



Internships and the Undergraduate Business Program Experience

Skyfactor Research Note

Internships and the Undergraduate Business Program Experience

Many students complete internships during their college experience, often as a required component of their program. Internships are widely recognized as one of many high-impact practices consisting of active learning opportunities that help engage students both in and outside of the classroom, and have been historically linked to numerous benefits¹.

This research note explores the relationship between having an internship and learning outcomes for business students, and the effect that the quality of one's internship has on these outcomes using data from the Skyfactor Benchworks Undergraduate Business Exit Assessment of over 10,000 graduating business students from over 30 colleges in the United States.

Key Points:

- Students with internships tend to have higher cumulative GPAs than students without internships; however, just having an internship does not affect learning outcomes or program satisfaction.
- Students who are satisfied with the experience they gain from their internship have higher GPAs, perform better on learning outcomes, and show higher satisfaction with their program.

Key Questions:

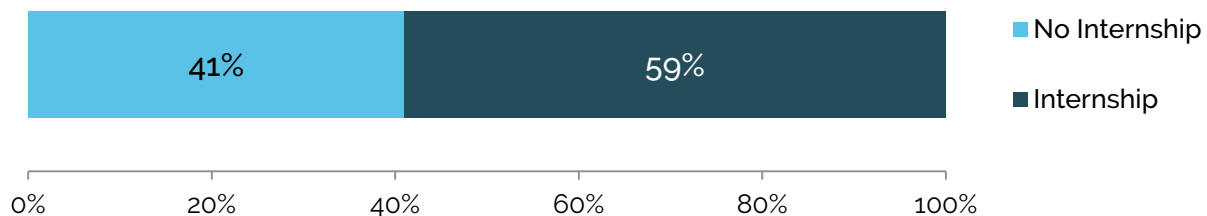
1. How many business students report having an internship?
2. How does internship participation relate to the business student experience?
3. How does internship satisfaction relate to the business student experience?

How many business students report having an internship?

Overall, 59% of business students report participating in an internship as part of their course of study. Figure 1 below illustrates these findings. While these students represented a diverse group of majors from over fifteen business fields, the majority of these students with internships were majoring in accounting (21%), finance (20%), and marketing (20%).

Figure 1: Internship Participation

Percentage of undergraduate business students responding "yes" or "no" to the survey question "Did you participate in an internship?".



¹ Kuh, G. D. (2008). High impact education practices: What they are, who has access to them, and why they matter. Washington, DC: Association of American Colleges and Universities.

How does internship participation relate to the overall college experience for business students?

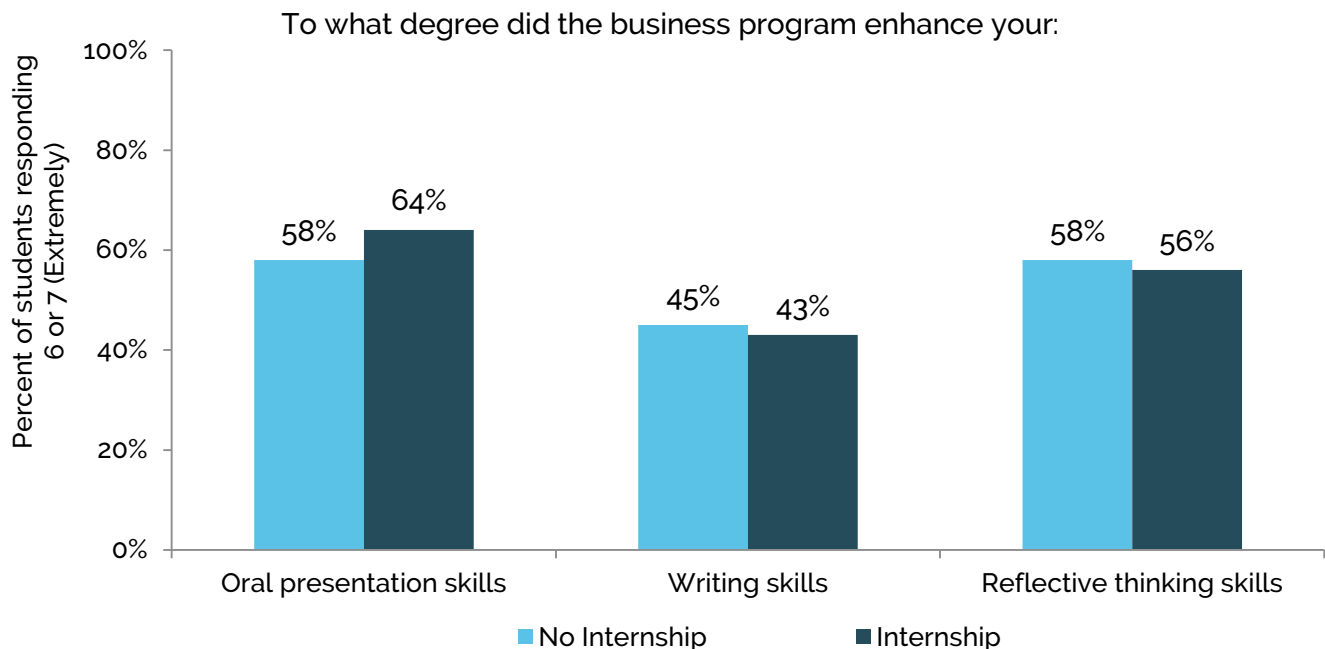
The first part of the analysis conducted for this research project explored the relationship between internship participation and various groups of learning outcomes in the business exit assessment. The following sections—along with figures 2 through 6—explore differences in measures of learning, program experiences, and cumulative GPA depending on whether or not graduating business students indicated that they participated in an internship. Generally, there were not major differences between internship participants and non-participants, except for overall program experiences and self-reported cumulative GPA.

