

**ARE YOU EXPERIENCED?  
AN ASSESSMENT OF  
EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING  
IN NEW JERSEY**

**A Report to the New Jersey Office of  
the Secretary of Higher Education**

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Executive Summary</b> .....	3
<b>Introduction</b> .....	5
<b>Background: Experiential Learning in a National Context</b> .....	6
<b>Literature Review</b> .....	6
Defining Experiential Learning.....	6
Criteria for Assessment of Experiential Learning.....	7
Equity Concerns in Experiential Learning.....	7
<b>Methods</b> .....	9
Experiential Learning Survey.....	9
Focus Groups.....	9
Career Services Website Assessment.....	9
Limitations.....	10
<b>Notable Findings</b> .....	10
Career Services Offerings.....	10
Barriers to Experiential Learning.....	12
Types of Experiential Learning.....	13
Years of Student Engagement in Experiential Learning.....	14
Participation by Major.....	15
Internship Requirements.....	17
<b>Recommendations</b> .....	17
<b>Conclusion</b> .....	21
<b>Appendix A: Survey Topline</b> .....	22
<b>Appendix B: Email Outreach for Survey Participation</b> .....	40
<b>Appendix C: OSHE Initial Outreach to New Jersey IHEs</b> .....	43
<b>Appendix D: Focus Group Items</b> .....	44
<b>Appendix E: Summarized Criteria for Assessment of Experiential Learning</b> .....	49
<b>Sources</b> .....	50

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Experiential learning (EL) is pedagogical technique that provides students with the opportunity to apply concepts from the classroom in real world scenarios. There is broad agreement that EL is critical for student development and leads to increased employment outcomes after graduation. It is mainly those EL opportunities that are measured as high-quality that lead to beneficial outcomes. High-quality experiences contain the following elements: reflection, critical analysis, synthesis, opportunities for student initiative, decision-making power, and accountability. Employers today are expecting new hires coming out of college to have considerable experience using critical workplace skills. As the benefits for students and employers are becoming better quantified and publicized, institutions of higher education (IHEs) are developing forward-thinking ways of fostering and encouraging meaningful student involvement in such activities. IHEs in New Jersey offer a wide range of services and programs to support students in their pursuit of EL opportunities; however, students still face significant barriers in obtaining and completing quality experiences.<sup>1</sup>

In assessing EL in the state of New Jersey, this study reveals several key themes that lead to the development of the following recommendations:

- ❖ **Implement mandatory EL requirements (ELRs).** Engagement in EL, especially in workplace settings, has been shown to lead to strong learning and employment outcomes for college graduates. While IHEs generally offer credit for completion of an EL opportunity, there are many barriers students face in finding and obtaining quality experiences. Developing ELRs would ensure that all students have access to developing necessary workplace skills. Such a policy should be well-structured such that students complete high-quality experiences that relate to their future career goals, have funding support, allow for reflection, and are properly evaluated. Colleges, universities and statewide systems of higher education representing all sectors and sizes have already implemented ELRs.
- ❖ **Build effective workplace learning programs and integrate EL into course curricula.** Although an ELR could be a standard by which IHEs strive to reach, effective programs can be developed that both promote and integrate EL into course curricula. These programs may not mandate participation in EL, but can offer structured experiences or simulate work settings for those who choose to participate.
- ❖ **Leverage current channels and create new ways of funding EL opportunities for students.** Finding ways to monetarily support students engaging in unpaid or low-paid EL opportunities is also crucial, especially for low-income and at-risk populations. Students may not participate in opportunities they are interested in because those positions are unpaid (and in some instances students have to pay IHEs to receive credit for their unpaid experiences). Providing some level of funding support can lead to higher participation in workplace EL.
- ❖ **Elevate career services offices' roles to meet emerging demands and trends.** As IHEs continue to foster EL on their campuses, career services offices will be invaluable. These offices should implement new models to address student needs and meet emerging demands and trends in the labor market. These models should be centered around the idea of building communities that cultivate relationships across all areas of campus and student life.
- ❖ **Foster further collaboration between IHEs and employers.** Institutions will likely lead the way in ensuring good access to quality EL experiences, but state government can also play a role in fostering partnerships amongst employers and IHEs. With state government providing necessary funding, such partnerships can not only offer training outside of the classroom but can also open up opportunities for students to be hired after graduation. These partnerships can also be structured such that employers benefit from more reliable streams of available talent.

The report's recommendations come from several important findings. The report's results are further noteworthy in that they find significant differences amongst the sectors of private, public, and community colleges. Broadly speaking, career services offices offer a variety of services that help students find and obtain EL opportunities. However, ease of access to this information is disparate and it is still incumbent upon a student to actively seek out these services. On top of having the responsibility to access information, students face several other

significant barriers in even participating in EL. They often have to work paid jobs unrelated to their majors, are unaware of what opportunities they want to engage in, or do not know what resources are available. Furthermore, IHEs in New Jersey seem to provide only limited opportunities to fund EL, deterring student participation in unpaid or low-paid experiences that might further their academic and career development. If students are fortunate enough to engage in EL, it is often later in their undergraduate careers. Participation also appears to be concentrated in particular sectors. Even if New Jersey IHEs encourage participation, most do not require completion of EL opportunities as part of their curriculums.

The findings and conclusions in this report were reached by employing a mix of qualitative and quantitative research methods. A literature review was completed to evaluate EL in a national context. Next, a statewide survey of career services staff was conducted to understand respondents' perceptions of student participation in EL and barriers faced in accessing these opportunities. Focus groups were held to further understand student perspectives on issues related to EL. Lastly, an assessment of New Jersey IHEs' career services websites was done to rate ease of access for student navigation.

This research was done by a graduate student group on behalf of New Jersey's Office of the Secretary of Higher Education (OSHE), who proposed the research project to Rutgers University's Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy for the Masters of Public Policy Practicum Experience. This report is aimed to build upon research conducted by the Center for Higher Education Strategic Information and Governance project (HESIG) at Stockton University's William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy on behalf of New Jersey's Office of the Secretary of Higher Education (OSHE) in 2014, which mainly cited student experiences with career counseling and workplace learning opportunities.<sup>ii</sup> This report ultimately recommends some best practices and policy solutions to strengthen EL opportunities in New Jersey.

## INTRODUCTION

Experiential learning (EL) has become a highly discussed topic in higher education as the recognition of the value of work-based learning has increased. Employers continue to report that many college graduates lack the necessary skills critical for work preparedness and professional success. Evidence shows that, on average, students largely feel unprepared for full-time work after college. Many students face significant barriers in participating in EL, which would help them gain necessary workplace skills.

IHEs are faced with the challenge of taking on increased responsibility for developing students' workplace skills while also addressing barriers that students might face. Many have begun addressing these issues by implementing models where they are encouraging or even requiring students to participate in EL opportunities. Others have developed models that seek to increase access and funding for these opportunities. Participation in EL is shown to improve learning outcomes and employment possibilities after graduation, and therefore should be encouraged. These disparities between students, IHEs, and employers require deeper examination and research to create tangible solutions for the state of New Jersey.

In 2014, New Jersey's Office of the Secretary of Higher Education commissioned the Center for Higher Education Strategic Information and Governance (HESIG) at Stockton University to conduct a survey on students' attitudes regarding academic advisement and career counseling. They found students recognize the importance of internships as tools that foster employability skills but that they are often restricted from participating in such opportunities. Also in 2014, OSHE conducted a roundtable discussion of career guidance counselors from 20 IHEs in New Jersey, which revealed a variety of hands-on learning experiences are key in developing students' hard and soft skills.

In 2018, OSHE proposed a research project for the Rutgers Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy for the Masters of Public Policy Practicum Experience to assess EL opportunities in New Jersey. The research in this report strives to gain the perspective of the other major sources of information regarding student interaction with EL, namely career services counselors and staff. These individuals work with and hear from students on a daily basis. This paper will particularly explore the following questions:

- How are EL opportunities (especially internships, cooperative education, and project-based learning) important in developing transferable employability skills after graduation?
- When students participate in these various hands-on experiences, how are they being assessed in terms of applicability to career aspirations and connections to classroom learning?
- What barriers do students face that might prevent them from participating in EL opportunities? How are IHEs addressing these barriers?
- How accessible are institutions' EL opportunities to students? How do IHEs promote EL on their campuses?

The graduate student team set out to answer these questions, among others, through the following research methods:

- A literature review of several different aspects of EL, including: defining EL, finding how EL opportunities are assessed, and examining equity concerns and barriers to participation in EL;
- A statewide survey of New Jersey IHE career services staff;
- Student focus groups at New Jersey IHEs; and
- An assessment of finding EL information on IHE's websites.

Using the information gathered through these methods, several institutional and policy recommendations are proposed to further foster and improve EL in the Garden State.

## BACKGROUND: EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING IN A NATIONAL CONTEXT

Increased interest in the concepts and applications of EL have occurred over recent years. Although degree attainment and grade point average (GPA) are certainly still central tenets in higher education goals, IHEs have started to focus on and integrate priorities relating to EL.<sup>iii</sup> Specifically, schools are emphasizing the development of transferable workplace skills that are not necessarily central focuses in the classroom. These include “soft skills” like communication, analytical thinking, teamwork, and time management.<sup>iv</sup> Participating in EL has been shown to develop and foster such skills, leading to increased chances of employment.

Participation in high quality EL promotes cultivation of many skills employers are searching for in potential new hires coming out of college. “High-quality” EL opportunities: (1) require consistent completion of meaningful tasks; (2) demand interaction with faculty and peers; (3) foster connections with people who have different backgrounds; (4) provide constant feedback regarding on-the-job performance; and (5) integrate, synthesize, and apply their knowledge.<sup>v</sup> Research suggests high-quality experiences directly develop important workplace skills. A recent survey demonstrated the top five skills employers are looking for in college graduates are problem-solving skills, ability to work in a team, written communications skills, leadership, and strong work ethic.<sup>vi</sup> However, another survey found that, even amongst learning outcomes in which employers’ rate recent graduates as most prepared, less than two in five employers rate college students as well prepared for the workforce.<sup>vii</sup> Another survey of college students found that only 29 percent feel “very prepared” or “extremely prepared” for their professional career. That same survey also found that 63 percent of students would feel more prepared for their career if they had more internship and professional experience.<sup>viii</sup>

Evidence suggests students who graduate with internship experiences are more likely, than students without internship experiences to find employment upon graduation.<sup>ix</sup> Other research shows students who participate in a wider range of more meaningful EL opportunities report more learning gains during their undergraduate careers.<sup>x</sup> On top of these benefits, reports suggest that completing experiences in which students can apply learning outside of the classroom contributes to postgraduate success and workplace engagement.<sup>xi</sup>

Given these trends, IHEs should be aware of EL’s benefits and explore pedagogical as well as practical ways in which EL can be integrated into curricula and campus life more broadly.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The following section outlines the literature that has informed the research conducted over the study period. It will lay out the definitions, assessment, and equity aspects of the varying EL opportunities discussed.

### *Defining Experiential Learning*

“Experiential learning” has a broad definition, which has evolved over the years. John Dewey first discussed the term as “learning by doing”<sup>xii</sup>. Kolb further developed it as “the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience.”<sup>xiii</sup> Thus, these experiences facilitate learning through the application of academic theory to concrete experience. Further, Andresen, Boud, and Choen provided a list of criteria necessary for a project to be considered “experiential.” These included something significant or meaningful to the students, which engages students and utilizes their prior knowledge. It should be holistic in its approach, by going further than just employing the students’ intellectual ability and must have opportunities for reflection. There must be teacher involvement to guide and mentor the students and care for their wellbeing.<sup>xiv</sup> Wurdinger and Carlson synthesized this criterion and described it as any learning opportunity, facilitated by an instructor that supports students in applying what they have learned to real-world situations. They argued that the crux of the learning occurs during the reflective process where the students assess their decisions in light of the consequences.<sup>xv</sup>

Thus, it appears learning that is considered “experiential” contains all the following elements: reflection, critical analysis, synthesis, opportunities for student initiative, decision-making power, and accountability. It is a

pedagogical technique that provides students with the opportunity to apply their learnings from the classroom in real world scenarios. It challenges them to engage with diverse audiences, and reflect on the personal and professional significance of these experiences. Moreover, students realize that their actions have consequences and their responsibility moves beyond a course grade. They must work in situations without predictable results, receive consistent faculty mentoring, and participate in ongoing reflection about what they are learning.

Given the definition above, EL could include a variety of experiences. For simplicity, EL can be categorized into two major categories: 1) Field-based experiences, which include internships, practicums, cooperative education, and service learning. 2) Classroom-based learning, with activities such as role-playing games, case studies, simulations, presentations, and various types of group work.<sup>xvi</sup> However, the present research limits its analysis to internships, cooperative education programs (co-ops), and project-based learning opportunities (PBL), described below.

Internship is defined here as a short-term work assignment where students work for an organization to gain work experience.<sup>xvii</sup> Dependent on the employer and the career field, these can be full-time or part-time, as well as paid or unpaid. Academic departments have varied requirements for internships, with some having mandatory programs with clearly defined requirements and granting academic credit. Students usually engage in full-time opportunities in the summer and in part-time opportunities during the semester.

Cooperative education opportunities (co-ops) are usually well-defined academic programs where students have a hands-on application component in their field of study. Co-ops are traditionally full-time, paid positions. A co-op usually involves multiple work-term agreement with one employer; traditionally with at least three full-time work stints alternated with school terms throughout a student's undergraduate career<sup>xvii</sup>. Students are assigned with increasing tasks and responsibilities as the student progresses through courses, obtaining in-depth work experience. Other models include an alternating model where students alternate between semesters of full-time work and full-time school, and a parallel model where students work part-time while attending classes.<sup>xviii</sup>

Project-based learning (PBL) is a dynamic classroom approach, which organizes student learning around projects. Students actively explore real-world problems and challenges and acquire in-depth knowledge by answering challenging questions that involve a range of student activities. These projects give students the opportunity to work relatively autonomously over extended periods of time, culminating in work products such as presentations.<sup>xix</sup> Other defining features of PBLs include defined educational goals and content, teacher facilitation, a reflection component, and some form of assessment.<sup>xix</sup>

### *Criteria for Assessment of Experiential Learning*

A quality student EL opportunity has a mix of the following components: tangible and meaningful work with manageable expectations; aligned with students' academic program; dual supervision from institution and participating organization; provide financial support to students who cannot afford them; can qualify for academic credit; reflection before the beginning of the opportunity and at the culmination; incorporates academic and career advising; embedded in the curriculum; and support retention of college partnerships and students.<sup>xx</sup> The best EL opportunities have most, if not all, of these elements.

The outcomes of EL can be varied and unpredictable. The way one student chooses to solve a problem will be different from another and what students take away from an experience may also differ. Moreover, the process is as important as the final product. Therefore, it is necessary to develop practicable and flexible assessments that measure success in both the learning process and the final outcomes while making sure students are able to actively participate in the assessments. A detailed outline of recommended assessment measures can be found in Appendix E at the end of this report.

### *Equity Concerns in Experiential Learning*

Today's college students face a unique educational and employment landscape generations before them have encountered. Tuition costs and related fees at IHEs across the nation continue to increase and do not indicate



any signs of stopping. The National Center for Education Statistics estimates for the 2014–15 academic year, average annual current dollar prices for undergraduate tuition, fees, room, and board were estimated to be \$16,188 at public IHEs, \$41,970 at private nonprofit IHEs, and \$23,372 at private for-profit IHEs. Between 2004–05 and 2014–15, prices for undergraduate tuition, fees, room, and board at public IHEs rose 33 percent, and prices at private nonprofit IHEs rose 26 percent, after adjustment for inflation.<sup>xxi</sup> These figures are important to understand the cost barriers students might face when considering participation in workplace EL.

Students obtaining an advanced degree have financial and other constraints that may prevent them from participating in EL opportunities. Roughly 14 million college students in the U.S. are working, where about 40 percent of undergraduates and 76 percent of graduate students work at least 30 hours a week; 25 percent of all working learners are simultaneously employed full-time and enrolled in college full-time.<sup>xxii</sup> Working more than 20 hours a week has a negative impact on students' grades whether on or off campus, but off campus contributes to a higher likelihood that students will drop out of school before receiving a degree.<sup>xxiii</sup>

Many high-quality internships are often unpaid, leaving low-income students with the issue of financially supporting themselves during the duration of such opportunities. These disadvantaged students often have to pay for higher education and personal expenses themselves, leaving career-rich opportunities out of their college experience. Students interested in internships in the non-profit or government realms have a more difficult time finding paid opportunities. It becomes difficult for college students to accept unpaid internships in context of rising tuition costs, cuts to state financial aid, and the increasing emphasis on loans in place of need-based grants.<sup>xxiv</sup> Young adults in their mid-twenties with highly paid, highly educated parents are eight times more likely to attain a bachelor's degree than those from more disadvantaged households.<sup>xxv</sup> The lack of affordability of both internships and, more broadly, a college education, leaves low-income students at a significant disadvantage in a competitive labor market. The 'glass floor' keeps less talented children born to affluent parents at the top of the income ladder, which is one of the obstacles to greater intergenerational mobility, by using personal or professional connections to arrange job or internship opportunities and possibly including paying the summer living costs associated with unpaid internships.<sup>xxvi</sup>

Some significant discoveries were found in a survey distributed by Intern Bridge in 2009 to 234 colleges and universities throughout the United States.<sup>xxvii</sup> Before delving into the findings, it is important to keep in mind that 70 percent of the respondents identified as white women with an average age of 23.8 (80 percent), and had a GPA above a 3.0 (82 percent). These students were attending private colleges and universities (36 percent), public colleges under 15,000 students (30 percent) and large public colleges (29 percent). Of these respondents, over 70 percent were receiving some form of federal financial aid. Thirty-seven percent were from households earning less than \$40,000 a year; 32 percent from households with \$40,000 to \$80,000; 21 percent from households with \$80,000 to \$120,000; and 10 percent from households with income above \$120,000.

