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The Internship Scorecard:

A new framework for
evaluating college internships
on the basis of purpose,
quality and equitable access



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Executive Summary

While internships are widely praised and promoted as a “door opener” to opportunity, the impact of these work-based learning programs on students is complicated by the variability in how they are designed, implemented and experienced. Consequently, instead of assuming that participation unequivocally results in positive academic and labor market outcomes, the field needs conceptual tools to distinguish internship programs from one another and to evaluate their efficacy, quality and commitment to equity. In this report we first review various frameworks that distinguish different types of work-based learning and internship programs, and then describe a new framework for distinguishing internships on the basis of purpose, quality and equity – The Internship Scorecard.

This new framework is based on theory and evidence from cultural anthropology, the learning sciences and work-based learning, and is designed for higher education professionals, funders, policymakers and employers so that they can – with more nuance and precision than is currently available – make distinctions between program types and begin to “score” programs at the individual-level or in the aggregate for entire institutions. An example of how the Internship Scorecard can be used in practice is provided, along with next steps for the analysis and improvement of college internship programs.

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Introduction

Internships are widely perceived around the world as an influential type of work-based learning (WBL) that provide benefits to students, educators, and employers alike (McHugh, 2017; Rose, 2013; Silva et al., 2018). The advocacy behind internships for college and university students is often predicated on the belief that these off-campus experiences provide students with valuable professional experience and networks, enable educators a venue for their students to translate academic knowledge to real-world situations, and provide employers with a pipeline of new talent - sometimes described as a “win-win-win” situation (Bailey, Hughes & Barr, 2000; National Association of Colleges & Employers, 2018a). In the U.S., interest in internships has risen dramatically since the early 2000s with their designation as a “high-impact” practice (Kuh, 2008), leading many state governments, colleges and universities, and workforce development boards to promote internship programs as a desirable solution to regional education-to-employment problems.

Yet programs that are called “internships” come in all shapes and sizes, varying along a variety of dimensions that include differences in program function, modality (e.g., online or in-person), disciplinary or professional affiliation, duration, location, activities, and supervision (Bayerlein & Jeske, 2018; Maertz, Stoeberl & Marks, 2013). As a result, while the term is often interpreted as referring to a single type of experience, in practice it actually encompasses an immense range of programs and student experiences. As a community college administrator once told us, the way internships are defined, designed, and implemented is truly an educational “free-for-all.”

This programmatic diversity can be seen as a strength, as students with different goals and situations can find a wide range of internship opportunities to fit their needs (O'Neill, 2010), but it is also a problem given the likelihood that different programs also have different levels of quality and confer different academic and professional outcomes to students. This state of affairs presents challenges to employers and educators who are designing and implementing internship programs, because it remains unclear what features of an internship (e.g., length, nature of tasks, type of mentorship) are essential for a high-quality experience. Furthermore, for those interested in evaluating the efficacy of an internship program (e.g., policymakers, funders, institutional leadership), such a task is extremely challenging, if not untenable, given the lack of uniformity or transparency regarding the nature of the “intervention” – the internship experience itself.

While the variability of internship programs is a strength given different student needs and goals, the range of possible formats poses considerable challenges for program design, implementation and evaluation.

In response, there have been several efforts to provide more clarity and consistency regarding the way that internship programs are defined and/or categorized. For example, the Department of Labor and the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) have offered definitions of internships in order to provide benchmarks for whether an internship should be paid and whether it constitutes a high-quality experiential education experience. Additionally, several typologies for WBL and internships exist, with distinctions between program types made on the basis of program function, nature of tasks, duration, modality, and program location.

In this report, we review different frameworks for distinguishing among different types of WBL and internships, and then offer a new framework of internships that builds upon prior work and new empirical and conceptual insights from the national College Internship Study underway at the UW-Madison Center for Research on College-Workforce Transitions (CCWT). In offering this new framework of internships, we also incorporate metrics for program quality and efficacy based on evidence from the research literature on internships.

Our goal in this work is to provide career services professionals, employers, philanthropic organizations, policymakers and college students with the conceptual tools necessary to distinguish different types of internship programs from one another on the basis of purpose, quality and equitable access. In addition, our framework accounts for the unique needs of students and nature of different workplaces, so that the assessment of a particular internship program accounts for these crucial considerations.

The report is organized into three sections. First, we review the literature on frameworks for WBL programs and the criteria analysts have used to distinguish programs from one another. Second, we review different ways to categorize internship programs, and the dimensions that analysts use to study and evaluate internships. Finally, we present a new framework for evaluating internships — The Internship Scorecard — and discuss its origins in theory and evidence from fields ranging from cultural anthropology to work-based learning, and how we anticipate it can be used for research, program evaluation, and policy development.

Given that few tools are currently available for the evaluation of internship program quality, and that many studies and institutions simply measure participation as a binary variable (yes/no), the Scorecard represents an important advance for scholars, practitioners and other stakeholders engaged in internship programming and efforts to support student success.

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Review of the literature: WBL Frameworks

First, to situate our work within the broader context of work-based learning (WBL) initiatives and to illustrate prior efforts at categorizing these programs, we review different frameworks for distinguishing different types WBL programs. Such frameworks and typologies are rather common, given the growing popularity of experiential learning around the world. But students, educators, employers and policymakers need to understand the differences between programs such as apprenticeships, coops, and internships.

Definitions of WBL

There are a variety of frameworks and typologies for WBL that tend to focus on broad categories of programs without delving into specific details and/or sub-categories within particular types (e.g., types of internships). In Table 1 we provide examples of common WBL typologies and the different forms of WBL covered in these frameworks.

Table 1. Examples of different ways to conceptualize types of work-based learning (WBL) programs

	Types of work-related experience	Types of Work-Based Learning	Models of Work Based Learning	Work-Based Learning Types	The Work-Based Learning Continuum
Types of programs	Internships Cooperative education School-based enterprises Job shadowing	Career-Related Student Competitions Internships School-Based Enterprises Social Enterprises for Learning Service Learning Simulated Workplace Technical Mentoring Work Experience Youth Apprenticeship	Youth Apprenticeship Clinical Training Cooperative Education School to Apprenticeship Programs School-based Enterprises Career Academies	Apprenticeship Cooperative Work Credit for Prior Learning Internships Job Shadowing Mentorship Practicum Service Learning Teacher Externship Volunteer Service Worksite Field Trips	Career Exposure (job shadowing, company tours) Career Engagement (Internships, Simulations) Career Experience (Apprenticeship, on-the-job training)

Sources: Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Improvement Act; <https://www.ilo.org/skills/areas/work-based-learning/lang--en/index.htm>; https://www.wested.org/online_pubs/workbasedlearning.pdf; <https://careerwise.minnstate.edu/education/training.html>; <https://center4apprenticeship.jff.org/work-based-learning/>.

