**RESOURCE REPORT F**

**GAINING JOB-RELATED WORK EXPERIENCE**

**Work Experience**

Based on this year’s GMAC survey results and conversations with recruiters and career service professionals, prior work experience is a basic requirement for employment. Prior work experience is especially true for MBA graduates. Depending upon specific job requirements, an employer will expect a degree earned in an appropriate discipline plus two to four years of prior work experience.

An MBA is often a requirement for an associate-level position. However, an MBA is a necessary but not sufficient condition for employment. A viable job applicant must demonstrate an integration between educational attainment and prior work experience. As one employer stated:

“Most of these candidates already have earlier professional working experience. That, matched with a higher level of education and specialization, makes that candidate more competitive than someone without previous work experience and a graduate level of education.” —US Products and Services Employer[[1]](#footnote-1)

But not all graduates, baccalaureate or MBA, have held full-time employment. How can a graduate get a job requiring experience if they don’t have the experience? Recruiters and employers have said they understand the difficulty applicants have in meeting a two – four-year prior job experience if they have never held full-time employment. Although actual industry work experience is preferred, employers and recruiters have said an applicant can demonstrate they have the experience in other ways - particularly a combination of related activities. The Center will assist students in securing/enhancing all of these.

* + Job Shadowing/Information Interviewing experiences
  + Community Service/Volunteering related to the job for which the candidate is applying.
  + Part-time Job related to the job for which the candidate is applying.
  + Internships – paid or unpaid
  + Externship
  + Applied projects related to or supporting the job for which the candidate is applying.
  + Applied Research related to or supporting the job for which the candidate is applying
  + Tutoring other students in subjects related to their career field
  + A portfolio (preferably an e-portfolio) of most significant career-related class or other applied projects. If the applicant gave presentations, a PPT should be added to their portfolio.
  + Credentials, e.g., Excel certification, Bloomberg certification, SAS certification, etc.
  + Study abroad demonstrating the applicant understands and appreciates different cultural perspectives; and has a global perspective.
  + Engagement in entrepreneurial activities, i.e., projects or activities the applicant has personally taken on.
  + Apprenticeship – A post-grad paid or unpaid apprenticeship.
  + Extracurricular activities, but only if the candidate can clearly demonstrate how the activity translates to job requirements for which he/she is applying.
  + Attending professional conferences, seminars, meetings (applied, not academic)
  + Volunteer or have paid assistantship with a professor doing applied research.

**Internships**

University officials and employers agree that involvement in an internship—or several, will set an applicant apart from his or her job competitors. “More than ever, schools across the country are pushing students of all majors toward internships, and several have even added them to their graduation requirements.”[[2]](#footnote-2) Patricia Cormier, president of Longwood University, says that internships give applicants an edge that they would not have otherwise. “For me it's a no-brainer. If you're going to position your students well, you've got to give them this exposure before they graduate."[[3]](#footnote-3)

Results from GMAC’s annual surveys of graduating students consistently show that internships are one of the most successful ways for graduate business school students to receive a job offer. Data from this year’s survey of employers support this finding. [[4]](#footnote-4)

*Sixty-seven percent of companies had MBA student interns in 2014 and the vast majority (85%) offered full-time positions to these interns.*

* *MBA internships are most common among employers in the United States (71%) compared with Europe (66%), Asia-Pacific (57%), and Latin America (53%).*
* *Larger companies were more likely than smaller companies to have MBA interns in 2014. Eighty-seven percent of companies with 10,000 or more employees had MBA interns compared with 65 percent of companies with 1,000 to 9,999 employees, 50 percent of companies with 100 to 999 employees, and 39 percent of companies with fewer than 100 employees.*

*Fifty-six percent of companies had master’s-level business student (non-MBA) interns in 2014, and 83 percent offered full-time positions to these interns.*

* *Non-MBA master’s level business student interns are most common in Europe (85%) compared with Asia-Pacific (55%), the United States (50%), and Latin America (49%).*
* *Larger companies were more likely than smaller companies to have non-MBA master’s level business student interns in 2014. Sixty-six percent of companies with 10,000 or more employees had non-MBA master’s level business student interns compared with 43 percent of companies with fewer than 100 employees.*

