

The Program Evaluation and Education Research (PEER) Internship Program for Undergraduate Students

A Friday Institute Equity-Mindedness Initiative

Pilot Year Evaluation Report

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This evaluation report was researched and authored by Callie Womble Edwards, Ph.D., associate director of the Program Evaluation and Education Research (PEER) group at the Friday Institute for Educational Innovation. This report details the pilot implementation and impact of the PEER Internship Program for Undergraduate Students during the 2020-2021 academic year. This program and report was made possible through generous support from the Federal Work-Study Program and the Friday Institute for Educational Innovation's outreach budget. The author would like to express special thanks to the Friday Institute Executive Director Hiller Spires, Ph.D., Friday Institute Deputy Director Jose Picart, Ph.D, and the Sr. Director of the PEER Group, Shaun Kellogg, Ph.D., for their support of the program since its inception.

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Abstract

During the 2020-2021 academic year, the Program Evaluation and Education Research (PEER) Group launched its first-ever undergraduate internship program. The program hosted five paid interns in partnership with the Federal Work-Study Program. Via the internship, undergraduate students received training in educational research and evaluation techniques while contributing to PEER Group projects. This program was strategically aligned with the Friday Institute's impact area of "cultivating equity in education through equity-mindedness," and students from historically marginalized communities were encouraged to apply. The program had three goals: (1) expose interns to the environment and expectations of educational research and evaluation, (2) develop interns' transferable workforce skills, and (3) enhance PEER Group operations.

This evaluation report details the implementation and impact of this program during its pilot year. Data were collected via monthly memos, administrative documents and intern culminating assignments as well as surveys, interviews and focus groups with interns and full-time PEER Group staff members. Findings suggest that the program was successful in accomplishing its three goals. This report is organized into four sections. Section one provides an overview of the internship program. Section two chronicles how the internship program was implemented in its pilot year and illustrates a snapshot of the inaugural cohort. Section three recounts how qualitative and quantitative data was collected and analyzed and then draws on those data to measure the program's impact on its three goals. Section four describes lessons learned from the pilot year as well as recommendations for the future.



Executive Summary

During the 2020-2021 academic year, the Program Evaluation and Education Research (PEER) Group launched its first undergraduate internship program, which included five interns. This program was strategically aligned with the Friday Institute's impact area of "cultivating equity in education through equity-mindedness." Eighty percent of the cohort identified as historically underrepresented racial and ethnic minorities, and 60% of the intern cohort identified as first-generation college students.

The initial vision for this program was developed by Callie Womble Edwards, Ph.D., associate director of the PEER Group. Implementation began in summer 2020 when Edwards submitted a proposal to the PEER Group and Friday Institute Executive Director Hiller Spires, Ph.D., for review and approval. Once approved, Edwards led the planning, implementation and evaluation of the program and was the internship supervisor.

The internship consisted of eight components:

1. Partnership with Federal Work-Study, requiring all interns to be work-study eligible
2. Remote Work and Flexible Scheduling, to accommodate for student and PEER Group safety and needs during the COVID-19 pandemic
3. Research and Evaluation Assignments, enabling interns to work on a variety of PEER Group projects
4. Ongoing Training and Development, via weekly check-in/training meetings and informal mentoring
5. Organizational Strategies, including Google Drive team and program administration folders and a Slack channel
6. Accountability Measures, including project logs, electronic journals and performance appraisals
7. Culminating Projects, including a final oral presentation to the PEER Group and final blog post for FI website
8. Iterative Program Assessment, including monthly memos, pre-mid-post inventory surveys, exit interviews and focus groups

Drawing on data collected from PEER Interns and the PEER Group, findings suggest that the program has achieved its goals of (1) exposing interns to the environment and expectations of educational research and evaluation, (2) developing interns' transferable workforce skills, and (3) enhancing PEER Group operations. In particular, interns gained a real-world understanding of what it means to be an educational researcher or evaluator as well as experience performing the duties and responsibilities for educational research and evaluator roles. In addition, interns strengthened their technical and soft skill sets. Finally, PEER Group members found time and money savings by distributing tasks to interns throughout the year, and the model demonstrates several factors related to sustainability.

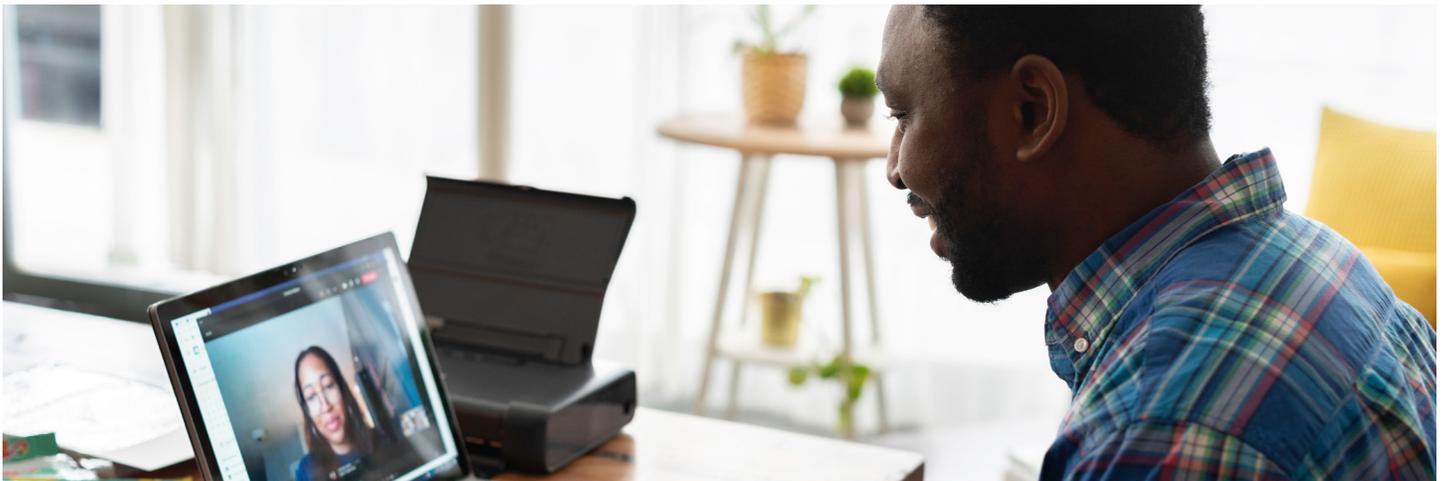
This pilot year of the internship program illustrated nine important lessons for future iterations of the program related to intern selection, student development, remote programming and program management, which are as follows:

1. There is a High Student Demand for the Internship
2. Campus Partnerships Help Reach a Diverse Applicant Pool
3. Provide Explicit Expectations Early in Selection Process
4. Interns Express Curiosity About the "Why" and Real World Implications
5. Electronic Journals Can Help Monitor Interns' Perceived Growth
6. Explicit Virtual Expectations and Intentional Training Can Overcome Communication Mishaps
7. Providing Instructions via Zoom Screen Share Recordings Can Increase Clarity
8. Amid a Virtual Reality, Interns Desire Community
9. Ongoing Management Training Can Enhance Administration



Given the findings and lessons learned, it is recommended that this program become a permanent part of PEER Group culture. To improve future cohorts, seven recommendations, also known as the 7 Is, are advised:

1. Improve the Intern Selection and Onboarding Process
2. Increase the Size of the Intern Cohort
3. Implement Lead Intern Roles
4. Incorporate More Opportunities for Interns to Serve as Co-Researchers/Co-Evaluators
5. Include Interns in Quarterly PEER Group Meetings
6. Infuse More Career Development Content and Reflection into the Internship
7. Institute Weekly Office Hours for Internship Supervisor