Key criteria or dimensions used to distinguish different types of WBL experiences

Given the wide range of possible WBL programs in use around the world, researchers and policymakers have distinguished types of programs from one another on the basis of program purpose, temporality or duration, function and role in learning, relationship to academic learning, program modality and quality.

Structure and type of program. Perhaps the most common approach to distinguishing different types of WBL from one another is to focus on the type of program itself (e.g., internship, teacher externship, apprenticeship) (see Table 1). This structural approach is useful in identifying different types of programs within the broad category of WBL but is limited in its lack of attention to other distinguishing characteristics such as program purpose, developmental experiences, or quality indicators.

Purpose of programs and developmental sequence of experience. Another way to conceptualize different types of WBL is to focus on the temporal nature of career development, where programs may be more or less appropriate to a person depending on their level of experience, maturity and readiness for the world of work. This perspective has been advanced by the Center for Apprenticeship and Work-Based Learning (2018), where WBL is defined as, “activities and experiences when a student or worker goes to a workplace or works with an employer, and does meaningful job tasks that (a) develop his or her skills, knowledge, and readiness for work, and, (b) support entry or advancement in a particular career field.”

Given this emphasis on the developmental processes, the Center argues that, “WBL is at its most powerful when experiences advance along a sequential, purposeful continuum” (Kobes, Cahill & Hartung, 2018). The continuum offered by the Center has three distinct sequential phases: career exposure where participants enter a workplace to get introductory information about industry/occupations; career engagement where individuals gaining skills and knowledge of a field; and, career experience where participants gain specific skills and paid work experience in a field (see Figure 1).

An important feature of developmental frameworks is that certain types of WBL are linked to different phases, such as internships being linked to career engagement and not career exposure or experience. In addition, these phases are closely linked to (if not dependent upon) the readiness of individual students for different experiences. Some students may be prepared only for simple career exploration, while others have more experience and specific goals, such that these developmental phases should take students’ experiences, readiness and intentions into account.

A similar framework conceptualizes WBL as functioning along three phases (career exploration, work-based learning experiences, and career preparation) (Darche, Nayar & Bracco, 2009), and WBL itself being a continuum of “experiences for students and exhibit increasing levels of intensity over time” (p.5). This framework also contains quality indicators, such as degree of engagement with the workplace or assessment of student learning, adding another factor that can be used to distinguish one type of WBL from another.

Program quality. The final category that researchers use to distinguish different types of WBL from one another is quality. For example, the ACTE Quality Career and Technical Education framework includes criterion such as standards-aligned curriculum, sequencing and articulation, effective program staff, engaging instruction, and access and equity (Imperatore & Hyslop, 2017). Another quality-oriented framework offers indicators of WBL program quality that include engagement in the workplace (e.g., in-depth engagement and involvement with communities of practice), connection of workplace to the classroom, reflective practice by students back in the classroom, and assessment of student learning (Darche, Nayar & Bracco, 2009). Given that internships are one type of WBL outlined in this report, the quality of internships can thus be ascertained based on how well they include these four elements.

Figure 1. Work-based learning framework from the Center for Apprenticeship & Work-Based Learning
(source: Jobs for the Future)



Visit JFF's Center for Apprenticeship & Work-Based Learning for more information: jff.org/center.

Review of the literature: Internship Frameworks

Definitions of internships

While a panoply of definitions for internships exist, here we provide four illustrative examples. One is an influential and widely cited definition and the others reflect the different (yet overlapping) views of professionals and organizations in the field.

National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE)

In a widely cited “position statement,” NACE (2018) observed that criteria for a “legitimate” internship was essential given the considerable variation in the types of internships in the U.S. This statement was partly intended as a response to the Department of Labor relaxing its guidelines for what could be considered an unpaid internship, and made a specific point in distinguishing between a “legitimate learning experience benefitting the student” and an “operational work experience that just happens to be conducted by a student” (NACE, 2018). Thus, the dimension of the recipient of benefits (i.e., the student or the employer) is used as a critical criterion for distinguishing internships from one another. The definition offered by NACE is as follows:

An internship is a form of experiential learning that integrates knowledge and theory learned in the classroom with practical application and skills development in a professional setting. Internships give students the opportunity to gain valuable applied experience and make connections in professional fields they are considering for career paths; and give employers the opportunity to guide and evaluate talent. (NACE, 2018)

Other criterion that NACE (2018) provide to distinguish between a legitimate and an illegitimate internship experience include the degree to which the experience is an extension of classroom learning, whether skills learned via the internship are transferable to other settings, if the experience has clearly defined learning goals, if supervision is provided by a professional with expertise, and if feedback and resources are provided to the student intern. It is notable that several of these criteria can also be applied to rigorous classroom or academic learning, indicating that NACE (2018) clearly views the internship first and foremost as a learning experience for the student. Additionally, the use of the term “legitimate” is rather strong in its implication that many internships can be considered illegitimate. In conducting our review and analysis, we agree with this focus on student learning and the prospect that some internships may in fact not be legitimate learning experiences, which is a sentiment rarely voiced in debates about HIPs, WBL and experiential learning – notwithstanding the skepticism of NACE (2018).

Council for Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS)

Another organization involved in establishing criterion for ensuring quality in postsecondary programs is the Council for Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS). As described by O'Neill (2010, p.6), the CAS standards for internships emphasize that they should be “framed and developed as a learning activity,” which is a similar stance taken by NACE. The CAS standards for internships, which are rather extensive, include the following statement about the ideal mission of individual programs:

The primary mission of Internship Programs (IP) is to engage students in planned, educationally-related work and learning experiences that integrate knowledge and theory with practical application and skill development in a professional setting (CAS, 2018).

Other features of the CAS standards include a focus on six domains that include: (1) knowledge acquisition, integration, construction and application, (2) cognitive complexity, (3) intrapersonal development, (4)

interpersonal competence, (5) humanitarian and civic engagement, and (6) practical competence (CAS, 2018). With respect to the structure of an internship program, the CAS standards (2018) are similar to NACE in emphasizing the articulation of learning goals, coordination between educators and employers, the presence of trained mentors at the job-site, the provision of feedback to students, and attention to equity and access.