Based on the aforementioned demographic data, there are interesting gender differences when it comes to participation in EL opportunities and internships in particular. Women are more likely to be engaged in unpaid internships (77 percent) than men. Of the women who participated in paid internships, their participation in for-profit paid internships never exceeded 67 percent, inclusive of women from the lowest to highest income brackets. Furthermore, approximately 25 percent of the women were in paid non-profit internships and roughly 18 percent in government internships. As for men, they seem to seek and participate in paid internships with for-profit companies. Over 65 percent of men were in paid, for-profit internships with the remainder evenly distributed over nonprofits and government agencies (about 16 percent each).

A students' selection of their major will ultimately determine the range of paid versus unpaid opportunities that will be available to them based on the evidence from the Intern Bridge study. Students majoring in education, social sciences, health sciences, communication, and arts & humanities are more likely to be engaged in unpaid internships. Arts and humanities students, for example, will more likely have internships from non-profits with slightly more unpaid than paid. High income students were over-represented in business programs and under-represented in agriculture & natural resources, education, and health majors. Low income students have a much

higher level of participation in unpaid internships than students from high income families. High income students are more likely to be engaged in internships of any kind with for-profit companies.

Limiting internships to those who can afford them simply perpetuates existing inequalities. Making paid internships more accessible to low-income students will help ensure they can gain the contacts and experience needed to secure employment in their preferred careers after graduation. Many graduates with college degrees financed by burdensome loans without the relevant work experience needed to get the jobs that will help pay off said loans. Additionally, increasing opportunities in the nonprofit and government sectors may help foster civic engagement and lead students to pursue careers in these fields. This would lead to a more inclusive democracy by having a wider range of diversity in public service and public policy.

## **METHODS**

Field research was conducted to garner a greater sense of how EL programs operate and are marketed to students at IHEs in New Jersey. Three central research methods, described below, were utilized.

### *Experiential Learning Survey*

A major component of the research was a survey to colleges and universities in the state of New Jersey. Approximately 400 individuals from all 44 public, private, and community colleges were invited to participate. The targeted population for the survey was individuals who work with students to help them access and take part in EL opportunities—primarily those working in career services offices. The purpose of the survey was to gain a better understanding of several dynamics of EL from professionals who work directly with students. Specifically, more information was sought regarding: student participation in three types of EL (internships, co-ops, and PBL); the extent to which career services offices market and/or get directly involved in EL; when students begin to participate in such opportunities; which areas of study are perceived to have highest levels of participation in EL; and any challenges that students are perceived to experience in accessing/committing to such opportunities as they move through their college experience.

A first round of emails asking for initial participation in the survey was sent to the New Jersey Consortium of Career Counselors; four subsequent follow-up emails were sent to a listserv that included career services staff listed on individual IHE websites, as well as certain college presidents and their staff. Response collection began on March 6, 2018 and ended on March 27, 2018. There was a total of 78 completed responses—36 of whom were from public colleges, 25 of whom were from private colleges, and 17 of whom were from community colleges. In total, 31 IHEs participated in the survey—10 of whom were from public colleges, 11 of whom are from private colleges, and 10 of whom are from community colleges. Of those 31 IHEs, 19 had multiple responses, meaning different people within the IHEs answered the survey. Please see Appendix A for the survey topline.

### *Focus Groups*

To supplement findings from other research methods used, two focus groups were conducted at a large public research university in New Jersey. Recruitment for the focus groups were done through the university's career services office, who solicited participation through email. The first focus group included six students, all of whom had participated in internships. The second focus group included seven students, none of whom had participated in internships. The goal of having two separate focus groups was to assess how experiences might differ or be similar between those who have engaged in such opportunities and those who have not. Please see Appendix D for the focus group items for both the internship and non-internship groups.

### *Career Services Website Assessment*

A central vehicle through which college students today access information for EL opportunities is their IHEs' career services websites. A well-designed career services website is one that is intuitive, follows a logical path

given predicted user questions, and includes specific links or landing pages for that a student would want to look for in accessing information. Garrett et. al. (2016) describes the elements of a good web design as “navigation, graphical representation, organization, content utility, purpose, simplicity, and readability.”<sup>xxviii</sup>

Under this criteria, specific aspects of career services websites were evaluated, given what were thought to be central questions EL-seekers might have. A list was developed to evaluate every IHE’s website in New Jersey and included: 1) any mention of EL programs (such as internships, co-ops, and PBL); 2) services for preparing students who are applying for EL opportunities (such as resume-building, cover letter assistance, and interviewing practice); 3) listings of EL opportunities; 4) funding assistance for EL opportunities; and 5) services linked with contact information for further support.

In conducting the assessment process, the following steps were taken:

1. Google Search “IHE name + Career Services.”
2. Go to the website and see any mention of EL “buzz words” (internships, co-ops, etc.). If there was any mention of those words, the institution was given a “Yes” in the respective column.
3. Click on those links and outline what is available.
4. Rate each institution by adding up the “Yes” across the rows for a final Accessibility Score, which is a final tally of how helpful each career services website is in terms of preparation, opportunities, contact information, support, and funding.

### *Limitations*

This report has some limitations that include, but are not limited to: time constraints, non-representative sample sizes, and data based only on perceptions of respondents, both career services staff and students, in the state. While the methodologies yielded useful results, the claims in this report are not meant to be representative of New Jersey IHE career services offices or IHEs in general, but are meant to serve as a starting point from where IHEs can make improvements to their programs. In addition, responses to questions regarding student experiences are solely the observations of the participants and should not be taken as generalizable. Furthermore, certain IHEs had multiple responses from different individuals, which might slightly skew results towards those institution’s experiences. Lastly, the researchers were unable to fully access/navigate the career services websites requiring login information. IHEs may have chosen to leave this information off the website as to not create demand for limited funding and may also provide external links for scholarships or further funding.

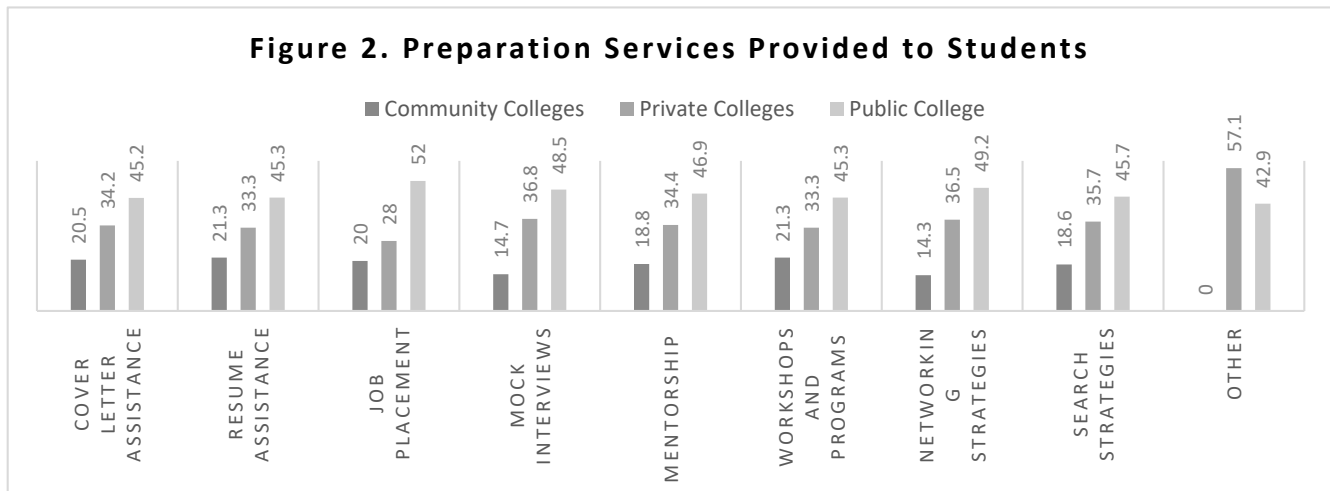
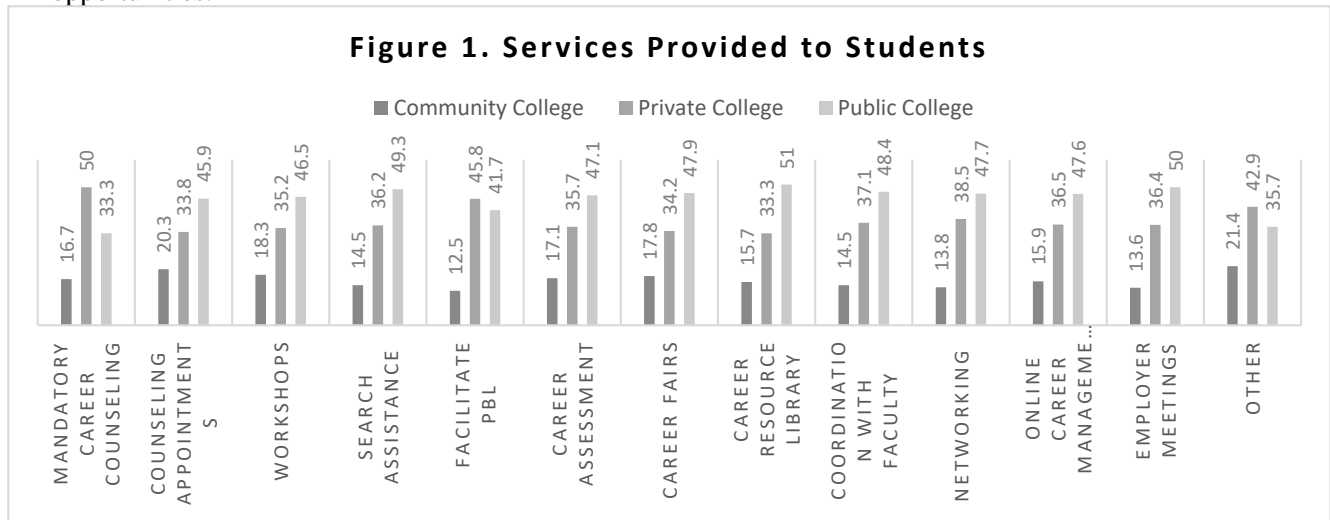
## **NOTABLE FINDINGS**

The findings section seeks to summarize key themes seen throughout all methods of research. The analysis further breaks down trends and differences seen by sector, where appropriate. The term “Community College” represents the 2-year associate degree public community and county colleges. The term “Private College” represents 4-year independent colleges and universities. The term “Public College” represents Senior Public Colleges, otherwise defined as 4-year state colleges and universities. Given these terms, it should also be noted that there are some disparities in the results for community colleges; this is likely because the mission of these colleges is different from the other two sectors and is more geared toward helping students gain admission into 4-year schools. Much of what was found reaffirms earlier research and points to potential solutions at both the institutional and statewide levels.

### *Career Services Offerings*

The opening portion of the survey asked career counselors about the services that their career services office provides. Career services offices provide a variety of services and resources to assist students looking to engage in EL. The numbers reported in the charts below further reaffirm findings from a 2014 survey of New Jersey student attitudes on academic advising and career counseling services conducted by the Higher Education Strategic Information and Governance Project’s (HESIG). Moreover, according to both focus groups, students

were aware that the university career services office provided a variety of assistance to get students prepared for EL opportunities.



The assessment of career services websites also indicated that, on average, IHEs market these services fairly well, although there is some variability by sector. As displayed in Table 1 below, most schools received an accessibility score of 4 out of 5. For the most part, IHE websites: provide information regarding EL; list internship/co-op opportunities (or have log-in portals to such information); display contact information for more tailored student support (like one-on-one career counseling appointments) and have resources to help prepare students applying to EL opportunities. Where IHEs lack is in the critical area of funding supports for EL opportunities.

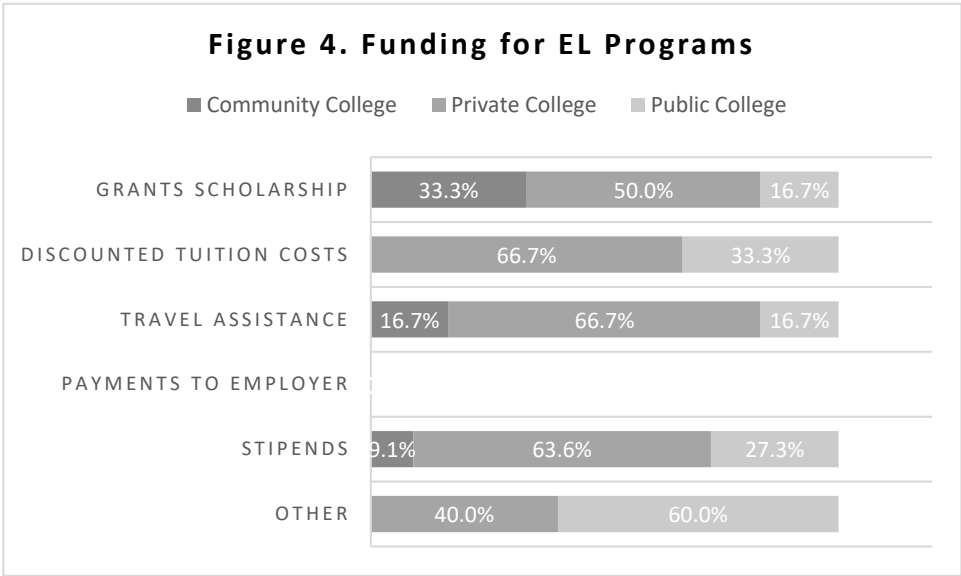
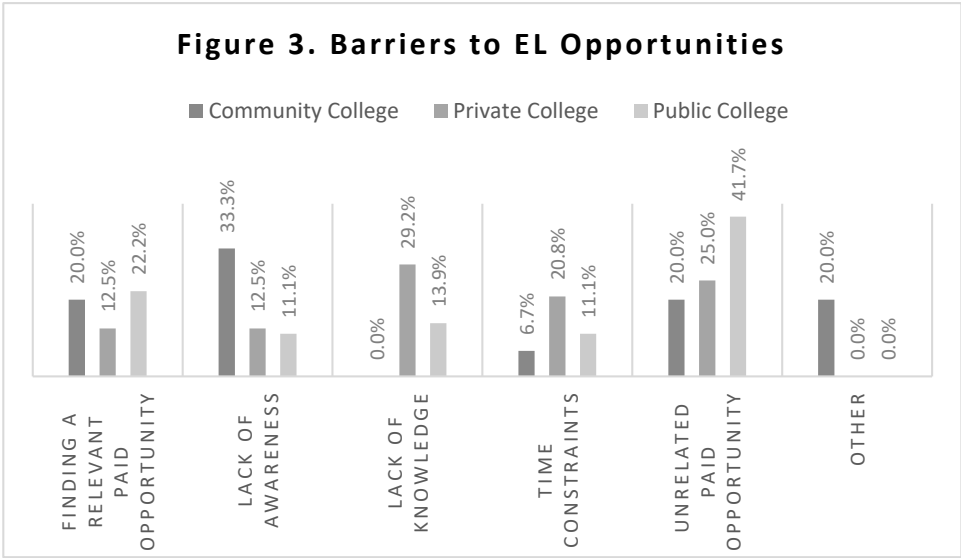
**Table 1. Assessment for Career Services Websites**

		Sector			Total
		Community College	Private College	Public College	
Accessibility Score	0	0	0	1	1
	1	2	0	0	2
	2	3	1	0	4
	3	7	3	0	10
	4	6	8	10	24
	5	0	2	0	2
	Could Not Evaluate	1	0	0	1

Total	19	14	11	44
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**Barriers to Experiential Learning Opportunities**

Despite the availability of career services, students still face certain challenges in being able to engage in workplace EL. Survey participants were asked to choose what they perceived as the most significant barrier students faced in participating in an internship, co-op, and PBL experience. Interestingly, the main barriers cited by respondents differed by sector. For instance, nearly 42 percent of public college respondents stated that students often have to work a paid job unrelated to their major. This finding was supported by anecdotal accounts from a student focus group containing students from a New Jersey public college who had not completed internships; 6 out of 7 participants said that they had working experiences in major-unrelated positions.



It is worth noting that fairly significant portions of respondents from community colleges and private colleges (20 percent and 25 percent, respectively) also felt that the main barrier for students was working a paid job. Meanwhile, over 29 percent of private college respondents indicated that students do not know what opportunities they want to engage in. A third of respondents from community colleges answered that students are not aware of resources.

Once again, these results reiterate findings from HESIG’s 2014 survey, which indicated that 76 percent of student respondents worked a paying job—largely to help pay for tuition and living expenses. However, the results also indicate that students at different types of schools might face different types of challenges.

Adding to these student barriers is the trend of IHEs not providing funding for EL opportunities. Table 2 below shows that over 56 percent of respondents cited that their IHE does not provide any funding for student participation in EL. Private colleges are most likely to provide EL funding, while community colleges and public colleges are less likely. In addition to these findings, 20 percent, 12.5 percent, and 22.2 percent of community, private, and public college respondents respectively believe that the most significant barrier

students face in participating in workplace EL is difficulty in attaining paid employment related to their major. The outcomes from the focus groups also aligned with this finding. Participants who had internship experiences conveyed that it was very difficult for students to find paid, major-related internships, as well as external funding to support unpaid internships. Students often had to either pay travel and housing expense by themselves, or find extra paid, major-unrelated jobs to provide financial support.

