

WHITE PAPER ON OPERATIONALIZING “EXPLORING YOUR POTENTIAL”

Abstract

This paper summarizes operationalization of “Exploring your Potential” product at the College of Business Administration of four-year public institution of higher education. A few examples of product implementation early outcomes/examples are shared.

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Background

Texas A & M University–Kingsville (TAMU-K) is located in south Texas approximately 100 miles north of the U.S.–Mexico border. Established in 1925 as South Texas State Teacher’s College, TAMU-K is designated as Hispanic serving institution and Minority serving institution. TAMU-K has five colleges: Agriculture, Natural Resources and Human Sciences, Arts and Sciences, Business Administration, Education and Human Performance, Engineering and Graduate Studies, collectively offering 56 undergraduate degree programs. TAMU-K offered its first business courses in 1925 and established the College of Business in 1929 (TAMU-K, n.d.a.). Ethnically, students attending the College of Business Administration (The College) reflect area and university demographics (60% Hispanic, 20% white, 10% African American, and 6% international). The College offers five undergraduate degree programs in business (i.e., accounting, finance, general business, information systems, management, and marketing) and a Master of Business Administration (online).

Texas A&M University-Kingsville business majors are required to broaden their education by gaining additional skills and global competencies through participation in an *immersion experience* (students can choose from internship, study abroad, or faculty/student collaborative research project). Students must first successfully complete the Student Professional Development Program (SPDP) as a prerequisite for the immersion experience. The SPDP and Immersion Experience have been graduation requirements for all College undergraduate majors since 2010. However, they were more routinely enforced starting spring, 2014.

The SPDP was designed and iteratively modified to provide learning experiences which help students develop personal and professional skills – with the end goal of giving students a competitive advantage in the job market and beyond. SPDP has traditionally been instructional and interactive in nature, focusing on development of student skills in these four workshops: Career Planning (becoming a business professional), Professional Appearance (do’s and don’ts of business dress), The Job Campaign (developing your professional profile), and Professional Etiquette (dinner and social opportunity). These workshops are completed in addition to the student’s degree plan (not offered for course credit) and originally were designed and taught by The College management faculty. However, faculty turnover and budgetary constraints led The College to re-design the format of its SPDP workshops and outsource some of them (Professional Appearance and Professional Etiquette) to the Office of the Career Services (Career Services). Career Services operates in an umbrella manner at the University level and is not housed or dedicated to The College.

In spring, 2014, University administration restructured Career Services, streamlining its services (e.g., it now offers self-assessment, career planning, major selection, resume and cover letter writing, interviewing, internship, and job search), and hiring additional qualified personnel. All internship and job positions are to be posted by employers on Career Services’ website. In fall, 2014, to better align with University Career Services, The College designated one faculty member and one undergraduate adviser to oversee and facilitate The College SPDP and serve as liaisons between The College and University Career Services.

The College redesigned the Job Campaign workshop to add networking aspects – as a result of indirect program assessment, the Dean’s Leadership Board feedback, employers’ feedback, and alumni survey feedback. SPDP workshops were offered once a month, after class hours (usually early afternoon), and were taught by the designated faculty member (i.e. SPDP Faculty Coordinator). Students had to pay a moderate fee \$15-\$20 per workshop. The College and University Career Services had to keep the cost of workshops moderately priced because the vast majority of the students attending TAMU-K and The College have very low price elasticity (e.g., approximately 80-85% of the students attending TAMU-K receive some form of financial assistance and are Pell-grant eligible). In addition to completing SPDP within The College, business students are required to register with University Career Services (e.g., create a personal online profile, have an updated resume’ on file) and attend the semi-annual University Internship and Career Fair.