In their focus on issues of diversity and equity, CAS (2018) argues that internship programs must create environments that are welcoming to all and non-discriminatory, include explicit attention to ensuring that programs respect the unique identities of diverse groups, and ensure access to interns with disabilities.

Department of Labor: Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA)

An influential statement on internships is one provided by the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) in its interpretation of internships under the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA). It was spurred in part by lawsuits alleging that unpaid interns should have been paid for performing work for employers in the entertainment industry (Burke & Carton, 2013; Curiale, 2010). In 2018 the DOL revised the standards that employers should use when determining if students are entitled to wages under the FLSA, providing a “primary beneficiary test” to determine whether an intern is considered an employee.

This 7-part test includes criterion such as the extent to which the internship is tied to the students’ formal education program, whether the interns work complements instead of displaces a paid employee, and the joint expectations of interns and employees regarding compensation (DOL, 2018). Under the new rules, which some consider to be a “win” for employers, firms have more flexibility in offering unpaid internships in contrast to prior rules which hinged upon the determination of whether the company derived financial benefits from the students’ work (Hamel, 2018; Townes, 2018). While not specifically a framework for distinguishing different types of internships from one another, the FLSA is an important and influential set of rules that affect the world of internships.

Third-party organizations example: Wested

A variety of organizations that conduct research, evaluation and policy analysis on education related issues have also offered definitions for research. Wested is one of the largest such organizations in the U.S., and here we share their definition of internships.

Internships are sustained work-based learning experiences designed to enrich and expand classroom learning, showing students how their learning is applied in the world outside of school, and offering access to tools, equipment, facilities and expertise that generally are not available at school. Learning objectives are specified and student performance is assessed (Darche, Nayar & Bracco, 2009)

Offered as part of a broader analysis of WBL in California, this definition also states that internships can be unpaid or paid, where the latter includes attention to articulating expectations for employers’ notions of productive work while also ensuring that student learning goals are met. This definition consequently places more attention on compensation and how its presence or absence may alter the way that both employers and students should approach the arrangement.

Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs) example: University of Iowa

Many IHEs offer their own definitions for internships so that their students have a clear understanding of the experience. This is important for many institutions since credit is often provided for an internship, which

requires certain criteria to be met that include elements including the relationship of the internship to the students' coursework and so on. For illustrative purposes, this is a definition offered by the University of Iowa:

An internship is a structured experience that:

- *Relates to a student's major and/or career goal*
- *Enhances a student's academic, career, and personal development*
- *Is supervised by a professional in the field*
- *Can be one academic term (summer, spring, fall) or multiple academic terms in length*
- *Is paid or unpaid, part-time or full-time*
- *Is mutually agreed upon by the student, supervisor and/or faculty member*
- *Meets registration requirements for 0 credit hour or academic internship course*
- *Can also be called a Practicum or Co-Op*

(University of Iowa, Pomerantz Career Center, 2020)

This definition is notable for its focus on the dimension of student learning and development, and also for comparing internships to practica and co-ops, which the earlier frameworks for WBL consider as distinct and incomparable types of experiences. However, definitions such as this - that emphasize student learning but do not carefully distinguish internships from other forms of WBL - are not uncommon among IHEs, and underscore the need for frameworks that address both issues simultaneously.

Internship scholars

Finally, within the research literature there are many different definitions of internships, and here we provide two examples. In a 2013 paper, Maertz and colleagues observed that internships within the research literature and among practitioners varied considerably, leading them to recommend that when thinking about internships, stakeholders should ask, "What kind of internship are we talking about?" To address the ambiguity in the field regarding terminology and definitions of internships, the authors aimed to clarify, "the boundary of what defines an internship" by offering 11 dimensions of internships mentioned in the literature (Maertz, Stoeberl & Marks, 2013, p.125). The dimensions include: compensation (paid vs unpaid), timing and intensity (full-time work, part-time summer work, part-time work concurrent with coursework), credit (academic credit vs no credit), and type of mentorship (faculty sponsor/mentor vs no faculty sponsor/mentor). This example highlights the large number of dimensions that can be used to distinguish internship programs from one another.

In another study focused on remote or online internships, Bayerlein and Jeske (2018) consider the predominant internship formats to fall into three categories: traditional, e-internships, and simulated internships. This approach is useful since many discussions about online internships treat them as a singular type of experience, but it is evident that as much variation exists in the realm of online internships as they do for traditional in-person programs. For Bayerlein and Jeske (2018), a simulated internship involves immersive, often virtual experiences that are embedded within a postsecondary course or program; an e-internship is a type of placement that takes place without the student being physically present at the job-site but instead is mediated through digital technologies; and traditional internships are real-world work placements that involve extensive on-site experiences.

While the internship literature contains many more definitions of the program, these examples highlight the complexity of the task, the variety of dimensions that can be used to differentiate programs, and the need to address more recent developments in the field such as the growth in online or remote experiences.

Overview of internship definitions and key distinguishing elements

Next, we consider some of the distinguishing elements or dimensions that different researchers and organizations use when defining internships. In highlighting these elements we begin to lay the groundwork for our own analysis of different types of internships, as each of these dimensions that can distinguish one internship from another (e.g., paid vs unpaid) could potentially be used to create a typology and/or scoring system for evaluating internship programs.

Table 2. Examples of internship frameworks and elements used to distinguish them from one another

	Primary beneficiary (employer or student)	Time of year	Education-oriented mission	Paid internships	Engagement in workplace
Distinguishing Elements and/or Dimensions	Educational quality: (a) learning goals (b) feedback (c) resources (d) mentoring (e) link to academics (f) network development	Industry Paid vs unpaid Credit vs no-credit On location vs virtual Externships	Program domains (skills) Organization and leadership Human resources Ethics Law, policy and governance Diversity, equity and access Institutional and external relations Resources	Internships for credit Nonprofit internships Summer internships Service learning Cooperative education Externships	Connection of workplace to classroom Reflection in classroom Assessment of learning

Sources: <https://www.nacweb.org/about-us/advocacy/position-statements/position-statement-us-internships/>
<https://www.internships.com/career-advice/basics/what-is-an-internship>
<https://www.jobmonkey.com/internships/types-of-internships/>
<https://www.thebalancecareers.com/types-of-internships-1986738>
https://www.wested.org/online_pubs/workbasedlearning.pdf; <https://www.cas.edu/>

Criteria or dimensions used to categorize different types of internships

The different frameworks for distinguishing internships from one another shown in Table 2 underscore a key fact – that internships are not a homogenous, monolithic and singular type of experience. This variability is not solely due to the idiosyncratic nature of a given students' experience, because as O'Neill (2010, p.6, emphasis in original) observes, "internships can easily vary even before a student takes a step to become involved in one."