Amongst those institutions that do offer some sort of funding for EL, the results indicate that private colleges represent the highest percentages of respondents in each funding category. For example, amongst all respondents who indicated that their IHE provides grants/scholarships for EL, 50 percent were from private colleges (see Figure 4 above).

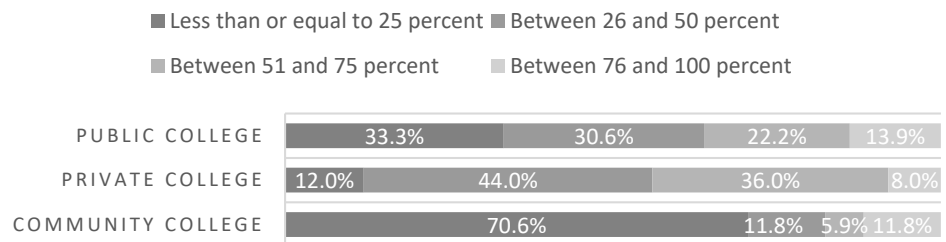
**Table 2. Funding for Experiential Learning Programs by Sector**

		Sector			Total
		Community College	Private College	Public College	
<b>Some funding for experiential learning programs</b>	Count	7	17	10	34
	% within sector	41.2%	68.0%	27.8%	43.6%
<b>No funding for experiential learning programs</b>	Count	10	8	26	44
	% within sector	58.8%	32.0%	72.2%	56.4%
<b>Total</b>	Count	17	25	36	78
	% within sector	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

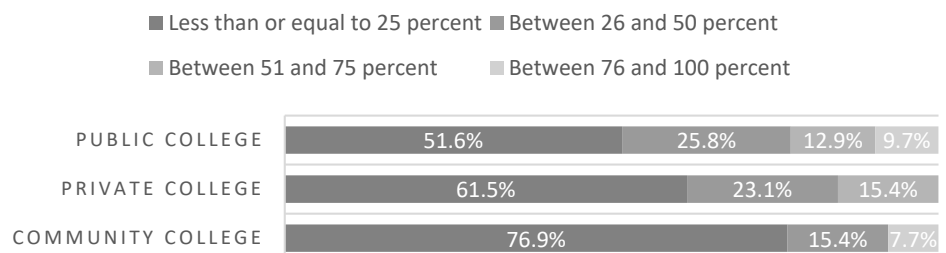
*Types of Experiential Learning*

In addition to identifying barriers to student participation in EL, a primary goal of the research was to find out to what extent students are perceived to actually be participating in three common types of workplace EL (internships, co-ops, and PBL). In general, it was found that, in the aggregate, students are more likely to participate in internships compared to co-ops and PBL. However, there are evident differences across sector.

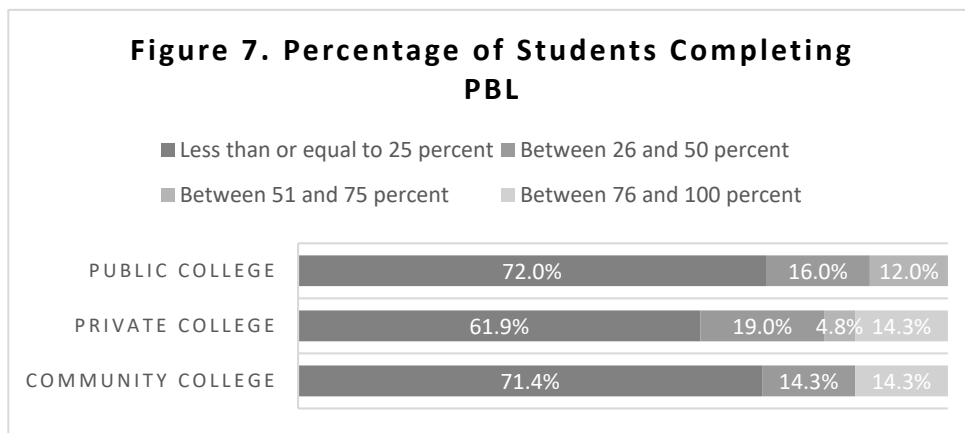
**Figure 5. Percentage of Students Completing an Internship**



**Figure 6. Percentage of Students Completing a Co-op**



Community college respondents showed that their students rarely participate in internships as nearly 71 percent indicated that less than 25 percent of their students engage in an internship. Meanwhile, 80 percent of private college respondents reported that they believe between 26 and 75 percent of their students participate in an internship. Over half of public college respondents observe that between 26 and 75 percent of their students complete an internship before graduating.

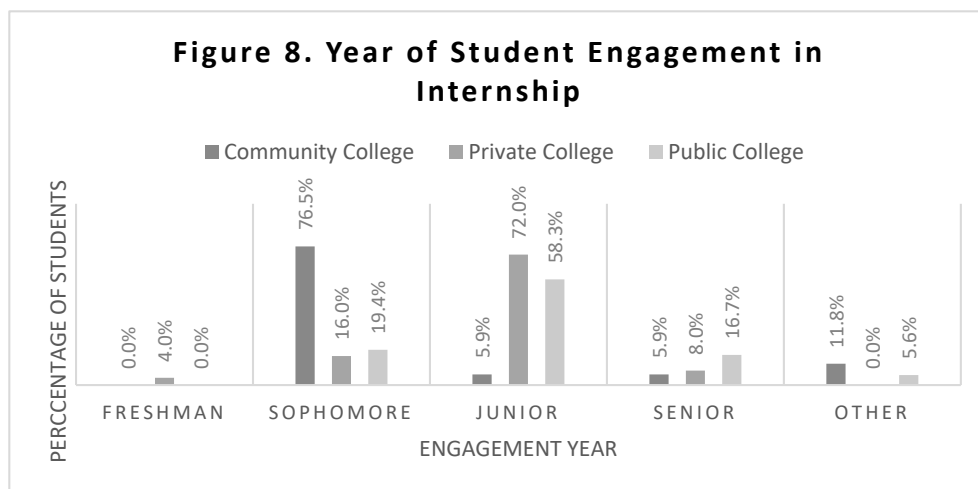


When examining responses in regards to co-ops, it is clear that IHEs in all sectors see lower levels of participation compared to participation in internships. The majority of respondents within each sector indicated that 25 percent or less of their student populations engage in a co-op. This finding makes sense as oftentimes co-ops are concentrated in certain sectors like engineering and technology, even if opportunities exist in other areas.<sup>xxix</sup>

In regards to PBL, similarly high percentages of community, public, and private colleges all indicated that 25 percent or less of students at their IHEs engage in PBL. Somewhat surprisingly, the distributions across all three sectors are fairly similar, indicating less prevalence of this type of EL across-the-board. It is possible that survey respondents may not know the scope of PBL opportunities provided in classrooms, therefore leading them to answer that less than or equal to 25 percent of their undergraduates participate.

### Years of Student Engagement in Experiential Learning

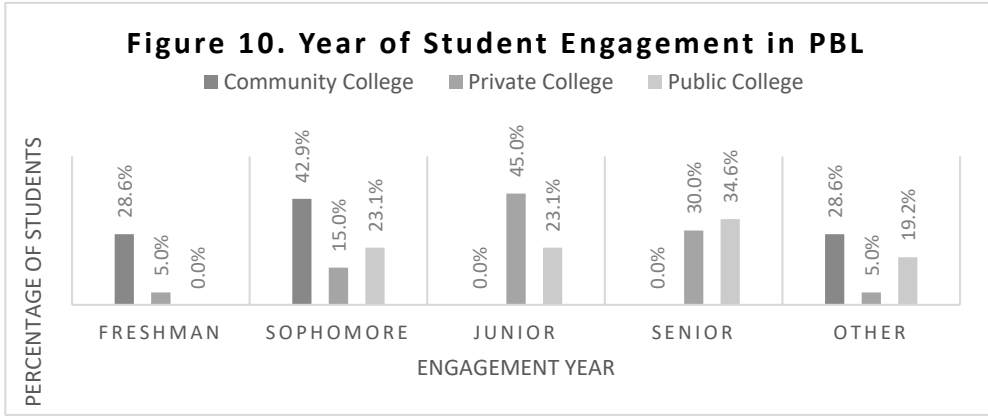
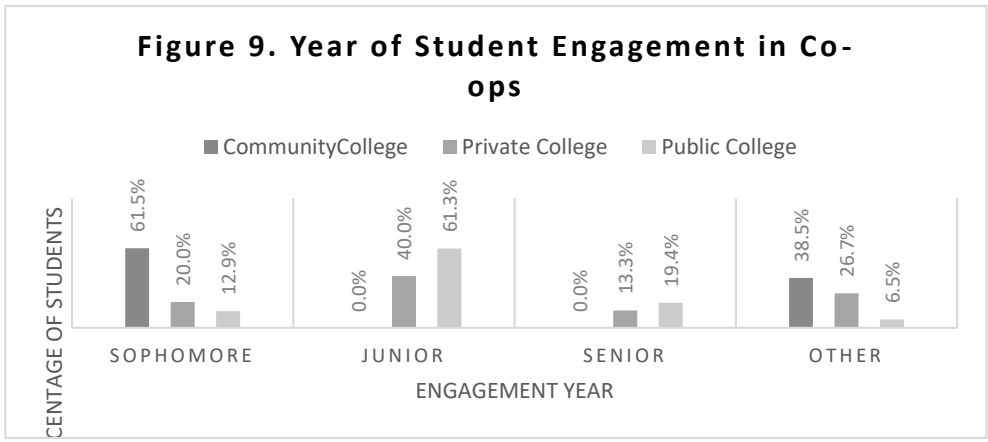
While the research certainly focused on availability of services and access to opportunities, another area of emphasis was gaining a sense of perceived trends amongst those students who are able to participate in EL. Prior research has asserted that a larger breadth and depth of participation in EL helps to increase self-reported learning outcomes and post-



graduate results. In other words, having a higher number of experiences that are meaningful helps to better educational and career results. Beginning such engagement earlier on in students' postsecondary education can allow them to have that breadth and depth in EL. Survey questions were asked, then, regarding years in which respondents felt as though students first began to engage in internships, co-ops, and PBL. In general, respondents indicated that students begin engaging in such workplace opportunities later in their college careers. This conclusion also coincided with the results from the focus groups. 5 out of 6 participants who had engaged in internships started their experiences either their junior or senior years.



72 percent of respondents from private colleges and 58 percent of respondents from public colleges answered that students tend to begin participation in internships during their junior year. The majority of community college respondents, meanwhile, think that engagement generally begins in sophomore year. Some caution should be taken when looking at this number as community colleges are usually two-year schools. This inclination amongst respondents from community colleges continues throughout these sets of questions. These findings do indicate that community college students also do not seek these opportunities until they are ready to exit the IHE.



Similar trends were seen when respondents were asked about co-ops. Exactly 40 percent of respondents from private colleges and over 61 percent of respondents from public colleges reported that students generally begin engaging in co-ops in their junior years. Interestingly, no respondents across any sectors reported that students engaged in co-ops in their freshman year.

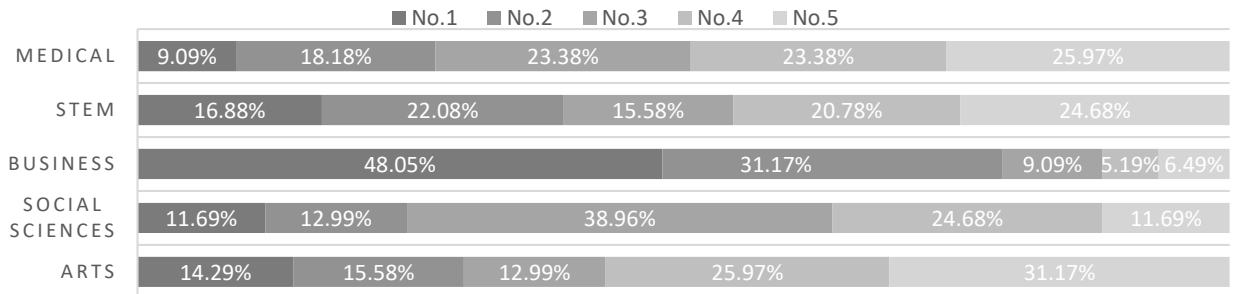
Results for PBL opportunities were somewhat more mixed compared to the other two types of EL. For example, nearly 35 percent of respondents from public colleges indicated that students tend to engage in PBL in their senior years. Meanwhile, 45 percent of respondents from private colleges felt as though most of their students engage in their junior years. While the highest percentages amongst these two sectors still demonstrate engagement in later years, there was not as much of a clear distinction as in the other two.

**Participation by Major**

Survey responses affirmed research from the literature review, which suggests that students in certain majors are more likely to participate in EL opportunities than those in other majors.<sup>xxx</sup> Particular attention was paid to participation in internships by major because this question had a high response rate compared to similar questions asked about co-ops and PBL. Nearly half of respondents (48 percent) felt as though, amongst all major areas of academic study, the highest levels of internship participation came from those majoring in business. Meanwhile, almost one-third (over 31 percent) felt that the lowest level of participation came amongst those who major in the arts and humanities. Similarly, low levels of participation are seen in the Medical and STEM fields, perhaps reflecting that these majors are more likely to participate in different sorts of EL, such as clinical shadowing or co-ops.

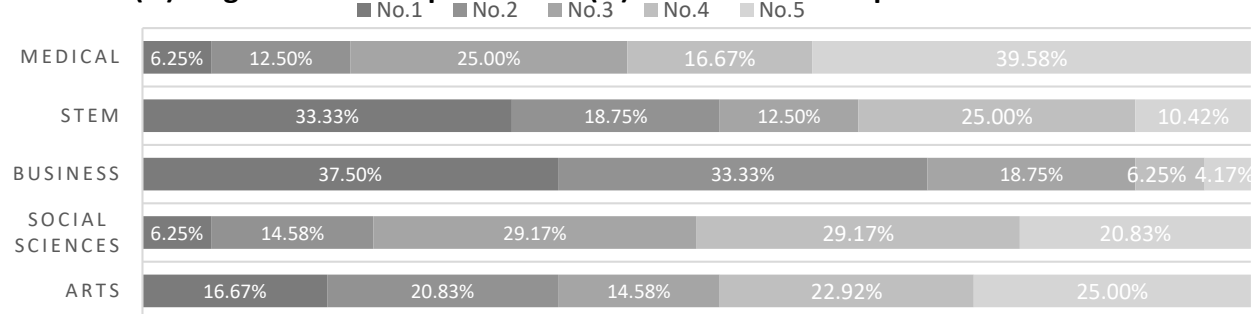


**Figure 11. Rank Internship Participation by Major  
(1) Highest Participation to (5) Lowest Participation**



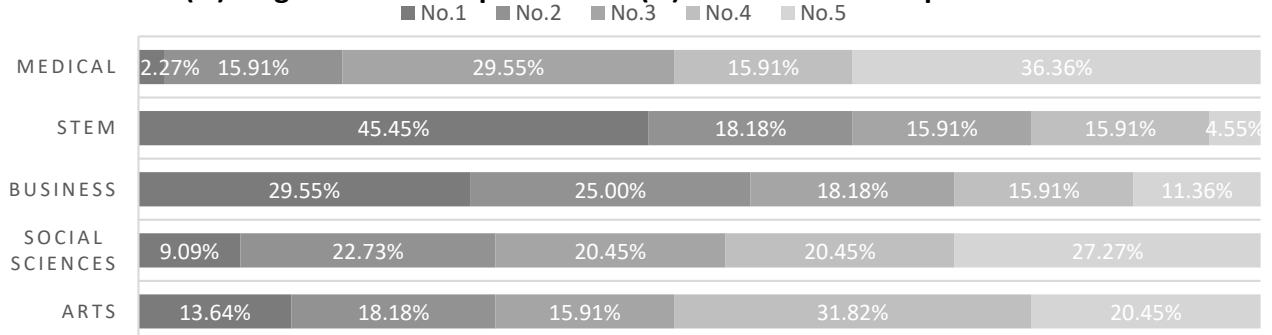
When examining perceived levels of participation in co-ops by major, respondents most frequently cited Business (about 38 percent) and STEM (over 33 percent) as being foremost areas in which co-ops are completed. The lowest levels of participation in the view of survey respondents were seen in Medical, Social Science, and Arts majors.