Overview of the Internship Program

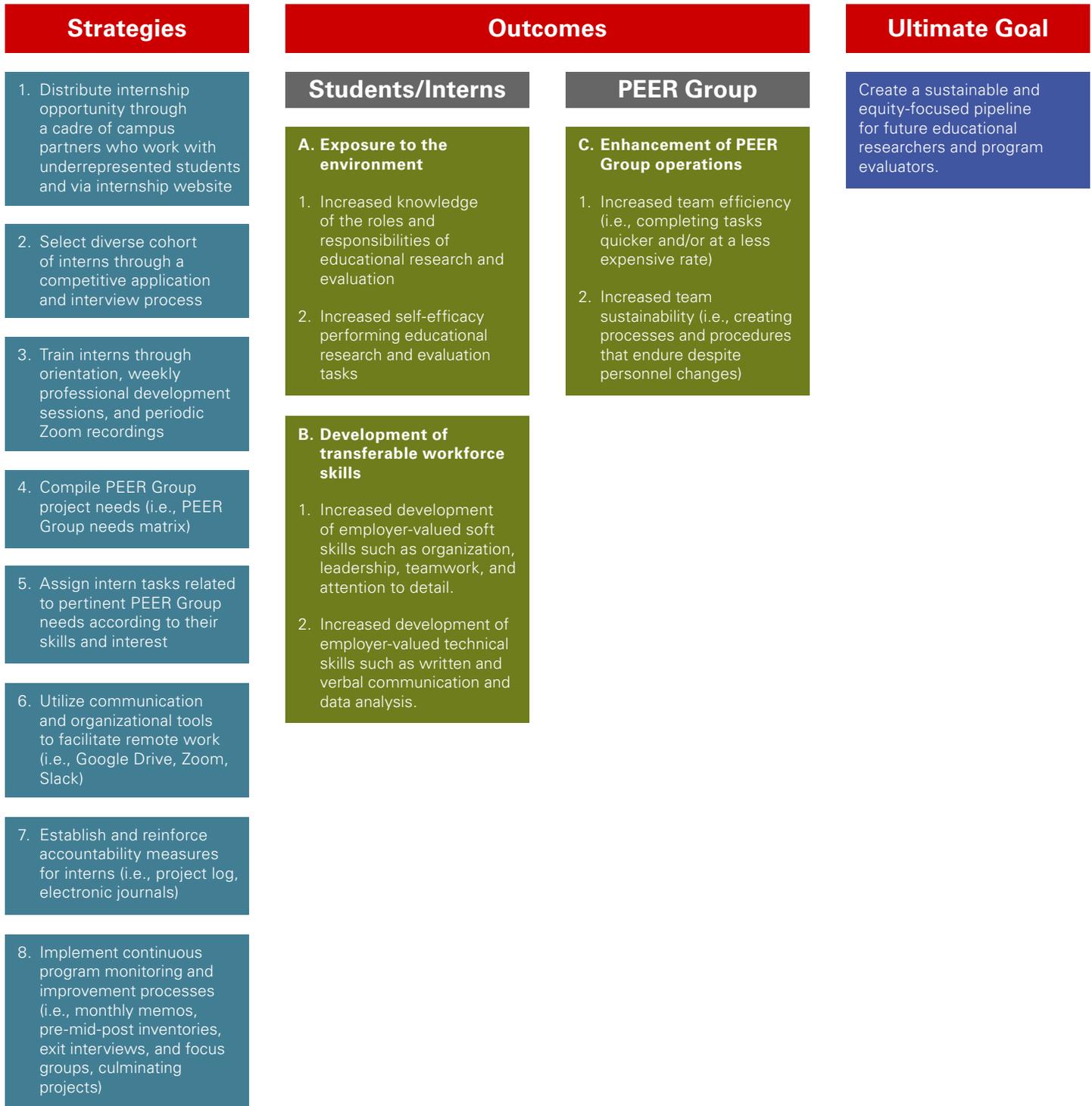
During the 2020-2021 academic year, the Program Evaluation and Education Research (PEER) Group launched an internship program that hosted five educational research and evaluation interns.

The design of this program is innovative, as it is the first undergraduate internship experience offered by the PEER Group. Funded in partnership with the Federal Work-Study program, this internship is a paid opportunity for undergraduate students to learn new research, evaluation and leadership skills. Interns receive ongoing training and informal mentoring while contributing to PEER Group projects.

The program is intentionally aligned with the Friday Institute's impact area of "cultivating equity through equity-mindedness." The Friday Institute defines equity mindedness as "the mode of thinking exhibited by educational stakeholders who are willing to 1) increase their understanding of the origins and causes of persistent and systemic barriers to student success, 2) critically assess their own biases, and 3) take responsibility for the success of all learners in order to increase equity in education." While comparable programs exist across disciplines, this internship is uniquely positioned to broaden the talent pipeline in educational research and evaluation via racial and ethnic, gender, social-economic status, and discipline/field of study diversity. The program intentionally centers students who are historically underserved and plays a critical role in exposing diverse talent to the field, nurturing students' preliminary interests and providing them with a safe space to learn, connect and grow in a community. Eighty percent of the inaugural intern cohort identifies as historically underrepresented racial and ethnic minorities, and 60% of the cohort identifies as first-generation college students.

The logic model below illustrates the program’s strategies, outcomes and ultimate goal.

PEER Internship Program for Undergraduate Students Logic Model



Eight Key Components of the Internship

1. Partnership with Federal Work-Study



requiring all interns to be work-study eligible

2. Remote Work and Flexible Scheduling



to accommodate for student and PEER Group safety and needs during the COVID-19 pandemic

3. Research and Evaluation Assignments



enabling interns to work on a variety of PEER Group projects

4. Ongoing Training and Development



via weekly check-in/training meetings and informal mentoring

5. Organizational Strategies



including Google Drive team and program administration folders and a Slack channel

6. Accountability Measures



including project logs, electronic journals and performance appraisals

7. Culminating Projects



including a final oral presentation to the PEER Group and final blog post for FI website

8. Iterative Program Assessment

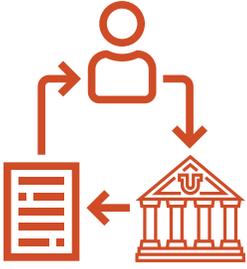


including monthly memos, pre-mid-post inventory surveys, exit interviews and focus groups

“ [This internship was] intentional. Everything that we did or participated in had intention and had a purpose. Nothing we did felt like a waste and I know I can use what I learned and was a part of in any of my future endeavors.

–Intern, Post-Year Inventory

Partnership with Federal Work-Study



The foremost component of the internship program was a funding partnership between the Friday Institute and the Federal Work-Study (FWS) program that required all interns to be work-study eligible. This intentional focus on providing opportunities to students who demonstrate financial need is one

illustration of how this program is strategically aligned with the Friday Institute's impact area of "cultivating equity in education through equity-mindedness." Another illustration of this strategic equity focus is that students from historically marginalized communities were encouraged to apply. This second illustration will be discussed in more depth in the lessons learned section, particularly [Lesson 2: Campus Partnerships](#).

Through the FWS-Friday Institute partnership, interns earned \$12 per hour, which is the maximum allowable FWS earning. Interns were paid on a biweekly payroll schedule. The FWS program contributed 75% of students' earnings with the remaining 25% covered by the Friday Institute. In general, work-study students are eligible to earn a maximum of \$2,000 maximum per academic year and a \$1,000 maximum per academic semester. During the 2020-21 academic year, the Friday Institute initially pledged to support three interns, resulting in an annual Friday Institute contribution/budget of \$1,500.

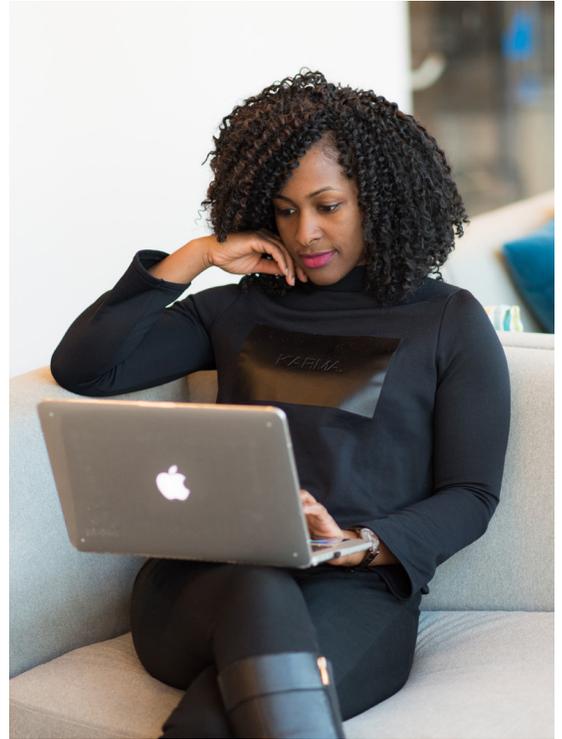
It is also important to note that work-study students do not receive the same work-study award. In other words, although some students can earn up to \$2,000 per year (which is a Friday Institute contribution of \$500), others could only earn up to \$1,500 (which is a Friday Institute contribution of \$375), for example. Thus, at the end of the pilot year, the Friday Institute supported five interns, and its annual \$1,500 contribution/budget had \$445.50 surplus funds remaining, due to the selected students' work-study awards.

Remote Work and Flexible Scheduling



Remote work was a central pillar of the internship, as the COVID-19 global pandemic necessitated a remote experience. All internship activities were completed remotely. Initially, Edwards planned to facilitate socially distanced meetings at the Friday Institute in the spring of 2021; however, due to the rise of COVID-19 cases, she opted against this idea. Google Drive, Zoom video conferencing and Slack were three key tools that facilitated remote work and communication for the interns.