Practical Skills

Figure 2 displays the percent of students responding six or seven on a seven-point scale (“Extremely”) on learning outcomes related to practical skills by whether or not they participated in an internship. While internship participants were more likely to say their program enhanced their oral presentation skills, graduating business students who did not participate in an internship were slightly more likely to say their business program enhanced their writing and reflective thinking skills.

Figure 2: Internship Participation and Practical Skills

Percentage of graduating business students responding 6 or 7 (extremely) on questions related to practical skills by whether or not the student participated in an internship.

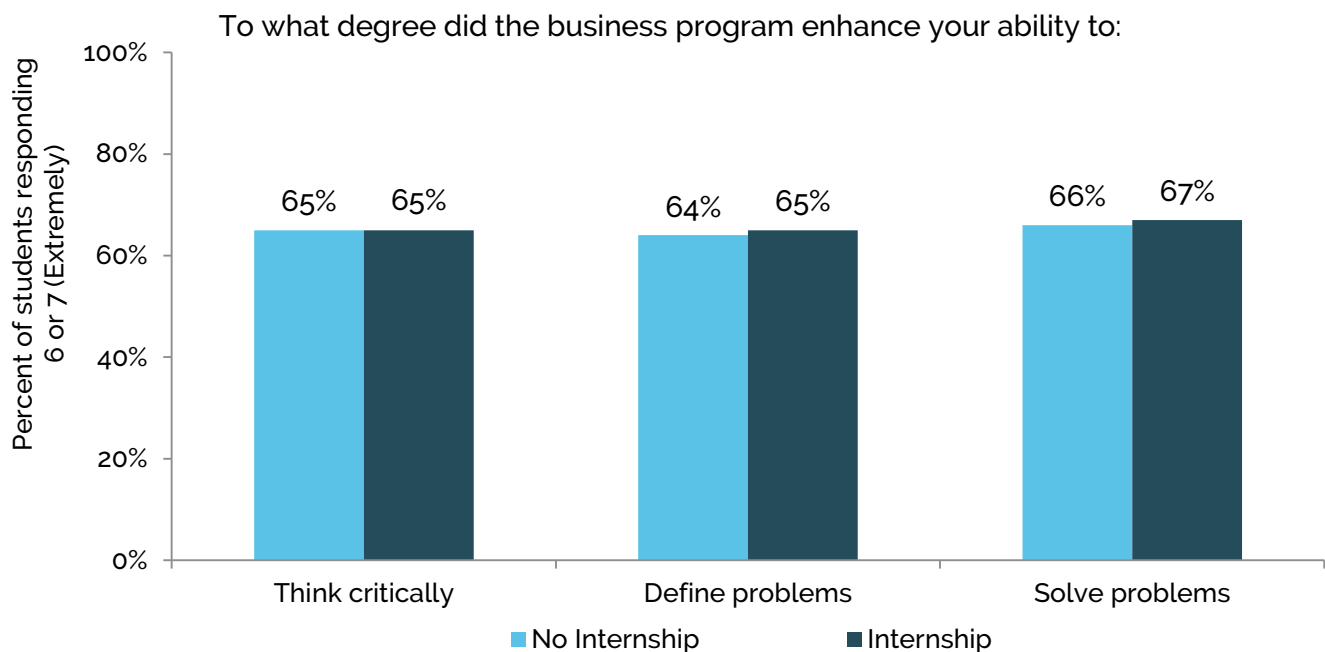


Critical Thinking Skills

Figure 3 displays the percent of students responding six or seven on a seven-point scale (“Extremely”) on learning outcomes related to critical thinking skills by whether or not they participated in an internship. Overall, graduating business students who participated in an internship were just as likely to say their program enhanced outcomes related to critical thinking as those who did not participate in an internship. Those business students who did not participate in an internship were slightly more likely to report that their business program enhanced their ability to both define and solve problems.

Figure 3: Internship Participation and Critical Thinking

Percentage of graduating business students responding 6 or 7 (extremely) on questions related to critical thinking by whether or not the student participated in an internship.



Leadership Skills

Figure 4 displays the percent of students responding six or seven on a seven-point scale (“Extremely”) on learning outcomes related to leadership skills by whether or not they participated in an internship. Generally, graduating business students who participated in an internship were slightly more likely to say their program enhanced outcomes related to leadership skills as those who did not participate in an internship. For example, two out of three business students who participated in an internship reported their program enhanced their ability to be an effective leader, compared to 61% of those business students who did not participate in an internship.

Figure 4: Internship Participation and Leadership Skills

Percentage of graduating business students responding 6 or 7 (extremely) on questions related to leadership skills by whether or not the student participated in an internship.