**Figure 12. Rank Co-op Participation by Major  
(1) Highest Participation to (5) Lowest Participation**



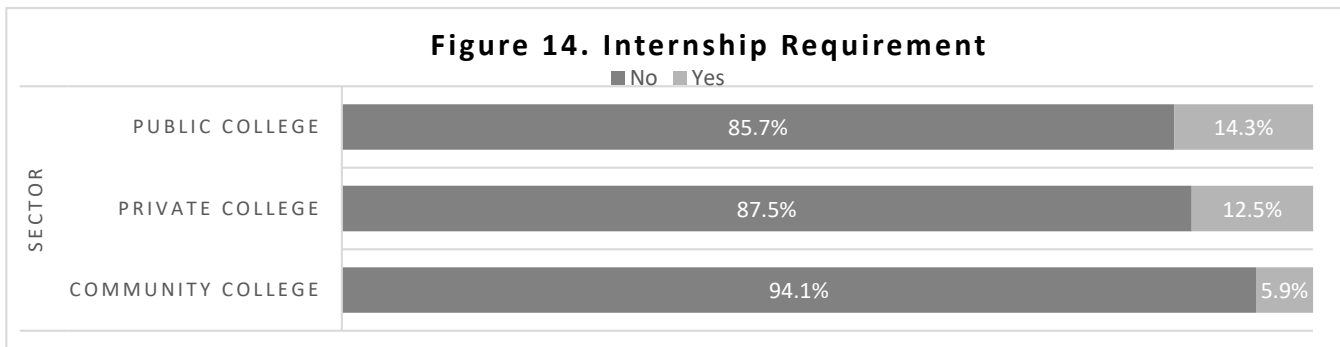
These trends largely continue when looking at PBL as once again STEM (over 45 percent) and Business (nearly 30 percent) majors were viewed to having the highest levels of participation in this type of experience. It is worth noting that low levels of participation across all sectors are perhaps perceived amongst majors related to medicine because they generally have more tailored experiences in clinical settings that might be classified as different types of EL than what was identified in the survey.

**Figure 13. Rank PBL Participation by Major  
(1) Highest Participation to (5) Lowest Participation**



## Internship Requirements

Research has shown that broad EL requirements at different institutions have enhanced self-reported learning outcomes and contributed to students completing multiple opportunities during their time in school.<sup>xxxix</sup> Given this background, the survey asked respondents whether or not their IHEs had requirements that their undergraduate students complete an internship before graduation. The survey asked about internships specifically because they are perceived to be the most common type of workplace EL.<sup>xxxix</sup> By and large, public, private, and community colleges in New Jersey do not have such a requirement in place. There does not appear to be significant variation across sector in regard to this question.



## RECOMMENDATIONS

Given the findings of this study, there are certain trends that are evident throughout IHEs in New Jersey. The following section lists key recommendations for IHEs, as well as the state, in encouraging and fostering quality EL opportunities.

- **Implement mandatory EL requirements (ELRs).** IHEs can directly promote access to EL by requiring that students complete a certain amount of EL credits. They can also offer funding supports, specifically targeted at low-income students completing unpaid or low-paid opportunities. IHEs in different sectors and of different sizes have implemented ELRs.
  - *University of Georgia ELR.* The University of Georgia (UGA), a large public research university with nearly 27,000 undergraduates, implemented a campus-wide ELR in 2016. The ELR can be met through the Center for Undergraduate Research Opportunities and other supervised research courses; study-abroad and field school programs; service-learning; internships; and other unique credit or noncredit options. UGA’s policy states that, “Each school and college will determine which courses and/or experiences will fulfill the requirement within its academic context, without increasing the hours required for graduation beyond the approved limit.”<sup>xxxix</sup> UGA offers a limited number of scholarship opportunities to support EL activities.<sup>xxxix</sup> An interview with a senior staff person at UGA who was heavily involved in the policy’s implementation revealed that the university’s administration was willing from the start to provide the resources necessary to make the ELR work. Most of the resources, it turns out, were geared toward building the infrastructure and credit protocols needed to ensure that all students are experiencing vetted, quality EL experiences. A few additional staff positions were created to build an Office of Experiential Learning, but, for the most part, each individual academic school assigned the responsibility of EL coordination to an existing staff person. Monies used to fund scholarships and grants were largely garnered through alumni donations as well as excess funds from other areas (including the Athletic Association). So, while cost may be a concern for many schools, UGA’s experience shows that implementing this requirement can be done efficiently and effectively—even at a large school with a diverse population.

- *Elon University ELR.* Elon University, a private university in North Carolina with an undergraduate population of about 6,000 students, has had an ELR as part of its undergraduate curriculum since 1994. A 5-year study of graduating seniors from Elon showed that students were quite engaged in EL throughout their undergraduate careers.<sup>xxxv</sup> On average, students completed 376 hours and 9.4 course units. The study’s results further showed that students who engaged in more EL hours and gained a wider breadth of experiences reported significantly more learning gains.
- *Bennington College, Field Work Term.* At Bennington College, a private liberal arts college with total undergraduate enrollment just over 700, students are required to complete Field Work Terms (FWT). Every student is required to complete 210 hours during FWT over seven weeks in January and February each year in their undergraduate careers.<sup>xxxvi</sup> At the end of the FWT experience, students are given a pass/fail grade based on an evaluation from their internship supervisor. Bennington does not charge tuition for the FWT and offers opportunities for some assistance that students can apply for to make their experience more financially feasible. Notably, students engaging in an unpaid FWT are allowed to use up to 70 supplemental hours at a part-time job unrelated to their major. In addition, Bennington offers grants for students with demonstrated financial need.<sup>xxxvii</sup>
- **Build effective workplace learning programs and integrate EL into course curricula.** While requiring students to complete a certain amount of EL credits is one strategy IHEs in New Jersey can investigate, they can also strive to integrate EL as part of course curricula. Several schools across the country have employed various models that allow academic faculty and departments, in coordination with career services professionals, to foster EL as an important part of learning. Listed below are some schools across the country that have implemented curricula that directly incorporate EL.
  - *SUNY Applied Learning.* The State University of New York (SUNY) system contains 64 different campuses with a total of 460,000 students. In March 2015, SUNY leadership, Governor Cuomo, and the State Legislature issued a policy directive mandating each campus to make EL activities available to all students.<sup>xxxviii</sup> The various campuses, including community colleges, have developed different types of programs, giving every SUNY student an opportunity to engage in a campus-approved “applied learning” activity before they graduate. As of January 2017, SUNY campuses offered a total of about 9,500 EL opportunities.<sup>xxxix</sup> A case study analysis using student focus groups at three SUNY campuses also revealed that students perceived applied learning programs as beneficial in developing their soft skills, growing their networks, and applying classroom concepts.<sup>xl</sup> As students and their families continue to perceive well-developed EL programs as integral in deciding where to attend college, New Jersey IHEs might become less competitive if they do not further develop and improve their EL programs.
  - *Northeastern Cooperative Education Program.* Northeastern University, a private university with an undergraduate population of about 18,000 students, has offered their Cooperative Education program for over a century. Students alternate between academic semesters and co-op semesters in which students engage in full-time employment. Along with an academic coordinator, students also have co-op coordinators to assist them in schedule building personalized to their career goals. The co-op curriculum requires students to take a course for preparation prior to the co-op semesters and, after completion of the experience, to reflect and detail how they related to their co-ops related to their academic experiences. Overall, about 92 percent of Northeastern students participate in at least one co-op and 75 percent do two or more. Co-op arrangements not only allow students to better develop soft skills in real-world workplace settings but also give employers the opportunity to fully evaluate and recruit talent for full-time positions. In fact, Northeastern reports that 90 percent of graduates are employed

within nine months of graduation, half are employed with their co-op employer, and 85 percent are working in their field of study.<sup>xli</sup>

- *Drexel University Cooperative Education Program:* Drexel University, a private research university with an undergraduate population of about 15,500 students, has had a cooperative education program, similar in structure to Northeastern University's, in place since 1919. As a part of the co-op curriculum, students are required to complete one of two co-op preparatory courses, either to prepare students engaging in professional experiences for the first time or to guide students looking to transition to a new field. Over 98 percent of undergraduate students participate in the program, the majority of whom are paid for their experience. In fact, median paid co-op salary for six months is over \$18,000. Furthermore, nearly half (48 percent) of co-op participants working full-time received a job offer from a former co-op employer.<sup>xlii</sup>
- **Leverage current channels and create new ways of funding EL opportunities for students.** Often, students do not engage in EL because of the prevalence of unpaid or low-paying opportunities. IHEs in New Jersey, by and large, do not provide their own funding to students. They should consider developing strategies to monetarily support students engaging in workplace EL—be it to help pay for travel or living expenses or to provide base pay. Targeting low-income students, who often do not have the connections to find well-paying opportunities or the means to complete unpaid opportunities, should be an important focus. EL is beneficial overall but is especially advantageous for low-income students. Several schools across the country have created channels for EL funding that is specifically targeted at those students who receive financial aid and are looking to engage in unpaid or low-paid opportunities.
  - *Brown University BrownConnect LINK Program.* In this program, Brown University alumni and parents, the Office of Financial Aid, as well as other departments in the University, fund stipends for students who secure an unpaid or low-paying internship. Students are awarded a \$3,500 stipend for domestic internships and \$5,000 for internships abroad. To be eligible, students must secure an unpaid internship or one which pays less than \$1,000 over the summer. These opportunities must have professional supervision according to LINK guidelines. Students must work a minimum of 240 hours of supervised work to receive the financial awards.<sup>xliii</sup>
  - *Rutgers University “Report of the Task Force to Enhance Experiential Education for Undergraduate Students at Rutgers University-New Brunswick.”* This task force proposed the creation of an Internship Opportunity Fund, which would be initially funded at \$100,000. The fund would be targeted to award students who are receiving financial aid an additional amount to help offset expenses, such as travel to and from their job site, incurred during unpaid internships. What is unique about this proposal is that it would be funded through either an adjustment to the cost allocation formula or an adjustment to the distribution of student campus fees, amounting to a charge of approximately \$2 per student.<sup>xliv</sup>

These two institution-level programs listed above illustrate models that could be scaled up so that all students receiving financial aid have the opportunity to receive some level of EL/internship funding. Such a policy could further be means-tested such that it benefits extremely low-income students who need internship funding most.

- *New Jersey's Many Paths, One Future Program.* Currently, this program is administered by the New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development. This program reimburses employers 50 percent of wages paid to up to a total of 1,000 new interns on a first-come, first-serve basis. The limit per student is set at \$1,500.<sup>xlv</sup> Due to lack of awareness and funding being limited to internships in a few specific fields, as of April 2018, only 341 students from a small concentration of IHEs in New Jersey have applied and received funding through the program. The state should look into increased funding for marketing to students, especially low-income

students who could doubly benefit from an EL opportunity and some financial assistance. Additionally, this program could be expanded such that it covers more sectors and offers assistance more specifically targeted to those low-income students who need it most.

While this program is monetarily small given the broader need for EL funding, it might be integrated into the current financial aid system for sustainability and better access to students.

- **Elevate career services offices' roles to meet the emerging demands and trends.** Moving forward, IHEs' career services offices will play a critical and perhaps central role in helping to produce successful career outcomes for students. Experts suggest that career services offices should strive to fully engage the entire network of students, alumni, faculty, employers, families, and surrounding communities.<sup>xlvi</sup> Central themes seen in newly conceived career services models are that they strive to interact with all parts of campus and student life, are tailored toward student needs and interests, and offer guidance in settings outside of formal counseling appointments. Listed below are IHEs across the country that are employing innovative, new models of career counseling.
  - *George Mason University's "Customized Connectors" Model.* This model is based on the premise that students often consult their networks of family and friends when making career decisions. George Mason's career services office seeks to get within a couple degrees of students' inner circles. They primarily strive to do this by creating partnerships with university life offices, faculty, and area employers. The goal of the model is to spread the word that career services staff are the experts on career education and valuable resources for facilitating connections between employers and students. People in students' networks, then, should be pointing students to the office when they are seeking career advice. In 2013-2014, the office's efforts saw success as there was an 18 percent increase in appointments, 45 percent increase in freshman and sophomore engagement, and a 78 percent increase in career program attendance.<sup>xlvii</sup>
  - *Rutgers University-New Brunswick "Career Cluster" Model.* In this model, students can sign up to be part of one of seven clusters, namely: Arts, Communications, and Entertainment; Business, Financial Services, and Logistics; Education and Public & Human Services; Food & Agriculture and Environmental & Natural Resources; Life Sciences and Health; STEM; and Students Still Deciding.<sup>xlviii</sup> The goal of these clusters is to tailor information toward students' career interests rather than solely their major. Since switching to this model, the office has seen a 25 percent increase in students seeking out services.<sup>xlix</sup>
- **Foster further collaboration between IHEs and employers.** Although IHEs might spearhead much of the reform efforts toward better promotion of EL on their campuses, the state can provide much-needed resources to further fostering collaborations. New Jersey should look into either creating or investing more in new or existing programs that seek to address industry needs and that help create meaningful workplace opportunities for students. Of note, there may be some programs that are being conducted already that this study was not able to learn about.
  - *Maryland Employment Advancement Right Now (EARN) Program.* This program allows employers and employer groups to receive EARN grants to help provide education and skills training to primarily unemployed, underemployed, and incumbent workers. The program has a specific focus on helping underserved populations who face significant barriers to employment. While the program largely targets those currently in the workforce or who were previously employed, some of the partnerships also provide internship opportunities for students that are still in school and completing educational requirements. For instance, the Maryland Manufacturing Extension Partnership implemented a structured internship program for college students. The most recent data suggest that 2,767 unemployed and underemployed participants

completed entry level training programs. Of those, 2,323 (84 percent) obtained employment. For every dollar the state invests into the program, an additional \$18.97 in economic activity is created. State leadership has further recognized the value of the program, doubling the program budget for FY 2018 to over \$8 million.<sup>1</sup>

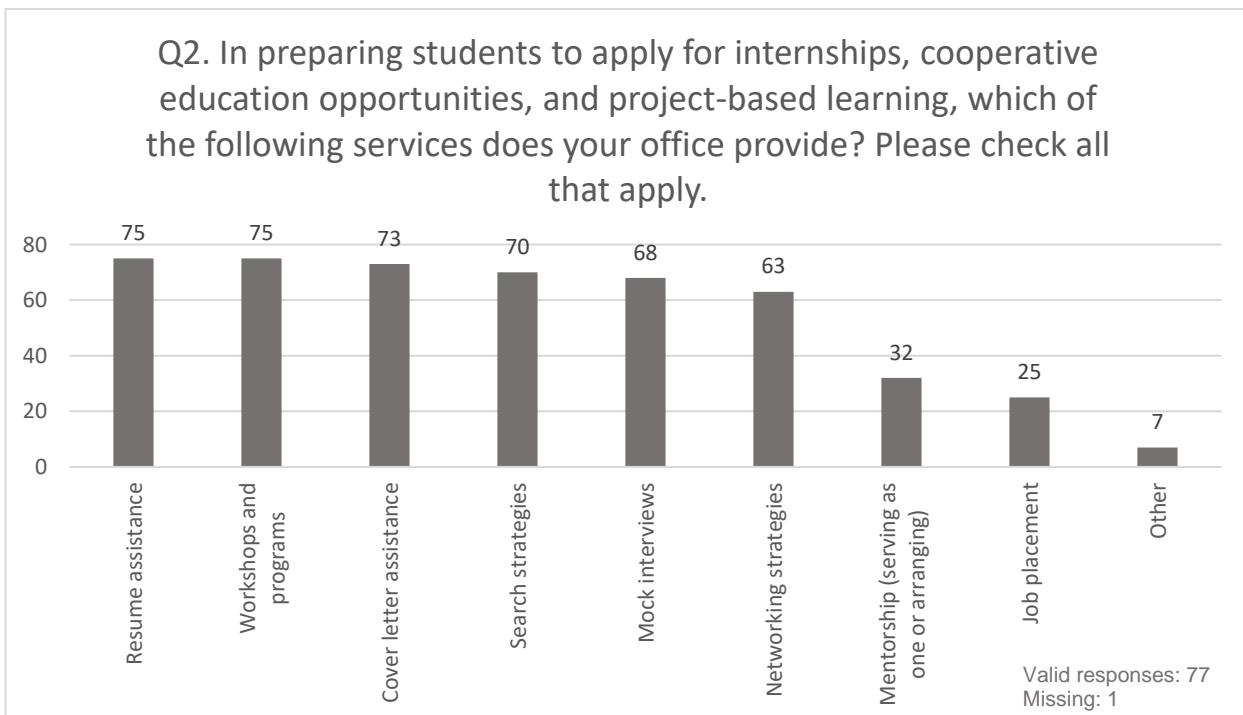
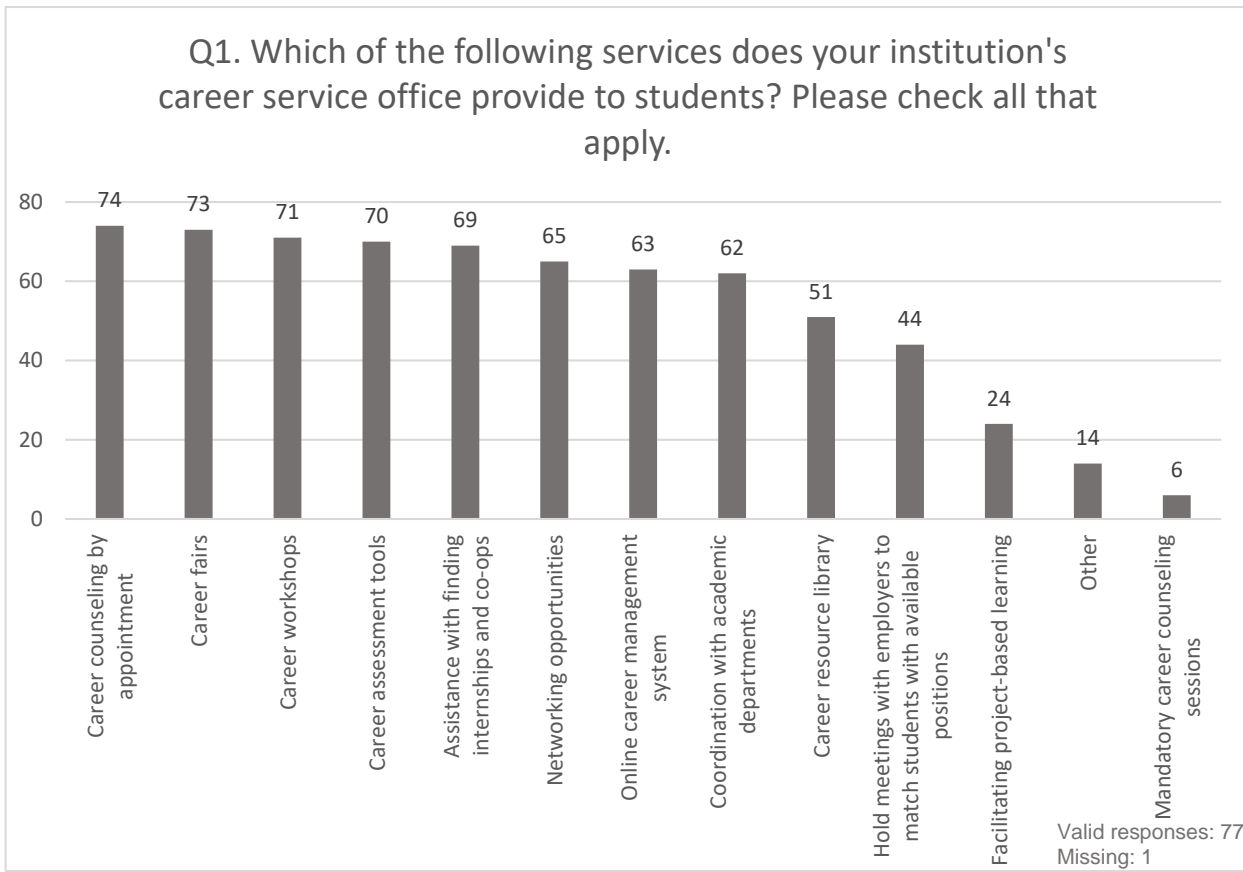
New Jersey should consider development of a similar program that is even more targeted toward college students, especially those who are low-income and have disproportionately lower access to workplace EL opportunities. The EARN program also involves partnerships with many community colleges. Perhaps EL disparities seen amongst community colleges in this study can be reduced if New Jersey develops a statewide program similar to EARN.