In tandem, from the onset of the program, interns were informed that their weekly hours were flexible and needed to be decided upon in consultation with the intern supervisor. Work hours were influenced by intern academic priorities (such as the need to study for an upcoming test or feeling overwhelmed with school work) as well as the availability and urgency of PEER Group projects. On average, interns worked between five and six hours per week. However, some weeks interns worked up to 10 hours, and other weeks interns did not



work any hours. Interns seldom worked more than 10 hours per week. When they did, it was due to their desire to earn their remaining work-study award at the end of the semester.

Initially, interns were asked to only work on their tasks during “work hours” (i.e., Monday-Friday, 8 a.m. - 5 p.m.). However, throughout the fall semester, some interns indicated that working on tasks during nights and weekends was more productive due to the condensed academic calendar. Thus, the “work hours” guideline was amended to meet the unprecedented needs of completing the academic semester in the midst of a global pandemic.

Demonstrating grace through remote work and flexible scheduling proved to be even more important when one intern contracted COVID-19 during the pilot year. The intern described their experience in their blog post as follows:

“ From when I announced that I had COVID-19, Dr. Edwards modeled what an exemplary leader looked like and embodied the ideal support system. She made sure I had all the materials I needed to succeed in the internship, not just the sources for completing projects. She was concerned for our social-emotional and mental well-being. It was easy to set a time to just have a meeting with her, and it was even easier to pick up the phone and have a conversation. During my time battling COVID-19 and the stress and anxiety that came along with it, Dr. Edwards halted my duties as an intern and made it easy for me to prioritize my health and safety. She modeled empathy. ”

Research and Evaluation Assignments



Each intern was assigned to work on a variety of research and evaluation tasks that contributed to PEER Group projects, including:

- identifying and organizing relevant articles for literature reviews
- cleaning data and performing data entry
- building surveys and online reports in Qualtrics
- creating tables and charts
- formatting and copy editing memos, reports and presentations, and
- supporting the internship website.

Over the course of the year, interns worked on a total of 11 PEER Group projects. Table 1 below itemizes the projects and accompanying tasks interns completed.

Interns appreciated the variety of tasks they were given. In one intern’s electronic journal, they described it as follows:

“ The most valuable part of the internship program for me was being able to work with several different [PEER Group] members on different things, therefore getting to experience all the different aspects of educational research. ”

Not only was there a diversity of tasks, but the tasks were also meaningful to the interns and contributed to important decision making. For example, in their final presentation, one bilingual intern described how projects encouraged them to use their Spanish speaking skills, which previously they never used in the workplace.

“ *[In the Increasing Digital Equity through Digital Inclusion Pilot project] I was translating a pamphlet with resources from English to Spanish. Previous to [participating in] this program, I had never really used my Spanish speaking skill set [in a work setting], and thanks to the team, they really pushed me to use that skill, and I excelled at it.* ”

Another intern articulated how impactful their work was in their final blog post as follows:

“ *I helped on a time sensitive project that, once completed, allowed for a county school board to decide whether schools were to go back in person or not [after initially closing due to COVID-19]. When applying for the internship, I never thought that as an entry-level employee that I would be helping with such important tasks, and I now truly appreciate the trust and faith that the team has in the interns to help with every project. After seeing the impact I could make on the community as just an intern in educational research, I began envisioning myself as a researcher one day.* ”

Table 1. Research and Evaluation Assignments

	Project Name (in alphabetical order)	Tasks (in alphabetical order by project)	# of interns
1	Advanced Teaching Roles (ATR)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extracted quotes from reports and pasted them into a table • Formatted three salary tables in a PowerPoint presentation 	1
2	At-Home Learning Initiative (AHLI)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proofread Classroom Connection Evaluation Summary before dissemination for clarity and any possible errors • Pulled data from Qualtrics and created spreadsheet of data • Reviewed project materials in preparation for data collection • Reviewed transcripts from Zoom focus groups, removed timestamps and condensed paragraphs to make it easier to read 	3
3	College of Veterinary Medicine Intramural Grant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assisted with formatting tables before grant submission 	1

	Project Name (in alphabetical order)	Tasks (in alphabetical order by project)	# of interns
4	Developing STEM Identity in Rural Audiences through Community-based Engineering Design (DeSIRE)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proofread/tested Qualtrics surveys • Searched for and compiled research articles about STEM education 	5
5	Digital Learning Initiative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Added notes to each Excel cell for each recommendation and sub-recommendation that provides the description from the Digital Learning (DL) Plan • Built extensive surveys in Qualtrics for the Digital Learning Media Inventory • Proofread Stakeholder Recommendations one-pager before dissemination • Reviewed transcripts from Zoom focus groups, removed timestamps and condensed paragraphs to make it easier to read 	4
6	Durham Public Schools (DPS) Survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assisted with the strategic plan report • Created pivot tables and charts in Excel • Pulled Qualtrics reports using a filtering feature to pull results by school, downloaded the PDF reports and uploaded them to Google Drive 	2
7	Increasing Digital Equity through Digital Inclusion Pilot	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Translated English technology materials to Spanish • Proofread technology kit document 	2
8	Instrument Requests	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responded to a backlog of FI instrument requests 	3
9	NC ACCESS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Created a dataset by pulling information directly from the NC Report Cards and putting it into a spreadsheet. • Compiled public data from the EDDIE database and added to the NC ACCESS spreadsheet • Compiled survey data and added it to the NC Charter School Performance spreadsheet 	1
10	PBS North Carolina (PBS NC, previously UNC-TV)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assisted with qualitative data analysis from open-ended survey responses • Inputted data from Qualtrics into a Google Spreadsheet • Inputted paper survey data in a Qualtrics form • Merged data with UNC_TV subscribers excel file • Reviewed transcripts from Zoom interviews, removed timestamps and condensed paragraphs to make it easier to read • Updated a data dashboard using Tableau 	3
11	PEER Intern Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Searched for and compiled research articles about internship programs 	1

Ongoing Training and Development



A staple of the internship program is a weekly professional development meeting, which is an opportunity for the intern cohort to check-in on projects and concerns as well as

enhance their knowledge and skills about a specific procedure or topic.

Over the course of the year, interns participated in a total of 23 training sessions. Table 2 below catalogs the training sessions completed by interns. All sessions that went over content—as opposed to discussion-based check ins—were recorded so that interns could rewatch them afterwards.



Interns found value in the training sessions. In the mid-year inventory, one intern shared,

“ I think that the sessions that we have had so far have been GREAT [...]. Hands-on opportunities always help me remember what I learned, and I appreciate that several of the guest speakers had them. ”

Later, in the post-year inventory, another intern articulated the usefulness of the sessions as follows:

“ You could tell the professional development sessions had intention, and they were also great for creating networks and making connections. ”

In their exit interviews and final presentations, interns reported reviewing the training recordings and applying the concepts learned to their academic coursework and projects. For instance, after reflecting on the training sessions in their final presentation, one intern stated,

“ At first, I had never used [Tableau] or never even heard of Tableau. I later learned it was used for visualizations and presenting information in a fun manner. During this semester, I got to use it for one of my [class] projects, and it really helped me get a leg up on the rest of my classmates and be able to just jump right in and feel comfortable using the program. I ended up getting 100% on the project, and it really helped. ”

Table 2. Training Sessions

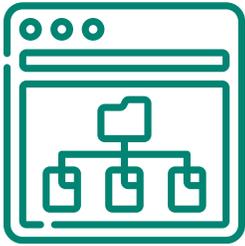
Training Session #	Date/Time	Topic & Facilitator / Speaker
1	Thursday, August 20 4-5 p.m.	Orientation (Facilitator: Callie Edwards, Intern Supervisor)
2	Thursday, August 27 4:15-5:15 p.m.	Survey 101 / Q&A (Facilitator: Malinda Faber, PEER Group, Research Associate) Literature Reviews (Facilitator: Callie Edwards)
3	Thursday, September 3 4-5 p.m.	Data Visualization (Facilitator: Emily Antoszyk, Technology Infrastructure Lab, Research Associate)
4	Thursday, September 10 4:15-5:15 p.m.	One Month Check-In (Facilitator: Callie Edwards)
5	Thursday, September 17 4-5 p.m.	Communication in a Remote Workplace Environment (Facilitator: Callie Edwards)
6	Wednesday, September 23 10-11 a.m.	Learning to Love Your Literature Review (Facilitator: Chelsea Smith, Ph.D. Candidate in NC State College of Education)
7	Thursday October 1 3:30-4 p.m.	Reflections about the Internship (Facilitator: Callie Edwards)
8	Thursday October 8 4-5 p.m.	Preparation for End of Semester (Facilitator: Callie Edwards)
9	Thursday October 15 4-5 p.m.	Using Research Tools (Facilitator: Shaun Bennett, Research Librarian for Business, Education and Data Literacy)
10	Thursday October 22 4-5 p.m.	Communicating Research / FI Branding Part 1 (Facilitator: Heather Bronson, Friday Institute Senior Communications Manager)
11	Thursday November 12 4-5 p.m.	Communicating Research / FI Branding Part 2 (Facilitator: Heather Bronson) Wrapping Up the Fall Semester (Facilitator: Callie Edwards)
12	Thursday, January 28 3:30-5 p.m.	Inclusive Leadership Part 1 (Facilitator: Jose Picart, Friday Institute Deputy Director)

