

**REVISING THE EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING COMPONENT  
OF THE BUSINESS CAPSTONE COURSE AT  
DELAWARE TECHNICAL COMMUNITY COLLEGE'S GEORGE CAMPUS**

by

June N. Roux

An executive position paper submitted to the Faculty of the University of Delaware in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership

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## **ABSTRACT**

This Executive Position Paper examines the experiential learning component of the business capstone course at Delaware Technical Community College's George campus in Wilmington, Delaware. As a statewide institution of higher education, Delaware Tech offers associate of applied science degrees in practical, skills-based majors, including a number of career-oriented degrees in the field of business. In an effort to assist graduates with building career development skills, a capstone course with an outside-the-classroom learning experience in the form of a job shadow, field experience, or internship is required.

The purpose of this study is to assess the satisfaction with the experiential learning component of the business capstone course, and to make recommendations to improve the learning experience for business graduates consistent with National Business Education Association (NBEA) Career Development Standards and best practices in the areas of workplace education and marketability.

The key questions of this study are:

1. Is the experiential learning component of Delaware Tech's capstone course considered beneficial by business students, graduates, faculty, and host organizations?
2. How beneficial is the experiential learning component of the course in terms of meeting Standards III and IV and best practices in these areas of career development?
3. What changes, if any, should be made to Delaware Tech's instruction of these units to meet the NBEA Standards and best practices?

A review of the literature indicated that students benefit from participating in an outside-the-classroom experience. Benefits include a smoother transition from education to employment, enhanced awareness of professional behaviors in the workplace, and better job placement. The literature also noted suggestions for improvement, including more planning prior to the learning experience, adequate instructor involvement, more time spent on the experience and more meaningful tasks during the experience.

The research methods used in the study included an examination of student artifacts, graduate surveys and interviews, and course instructor and mentor interviews. This approach provided an opportunity to learn about the value of the experience from the perspectives of students, faculty, and host organizations.

The results of the study indicated that the learning experience is a valuable addition to the business capstone course, and should remain in the curriculum. However, to be consistent with NBEA Career Development Standards as well as best practices, the following improvements should be made:

- Enforce an eight-hour minimum for time spent in the learning experience.
- Increase instructor/mentor interaction prior to the experience.
- Improve student/mentor networking to enhance graduate marketability outcomes.

By implementing strategies to make the improvements noted above, the value of the experiential learning component of the business capstone course will be enhanced. The resulting impact on graduates as they transition from school to careers

will improve, with positive results in the areas of career development and marketability, leading to increased satisfaction with the learning experience for graduates, instructors, and host organizations.

## **Chapter 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Experiential learning is widely thought to benefit students in higher education, providing hands-on experience in a chosen field as well as contributing to the professional behaviors and practical knowledge needed to gain entry-level employment. In keeping with this view, the business department chairs at Delaware Technical Community College (Delaware Tech) added an experiential learning requirement to the business capstone course in the fall of 2013. This requirement could be satisfied by participation in a job shadow, internship, or field experience aligned with each student's major field of study. As the department chair of Delaware Tech's George campus in Wilmington, I noted that some of my students benefited greatly from the experiential learning component, while others did not. This led me to focus my work at the University of Delaware on how the experiential learning component of the capstone course could be strengthened to help Delaware Tech students reach their educational and employment goals.

This executive position paper is organized into four chapters, with accompanying appendices. Chapter 1 provides background and an analysis of the problems relating to the experiential learning component of Delaware Tech's business capstone course. Chapter 2 reviews the methodology that I undertook to gain a better understanding of the issues noted by students, faculty, and host organizations. In

Chapter 3, I review common themes that emerged as a result of my study. In Chapter 4, I present recommendations for improvement strategies based on my findings.

### **Experiential Learning as Part of a Business Curriculum**

Experiential learning is an increasingly important component of higher education. Job shadowing, internships, and cooperative education are all terms that can be used to describe the placement of an enrolled student in an organization, with or without pay, with a faculty supervisor, a company supervisor, and some academic credit earned toward the degree (Narayanan, Olk, & Fukami, 2010, p. 61). The inclusion of experiential learning (and of career development curriculum) is a trend that is increasing in scope and importance across many college campuses as more emphasis is placed on business career readiness upon degree completion (Truell, 2008).

As noted by the American Association of Community Colleges (2014), effective education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century will require more work-based learning, which includes internships, apprenticeships, and clinical placements. The National Business Education Association (NBEA), recognizing the need for standards to guide career development curriculum, introduced a series of career development standards in 2007. These standards include a focus on a number of related career development skills, including the assessment of personal skills, abilities, and aptitudes for assessing a good “career fit”; the ability to utilize resources to explore career opportunities; the development of work-related values and expectations; and managing the transition from school to a professional position (NBEA, 2007). Table 1 summarizes the NBEA standards relating to career development.

Table 1. NBEA Career Development Standards

<b>Career Development Area</b>	<b>Achievement Standard</b>
I. Self-Awareness	Assess personal skills, abilities, and aptitudes and personal strengths and weaknesses as they relate to career development.
II. Career Research	Utilize career resources to develop a career information database that includes international opportunities.
III. Workplace Education	Relate the importance of workplace expectations to career development.
IV. Career Strategy	Apply knowledge gained from individual assessment to a comprehensive set of goals and an individual career plan.
V. School-to-Career Transition	Develop strategies to make an effective transition from school to career.
VI. Lifelong Learning	Relate the importance of lifelong learning to career success.

### **Background and Purpose of the Study**

Delaware Technical Community College (Delaware Tech) is the only community college in the state of Delaware, offering practical, career-based degrees, diplomas, and certificates as well as transfer degrees to residents of Delaware and nearby states. The college operates on a county-specific basis, with campuses in all three Delaware counties: New Castle, Kent, and Sussex.

Each of the campuses at Delaware Tech has a business administration department that grants associate of applied science degrees in a number of business-related areas, including accounting, management, marketing, and general business. The number of graduates in these four business concentrations has averaged over 250 students college-wide for the past four years. The largest business program is housed

at the George campus in Wilmington, with the number of graduates in accounting, general business, management, and marketing averaging roughly 85 students annually for the years 2013 through 2016.

In destination surveys completed by Delaware Tech's graduates each year, approximately 50% of business graduates at the George campus indicate their intention to continue their education at four-year institutions, with the remainder seeking part or full-time employment immediately after graduation.

To address the need to better prepare business students for entry into the workplace by providing a real-world learning experience, in 2012 a new business capstone course was developed at Delaware Tech. This capstone course, BUS 275 Portfolio and Experiential Learning, begins with a review of "soft skills" such as résumé writing, interviewing strategies, and the basics of professional communication. The course then includes an experiential learning component consisting of a job shadow (the student observes and asks questions about a workplace position or positions in a company in which he or she is not employed), field experience (the student is given an opportunity to participate in a job shadow within his or her current place of employment), or internship (the student is given workplace tasks to perform, typically at a company in which he or she is not employed). These experiences are typically related to the student's field of study. Students also attend various seminars and networking events and participate in a career fair. The course was incorporated into the curriculum beginning in the spring of 2013, and it has been a required course for all accounting, general business, management, and marketing majors since then. As the chair of the business



department at the George campus in Wilmington from 2011 until 2016, I was one of the primary instructors for this course.

### **The Problem**

My interest in revising the experiential learning unit of our capstone business course arose from informal conversations with business students who had taken this course as well as from written student reflections on the experiential learning component of the course. Some of the students had valuable job shadows, internships, or field experiences that enabled them to take part in real-world experience in their field while working on meaningful projects. These students valued the experience and felt that it assisted them with developing their life plans and career strategies, and also enhanced their marketability after graduation.

Unfortunately, some students were not satisfied with their job shadowing opportunity in the course. Their experiences were either not in their field of study or they were assigned to junior staffers and observed low-level tasks. In some of these cases, the students' time or transportation limitations left them with limited options for meeting the experiential learning requirement. In addition, some instructors had little formal contact with the mentor providing the experience, which resulted in confusion about the details of the learning experience.

An additional issue with the course stems from its initial creation. The department chairs of each of Delaware Tech's three business departments, recognizing the need for "soft skills" training and work-based learning in the curriculum, worked together to develop a course that included these components, but did not consult NBEA standards before developing the course.

These issues led me to conduct a review of the experiential learning curriculum in Delaware Tech's career development units of the business capstone course, both within the context of the NBEA standards on career development via experiential learning as well as student satisfaction with the course in terms of these areas of career development.

### **Key Questions**

My specific research questions were the following:

1. Is the experiential learning component of Delaware Tech's capstone course considered beneficial by business students, graduates, faculty, and host organizations?
2. How beneficial is the experiential learning component of the course in terms of meeting Standards III and IV and best practices in these areas of career development?
3. What changes, if any, should be made to Delaware Tech's instruction of these units to meet the NBEA Standards and best practices?

### **Review of the Literature**

Various forms of experiential learning are utilized in meeting the career development standards noted above. Methods utilized typically include informational interviews, mentoring, job shadowing, internships, and cooperative education (NBEA, 2007). As noted by Truell (2008), because cooperative education and other experiential-learning initiatives connect business concepts taught in the classroom with real-world applications, these initiatives are an ideal setting for teaching career development standards (p. 250).

A significant body of literature supports the value of including experiential learning in business curricula. Numerous research studies have reported the benefits of various forms of experiential learning activities (internships, co-operative learning, job shadowing) undertaken by students outside the traditional classroom environment. “Students benefit from internships because the professional work experience makes them more marketable, employers like internships because they provide risk-free trial access to potential future employees, and schools benefit from them because it helps strengthen their connections to the business community” (Divine, Linrud, Miller, & Wilson, 2007, p. 45).

Research has also been conducted regarding the benefits of experiential learning for students transitioning from college to a career. Studies have shown that an internship helps students to foster more realistic expectations of entry-level positions, increases employment opportunities of students after graduation, shortens the time period between graduation and employment, and softens the shock of transitioning from school to work (Coco, 2000; Knouse & Fountenot, 2008; Swanson & Tomkovick, 2012).

Community college students also benefit greatly from experiential learning, although there are unique challenges facing the community college population. According to Walker (2009), community colleges should provide internship opportunities to students, giving them experience in their respective fields and therefore an advantage for job placement (p. 66). However, Divine et al. (2007) noted that a required internship program may not be as good a fit for schools that have a large percentage of part-time or non-traditional students, although schools that are

teaching-oriented, lack national prestige, focus on undergraduate studies, and place a high priority on industry contacts are a better fit for required internships (p. 50).

Research regarding student satisfaction with experiential learning has also yielded valuable insights. In a study by McCarthy and McCarthy (2006), business students found the job shadowing form of experiential learning to be either helpful or very helpful in terms of understanding what a particular type of job entails. The students preferred job shadowing over the analysis of business cases, a staple of traditional business curricula (p. 203).

Studies have been conducted to determine students' perceptions of the value of experiential learning in regard to a number of different factors relating to NBEA standards. These factors (discussed in more detail below) include skill development, employability, initial salaries, career choice, comprehension of classroom material, and personal growth.

### **Skill Development**

As noted by Coco (2000), an internship should offer its participants substantive, creative, and challenging work (p. 42). Students value the opportunity to engage in challenging assignments as part of their experiential learning. A study by Swanson and Tomkovick (2012) finds that both students and internship providers rate skill development as the most important aspect of internships (p. 259).