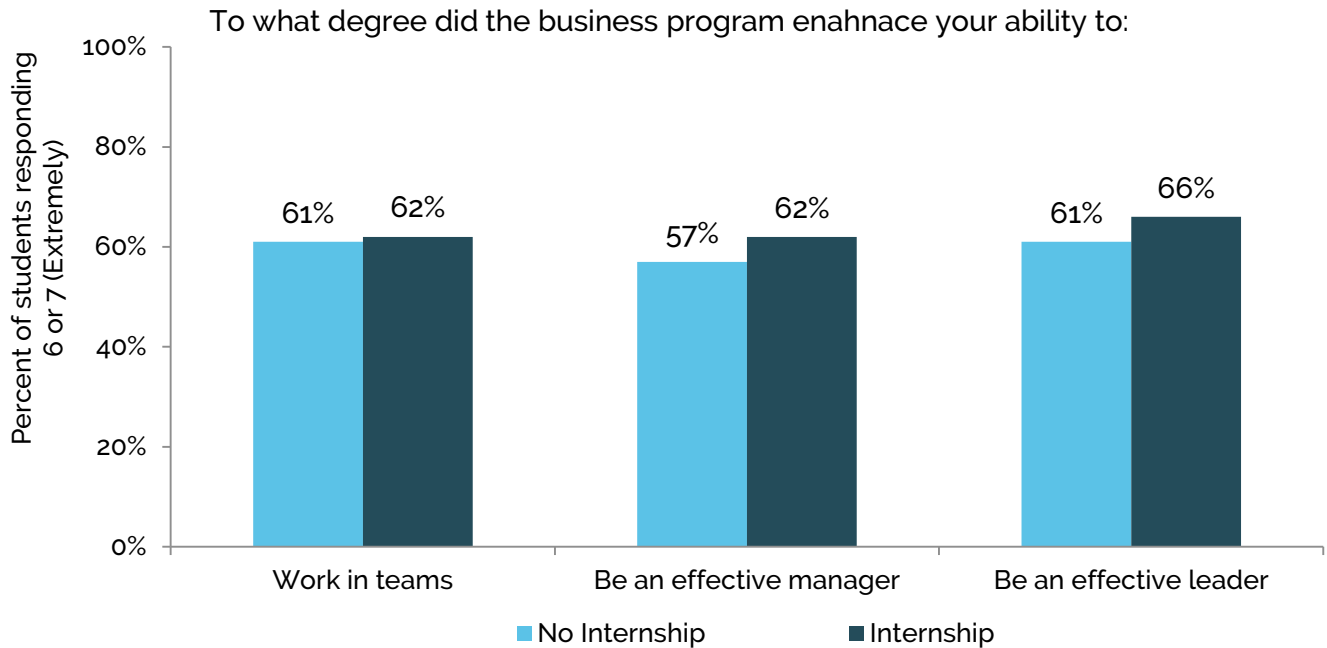
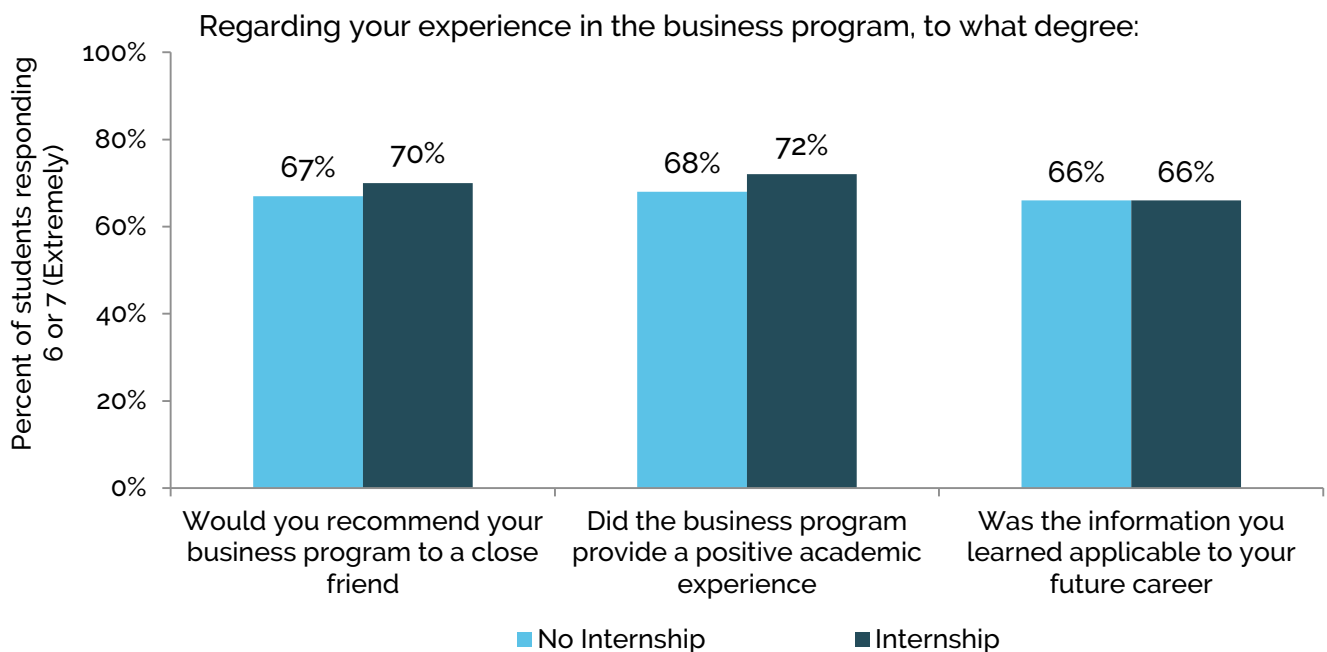


Figure 5: Internship Participation and Overall Experience

Percentage of graduating business students responding 6 or 7 (extremely) on questions related to their overall experience by whether or not the student participated in an internship.