The National Association of Colleges and Employer’s (NACE) 2015 Internship & Co-op Survey echoes the GMAC survey. NACE conducted the 2015 survey from December 3, 2014, through January 30, 2015. NACE sent surveys to 1,116 NACE employer members; 241, or 24.8 percent representing more than 20 industries participated.[[5]](#footnote-5)

Based on the sources cited in the footnote, highlights from the NACE survey include:

* Each year NACE reports the value employers place on job-related experiences. This year almost all employers said job-related experience is a factor in hiring.
* Almost half of employers reported they wanted to see one or more internship experiences on a student’s resume.
* Many employers use an internship as a screening device
* An internship with a company will give a student an opportunity to show an employer the value he/she can bring to the company and many students are offered a full-time job as a result of their internships
* Just as employers can use and internship to “road test” a possible job candidate, an internship gives a student an opportunity to see how well they like a company or even how well they like what might be their future career.
* An internship enables students to identify gaps in their skills and knowledge. Once identified, a student can return to school and close the gaps identified through coursework, applied projects, or other experiences.
* Students will gain valuable experience in securing an internship. Cover letters will need to be written, a resume developed, and an e-portfolio created. Interviewing for an internship will provide a student an opportunity to “practice” before interviewing for a full-time position.
* Internships begin a student’s professional network that can be very valuable when looking for a permanent job.
* An internship provides other values to employers, e.g., it increases employee retention. Employers know that an internship helps a student to understand better the profession and what it will be like to have a job.
* Having one or more internships is positively related to a higher starting salary.
* Internships can be a positive change of pace from the typical classroom education.
* Internships build self-confidence.

Findings from the NACE executive summary of the findings include:

* More than 90% of companies responding said they have a formal internship program.
* Employers said their companies have a formal internship program to screen future employees, i.e., internships are converted into full-time jobs for many students. The conversion rate in 2015 was 51.7%.
* Students who have held one or more internships with a single employer are most likely to be converted into full-time hires.
* While credit might be something some students want along with pay during the internship, only a few employers required credit for participation in their internship program
* On average, employers planning for intern recruitment begins seven months before the start date of the internships.
* Employers favor career fairs to recruit interns; and past experience and success in recruiting students from specific locations and schools.
* The skills preferred in selecting interns is almost exactly the same as the skills expected of job applicants. Specifically:
  + the ability to work in a team
  + the ability to determine the additional information needed and the ability to obtain it
  + planning and organizing skills
  + written and verbal communication skills
  + problem-solving skills

**Externships**

Externships are for a considerably shorter length of time than internships. Externships can last one week to an entire semester or summer term depending on the needs of the alumni, member of the COBE Business Council or other sponsors. Students can easily complete the externship experience during Wintermester, spring break, or during a study abroad. Sponsors offer externships at companies, start-ups, and non-profits.

Externship opportunities have long-term benefits as students can gain experience, learn new skills, network, and maximize their next similar experience. Externships can lead to summer internships, full-time employment, and meaningful connections with alumni and other business professionals.

1. **Op. cit**. GMAC Corporate Recruiters Survey Report [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. **Degrees Are Great, but Internships Make a Difference** Brian Burnsed (April 15, 2010) <http://www.usnews.com/education/articles/2010/04/15/when-a-degree-isnt-enough> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. **Ibid.** [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. **Corporate Recruiters Survey 2015 – Survey Report**, Graduate Management Admission Council (GMAC), (2015) <http://www.gmac.com/market-intelligence-and-research/research-library/employment-outlook/2015-corporate-recruiters-survey-report.aspx> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. **NACE’s 2015 Internship & Co-op Survey** NACE (2015) <https://www.naceweb.org/uploadedFiles/Content/static-assets/downloads/executive-summary/2015-internship-co-op-survey-executive-summary.pdf> as reported by College Parents of America, **Why Your College Student Should Consider An Internship** (2014) <http://www.collegeparents.org/members/resources/articles/why-your-college-student-should-consider-internship> and Katharine Hansen, Ph.D. **College Students: You Simply Must Do an Internship (Better Yet: Multiple Internships)!**, Quintessential Careers, (2015) <http://www.quintcareers.com/internship_importance.html> **Why and Internship**, Arianna Grinnell SlidePlayer.com (2015) <http://slideplayer.com/slide/3894989/> [↑](#footnote-ref-5)