One of the more highly valued skills was in the area of interpersonal development. In a study by Beard and Morton (1999) involving 193 advertising and public relations interns, 75% agreed that their internships helped them to acquire interpersonal skills (p. 48). In a study of business interns by Gault, Redington, and

Schlager (2000), interns rated the internship as providing a higher level of career preparation in the area of relationship building than the preparation received in the university classroom (p. 49). Further evidence of students' appreciation of the interpersonal development in internships comes from a study by Cook, Parker, and Pettijohn (2004), in which the researchers noted that in a survey of 351 interns, 87% agreed that the internship had helped them learn to work with a variety of different types of people in different work environments, as noted by their positive response to the survey question relating the internship to an increase in their ability to get along with others (p. 181).

Effective communication is also a key area of skill development for business students. In a study by Kathy Barnett (2012), internship respondents noted the key role that communication (both internal and external) played in terms of their own satisfaction in the workplace, as well as what their behavior and interactions as a team communicated to other participants in the workplace as the students sought to build their professional reputations (p. 277).

### **Marketability/Employability**

NBEA Standards II, IV, and V address the issues of marketability and employability in developing a career strategy and the transition from school to career. Beard and Morton (1999) found that 69% of 193 post-secondary interns studied reported that they derived career benefits from their internships because the internships allowed them to experience many different career possibilities (p. 48). Swanson and Tomkovick (2012) also noted that students valued the career benefits of internships. Both students involved in internships and those who were not involved

appreciated the career benefits of internships; however, it is interesting to note that this value increased for students after they participated in an internship. Swanson and Tomkovick (2012) attributed this finding to the fact that, after participating in an internship, students may recognize the greater importance of long-term career benefits over the shorter-term concerns (wages, initial job offer) of a non-intern (p. 260).

In the Gault et al. (2000) study, alumni with internship experience reported significantly higher levels of extrinsic success than their non-intern counterparts. Interns reported receiving greater entry-level compensation than non-interns, with starting salaries averaging 9.2% higher than for non-interns, and shorter time to obtain their first positions: 2 months versus 4.3 months for non-interns (p. 50). A study of marketing instructors by Weible and McClure (2011) also supports this view. Instructors perceived that internships helped students get jobs sooner, at a higher salary, and with better positions (p. 235). A third study also supports the effect of experiential learning on employability. Cook et al. (2004) found that 78% of the student intern respondents in their study agreed that the internship helped them to have more confidence in finding employment (p. 182).

### **Students' Suggestions for Improvement**

As noted above, many researchers have found that external experiential learning, in the form of job shadowing or internships, is viewed positively by student participants. However, considerable research has been done in the area of improvements to the experiential learning process. In a study of a semi-directed internship experience at a large mid-western university, student interns suggested that

firms provide more time on the job, better training/mentor feedback, more meaningful work, and better pre-internship training. Although students in this study found the internship experience to be beneficial, the researchers conclude that in instances where the intern has found his or her own experience provider, the provider may or may not recognize the importance of providing pre-experience briefing and subsequent feedback on performance (Jackson & Jackson, 2009, p. 65).

Rothman (2007), in her study of 402 undergraduate business students, found that over one quarter of students felt that the internship was a very positive experience, and 36% would make no changes at all to the program. However, 64% of respondents suggested the following improvements to the internship experience: more structure on the part of the host company; better scheduling of assignments; more specific, quality projects to work on; greater clarity of instruction; more feedback from supervisors; and more interpersonal interaction/involvement with supervisor and staff (p. 142).

### **Faculty Suggestions for Improvement**

Clark (2003) noted the importance of both practical and reflexive goals in maximizing the value of internships to business students. Practical goals relate to job-relevant skills that the student can, in turn, use to obtain a job after graduation. Reflexive goals are those that help the student integrate theory and practice, classroom learning, and professional experience. Clark (2003) suggested a series of assignments (for example, keeping a journal, writing about problem solving in the internship) to enhance both of these aspects of the internship for an enhanced learning experience.

In a long-term study of Portuguese university students, Narayanan et al. (2010) found that faculty knowledge of the project and interest in the student as well as the student's general knowledge were important in determining student satisfaction, although the role of the faculty advisor was the most important determinant of student satisfaction (p. 71). Swanson and Tomkovick (2012) also found that faculty can help their advisees better integrate their expectations to the specific demands of the internships (p. 260).

Beard and Morton (1999) found that student grades (as measured by GPA) and completion of a requisite number of courses are less effective methods for determining student success in an internship than the student's positive attitude about elements of the internship (p. 51). Students should also be active participants in the internship placement, and employers should make an attempt to match student skills to the project requirements (Narayanan et al., 2010, p. 66).

In summary, the research suggested significant advantages to students who participated in an outside-the-classroom experience. One benefit to the students from engaging in a real-world learning experience was a smoother transition from education to employment. An additional benefit was enhanced student awareness of appropriate professional behaviors in the workplace, including skill development in areas such as communication and interpersonal relationships. Graduate marketability also improved, with higher salaries, less time needed to find employment, and increased confidence in the job search process.

The literature also noted suggestions for improvement. Pre-placement planning, adequate instructor involvement, a longer learning experience, and more



meaningful work were cited among the improvements to the programs studied. This information provided useful background for the focus of my study: improving experiential learning for Delaware Tech's business students.

## **Chapter 2**

### **METHODOLOGY TO INVESTIGATE EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING EFFECTIVENESS**

To determine the elements of an effective experiential learning unit of the career development curriculum, I included NBEA Standards III and IV for career development and evidence-based practices as evaluation criteria in my review framework, combining similar categories or demonstrated areas of effectiveness into the criteria (see Table 2). The framework also includes the research analyzed in Chapter 1 relating to faculty as well as students' suggestions for improvement. I then summarized the desired performance outcomes for each criterion, and included the relevant measurable performance objectives that were written for the course. Two performance outcomes on the chart within the context of the experiential learning course requirement are of particular interest as they relate directly to the early stages of career planning: applying knowledge gained from individual assessment to goals/career plan, and relating the importance of workplace expectations to career development.

Using the criteria in Table 2, I chose to study the experiential learning unit of Delaware Tech's BUS 275 capstone course at the George (Wilmington) campus. This experiential learning unit currently consists of a 16-hour outside-the-classroom experience (this amount of experiential learning time was chosen because it is equal to the lab hours assigned to the course: one hour per week for 16 weeks, although

some students choose to participate for longer periods). Eight hours of this experience should consist of a job shadow, field experience, or internship opportunity, although in some cases students complete fewer than eight hours, primarily due to student or mentor time constraints, or student transportation constraints.

Table 2. Framework for Analysis of Experiential Learning Component of Business Capstone

<b>Evaluation Criterion</b>	<b>Source of Criterion</b>	<b>DTCC Measurable Performance Objective</b>	<b>Desired Performance Outcome</b>
Workplace Expectations as Related to Career Development	NBEA Standard III; Clark (2003); Rothman (2007); Jackson & Jackson (2009); Narayanan, Olk, & Fukami (2010)	Arrange a field experience or job shadowing opportunity in field of study. Participate in job shadowing or field experience. Appraise job shadowing experience.	Participate in or observe assignments that demonstrate specific job-relevant skills. Relate importance of workplace expectations to career development.
Marketability	NBEA Standard IV; Beard & Morton (1999); Cook, Parker, & Pettijohn (2004); Gault, Redington, & Schlager (2000); Swanson & Tomkovick (2012); Weible & McClure (2011)	Use a self-reflection process to identify possible careers and positions.	Use the knowledge gained to obtain employment sooner, with a higher salary and/or a more desirable position. Utilize career resources to develop a personal career information “database.” Apply knowledge gained from individual assessment to goals/career plan. Describe strategies to transition from school to career.

The learning experiences should focus on the students’ primary concentration areas or majors within the field of business. For example, accounting majors may spend their time with one or more certified public accounting (CPA) firms or in the

accounting department of a private company, while management majors may shadow a company's operational manager.

The remaining portion of the experiential learning component consists of student participation at seminars and networking events. For example, the college's business advisory board hosts a business career expo event where students participate in informational interviews with board representatives from a variety of industries. Seminars such as "Interviewing 101" or attendance at an annual career fair make up the balance of students' experiences.

For my executive position paper, I chose to evaluate the quality of the desired performance outcomes related to the experiential learning component of the course as noted in Table 2. In particular, I focused my study on the job shadow, field experience, and internship component of the learning experience requirement.

In addition to a comparison of the current curriculum to desired performance outcomes, I used a mixed methods approach to explore the effectiveness of the learning experience from the three different groups of stakeholders who are directly involved: students, faculty, and host organizations. Primary data from the following three sources were collected: business graduates, course instructors, and business host organizations.

In the case of business graduates, a variety of methods were used to collect the data. The study collected two types of primary data from former business students: quantitative data in the form of a structured survey (with one open-ended question) and qualitative data using the individual interview method. In addition, previously

collected artifacts were examined via a review of a number of reflection papers on the learning experience, written by students as a requirement of the capstone course.

The use of the survey method enabled me to gain feedback from a relatively large number of former students, while the interview method allowed me to use open-ended questions (with the opportunity for further probing) to gain more in-depth insight from a small number of students.

Three faculty members who taught the capstone course at various times since its inception were also interviewed in an effort to gain feedback regarding their perceptions of the strengths and weaknesses of the experiential learning component of the course. Additionally, mentors from five host organizations were interviewed to gain insight into the mentoring organizations' views regarding the value of the learning experience for the graduates as well as for their organizations.

The different methods of collection allowed for data triangulation. The student data was triangulated with the interview results from the course instructors and host organizations, which increased the consistency of results and yielded a better understanding of the issues from the various stakeholders' perspectives.

The protocols for each instrument used in my study were reviewed and revised by my EPP committee and were subsequently submitted to the University of Delaware's Human Subjects Review Board for review and approval. Consent forms were signed by all subjects, and Institutional Review Board guidelines were followed concerning the treatment of human subjects and the subsequent storage of data.

## **Reflections of Business Graduates**

To investigate student views regarding the value of their experiences, I first examined students' experiential learning reflection papers, written while the students were completing the capstone course. An examination of these artifacts provided me with an opportunity to review students' detailed insights into their experiences while still in recent memory. Appendix A contains the reflection paper guidelines for the course. I examined a total of 38 student reflection papers, the total number of students enrolled in the spring and summer semester sections of the course at the George campus. Twenty-one papers were collected from the spring 2016 sections of the course, and 17 were collected from the summer 2016 course sections.

Twenty-four of the 38 students reported participating in a job shadow, where students observed and asked questions about workplace positions. Thirteen students participated in a field experience, where each student was given an opportunity to participate in a job shadow at his or her current place of employment. One student reported participating in an internship, where the student was given workplace tasks or assignments to perform for an extended period of time. The times spent on the experiences ranged from 3 to 16 hours for the job shadows and field experiences, and 11 weeks for the internship.

Each of the reflection papers was scored against a rubric developed for this study (see Appendix B). Scoring results are summarized in Appendix C. The papers were then examined to identify common themes relating to students' perceived value of their learning experiences; in Appendix D, the themes were aligned to NBEA career development standards.