Training Session #	Date/Time	Topic & Facilitator / Speaker
13	Thursday, February 4 4-5 p.m.	Inclusive Leadership Part 2 (Facilitator: Jose Picart)
14	Thursday, February 11 4-5 p.m.	Inclusive Leadership Part 3 (Facilitator: Jose Picart)
15	Thursday, February 18 4-5 p.m.	Inclusive Leadership Part 4 (Facilitator: Jose Picart)
16	Thursday, February 25 4-5 p.m.	Attended 2021 College of Education Research Celebration
17	Thursday, March 4 4-5 p.m.	Using Research Tools Part 2 (Facilitator: Shaun Bennett) <i>Note: No meeting week of March 11 to accommodate for midterms</i>
18	Thursday, March 18 4-5 p.m.	Educational Equity (Facilitator: Kevin Winn, PEER Group, Research Assistant)
19	Thursday, March 25 4-5 p.m.	Inclusive Leadership Part 5 (Facilitator: Jose Picart)
20	Thursday, April 1 4-5 p.m.	End of Semester Planning (Facilitator: Callie Edwards)
21	Thursday, April 8 4-5 p.m.	Communicating Research / FI Branding Part 3 (Facilitator: Heather Bronson) <i>Note: No meeting Week of April 15 to accommodate for Wellness Day</i>
22	Thursday, April 22 4-5 p.m.	Presentations Q&A (Facilitator: Callie Edwards) <i>Note: No meeting week of April 29 to allow interns time to work on their final projects including their performance appraisal, blog and presentations.</i>
23	Tuesday, May 4 11 a.m. - 12 p.m.	End of Semester Celebration & Final Presentations

*Time adjusted to accommodate for College of Education's State Employees Celebration at 4 p.m.

In between weekly sessions, interns were also informally mentored by PEER Group staff as they worked on projects. This mentoring took place in the form of email communication, live Zoom meetings and recorded Zoom sessions to explain a project or process in greater detail.

Organizational Strategies



As mentioned previously, Google Drive, Zoom video conferencing and Slack were three key tools that facilitated remote work and communication for the interns.

Two Google shared drives were created: PEER Internship Program and PEER Internship Program Administration. Each intern had access to the PEER Internship Program shared drive, which housed all intern work and documentation such as weekly training slide decks and assignments. Each intern also created a subfolder for themselves in this drive that contained their project log, electronic journal and any other documents they created for the internship. Only full-time PEER Group members had access to the second shared drive, PEER Internship Program Administration, which housed all administrative documentation related to the internship including planning notes, application and interview materials, performance appraisals and monthly memos. Also within the Program Administration folder was a PEER Group Needs Matrix, which allowed Edwards to identify current and upcoming PEER Group needs and assign intern tasks accordingly.

Weekly meetings were facilitated through Zoom video conferencing. Moreover, Slack was used for quick communication and information sharing between weekly meetings. The interns had their own Slack channel and could also participate in other open Slack channels, fostering a sense of community.

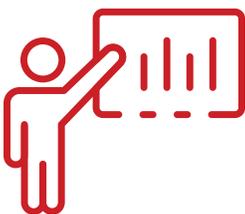
Accountability Measures



The remote nature of the internship made accountability measures particularly important. To hold interns accountable for completing their assignments during their working hours, they were required to complete a project log each time they worked, which specified the day and time of their work, what tasks they worked on and what questions they had as a result of their work. Edwards checked their project logs to confirm their hours when approving their timesheets. Each week, interns were also required to write an electronic journal entry reflecting on their tasks for the week. This journal entry both served as an accountability measure as well as a program assessment tool. At the end of the fall and

spring semesters, interns were also required to complete a performance appraisal with Edwards. This performance appraisal identified intern strengths and areas for improvement. As a part of the performance appraisal process, interns were required to complete a self assessment and articulate their rationale for their self ratings.

Culminating Projects



What differentiates this internship from other work-study experiences is the student development aspect. The program seeks to develop students' transferable workforce skills. As such, the culminating projects were designed to prompt deep reflection about the interns' growth and development throughout the experience. At the end of their internship, interns were required to present a final oral presentation to the PEER Group and write a final blog post for the Friday Institute website. The final oral presentation was

recorded, and the Friday Institute communications team packaged each intern's presentation into a short clip interns can use for future professional opportunities, such as uploading to their LinkedIn page or including in portfolio materials.

In their post-inventory, one intern expressed the value of one culminating projects, the final presentation, as follows:

“ I really enjoyed the presentations we were able to give to the PEER Group. I appreciated the PEER Group's support and it was also nice to see their faces. Reflecting on what we did in the internship was a nice ending to the program and I was happy to know that the support from the PEER Group will continue even after the internship has ended. ”



Iterative Program Assessment



To monitor the program's progress towards achieving its desired outcomes and make evidence-based adjustments to the program's strategy throughout the year, formative assessment data were collected and analyzed on a periodic basis. To start, interns were provided an inventory at the start of the year, mid-year and at the end of the year to assess their knowledge, skills, attitudes and beliefs. Full-time PEER Group members were also provided an inventory mid-year and at the end of the year to evaluate the quality of intern work. Each month, Edwards wrote a memo describing internship activities, which was shared with Friday Institute leadership. Also, at the end of their experience, interns completed exit interviews and PEER Group staff participated in a focus group. Moreover, data collected from the accountability measures and culminating projects were also used to assess the program impact.

Pilot Year Implementation

This section will describe how the internship program was implemented during its pilot year.

Summer 2020

Implementation began in June 2020 with the initial proposal for the program that was developed by Callie Edwards, Ph.D., associate director of the Program Evaluation and Education Research (PEER) Group, and submitted to the PEER Group and Friday Institute Executive Director Hiller Spires, Ph.D., for review and approval.

Spires approved the proposal. Once approved, Edwards led the planning activities to identify team capacity needs, create organizational strategies for the interns, finalize the selection process, design initial trainings and develop program assessment measures.

Selection Process

The three internship positions were posted on Work-Study Central on July 27, 2020, and Edwards began receiving applications on the first day of posting. To reach a diverse cadre of applicants, Edwards created a promotional flyer in consultation with Senior Communications Manager, Heather Bronson (available in JPG and PDF), and shared this flyer with the following campus partners:

- FI newsletter
- College of Education email listserv
- Office of Institutional Equity and Diversity
- TRIO Programs
- African American Cultural Center
- Multicultural Student Affairs
- The Career Development Center

At the time of hiring, each intern stated their intention to participate in the program for the entire 2020-2021 academic year. However, shortly after beginning, one intern shared that they planned to graduate in December 2020; thus, there was room for one intern to join the cohort in spring 2021. Then, shortly after beginning their assignment, the new intern learned they could only continue in a volunteer capacity for half of the semester, making room for a fifth intern to join the cohort mid-spring 2021.

Onboarding

The FI business office facilitated the new hire process for the three selected interns. The program officially began with a one-hour orientation facilitated via Zoom.

Fall 2020

The candidate pool was impressive (n=18), making it difficult to select only three candidates to offer internships. Ultimately, Edwards interviewed 13 candidates and selected three interns. The initial cohort was fairly diverse in terms of ethnicity, gender, year in college, major and future plans. All interns had a GPA of 3.0 or greater, and two interns had a GPA greater than 3.7. Two interns were first-generation college students.

This second illustration will be discussed in more depth in the lessons learned section, particularly [Lesson 2: Campus Partnerships](#).

The orientation introduced the interns to each other and the Friday Institute generally, discussed the program goals and structure, including their hours, their shared Google drive folder, project logs, electronic journal, performance appraisal and final deliverables (i.e., exit interview, final blog post for FI website and final oral presentation at a PEER Group meeting). Edwards also assigned the interns their first assignment, which was responding to a backlog of FI instrument requests for PEER Group member, Malinda Faber. Following the meeting, interns were asked to complete a pre-inventory to assess intern knowledge, skills and beliefs prior to the internship.

Pilot Year Implementation

(continued)

Fall 2020 (continued)

Fall Activities

Throughout the fall semester, interns were assigned tasks based on PEER Group needs. Edwards also maintained a one-hour weekly intern team meeting to discuss project status updates, provide assignments, answer questions and facilitate professional development trainings, including guest speakers.

