 (8.33%)	25 (29.76%)	41 (48.81%)	84	4.1	1.16
I have gained the capacity to contribute to society.	4 (4.82%)	7 (8.43%)	6 (7.23%)	27 (32.53%)	39 (46.99%)	83	4.08	1.15
I have the intention to work on behalf of social justice.	8 (9.52%)	10 (11.90%)	9 (10.71%)	17 (20.24%)	40 (47.62%)	84	3.85	1.38
I dedicate more time to volunteer work.	8 (9.52%)	14 (16.67%)	22 (26.19%)	12 (14.29%)	28 (33.33%)	84	3.56	1.36
I stay current with local political news.	7 (8.33%)	6 (7.14%)	24 (28.57%)	20 (23.81%)	27 (32.14%)	84	3.64	1.24
I stay current with national political news.	8 (9.64%)	8 (9.64%)	19 (22.89%)	21 (25.30%)	27 (32.53%)	83	3.61	1.3

Follow-Up Survey

The original respondents, as well as those students that had served in internships in AY2015 – 2016 were sent a follow-up survey in July and September of 2016. Thirty-six (36) students responded. All 35 validated that their internship was in the criminal justice field. Over half (53%) were in the law enforcement field. Eleven percent of the respondents were in the courts and 11 percent in the probation/parole field. Thirty-five (97%) of respondents reported that they were not paid for their internship. Of interest, 42 percent reported that they were currently not working in the criminal justice field; 20 percent were currently not employed. Twenty percent

were working in a criminal justice agency (of which five percent were working with the host agency of their internship). Eleven percent of the respondents were full-time in the military. Forty percent were working, but not in the criminal justice field. And, 20 percent of those responding reported that they were not employed. It was not specifically reported if those not working were still attending school.

Satisfaction with the internship is reflected in Table 8. Respondents were most satisfied with the internship supervision, e.g., *individual agency supervision (88.9%).* Next, they were most satisfied with *internship training (83.3%);* this is noteworthy as the majority of interns

reported in the initial survey that they had no formal training prior to their internship. These were followed quite consistently with satisfaction with *internship facilitation* (80.5%) and *internship coordination* (80.6%). These two areas are very important as it is crucial to coordinate successfully with all interns from a central location in the online classroom format. Of note, 61 percent of respondents felt that the *internship program needed improvements*. Satisfaction with the internship is reflected in Table 8.

Respondents were most satisfied with the internship supervision, e.g., individual agency supervision (88.9%). Next, they were most satisfied with internship training (83.3%). These were followed quite consistently with satisfaction with internship facilitation (80.5%) and internship coordination (80.6%). Only 61 percent of respondents felt that the internship program needed improvements.

Table 8. Follow-Up Satisfaction by Degree of Satisfaction.

	Highly Satisfied	Satisfied	Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Strongly Dissatisfied	Total
Satisfaction with Park internship placement	18 (50.00%)	8 (22.22%)	6 (16.67%)	1 (2.78%)	3 (8.33%)	36
Satisfaction with Park internship facilitation	20 (55.56%)	9 (25.00%)	5 (13.89%)	1 (2.78%)	1 (2.78%)	36
Satisfaction with Internship supervision	22 (61.11%)	10 (27.78%)	3 (8.33%)	0 (0.00%)	1 (2.78%)	36
Satisfaction with Internship coordination	20 (55.56%)	9 (25.00%)	6 (16.67%)	1 (2.78%)	0 (0.00%)	36
Satisfaction with Internship training	18 (50.00%)	12 (33.33%)	5 (13.89%)	1 (2.78%)	0 (0.00%)	36
Satisfaction with Internship Preparation for future employment	16 (44.44%)	11 (30.56%)	8 (22.22%)	0 (0.00%)	1 (2.78%)	36
Park Internship Program Needs Improvements	12 (33.33%)	10 (27.78%)	10 (27.78%)	1 (2.78%)	3 (8.33%)	36
Would recommend Park Internship to Others	16 (44.44%)	11 (30.56%)	7 (19.44%)	0 (0.00%)	2 (5.56%)	36

Satisfaction with the internship is reflected in Table 8. Respondents were most satisfied with the internship supervision, e.g., individual agency supervision (88.9%). Next, they were most satisfied with internship training (83.3%). These were followed quite consistently with satisfaction with internship facilitation (80.5%) and internship coordination (80.6%). Only 61 percent of respondents felt that the internship program needed improvements.

5. Conclusions

The current study represents the first evaluation of the Park University Department of Criminal Justice Internship Program since its conversion to a centralized management format. This study, based on data collected via self-administered surveys completed by Criminal Justice student interns, was designed to build on the existing body of literature on the benefits associated with Criminal Justice internships. The first goal was to establish key findings from previous studies related to the general experiences of student interns, particularly criminal justice internships. It was assumed, and subsequently verified, that students in our sample, like those who have been surveyed and reported by other researchers, tend to have a favourable evaluation of their internship experiences.

Specifically, the research attempted to determine how students assessed the significance of an internship relative to the overall undergraduate education experience and the prioritization that students placed on specific aspects of their internships. An objective was to assess the areas of internship

impact as self-rated by interns. Survey findings are somewhat related to the findings and student input from previous studies. The majority of student respondents rated their experiences positively and rated the individual components of their internship as an important component of their undergraduate education in CJ.

Students are more likely to emphasize the importance of benefits associated with professional development. It is clear that the respondents consider internships to be important, but they tend to place an importance on different aspects of the internship experience. Central to the responses was the facilitation from a central location. However, the diversity of the internship agencies, types, and locations, and limited sample size made it difficult to determine exactly when such goals are accomplished.

Thus, some goals could be achieved quickly and others could take years to complete. These potential explanations suggest that academic supervisors need to pay close attention to the goals students have going into their internships and must play an active role in goal development. From the agency supervisor's perspective, it is somewhat understandable that they may believe that the 135- and even 270- hour requirement is necessary for students to have the chance to see everything that the occupation has to offer and to gain an adequate amount of professional experience.

Although this research has addressed several questions, many remain. First, additional research is needed to determine a further extent of student intern responses in the various categories. With a sample of only eighty-five (85), a larger sample would provide more statistically testable and comparable results. Further research that evaluates how the

perspectives of faculty internship coordinators compare to those of students and agency supervisors is also needed. With the centralization of the internships at the institution, the number of faculty internship coordinators is now limited to five which should provide for a greater consistency. Because the internships are located in nearly every state and varied internships in the courts, corrections, and law enforcement, a large sampling of respondents will allow for more precise comparisons for evaluation and improvements. A more concerted effort of locating willing agencies for student internships was noted by some respondents as a needed improvement. Future research should also consider the possibility that departmental objectives and policies regarding internship programs influence perspectives of students, agency supervisors, and faculty internship coordinators alike. The research has confirmed assumptions of the need-for and benefits of student internships in the field of criminal justice.

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