## **Graduate Surveys**

I also sought primary data from business graduates in an attempt to determine their perception of the value of the experiential learning component of the capstone course. To obtain data from as many former students as possible, I conducted a survey using the Qualtrics software platform. By using a Qualtrics survey, I was able to collect quantitative data from a significant percentage of the population of former students who have completed the capstone course since its inception, gaining insight into graduate satisfaction with specific aspects of the learning experience as well as some general feedback regarding former students' overall impressions of their experiences. The survey obtained information regarding the job shadow/internship process (for example, whether the instructor or the former student secured the position) as well as outcome questions relating to graduate satisfaction with elements of the desired learning outcomes noted in Table 2. The survey included several Likert-type scales, allowing graduates to indicate their levels of satisfaction with the job shadow or internship in the areas of time spent on the experience, enhancement of marketability or employability, the perceived quality of the assigned tasks or projects, and the amount and quality of the feedback received by the student's mentor for the job shadow or internship. The survey protocol and questions can be found in Appendix E.

On December 1, 2016, 333 emails with the Qualtrics survey link were sent to all known George campus business graduates from spring 2013 through summer 2016. A total of 42 email addresses were determined to be undeliverable by Qualtrics, leaving 291 emails that reached the inboxes of graduates. Approximately two weeks

were given to respond to the survey, and two reminder emails were sent to the contact list. A total of 69 responses were received by the December 16, 2016, deadline. Of those respondents, 62 indicated that they had completed the business capstone course. The response rate by question is shown in Appendix F.

### **Graduate Interviews**

Using one-on-one interviews, I collected qualitative data from a convenience sample of six former students to gain in-depth insights from graduates. This sample of graduates was self-selecting in that they were the first 6 of 22 graduates who responded to my emailed request for assistance with my study. Three of the respondents interviewed had participated in a field experience with their current employers, two participated in a job shadowing experience, and one respondent participated in an extended internship.

The questions asked in the interviews included background information on the companies shadowed and the former students' overall impressions of the experiential learning component of the course. Interview questions also asked for examples of specific workplace activities observed or performed by the former students and the skills they learned from their experiences. In the interviews, I also elicited feedback about satisfaction with the amount of time spent on the learning experience. The interviews concluded with questions regarding the former students' perceptions of the value of their experiences in terms of the desired learning outcomes noted in Table 2, as well as a request for suggestions to improve the learning experience. The protocol for the graduate interviews can be found in Appendix G, and an analysis of the



graduate interview responses to determine common themes can be found in Appendix H.

### **Instructor Interviews**

Three full-time instructors who taught the business capstone course between the spring of 2013 and the fall of 2016 were interviewed to gain their perspective on the effectiveness of the experiential learning component of the course in meeting the objectives noted in Table 2. Questions posed to these instructors included whether students found their own placement or relied on the faculty members to provide a suitable placement, the amount of guidance the faculty members gave to employers and students prior to the job shadow placement, the quantity and quality of feedback received from the employer, and the level of satisfaction expressed by students in their experiential learning reflection papers. The interviews were conducted in October and November of 2016, and took from 35 minutes to 1 hour to complete. The interview protocol for instructors can be found in Appendix I, and an analysis of the instructor interview responses to determine common themes can be found in Appendix J.

### **Mentor Interviews**

Mentors from five of the host organizations that offered experiential learning placements were also interviewed. Four of the host organizations were chosen because they provide experiential learning opportunities to Delaware Tech's business students on an ongoing basis, and the fifth was chosen from a group of seven organizations that provided learning experiences to students in the summer of 2016, the most recent semester studied. Three of the five organizations hosted students for

job shadows, one firm hosted a student for a field experience, and the final organization hosted a student for an internship. Interviews with the five mentors occurred in October and November 2016. The interviews took from 45 minutes to 1 hour and 15 minutes to complete. Questions asked of the mentors included seeking feedback on the amount of guidance given by the faculty member regarding desired outcomes of the learning experience (as noted in Table 2), including mentors' perceived value of the experience in terms of career skills and marketability or employability. Suggestions for improvement were also requested. The interview protocol for mentors can be found in Appendix K, and an analysis of mentor responses to determine common themes can be found in Appendix L.

To summarize, my study was designed to explore the value of business students' learning experiences as related to career development in areas such as awareness of professional behaviors, teamwork, and professional communication. The future marketability of students as a result of their experiences was also a focus of the study. Finally, overall satisfaction of the learning experience was explored.

The methods used in the study included an examination of student artifacts, graduate surveys and interviews, and instructor and mentor interviews. This approach provided me an opportunity to learn about the value of the experience for students, faculty, and host organizations.

## **Chapter 3**

### **VALUE OF EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING**

After collecting data from the various stakeholders involved in the learning experience, I triangulated the data by source, including information from students, graduates, mentors, and instructors. I also triangulated the data by methodology, using an examination of artifacts along with survey results from graduates and the interviews with graduates, mentors, and instructors. Based on the triangulated data, three major themes emerged from my investigation. The first theme answers the first of my key questions: experiential learning is viewed as a valuable component of the business capstone course. The second theme addresses the second key question: workplace expectations as related to career development are enhanced by the learning experience. The third theme, that marketability (also called employability) is enhanced in some instances (Table 3), relates directly to the third key question. Each of these themes will be discussed in turn, followed by a discussion of some suggestions for improvement of the experience.

Table 3. Triangulated Results of Experiential Learning Investigation

	<b>Experiential Learning is Valuable</b>	<b>Workplace Expectations Regarding Career Development are Enhanced</b>	<b>Marketability is Enhanced for Some Students</b>
Student Artifacts	X	X	
Graduate Surveys	X	X	X
Graduate Interviews	X	X	X
Mentor Interviews	X	X	X
Instructor Interviews	X	X	X

### **Experiential Learning is Beneficial**

For the first key question, I found that business graduates, instructors, and mentors all expressed support for the inclusion of experiential learning into the business programs at Delaware Tech. This finding is consistent with my review of the literature, which reported that students and other stakeholders generally felt that the learning experience was valuable.

#### **Artifacts**

In a review of student reflection papers, I found that in 35 of the 38 papers reviewed (92.1%), students reflected on the positive quality of their experience. This supports the theme that the students value experiential learning while they are taking the course. Several students expressed their gratitude for the opportunity to participate in an on-site learning experience within a professional environment. The overall level of student satisfaction with the experience was fairly high, as numerous students noted that the mentors were approachable and willing to answer questions about their positions and the organization for which they worked. Students' reflections of their

experiences included statements such as, “I think the job shadow was a good experience for me,” and “I enjoyed the entire experience and was grateful to have had the opportunity,” indicating that students valued the experiential learning component of the course. However, given the fact that the reflection papers were graded assignments that were written while the students were still enrolled in the course, some bias could skew these results, as some students may have sought to provide instructors with the type of feedback that the students thought their instructors wanted to hear.

### **Graduate Surveys**

The results of the graduate survey also indicate that the learning experience was believed to be a valuable component of the capstone course. In Question 6, the survey asked graduates to assess the value of their learning experiences, using a Likert-type scale. As shown in Figure 1, the graduates were very positive in their assessment of the overall value of the experience, with 90.9% of the 55 respondents indicating that the learning experience was valuable to either a great or a modest extent.

Question 6 – Likert scale: Overall, I think the job shadow/field experience/internship was valuable.

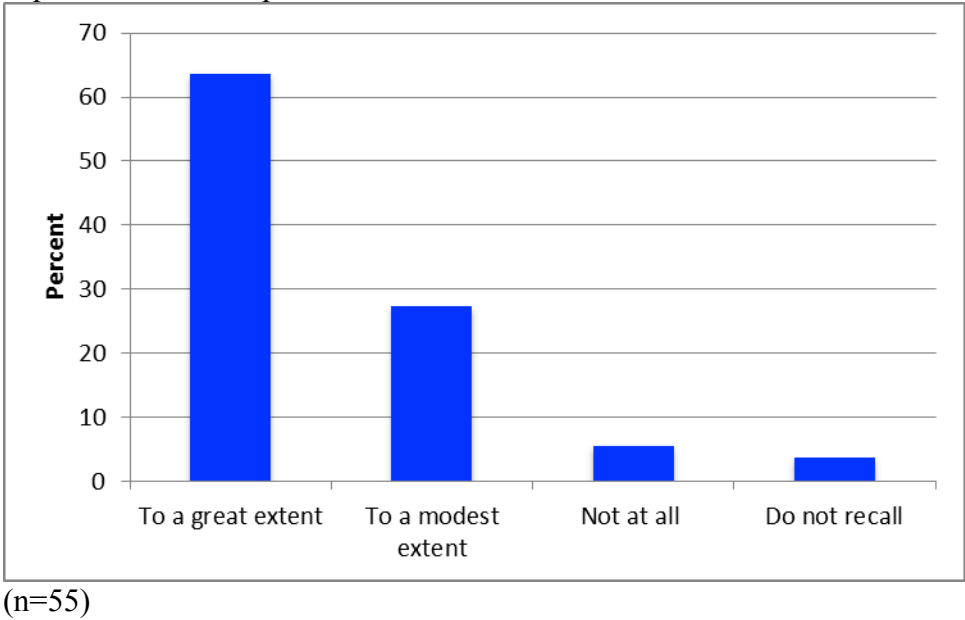


Figure 1. Graduates’ Perceived Value of Learning Experience

This level of satisfaction with the experience remained high for respondents from 6 months to 3 years after graduation from the program, with survey graduates from the years 2013 to 2016 reflecting positively on their experiences. Comments provided in the survey’s open-ended question support these results. Coded responses to a request for additional details indicate that 81.8% of graduates (18 out of 22) gave positive feedback on their learning experience, as seen in Table 4.

Table 4. Coded Responses to Open-Ended Survey Question

Please provide any additional details that you'd like to share about your job shadow/field experience/internship in the space provided.		
<b>Coded Responses</b>	<b>Frequency (n = 22)</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Informed graduate of specific position in a business-related field	6	27.3%
Graduate made networking, professional connections	4	18.2%
Good experience overall	8	36.4%
Total positive comments	18	81.8%
Difficult to schedule experience; more structure or connection to employers needed	3	13.6%
Not relevant to working professional	1	4.5%

The open-ended responses were generally positive, as noted above. Graduates expressed appreciation for the chance to observe a professional in their chosen field, which gave many of them a sense of the skills required for their career beyond what was taught in the classroom. In addition, students indicated their appreciation for the opportunity to observe professional behaviors in their chosen field. For some students, this was their first opportunity to do so. One student wrote, “Being I have always worked in the restaurant industry it gave me a better insight and understanding on what a ‘normal’ job looks like. It prepared me for my upcoming interviews and allowed for me to be where I am today.”

### **Graduate Interviews**

The theme of general appreciation for the opportunity to participate in a learning experience was also evident in the graduate interviews. All six respondents expressed appreciation for the opportunity to participate in a job shadow, field experience, or internship in their career field. Graduates noted the value of observing real-world issues in terms of task completion, decision-making, and professional

interactions with peers, supervisors, and subordinates. One young graduate placed the value of his internship in the greater context of his education at Delaware Tech, “[The internship] matured me, because I had a rough start at Delaware Tech. I was young and not sure of my future. I grew up and matured with the experience in my classes, and the internship helped me with that.”

### **Mentor Interviews**

The five interview subjects from the host organizations also reflected positively on the experience. Two of the respondents reported on the beneficial impact of the learning experience for both the students and the organizations. One mentor noted that he would be interested in hiring a student who recently shadowed him when a suitable position became available, and another felt that he had “gained a friend” over the duration of the internship.

### **Instructor Interviews**

Instructors’ insights regarding their students’ views of the learning experience were positive, but perhaps less so than that of the students or graduates. The instructors generally reported that for students in well-matched placements, the experience seemed to be positive. One instructor stated that he felt that it was “the best experience in the whole course” for his students.

