



**CALIFORNIA POLYTECHNIC UNIVERSITY, HUMBOLDT
INTERNSHIP NEEDS ASSESSMENT REPORT**

Spring 2025

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Executive Summary

This report covers the results from the EPIIC Needs Assessment Survey administered to Cal Poly Humboldt students between February 17th and March 12th, 2025. This survey asked students to report about their internship experiences while being enrolled at Cal Poly Humboldt. The survey was administered via Qualtrics. Students were identified by the Cal Poly Humboldt team.

Methods

- All Cal Poly Humboldt undergraduate students (N= 4,993) were sent a link to an anonymous Qualtrics survey.
- Respondents (N=642) were predominantly seniors (40.5%), continuing generation status (59.0%), and identified as cis-gender women (48.7%).
- Survey respondents primarily came from three colleges: Natural Resources & Sciences, Arts, Humanities, & Social Sciences, and Professional Studies.

Results

- Most Cal Poly Humboldt students have not had an internship. Of 456 responses, 84 students participated in one internship with 49 students completing more than one internship.
- Three quarters of respondents do not know where to find information about internships.
- When seeking information, the majority of students read announcements from their college and department (91.7%) and about three quarters of students reported that they use the career fair to learn about opportunities on campus.
- The majority of first internships secured by students are paid, off-campus, and occur during the academic year.
- Students that have internships most often get information about them formally from their Advisor and Handshake, and informally by hearing about internships from a classmate, mentor, or seeing postings around campus.
- Even those that have information about where to find an internship have trouble securing internships. Common difficulties cited by the students are the competition for internship positions and conflicting class schedules.
- Students identified resume building and gaining experience as the most appealing reason to secure an internship.
- Money matters, but for students who have had an internship it is less important than for students who have not had an internship.
- The majority (96%; n=425) of students who have not had an internship said they were “maybe” or “definitely” interested in an internship and identified obstacles including being unsure where to find an internship, feeling like they’re missing necessary qualifications, or time or money challenges.
- Three quarters of respondents said they had not taken a service-learning course at Cal Poly Humboldt.

- Of those students who had taken a service-learning course (n=33), three quarters would do so again.
- CP students care about and want to impact their community (see Table 10).

Recommendations

- Students suggested additional advertisement and supportive feedback will make it easier for them to find internships (see Appendix C for potentially useful graphics).
- Service learning and other hands-on-experiences are as important as internships and might be perceived as more accessible, especially to younger students or those who do not yet feel they have the qualifications for an internship.
- Students noted that the availability of and competition for positions is a recurring obstacle to securing an internship. Look to offer additional on-campus and near-campus internship opportunities.

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EPIIC Needs Assessment Survey Report – Cal Poly Humboldt

Introduction

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Participants

Cal Poly Humboldt invited 4,993 undergraduate students to participate in the needs assessment by providing a link to the Qualtrics survey. Of those, 831 students opened the survey and 642 individuals consented to participate in the Needs Assessment Survey. The age ranged from 18-66 years old, with the average age being 23.44 years old ($SD = 7.51$). As seen in Table 1, students were predominantly seniors (40.5%), continuing generation status (59.0%), and identified as cis-gender women (48.7%). As seen in Table 2, students largely identified as White, Caucasian, or European American (57.3%). For those who self-identified as Mixed (i.e., their parents are from different ethnic groups), additional identifiers for their parents' ethnicities and race were provided (see Table 3).

Table 1. Class Standing, First-Generation Status, and Gender Identity of Participants

	Attributes	<i>f</i>	%
Class Standing	Freshman	95	14.8
	Sophomore	103	16.0
	Junior	184	28.7
	Senior	260	40.5
First-Gen Status	First-Generation	256	39.9
	Continuing Generation	379	59.0
	Unknown	7	1.1%
Gender Identity	Woman (Cis-Gender)	312	48.7
	Man (Cis-Gender)	192	30.0
	Non-Binary/Non-Conforming	79	12.3
	Transgender Man	20	3.1
	Transgender Woman	6	0.9
	Other	11	1.7
	Prefer not the respond	21	3.3

Table 2. Ethnicity/Race Breakdown of Participants and their Parents

	Ethnicity/Race Breakdown	<i>f</i>	%
Participant Ethnicity/Race	Asian or Asian American	19	3.0
	Black or African American	9	1.4
	Hispanic or Latinx	129	20.1
	Native American or Alaska Native	10	1.6
	Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	3	0.5
	Mixed: My parents are from different ethnic groups	87	13.6
	Other	17	2.7
	White or Caucasian or European American	367	57.3%

Table 3. Ethnicity/Race Breakdown of Parents of Students who Identified as Mixed Race

	Ethnicity/Race Breakdown	<i>f</i>	%
Mother's Ethnicity/Race	Asian or Asian American	8	9.3
	Black or African American	0	0.0
	Hispanic or Latinx	20	23.3
	Native American or Alaska Native	3	3.5
	Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	0	0.0
	Mixed: My mother's parents are from different ethnic groups	12	14.0
	Other	1	1.2
	White or Caucasian or European American	42	48.8
Father's Ethnicity/Race	Asian or Asian American	6	7.0
	Black or African American	6	7.0
	Hispanic or Latinx	22	33.7
	Native American or Alaska Native	6	7.0
	Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	1	1.2
	Mixed: My father's parents are from different ethnic groups	13	15.1
	Other	3	3.5
	White or Caucasian or European American	29	33.7

Note. The 87 participants who identified as mixed reported their mother and father's ethnicity/race.

The Cal Poly Humboldt campus provides students with a variety of majors to explore, with survey respondents coming from three primary colleges: Natural Resources & Sciences, Arts, Humanities, & Social Sciences, and Professional Studies. A comprehensive breakdown of the majors in which survey respondents are enrolled is provided in Table 4. Some majors have additional concentrations.