Because this variability exists along a number of dimensions – including duration, location, quality, goals and equitable access to name but a few - deriving a typology of programs is an extremely difficult task. Regardless of the challenges associated with identifying specific "types" of internships, it is useful to consider the various dimensions upon which they can be distinguished, which may then provide some guidance on which of these

dimensions are more important than others. In the remainder of this section we briefly consider some of the features of internships that can be used to distinguish programs from one another.

Purpose of programs and developmental sequence of experience. Different students will have different reasons for pursuing an internship, from curiosity in certain professions as part of an exploratory phase to a more focused, intentional desire to become immersed in a specific profession (Center for Apprenticeship and Work-Based Learning, 2018; Darche, Nayar & Bracco, 2009; O'Neill, 2010). In addition, different academic programs will have varied reasons for requiring or encouraging their students to pursue internships, from accreditation or certification requirements to more general interest in facilitating their post-graduate employment prospects. The key idea here being the fact that internships are pursued according to varied goals, purposes and criteria, and these may alter other dimensions of internship programs.

Duration. One of the simpler dimensions to monitor and analyze that distinguishes internship programs from one another is that of duration. From some programs considered “micro-internships” which last as short as four hours to traditional summer internships that last 12-16 weeks, the length of an internship can be easily determined. However, it is more challenging (and perhaps not tenable or defensible) to assign quality indicators to programs based solely on duration, where shorter internships are viewed as less effective than longer ones.

Modality and/or location. An internship can also be categorized based on where it is experienced – either on-site at the organization’s facility or via remote or online modalities. With the COVID-19 pandemic resulting in the massive increase in online internships, this form of remote work may become a regular feature of the internship landscape. As with duration, however, without further research it is not recommended that the quality or efficacy of an internship be assigned to an internship solely based on where it is experienced by students. In addition, it is important to recognize that just as there is no single type of in-person or traditional internship, variation also exists within online or remote internship experiences (Bayerlein & Jeske, 2018).

Educational quality. With several of the internship frameworks described above, the overall educational quality of a program is a key consideration when scrutinizing internship programs. From standards outlined by CAS (2018) to criteria for a “legitimate” internship offered by NACE (2018), a focus on evaluating programs based on their quality is one of the primary goals of the field. However, as with any educational experience, determining quality is no small matter, and is complicated by factors including the varied goals of students and educators, the sheer variety of indicators that could potentially be used to determine “quality” (e.g., mentoring, nature of tasks, link to coursework), and so on.

A considerable amount of work exists, however, on what makes an internship a high-quality learning experience. NACE (2018) emphasizes the importance of the internship being an extension of classroom learning, the presence of clearly defined learning goals and feedback, and especially the need for supervisors with experience in mentoring novices. In addition, the CAS standards (2018) call for a focus on diverse sets of competencies (e.g., intra- and inter-personal), civic engagement, cognitively engaging and complex tasks, and close coordination between academic advisors and employers. While each of these criterion themselves is difficult to measure and cumulatively represent a challenging measurement predicament, they nevertheless highlight critical aspects of an internship program that should be considered when estimating the educational quality of the experience for students.

Another programmatic feature that is widely believed to enhance the educational quality of an internship is the presence of a credit-bearing “internship course” that students may take alongside their field experience.

These courses have the added benefit of providing a structured venue for reflection and obtaining advice and feedback from an academic advisor. Thus, another potential distinguishing factor between and among internships is whether or not students are taking an academic course as a complement to their field experience.

Compensation. While debates regarding the legal and ethical considerations for offering unpaid internships, there is growing consensus – especially as the global economy enters another recession – that student interns should not work for free. Besides problems with uncompensated labor and the potential for student interns to displace full-time workers (e.g., Chan, Pun & Selden, 2015), unpaid internships are simply out of reach for many college students who cannot afford to work for free. Thus, while not an indicator of quality or efficacy on its own, compensation should be part of the equation when analyzing internship programs given the role it plays in equity and the ethical treatment of labor.

Equitable access. As one of the key indicators for the CAS standards, equity and diversity should be an aspect of determining program quality as well as a factor that can distinguish internships from one another. Given the documented problems of access to internships that students who are working, low-income, or first-generation experience – either due to their lack of professional connections or funds to compensate for unpaid work – it should go without saying that the field of higher education should strive to make these potentially transformative experiences available to all students, regardless of social class, connections or socio-economic status (Hora, Wolfgram & Chen, 2020).

In addition, with evidence that students of color experience hiring discrimination in the internship labor market (Nunley, Pugh, Romero & Seals, 2015) and discrimination persists in the broader labor market on the basis of race, gender identity, disability status, and other features of job applicants (e.g., Quillian et al., 2017), it is evident that the field should also aim to make internships available for all students.

Meaningful and appropriate tasks and activities. Finally, we draw attention to a rarely discussed criterion that can be used to distinguish internships from one another – the nature of the tasks and activities that students are asked to perform on a daily basis. While the stereotype of interns spending a summer pouring coffee, making photo-copies and engaging in similarly menial tasks that have little educational or professional value hopefully is on the wane, it is still not unusual for interns to be disappointed in the quality and rigor of their daily work. Given the central feature of the nature of work itself to any form of work-based learning, attention to the nature of interns' tasks and activities is critical for any effort to categorize internship types and to ascertain the quality of these experiences.

The nature of tasks and activities has long been studied in fields ranging from cultural anthropology (Lave, 1977) to cognitive science (e.g., Chi & Wylie, 2014; Cobb & Bowers, 1999;), with one of the more influential theories of activity developed by the Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky (1980), which was then subsequently developed into a sociocultural theory of learning (Chaiklin & Lave, 1993). The concept of an activity type focuses on the social and material setting of practical activity, prioritizing the significance of the identities and social relationships between the participants involved in a task, the physical arrangements of space, tools, and bodies of the participants, and the cultural beliefs and goals that inform the setting.