However, some students had to be placed in experiences that were not consistent with their major or career plans, primarily due to time or transportation constraints. In those cases, instructors reported experiences that were not as positive. One instructor noted that “I had students with transportation problems, so that made it harder to place them in meaningful shadows.”



To address the second key question within the framework of Table 2, the experiential learning requirement was evaluated in two areas: workplace expectations as related to career development and marketability. Findings related to these criteria are discussed below.

### **Workplace Expectations as Related to Career Development are Enhanced**

The triangulated results indicate that the majority of students valued the learning experience for developing skills and behaviors that will lead to professional careers in their field. Both instructors and mentors share this appreciation of the development of desired skills and behaviors.

#### **Artifacts**

As seen in Figure 2, a review of the experiential learning reflection artifacts reveals the students' observations of professional behaviors and their expectations of applying those behaviors when embarking on their careers. In this area, 71% of the former business students commented on observing professional behaviors at their host organization or discussing professional behaviors with their mentors. A student wrote that "this job has to maintain professionalism as well as be efficient during the entire day," while another noted that "I got to experience the office workplace and environment. I have never seen how things work in an office or the structure besides how they show it on TV." A third student also emphasized workplace expectations relating to teamwork, noting that "they stressed the importance of relying on coworkers when you couldn't figure something out yourself."

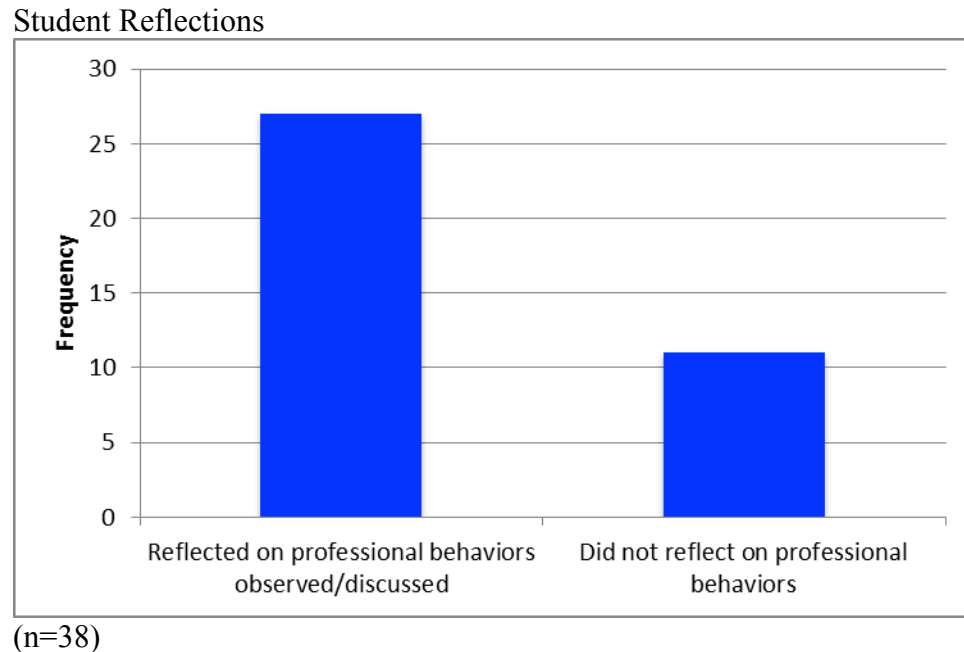


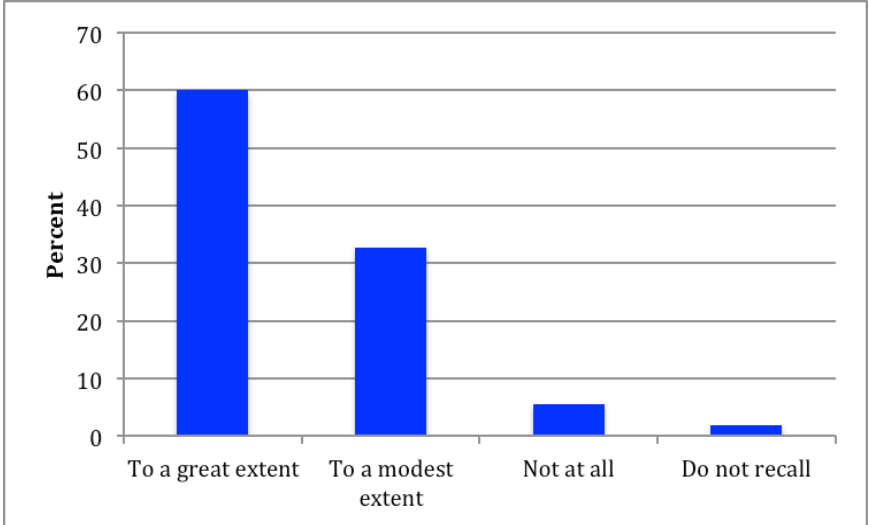
Figure 2. Student Reflections on Observing or Discussing Professional Behaviors with Mentor

The reflection papers also indicated students' awareness of the need for professional behaviors upon embarking on their future careers. One student wrote that "creating a LinkedIn page is definitely on my list of things to do," and several students commented on the opportunity to include the employees they met in the host organizations in their professional networks.

### **Graduate Surveys**

Graduate survey results also indicated former students' perceptions of the value of the experience in terms of professional expectations. As seen in Figure 3, 92.7% of graduates agreed to a great or modest extent that the experience helped them understand the mentor's responsibilities within the organization.

Question 6 – Likert scale: My experience helped me to understand my mentor’s workplace tasks or responsibilities.

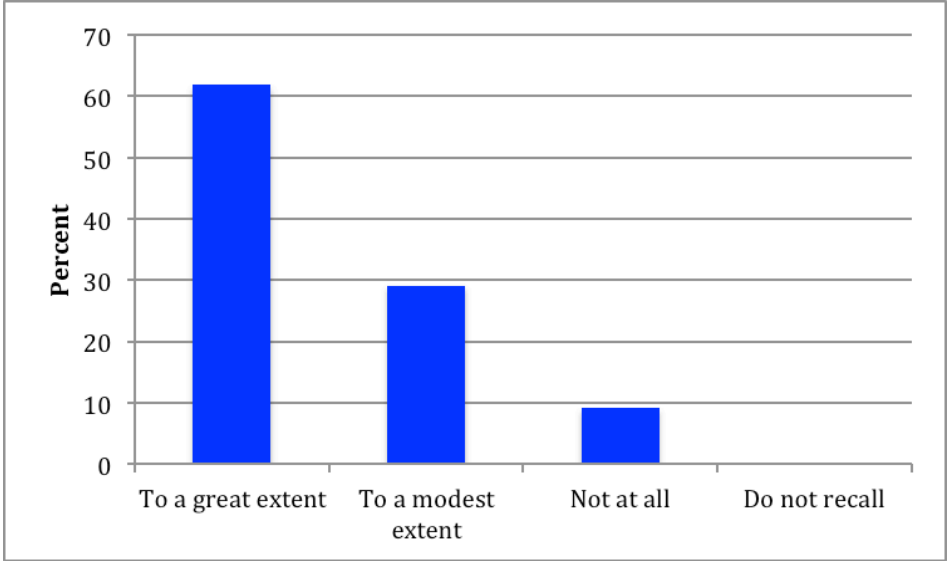


(n = 55)

Figure 3. Graduates Understand Mentor’s Responsibilities

Career choice decisions are also evident. Over 90% of respondents agreed to a great or modest extent that the experience helped them to determine if they would like to work in the associated field after graduation as seen in Figure 4.

Question 6 – Likert scale: My experience helped me to determine if I would like to work in this type of job.



(n = 55)

Figure 4. Experience Helps Graduates with Career Choices

A review of the survey's open-ended question illuminated the graduates' opinions of the learning experience as it related to workplace expectations. In the coded responses that referenced workplace expectations (Table 5), over 27% of respondents indicated that they felt more informed about the position after participating in the learning experience, and over 18% felt that the experience provided them with an opportunity to network in their field.

Table 5. Coded Responses to Open-Ended Question on Graduate Survey Relating to Workplace Expectations

Question 7: Please provide any additional details that you'd like to share about your job shadow/field experience/internship in the space provided. (n = 22)		
<b>Coded Responses</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Informed graduate of specific position in a business-related field	6	27.3%
Graduate made networking, professional connections	4	18.2%

### **Graduate Interviews**

All six graduates who were interviewed agreed that the learning experience improved their knowledge of expectations in the workplace. One student noted, "It was valuable to me to have three mentors in my field experience. It was good to see someone else at work and how they arrived at the assumptions that they did."

Also evident from the interview results were graduates' abilities to relate the importance of workplace expectations to career development, as the subjects reflected positively on their discussions with mentors. Four of the six graduates observed their mentors performing specialized tasks in the workplace and expressed appreciation for being exposed to new skills such as specialized software or business analysis. One student noted that the experience added depth to her knowledge of her career field: "I just saw the tip of the iceberg in class." Other students acknowledged the impact that

the experience had on their career goals, in terms of refinement (for example, switching focus from finance to accounting) or as a stepping-stone to a new career goal (for example, from general business to inventory management).

Graduates also reflected on their exposure to professional behaviors, noting the value of observing the interactions of the mentors in their various roles. One student “liked to see the way that the professionals managed themselves and communicated in order to have a company that grows.” Three of the graduates commented on the networking benefits associated with the experience, expressing appreciation for the connections they were able to make in their fields.

### **Mentor Interviews**

Mentors at host organizations said that their students’ abilities to apply the knowledge gained from the experience to a comprehensive set of goals and an individualized career plan was most evident when their students’ interests matched the nature of the arranged learning experiences. The five mentors who were interviewed noted that the experience and the students’ majors or stated career goals were fairly well matched in most cases (although a few students with time or travel constraints had less than ideal placements). One mentor reflected positively upon being paired with a graduate who was interested in her field:

The students’ experiences matched their career goals – the student who shadowed me was interested in budgeting and client investing. It was a good match because I got to explain the licensing and education piece. I also talked about the stages of her (student’s) career goals – what’s important to get right away and then down the road.

Two of the mentors felt that the experience helped students clarify their desired areas of specialization within their field. For example, students who participated in a job shadow at a local accounting firm were exposed to the areas of

tax accounting, auditing, and business services. This opportunity gave them more information about the different types of positions within the field of accounting. Some of the students shared their preferences for one area over another with their mentors, which was perceived by the mentors as a valuable step in the students' career development.

Mentors also recognized the value of addressing professional behaviors with the students and welcomed the opportunity to share their insight about the importance of these skills. One mentor reported that she spent time reviewing interviewing techniques as well as tips on dressing professionally with her mentee, noting that these types of discussions enhance a student's learning experience.

### **Instructor Interviews**

Capstone course instructors reported that their students' abilities to apply knowledge gained from the learning experience to a comprehensive set of goals and an individual career plan were evident for most of the students, although the quality of the experience influenced the extent of these abilities. One instructor noted the significance of the learning experience on many of his students who lacked exposure to a professional environment:

It makes a major impact on the student's understanding of what a professional setting or environment looks like. The closest we can get in class are videos showing offices spaces and duties, but that will never be the same as an actual shadow.