Table 4. Students' Majors

Major	<i>f</i>	%
Anthropology	14	2.2%
- Archaeology	5	0.8
- Biological Anthro	2	0.3
- Cross-Disciplinary	1	0.2
- Linguistic	4	0.6
- Sociocultural	2	0.3
Applied Fire Science & Management	3	0.5%
Art	22	3.5%
- Art History and Museum Studies	7	1.1
- Education	1	0.2
- Studio	14	2.2
Biochemistry	4	0.6%
Biology	51	8.0%
- Cellular/Molecular	11	1.7
- Ecology and Biodiversity	1	0.2
- Ecology	9	1.4
- General	4	0.6
- Marine	21	3.3
- Microbiology	3	0.5
- Science and Education	2	0.3

Table 4. Students' Majors (continued)

Major	<i>f</i>	%
Botany	23	3.6%
Business Administration	25	4.0%
- Management and Entrepreneurship	4	0.6
- New Venture Management	3	0.5
- Accounting	9	1.4
- Finance	2	0.3
- Marketing	3	0.5
- Economics	1	0.2
Cannabis Studies (Equality/Social Justice)	1	0.2%
Child Development and Family Relationships	3	0.5%
- Child and Family Services	2	0.3
- Special Studies	1	0.2
Chemistry	7	1.1%
- Biochemistry	2	0.3
Communication	6	0.9%
Computer Science	15	2.3%
Criminology and Justice Studies	9	1.4%
Critical Race, Gender, & Sexuality	3	0.5%
Data Science	4	0.6%
Energy Systems Engineering	6	0.9%
English	10	1.6%
- Education	3	0.5
- Teaching Language Arts	1	0.2
Environmental Science and Management	58	9.0%
- Ecological Restoration	34	5.3
- Environmental Planning and Policy	8	1.2
- Geospatial Sciences	2	0.3
- Energy and Climate	4	0.6
- Environmental Education and Interpretation	10	1.6
Environmental Resources Engineering	25	3.9%
Environmental Studies	8	1.2%
Film	4	0.6%
Fine Art, BFA	4	0.6%
Fisheries Biology	9	1.5%
- Aquaculture	3	0.5
- Freshwater	5	0.8
- Marine	1	0.2
Forestry	36	5.6%
- Fire Management	4	0.6
- Forest Operations	2	0.3
- Hydrology	3	0.5
- Restoration	9	1.4
- Soils	5	0.8
- Tribal Forestry	1	0.2
- Wildland Fire Management	4	0.6
Geography	2	0.3%
Geology	13	2.1%
- Geoscience	1	0.2

Table 4. Students' Majors (continued)

Major	<i>f</i>	%
History	11	1.7%
- Education	8	1.2
IS – Individualized Degree	11	1.7%
Journalism	5	0.8%
- Public Relations	2	0.3
- News	3	0.5
Kinesiology	14	2.2%
- Exercise Science	4	0.6
- Health Promotion	1	0.2
- Pre-Health Professional	9	1.4
Liberal Studies – Elementary Education ITEP	3	0.5%
Liberal Studies-Elementary Education	5	0.8%
Mathematics	3	0.5%
Mechanical Engineering	16	2.5%
Music	1	0.2%
Native American Studies	2	0.3%
Nursing	2	0.3%
Oceanography	10	1.6%
Philosophy	1	0.2%
Physical Science	1	0.2%
Physics	6	0.9%
- Astronomy	2	0.3
Political Science	6	0.9%
- Environment and Sustainability	1	0.2
- Global Politics	2	0.3
- Law and Policy	2	0.3
Psychology	45	7.0%
Rangeland Resource Science	5	0.8%
- Wildland Soils	1	0.2
Recreation Administration	3	0.5%
Social Work	27	4.2%
Sociology	6	0.9%
Software Engineering	5	0.8%
Theatre Arts	3	0.5%
Undeclared	5	0.8%
Wildlife	52	8.2%
- Management and Conservation	12	1.9
- Wildlife Ecology Conservation Management	37	5.8
- Conservation Biology/Applied Vertebrate Ecology	3	0.5
Zoology	27	4.2%
Total	642	100.0

[Where Do You Go to Find an Internship?](#)

With the ultimate goal being to make internships more accessible to students, the Needs Assessment survey first captured how students learn about internships at Cal Poly Humboldt and sought to understand their experiences in internships. As reported in Table 5, approximately three quarters of students do not know where to find information about internships. Additionally, there is only a ten percent increase of knowledge about where to inquire about internships between freshman and senior

year, further illustrating that students are unsure about where to locate information about internships. Later in the report, we include students' responses regarding their recommendations for securing internships.

Table 5. Finding out about Internships on Campus

	Do you know where to go on campus to find out about internships?		
	Yes	No	Total
Freshman	15 (18.3%)	67 (81.7%)	87 (15.5%)
Sophomore	21 (23.9%)	67 (76.1%)	88 (16.7%)
Junior	37 (24.0%)	117 (76.0%)	154 (29.1%)
Senior	58 (28.3%)	147 (71.7%)	205 (38.7%)
Total	131 (24.8%)	398 (75.2%)	529 (100.0%)

Note. Percentages are total percentages.

Students were asked, "Where would you go to find out more about internships?" A total of 124 responses were recorded. Those resources that were most often mentioned include: Academic Advising Center (ACAC), the Library Fishbowl, Career Development Center, Handshake, Career Fair Events, and COMPASS/LSAMP.

To further investigate how students may be receiving information about the current opportunities offered at Cal Poly Humboldt and the surrounding community, students were asked to provide how they commonly receive news on campus. Almost every student reads the announcements from their college and department (91.7%) and about three quarters of students reported that they use the career fair to locate information about opportunities on campus (Table 6). This information will be very helpful for advertising internship openings to the student body at Cal Poly Humboldt. Additionally, these findings demonstrate that even though students are accessing the formal resources provided by the campus, a large portion of students are not able to secure internships.

Table 6. How do you receive information on campus?