Overall Program Experience

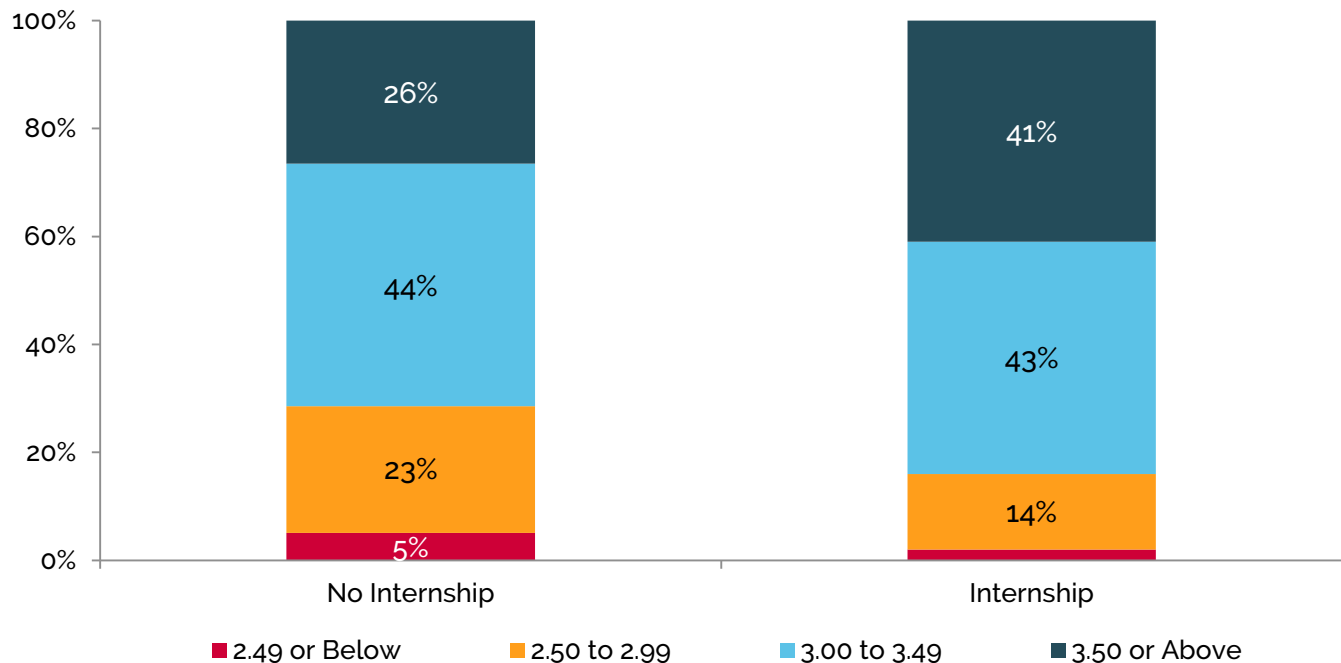
Figure 5 displays the percent of students responding six or seven on a seven-point scale (“Extremely”) on questions related to their overall business program experience by whether or not they participated in an internship. Generally, business students who participated in an internship were slightly more likely to report high satisfaction with their program experience than business students who did not have an internship. For instance, 70% of graduating business students indicated they would highly recommend their business program to a close friend while 67% of business students who did not have an internship would highly recommend their business program.

Cumulative GPA

Figure 6 displays the distribution of self-reported cumulative GPA for graduating business students depending on whether or not they had an internship. Graduating business students with internships were more likely to report a higher cumulative GPA than students who did not have internships. Roughly four out of ten business students with internships had a cumulative GPA above 3.50, compared to 26% of students without internships.

Figure 6: Internship Participation and Cumulative GPA

Percentage of students scoring in each GPA category, split by whether or not they completed an internship as part of their program.



How does internship satisfaction relate to the business student experience?

The second part of the analysis explored the relationship between the quality of the internship experience and learning in the business program. Figure 7 displays the results to questions assessing the overall internship experience. Figure 8 displays the bucketed average scores of internship participants across all three internship questions. Responses were grouped into low (average score of less than 3), moderate (average score between 3 and 5.9), and high (average score 6 or higher). Generally, business students reported high satisfaction with their internship experiences.

Figure 7: Internship Experience

Percentage of internship participants responding not at all (1-2), moderately (3-5), or extremely (6-7) to questions related to their internship experience.