One of the instructors acknowledged that the quality of the experience affects the value perceived by students. For those students with time constraints (for example, students who are working full-time as well as attending classes) and those

without private transportation, some of the placements are not ideal. In these cases, the instructor felt that the students missed as meaningful a learning experience as they would have had if they had been able to participate in an experience of their own choosing, instead of settling for an experience that fit their schedules or one that was chosen based on access to public transportation.

Another instructor questioned the value of the experience for students who were already employed in full-time, professional positions. The instructor stated, “Overall, it’s a very beneficial class for students to take if they are not already working full-time in the field. If they are working full-time, they’ve already thought about career planning and professional behaviors.”

### **Marketability (or Employability) is Enhanced for Some Students**

Data on the ability of graduates to leverage their learning experiences when seeking employment was mixed. Some respondents indicated a clear connection, while others reported that their marketability or employability had been impacted in an indirect way or not at all.

### **Artifacts**

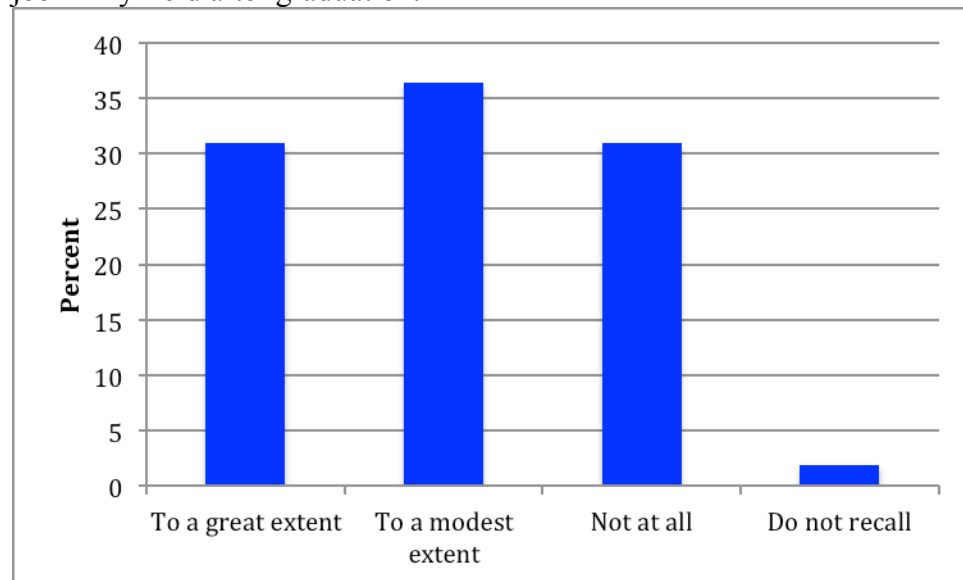
An examination of the artifacts is not relevant when discussing marketability. The reflection papers were completed by students prior to graduation and the search for suitable employment.

### **Graduate Surveys**

Question 6 on the graduate survey addressed students’ perceptions of the value of the learning experience as it related to the graduates’ ability to find employment. As seen in Figure 5, 67.3% of graduates agreed to a great or modest

extent with the statement, “My experience improved my ability to find a job in my field after graduation.” However, this is one of a minority of questions where more than 10% of respondents (30.9) disagreed. This suggests that a significant portion of respondents did not credit their learning experiences with assisting with their job search.

Question 6 – Likert-type scale: My experience improved my ability to find a job in my field after graduation.



(n = 55)

Figure 5. Graduate Perceptions of Experience Leading to Employment

The issue of marketability or employability was not directly addressed by any of the respondents who chose to answer the open-ended question in the survey. This could have been due, in part, to the perceived lack of a strong connection between employability and the learning experience.

### Graduate Interviews

In general, respondents in the graduate interviews did report that the learning experience enhanced their marketability, but the responses were much more positive



for participants who also participated in more relevant or engaging field experiences. The subject who participated in an 88-hour unpaid internship with an organization reported being hired by the company for a full-time position after graduation. Understandably, this individual felt that the experience directly related to his ability to find meaningful employment.

Two other graduates agreed that the experience positively impacted their marketability. In one instance, a graduate learned a valuable skill: an accounting software program that is used by many accounting firms. The other student was able to observe a job skill in a field experience within her company that gave her the knowledge to be promoted into the department that utilized that specific skill.

One graduate felt that the job shadow, in particular, may be more beneficial to graduates with no prior work experience in their major, noting that in the interview for her current position, “I also had work experience and my employer was more interested in that, but it’s probably better for someone with no experience to have the job shadow listed on their résumé.”

### **Mentor Interviews**

When mentors were questioned about the value of the learning experience in terms of graduate marketability or employability, three of the five mentors stated that it would be possible for graduates to be considered for employment opportunities, if their firms anticipated having openings that were suitable for associate degree-level candidates in a relevant field. One mentor noted that “there are definitely opportunities to join our company; we wouldn’t do this if it wasn’t good for the company as well as the participants.”

However, two firms acknowledged that a bachelor's degree and/or additional credentials would be required for many of the positions within their firms and advised their mentees to continue their education or to obtain specific certifications in their field. The mentors did not view the students' lack of credentials as an indication that placements should not be made in these organizations; on the contrary, they believed that these placements helped students to help define their areas of interest in the field as well as to provide students with an incentive to continue their studies at a four-year institution.

### **Instructor Interviews**

Based on an analysis of my interviews with the course instructors, the learning experiences helped graduates with future employability in some cases, thereby enhancing the marketability of the graduates in the workforce. Instructors reported that the level of marketability depended, to an extent, on the match between the learning experience and the graduate's major, as well as the amount of time spent on each experience. One instructor emphasized that the value of the experience depended on the extent of its alignment to a student's major and career goals. Another instructor commented on the shorter duration length of the job shadow: "I don't think the job shadow is significant enough to impact employability, but at an internship level – yes."

### **Areas for Improvement**

Although the learning experience was generally considered valuable by graduates, mentors, and instructors, it became evident that there were several areas in which the results failed to align with the evaluation criteria noted in Table 2 regarding

NBEA standards or best practices for career development. The following recommendations address my third key question regarding changes that should be made to the learning experience requirement.

### **Length of the Learning Experience**

Graduates, mentors, and faculty were all asked for feedback regarding the appropriate amount of time that should be spent on the learning experience. Some of the data that was reported does suggest satisfaction with the length of the learning experience, but it is questionable as to whether the brief amount of time that some of the students spent on the experience was enough to substantially benefit their career development.

**Artifacts.** In the student reflection papers, most students did not comment on the length of time spent on the experience, since this was not a required element of the assignment (see Appendix A). However, one student did express disappointment in the lack of time spent performing tasks, reflecting that “what put a little damper on my experiential learning experience was the lack of hands on time.”

**Graduate surveys.** In the graduate survey, Question 9 asked graduates to report the approximate length of time that they spent on the job shadow, internship, or field experience portion of the 16 required hours of experiential learning. Although the course requires a minimum of eight hours to be spent on the learning experience, 30.2% of respondents reported that they spent fewer than four hours on the actual learning experience, and almost 50% of respondents reported spending fewer than eight hours on the experience. In reviewing the open-ended comments in Question 7 of the survey, one student did comment on the length of time spent on the learning

experience, noting that he or she found it difficult to find a worthwhile opportunity while working full-time. Interestingly, as seen in Figure 6, the amount of time spent on the learning experience did not seem to be related to the number of hours that the students were employed outside school. However, other commitments may have kept the students from participating for the full eight hours.

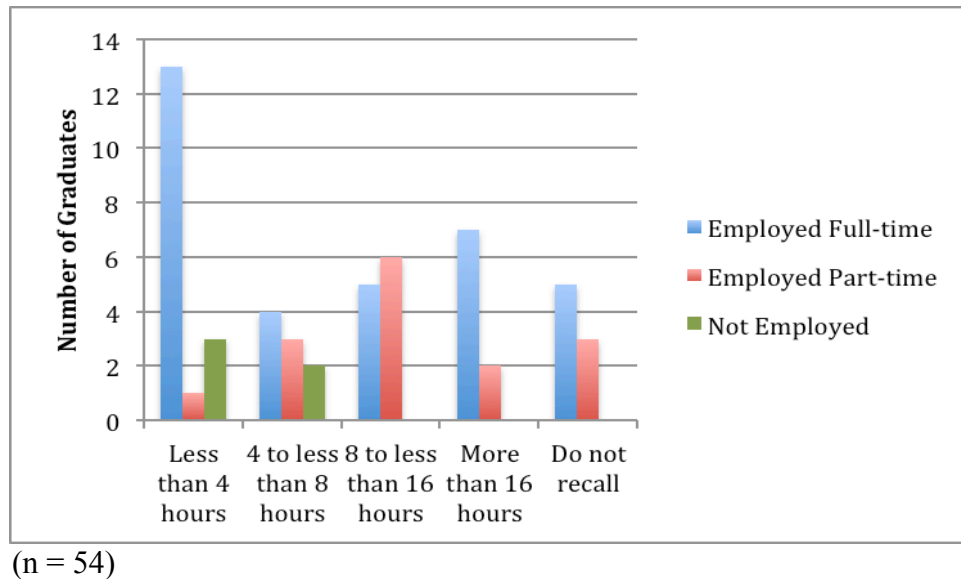


Figure 6. Hours Spent on Learning Experience in Graduate Survey by Work Status

It should be noted that the length of time that students spent on their learning experiences varied widely, from less than 4 hours to more than 16 hours. This disparity in the amount of time spent indicates that students had vastly different learning experiences, although even graduates who spent less than 4 hours in the experience viewed it favorably. The positive feedback expressed by students and graduates could be due, in part, to the fact that many Delaware Tech business students at the George campus have had very limited opportunities to observe a professional work environment. As such, despite the very brief exposure to professional office settings, students had favorable impressions of this novel experience.

The graduate survey results do indicate that satisfaction with the learning experience increased with the amount of time expended. As seen in Figure 7, a higher percentage of students with longer experiences agreed to a great extent with a statement indicating that they felt that the learning experience was valuable (77.8%) than those who participated for fewer than 4 hours (56.3%).

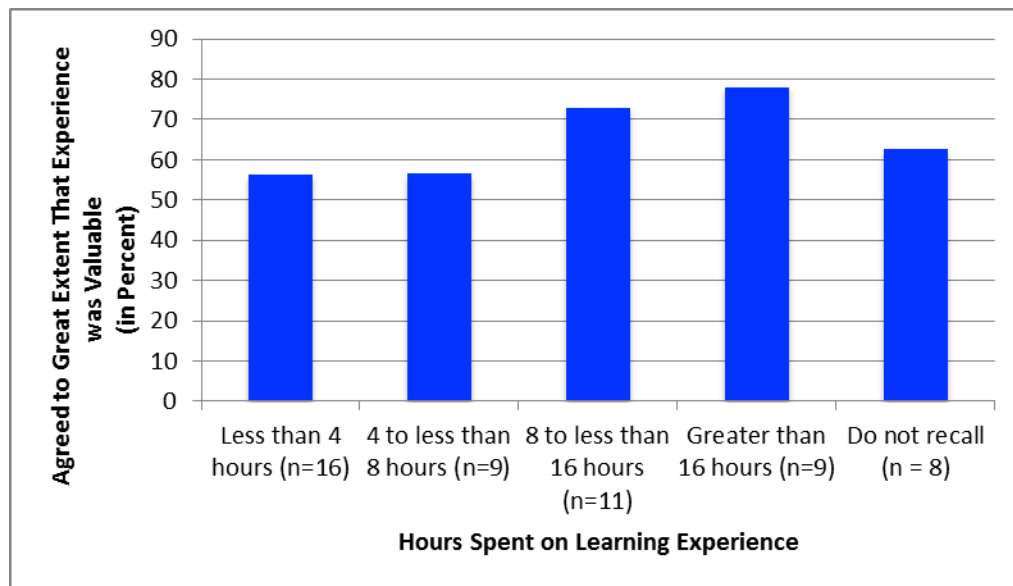


Figure 7. Satisfaction with Learning Experience by Hours Spent on the Experience

**Graduate interviews.** The six graduates interviewed were also asked about the time spent on the experience. As seen in Table 6, the amount of time spent on their experiences varied widely, from as little as three hours spent in a job shadow to 88 hours in an internship. As noted above, this wide disparity in the total number of hours spent on the learning experiences highlights the incredibly diverse experiences undergone by students, ranging from a few hours of shadowing a mentor to over 80 hours of participation in a formal internship. These extremely varied experiences impose limits on the generalizations that can be made from the data. It can be noted,

however, that the two students with the briefest experiences reported that they had either work or family constraints that limited their ability to participate in experiences with a longer duration, and they expressed regret at not being able to spend more time shadowing.