	Choice	Yes		No	
		N	%	N	%
Do you...	Read announcements from your department?	483	91.7	44	8.3
	Go to career fairs?	272	51.7	254	48.3
	Use the Career Center?	402	76.6	123	23.4
	Look at your department's Instagram account?	210	40.2	313	59.6
	Look for postings on Handshake?	345	65.7	180	34.3

Note. Valid percentages are provided per row, as students were able to select as many options as possible that applied to them.

Internship Participation & Experiences

The following sections of the survey are dedicated to understanding students' internship experiences. The remainder of this report provides an overview of their responses¹.

¹ The survey included individual questions related to every internship experience (first, second, third, or fourth). Because experiences related to internships were common to the first and subsequent internships, we report only the first internship in depth. However, a notable difference between the first and subsequent internships is that students reported that faculty played a more active role in securing their second internship.

Students were asked if they had participated in an internship while being enrolled at Cal Poly Humboldt. Of the 456 respondents, 84 students participated in one internship, with 49 students completing more than one internship. Not all students answered every question; thus, totals may not be equal across all following sections of the report.

When asked to describe their first internship, Cal Poly Humboldt students report working off-campus, for money, during the school year. Only 3.2% of students reported participating in an internship as part of the College Corps Program (see Table 7).

Table 7. What Best Describes Your First Internship?

	Attribute	Yes		No	
		<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
What Best Describes Your First Internship?	On Campus?	58	37.4	97	62.6
	Paid?	97	62.6	58	37.4
	Received Course Credit?	72	46.5	83	53.5
	Part of College Corps Program?	5	3.2	150	96.8
	Summer internship only?	47	30.9	108	69.7

Note. A total of 155 participants answered this question. Students were able to choose as many options as possible that applied to their internship experience. % of valid percentages for each row.

Finding Internships

Principal Investigators were interested in learning how students found their internships. Their Advisor and Humboldt Handshake are the most popular formal ways that students discover internship opportunities (see Table 8). Students indicated informal avenues for finding internships; most prevalent among these were finding connections through the Cal Poly Humboldt campus community, such as hearing about internships from a classmate, mentor, or postings around campus (see Appendix B).

Table 8. What Resources Did You Use to Find Your First Internship?

Resource Used	<i>f</i>	%
Humboldt Handshake	20	12.4
Online Job Board (e.g., Indeed, Idealist, LinkedIn)	9	5.6
Job Fair	6	3.7
Career Development Center Staff	2	1.2
Center for Community Based Learning (CCBL)	2	1.2
COMPASS/INRSEP	10	6.2
Sponsored Programs Foundations/Engagement Hub	3	1.9
Department Internship Coordinator	6	3.7
Faculty	0	0.0
Advisor	35	21.7
Other	54	34.5
None of These	14	8.7

Note. A total of 161 participants answered these questions. % are Valid Percent.

Benefits and Challenges of Internships

Students were asked to describe what they found valuable and challenging about their internship experience. Based on a qualitative analysis of their responses, we identified five themes that reflected what students identified as valuable to their experience and six themes that reflected the challenges students faced.

Students deeply value doing real-world application and hands-on work in their internships, regardless of the context or specific field of study. Being able to work among others in their field of interest in real-time was the most commonly cited positive feature of their experience. Many students also saw their internship participation as a way to either explore or confirm their career path(s). Regarding challenges, the most commonly mentioned issue was time management while participating in an internship, with many respondents expressing issues scheduling work hours that conflicted with their class schedules. Themes that were captured, along with direct quotes from participants, are detailed below. Additionally, a graphic was created that illustrates the themes (See Appendix C). These graphics may be found useful for marketing purposes.

What Students Found Valuable About Their Internship

Hands-On Experience/Practical Application

- *I finally had the chance to work outside in the field.*
- *I find the real-world applications of what I do in my internship valuable*

Career Exploration and Confirmation

- *I got a job there afterwards and I began considering a career in Library Science!*
- *It's been a really meaningful job and now I am an elementary education (liberal studies) major!*

Community Building and Connections

- *I connected with many people, including scientists, federal employees, state employees, and community members.*
- *Wonderful opportunity to work for and within my community. Expand my network and created lasting, strong connections*

Supportive Environment

- *I had a work-family and access to the amazing advisors – their compassion, helpfulness, integrity, and good humor*
- *Being treated a valuable member of the team*

Developing Skill for Resume

- *I learned a lot and was able to hone some of my career-related skills at work*
- *It advanced my education and gave me many opportunities to expand my CV*

What Students Found Challenging About Their Internship

Time Management and Scheduling Conflicts

- *It is hard being a student and getting a majority of my hours on the weekend*
- *The biggest challenge was taking the Spring semester course and preparing all the paperwork while working a job and attending classes full time*

Transportation and Location Barriers

- *The rurality of Humboldt made travel difficult!*
- *Only challenge is getting my way there. I have to take the bus and walk there. I have no car to get to the location and back to campus*

Difficult Working Conditions

- *Required a decent amount of physical labor in super hot conditions. Had to camp outside in the heat during the day and cold at night.*
- *There were long beach patrols that require walking on sandy conditions for distances that range from a couple of miles to more than ten miles in one day. Our field research and patrols are conducted under adverse weather conditions at times.*

Financial Strain

- *My biggest challenge this semester have been financial. The internship had a stipend but because of the program, we were not able to be paid. If there was some kind of program at Cal Poly that would help interns get other paid or work study that would be of immense help.*
- *The internship was unpaid, and a minimum of 27 hours a week for three months. This made it difficult to save money, or pay for my expenses during this period of time*

Issues with Structure, Supervision, and Communication

- *The whole thing was completely independent... My only interaction with my boss was occasional instructions for a new project to work on and he never had time to review anything that I had completed*
- *Not having a direct supervisor, bouncing around between people to try to have something to do*

Lack of Relevancy

- *I found that the work I was doing for the company didn't fulfill the requirements for my major*
- *No potential for further employment growth*
- *May not be applicable to my career*

Open-Ended Questions Asked of Students with Internship Experience.²

The survey offered students an opportunity to specify the types of obstacles they faced when attempting to find an internship. Below are select responses in open-ended format. Based on a qualitative analysis of the data, responses are categorized within seven themes: *Availability, Competition, Financial Compensation, Location, Where to Find an Internship, Scheduling Conflict, and Experience Requirements.*

² This same question was asked of students who did not have previous internship experience. Their responses overlapped significantly with those presented below. In order to manage the length of this report, those responses are not included.