In 1991 Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger focused on a process they called legitimate peripheral participation, which involves novices and experts co-participating in complex work activities. In this situation, at first the novice participates at the margins of the activity—helping the expert with tasks appropriate to their beginner skill level—but gradually, while learning through co-participation, novices acquire the skills and confidence to

take over more central tasks. Over time and with appropriate coaching, the novice's identity itself gradually transitions to that of an expert practitioner. This perspective is particularly salient for internships, which can be experiences that involve the socialization of interns into the cultural norms and workplace practices of a profession (Gowlland, 2012; Guile & Young, 1998; Jackson, 2017).

With these concepts in mind – that of the sociocultural nature of learning and legitimate peripheral participation – we analyzed data from our national College Internship Study to conceptualize internship activities as a continuum from the most peripheral and least to the most autonomous.

Job shadowing. This activity format involves the intern accompanying the supervisor and supporting their work; the intern does what the supervisor does and does tasks that support the work of the supervisor. We see shadowing in legal internships, for example, when the intern accompanies the attorney to court, and may take notes or log evidence during depositions.

Peripheral division of labor. This activity format limits an intern's participation to low-risk tasks which are often marginal to the professional activity and identity; but still central to the value produced by the company or organization. For example, interns at a kitchen design company may manage the intake of clients over the phone and at the store front, which is an important yet relatively low-skill and low-risk task.

Legitimate peripheral participation. This activity format involves the transition from the interns' work from the periphery of core tasks at an organization to a more direct involvement in the work. An example is an architecture student who spent the first year of his internship at a sprinkler design firm cleaning and adding additional specifications and details to senior architects' drafts—but the legal responsibility to make sure that the drafts meet code and that the product meets the clients' needs is solely the expert's. Gradually, the intern took increased responsibility for larger portions of ongoing projects, and he may even take responsibility for some small projects independently, but the senior architects review and approve his work, as is legally required.

Autonomous work. In this activity format, the intern works on their own project independently, with support from a supervisor only as needed. For example, students at one of our study sites were given engineering problems (e.g., improving a hair-dryer's energy efficiency) that they worked on independently for most of the summer, with supervisors available for advice when necessary. At the end of the summer, the interns gave a final presentation to their host site, such that the internship was an almost completely autonomous and self-directed experience.

In activity formats such as legitimate peripheral participation, parallel simulated participation, and projects with panoptical review, students progressively engage in increasingly central work tasks, but the legal, ethical, financial responsibilities of the work remain vested in the expert. Internships organized with the peripheral division of labor format receive relevant work experience, often in close proximity to expert practitioners, but they do not engage in increasingly central activities to the organization, as often occurs in legitimate peripheral participation. And autonomous projects, while often beneficial to students, are expensive for organizations to provide, and with less supervision and more independence, the risks of unsatisfactory performance are greater. We have noticed, surprisingly, that students who have done autonomous projects for their internships often feel that while they learned a great deal about their particular project, they also felt they lacked a more general understanding about the profession and the organization.

A new framework for evaluating internship programs: The Internship Scorecard

Our primary goals in this report were to problematize the notion of an “internship” from a homogenous type of program to one far more varied in terms of quality, purpose and activity, and to provide the field of higher education with a typology that can be used to distinguish one internship from another. The latter goal is especially important for postsecondary educators and administrators, as well as policymakers or philanthropic organizations involved in supporting internship programs, who wish to know more about the quality and/or efficacy of particular internship programs.

Ideally, we had hoped to provide a user-friendly typology that faculty, employers or other stakeholders could easily and quickly use to determine which “type,” but given that there are at least seven dimensions that can distinguish programs from one another it is clear that an easy-to-use typology where all internships could be quickly and easily placed into mutually exclusive categories is not possible.

However, given that some sort of framework allowing stakeholders to differentiate internship types still remains, we developed a framework for evaluating internship programs across three categories - **purpose, quality and equitable access**. To determine program (or cluster of programs) quality on these points, several indicators can be used to assign programs with a set of “scores” based on either a pre-internship analysis of program materials or a post-internship analysis of program materials and student feedback.

Before discussing the indicators and scoring system for this new framework, we first articulate a few key principles governing our approach that should be considered.

Key principles of the Internship Scorecard

- Our approach varies from those of NACE (2018) and CAS (2018) in not articulating a set of criteria that all internships must meet to be considered “legitimate” or of high-quality. Instead, our position is that depending on the goals of each student and/or their academic program, and their level of maturity and preparedness, the specific format and activities of an internship may vary.
- Consequently, no determinations of program quality can be made solely on a program’s modality (e.g., online or in-person), duration or activities, as each may or may not align with students’ unique goals for their experience. Thus, our approach takes the degree of alignment between student goals and program modality, duration and type of activity as a key indicator for program quality.
- Our approach also departs from previous attempts at asserting quality measures by adding a category for “equitable access,” which we argue is a critical issue that the field needs to consider while also actively working towards making internships available to all college students regardless of their financial status, social contacts, and personal identity and attributes (e.g., race, ethnicity, age, etc).
- Finally, The Internship Scorecard should not replace evaluations that an intern and/or their supervisor do of one another’s performance during the course of an internship. Instead, the Scorecard is intended as a measure of the internship program itself and not of an individuals’ performance.

With these principles in mind, we now present our new framework for evaluating internship programs on the basis of purpose, quality and equitable access, starting with the indicators that comprise the framework.

Key indicators for categorizing internships by purpose, quality and equitable access

The following indicators can be measured before the internship and/or after the internship is completed. Depending on the nature of the indicator, data sources can include the internship posting, internship program materials, and student surveys conducted after their internship is completed. Most frequently, we envision an internship coordinator, academic advisor or career services professionals using the Scorecard and determining the scores, though for several of the indicators an external survey is required to obtain the data.

1. Program purpose and format. The first set of indicators pertains to the structure of the internship program itself and students' goals for their experience. These indicators are not assigned a numeric score, but instead are used to describe the nature of the experience and the alignment between students' goals and program format.

Goals and purpose (pre- and post-internship). The goals that a student has for their internship has a strong relationship to the type of experience that is most appropriate and beneficial for them. Here, we identify two types of goals – that of career exploration or gaining experience – that differentiate student goals for an internship (Center for Apprenticeship and Work-Based Learning, 2018; Darche, Nayar & Bracco, 2009).

Duration (pre- and post-internship). This indicator simply pertains to the number of weeks an internship lasts, which can range from less than 1 week to more than 12 weeks, which reflect the typical period of time for a “micro-internship” and traditional summer internship respectively.