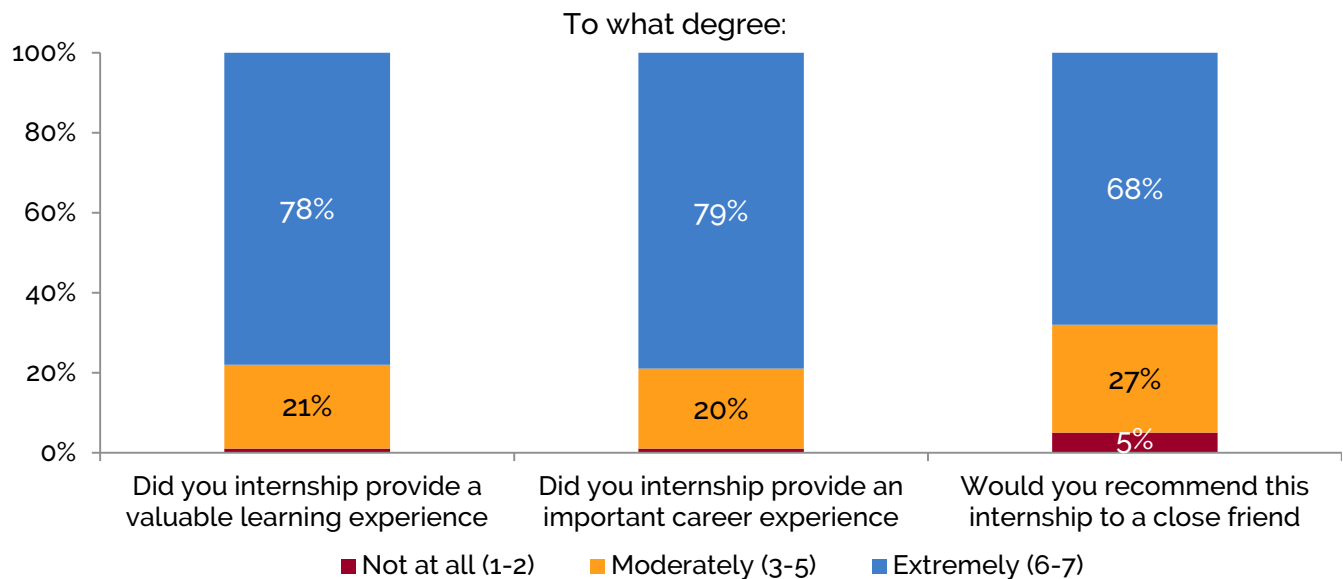
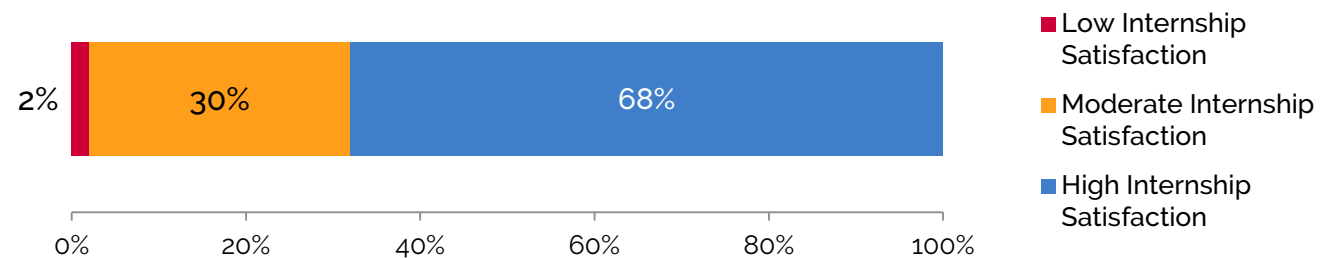


Figure 8: Internship Satisfaction Average

Percentage of internship participants averaging low (1.0-2.9), moderate (3.0-5.9) and high (6.0-7.0) across all three questions related to internship satisfaction.



The remaining sections in this research note—along with figures 9 through 13—explore differences in measures of learning, program experiences, and cumulative GPA by how satisfied business students were with their internship experience. The analysis used the groups in figure 8 and compared those who reported high internship satisfaction to those who reported moderate or low internship satisfaction (the low group was combined with the moderate for the purpose of this analysis due to the few number of respondents on the low end of the scale).

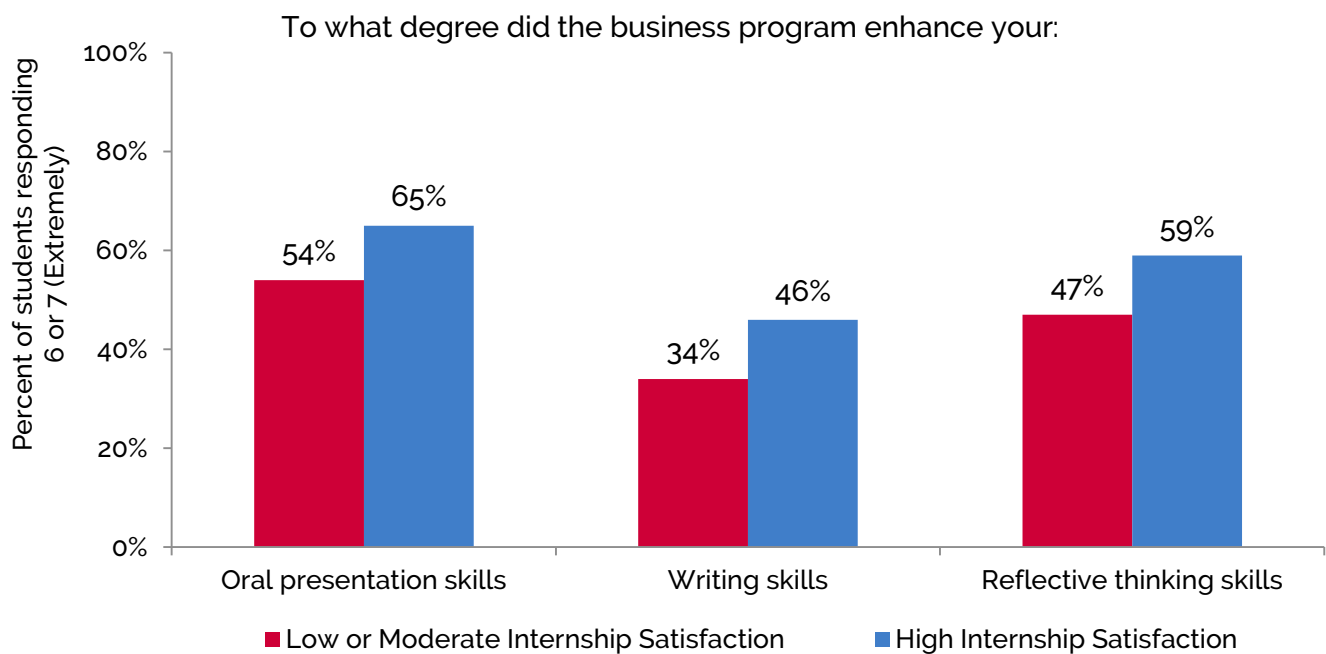
Overall, business students who reported high internship satisfaction were more likely to report high levels of learning, high overall business program satisfaction, and high self-reported cumulative GPA that business students with moderate or low satisfaction with their internship experience.