Table 6. Amount of Time Spent on Learning Experience as Reported in Graduate Interviews

Type of Learning Experience	Number of Graduates	Reported Hours Spent in Experience
Job Shadow	2	3, 5
Field Experience	3	8, 10, 20
Internship	1	88

**Mentor interviews.** The five mentors interviewed all expressed satisfaction with the amount of time spent conducting the learning experience. All of the mentors reported spending roughly four to five hours per session with their mentees, although three of the mentors hosted their students for multiple sessions. The rationale given for this approach was that the mentors typically could not take an entire day from their responsibilities to host students, and when students were given tasks to perform with supervision, this resulted in making the mentors less efficient; mentors needed the balance of the day to perform their daily duties. Additionally, three mentors reported feeling that a full day of observation would be too tedious for students. Even the mentor of the internship believed that a full day would be overwhelming for his mentee, explaining that the student spent the majority of the 88-hour internship observing the mentor's responsibilities.

**Instructor interviews.** Instructors reported that they were frequently lenient about the eight-hour minimum requirement for the learning experience portion of the course, letting students participate in other seminars and events on campus in its place when necessary. One instructor noted that many of his students had family or work commitments that prevented them from shadowing for a full eight hours during the day (most of the host organizations have business hours between 8:00am and 5:00pm during the week). In addition, the instructor commented that many students do not have access to private transportation, which made adequate placement difficult. One instructor added this insight when asked about the appropriate length of time for a learning experience: “It depended on where the student went. If it was meaningful, it was probably too short; if it was not related to their work (plans), it was too long.”

### **Communication Between Mentors and Instructors**

The level and quality of communication between host organization mentors and faculty are most evident in the data collected from mentors and course instructors. However, there are some indications from the student artifacts and graduate survey that may suggest a lack of communication between the mentors and instructors occasionally diminished the learning experience.

**Artifacts.** In reviewing student reflection papers, instructor/mentor communication was not addressed directly by the students, but a comment made by one of the students did indicate an issue. The student commented that her experience “did not seem to touch upon or be related to my education within my Management major.” This student further noted that her placement at the host organization was at a level lower than her current full-time position and expressed regret at not being

placed with upper-level managers. Since this student reported that her learning experience was coordinated by her instructor, the improper placement may result from a lack of communication between the student and the instructor, as well as a lack of background information being shared with her mentor.

**Graduate surveys.** The graduate survey requested feedback on the quality of communication between the students and their mentors, but did not ask about students' perception of the quality of communication between instructors and mentors. However, two comments in the open-ended question implied that a minority of students had issues with their experiences that could have been due, in part, to a lack of instructor/mentor communication. One student noted, "I wish there was more involvement from the employer our group was at." Another student wrote, "There needs to be a better structure to the entire experience to get higher satisfaction." A lack of clearly communicated expectations for the learning experience may have been an issue in each of those cases.

**Mentor interviews.** In the mentor interviews, the five respondents indicated that they had received no prior guidance from the instructor other than the request to host one or more students for the learning experience. Two of the mentors acknowledged that they would have liked more guidance from the course instructor regarding what was expected of the host organization. Two other mentors responded that they would like to have had the opportunity to review the students' résumés prior to hosting the experiences, in order to have more information regarding the students' backgrounds and interests when preparing for the learning experiences. However, one of the mentors stated that he did not want to receive information on a student's



background or any sort of guidance before the experience, as he felt that having this information would inhibit conversation with the students. The mentor noted that:

I spend the first 20 minutes asking about their background, so not having the résumé ahead of time sparks a dialog when they get here. Every firm is different; a guidebook or guidelines wouldn't help – it would divert us away from what we do. I don't want to try to teach to a guidebook; I prefer the experience to be open-ended.

Another mentor stated, “The students that shadowed our company were in the right major, so I didn't need any preparation; I know what I do all day.” This mentor noted that she does ask for the students' majors prior to the learning experience so that she can place them with the right areas in her company.

**Instructor interviews.** Feedback from the instructors regarding the communication issue was mixed. One of the three instructors acknowledged having some verbal communication with the mentors about the learning experience: “It made the locations feel more comfortable.” The other two instructors responded that they had not provided the mentors with information or guidance prior to the experience. One of the instructors who did not provide information stated that the companies had shadowed students before, so there was no need to communicate expectations regarding the mentors' responsibilities.

### **Marketability and Networking**

One issue of particular interest to the mentors who were interviewed was the lack of communication from students after the learning experience was over. Two of the mentors expressed regret that the students failed to stay in touch after the experience. The mentors stated that they would like to hear from their mentees

periodically to see how they are progressing in their careers or the pursuit of their four-year degrees. One mentor noted that “it would be nice to know how they are progressing; this is also the beginning of networking in their field.”

Mentors also implied that continuing the connection is beneficial to both the graduates and to the host organizations, many of which are periodically looking for talent. One mentor stated that “[the student] was prepared, engaged, and may take advantage of the opportunity if a position [within the company] becomes available.”

Overall, the results of the study are consistent with the major themes noted in the literature review. Graduates felt that the learning experience was a valuable component of the business curriculum. Instructors expressed their support for the experience, and mentors agreed that the experience was valuable for students and benefited host organizations by connecting them with potential employees.

Results were also consistent with the literature review in that workplace expectations as related to career development are enhanced by the learning experience. Students were made aware of the value of professional skills such as teamwork and networking and were introduced to areas of specialization within their fields of study.

The theme of enhanced graduate marketability was also supported by the evidence, although to a lesser extent than that of career development. In one case, a graduate was hired by his host organization, while other graduates were considered likely prospects for future employment. This outcome is beneficial to the business graduates who are hired as well as to host organizations searching for talented

workers. The outcome is also beneficial for Delaware Tech, as it fulfills the college's mission of providing qualified, trained employees to local industries.

## **Chapter 4**

### **DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on my study of the data from the various stakeholders involved in the experiential learning component of the capstone course, the learning experience does align with some elements of NBEA standards III and IV, as well as best practices in the area of career development, as summarized in Table 2. In answer to the first key question, it was found that students generally value the experience both during its tenure as well as after they graduate. Course instructors and mentors from host organizations also share the view that the learning experience is beneficial.

Addressing the second key question, the findings indicate that students can relate the importance of workplace expectations to career development, they apply knowledge gained from the experience to a career plan, and in some cases, learning experiences assist students in terms of increase marketability. However, in answer to the third key question, improvements could be made in a number of areas.

#### **Continue Experiential Learning**

Consistent with the literature review, the study indicates that participating in a learning experience in a professional environment is beneficial for students. Students valued the experience immediately after participating, and graduates continued to value the experience in the years after completion. Course instructors and mentors from host organizations shared this view.

In the literature review, McCarthy and McCarthy (2006) found that business students believed that the learning experience was helpful in determining what a particular job entailed (p. 203). This was reported by students as a strength in the Delaware Tech study as well, as many students had not previously been exposed to a professional position in their field of study. Adding to the literature, this study found that even students who participated in brief learning experiences of 4 hours or less reported that they valued the experience.

Another advantage for students who participated in the experience included the development of interpersonal skills such as communication and networking, a finding that was also noted as a strength in the Beard and Morton (1999) study (p. 45). Consistent with a study by Divine et al. (2007), the benefits of this type of learning experience extended beyond the students; mentors noted that organizations seeking employees would benefit from hosting experiences as well (p. 45). These findings are particularly relevant for Delaware Tech students, as many business graduates without workplace connections struggle to find career-related employment with only associates degrees in their fields. For these reasons, the experiential learning requirement should continue to be included in the business curriculum at Delaware Tech.

### **Enforce Eight-Hour Minimum in Learning Experience**

Analysis of the data suggests that increasing the amount of time spent on the learning experience would be beneficial to students. As noted by Walker (2009), community colleges should provide these types of opportunities to students as a way

to provide a competitive edge in the job market (p. 66). However, myriad time constraints are a major challenge for community college students.

Divine et al. (2007) noted the participation limitations placed on schools with large populations of part-time or non-traditional students (p. 50). Adding to the literature, this study further highlighted the impact of time as well as transportation constraints on the ability of business students at an urban campus to participate in even a brief learning experience. Although many Delaware Tech students typically have work and/or family commitments, a more proactive approach to scheduling learning experiences of a longer duration is warranted. A search for more host organizations, especially those that offer learning experiences at times other than normal business operating hours, would be helpful in this regard. Some Delaware Tech departments, such as human resources, have offered business students an internal job shadow experience when other placements weren't appropriate; a search for internal mentors within various departments on campus may uncover other opportunities. Although it is recommended that the total duration of the learning experience be a minimum of eight hours, the length of individual sessions should remain flexible to meet the needs and preferences of both students and mentors.

#### **Increase Level and Quality of Instructor/Mentor Communication**

As noted above, some mentors report that the amount and quality of communication received from capstone course instructors is acceptable. However, other mentors stated that they do not feel comfortable with the lack of communication regarding the expectations required. The data indicates that the lack of communication may have resulted in less than ideal placements for some students. In

Table 4, a minority of Delaware Tech graduates (13.4%) indicated in the graduate survey that more structure or connection to employers is needed. Rothman (2007) also found that more structure on the part of the host company was suggested in her study of undergraduate business students (p. 141).

A solution to this issue would be for instructors and mentors to meet prior to the learning experience to review the structure of the learning experience, as well as areas concerning the expectations of the mentor. It would also serve to inform the mentor of the student's background and interests. If the meeting cannot be conducted in person, a phone conference or other form of communication would suffice. If lack of instructor or mentor time is an issue, the instructor could task the student with forwarding a letter of introduction and a résumé to the mentor prior to the scheduled learning experience. Delaware Tech could also prepare a handbook or manual to advise those mentors who would prefer assistance with developing a structured experience for students. The manual would provide an outline of the college's suggested expectations for the learning experience, where the mentor could find information and guidance if needed.

A clear set of expectations, agreed to by instructors and mentors, is important in terms of enhancing the quality of the learning experience for students. Increasing advance communication between the instructor and the mentor would assist with setting expectations regarding the best structure for the learning experience, the appropriate length of time that the student should spend on various aspects of the experience, and any known constraints (time or travel) that may impact the experience. The instructor could then share relevant information with his or her

students before the experience takes place, which would help establish student expectations and avoid misunderstandings between the host organization and the student.