Each week, interns documented their work in their individual Google Drive folders and project logs and wrote weekly reflections in their electronic journals. Edwards also produced a monthly update memo for Spires, Friday Institute Deputy Director Jose Picart, Ph.D., and the Senior Director of the Program Evaluation and Education Research (PEER) Group, Shaun Kellogg, Ph.D.

The fall semester closed with interns and full-time PEER Group staff completing a mid-year inventory to assess any changes in intern knowledge, skills and beliefs, in addition to program strengths and areas of improvement for spring 2021 and future scaling of the program. Data were used to iteratively refine the program. Edwards also conducted the university's work-study performance appraisal process for all the interns.

At the end of the fall semester, one of the initial interns graduated from the university. This intern completed their culminating blog post, final presentation and exit interview. In addition, Edwards facilitated a mid-year selection process to identify a replacement, and a new intern joined the cohort in January 2021.

Spring 2021

The following changes were implemented based on program feedback from the fall:

- Starting an intern Slack channel to promote quick communication
- Distributing intern pre- and mid-year inventory responses and application materials to PEER Group members to assist with identifying potential projects
- Edwards completing management training sessions with the FI Business Office and with University Human Resources to learn more about management protocols at the university
- Beginning each weekly intern meeting with an icebreaker to promote team building
- Rotating icebreaker facilitators each meeting to allow for diversity of thought, perspective and leadership
- Incorporating more leadership trainings into the weekly team meetings
- Developing team shout outs during team meetings to celebrate intern accomplishments and recognize interns for high-quality work

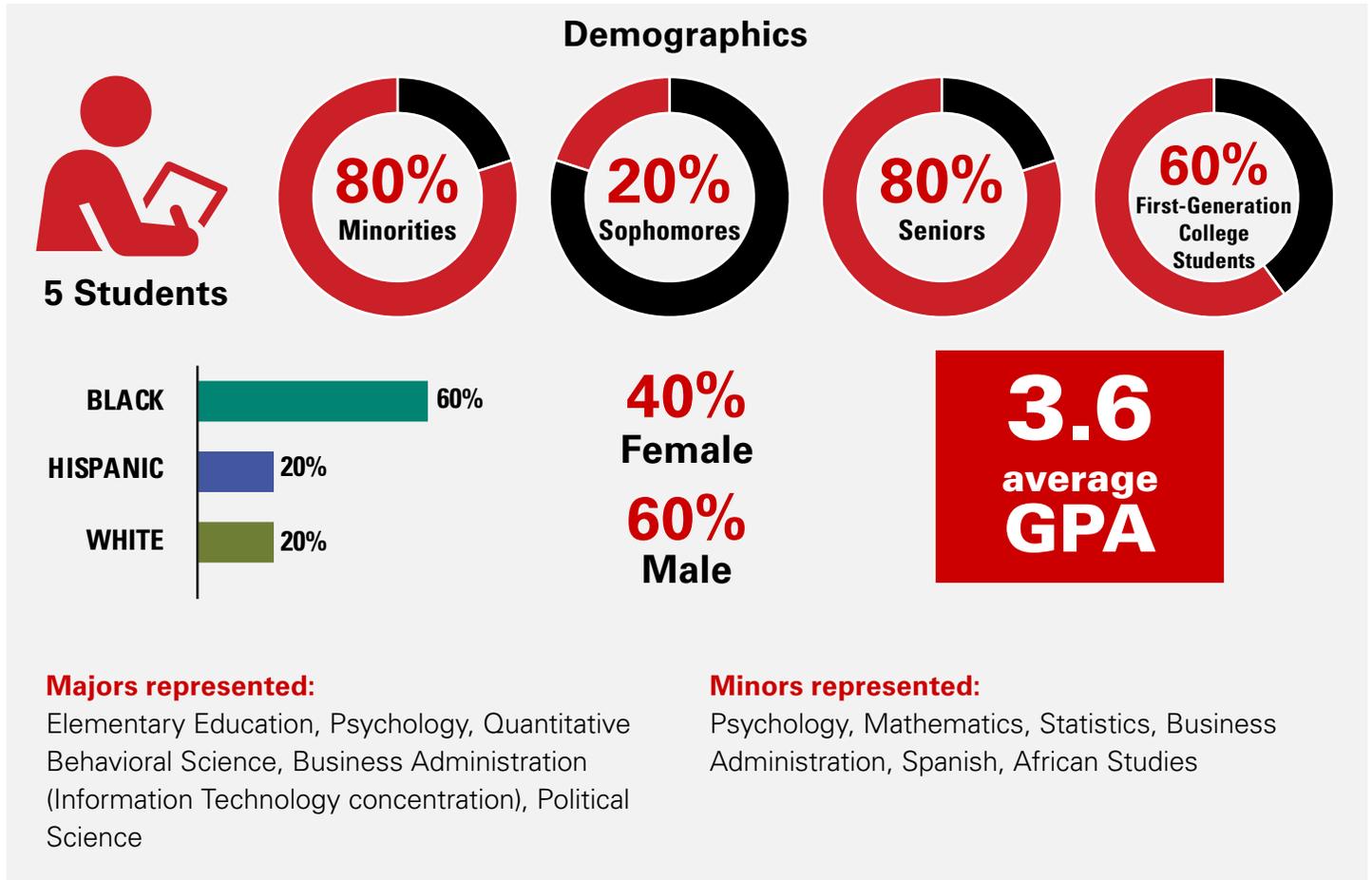
Spring Activities

Interns continued to be assigned tasks based on PEER Group needs, and Edwards maintained a one-hour weekly intern team meeting for the aforementioned purposes. Interns also continued to report their work in their project logs and weekly electronic journals, and Edwards continued to produce a monthly update memo to Spires, Picart and Kellogg.

At the end of the semester, Edwards conducted the university's workstudy performance appraisal process for all the interns. Interns and PEER Group members were also surveyed at the end of the year to assess the program's strengths and areas for improvement.

The interns' work concluded with completing their culminating blog post, final presentation and exit interview. All interns received certificates of completion and one intern received the Outstanding Intern Award for exceptional service. Two interns graduated from the university in May 2021.

Snapshot of the Inaugural Cohort



At the time of the pre-inventory, all interns expressed interest working with data and gaining practical experience in the educational research process. For example, one intern explained,

“ I applied to this internship because I thought it would be a great experience to learn about research in a hands-on way. After taking a research methods class, I was intrigued on how I could use my knowledge and apply it to the real world. ”

Similarly, another intern articulated,

“ This internship directly aligns with what I want to do in my career. I want to research and provide research in education equity, policy and social justice. This position will allow me to hone in my research and literature review skills in the hopes that my experience will aid me throughout my graduate school program and into my future career. ”

Moreover, a third intern shared,

“ I applied to this internship because I thought the idea of educational research was interesting. I have some experience with research in a past position I held with a former professor of mine. When it comes to education, I think the field of education and how educational policy is implemented by governments, especially as a political science major, has always been interesting and important.”

At the beginning of the internship, all interns expressed different career goals, yet three out of the five interns desired to work in an educational setting, including becoming a professor, speech scientist or school psychologist. The fourth intern had data-related interests and desired to be a network architect or a business analyst. The fifth intern had policy-related interests and desired to work for foreign service with the United States Department of State, or with international governmental bodies such as the United Nations or the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

The next section, [Program Impact](#), will discuss how interns’ knowledge, skills, attitudes and beliefs changed as a result of participating in this program.