Availability

- *Actually finding one that's not full. I just happened to get assigned to it by my councilor*
- *Availability and companies not being specific about what they're looking for*
- *Availability and diversity of internships*
- *Availability, how remote the internship is*
- *Lack of spots, I've applied to many internships and very few even responded.*
- *Specifically with math, there aren't any offered. All of the non-major related internships are limited are very competitive.*

Competition

- *Competition, lack of time, being a freshman in college*
- *Extreme competition, with other students trying to find an internship as local to campus as possible*
- *Highly competitive internships*
- *It's competitive. Handshake seems overloaded with students all trying for the same positions.*

Financial Compensation

- *Adequate compensation*
- *Being unable/hard pressed to take an unpaid internship*
- *Compensation is a barrier*
- *I can't work full time, be a student full time, and have an internship. Unfortunately not privileged in that sense, I have to have a job to sustain myself.*
- *It was off campus, [so] compensation wasn't enough because of cost of living*
- *If you're a student who needs to be working while in school because you are solely financially supporting yourself and don't have anyone to help you, then its almost impossible to spend your time doing an internship without being paid. That was the only reason I could do college corps.*

Location

- *A lot of internships I have seen are very far from here and it makes it feasibly difficult to consider attending.*
- *As a transfer student, I have found it challenging to find a flexible internship because I am not from the area, and there is a high competition for a spot locally*
- *Being able to find an internship that has a contract with Humboldt because I do DL [Distance Learning] and am out of the service area*
- *Finding programs that provide enough financial support to justify doing an internship instead of working all summer*
- *I encountered the obstacle of living away from campus, since that limited my options for possible internship placement.*
- *I attend Cal Poly Humboldt online. My obstacle is locating a site in my county that is already connected with the site registry system for Cal Poly Humboldt State University*

Where to Find an Internship

- *A little bit of just knowing where people place the internship ad, as well as, finding a lot of internship for not freshman (like sophomores and juniors)*
- *A lot of internship opportunities are sent to the forest department via email which means a lot of them get lost in peoples inboxes*
- *Handshake is oversaturated and not effective for finding jobs/internships. Online platforms have made it more difficult for students to find opportunities.*
- *Not all internships are posted where I could easily find them, a lot of them require you to “know someone”*
- *There are not many that are advertised*

Scheduling Conflicts

- *Required classes during the same times as the internships (I couldn’t work at the summer camp despite it being the best opportunity for my major because my major class was at those exact times during the week)*
- *Scheduling the time needed for internship with the time needed to be successful in class*
- *Something that works with my work schedule*
- *Start date and end date timing with semesters*

Experience Requirements

- *Being under qualified or not knowing where to take that leap of applying just in case you aren’t ready*
- *Everywhere requires experience but it’s to get experience when no one will hire you without it*
- *Not qualified as a freshman for many internships*
- *Not till I was a senior I was able to get the opportunity to do an internship*

What recommendations do you have to make finding an internship easier?³

The survey provided students with an opportunity to offer recommendations for making it easier for students to find internships. Select responses in open-ended format are seen below. Based on a qualitative analysis of the data, responses are categorized within two themes: *More Advertisement and Supportive Feedback*.

More Advertisement

- *Centralized newsletter for the departments/major/concentrations would make it easier because the vast majority of internships I find out about are from the direct emails from faculty*
- *Have internships for every department/have teachers announce them in class, gave field trips to these places*

³ This same question was asked of students who did not have previous internship experience. Their responses overlapped significantly with those presented below. In order to manage the length of this report, those responses are not included.

- *Send all internship opportunity information to student emails, give all students at least a yearly opportunities to be added to email lists for subjects/careers email lists that would allow them to view applicable internship info*
- *Having websites dedicated to each major where we can login and look for internships easily or having our majors counselors promote internships*
- *It would be awesome if there were a site where you could filter what internships are on campus versus off campus and what “term” the internships take place.*
- *Maybe an internship board on the school’s website that is updated regularly, especially one for local organizations. Handshake is nice, but it’s not always user-friendly or it has outdated application deadlines/job postings.*

Supportive Feedback

- *It would be good to include small workshops for the science students on internship opportunities, how to create a federal resume, and what websites are useful for environmentally focused majors*
- *It would be helpful for advisors to give evaluative feedback about the student’s educational plan early on and advise internships that fit the timeline of the students that fit the timeline of the student’s goals and life outside of the university and help the student to plan their internship with these goals in mind*
- *Support for getting letters of recommendation and writing good cover letters, resume/CV, and statements of interest*

Re-Enrolling in an Internship

Students who had internship experience were asked a follow up question, “Are you interested in an additional internship while enrolled at Cal Poly Humboldt?” Just under half of the students who had an internship were interested in more internships, while 39.9% of students were unsure and 14.1% said no. Two major themes emerged from those students who were not interested in pursuing additional internships. Specifically, these students indicated that they were preparing to graduate and/or noted challenges with time and financial constraints.

Those who were interested in an additional internship (n = 122) were prompted to provide information about what they found most appealing: whether the internship is on campus, a mechanism for meeting their career goals, or if receiving course credit for participation was a requirement, preference, or not necessary. Students stated that having an internship on campus was either required or preferred (54.1%; n = 66), that meeting career goals was either required or preferred (99.1%; n = 121), and that receiving course credit was either required or preferred (46.8%; n = 57).

Internship Appeal

All students, whether or not they had an internship, were asked to rank items that are traditionally considered to be appealing when searching for an internship. Students placed items in order of importance. Overall rankings of appeal by internship exposure are provided below in Table 9.