## CONCLUSION

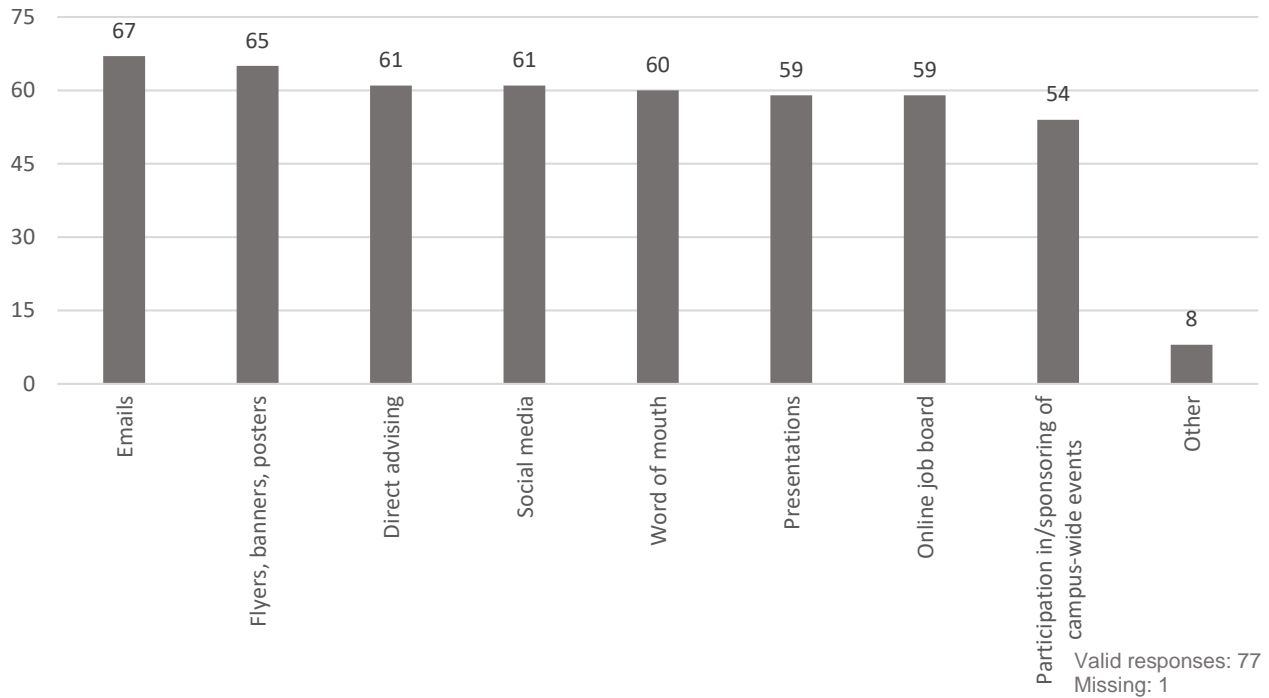
There is widespread recognition that EL, specifically workplace EL, helps students develop skills that increase their chances of employment after graduation. As employers increasingly value prior workplace experience when hiring recent graduates, it is crucial that access to EL opportunities be expanded for all students. IHEs can play a significant role in breaking down the several barriers that might prevent students from participating in workplace learning opportunities. In fact, schools across the country have already implemented structured EL models that allow students to: engage in meaningful work, receive helpful feedback, reflect upon their experiences, and obtain funding support. Some IHEs have even valued EL so highly that they require all undergraduate students to complete a certain amount of EL credits before graduation. As students and their families are increasingly viewing higher education in terms of returns on investment in the form of employment outcomes, they may find such innovative EL programs as attractive when selecting schools to attend. IHEs in New Jersey can emulate models at other schools across the country and improve upon existing successful programs to not only promote EL to their students but to also attract prospective students both inside and outside of the state.

## APPENDIX ITEMS

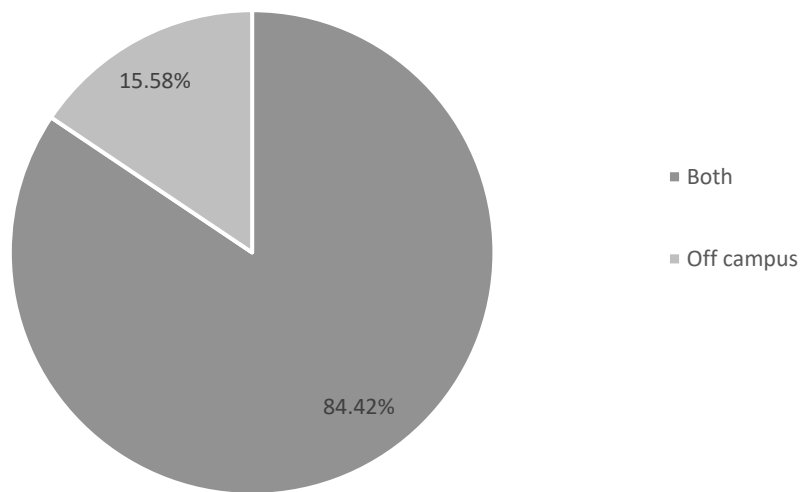
### APPENDIX A: SURVEY TOPLINE



Q3. How does the career services office make students aware of internships, co-ops, and project-based learning opportunities?  
Please check all that apply.



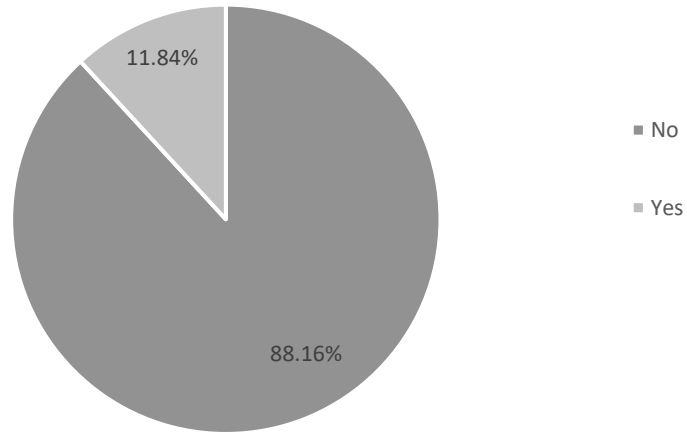
Q4. Do your students engage in on-campus internships, off-campus internships, or both?



Valid responses: 77  
Missing: 1

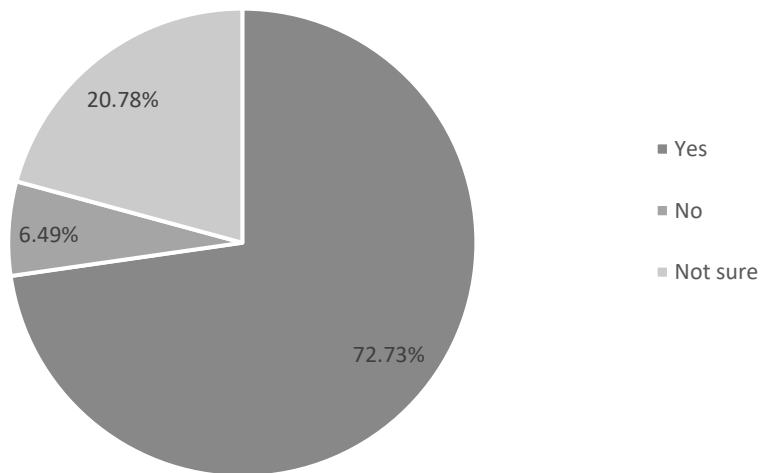


Q5. Does your institution have a requirement that all undergraduate students complete an internship in order to graduate?



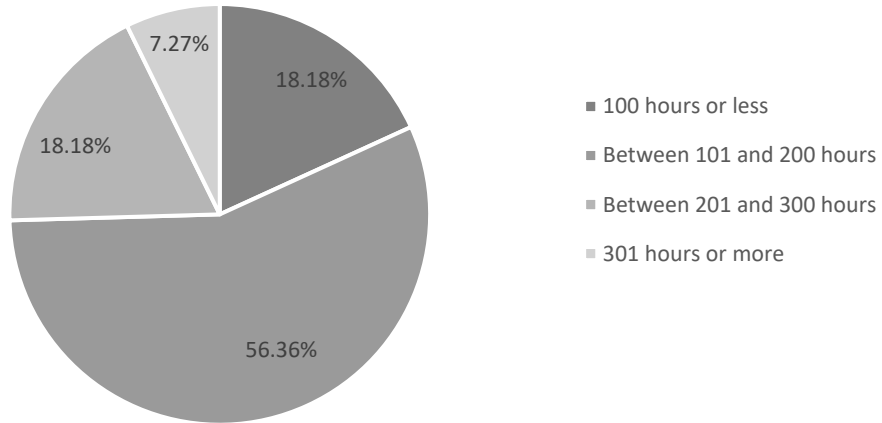
Valid responses: 76  
Missing: 2

Q6. Are students able to receive academic credit for the internships they participate in?



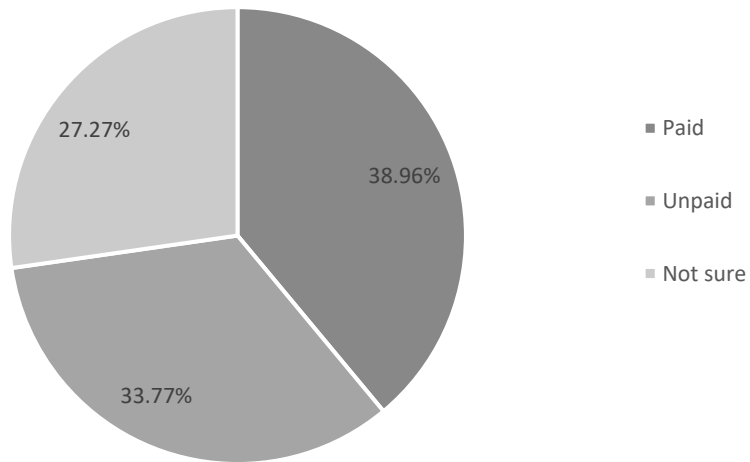
Valid responses: 77  
Missing: 1

Q7. In order for students to receive academic credit for internships in one semester, how many working hours are required of a student in that semester?



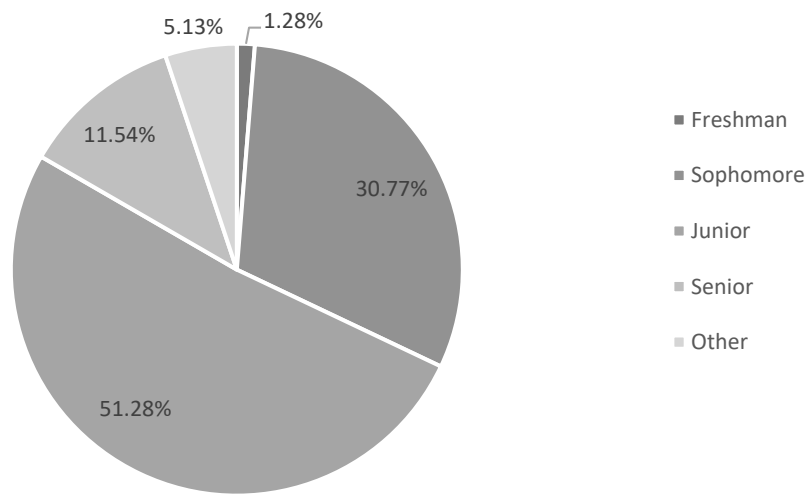
Valid responses: 55  
Missing: 23

Q8. In your observation, do students more frequently participate in unpaid internships or paid internships?



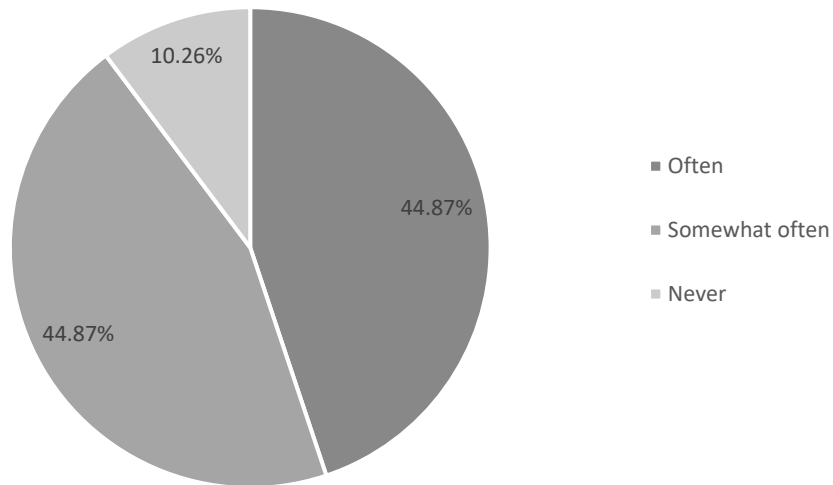
Valid responses: 77  
Missing: 1

Q9. In your observation, in which year do most students first participate in internships?



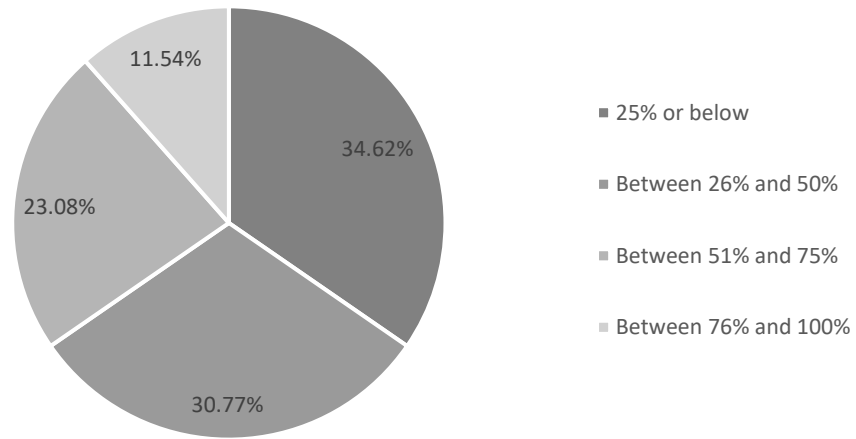
Valid responses: 78  
Missing: 0

Q10. In helping students with internships, how often do you coordinate with academic departments and professors?