Program Impact

This section will describe the program's impact on its three major goals, drawing on data collected from interns and PEER Group members. Edwards employed a concurrent mixed method embedded design (DeCuir-Gunby, & Schutz, 2016) to inform this evaluation in which qualitative and quantitative data were collected simultaneously to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the program impact. Utilizing such a design is advantageous to increase interpretability and meaningfulness of findings because the researcher capitalizes on the inherent methodological strengths of each approach and counteracts their inherent biases. To increase the reliability of the results, multiple data sources were used for this evaluation. The data sources are listed below:

Intern Data Sources

The *Intern Pre-Inventory* is a Qualtrics-administered survey designed to assess intern knowledge, skills and beliefs prior to the internship. The survey is anonymous and contains Likert Scale, multiple choice and open-ended items. Interns were asked to provide a pseudonym to track their individual progress over the course of the internship. All five interns completed the pre-inventory. To analyze the data, descriptive statistics were conducted on the Likert Scale and multiple choice items and open-ended responses were coded for emergent themes. [Survey Preview](#)

The *Intern Mid-Year Inventory* is a Qualtrics-administered survey designed to assess intern knowledge, skills and beliefs at the end of the first semester of the internship as well as programmatic strengths and areas of improvement. The survey is anonymous, contains Likert Scale, multiple choice and open-ended items. Interns were asked to provide their pseudonym from the pre-inventory to track their individual progress over the course of the internship. Because of the transition in interns, only the three interns who completed the fall 2020 semester completed the mid-year inventory. To analyze the data, descriptive statistics were conducted on the Likert Scale and multiple choice items and open-ended responses were coded for emergent themes. [Survey Preview](#)

The *Intern Post-Year Inventory* is a Qualtrics-administered survey designed to assess intern knowledge, skills and beliefs at the end of the second semester of the internship as well as programmatic strengths and areas of improvement. The survey is anonymous and contains Likert Scale, multiple choice items and open-ended items. Interns were asked to provide their pseudonym from the pre-inventory to track their individual progress over the course of the internship. Because of the transition in interns, only the four interns who completed the spring 2021 semester completed the post-year inventory. To analyze the data, descriptive statistics were conducted on the Likert Scale and multiple choice items and open-ended responses were coded for emergent themes. [Survey Preview](#)

Project Logs are preformatted Google spreadsheets where interns tracked all their work tasks. Information obtained from project logs included date, time in/time out, number of hours, a brief description of task/activity and any questions or concerns. All five interns completed project logs for each task they were assigned during the internship. Edwards monitored project logs weekly and responded to questions as needed. Data were analyzed to determine themes in (1) the types of tasks interns completed, (2) the amount of time it took them to complete certain tasks, and (3) the types of questions interns asked/the type of support they needed to complete their tasks. Data were also analyzed to determine aggregate descriptive statistics concerning time spent on the internship.

Electronic Journals are Google documents where interns reflected on their work tasks and professional development. Electronic journals did not have a set prompt; rather, interns were encouraged to use these free writing assignments to make meaning of their experience in real time. All five interns completed weekly journal entries, and the internship supervisor also monitored electronic journals on a weekly basis to ascertain intern perceptions during the internship. Data were also coded for emergent themes in intern growth and development.

Exit Interviews are one-on-one semi-structured sessions facilitated by the internship supervisor to learn more about interns' individual experiences and how the program can be improved. All five interns participated in an exit interview via Zoom. Four interns consented to be recorded and have the interview transcribed for further analysis and potential promotional distribution. One intern did not consent and thus their interview was not recorded or transcribed. Data were also coded for emergent themes in intern growth and development as well as program improvement. [Protocol](#)

Blog Posts are written reflective deliverables that describe intern experiences and what they learned. All five interns authored a final blog post for inclusion on the PEER Group intern website. Data were coded for emergent themes in intern growth and development.

Final Presentations are oral reflective deliverables that describe intern experiences and what they learned. Four interns delivered a final presentation via Zoom at a PEER Group meeting. All presentations were recorded and transcribed. One intern was unable to join the PEER Group meeting due to an unexpected schedule conflict. This intern recorded an asynchronous presentation via Zoom to share with the team, which was also transcribed. Data were coded for emergent themes in intern growth and development.

PEER Group Data Sources

The *PEER Group Needs Matrix* is a preformatted Google spreadsheet where PEER Group members tracked all their work tasks for the interns. Months were distinguished by tabs. Information obtained from the PEER Group included the name and description of the task, anticipated hours to complete, training needed, deadline and the PEER Group contact, should questions arise. Edwards then completed the second half of the spreadsheet, which included the name of the intern assigned, start/end date, training provided and actual hours to complete. She monitored the Group Needs Matrix weekly and assigned tasks to interns as needed. Data were also analyzed to determine themes in (1) the types of tasks interns completed, (2) the amount of time it took them to complete certain tasks and (3) the types of training needed to complete their tasks. Data were also analyzed to determine aggregate descriptive statistics concerning time spent on the internship.

The *PEER Group Mid-Year Inventory* is a Qualtrics-administered survey designed to assess the group's usage and perceptions of the internship program, including strengths and areas of improvement at the end of the first semester of the internship. The survey is anonymous and contains Likert Scale, multiple choice and open-ended items. Four group members completed the mid-year inventory. To analyze the data, descriptive statistics were conducted on the Likert Scale and multiple choice items and open-ended responses were coded for emergent themes. [Survey Preview](#)

The *PEER Group Post-Year Inventory* is a Qualtrics-administered survey designed to assess the group's usage and perceptions of the internship program, including strengths and areas of improvement at the end of the second semester of the internship. The survey is anonymous and contains Likert Scale, multiple choice and open-ended items. Four group members completed the post-year inventory. To analyze the data, descriptive statistics were conducted on the Likert Scale and multiple choice items and open-ended responses were coded for emergent themes. [Survey Preview](#)

The *PEER Focus Group* was a semi-structured group session Edwards facilitated to learn more about Group members' experiences and how the program can be improved. Two Group members participated in the focus group via Zoom. It was recorded and transcribed for analysis. Data were coded for emergent themes in intern growth and development as well as program improvement. [Protocol](#)

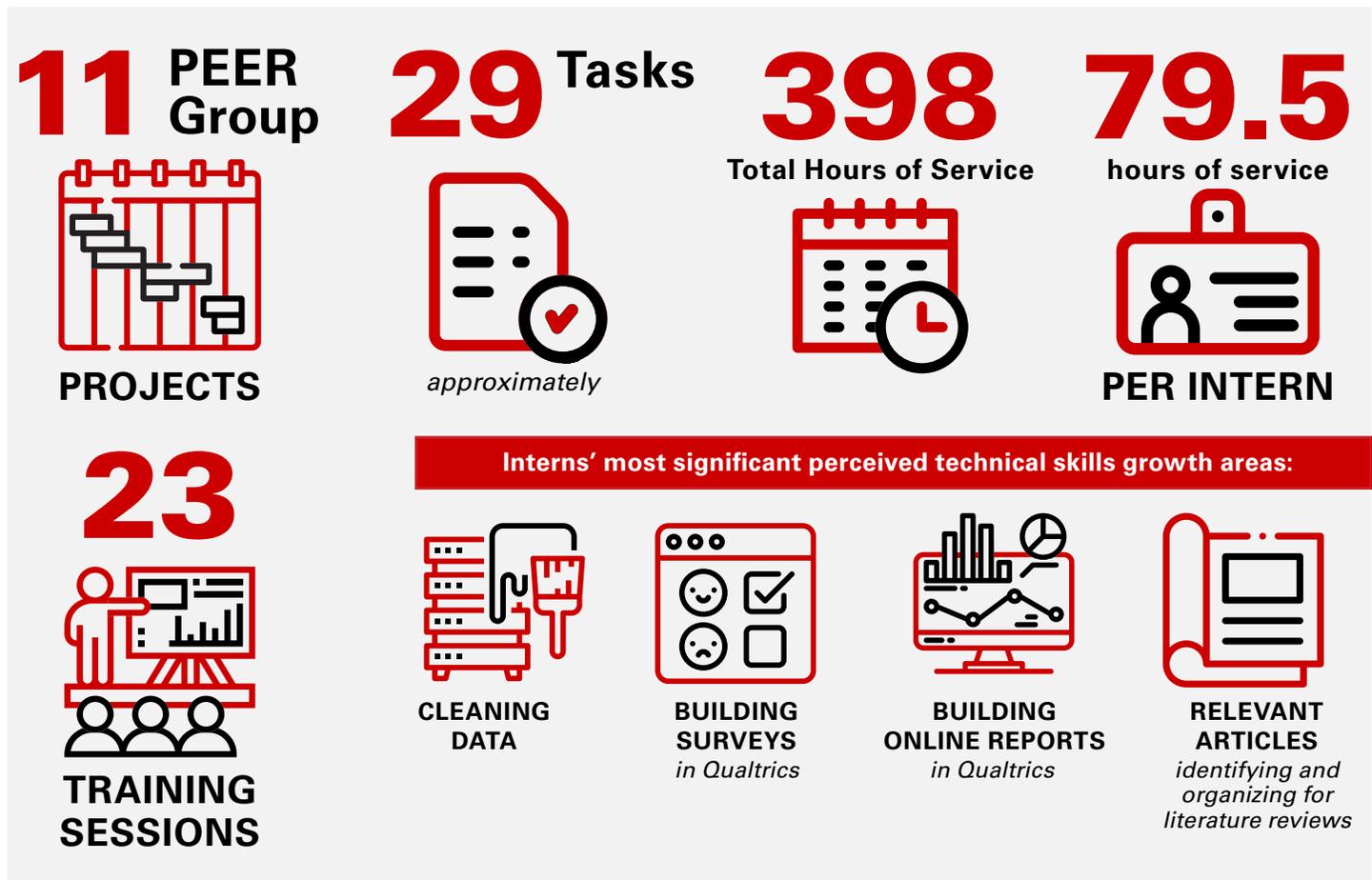
Table 3 (below) aligns the program goals and objectives with the evaluation questions and accompanying data sources.