Table 9. Ranking of Items that are Appealing to Students by Internship Exposure

Had Internship	Internship Appeal	No Internship
1	Build resume/Gain Experience	1
2	Explore career interests	4
3	Apply academic learning to real world experience	5
4	Build professional network	3
5	Easily Accessible	8
6	Opportunity to make positive change	6
7	Receive compensation	2
8	Receive academic credit/support	7
9	Required for my degree	9

Note. N = 519. All items were relisted together in ranking order to get a clearer idea about what the true rankings are, as the item rankings were split by question. The item with the most frequent selections were assigned a ranking spot.

Key findings include the following:

- Both groups identified resume building as highly appealing.
- Both groups ranked degree requirement as the least appealing benefit.
- Those who had held at least one internship ranked receiving compensation near the bottom of the list, while those without internship experience ranked compensation as the second most appealing benefit (after gaining experience).

Future research could investigate any relationship between internship exposure and appeal of pay, as the rankings between groups were considerably different. An area to investigate more fully is whether a student's financial situation is related to the appeal of securing an internship.

Appealing Characteristics: Answers from Those With Internships

Students' qualitative responses revealed additional appealing characteristics that were not included in the above ranking table. Selected responses are listed below by internship exposure:

Job Security

- *A guaranteed job*
- *An internship to job position arrangement*
- *If it offers a job/position after the internship*
- *Support or higher acceptance rates for future graduate applications and/or jobs*
- *Upward mobility in the company, opportunity to be rehired*

Community Building (Outside of Professional Connections)

- *Community building*
- *Community connections*
- *Getting involved in the community beyond the campus, which can often feel like it's own isolated world apart from Humboldt county*
- *The ability to make social connections with people*

Financial Compensation

Despite financial compensation having a low ranking in the table above, students with internships indicated that being paid would greatly increase the appeal of applying to an internship:

- *Dual Pay and Academic Credit*
- *Higher pay or compensation*
- *I like internships in new area so it would be appealing if it provided some sort of housing or housing compensation*
- *Mid-term traveling stipend*
- *Reimbursement for travel*
- *Scholarships or financial support*

Appealing Characteristics: Answers from Those *Without* Internships

Timing and Flexible Schedule

- *A schedule that I can work around while keeping my part-time job*
- *Accommodating hours with class schedules. Length of time, one semester or two*
- *Flexibility with my schedule would probably be #1 for me as of right now*
- *If it fits with my class schedule*
- *Takes place over the summer break... Part time during the semester, Flexible Hours for class schedule*

Job Security

- *Ability to continue working and do the internship*
- *An internship that could lead to permanent employment*
- *Guarantee for a job after completion*
- *If the internship will provide job opportunities*
- *Job opportunity after school, long term remote/flex internships during school year, references that can be used for future employment*

Housing

- *Provides Housing*
- *At the very least, I need to be able to afford transport and housing in an internship, so having those covered is important*
- *Helping students feel more secure with housing*
- *Housing benefits*
- *I would like it if they were close to where I live, or provide housing*

More Internship Choices

- *An interdisciplinary internship where students of different backgrounds + career paths work together on one research study, initiative, or other shared projects.*
- *As a psychology major, it would be appealing to be able to preform[sic.] different studies or have a wider diversity of labs to participate in*

- *I've seen little to no internships that are in the Art department. A beneficial feature would include diverse internships that heavily correlate with students' majors.*
- *More internship opportunities offered, because internships are so competitive and limited than I have never been accepted to any of the internships I have applied to.*
- *More of them/more opportunities to take internships outside of classes/more information about them*
- *Seeing as I haven't seen much talk about internships in the first place, I'd definitely say looking into more opportunities and more programs where it is available.*

Students without an Internship

Open-Ended Questions Asked of Students without Internship Experience

Not every student who agreed to participate in this needs assessment survey had participated in an internship and those students were routed to answer a different set of questions.

Asked if they were interested in being involved in an internship, 68.1% (n = 301) of students responded that they were interested, while 3.8% (n = 17) said no and 28.1% (n = 124) said maybe.

Obstacles to Obtaining an Internship

In order to understand why students have not participated in an internship, an open-ended question was included asking them to report what obstacles they have encountered. A total of 375 students responded to this question. Based on a qualitative analysis of the data, the following themes emerged: *Unsure Where to Look, Missing Qualifications, Grade Level, Compensation Challenges, Time Commitment*. Below are selected responses representative of each theme:

Unsure Where to Look

- *I don't know where to start or who to ask, especially for my major I feel like there aren't many opportunities.*
- *I don't know where to start and wouldn't know what to do after either since I've never had an internship.*
- *I have recently been trying but I don't know where to specifically look for more local ones. It seems like I would be getting these resources during the internship course but I want to look prior to taking that course.*
- *My biggest obstacle with finding an internship is finding one that's actually for my major. All the emails that seem to be sent out about internships seem to be for other majors.*
- *Not sure where to start, feeling like the market is over saturated.*

Missing Qualifications

- *A lot of internships prefer already having experience in field/lab work of what they are researching*
- *Competition, internships wanting experience beforehand when you don't have any*
- *Filling out the experience fields without any prior internships*

- *I have applied to a handful of internships. I don't think employers are looking for students with no work experience. This has been a huge obstacle for me personally. I have a full resume with the exception of professional work experience.*
- *I've been trying to get an internship for 2 years. Applied to 150+ internships and been rejected because I have no experience.*
- *The biggest obstacle seems to be lack of experience.*

Grade Level

- *As a new student joining in this semester, it has been a bit difficult to find opportunities to join internships since there isn't much posted about it physically around campus. I also have limited social connections, but I am building more as I have time here.*
- *Being a 1st year student*
- *Being a freshman and trying to navigate through my first year of living independently*
- *Being an underclassman – I applied for an internship I am interested in but was rejected; the reason given being that they were prioritizing upperclassmen.*
- *I haven't found any internships open to freshmen.*