Modality (pre-and post-internship). This indicator refers to the location where an intern spends their time during the internship, either on-site or online. It is important to note that this category does not include what some call virtual or simulated internships, which are a form of work-integrated learning that occur within the context of an academic course (Bayerlein & Jeske, 2018; Arastoopour et al., 2018). For the purposes of this report, we consider any computer-mediated arrangement where the intern does not physically appear at the organizations' location to be an online experience. While other terms are often used to describe online internships such as virtual or remote internships, here we use the term online to capture these computer-mediated experiences.

2. Features of internship program quality. The second set of indicators addresses the critical issue of program quality.

Plan for learning (pre- and post-internship). This indicator refers to the presence (1) or absence (0) of a written document that outlines the students' plan for learning, which should be prepared by either the academic advisor or the employer (or both parties). This plan should at least state the learning goals for the student, but also ideally would include information about communication, feedback, assessment, and resources for student development (e.g., networking opportunities).

Alignment between internship tasks and activity (post-internship). This indicator captures the alignment between students' own goals for their internship (i.e., career exploration or gaining experience) and the actual work that the student performed during their internship (e.g., job shadowing, legitimate peripheral participation). These

activity types on their own should not be used as a quality indicator but are intended to be combined with students' goals in order to capture the fact that an activity type is not universally good or bad – their utility and value depend on the students' goals and intentions. For the ways that the alignment between goals and activities are scored, see Table 3.

Table 3. Scoring for relationship between intern purpose and tasks

	Career exploration	Gaining experience
Job shadowing	High alignment (1)	Low alignment (0)
Peripheral division of labor	High alignment (1)	High alignment (1)
Legitimate peripheral participation	High alignment (1)	High alignment (1)
Autonomous work	Low alignment (0)	High alignment (1)

Note: A (1) or (0) indicates the points allotted for combinations of program purposes and activities.

Supervisor mentoring and support (post-internship). One of the most important features of a successful internship is attentive, appropriate and high-quality supervision and mentoring. Based on student responses post-internship, this indicator relies on a survey scale for supervisor mentoring (e.g. did supervisor provide advice, give feedback, etc) (on a 1-5 Likert scale) and supervisor support (e.g., did supervisor care about your experience) (on a 1-5 Likert scale).

Skill development (post-internship). The next indicator for internship quality addresses the critical issue of a category of skills often called “soft” or “non-cognitive” skills that include communication, teamwork, and problem-solving (on a 1-5 Likert scale). We reject terms such as “soft” to refer to these skills and instead just name individual competencies on their own. This indicator relies on post-internship reflections on the degree to which the internship included explicit opportunities for developing these skills. While existing instruments provide far more detailed and nuanced accounts of student skills exist (e.g., SkillSurvey Career Readiness, NACE career readiness competencies), this indicator is a necessarily coarse or blunt measure of this complex phenomena.

Network development (post-internship). This indicator for internship quality refers to the development of a students' professional network, which is one of the most important outcomes often attributed to internship programs. Based on students' own self-reports, this indicator can either be measured from a simple yes/no question about network growth via the internship, or name-generator items in surveys used by social network analysts (e.g., Benbow & Lee, 2019).

Student satisfaction. Measuring student satisfaction with their internships is a straightforward and common approach to assessing quality, even though the self-report measure is not an objective accounting of program quality.

Student developmental value (academic and career). The final indicator for program quality refers to the developmental value of an internship. The two types of developmental value included in the College Internship Study include academic value (i.e., if the internship enhanced students' academic experiences) and career value (i.e., if the internship enhanced their career goals).

3. Equitable access. The last set of indicators addresses the interrelated issues of equity and access. An extensive and growing literature exists on what constitutes equity and access in higher education (e.g., Center for Urban Education, 2020), and a wide range of indicators could be used to measure equity in the world of internships. These include issues such as compensation, the availability of positions across the disciplines, non-racist workplaces, and so on. Here, we necessarily focus on a limited number of indicators that capture the degree to which internships are attentive to matters of equitable access and anti-racist policies and practices.

Compensation (pre- and post-internship). This indicator relates to whether the internship is unpaid (0) or paid (1), which is a critical issue for low-income students who cannot afford to work for free, and thus are screened out from unpaid internship opportunities.

Access and transportation (pre- and post-internship). This indicator addresses the issue of physical access and transportation to the internship site. For positions located out-of-state or inaccessible to public transportation, students without extensive financial resources and/or personal transportation may not be able to pursue and take that internship. This indicator is measured by the reference to transportation subsidies or access (e.g., being on a subway line, bus route or free parking) (1) or not including any reference to or accommodation for transportation access (0).

Type of posting (pre- and post-internship). How information about an internship opening is shared can also be a way to restrict access, with those being shared among informal networks (0) being less accessible than those advertised on open forums (1) (e.g., job boards).

Explicit statement about non-discrimination (pre- and post-internship). This indicator pertains to the presence (1) or absence (0) of an explicit statement about non-discriminatory hiring practices and workplace environment in an internship posting or announcement.

Student perceptions about equity and discrimination (post-internship). This indicator is based on a students' post-internship perceptions about whether their internship host had (1) created a welcoming and non-discriminatory workplace environment for them or had failed to do so (0).

Obstacles preventing students from participation. This indicator refers to the percentage of students at a given institution or disciplinary cluster that indicate they had wanted to pursue an internship but could not for a variety of reasons (e.g., workload, courseload, insufficient pay). In our College Internship Study the percentages of students who desired an internship but could not take one are very high including 77% (n=133), 67% (n=259), and 53% (151), which indicates that hundreds of students at these three colleges were prevented from taking an internship. That said, we recognize that a postsecondary institution cannot (and even should not) be expected to minimize or remove all obstacles keeping students from pursuing an internship, as students' own life situations and choices may impact their ability to pursue (or not) a particular opportunity.