Table 3. Program Goals, Objectives, Evaluation Questions and Data Sources

#	Program Goals	Objectives	Evaluation Questions	Data Sources
1	Expose interns to the environment and expectations of educational research and evaluation	<p>a. Increase interns' knowledge of the roles and responsibilities of educational research and evaluation</p> <p>b. Increase interns' self-efficacy performing educational research and evaluation tasks</p>	How, and to what extent, did the PEER internship program expose interns to the environment and expectations of educational research and evaluation?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The intern pre-mid-post year inventories • Electronic journals • Exit interviews • Blog posts • Final presentations
2	Develop interns' transferable workforce skills	<p>a. Assist interns' development of employer-valued soft skills such as organization, leadership, teamwork and attention to detail</p> <p>b. Assist interns' development of employer-valued technical skills such as written and verbal communication and data analysis.</p>	How, and to what extent, did the PEER internship program develop interns' transferable workforce skills?	
3	Enhance PEER Group operations	<p>a. Increase Group efficiency (i.e., completing tasks quicker and/or at a less expensive rate)</p> <p>b. Increase Group sustainability (i.e., creating processes and procedures that endure despite personnel changes)</p>	How, and to what extent, did the PEER internship program enhance PEER Group operations?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Intern Project Log • The PEER Group Needs Matrix • The PEER Group mid and post year inventories • The Focus Group

Impact At A Glance

Over the course of the year, the interns contributions were significant. Total hours worked ranged between 35-167 hours. In the pilot year, the Friday Institute contributed only \$1,054.50, which is \$445.50 less than their pledged annual \$1,500 budget. The grand totals and most significant achievements are below:



Goal 1: Expose Interns to the Environment and Expectations of Educational Research and Evaluation

The first goal of the program was to expose students to the environment and expectations of educational research and evaluation. This goal was achieved, as all interns gained a real world understanding of the role of educational researchers and evaluators and gained experience performing the duties and responsibilities for those roles.

Understanding the Role

All interns gained a real world understanding of what it means to be an educational researcher or evaluator. At the time of the pre-inventory, 60% of interns strongly agreed or agreed that they understood the responsibility of an educational researcher and evaluator. That percentage grew to 100% of interns strongly agreeing or agreeing with the same statement in the mid-year and post-year inventories, respectively.

When provided an open-ended text box to explain the roles and responsibilities of educational research and evaluation on the pre-inventory, one intern stated they weren't sure. When asked that same question on the mid-year inventory, the same intern stated,

“ *There's a lot of data processing, data visualization, client management and a lot of learning that occurs as you work. It's like being a data analyst with an educational background.* ”

Another intern echoed similar sentiments in their final presentation, indicating that the internship essentially taught them what educational research was. They explained:

“ *I've learned what educational research was. I came into this [experience] not really understanding. I came in as an education major just seeing this as an opportunity to learn a little bit about research, but I didn't really understand what educational research was and what all that you guys do, and so I'm really thankful that I got the opportunity to learn the definition firsthand.* ”

Similarly, at the time of the pre-inventory, no intern strongly agreed or agreed that they were aware of careers in educational research and evaluation. That percentage grew to 75% of interns strongly agreeing or agreeing with the same statement in the post-year inventory.

Performing the Role

All interns also gained experience performing the duties and responsibilities for educational research and evaluator roles. At the start of the year, interns' prior research experience was limited. Two interns had never worked on a research project before the internship and one intern had worked on two research projects before the internship.

Their experience grew significantly over the course of the year. At the time of the mid-year inventory, two interns had worked on four research and evaluation projects and one intern had worked on five research and evaluation projects. Then, at the time of the post-year inventory, interns had collectively worked on 11 research and evaluation projects.

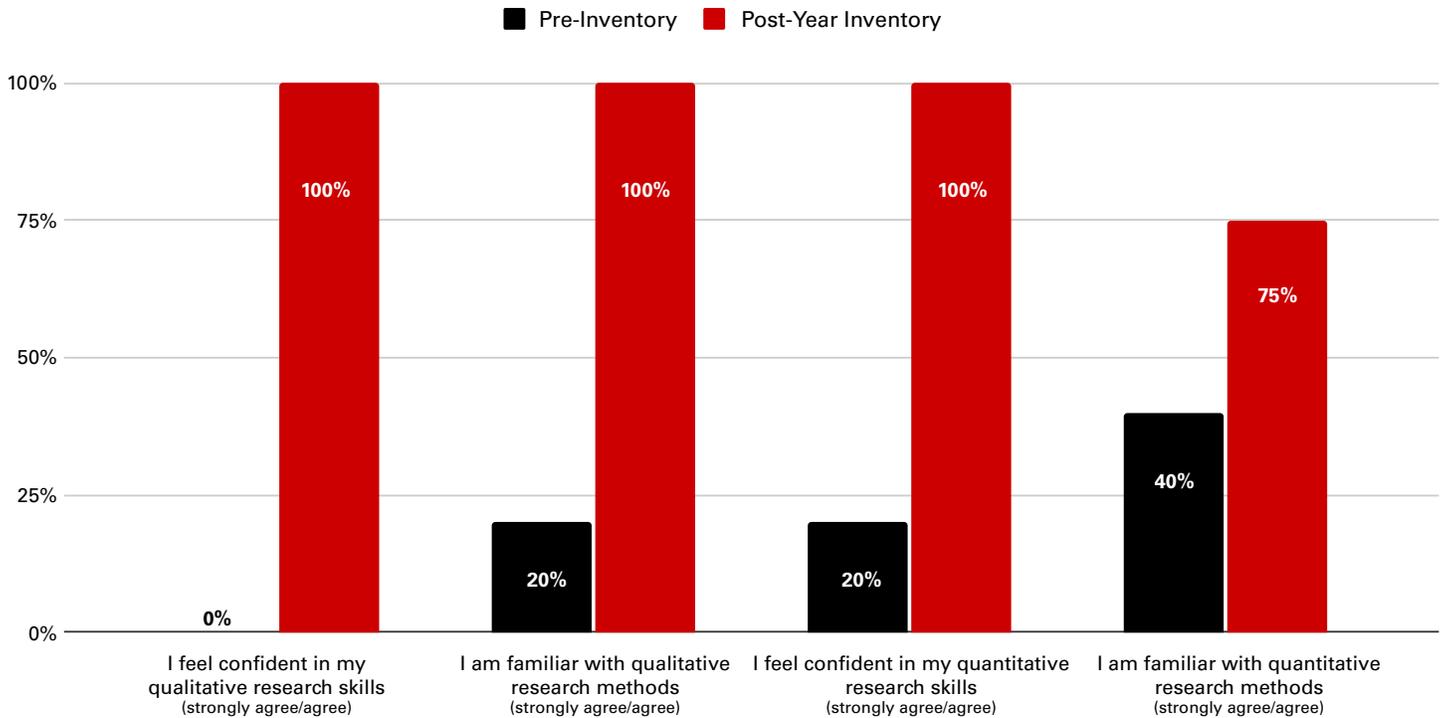
Not only did interns work on several research and evaluation projects, but they also gained authentic experiences with data, including data cleaning, automation, entry, analysis and visualization. One intern said:



“ I have learned how important the data is in a project. Most assignments that I have had involved organizing, complying and cleaning data. Before I began, I didn't expect data to be that important, but I understand now that without correctly formatted data, the rest of your project could be messed up! [...] I am amazed at the amount of detail that goes into each project. I have learned that the most time consuming part of this job is the data organization. Preparing the data is very important in a project and there becomes a tedious, time consuming task. I have come to appreciate how hard myself and all the other researchers work, as the job we do holds an important role in society. ”

One positive benefit of gaining these authentic experiences with data was boosting interns’ familiarity and self-efficacy performing research and evaluation tasks. As demonstrated in Figure 1 (below), at the time of the pre-inventory, 40% of interns strongly agreed or agreed that they were familiar with quantitative research methods, and 20% of interns strongly agreed or agreed that they were confident in their quantitative research skills. Likewise, no intern strongly agreed or agreed that they were confident in their qualitative research skills, and 20% strongly agreed or agreed that they were familiar with qualitative research methods. However, by the time of the post-year inventory, 100% of interns felt confident in their qualitative research skills, and 75% felt confident in their quantitative research skills.