Beginning fall, 2016, The College added an on-line self-development component of SPDP (4 courses) which must be completed prior to attending workshops. As a result, undergraduate business students participate in professional self-development through a combination of on-line courses (through “Exploring Your Potential” designed and offered by EYP Ventures) and an interactive session - “Job Campaign” - facilitated by the College faculty and organized with the help of the College Dean’s Leadership Board, area employees, and internship providers. By applying themselves in the program workshops (Discovering Your Options; Sculpturing Your Value Proposition; Marketing Yourself; and Activating Your Plan), business students develop a balanced portfolio which reflects their academic, professional, and career readiness objectives. The evolved SPDP is unique to The College and is a student’s unique resource in gaining a competitive advantage over other qualified job candidates. The College focuses workshops on personal development, industry and career knowledge, emotional intelligence, networking, and professional image enhancement. The “Job Campaign,” an interactive session with a panel of leaders from a diverse mix of business organizations, concludes the SPDP, which is a collective prerequisite requirement to the immersion experience (i.e. business internship, Study Abroad or faculty led research project).

Texas A&M University-Kingsville Outcomes

Through the iterative program changes made over time (2010 – present), it has become increasingly clear that two components are critical to internship program success: (1) student professional development preceding the internship and/or other immersion experience and (2) meeting/exceeding organizational internship needs and objectives. Example of SPDP workshops schedule:

Fall semester 1 st year: Course 1: Exploring Your Options	Spring semester 1 st year: Course 2: Sculpting Your Value Proposition
Fall semester 2 nd year: Etiquette dinner Course 3: Marketing Yourself	Spring semester 2 nd year: Course 4: Activating Your Plan The Job Campaign

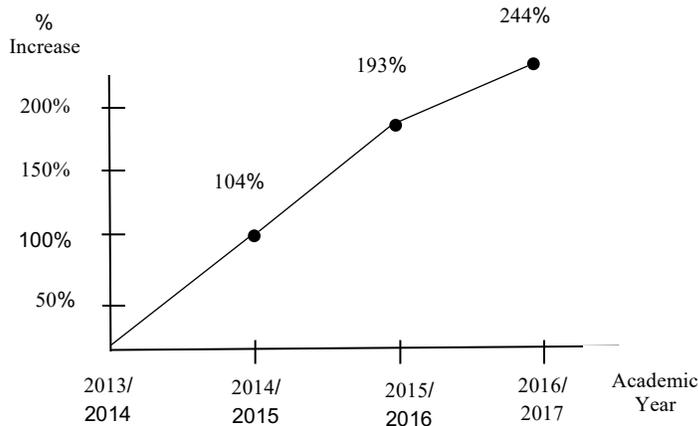
College has full participation of all undergraduate students in the SPDP because this is a mandatory program, but is not offered for credit hours. SPDP is required by undergraduate business degree plan. SPDP is graded on a “pass/fail” basis. Students must successfully complete the SPDP - prerequisite for the College mandatory immersion experience. Students advance through the SPDP as a cohort, which helps them share learning experiences and personal development stories with one another. This also helps them stay on track and keep motivation levels higher on the collective.

As such, we also find that success of our internship program is defined according to two components above. Implementation of the revised SPDP program has resulted in immediate positive returns, in that internships are increasingly being pursued by students (Figure 1). Located along the mainline of the Union Pacific and US 77 (designated as future I-69), Kingsville is adjacent to a power corridor that features rail, highway, fiber optic, power transmission and water transportation infrastructure of world-class quality. Corpus Christi International Airport is a 30-minute drive time from Kingsville, the same time to travel from the south side of Corpus Christi to the airport. Kingsville has a pro-business environment supported by local public entities. The Kingsville Enterprise Zone, created in 1999, is an economic development tool that allows the community to partner with the state on local and state tax regulatory benefits.

Figure 1 illustrates internship program percentage growth - measured by number of students completing an internship on an academic yearly basis, with 2013/2014 set as the baseline against which 2014/2015 and the academic years following are compared. In addition to growth in the number of student internships secured and completed, the number and diversity of organizations participating in SPDP and the internship program is also increasing. For example in 2014/2015, 55 students secured and completed a

business internship, which is reflected in Figure 1 as an internship program growth of 103.7% (rounded to 104%) over the prior year (2013/2014), which had 27 students completing an internship. College resumed offering Study Abroad classes in business in 2013-2014. On average, eight – ten students per academic year (1-2% of the College undergraduate enrollment) choose Study Abroad to fulfill *immersion experience* BBA graduation requirement.