Compensation Challenges

- *A good majority of the internships I have encountered or been interested do not offer compensation, but I simply cannot afford to participate in these types of internships*
- *Being fairly compensated. I work a full time job and go to school part time but would prefer to do internships if they paid well*
- *I already work several jobs, and the offers on campus haven't been high enough paying to justify my time.*

Time Commitment

- *A lot of them either don't fit my schedule or just too big of a time commitment for the class load I have right now*
- *Class scheduling + internship competing*
- *Conflict with class schedules and transportation*
- *I was enrolled in an internship class, but had to drop it due to lack of accessibility and time management to collide with class schedule and job.*
- *Inflexible hours/hours only being available during class periods*

Support Needed to Obtain an Internship

A total of 249 students responded to the question, "What support do you need to get ready for an internship interview? Do you know where to find that support?" Selected responses about what support students were seeking include:

- *A walkthrough of what to expect, how to prepare, resume revision/review.*
- *Aid in developing a stronger resume and cover letters.*
- *I need help fixing my resume to better suit my engineering degree*

- *Being aware of what kind of questions they ask. I don't know where to find this.*
- *Familiarizing the process and potential questions and qualities that I should bring up. Also having preparation for common questions that would be asked.*
- *Having a practice interview with someone in the same industry as the internship I am applying for would help me feel better prepared to answer specific questions about my major.*
- *I need to know the information I would need to have prepared about myself in order to answer questions well during the interview. It would be nice to have a list of sample questions and maybe someone to have a mock-interview with. I don't know where I would get this support besides google or asking around the library.*

Students who reported that they did know where to find support noted the following resources: library workshops, the Career Development Center, COMPASS/Engineering events, and INRSEP.

Service Learning Experiences

Sometimes students are unable to gain hands-on experience through internships due to certain restrictions, but Cal Poly Humboldt offers courses that focus on Service-Learning. These courses prioritize hands-on learning by making community service a requirement. Students who participated in the survey were asked if they had taken a service-learning course, and 75.6% (n = 396) of students had not done so. Meanwhile, 24.4% (n = 128) indicated either that they had taken this type of course or were unsure. When assessing whether students who have not taken these courses would be interested in taking a community service course, 52.9% (n = 250) said they would maybe be interested, 29.0% (n = 137) stated they would be, and 18.2% (n = 86) said they are not interested.

For those who said they had taken the course, 41 students provided the course name and department of the service-learning course, as well as the benefits and challenges of being enrolled in this particular style of class. Results are shown in Appendix A.

Re-Enrolling in a Service Learning Course

When asked if they were interested in taking an additional service-learning course, 77.8% of students said they would. Regarding why they are interested in participating in a course like this again, 33 students provided their viewpoints. Below are selected responses covering the following themes: *Hands-On Experience*, *Enjoyable Experience*, and *Applicable to School and Career Growth*.

Hands-On Experience

- *As it doesn't go towards my internship or hours, it gave me different hands-on learning experiences and allowed me to see other sides of my major*
- *Because having real-world experience as students is vital to success in any career path. And the more low-stakes experience I can gain, the better equipped I'll be when I'm out in the world, or better yet, paying it forward to interns while I'm in the supervisor roll*
- *Because this kind of course gave me practical experience*

Enjoyable Experience

- I believe it is a quality learning experience, service experience, and fun! I am actually doing it again this semester and would highly recommend it to anyone.*
- I enjoyed participating and getting to know a new community.*
- It was very enjoyable, and I like the idea of being able to give back to the community.*

Applicable to School and Career Growth

- I felt engaged in the class and like I could apply the coursework and concepts to my long term goals.*
- It is beneficial to see what I am doing all of my homework for. It is nice to know that I am working towards a job like this.*
- It is really good experience and it's helping me figure out what I enjoy and what I could potentially do as a career.*
- The people I met and the experience I had were so valuable to my career and self-exploration*

Other Hands-On-Experiences

Students who stated that they were involved in other hands-on experiences, outside of service-learning and internships, were further prompted to state what benefits they received from those experiences. Those are reported in Table 10. For those who reported an on-campus job, the greatest benefit is accessibility, followed closely by the opportunity to build their resume and gain experience. Cal Poly Humboldt students care most about creating community impact. Students who were involved with the Youth Educational Services program, as well as those who participated in either a group or independent volunteer activity, stated that the primary benefit was the ability to create impact within the community. Those who participated in a volunteer activity also noted they benefited from building their resume and gaining experience.

Table 10. Other Hands-On-Experiences

	Easily Accessible (close to campus)	Ability to create community impact	Build Resume/ Gain Experience	Build Professional Network	Explore Career Interests	Apply learning to real world experience
On-Campus Job	146	111	144	108	101	80
Youth Educational Services (Y.E.S)	39	50	38	25	28	25
Volunteer activity with a club/group	115	152	134	96	114	85
Volunteer Activity Independently	76	121	111	84	99	80
Other	17	19	23	19	18	15

Note. Participants selected as many items as possible that were applicable to their experiences. Cells contain frequencies. Most common responses by other learning experience are in **bold**.

Conclusion

Cal Poly Humboldt has an opportunity to increase awareness about and experience with internships and other hands-on learning experiences for students. Most Cal Poly Humboldt students have not had an internship, and often students do not know where to find information about internships. When accessing information, almost all students (92%) read department emails and announcements, and three quarters of them use career fairs to find opportunities. Those students that report having had an internship most commonly cite their Advisor and Handshake as the formal resources they use(d) to secure that internship. Informally, students state they learn about internships from a classmate, mentor, or postings around campus. However, even those students that have information or utilize resources have trouble securing internships. Common difficulties are the competition for internship positions and conflicting class schedules.

The majority (96%; n=425) of students who have not had an internship said they were “maybe” or “definitely” interested in an internship. Responses to open-ended questions identified obstacles including being unsure where to find an internship, feeling like they’re missing necessary qualifications, or time or money challenges.