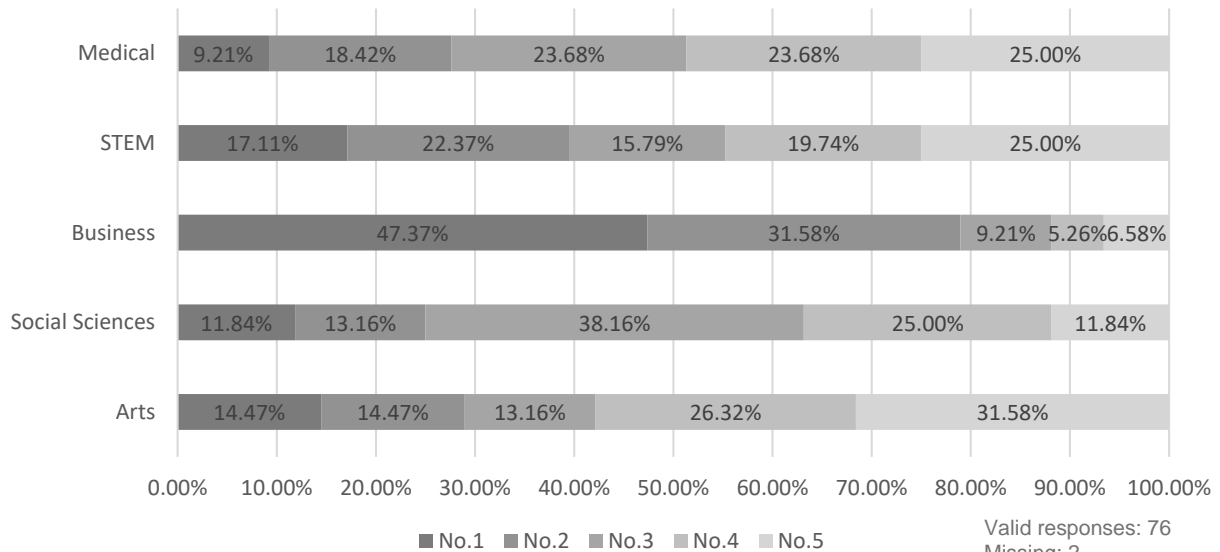
Valid responses: 78  
Missing: 0

Q11. In your estimation, what percentage of students complete an internship during their time at your institution?



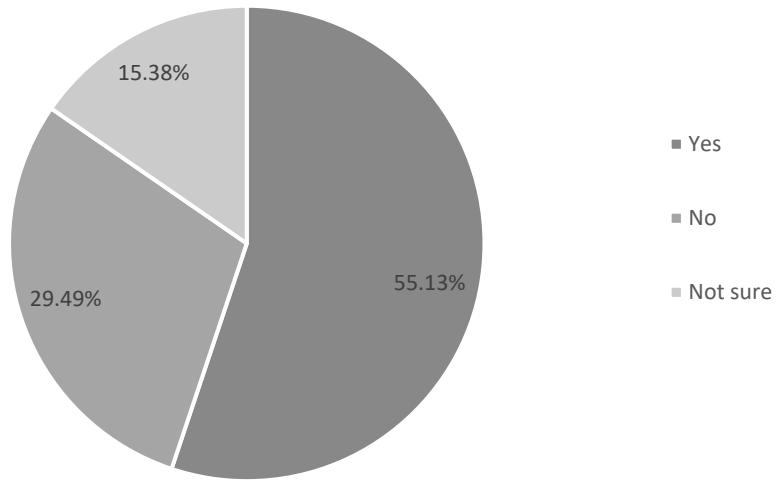
Valid responses: 78  
Missing: 0

Q12. In your observation, which of the following disciplines have the greatest percentage of students engaging in internships? Please rank them from highest level of participation (1) to lowest level of participation (5).



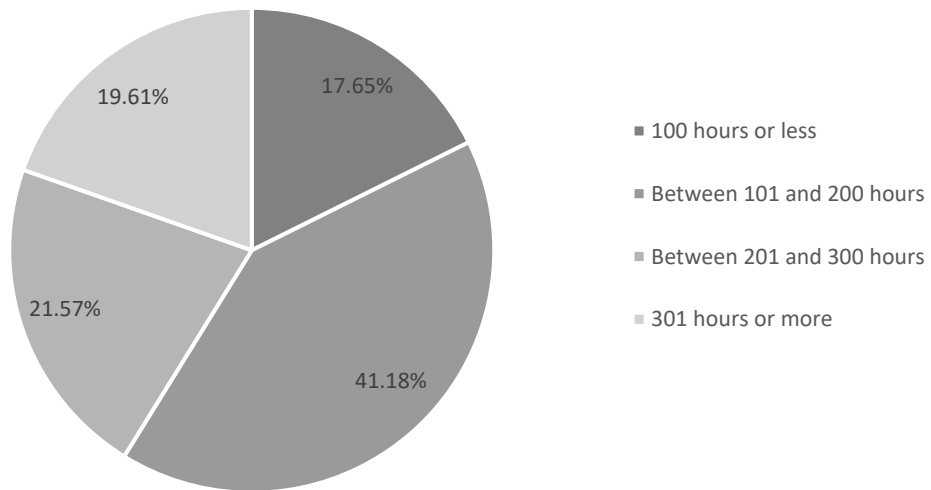
Valid responses: 76  
Missing: 2

Q13. Does your institution offer academic credit for co-ops?



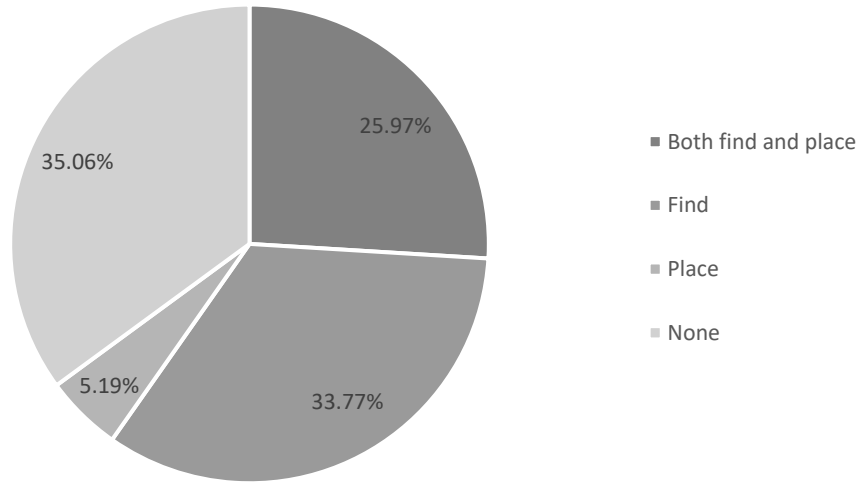
Valid responses: 78  
Missing: 0

Q14. In offering academic credit for co-ops in one semester, how many working hours are required of a student in that semester?



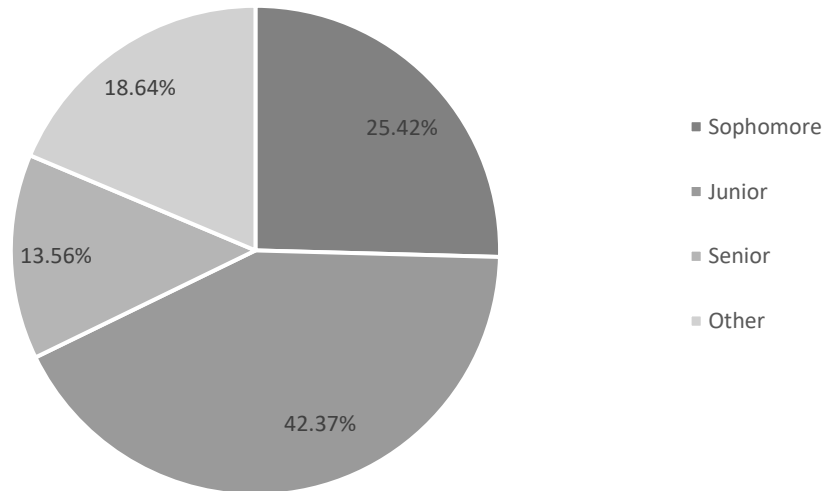
Valid responses: 51  
Missing: 27

Q15. Does your office help students find co-ops and/or does it arrange specific co-op assignments for individual students?



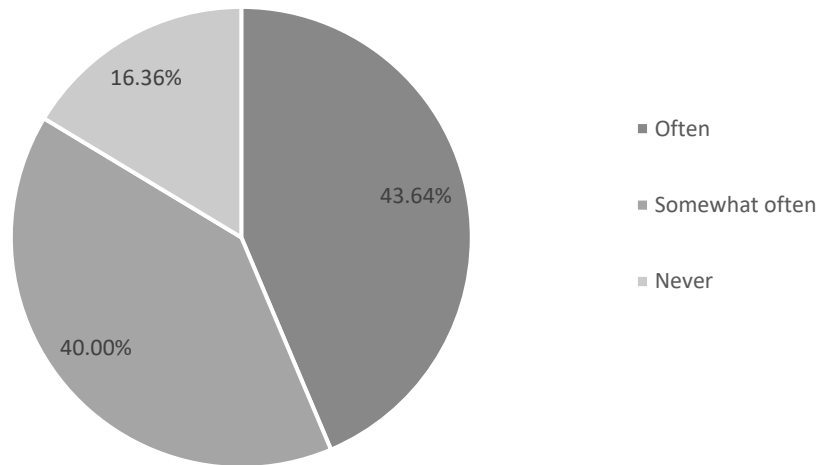
Valid responses: 77  
Missing: 1

Q16. In your observation, in which year do most students first participate in co-ops?



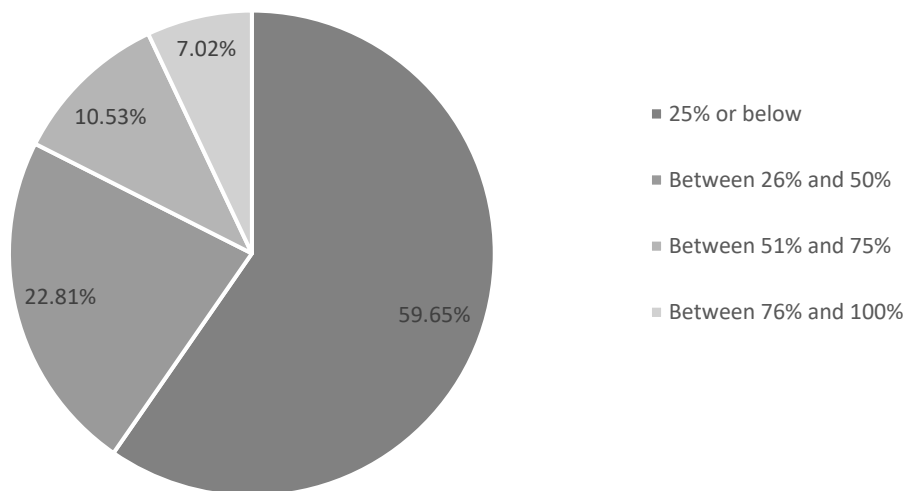
Valid responses: 59  
Missing: 19

Q17. In helping students find and/or get placed into co-ops, how often do you coordinate with academic departments and professors?



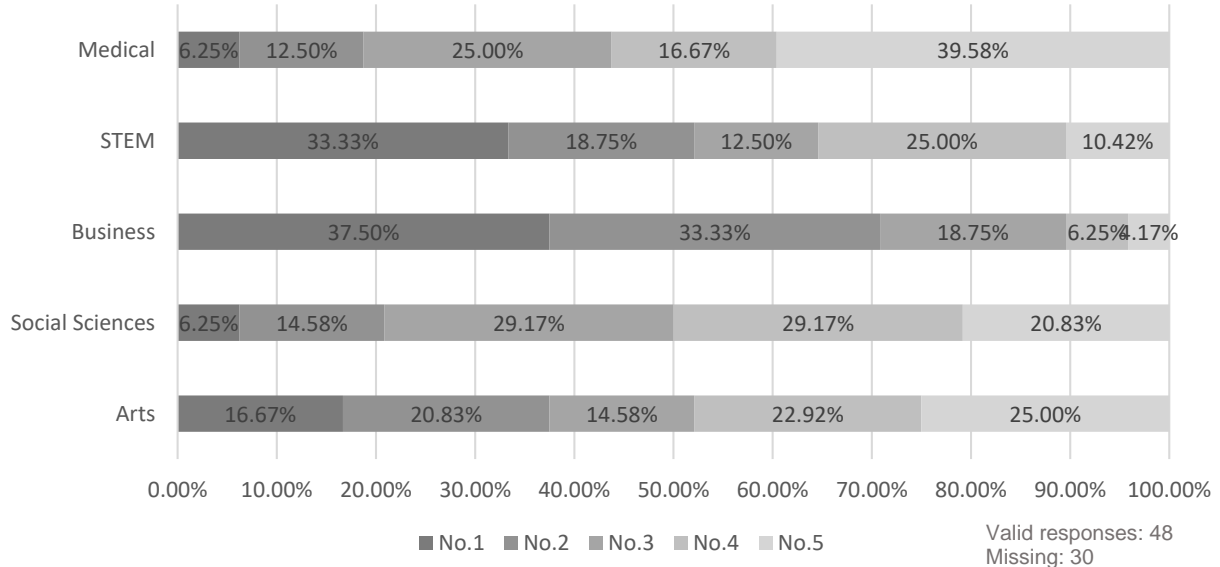
Valid responses: 55  
Missing: 23

Q18. In your estimation, what percentage of students complete a co-op during their time at your institution?

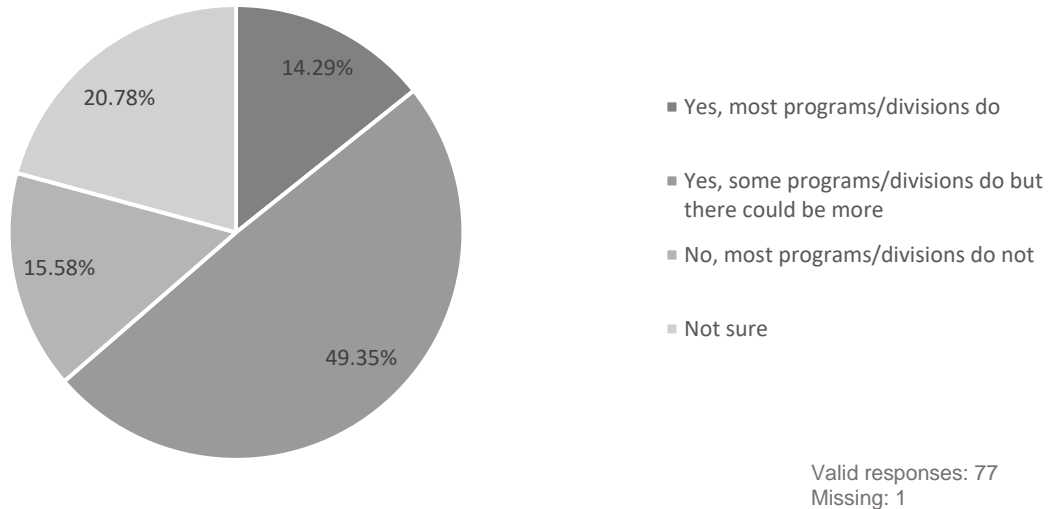


Valid responses: 57  
Missing: 21

Q19. In your observation, which of the following disciplines have the greatest percentage of students engaging in co-ops? Please rank them from highest level of participation (1) to lowest level of participation (5).

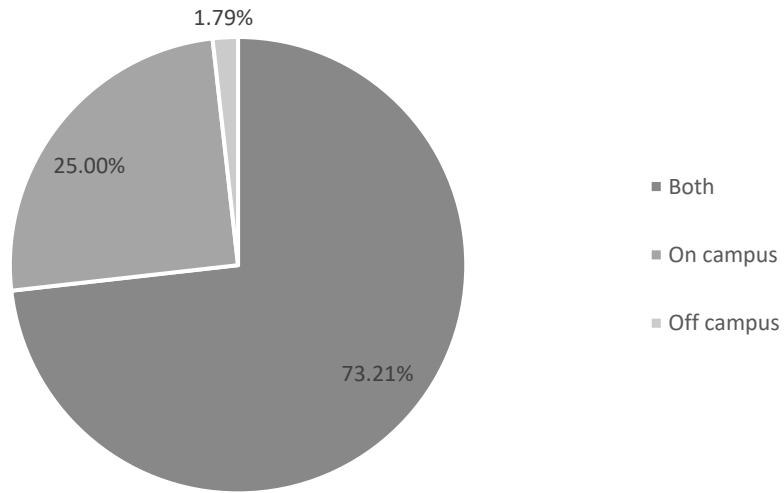


Q20. Does your institution offer project-based learning opportunities for students?



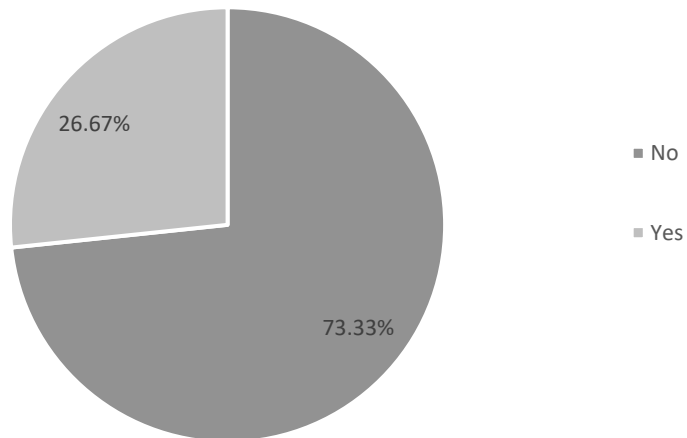


Q21. Does your institution offer on-campus project-based learning, off-campus project-based learning, or both?



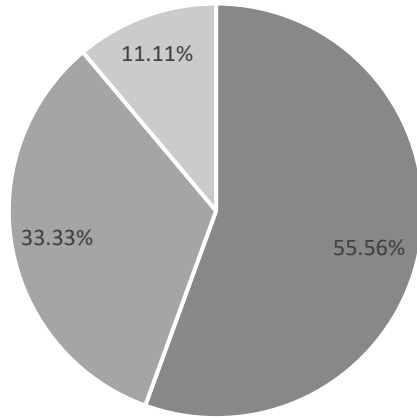
Valid responses: 56  
Missing: 22

Q22. Does your office help in coordinating project-based learning opportunities for students?



