


 **Carleton**


**Learning Good Employee Skills:
Maximizing Internship Program
Effectiveness**

InternBridge Career Services Online Conference, August 2016

Abby Trout, Career Center
Carol Trosset, Institutional Research and Assessment
Carleton College

Institutional Research and Assessment




 **Carleton**

Overview

- We'll discuss:
 - Carleton Career Center's internship process and focus on learning goals
 - Our research to figure out what Carleton students learn at their internships (built off Bennington College's study)
 - Our findings on what students interns learned about being a good employee, and how we're addressing it
 - Our next research steps

Institutional Research and Assessment

 **Carleton**

Career Center mission:

The Mission of the
Carleton College Career Center
To empower students and
recent graduates to integrate
and apply their liberal arts
education toward succeeding in
their career paths and living
**a Meaningful
Life**
after Carleton.

Institutional Research and Assessment

Carleton

Carleton Career Center learning goals:

- Self-assessment
- Career field awareness
- Transferable skills
- Market selves
- Experience
- Job search
- Graduate degrees
- Access to networks
- Effective networking

Institutional Research and Assessment

Carleton

Career Tracks



Institutional Research and Assessment

Carleton

Internships at Carleton

- 515 (35%) of upper-class Carleton students (rising sophomores, juniors, and seniors) did internships in Summer 2015.
- 67 of these internships were funded through the Career Center.
- Internships were located all over the world and in a variety of industries.

Institutional Research and Assessment

Carleton

What makes for a great internship?


Students who have had great internships often talk about the importance of:

- **A strong relationship with a supervisor:** A good internship allows the intern to work with a supervisor who will provide them with direction and support, and spend time mentoring them.
- **Learning:** During an internship, the intern will learn much about an organization through direct experience.
- **Goals:** The intern will commit to learning goals that they hope to fulfill during their internship.
- **Self-discovery:** Internships will help interns to learn more about themselves.

Institutional Research and Assessment

Carleton

At Carleton, students specify learning goals:



Institutional Research and Assessment

Carleton

But how do we know what student interns really learn?

- What are the actual learning outcomes?
- What are the most important/beneficial outcomes, that internships should foster?
- How can we assess (a) the degree to which students achieve these outcomes, and (b) the quality of their performance as interns?
- Can we identify how beneficial learning took place, so we can design experiences that maximize these effects for other students?

Institutional Research and Assessment

Carleton

What 2015 Carleton students want from internships:

- **Career exploration** (85) – learn the industry, consider a possible career, network, build resume
- **Extend academic learning** (44) – gain subject knowledge, apply coursework
- **Develop writing, oral communication, and foreign language skills** (19)
- **Develop research skills** (12)
- **Develop job-specific skills** (17)
- **Develop good employee skills** (15) – time management, teamwork, independence, efficiency
- **Develop life skills** (6) – manage a budget, live independently

Institutional Research and Assessment 10

Carleton

But what do their employers want?

- AACU study in 2013 asked employers whether they want employees to have particular qualities (things colleges already value, like writing and critical thinking skills). The employers say “yes.”
- At Bennington College (VT), every student does a 6-7 week internship every winter term. Employers are asked to write evaluations of the students. Open-ended questions asked about (a) students’ strengths, and (b) areas where they needed to improve.
- These documents made it possible to identify what skills and behaviors employers think about without being prompted.

Institutional Research and Assessment 11

Carleton

What employers actually comment on:

- “She was always on time and willing to step in and help with anything.”
- “She asked great questions and responded to feedback gracefully.”
- “He had good insights into the sales data he organized.”
- “He could be a bit more eager to learn and gain from every possible opportunity.”
- “She could pay more attention to her body language during meetings and while working. At times she seemed a bit distracted and disinterested.”
- “He tended to drift off task to check Facebook.”

Institutional Research and Assessment 12

Categories employers mentioned:

- Work ethic
- Engagement with work
- Quality of work
- Organization/efficiency
- Punctuality
- Professional conduct
- Takes direction
- Teamwork
- Interpersonal skills
- Independence/initiative
- Learns quickly
- Confidence
- Creativity
- Writing skills
- Critical thinking skills
- Other job skills

Note: Most of these are neither liberal arts skills nor job-specific skills. Instead, they are qualities of **any good employee** in any job sector.

Carleton employers want the same things:

- Work ethic
- Engagement with work
- Attention to detail
- Organization/efficiency
- Flexibility
- Punctuality
- Professional demeanor
- Takes direction
- Teamwork/leadership
- Interpersonal skills
- Learns quickly
- Independence/initiative
- Confidence
- Problem-solving skills
- Writing/editing
- Oral communication

Qualities of a good student?
(taken from Bennington Faculty narrative evaluations)

- Work ethic – “works hard,” “diligent,” “spends time texting during class”
- Engagement – “excellent work when focused but not consistently engaged”
- Quality – “does high quality work,” “should focus on producing high-quality work the first time around”
- Organization – “sometimes unprepared,” “talented but disorganized”
- Punctuality – “late to class several times,” “some absences”
- Takes direction – “responded to feedback,” “needs to learn to follow directions”
- Teamwork – “listens and contributes well in discussion,” “good team member”
- Initiative – “challenges himself,” “does the minimum to get by”
- Learns quickly – “learns from mistakes,” “learns quickly”
- Confidence – “should have more confidence,” “wish would speak up more”

Carleton

Goal overlap with different emphases

Employers	Students	Faculty
	Career exploration	
	Academic learning	Academic learning
(Communication skills)	Communication/research skills	Liberal arts skills
(Job-specific skills)	Job-specific skills	Field-specific skills
Employee skills	Employee skills	"Good student" skills
	Life skills	

Institutional Research and Assessment

Carleton

What did we do with our findings?