While financial compensation is always welcome, money is not the main appeal of an internship – especially not for those who have had at least one internship. However, students who have not had internship experience indicated that compensation is highly appealing. The fact that an internship is required for a degree does not make it appealing to students, regardless of previous internship exposure. Closed-ended survey questions revealed that resume building and/or gaining experience is (are) the most appealing factor(s) for securing an internship.

Cal Poly Humboldt students care about their community and want to have an impact through their internship, volunteer, and service-learning opportunities. They recognize that internships are a good way to gain experience and build their resume, but uncertainty about finding appropriate positions, and time constraints and money continue to be obstacles to successfully securing an internship position.

Appendix A – Benefits and Challenges of Service Learning Experiences

Name of the Course	Benefits	Challenges
ESM 360	<i>Hands-on learning and learning about Humboldt's community</i>	<i>Making time for it while being a full-time student athlete.</i>
SOC 225S Social Issues and Action; Sociology Department	<i>I am currently enrolled</i>	<i>I am currently enrolled</i>
Sustainable Agriculture-soils	<i>I learned about farming practices, which I used to get my current job.</i>	<i>None, it was fun.</i>
SW social agency experience & SW field experience seminar	<i>Real world connections & experience, plus opportunities to reflect and integrate theories about our experience in class</i>	<i>The challenges of working on difficult projects in the real world - relationships, for my specific service learning project finding funding and planning events</i>
I did required volunteer work in high school, it was built into my core.	<i>Learning to work with others, where to find help when needed, and to be able to work towards a common goal.</i>	<i>N/A</i>
High school class; Economics, I participated in city council meeting	<i>Information on my cities issues and concerns from the residents</i>	<i>Location and time</i>
BA 105	<i>I benefitted by feeling like a part of our community more.</i>	<i>None.</i>
RS 361 Religious Studies	<i>OJT</i>	<i>the internship was too short</i>
Social work	<i>Real world experience</i>	<i>None</i>
Peace and Justice Studies, Humanities department	<i>Time management for projects, connection to community</i>	<i>fitting it into my schedule</i>
High school FFA	<i>public speaking, animal welfare, how to lead a team, how to be a good follower, built community and connection, and lastly i got to play with animals all the time which was so fun</i>	<i>So many! a lot of finding myself and how i managed difficult situations.</i>
ISLP Mexico	<i>An unreal amount, it was the best experience of my time at Humboldt so far</i>	<i>Not many, this was a very well put together course</i>
ART 357B Curr & Dvlpmnt Thru Art Educ I 42328	<i>I gained the ability to work with children from various age groups and used my own skillset to navigate different needs for each age group.</i>	<i>My classmates were overwhelmed, which caused a lot of disorganization. However, having worked with children before, I could keep my cool and maintain the flow. Someone had to adult-up for them.</i>
SP121 S	<i>experience, creating positive experience</i>	<i>Confidence</i>
SW 355	<i>I got to put academics in to practices</i>	<i>Scheduling</i>
Small group communication.	<i>N/A</i>	<i>Working with a group can be challenging.</i>
professional development CD	<i>i did the research option</i>	<i>not enough time in my week to commit to service learning</i>
CRIM 225S	<i>Currently enrolled</i>	<i>Finding an internship that would accept me on short notice.</i>
Link Crew	<i>Learn how to communicate and work with others</i>	<i>Frustrations and let downs</i>
Native American Studies	<i>N/A</i>	<i>N/A</i>

Name of the Course	Benefits	Challenges
Sociology 225s Social Issues and Action (currently enrolled)	<i>I am working with children at the Arcata Elementary school and learning how to interact and make a positive impact in their lives. I am also learning how to work with a group and help each other to make the experience more efficient and meaningful.</i>	<i>Learning how to prioritize the steps I needed to take for the screening process and coming up with new ideas for activities we could have the kids do.</i>
ISLP WLC	<i>real world experience, motivation regarding my chosen area of study, dopamine, new life experience, got to see cool art</i>	<i>I didn't always know what to do or have the answers for everything. I couldn't just go into auto pilot since I was in a new environment. I had to be more intentional and critical.</i>
REC 480	<i>working with youth with disabilities</i>	<i>Staying on timeline with the itinerary</i>
Religion and the environment	<i>It was a pleasure to engage in helping my community</i>	<i>I am a distance student and there were *very* few distance opportunities, either online or in my community for me to complete the required service learning</i>
ISLP 480 (Mexico)	<i>I gained big language development of Spanish. I gained a whole new insight in international service, and developed a big appreciation for community interaction.</i>	<i>The biggest would be the language because the service took place at a clinic filled with conversation of medical terms.</i>
Art ed	<i>General teaching experience</i>	<i>the unexpected</i>
college corps	<i>helped with the vets hall</i>	<i>long hours lots of work for not a ton of benefit</i>
ECON470S, sustainable rural economic development	<i>Course credit for my existing service with the Wiyot Tribe</i>	<i>The course goals and my employment did not always align perfectly. Sometimes it was hard to find new 'course material' in a pretty repetitive job as is the case with natural resource management.</i>
Course from previous college (Cal Nat Certification program)	<i>It lead me to becoming a consistent volunteer with organizations back home and now here at Cal Poly Humboldt.</i>	<i>Volunteering and being a full time student can be difficult at times due to time constraints.</i>
Child Development	<i>communication</i>	<i>Communication</i>
Community Psychology	<i>Connections, helping the community, learning about what my community needs.</i>	<i>N/A</i>
NAS 200	<i>It was extra credit so I just went and volunteered</i>	<i>None</i>
Canva	<i>Confidence</i>	<i>Nothing</i>
Environmental science in high school, we were required to help volunteer with our local park rangers	<i>Graduation credits</i>	<i>None the work was very straightforward and it was very accessible</i>
Blood Drive	<i>Hosting and working with people while saving lives.</i>	<i>Being able to meet quota and have enough room for walk-ins.</i>