### **Improve Networking to Enhance Marketability Outcomes**

In the Gault et al. (2000) study, graduates with internship experience were more marketable, reporting a higher starting salary and taking less time to find a job (p. 52). However, the Delaware Tech data suggests that some graduates do not continue to network with their host organizations after the learning experience has ended. To the extent that mentors can influence hiring decisions within the host organization (or have connections to other firms interested in hiring), this lack of contact with mentors may mean that graduates are closing the door on future employment opportunities.

Guidelines from instructors on how to maintain contact with mentors would be beneficial to students. A schedule of routine contact (via phone or email) would assist students with learning the basics of networking and may develop into longer-term coaching relationships with mentors that could prove valuable to graduates as they embark on their careers.

### **Implementation Plan**

To implement changes to improve the learning experience for students, collaboration will be key. Working with instructors as well as host organizations to share findings and develop new policies and procedures will help ensure participation and commitment of the stakeholders. The following actions will be taken to develop policies and processes to implement the recommendations noted above.



### **Enforce Eight-Hour Minimum in Learning Experience**

In my leadership role within the business department, I will work with the faculty to develop a detailed strategy to enforce the 8-hour minimum requirement for experiential learning. Enforcing the completion of the minimum hours as a firm requirement for successful course completion will send a message to students about the importance of the experience. However, support policies must be put into place to ensure that all students have access to valuable, career-relevant learning experiences.

I will work with business faculty to develop a strategy to increase the number of institutions that offer learning experiences outside normal business hours. This would provide students hampered by other obligations the opportunity to attend a valuable learning experience during evening or weekend hours, lowering the barriers to completion for these students. As noted above, I will also work with faculty to identify more departments within the college that would be willing to host students for a job shadow or internship. In addition, I plan to work with business faculty to identify city of Wilmington firms that have an interest in hosting learning experiences, to assist students with transportation issues. This initiative has the added benefit of connecting Delaware Tech to its local business community, which may ultimately result in higher employment for business students in the area surrounding the Wilmington campus.

### **Increase Level and Quality of Instructor/Mentor Communication**

To implement my suggestions for improvement in this area, it will be important to use my research findings as a springboard for discussion among faculty and host organizations to establish procedures for increased instructor/mentor

communications. In my leadership role, I will schedule roundtable discussions with faculty and mentors in an effort to develop guidelines for instructor/mentor communication that, as a result of mutual collaboration, will be applied consistently by both groups, with the goal of providing students with tailored learning experiences that maximize the benefit of each student's experience.

### **Improve Networking to Enhance Marketability Outcomes**

The faculty/mentor roundtable sessions noted above will also include a discussion of how to effectively continue relationships between students and their mentors after the learning experience has concluded. As the George campus business chair, my role will involve working with this group to facilitate the development of a schedule of routine contact to assist students with learning the basics of networking. As noted above, these connections may develop into longer-term relationships that could prove valuable to business graduates when seeking employment.

### **Conclusion**

Experiential learning is a valuable instructional unit for business students at Delaware Tech. This study revealed that students, mentors, instructors, and graduates believe that it is a worthwhile addition to the curriculum. Consistent with NBEA career development standards, the study indicates that the learning experience benefits students' ability to relate the importance of workplace expectations to career development and (to a lesser extent) to use the knowledge they have gained to obtain employment sooner, with a higher salary and/or a more desirable position. With some modifications to this component of the capstone course, it will become even more valuable for business students as they transition to careers.

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## **Appendices**

## Appendix A

### EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING REFLECTION PAPER GUIDELINES

## **EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING REFLECTION PAPER GUIDELINES**

Guidelines for Reflection:

- Description of department/work site or experiential learning event(s) in which you participated.
- Type of work or activities observed
- What did you like best about your experiences? Why?
- What did you like least about your experiences? Why?
- What surprised you most about what you learned/observed/heard/ did?
- For job shadow:
  - If you wanted to work in the department or work site that you shadowed, what might you do to prepare for possible employment?
  - Would you consider a career in the type of industry in which you job shadowed? Why or why not?
  - Did the job shadow experience influence your career choice/goals? How?
- From your perspective (your interests, abilities, and goals) summarize your perspective on your cumulative experiential learning in this course.

Experiential reflection paper should be 2-3 pages.



Appendix B

EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING ACTIVITY REFLECTION PAPER

SCORING RUBRIC

## EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING ACTIVITY REFLECTION PAPER SCORING

### RUBRIC

Category	4 = Highly Proficient	3 = Proficient	2 = Minimally Proficient	1 = Not Proficient	Score
1. Description of Experiential Learning Activity	Complete description of experiential learning activity is included. Type of work activities described in detail.	Complete description for experiential learning activity is included. Type of work activities adequately described.	Partial description of experiential learning activity is included. Type of work activities partially described.	Description of experiential learning activity is not included or type of work activities not described.	
2. Reflection on Quality of Activity	Reflection on experiential learning activity in terms of quality of experience is comprehensively described.	Reflection on experiential learning activity in terms of quality of experience is adequately described.	Reflection on experiential learning activity in terms of quality of experience is partially described.	Reflection on experiential learning activity in terms of quality of experience is not addressed.	
3. Reflection on Quality of Mentor Communication /Feedback	Reflection on experiential learning activity in terms of quality of mentor communication and feedback is comprehensively described.	Reflection on experiential learning activity in terms of quality of mentor communication and feedback is adequately described.	Reflection on experiential learning activity in terms of mentor communication and feedback is partially described.	Reflection on experiential learning activity in terms of mentor communication and feedback are not addressed.	
4. Reflection on Future Marketability/ Employability	Reflection on all experiential learning activities is comprehensively described with relationship to possible career choice/relevance to major and anticipated marketability fully described.	Reflection on at least one experiential learning activity is described with relationship to possible career choice/relevance to major and anticipated marketability described.	Reflection on at least one experiential learning activity is described, but relationship to possible career choice/relevance to major and anticipated marketability is not described.	Reflection on at least one experiential learning activity is not described, and relationship to career choice/relevance to major and anticipated marketability are not addressed.	

## Appendix C

### EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING ACTIVITY SCORED RESULTS

## EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING ACTIVITY SCORED RESULTS

**SPRING AND SUMMER 2016**

(n = 38)

Category	Highly Proficient		Proficient		Minimally Proficient		Not Proficient	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
1. Description of Experiential Learning Activity	37	97	1	3				
2. Reflection on Quality of Activity	30	76	8	21				
3. Reflection on Quality of Mentor Communication /Feedback	10	26	16	42	12	32		
4. Reflection on Future Marketability/ Employability	21	55	14	37	3	8		

## Appendix D

### CODING OF COMMON ARTIFACT THEMES AND COMPARISON TO NBEA CAREER DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS

**CODING OF COMMON ARTIFACT THEMES AND COMPARISON TO  
NBEA CAREER DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS**

Career Development Area	Achievement Standard	Common Themes in Student Reflections <i>n=38</i>	
		Number	Percent
III. Workplace Education	Relate the importance of workplace expectations to career development.	8	21
IV. Career Strategy	Apply knowledge gained from individual assessment to a comprehensive set of goals and an individual career plan.	10	26
Aspects of III and IV both noted		19	50
Neither career development area noted		1	3

Appendix E

GRADUATE PROTOCOL AND SURVEY

## GRADUATE PROTOCOL AND SURVEY

### *Personal Greeting:*

You are being invited to participate in a research study. As a doctoral student at the University of Delaware, I'm conducting research on the benefits of the experiential learning (job shadow) portion of Delaware Tech's business capstone course, BUS 275 Portfolio and Experiential Learning. You are receiving this survey because you completed this course as part of your degree requirements at Delaware Tech.

This research study is being conducted to assess not only the benefits of the job shadowing portion of the course, but to give you, as a former student, a chance to provide us with feedback on how to improve this course for future students. This brief online survey is being sent to between 50 and 75 Delaware Tech business students, and will take about ten minutes to complete. The research team does not expect your participation in this study will expose you to any risks different from those you would encounter in daily life. While there is no potential direct benefit to you as a participant in this study, the results of the study will be used to improve the experiential learning component of BUS 275 for future students.

Your participation is confidential, which means that it will be grouped without identifying information. The unidentified grouped data will be shared with business faculty at Delaware Technical Community College for purposes of improving the experiential learning component of its BUS 275 capstone course. The research team will make every effort to keep all research records that identify you confidential. The findings of this research may be presented or published. If this happens, no information that gives your name or other details will be shared.

If you choose to participate, you will also have the opportunity to receive a copy of my research study when it's complete by requesting results via e-mail to [jroux1@dtcc.edu](mailto:jroux1@dtcc.edu).

Participation in this research study is entirely voluntary. If you choose not to participate, or change your mind about participating, you may close the Qualtrics survey link (below) at any time. Your decision to stop participation, or not to participate, will not influence current or future relationships with the University of Delaware or Delaware Technical Community College.

If you have any questions about details regarding this research study, please contact me at [jroux1@dtcc.edu](mailto:jroux1@dtcc.edu) or by phone at 302-434-5510, or my advisor at the University of Delaware, Dr. Robert Hampel, at (302) 831-1651 or [hampel@udel.edu](mailto:hampel@udel.edu).



By clicking on the survey link below, you are agreeing that: 1) you are at least 18 years old; 2) you have read and understand the information provided above; 3) you have asked any questions you have about the research and the questions have been answered to your satisfaction; and 4) you accept the terms in the form and volunteer to participate in the study.

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant or any concerns or complaints about the conduct of the project, please contact: Chair, Human Subjects Review Board, 210 Hullahen Hall, University of NA Delaware, Newark, DE 19716-1551, (ph) 302-831-2137.

If you enter your name and e-mail address at the end of this survey, **your name will be entered into a drawing to win one of five \$50.00 Wawa gift cards.** Thank you very much for your help with this important research to enhance business student success at Delaware Tech!

June Roux  
Administrative Intern  
Delaware Technical Community College  
300 N. Orange Street  
Wilmington DE 19801

[Link to survey \[Next page\]](#)

### Survey of Experiential Learning for Business Students at Delaware Tech

<b>STATEMENT</b>	<b>Yes (continue)</b>	<b>No (thank you for your time)</b>
Did you complete BUS 275 Portfolio/Experiential Learning at Delaware Tech as part of your business program requirements at the college?		
Which type of experiential learning did you complete during the BUS 275 course? (Check all that apply): <u>Job shadow</u> – you observed a position at an external organization <u>Field experience</u> - you observed a position with your current employer <u>Internship</u> – you were given specific tasks to complete in an organization		

Please rate the following statements about **scheduling** your outside-the-classroom learning experience in BUS 275 using the scale provided below.

<b>STATEMENT</b>	<b>To a great extent</b>	<b>To a modest extent</b>	<b>Not at all</b>	<b>Do not recall</b>
I knew the type of industry that I wanted to shadow.				
My instructor helped me select a company to visit.				
The company that I visited was in a field that aligned with my major.				
The company that I visited was in a field that aligned with my future plans for a career.				

Please rate the following statements about **activities during** your outside-the-classroom learning experience in BUS 275 using the scales provided below.

<b>STATEMENT</b>	<b>To a great extent</b>	<b>To a modest extent</b>	<b>Not at all</b>	<b>Do not recall</b>
The activities in which I participated during my job shadow/field experience/internship were interesting to me.				
The activities in which I participated during my experience were relevant to my major.				
My job shadow mentor answered my questions about the industry/position that I shadowed.				

