IR’s Role in Workforce Development and Work-Related Experiential Activities

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Workforce development is important to many communities

- Retirements have accelerated in the past 2 years
- People are quitting jobs a higher rate – especially in health care, social services, and education
- Churn in in the labor market is increasing
- Labor market is tight
  - Very low unemployment rate (U.S. 3.4%) (Georgia 3.1%)
  - And fewer people are in the workforce; demand is greater than supply
- More pressure on higher education institutions to provide graduates who are prepared for the available work.
- IR officials may be asked to collaborate, so it’s something to anticipate
A College Education Provides a Lifetime of Value
Despite Positive Experiences, Students Question Value of College

Survey finds students support their institutions and mostly plan to re-enroll -- but increasingly doubt whether education is worth the price.

By Doug Lederman
The U.S. Education System Isn’t Giving Students What Employers Need

by Michael Hansen

May 18, 2021
What is Workforce Development?

Workforce Development is a term that describes “a relatively wide range of activities, policies and programs employed by geographies to create, sustain and retain a viable workforce that can support current and future business and industry.”

Workforce Pipeline

Adapted from “Insulating the Education Pipeline” from The Forum for Youth Investment
The Role of Higher Education in the Workforce Pipeline

**Individual**
- Academic Degree Programs
- Certifications
- Experiential learning
- Exposure to opportunities and networks
- Career Services

**Community**
- Outreach programs
- Experiential learning
- Employer Partnerships
- Exposure
- Action research

**Organizations**
- Connecting and improving systems (workforce, human services, job training, education, and economic development)
Role of Higher Education

Historical Involvement in Workforce Development

WIOA
PERKINS V

Programs:
• Career and Technical Education
• Technical training
• Certificates
• Associate Degrees
Role of Higher Education

Historical Involvement in Workforce Development
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Programs:
- Career and Technical Education
- Technical training
- Certificates
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Today
Historical workforce participants and....
All academic programs

Programs:
- Bachelors degrees
- Masters degrees
- Certificate and continuing ed
Figure 4. Potential Sector Partnership Participants

Source: https://www.tcsge.edu/worksource/sector-partnerships/
There are more partners, employers, and organizations actively involved in or wanting to be involved in workforce development than ever.
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Desired State

Regional Workforce Needs
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**Desired State**

**How do we achieve this alignment?**

**Regional Workforce Needs**
Alignment
Example 1 — Experiential Learning Guide

What it Includes:
- Experiential Learning Framework
- Case Studies
- Process
- Key Themes
Example 2—Georgia Alignment Toolkit

What it Includes:
- Key Considerations for Alignment
- Using Data for Alignment
- Decision Making Tools for Alignment
- Case Studies of Alignment in Action
Example 3: The Georgia Workforce Planning guide provides tips and templates for doing a community workforce strategy.

https://t.uga.edu/98u
Higher Ed is just **ONE** of the partners in aligning programs for workforce development.
Graduate Outcomes
Business, Management, Marketing, and... 8,689
The Effect of Geographic Locale on Access to Work-Related Experiential Activities

https://www.ihe.uga.edu/WREA

NSF Project Award # 2000847
WREA Project

Mixed methods, multi-year, multi-institution project to examine the benefits of work-related experiential activities for students’ transition from college to the workforce.

Data gathered from students, career center directors, and employers.

Engineering and computer science majors

- Institutions:
  - Kennesaw State University
  - Georgia Institute of Technology
  - Mercer University
  - Savannah State University
  - UGA
  - Valdosta State

A focus on the effect of geographic location.
What do WREAs Offer to Students?

Considered a high-impact practice (Kuh, 2008)

Positive academic gains (Binder et al., 2015; Knouse et al., 1999; Kuh, 2008; Parker et al., 2016)

Student career learning (Dirienzo, 2016; McGee & Spiro, 2000)

Increased employability (Callanan & Benzing, 2004; Gault et al., 2010; Knouse et al., 1999; Nunley et al., 2016)

Differences exist based on structure (Hora et al., 2017)
What Prevents WREA Participation?

Many barrier exist to participation (Bathmaker et al., 2013; Dirienzo, 2016; Frenette et al., 2015; Hora et al., 2017, 2019; Hora, Chen, et al., 2020)

Hora et al. (2019) found that many barriers prevent students from participating
  • Financial (e.g., need for pay or transportation)
  • Sociocultural (e.g., cultural screening)
  • Institutional barriers (e.g., course loads or scheduling)
Location of permanent Address

Locations of Permanent Address - USA

Location of Permanent Address - Georgia
Spring 2021+2022 Student Survey results

Responses received from 2,300 students across five institutions

- More responses from 2 of the institutions

61.6% participated in at least one WREA, with average total of 2 WREAs during their time in college

WREAs in 39 states and 13 countries

92.6% of respondents reported their WREA was paid

Of students who had participated in at least one WREA graduated,
63% already had a full-time job offer

- About 1/3 of these job offers were from companies in which the student had completed a WREA
Spring Student Survey Results

Respondents experienced WREAs differently based on many factors, including socioeconomic status, academic major, and institution. A few by gender and race/ethnicity.