Figure 1: Internship Program Growth

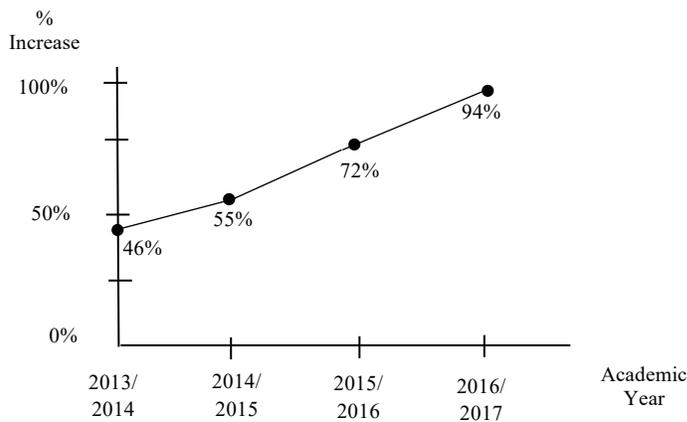


This figure illustrates internship program percentage growth measured by number of students completing an internship on an academic year basis. 2013/2014 is set as the baseline against which 2014/2015 and the academic years following are compared.

The College currently has six student led and faculty sponsored professional business associations and clubs. An additional indicator of the internship program success is that more students have joined and become more engaged in these professional business associations/clubs. As student membership in professional business associations/clubs rises, so does their successful selection and completion of business internships.

Figure 2 depicts student engagement growth, reflected as a percentage of students engaged in (members of) professional business associations/clubs during a given semester, compared to (divided by) BBA degrees awarded at the end of that semester. For example in 2013/2014, 26 students were engaged in business professional associations, compared to (divided by) 56 students who graduated with BBAs that semester, which represents 46.4% (rounded to 46%). In 2015/2016, 63 students were engaged in business professional associations, compared to (divided by) 88 students who graduated with BBAs that semester, which represents 71.6% (rounded to 72%).

Figure 2: Student Engagement Growth



This figure depicts student engagement in business professional associations/clubs as a percentage of BBA degrees awarded. In other words, for all students graduating with a BBA degree, this percentage were engaged in business professional associations/clubs. (Senior Survey)

The SPDP and Internship Program significantly benefit from vested faculty and staff engagement. Having designated faculty and staff (undergraduate advisor) assigned to this program (development, implementation and maintenance) helps streamline and facilitate communication between companies and The College, as well as University Career Services. It also helps reinforce the program framework and step-wise completion process in that the faculty and staff coordinators set clear expectations of all participants, ensure proper reporting, keep lines of communication and feedback channels open, and assist with managing employers' opportunity costs (i.e., offsetting costs by improving business intern skill-sets). We further find that additional value is created in the internship program for all parties, by pre-screening students after their junior year, implementing a well-structured internship project (individual) mentored by a dedicated company representative, and having clear goals and deliverables for all parties.

As a practical example of internship program success and company-specific opportunity cost offset, one of the companies in our program implements 50% of student-intern projects, as facilitated under the mentorship of a dedicated company representative, who is also an adjunct lecturer at The College.

Challenges and Limitations

Consistent and timely student job search, although improving, remains a challenge for The College, largely due to cultural influences of the surrounding demographic. Current business students and/or recent graduates may turn down a repeat internship, a paid internship or an out-of-town job offer because of the strength of family relationship ties and traditional routines, thus limiting themselves to local professional opportunities only.

Reference

“Business internship: a practical framework,” N. Delcoure, R. Karst and C. Longoria, *Business Education and Accreditation*, 10(1), 2018.

<http://www.tamuk.edu/cba/>