Practical Skills

Figure 9 displays the percent of students responding six or seven on a seven-point scale (“Extremely”) on learning outcomes related to practical skills by their satisfaction with their internship. Business students who reported high satisfaction with their internship experience were more likely to report that their business program experience enhanced practical skills such as oral presentation skills, writing skills, and reflective thinking skills.

Figure 9: Internship Satisfaction and Practical Skills

Percentage of internship participants responding extremely (6-7) to questions related to practical skills based on satisfaction with their internship.

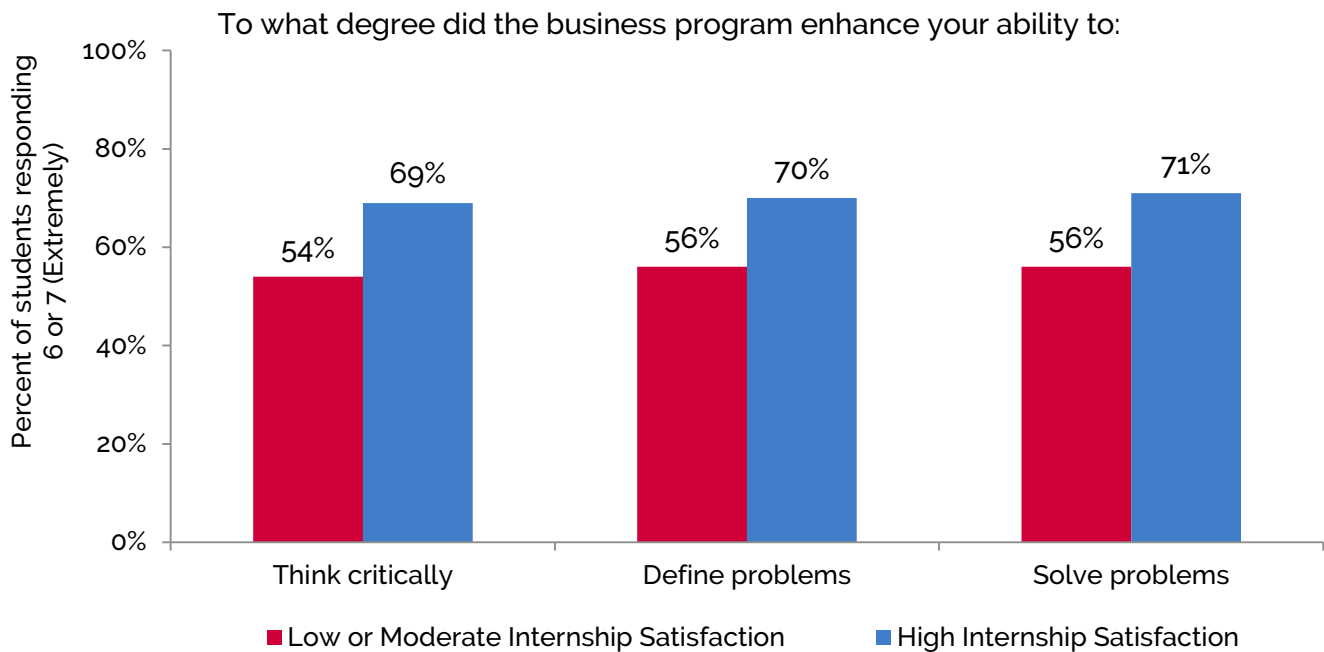


Critical Thinking Skills

Figure 10 displays the percent of students responding six or seven on a seven-point scale (“Extremely”) on learning outcomes related to critical thinking skills by their satisfaction with their internship. Business students who reported high satisfaction with their internship experience were more likely to say their business program enhanced outcomes related to critical thinking. About seven out of ten business students satisfied with their internship reported their business program enhanced their ability to think critically, define problems, and solve problems. In comparison, about 55% of students moderately or not at all satisfied with their internship reported similar outcomes.

Figure 10: Internship Satisfaction and Critical Thinking Skills

Percentage of internship participants responding extremely (6-7) to questions related to critical thinking skills based on satisfaction with their internship.



Leadership Skills

Figure 11 displays the percent of students responding six or seven on a seven-point scale (“Extremely”) on learning outcomes related to leadership skills by their satisfaction with their internship. Generally, business students who reported high satisfaction with their internship experience were more likely to say their program enhanced outcomes related to leadership skills as those who did not participate in an internship. However, satisfaction with internship had little relationship to the degree to which students said their business program enhanced their ability to work in teams.

Figure 11: Internship Satisfaction and Leadership Skills

Percentage of internship participants responding extremely (6-7) to questions related to leadership skills based on satisfaction with their internship.