Looking back, please rate the following statements about the **value** of your outside-the-classroom learning experience in BUS 275 using the scale provided below.

<b>STATEMENT</b>	<b>To a great extent</b>	<b>To a modest extent</b>	<b>Not at all</b>	<b>Do not recall</b>
My experience helped me to understand my mentor's workplace tasks or responsibilities.				
My experience helped me to determine if I would like to work in this type of job.				
My experience improved my ability to find a job in my field after graduation.				
Overall, I think the job shadow/field experience/internship was valuable.				

Please provide any additional details that you'd like to share about your job shadow/field experience/internship in the space provided:

COMMENT

Almost done! Please provide us with the following information:

<b>STATEMENT</b>	<b>Full-Time</b>	<b>Part-Time</b>
Were you primarily a full-time (at least 12 credits per semester) or a part-time student at Delaware Tech?		

<b>STATEMENT</b>	<b>Accounting</b>	<b>General Business</b>	<b>Management</b>	<b>Marketing</b>
What was your major? Choose all that apply:				

What year(s) did you graduate? \_\_\_\_\_

What was the name of the company (ies) where you had the job shadow/internship/field experience?

\_\_\_\_\_

Approximately how many hours did you spend in the job shadow/internship/field experience?

- ☐ Less than 4 hours
- ☐ 4 to less than 8 hours
- ☐ 8 to less than 16 hours
- ☐ More than 16 hours
- ☐ Do not recall

Would you be willing to participate in an interview (by phone or in person) to discuss your job shadow/field experience/internship in more detail?

Yes

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Contact information \_\_\_\_\_

Not at this time

Thank you again for participating in this important survey! Please complete the information below to be entered into a drawing to win one of five \$50 Wawa gift cards.

- ☐ Name \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix F

### GRADUATE SURVEY RESPONSE RATE

### GRDUATE SURVEY RESPONSE RATE

<b>(n = 69)</b>		
<b>Survey Question</b>	<b>Number of Respondents</b>	<b>Response Percentage</b>
Q1: Proceed with survey?	69	100
Q2: Filtering question: complete capstone course?	68 (62 responded that they took the capstone course )	98.6
Q3: Type of experiential learning: job shadow, field experience, internship	58	84.1
Q4: Likert-type scale: scheduling experience	58	84.1
Q5: Likert-type scale: activities in experience	57	82.6
Q6: Likert-type scale: value of experience	55	79.7
Q7: Open ended question: feedback to share	23	33.3
Q8: Name of host company(ies)	41	59.4
Q9: Number of hours spent	53	76.8
Q10: Full-time/part-time student	54	78.3
Q11: Major	54	78.3
Q12: Year of graduation	54	78.3
Q13: Working full-time or part-time when student	54	78.3
Q14: Contact for chance to win gift card	53	76.8

## Appendix G

### GRADUATE INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

## GRADUATE INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Graduate No. \_\_\_\_\_

Hello, XX. Thank you for your time today. You were a student in BUS 275 Portfolio and Experiential Learning, and I'm studying students' perceptions of the value of the job shadow component of the course.

This is a confidential interview; your name will not be used at any time during the analysis or presentation of the results of this interview. I have your signed consent form, but if there's something you'd rather not discuss, please let me know. You're free to end the interview at any time.

The interview should take less than an hour.  
Let's begin.

1. You were a student in BUS 275, and you participated in the internship/job shadowing portion of the course. With which company or companies did you participate?
2. Who selected this particular job shadowing opportunity, you or your instructor?
3. Did you feel that the opportunity was appropriate given your major or career plans?

Probing Question if needed: Why or why not?

4. Approximately how many hours did you spend on the job shadow/internship experience? How did you feel about the number of hours you spent? Was it too long; too short, or about right?
5. Please describe some of the things you did or observed during the job shadow.
6. Please describe the amount and quality of feedback you received from your mentor as you completed tasks during your experience.
7. Did your job shadow help you as you prepared to transition to a career in your field?

Probing questions if needed regarding "marketability" or "employability"



8. What were your overall impressions of the job shadowing experience?

Probing questions if needed, “let’s explore that further” or “can you elaborate on that”

9. Is there anything I’ve missed that we should know about your job shadowing experience?

Thank you again for participating. Ask if can contact later for any questions.

## Appendix H

### GRADUATE INTERVIEW RESULTS CODED FOR COMMON THEMES

**GRADUATE INTERVIEW RESULTS CODED  
FOR COMMON THEMES**

<b>Interview Topic</b>	<b>Emerging Themes</b>
Appropriateness of learning experience	Valuable to have mentors in career field Assisted with career direction Good matched for chosen field Professional behaviors observed
Number of hours spent on job shadow/field experience/internship	Job shadow: 4 to 5 hours Field experience: 10 – 15 hours Internship: 88 hours
Description of experience	Observed mentor's tasks and duties Sat in on meetings with mentor Asked questions
Amount and quality of feedback received from mentor	Mostly observed Mentor answered questions
Value of experience in terms of transitioning to career in field	Increased marketability Appreciation for value of professional experience to advance career Appreciation for types of companies to target in job search Helped gain insight into new career Insight into professional behaviors
Overall Impressions	Appreciated real-world experience Appreciated opportunity to participate Valuable part of course

Appendix I

INSTRUCTOR INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

## INSTRUCTOR INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Instructor No. \_\_\_\_\_

Hello, XX. Thank you for your time today. We're here today because you have taught a section of BUS 275 Portfolio/Experiential Learning at the Wilmington campus within the past three years, and I'm studying instructors' insight and perceptions of the value of the job shadow component of this course.

This is a confidential interview; your name will not be used at any time during the analysis or presentation of the results of this interview. I have your signed consent form, but if there's something you'd rather not discuss, please let me know. You're free to end the interview at any time.

The interview should take less than an hour. Would it be ok if I tape the interview, so I don't miss any important information?

Let's begin.

*Filtering question:* Did you require your students to participate in an internship or a job shadow?

*Internship:*

1. Did you or another instructor provide any guidance to the organization providing the internship? If so, please describe the amount and quality of the guidance you provided to the organization.
2. Did you feel that the length of the internship was too short, too long, or about right?
  - a. Probing questions if needed
3. What were your impressions of the value of the internship experience to students in terms of:
  - a. Knowledge of their career field?
  - b. Future employability?
4. Based on the students' reflections on their experience, did the students seem interested and engaged in their internships?
5. Is there any other feedback that you'd like to share about the internship experience?

*Job Shadow:*

1. Did you or another instructor provide any guidance to the organization providing the job shadow? If so, please describe the amount and quality of the guidance you provided to the organization.

2. Approximately how many hours did students spend on their job shadows?
3. Did you feel that the length of the job shadows were too short, too long, or about right?
  - a. Probing questions if needed
4. What were your impressions of the value of the job shadow experience to students in terms of:
  - a. Their exposure to professional behaviors in the workplace
  - b. Their future employability
5. Based on the students' reflections on their experience, did the students seem interested and engaged in their job shadows?
6. Is there any other feedback that you'd like to share about the job shadow experience?

Thank you again for participating, turn recorders off. Ask if can contact later for any questions.

## Appendix J

### INSTRUCTOR INTERVIEW RESULTS CODED FOR COMMON THEMES

**INSTRUCTOR INTERVIEW RESULTS CODED  
FOR COMMON THEMES**

<b>Interview Topic</b>	<b>Emerging Themes</b>
Amount and quality of guidance provided to host organizations	Did not provide guidance Feedback form provides guidance
Number of hours spent on job shadow/field experience/internship	Ideal length depends on quality of placement About 8 hours is best, but some shorter due to student/mentor constraints
Value for developing career goals and plan	Depends on quality of placement Impacted most students' understanding of professional environment and behaviors
Value for future marketability or employability	Yes for internship level or field experience, questionable for job shadow Valuable for future networking
Student interest/engagement in experience	Most students appreciate opportunity If poor placement, less engagement
Overall Impressions/Feedback	Difficult to place some students due to time or transportation issues Viewed as positive addition to curriculum



## Appendix K

### MENTOR INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

## MENTOR INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Organization No. \_\_\_\_\_

Hello, XX. Thank you for your time today. We're here today because your organization hosted an internship or job shadow for a Delaware Tech business student within the past three years, and I'm studying employer insight and perceptions of the value of the job shadow component of this course.

This is a confidential interview; neither your name nor your organization's name will be used at any time during the analysis or presentation of the results of this interview. I have your signed consent form, but if there's something you'd rather not discuss, please let me know. You're free to end the interview at any time.

The interview should take less than an hour. Would it be ok if I tape the interview, so I don't miss any important information?

Let's begin.

*Filtering question:* Which type of experience did you provide to our students, an internship (students performed tasks) or a job shadow (students observed your workplace)?

*Internship:*

1. Can you briefly describe the types of duties performed by the student during the internship?
2. Did you or a colleague receive guidance from the DTCC faculty member who contacted you about how to conduct the internship? If so, please describe the amount and quality of the guidance you received from the faculty member.
3. Did the student seem interested and engaged in the internship?
4. Approximately how many hours did the student spend on the internship?
5. Did you feel that the length of the internship was too short, too long, or about right?
  - a. Probing questions if needed
6. What were your impressions of the value of the internship experience to students in terms of:
  - a. The match of the experience to the student's major or stated career goals
  - b. Their future employability, either in your organization or a similar organization
7. Is there any other feedback that you'd like to share about the internship experience?

*Job Shadow:*

1. Can you briefly describe the types of duties observed by the student during the job shadow?
2. Did you or a colleague receive guidance from the DTCC faculty member who contacted you about how to conduct the internship? If so, please describe the amount and quality of the guidance you received from the faculty member.
3. Did the student seem interested and engaged in the internship?
4. Approximately how many hours did the student(s) spend on the job shadow?
5. Did you feel that the length of the job shadow was too short, too long, or about right?
  - a. Probing questions if needed
6. What were your overall impressions of the value of the job shadow experience to students in terms of:
  - a. The match of the experience to the student's major or stated career goals
  - b. Their future employability, either in your organization or a similar organization
7. Is there any other feedback that you'd like to share about the job shadow experience?

Thank you again for participating, turn recorders off. Ask if can contact later for any questions.

## Appendix L

### MENTOR INTERVIEW RESULTS CODED FOR COMMON THEMES

## MENTOR INTERVIEW RESULTS CODED FOR COMMON THEMES

Interview Topic	Emerging Themes
Amount and quality of guidance provided by course instructors	Did not provide guidance Guidance not needed
Number of hours spent on job shadow/field experience/internship	4-8 hours for job shadow, 4 hour increments at a time preferred 8-18 hours for field experience, 4-5 hour increments at a time preferred 88 hours for internship, 4 hours per day preferred
Value for developing career goals and plan	Valuable for students who were well-matched to placement May help students refine career plan
Value for future marketability or employability	May be opportunity for future employment upon completion of BS or other credentials May be future opportunity for engaged student
Overall Impressions/Feedback	More information prior to experience helpful for some mentors but not all Maintain contact for networking, future opportunities

Appendix M

IRB APPROVAL

Please note that University of Delaware IRB (HUMANS) has published the following Board Document on IRBNet:

Project Title: [951812-1] Revising the Experiential Learning Component of the Business Capstone Course at Delaware Technical Community College's George Campus

Principal Investigator: June Roux, MBA

Submission Type: New Project

Date Submitted: August 25, 2016

Document Type: Stamped Document

Document Description:

Publish Date: October 5, 2016