Valid responses: 60  
Missing: 18

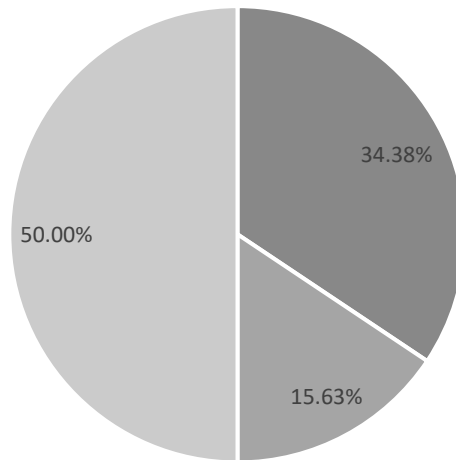
Q23. In coordinating project-based learning opportunities, how often would you say you work with academic departments and professors?



- Often
- Somewhat often
- Never

Valid responses: 18  
Missing: 60

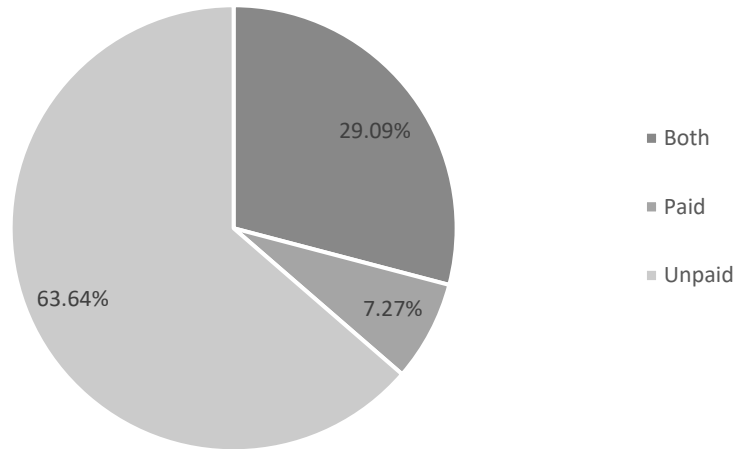
Q24. Does your institution offer academic credit for project-based learning?



- Yes
- No
- Not sure

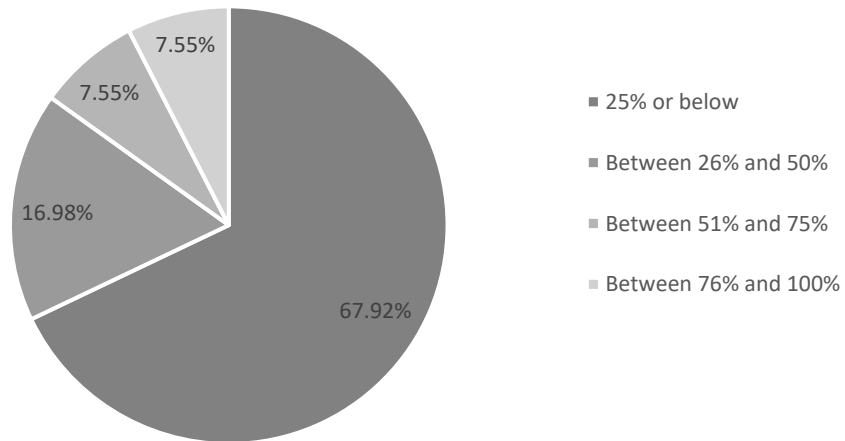
Valid responses: 64  
Missing: 14

Q25. Does your institution provide paid project-based learning, unpaid project-based learning, or both?



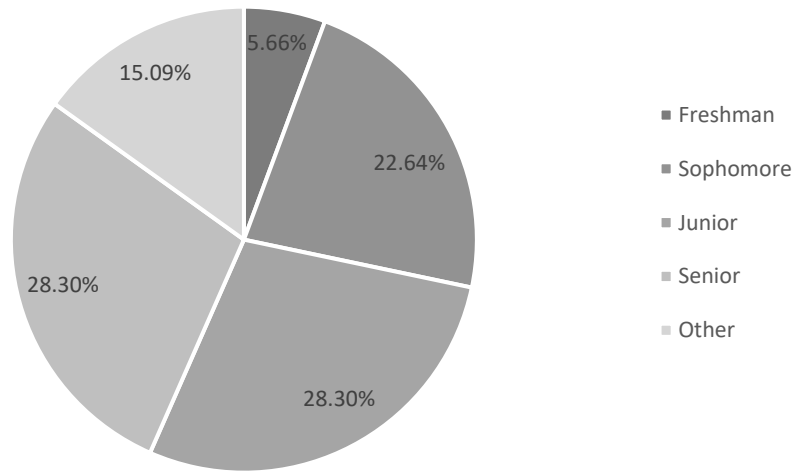
Valid responses: 55  
Missing: 23

Q26. In your estimation, what percentage of students complete a project-based learning opportunity during their time at your institution?



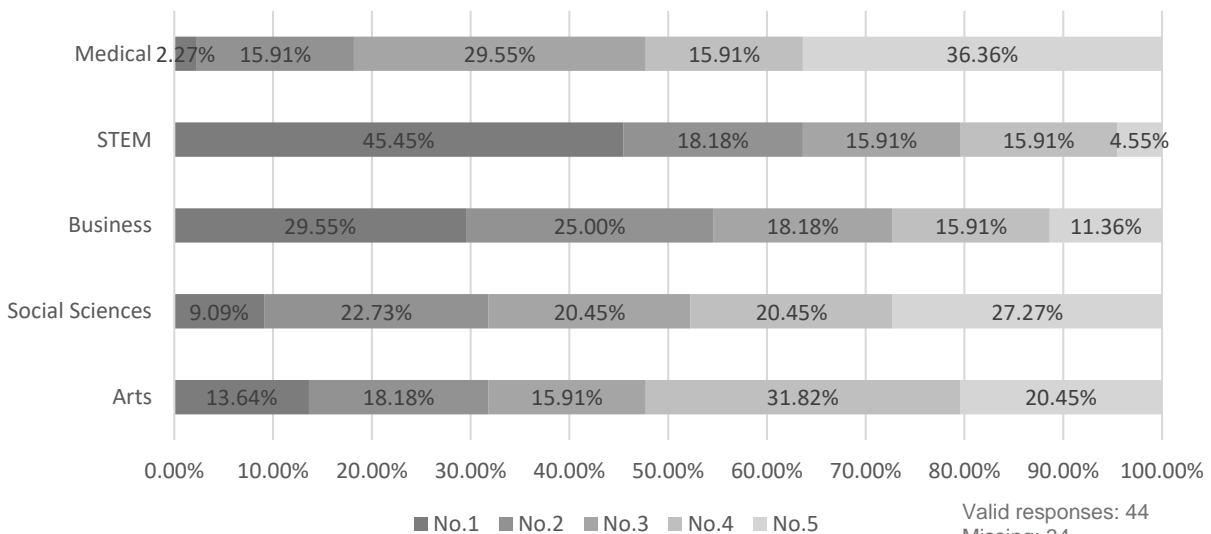
Valid responses: 55  
Missing: 23

Q27. In your observation, in which year do most students first participate in project-based learning opportunities?



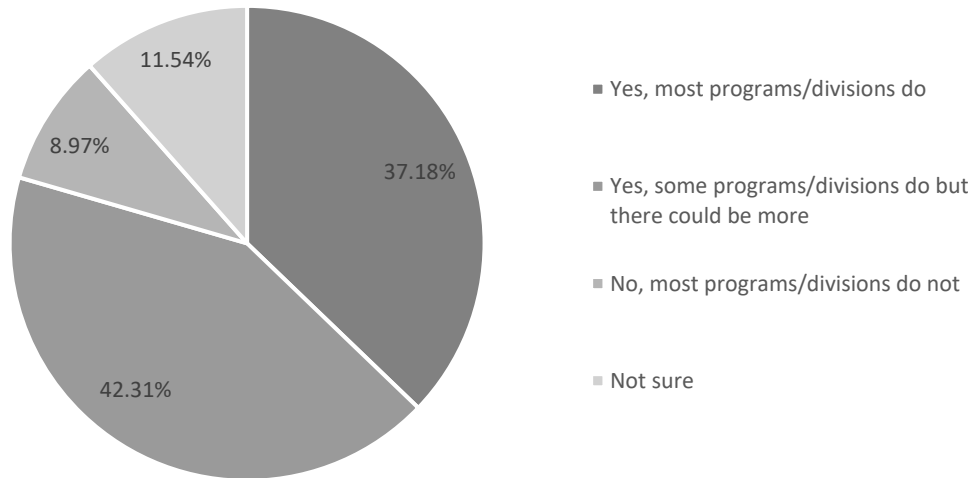
Valid responses: 53  
Missing: 25

Q28. In your observation, which of the following disciplines have the greatest percentage of students engaging in project-based learning opportunities? Please rank them from highest level of participation (1) to lowest level of participation (5).



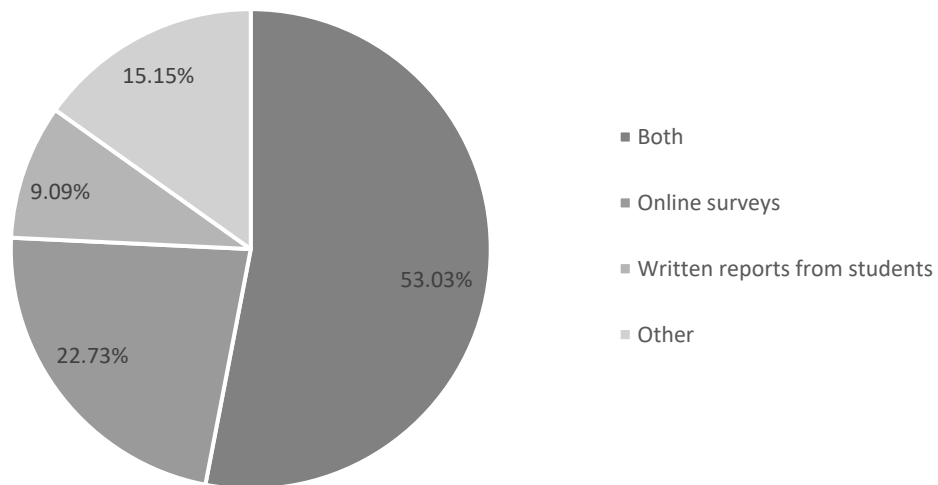
Valid responses: 44  
Missing: 34

Q29. Does your institution capture data on students' experiences with the experiential learning opportunities that they engage in?



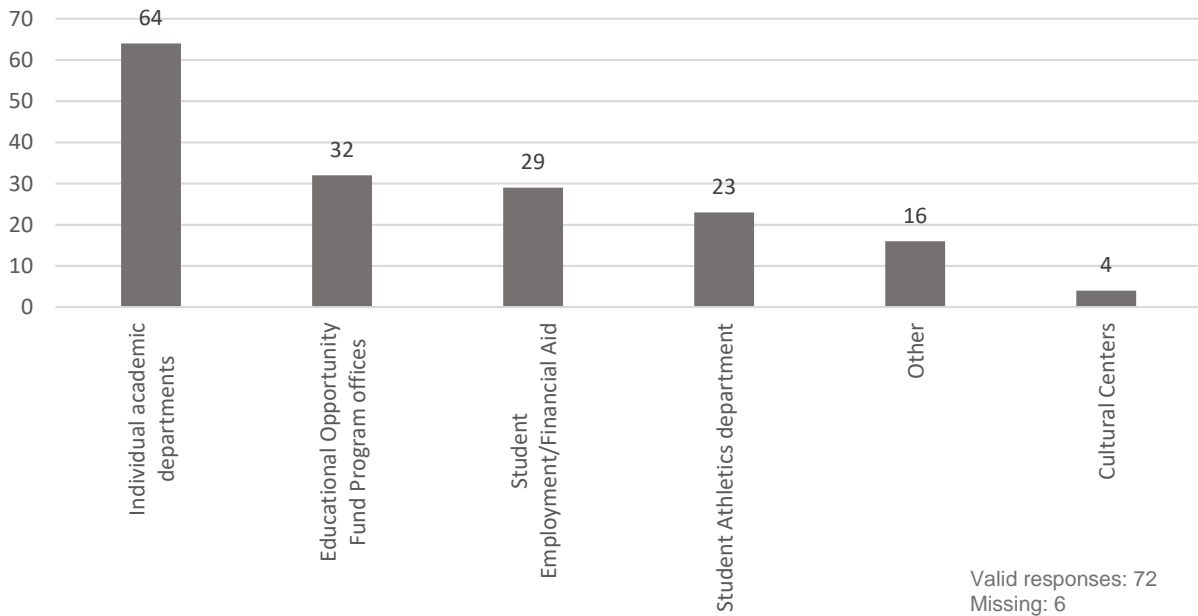
Valid responses: 78  
Missing: 0

Q30. Which of the following methods does your institution use to capture this data?

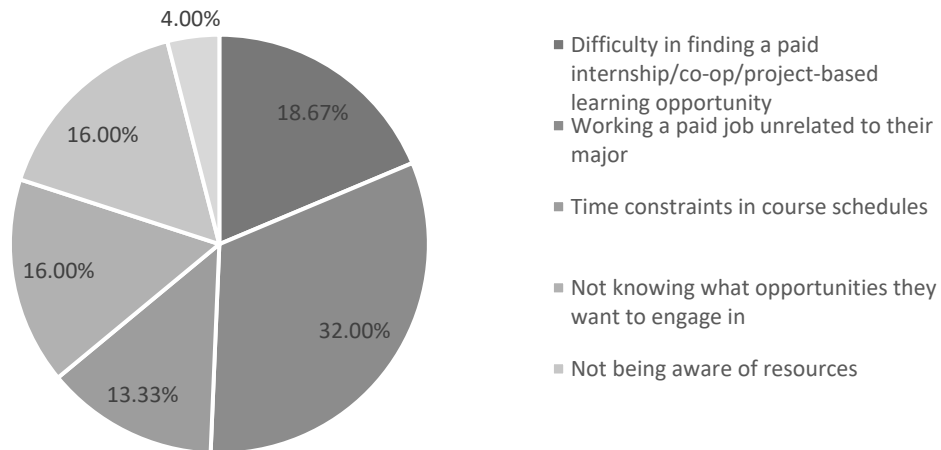


Valid responses: 66  
Missing: 12

Q31. Which of the following offices, if any, also help students in finding opportunities discussed in the survey? Please check all that apply.

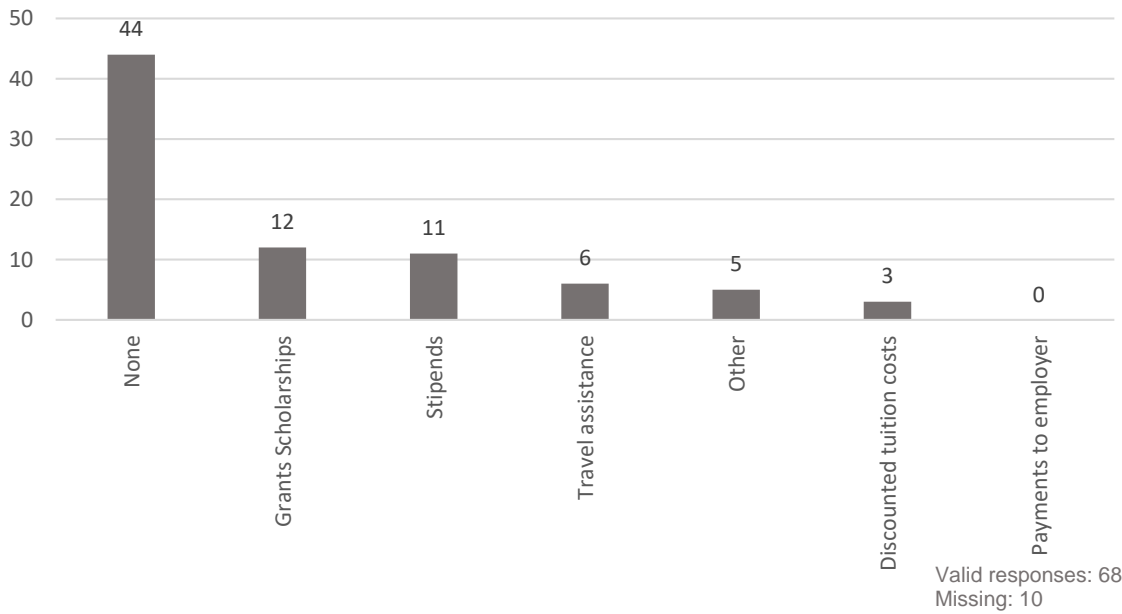


Q32. In your personal view, which of the following do you feel is the most significant barrier students face in partaking in an internship, co-op, or project-based learning experience?