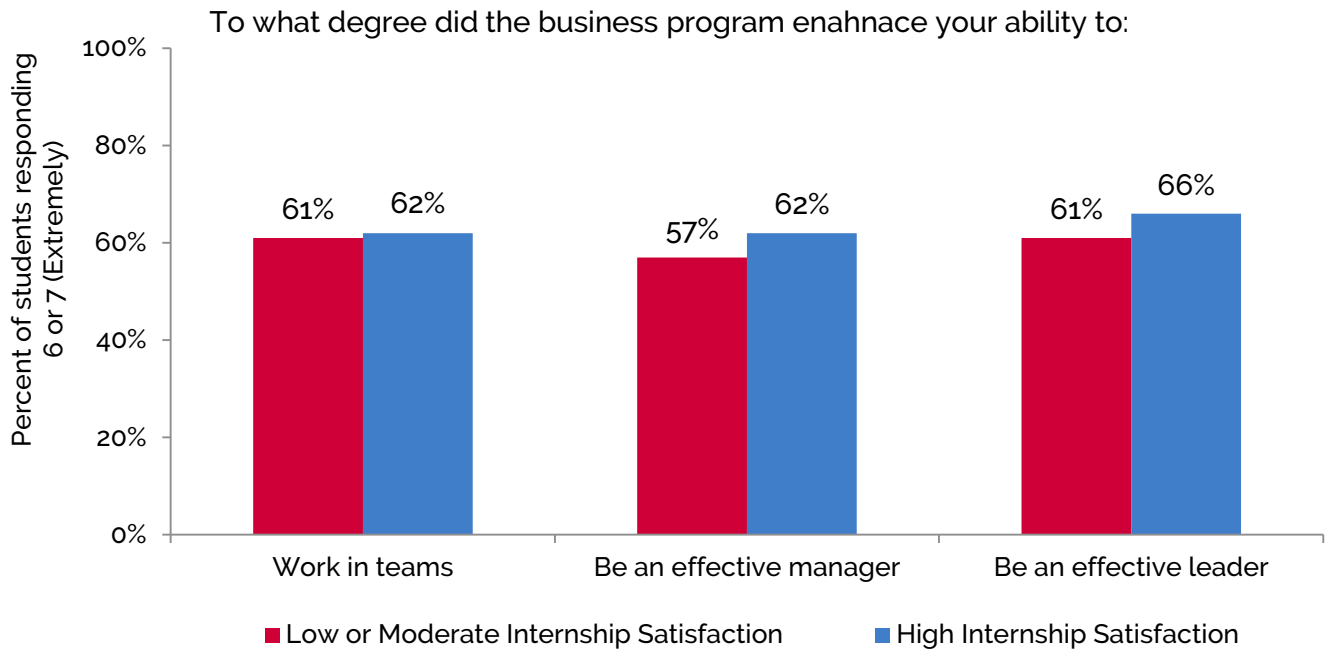
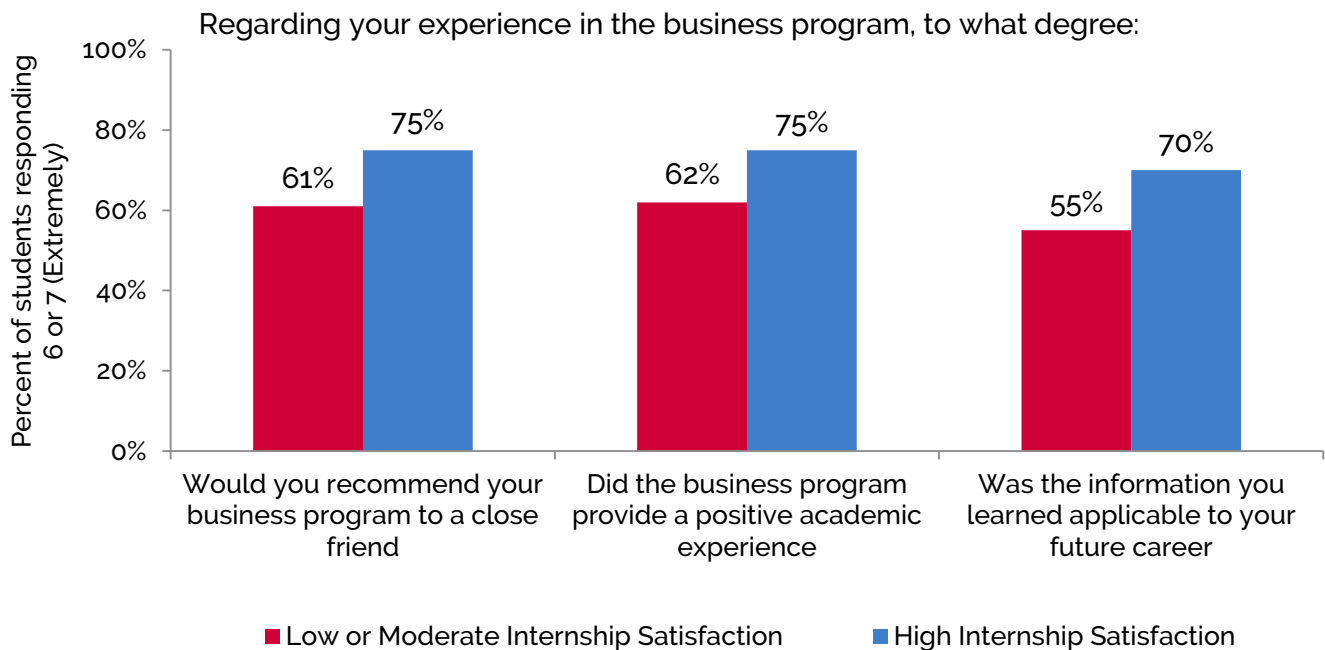


Figure 12: Internship Participation and Overall Experience

Percentage of internship participants responding extremely (6-7) to questions related to their overall experience based on satisfaction with their internship.