Skills reported as most developed by their WREAs:

• Career and Self-development
• Professionalism
• Communication
• Technical Skills
• Critical Thinking

Challenges of WREA experiences:

• lack of meaningful work
• WREA structures/systems
• COVID and associated challenges due to remote experiences
• WREAs that lacked applicability to their future career interests

How could WREAs be improved:

• institutional career centers/career platforms and students' ability to find WREAs
• the overall WREA structure
• the need to expand opportunities to WREAs
• the role that information plays in helping students make informed decisions about their WREAs.
International Internships

International Locations

Karlsruhe, Germany (GT)
Sulzbach-Rosenberg, Germany (UGA)
Hong Kong (GT)
Beijing, China (GT)
Shanghai, China (UGA)
Bangalore, India (GT)
Lagos, Nigeria (GT)
Beirut, Lebanon (GT)
Cape Town, South Africa (GT)
The Bahamas (GT)
Remote WREAs

Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, some scholars suggested that remote WREAs could expand access (Jeske & Axtell, 2014; Kraft et al., 2019).

Not all experiences are built the same (Hora, Vivona, et al., 2020)

Reported benefits (Bayerlein & Jeske, 2018; Bell et al., 2021; Cabrera Rasmussen & Van Vechten, 2021; Judene Pretti et al., 2020; Morrill Bijeau & Peters, 2021)

- Can offer similar benefits to in-person WREAs
- Gain different skills
- More affordable and flexible
Challenge of Remote WREAs

Reported challenges (Bayerlein & Jeske, 2018; Bell et al., 2021; Cabrera Rasmussen & Van Vechten, 2021; Hora et al., 2021; Judene Pretti et al., 2020)

- Can’t always replicate the in-person experience
- Fewer social interactions and slower communication
- Technology issues
- Difficult to network
- Issues creating/finding space mentally and physically for work
- Does not always lower barriers

Negative perceptions from some participants who report “lower satisfaction, developmental value, 21st century skills, professional network development, and high-skill tasks than in-person interns” (Hora et al., 2021, p. 58).
Remote, in-Person or Hybrid Options

Spring 2021 survey

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<table>
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<tr>
<td>Remote</td>
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<tr>
<td>In-Person</td>
<td>480</td>
<td>54.6</td>
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• Overall, few significant predictors (in the multinomial logistic regression)
  • Older students and first-generation students were more likely to choose in-person WREAs over remote opportunities (similar relationships exist between in-person and hybrid, though the relationship is weaker)

• Those who placed more emphasis on the time it takes to get to a WREA site or the rurality of the WREA were more likely to do in-person
  • Conversely, students who placed more emphasis on the ability to work from home and the urbanicity of the WREA site were more likely to have remote WREAs
Student Comments on Remote WREAs
Spring 2021 survey

Benefits
• Flexibility and less restrictive environment
• Extended opportunities outside of their local

Challenges
• Isolation/Communication
• Space (mental and physical)
• Lack of replicability/quality of experience

Remain open to remote WREAs
• Personal preferences matter
Next Steps in WREA Project

Analyze and report on spring 2022 surveys
Finish and report on qualitative interviews
Integrate findings
Submit reports to NSF (summer 2023)

https://www.ihe.uga.edu/WREA
Select References


Dirienzo, D. F. (2016). *Student perceptions of unpaid internships in the arts, entertainment, and media industry: A survey of lower income students’ ability to participate in internships* [St. John Fisher College]. https://fisherpub.sjfc.edu/education_etd/258


EXAMPLE

STATE GOVERNMENT AS AN EMPLOYER
State of Georgia as an employer

- 60,460 employees
- Last decade, Georgia’s population grew by 14.1% while FTEs dropped by 16.7%.
- ^68% of turnover in the last two fiscal years is due to voluntary resignations
- 1 in 4 current employees are eligible for regular or early retirement within three years
Higher Education Engagement to address State Government needs

What can higher education institutions do?
• Form partnerships with employers and high school programs
• Intentionally form academic program advisory committees
• Consider micro-credentials and certifications
• Help students connect with industries and employers in the community
• Student success = employment
• Engagement starts early
• Must be an priority for leadership

State of Georgia Examples:
• Internships
• Career pathways with articulation agreements
  • DNR Conservation Law Enforcement
• Law Enforcement HOPE Career Grant
• Service Cancelable Loans – Behavioral Health
• Certifications and other credentials
• Executive In Residence
• New partnerships for recruitment and training
So... What is IR’s Role in Workforce Development?

• Using new tools to compile data on graduate outcomes for program review, new program proposals, and accreditation reviews

• Understanding program to occupation data relationships and other labor market data sources and uses

• Developing insights to inform alignment and articulation agreements with partner institutions (upstream and downstream)
Conclusions

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