Table 4. Description of indicators for determining internship purpose, quality and equitable access in The Internship Scorecard

	Measurement	Data Source	Time of Data Collection	Scoring	
			Pre-	Post-	
Total # of internships		Student survey/ campus records	X	X	Total #
Program purpose and format					
Purpose	Exploration or experience	Student survey/ interview	X	X	Exploration or experience
Modality	On-site or online	Program listing	X	X	On-site or online
Duration	<1 week to >12 weeks	Program listing/ student survey	X	X	Micro (< 40 hours), Short (40-320 hours), Immersive (320-480 hours), Intensive (480+ hours)
Program quality					
Plan for learning	Present (1) or absent (0)	Program listing or host/student assessment	X	X	0 (poor), 1 (good)
Internship tasks	Type of tasks	Student survey/ interview		X	N/A; report # by task type
Purpose/Task Alignment	Alignment w/ purpose	Student survey/ interview		X	0 (poor), 1 (good)
Supervision & mentoring					
Supervisor mentoring	1 (never) to 5 (extremely often)	Student survey/ interview		X	Average of two scales; 1 (poor), 2 (low), 3 (medium), 4 (good), 5 (excellent)
Supervisor support	1 (not at all) to 5 (a great deal)	Student survey/ interview		X	

	Measurement	Data Source	Time of Data Collection	Scoring	
			Pre-	Post-	
Skills development					
Communication	1 (never) to 5 (extremely often)	Student survey/ interview		X	Average of three scales: 1 (poor), 2 (low), 3 (medium), 4 (good), 5 (excellent)
Teamwork	1 (never) to 5 (extremely often)	Student survey/ interview		X	
Problem-solving	1 (never) to 5 (extremely often)	Student survey/ interview		X	
Network development	Yes (1) or no (0)	Student survey/ interview		X	0 (poor), 1 (good)
Student satisfaction	1 (poor) to 5 (high)	Student survey/ interview		X	Value of scale: 1 (poor) to (5 (high)
Student development					
Academic	1 (poor) to 5 (high)	Student survey/ interview		X	Average of two scales; 1 (poor), 2 (low), 3 (medium), 4 (good), 5 (high)
Career	1 (poor) to 5 (high)	Student survey/ interview		X	
Equitable access					
Compensation	Yes (1) or no (0)	Program listing/ student survey	X	X	If % of students w/unpaid internships below 25% (1)
Transportation access	Present (1) or not (0)	Program listing/ student survey	X	X	If % of students w/no transportation accommodations is below 25% (1)
Type of posting	Open posting (1) or informal (0)	Student survey/ interview	X	X	If % of positions w/ informal postings is below 25% (1)

	Measurement	Data Source	Time of Data Collection	Scoring	
			Pre-	Post-	
Explicit statements on discrimination	Present (1) or absent (0)	Student survey/ interview	X	X	If % of positions w/o statements is below 25% (1)
Students views of discrimination	Not present during internship (1) or present (0)	Student survey/ interview		X	If % of students w/discriminatory experiences is below 25% (1)
Percent of students at college who wanted an internship but could not pursue one	% of students unable to pursue internships	Student survey	X	X	If % of students unable to pursue an internship but reported an interest in pursuing one is below 25% (1)

How to use The Internship Scorecard

The Internship Scorecard can be used to evaluate an individual internship program or experience, or a larger number of internships across an entire institution or disciplinary cluster. Depending on the indicator, the framework can also be used before students take an internship – which necessarily omits most indicators for program quality – or after the completion of the program. Ultimately, we hope that this Scorecard can be used by colleges, universities and other stakeholders involved in internship programming as a flexible and customizable tool to meet local needs, interests and situations. Finally, the data used to provide information on these indicators are varied and may or may not be available for specific internships and/or institutions, and for several indicators (especially for program quality), a survey instrument such as the one used in our College Internship Study will be required.

We hope that this Scorecard can be used by colleges, universities and other stakeholders involved in internship programming as a flexible and customizable tool to meet local needs, interests and situations

The scoring for this framework is intended to provide users with a sense of the purpose and type of internships students are pursuing, their quality and whether or not they offer equitable access. In the not unlikely situation where data for certain categories in the Internship Scorecard are not available, then simply remove that category from the analysis and reporting. If the unavailable data are part of an entire scale or multi-item category (e.g., the equitable access category) then revise the scoring scale to reflect the number of available items. The scoring for the categories is outlined in the last column of Table 5, and interpretation of these scores are as follows:

Total number of internship programs

This category is intended to provide a snapshot of the breadth of internship programs across a department or campus. These data may be available from career services units, individual departments, or external research such as the College Internship Study.

Program purpose and format

The scores for this category are entirely descriptive and are not intended to generate an evaluative judgment on the quality or accessibility of a single or group of internship programs. It is important to note that different academic programs and professional associations have different criteria for the number of hours that satisfy internship requirements, and so our categories (i.e., micro, short, immersive, intensive) may or may not be appropriate for a given college and/or program. In cases where it is not appropriate, these categories should be customized. For individual programs the result can be text such as:

- Students' purpose is career exploration, online and micro- internship
- Students' purpose is gaining experience, on-site and immersive internship (10 weeks, 400 hours)

For groups of internship programs, a table can be generated that outlines the number of different combinations reported by students. It is important to note that there would be 12 different combinations of purpose, modality and duration, and that these categories are not designed to suggest any aspect of program quality. Instead, these are descriptive categories intended to capture the different structures and formats experienced by student interns.

Table 5. Example of how program purpose and format can be reported

Types of program purposes and formats	# of students reporting purpose and formats
Career exploration, on-site, micro	42
Career exploration, on-site, short	142
Gaining experience, online, micro	23
Gaining experience, online, immersive	4

Program quality

The next category pertains to internship program quality, and six distinct yet interrelated sub-categories are used to assess the quality of programs at the individual and/or institutional level. Because most of these items require post-experience reflections by students, it is likely that this category will only be included in analyses and reports of programs after they have been completed. Scoring for the four sub-categories is as follows:

Plan for learning: If a plan for learning exists – in a clear and formalized document – that outlines key elements such as learning goals, communication protocols, and so on, then a (1) can be applied for this sub-category. If a plan does not exist then that internship receives a (0). A score of (0) reflects a poor value for this category, while a (1) indicates a “good” plan for learning exists.

Internship tasks and purpose alignment: To score the alignment between student purpose and internship tasks refer to Table 3 and assign either a (1) or (0) accordingly. A score of (0) reflects a poor value for this category, while a (1) indicates a “good” alignment between purpose and tasks exists.

Supervision and mentoring: The scoring for this category involves finding the average for the items for each category (i.e., four items for supervision and five for mentoring) and then taking the average of those two scores. For instance, the supervision scale may average to 2.6 while the mentoring scale averages to 4.2. The final score then for this broader category would be 3.4, though it is also possible to just focus on the two scales on their own.