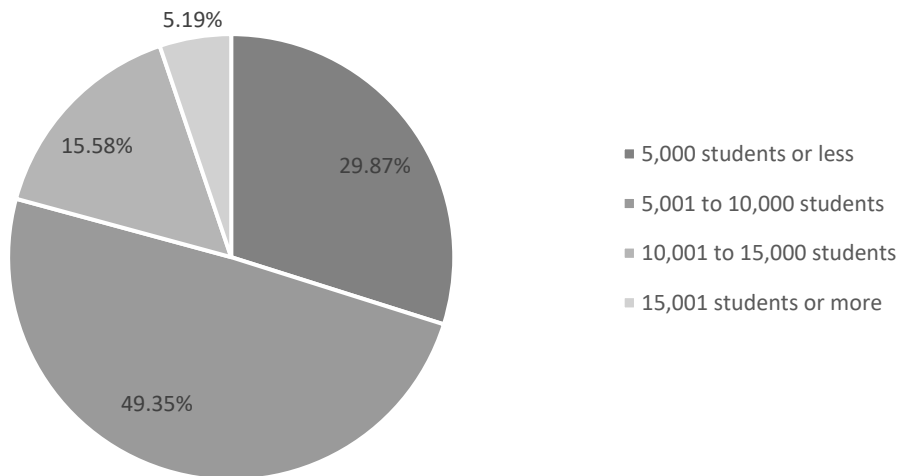


Valid responses: 75  
Missing: 3

Q33. Which financial supports, if any, does your institution provide to students participating in internships, co-ops, or project-based learning. Please check all that apply.

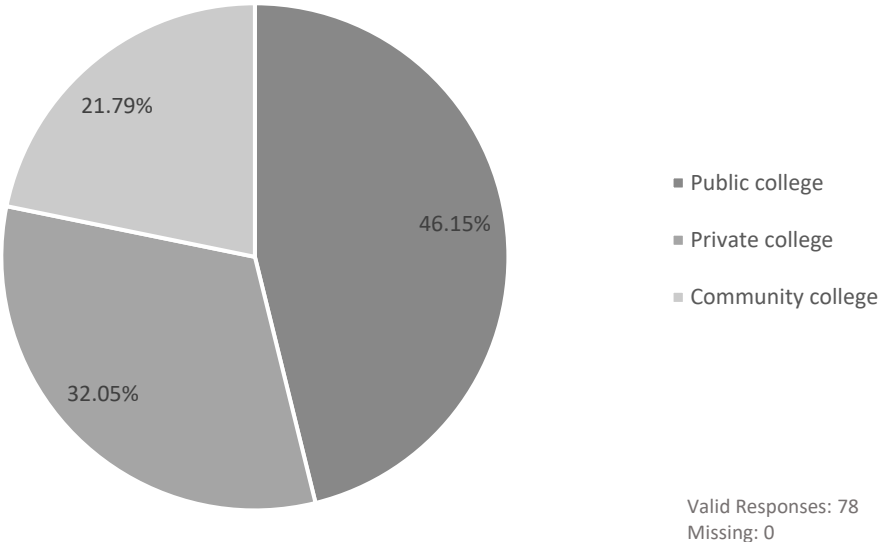


Q34. What is the size of your institution's undergraduate population?

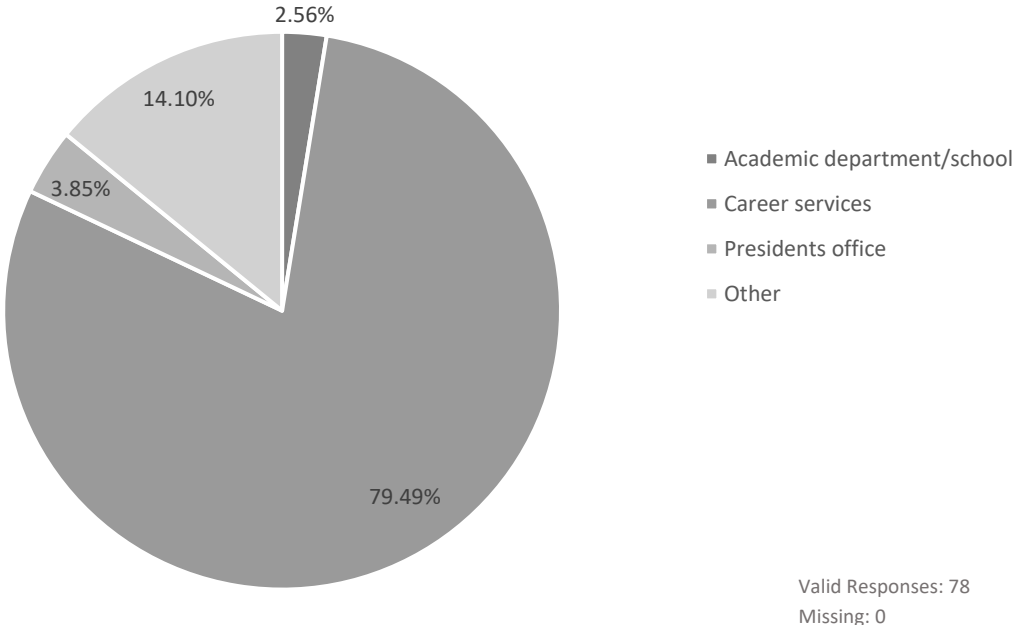


Valid Responses: 77  
Missing: 1

Q35. In what sector is your institution classified?



Q36. In what section of your institution do you work?





## APPENDIX B: EMAIL OUTREACH FOR SURVEY PARTICIPATION

**March 12, 2018**

Greetings,

My name is Christopher Myles. I am part of a graduate student research team at Rutgers University that is partnering with New Jersey's Office of the Secretary of Higher Education to develop an important report on experiential learning in New Jersey. We are seeking to gather information about internship, cooperative education, and project-based learning programs at colleges and universities across the state. The Presidents at your institutions have been notified that we are reaching out to you about our research.

I am writing to ask for your help with a key element of this project, the 2018 OSHE Experiential Learning Survey. Your responses are sincerely appreciated and integral to our research. The questionnaire contains a series of short questions, and should take less than ten minutes to complete.

**Follow this link to the Survey:**

[\\${!://SurveyLink?d=Take the Survey}](#)

**Or copy and paste the URL below into your internet browser:**

[\\${!://SurveyURL}](#)

Your thoughts on these critical experiential learning issues will give our team a better understanding of how students are engaging in hands-on learning experiences that enhance their employability. If you have already responded to this survey and would like to be removed from future emails, please feel free to unsubscribe below or email me at [ctm125@scarletmail.rutgers.edu](mailto:ctm125@scarletmail.rutgers.edu). We thank you for your help with this survey.

Best,

Christopher Myles  
Master of Public Policy Candidate  
Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy  
Rutgers University

Follow the link to opt out of future emails:

[\\${!://OptOutLink?d=Click here to unsubscribe}](#)

**March 15, 2018**

Hello,

Earlier this week, I sent an email to you asking for your participation in the 2018 OSHE Experiential Learning Survey. The survey is being conducted by Rutgers graduate students on behalf of the New Jersey Office of the Secretary of Higher Education.

**Follow this link to the Survey:**

[\\${!://SurveyLink?d=Take the Survey}](#)

Or copy and paste the URL below into your internet browser:

[\\${!://SurveyURL}](#)

Your responses to this survey will help us better understand how New Jersey students are engaging in opportunities that improve their chances of employment after graduation.

If you have already responded to this survey and would like to be removed from our email list, please feel free to unsubscribe below or email [ctm125@scarletmail.rutgers.edu](mailto:ctm125@scarletmail.rutgers.edu). We appreciate you considering our request.

Best,

Christopher Myles  
Master of Public Policy Candidate  
Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy  
Rutgers University

Follow the link to opt out of future emails:

[\\${!://OptOutLink?d=Click here to unsubscribe}](#)

**March 22, 2018**

Good Afternoon,

Recently, we sent an e-mail asking you to complete a survey about how you view students' experiences with internships, cooperative education, and project-based learning. Your Presidents have been notified about our research (see attached). While our initial deadline for the survey was today, we are extending the open date for responses to **Tuesday, March 27th**, to allow for more input.

If you have not answered the 2018 OSHE Experiential Learning Survey yet, we please urge you to do so. It should only take less than ten minutes to complete. Simply click on the link below to begin answering questions.

**Follow this link to the Survey:**

[\\${!://SurveyLink?d=Take the Survey}](#)

Or copy and paste the URL below into your internet browser:

[\\${!://SurveyURL}](#)

If you have already completed this survey, we thank you very much. We truly appreciate your help. Please feel free to unsubscribe below if you do not wish to receive further emails.

This survey is very important in seeing how students learn about and gain access to experiential learning opportunities. If you have any questions or comments, please feel free to contact me at [ctm125@scarletmail.rutgers.edu](mailto:ctm125@scarletmail.rutgers.edu) or (848) 469-6931. Thank you so much.

Best,

Christopher Myles  
Master of Public Policy Candidate  
Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy  
Rutgers University

[Oshe2018research](#)

Follow the link to opt out of future emails:  
\${!://OptOutLink?d=Click here to unsubscribe}

**March 27, 2018**

Good Morning,

We are writing for to follow up on our requests asking for your participation in the 2018 OSHE Experiential Learning Survey. Our assessment of student experiential learning programs at colleges across the state is wrapping up, and this message is the last email reminder we are sending out about the study. Your Presidents have been informed of our research (see attached). To reiterate from our last message, we extended the survey's timeline so that close of business TODAY is the deadline.

**Follow this link to the Survey:**

\${!://SurveyLink?d=Take the Survey}

Or copy and paste the URL below into your internet browser:

\${!://SurveyURL}

Thank you for considering participating in our research. We hope to hear your thoughts on this important higher education issue.

Best,

Christopher Myles  
Master of Public Policy Candidate  
Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy  
Rutgers University

[Oshe2018research](#)

Follow the link to opt out of future emails:  
\${!://OptOutLink?d=Click here to unsubscribe}

## APPENDIX C: OSHE INITIAL OUTREACH TO NEW JERSEY IHES



### State of New Jersey

NEW JERSEY HIGHER EDUCATION  
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF HIGHER EDUCATION  
P.O. BOX 542  
TRENTON, NJ 08625-0542  
TELEPHONE: (609) 292-4310  
FAX: (609) 292-7225  
E-mail: njhe@njhe.state.nj.us

PHILIP D. MURPHY  
GOVERNOR

SHEILA OLIVER  
LT. GOVERNOR

ROCHELLE R. HENDRICKS  
SECRETARY OF HIGHER EDUCATION

February 12, 2018

Dear Colleagues:

I am pleased to inform you that the Office of the Secretary of Higher Education is working with Dr. Carl Van Horn and the Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy at Rutgers University to gather important information from your institution. The project focuses on how New Jersey institutions of higher education provide experiential learning opportunities. Our goal is to create a public policy white paper that showcases promising practices from across the state of New Jersey. The project will identify program tools and policy changes that can be disseminated to facilitate expansion and/or replication of high quality models.

Graduate students from the Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy have already started. The students have commenced researching promising practices used by other states. **The next phase of this research will require your institution to complete a survey.** Findings will be collected and published in a report to be shared with all of our institutions of higher education.

In the next several days, the research team will email you a short survey regarding the work of your institution. **In the email you will be asked to designate a point of contact to receive the survey link.** Your full and voluntary cooperation will contribute to the overall success of this project, which will ultimately help programs across the state deliver better services to our students.

Should you have any questions or concerns regarding this project, please feel free to contact Marie Virella by email at [marie.virella@oshe.nj.gov](mailto:marie.virella@oshe.nj.gov) or Dr. Van Horn at (848) 932-1153 or by email at [vanhorn@rci.rutgers.edu](mailto:vanhorn@rci.rutgers.edu).

Thank you in advance for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rochelle R. Hendricks'.

Rochelle Hendricks  
Secretary of Higher Education

RH/MV/ta/R/Toula/SecCorresp/OSHE2018Research.doc

c: Marie Virella  
Angela Bethea  
Carl Van Horn  
Stephanie Holcomb

WEB SITE: [www.nj.gov/highereducation](http://www.nj.gov/highereducation)

LOCATION: 1 John Fitch Plaza, Trenton, NJ 08625

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## APPENDIX D: FOCUS GROUP ITEMS

### **Main Questions for Internship Group**

- Introduce yourself (your name, program/major, year) and when/where you had your internship, cooperative education, or project-based learning experience.
- What was your reason for engaging in this opportunity?
- How did you find this opportunity?
- What was the nature of your internship (or co-op/project-based learning experience)? What kind of tasks did you regularly perform? Were you compensated and in what form (college credit, stipend, payment etc.)?
- How valuable was the experience in developing your workplace skills or deepening the knowledge you gained in the classroom? In other words, how would you say you benefited from your experience, if at all?
- Did you experience any challenges or obstacles during your experience?
- What do you think are some reasons why students would not engage in an experiential learning opportunity?
- In your college experience, have you ever worked at a job unrelated to your major? If so, did you need to leave that job in order to participate in your internship? Did working for your internship “cost” you anything (loss wages from previously held job, college tuition, etc.)?
- Where would you rank the level of importance of having an experiential learning opportunity when thinking about your priorities, responsibilities, and obligations?
- Do you have any recommendations for how your hands-on (experiential) learning experience could have been improved?

# Internship Focus Group Pre-Discussion Questionnaire

\*Handed out prior to focus group discussion

What is your first name? \_\_\_\_\_

What is your major? \_\_\_\_\_

What year are you?

- Freshman
- Sophomore
- Junior
- Senior
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

Which of the following have you participated in during your undergraduate career? Please check all that apply.

- Internship
- Cooperative Education (Co-Op)
- Project-Based Learning
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

Below, please feel free to jot down some notes about your experience. This will help us get started with today's discussion. Here are some questions for guidance: Did you find the experience meaningful? What skills do you feel you gained from it? Did the experience influence your thoughts on a potential career path?

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## **Main Questions for Non-Internship Group**

- Introduce yourself (your name, program/major, year).
- What was your reason for engaging in the focus group?
- During your undergraduate career, have you worked at a paying job that is unrelated to your major?
- We'd like to hear about the career services—career advising, etc. that you have participated in.
  - In what ways were the services helpful to you?
  - In what ways do you feel that the services fell short in helping you reach your goals?
- What are your thoughts behind experiential learning opportunities?
  - Were there certain circumstances/barriers that might have prevented you from participating in some sort of experiential learning opportunity?
- What skills do you hope to develop in future experiential learning opportunities?
- What are your thoughts on future career goals?
- What plans do you have for applying to or participating in experiential learning opportunities down the line, if any?

# Focus Group Non-Internship Pre-Discussion Questionnaire

What is your first name? \_\_\_\_\_

What is your major? \_\_\_\_\_

What year are you?

- Freshman
- Sophomore
- Junior
- Senior
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

Are you engaged in any activities outside of academics? If any, please list them in the space provided below.

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What skills do you think are important for the workplace? Please write any thoughts you have about this topic in the space provided below.

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# **Experiential Learning Focus Group Agenda**

March 26, 2018

Thank you for participating in our focus group. We are looking forward to hearing your perspective on experiential learning to include in research for our client, the New Jersey Office of the Secretary of Higher Education (OSHE).

- Complete Focus Group Pre-Discussion Questionnaire and Consent Form
- Introduce Graduate Student Researchers
- Explain Scope of Research Project
- Research Participants Introduce Themselves
- Continue with Focus Group Questions
- Debriefing
- Gift card rewards for participating in our study

If you have any questions regarding your participation in this focus group, please feel free to contact today's focus group leaders Kellie Palomba at [kelliepalomba@gmail.com](mailto:kelliepalomba@gmail.com), Daniyal Rahim at [daniyal.rahim@rutgers.edu](mailto:daniyal.rahim@rutgers.edu), or Christina Huang at [xh118@scarletmail.rutgers.edu](mailto:xh118@scarletmail.rutgers.edu).

Thank you!

## APPENDIX E: SUMMARIZED CRITERIA FOR ASSESSMENT OF EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

Before starting an experiential learning opportunity, it is encouraged for students to submit a detailed report to illustrate:

- The knowledge (e.g. fundamental principles/concepts/theories) they learned in coursework that can be possibly applied to this experience and why;
- The kinds of skills are they expecting to gain from the experience and how these skills can strengthen their future career;
- The outcomes they hope to attain from the opportunity. If possible, they should provide an outline plan based on the length of their placement;
- Define how they want their work to be judged and in what way these descriptions make sense.

In the experiential learning process, a reflective portfolio will work as a progress report to allow both students and their supervisors to participate in the experience. Students would update their work, while their instructors would be responsible for making records of the student's performance. The following categories should be given attention because these categories make up the key points in evaluating the results of experiential learning:

- Whether there is a true connection between what students' have learned in class and their chosen experiential learning opportunity;
- Whether students are able to gain "soft skills" in the process, such as communication, critical-thinking analysis, etc.;
- Whether students are making progress in achieving their goals and if not, what changes need to be made and why;
- Both a student self-evaluation and instructor evaluation should be conducted at the culmination of the opportunity. The following criteria should work as the general guideline to the assessment of experiential learning:
  - Students' self-evaluation should start from a re-examination of their first report and then identify:
    - If they applied their previous academic knowledge, learned transferable skills, and achieved their goals. If not, what did they gain and what would have improved the experience;
    - If their plan for their work function and if not, where would they have made adjustments;
    - How they perceived the experience (i.e. did they consider it different from traditional jobs).
  - The instructor evaluation should focus on measuring:
    - Whether it was an integrative learning process;
    - If the student completed what they expected to accomplish and what they could improve upon for the future.
- One-on-one oral assessments between students and their instructors are also recommended, which would provide a chance for students and their instructors to communicate about the experience.

Source: Teaching and Learning Services at McGill University. "Guidelines for Assessment of Experiential Learning." Montreal. 2014. [https://www.mcgill.ca/tls/files/tls/guidelines\\_-\\_assessment\\_of\\_experiential\\_learning\\_1.pdf](https://www.mcgill.ca/tls/files/tls/guidelines_-_assessment_of_experiential_learning_1.pdf)

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