Overall Program Experience

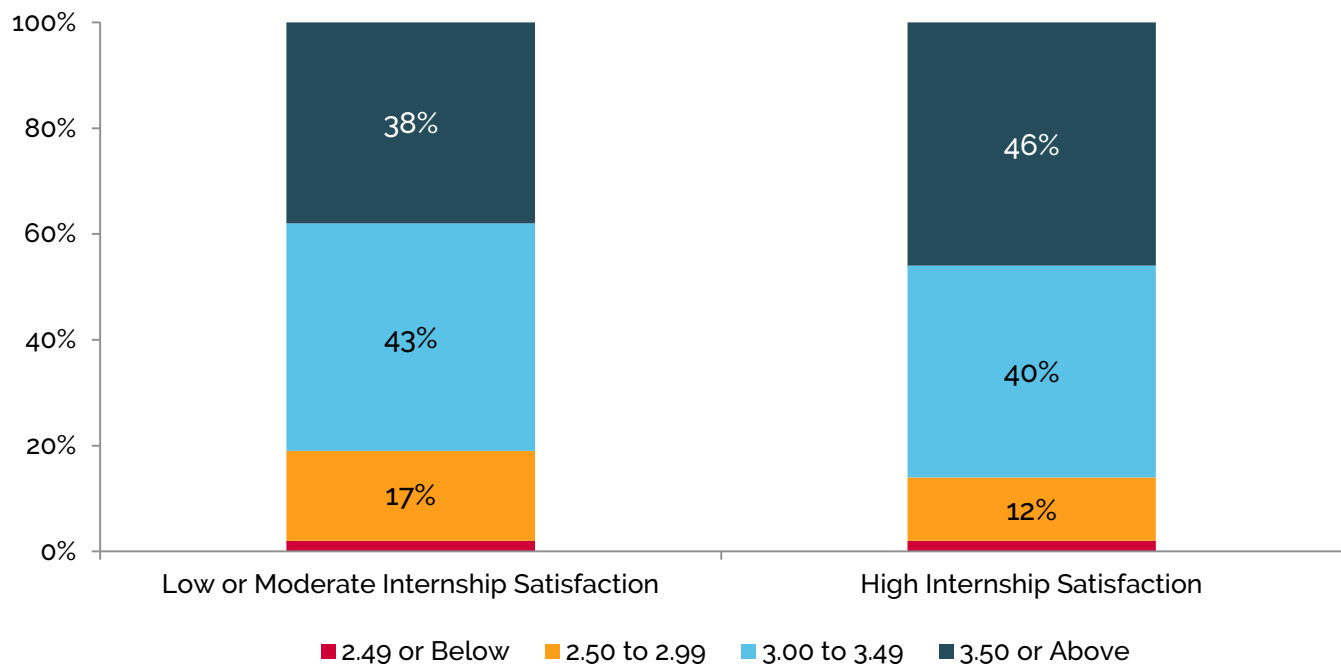
Figure 12 displays the percent of students responding six or seven on a seven-point scale (“Extremely”) on questions related to their overall business program experience by their satisfaction with their internship. Business students who reported high satisfaction with their internship experience were more likely to rate their overall business program experience highly than students who indicated moderate or low internship satisfaction. For example, students highly satisfied with the learning experience provided by their internship were more likely to indicate that the business school provided a positive academic experience (75% versus 61% for moderately or not at all satisfied students).

Cumulative GPA

Figure 13 displays the distribution of self-reported cumulative GPA by whether by their satisfaction with their internship. Business students who indicated that they were highly satisfied with their internship were more likely to have higher cumulative GPAs than students who indicated moderate or low satisfaction. Overall, 46% highly satisfied students indicated that they had cumulative GPAs of 3.50 or higher, compared to 38% of students moderately or not at all satisfied with their internship experience.

Figure 13: Cumulative GPA by Internship Satisfaction

Percentage of students scoring in each GPA category, split by whether or not they completed an internship as part of their program.



Conclusion

Overall, approximately 60% of business students participate in an internship at some point during the course of their enrollment. While simply having an internship is not strongly related to their broader undergraduate business program experience, the experiences one gets out of completing an internship appears to be. Students who reported high satisfied with their internship experience were more likely to report higher cumulative GPAs, were more likely to report learning across a wide variety of measures, and were more likely to report high satisfaction with their overall business program experience than those students who were moderately or not at all satisfied with their internship.

About the Data

The data used in this research note is from the 2016-2017 Benchworks Undergraduate Business Exit Assessment. This exit assessment provides administrators with valuable insight into the student experience and important outcomes from that experience. Results can be effectively utilized to focus attention on both strengths and areas in need of improvement. The data in this research note are from 10,116 graduating business students from 232 institutions in the United States.

About Skyfactor

Since 1994, Skyfactor (formerly EBI MAP-Works) has been dedicated to improving retention, student success, and the quality of the college student experience. Our products and services have empowered over 1,500 college and universities to positively impact student development, learning, retention and satisfaction through the Mapworks student success and retention system, and through Benchworks national benchmarking assessments.

Mapworks is a research-based, comprehensive, student retention and success platform created through a partnership between Skyfactor and Ball State University. It capitalizes on Ball State's 20+ years of experience with the original Making Achievement Possible (MAP) program and Skyfactor's expertise in national benchmarking assessments. Mapworks leverages predictive analytics to identify at-risk students. It presents that information in a format that makes it easy for an institution's faculty and staff to focus on the needs of students early in the term and to have a positive impact on student success and retention.

Benchworks includes over 50 easy-to-use student affairs and academic affairs program assessments. These assessments are rooted in accreditation and professional standards and are designed to support a culture of continuous program improvement. Assessment reports include longitudinal data, the ability to benchmark against peer institutions, and interactive dashboards that enable rapid identification of critical issues.



For more information about Skyfactor,
to schedule a demonstration, or to sign up for a webinar,
please write to us at info@Skyfactor.com or visit Skyfactor.com