Network development: To score the network development category the student will report (via a single question) that the internship did (1) or did not (0) lead to their network growing in size. A score of (0) reflects a poor value for this category, while a (1) indicates that the internship provided a “good” impact on the students’ professional network.

Student satisfaction. Scoring student satisfaction with their internship is simply the score for individuals or the mean score across students, with values going from 1 (poor) to (5 (high).

Student developmental value (academic and career). The scoring for this category involves finding the average for the items for each category (i.e., five items for academic development and six for career development) and then taking the average of those two scores.

Equitable access

The score for equitable access is derived by summing the results for an individual internship program across the 5 indicators outlined for the category in Table 4, with each item receiving a (1) if the value of the less optimal item (e.g., unpaid internships, postings only through informal networks, students experiencing discrimination) does not exceed a threshold of 25% of respondents. For example, if 44 of the 136 internships at a university were unpaid, the percentage of unpaid (and inequitable) internships would be 32% and thus would exceed the 25% threshold, resulting in a score of (0) for the indicator of compensation. The final value for equitable access is derived by summing the scores for each of the five indicators, with cumulative scores as follows: 1 (poor), 2 (low), 3 (medium), 4 (good), 5 (excellent)

Each item receiving a (1) if the value of the less optimal item (e.g., unpaid internships, postings only through informal networks, students experiencing discrimination) does not exceed a threshold of 25% of respondents.

Examples of The Internship Scorecard in use

The administration of The Internship Scorecard will vary depending on the availability of data and the unit of analysis (e.g., individual internship, internships across departments or institutions). To illustrate what the use of the Scorecard looks like in practice, in Table 6 we report data for an individual students' internship (i.e., Larry's internship at Corporation X) and then for an entire institution (i.e., HBCU #1). For the latter example, we draw upon some data collected as part of the College Internship Study.

Table 6. Example of The Internship Scorecard in practice: Results from evaluation of programs at individual- and institutional levels

	Individual Internship Program: Larry's internship at Corporation X	Internships Across Entire Institution: University #1	Notes
Total # of internships	1	136 (26% of sample)*	Descriptive
Program purpose and format	Experience, on-site, immersive	Career exploration, on-site, micro (42)	Descriptive (combining 3 categories)
Purpose		Career exploration, on-site, short (62)	
Modality		Gaining experience, online, micro (28)	
Duration		Gaining experience, online, immersive (4)	

	Individual Internship Program: Larry's internship at Corporation X	Internships Across Entire Institution: University #1	Notes
Program quality			
Plan for learning	No plan, poor	75 (no plan; poor), 61 (plan, good)	0 (poor), 1 (good)
Internship tasks	Legitimate peripheral participation; autonomous work	Job shadowing (12) Peripheral division of labor (42) Legitimate peripheral participation (70) Autonomous work (12)	Descriptive
Purpose/Task Alignment	High (1)	High (72), Low (64)	See Table 3
Supervision & mentoring	2.89; low-medium	3.38 (SD - 0.86); medium-good*	Average of two scales
Skills development	2.5; low-medium	4.21 (SD - 0.86); good-excellent*	Average of three scales
Network development	1 (good)	82 (poor), 56 (good)	0 (poor), 1 (good)
Student satisfaction	4.5 (high)	3.1 (medium)	Average of one scale
Developmental value	4.1 (good)	3.9 (good)	Average of two scales
Equitable access	3/5 (medium) **	1/6 (poor)	Cumulative scoring: 0 (very poor), 1 (poor), 2 (low), 3 (medium), 4 (good), 5 (excellent)
Compensation	Paid (1)	92 paid, 44 unpaid (32%) (0)*	32% students with unpaid internship, which is above the 25% threshold
Transportation access	Subsidy provided (1)	26 subsidy provided, 110 no subsidy provided (81%)(0)	81% of positions did not have subsidies or accommodations for transportation, which is above the 25% threshold
Type of posting	Informal networks (0)	110 public posting, 26 informal networks (19%) (1)	19% of positions are only posted informally, which is below the 25% threshold

	Individual Internship Program: Larry's internship at Corporation X	Internships Across Entire Institution: University #1	Notes
Explicit statements on discrimination	No statement on discrimination (0)	42 yes, 100 no (70%) (0)	70% of positions without explicit statement on discrimination, which is above the 25% threshold
Students views of discrimination	Did not experience discrimination (1)	92 did not experience discrimination, 44 did (32%) (0)	32% of students with discriminatory experiences, which is above the 25% threshold
Percent of students at college who wanted an internship but could not pursue one	N/A	125 of the 245 students who did NOT take an internship, had wanted to but could not (51%) (0)*	51% of students were unable to participate in an internship but expressed interest in pursuing one, which is above the 25% threshold

Note: * Some of the data for University #1 are authentic (indicated by *) and taken from the College Internship Study conducted by CCWT.

** The 3/5 in Larry's equitable access score indicates that only 5 categories were available (i.e., the % of students wanting to take an internship was not a relevant category) and three of the categories scored a (1)

Conclusions and Next Steps

It is our hope that the information reviewed in this report and The Internship Scorecard can be used by postsecondary professionals, employers, funding agencies and other stakeholders to improve their understanding of the nature of internship programs, and how they may be impacting college students' success. In addition, given that many colleges and universities will likely not have the resources to collect and analyze data on the different categories that comprise our new framework, CCWT will be launching a new national survey of internship programs that institutions can administer to their students. In return, CCWT will provide information on how their students are engaging with the world of internships and how they score based on the approach outlined in this report.

At the very least, the field of higher education and work-based learning needs to treat the advocacy for and measurement of college internships with far more precision and nuance than is currently the norm. For surveys such as the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE, 2018) that simply measure whether students have participated in an internship, and for frameworks like those offered by NACE (2018) and CAS (2018) that are conceptually rigorous but lack user-friendly methods for analyzing individual programs, a new approach is needed that unpacks the complexity inherent within an internship experience and allows for the measurement of program purpose, quality and equitable access. As college students graduate into a labor market rife with uncertainty and rapidly changing conditions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the potentially transformative experience offered by a high-quality internship may become even more important. It is therefore incumbent that the higher education community improve how these programs are designed and implemented, and that they are made available to all students regardless of race, socio-economic status, and geographic location.

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The mission of The Center for Research on College-Workforce Transitions (CCWT) is to conduct and support research, critical policy analysis, and public dialogue on student experiences with the transition from college to the workforce in order to inform policies, programs, and practices that promote academic and career success for all learners.

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