Name of the Course	Benefits	Challenges
AHSS Selected Topics – Y.E.S.	<i>I learned a lot, got to go into town and interact with local community when adjusting to the area, and got to hand out with kind and patient people</i>	<i>I did not feel able to do the socializing element of the work very well (I was not very confident)</i>
ISLP Cebu, Philippines (WLC480)	<i>I gained service experience, cultural exchange, service experience abroad, traveling experience, teaching experience, team building, and professionalism</i>	<i>Team building with new personalities, jet-lag.</i>
Social Work Advanced Methods with Jovonne Dempster	<i>I learned how to host group meetings and run my own wellness center</i>	<i>I was challenged by not having a supervisor to refer back to except discussion posts or classwork</i>
Juvenile Hall Recreation Program	<i>Receive 30 hours of service requirement for a major class</i>	<i>Conflicts with times and days of engagement</i>

Appendix B – Informal Avenues for Finding Internships

The most prevalent answer students provided was that they found connections through the Cal Poly Humboldt campus community, such as hearing about internships from a classmate, mentor, or postings around campus.

Theme	N	Quotes
Direct Connection/ Directly Reached out	9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “[I] already work for them” • “Direct Correspondence” • “I already worked there” • “I had to reach out myself” • “I inquired with a staff member of the Sequoia Park Zoo, and then found the information on their website” • “I was offered the internship being a former reentry client with a passion to do great things, Amber Miller offered me a chance to work with the team.” • “In person resume handoff” • “Randomly met in person and was encouraged to apply” • “The mentor of the internship had reached out to me about participation”
Campus Community	15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Classmate” • “Got invited by other students I was already helping” • “I found out by professors that there was a School of Business Internship program” • “I saw a job board in the Natural Resources building, which led me to another job for another professor who did not select me, but pointed me into the direction of Jeff Kane’s project.” • “Internship course through Cal Poly Humboldt” • “Museum and Gallery internship class for the gallery certificate” • “Program” • “RAMP Mentor” • “Required for class” • “She [Sarah Landis] came to one of my classes” • “Yvonne Doble”
Campus Emails and Newsletters	8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Amelia Wright sending emails about Biological Sciences opportunities” • “Art Department Newsletter” • “Bulletin boards in wildlife building, school email” • “Email sent to school email address” • “Emailed through Humboldt” • “Emailed by the Union due to membership!” • “General e-mail message” • “Humboldt Email – Weekly Announcements (Humboldt NOW)”
External Programs/ Websites and Personal Research	9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Cal-Bridge” • “CSU Coast Website” • “Google and on the USA Government Jobs website” • “I was proactive and did research and looked up and applied to various companies that applied to my major of Geology. Not all of them, including the one I went to, had a job posting on the internet.” • “I went to DOR for services and was hired on as a temp volunteer” • “Independent Research” • “It was posted on Instagram” • “Local research on my own” • “The organizations website”

Theme	N	Quotes
Friends, Family, or Connections outside of Cal Poly Humboldt	10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>"Community college professors"</i> • <i>"Family Friend"</i> • <i>"Friend"</i> • <i>"Local contact"</i> • <i>"Mom"</i> • <i>"Nona"</i> • <i>"Relative"</i> • <i>"Through family"</i> • <i>"Through word of mouth, I just wanted to volunteer and lessened about the leadership role after I joined"</i> • <i>"Word of Mouth"</i>

“WHAT DID YOU FIND VALUABLE ABOUT YOUR INTERNSHIP EXPERIENCE?”

HANDS-ON EXPERIENCE



“I finally had the chance to work outside in the field”

“I find the real-world applications of what I do in my internship valuable”

CAREER EXPLORATION AND CONFIRMATION

“I got a job there afterwards and I began considering a career in Library Science!”

“It’s been a really meaningful job and now I am an elementary education (liberal studies) major!”



COMMUNITY BUILDING AND CONNECTIONS

“I connected with many people, including scientists, federal employees, state employees, and community members”

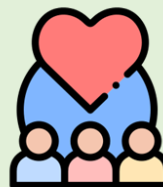


“Wonderful opportunity to work for and within my community. Expand my network and created lasting, strong connections”

SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT

“I had a work-family and access to the amazing advisors – their compassion, helpfulness, integrity, and good humor”

“...being treated as a valuable member of the team”



DEVELOPING SKILLS FOR RESUME



“I learned a lot and was able to hone some of my career-related skills at work”

“It advanced my education and gave me many opportunities to expand my CV”

“WHAT DID YOU FIND CHALLENGING ABOUT YOUR INTERNSHIP EXPERIENCE?”

TIME MANAGEMENT AND SCHEDULING CONFLICTS



“It is hard being a student and getting a majority of my hours on the weekend”

“The biggest challenge was taking the Spring semester course and preparing all the paperwork while working a job and attending classes full time”

TRANSPORTATION AND LOCATION BARRIERS



“The rurality of Humboldt made travel difficult!”

“Only challenge is getting my way there. I have to take the bus and walk there. I have no car to get to the location and back to campus”

DIFFICULT WORKING CONDITIONS



“Required a decent amount of physical labor in super hot conditions. Had to camp outside in the heat during the day and cold at night.”

“There were long beach patrols that require walking on sandy conditions for distances that range from a couple of miles to more than ten miles in one day. Our field research and patrols are conducted under adverse weather conditions at times.”

FINANCIAL STRAIN



“My biggest challenge this semester have been financial. The internship has a stipend but because of the program, we were not able to be paid. If there was some kind of program at Cal Poly that would help interns get other paid or work study that would be of immense help.”

“The internship was unpaid, and a minimum of 27 hours a week for three months. This made it difficult to save money, or pay for my expenses during this period of time”

ISSUES WITH STRUCTURE, SUPERVISION, AND COMMUNICATION



“The whole thing was completely independent... My only interaction with my boss was occasional instructions for a new project to work on and he never had time to review anything that I had completed”

“Not having a direct supervisor, bouncing around between people to try to have something to do”

LACK OF RELEVANCY



“I found that the work I was doing for the company didn't fulfill the requirements for my major”

“No potential for further employment growth”

“May not be applicable to my career”