Institutional Research and Assessment 17

Carleton

Evaluating internship performance (Bennington College)

	Unacceptable	Needs Improvement	Good	Exceptional
Focused work ethic	Too laid-back, easily distracted, takes frequent breaks	Mostly works hard, but some tendency to lose focus and drift off task	Productive and conscientious	Works harder than others and is much more productive
Engagement with the work	Seems unmotivated, avoids or resists unwanted tasks	Engagement and motivation vary with the task	Engaged in the work, willing to help as needed	Seizes every opportunity to learn as much as possible
Quality of work	Makes errors, turns in work without proofreading	Quality variable, would benefit from greater consistency	Does good quality work, pays attention to detail	Work would stand out among that of experienced professionals
Organization and Efficiency	Inefficient, forgets about assignments, may not follow through to completion	Still learning how to manage time and priorities when working alone	Good time management, follows up on assigned tasks	Unusually efficient, intuitive sense of priorities


Institutional Research and Assessment

 Carleton

Benefits of the rubric:

- All employers are asked to comment on a consistent group of skills
- Students have a consistent definition of what the College means by workplace readiness
- Students can:
 - compare their self-rating using the same rubric to that of their employers
 - track their rubric ratings over four years
 - use employer evaluations as part of a job application packet
- Employers have asked us for copies of the rubric to use with their staff


Institutional Research and Assessment 19

 Carleton

Challenges for using rubrics with employers:

- Colleges need to compare the students in aggregate, and over time.
- But students all have different jobs and employers.
- The students start at different stages of development.
- The employers have different expectations.
- We cannot norm the employers to consistent standards.
- The evaluation process cannot be blind or unbiased.

Institutional Research and Assessment 20

 Carleton

Carleton focus groups on What is Learned


We know employee skills are important, but not students' main concern.

So we started asking Carleton students what they had learned about being an employee. We did informal interviews and two focus groups.

Effective prompts:

- What did you learn about being an employee?
- What did you learn that would still be useful if you had a totally unrelated job next summer?
- Tell me something that happened, that you would handle differently if it happened again in the future.
- How is having a boss different from having a professor?

Institutional Research and Assessment 21

 Carleton

What students learned about employer goals:

Work ethic

- He is a valued leader at Carleton, so he expected the same to be true at work. It didn't, so he was less invested, and he was disappointed in how this affected his work ethic.


Engagement with work

- Theater intern said he "didn't look at work he wanted to do as being employed," and so he hadn't really learned about being an employee.

Quality of work

- Intern set up a meeting for a group of visitors. She had incomplete information and only ordered half as many lunches as were needed. Next time, would make sure she knew more about the group setting before placing an order.

Institutional Research and Assessment 22

 Carleton

Organization/efficiency

- Learning how to prioritize – she didn't at first; took everything to the boss as she had taken everything to professors. Boss said he made her a group leader because he trusted her to be able to figure out what was important enough to bring to his attention. She was insecure about this at first but it gradually got easier.


Professional conduct

- Your boss is not your professor (where there is handholding, flexibility, every answer is right). You're expected to be independent, and to deliver; work within guidelines, meet deadlines.

Taking direction

- Sometimes your ideas don't fit with what the employer wants. You learn to be patient, and find ways to get the goals done.

Institutional Research and Assessment 23

 Carleton

Interpersonal skills

- Build relationships beyond simple work transactions. Taking an interest in them will help with work. It feels less productive at the time but is more productive in some ways.


Independence/initiative

- Social work intern learned to take charge and be responsible. Sometimes clients would show up but no one could see them; someone needed to tell them to go home and come back the next day. Learned that at some point, you have to do not-nice stuff.

Confidence

- Learned to figure out what they needed her to do, and the right way to do it. For this, she learned to assert herself and ask questions.
- Felt insecure during the early weeks but didn't want to ask too many questions. It was hard to tell what to ask about and what to figure out on her own.


Institutional Research and Assessment 24

 Carleton

Next Steps

- Currently working with all materials from Carleton-funded Summer 2016 interns – application essays, learning contracts, blog posts, final reflective essays.
- Summer blog prompts for funded interns were designed to address major issues raised by employers or by students.
- “Reflective metacognition” – Career Center will work on increased student awareness of these issues as things they are learning from having internships.

Institutional Research and Assessment 25

 Carleton

Questions?