Figure 1: Interns Self-Efficacy: Percentage of Interns Who Strongly Agree or Agreed with the Statements Below



Another positive benefit of gaining these authentic experiences with data was clarifying interns' future career interests. By the end of the internship, one intern's career interests changed, and they desired to pursue a research-oriented career in the future. They described this change in their final blog post as follows:

“ I enjoyed working so much that I began envisioning myself as a researcher one day. Therefore, I decided during the second semester of my internship that I would change my major to psychology to attend graduate school in the future in a research-related field. ”

In addition to gaining authentic experiences with data, interns also developed content knowledge around the topics their projects centered on. For example, in their electronic journal, one intern reflected on how they learned from the research articles they compiled for a literature review. They stated,

“ I found an article about STEM in rural communities, specifically in the Southern United States, and I learned that they are the ones who suffer the most from the lack of STEM professionals. What I gathered is that these Southern rural areas are mostly untapped potential and that more funding would be able to help add more STEM professionals in the region. I feel like I have learned a lot from this topic, which is something I really didn't know much about prior to this internship. ”

Likewise, in their final presentation, another intern described how they learned about the topic of educational equity, stating,

“ We talked about educational equity [during a professional development session] with Dr. Kevin Winn [...] There are [...] big things that you have to ask while doing educational research to make sure your research is equitable [...] [You must ask] for whom, so why are you doing it and who are you doing it for, so it's mainly who were you doing it for and how is this research going to be applied to whom you're serving. ”

Goal 2: Develop Interns' Transferable Workforce Skills

The second goal of the program was to develop interns' transferable workforce skills. This goal was achieved, as all interns strengthened their technical and soft skill set. While these skills certainly helped interns perform the duties of the internship, they are also employer-valued; thus, interns can employ these skills in a variety of professional contexts beyond the internship.

Strengthening Technical Skills

All interns reported developing or refining several technical skills or abilities and knowledge needed to perform specific educational research and evaluation tasks.

Interns' self-reported abilities in cleaning data, building surveys in Qualtrics, building online reports in Qualtrics, and identifying and organizing relevant articles for literature reviews grew the most across their pre-, and post-year inventories, as illustrated in Table 4 below.

Table 4: Interns' Most Significant Perceived Technical Skills Growth

Technical Skill on a scale from 1(low) to 10 (high)	Pre-Inventory	Post-Inventory	Change
Cleaning data	4.2	8.0	+3.8
Building surveys in Qualtrics	3.6	7.0	+3.4
Building online reports in Qualtrics	2.6	5.5	+2.9
Identifying and organizing relevant articles for literature reviews	6.2	8.5	+2.3

In their electronic journals, interns expressed a newfound interest in learning about data visualization or working on data visualization related tasks or projects as a result of the internship. Relatedly, in their final presentations, interns described how they learned how to use new technologies including Tableau, Qualtrics, the NC State Library Database and Excel.

Another important technical skill interns discussed in their exit interviews was identifying and organizing relevant articles for literature reviews. One intern described their growth in this area as follows:



“ I think the internship did a good job at boosting my education research confidence. In the future, I’ll know what to look for and how to look for it with better precision and more intent. The literature reviews definitely helped in my confidence in searching for and reading scholarly articles. ”

A final technical skill interns described was learning how to make research materials accessible for different audiences. For example, during one intern’s final presentation they shared,

“ I use pictures in my PowerPoint, but when I hover over them you'll see the alternative text on it. [...] I learned [the importance of] making sure that my presentations or any deliverables have accessibility attached to it and making sure that everybody can gain from what I present. ”

Strengthening Soft Skills

All interns also reported developing or refining several soft skills or interpersonal abilities and knowledge that are sought after in the workplace. In particular, they described how the internship helped them expand their communication/virtual communication, organization, time management and inclusive leadership competencies. Illustrative examples are provided below.



COMMUNICATION

My professional communication skills have gotten better. How I communicate with a supervisor or colleague has become more precise in transmitting a clear message with all the important information enclosed.

–Intern, Exit Interview

I feel better at using Zoom and better at communicating virtually. Like, you're not always going to have the opportunity to talk to someone face to face, so you have to learn to say what you need to say in your email so that your questions can get answered.

–Intern, Final Presentation



VIRTUAL COMMUNICATION



TIME MANAGEMENT

I think the process of prioritizing important and time-sensitive tasks is something I will take with me throughout my career journey. Being able to know what needs to be done and when is crucial when it comes to working with others and working to get a project done.

–Intern, Exit Interview



ORGANIZATION

My organizational skills have also improved heavily; note-taking and jotting has become a professional skill of mine at this point.

–Intern, Exit Interview

The main thing that I learned was inclusive leadership, and the main tenets [I learned] were microaggressions and microaffirmations. Microaffirmations are just small actions that make people feel good, and that's something I would like to utilize if I was ever to be in a leadership position.

–Intern, Final Presentation



INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP

The impact of the internship program on interns' soft skills was perhaps best described in one intern's post-year inventory. When asked to describe the internship in one word they said:

“ *Motivating—I could use a whole essay of words to describe how great this internship was. However, motivating seemed to be the most accurate. Throughout the year I have learned so much not only about educational research but about myself. I have been encouraged and appreciated for the hard work I have put in during my time as a PEER intern. The support and mentorship that I have received has motivated me to not only change my major to pursue a career in educational research but also to take myself more seriously in the professional world. I am motivated to continue the positive impact I have started making this year as a PEER intern.* ”

PEER Group members also noticed how the internship increased the interns' transferable workplace soft skills. In particular, Group members described how interns' learned workplace expectations are important across professional roles. In the focus group, one full-time PEER Group member explained it as follows:

“ One of the things that I found that was really helpful for the interns was just the exposure to the work environment [such as] expectations about deliverables and communication [or] being able to say to somebody, ‘I don't feel comfortable doing this [or] I don't feel like my skill set is up to snuff.’ Those [skills] I think were probably even more important for the interns to learn in this kind of safe environment than even some of the hard skills that we taught them. ”

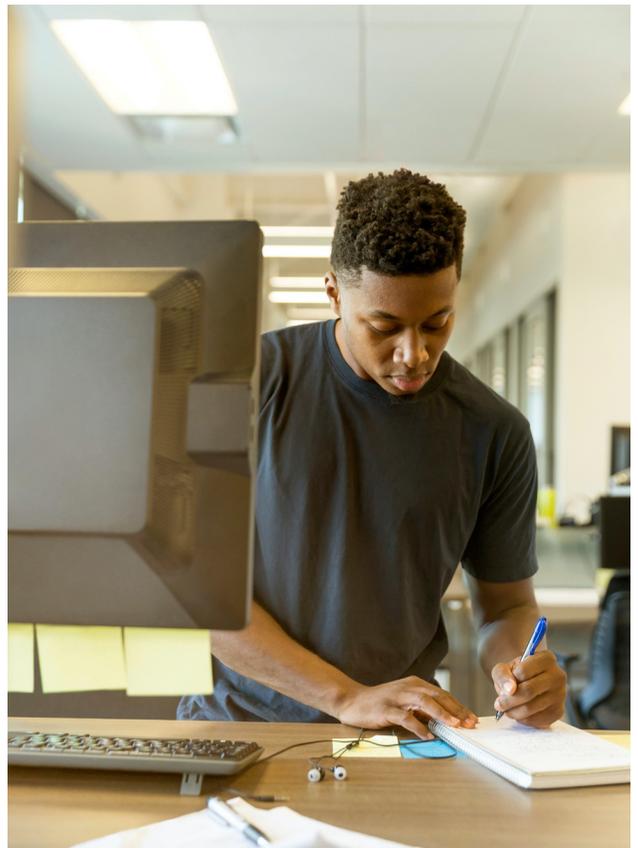
Goal 3: Enhance PEER Group Operations

The third goal of the program was to increase the PEER Group’s efficiency and sustainability. This goal was achieved, as PEER Group members found time and money savings by distributing tasks to interns throughout the year, and the model demonstrates several factors related to sustainability.

Augmenting PEER Group Efficiency

Efficiency here is defined as completing tasks quicker and/or at a less expensive rate. In the beginning of 2020, the PEER Group experienced a lot of transition, as long-standing team leads moved onto new career opportunities outside of NC State. By mid-year, with a downsized staff, increased projects and continued uncertainty surrounding the pandemic, the PEER Group was collectively overwhelmed. Routine fundamental tasks, such as responding to survey requests, cleaning transcripts or compiling datasets, grew increasingly challenging to maintain, as full-time staff needed to prioritize their efforts on more complex tasks such as data analysis and interpretation, long term strategy and partnership building to extend the team’s external funding portfolio. The internship program emerged as an efficiency boosting strategy to supplement the group’s capacity gaps.

Hiring interns is much less expensive than full-time or temporary paraprofessional staff. The interns were paid at the highest Federal Work-Study (FWS) pay rate of \$12 per hour. In accordance with the cost-sharing agreement, the FWS program contributed 75% of student salaries, and the Friday Institute contributed 25% of student salaries. As such, at the conclusion of the year-long pilot, the Friday Institute only contributed **\$1,054.50** for a total of 398 hours of service completed by all five interns. This total investment is equivalent to approximately 35 hours of work from one of the current PEER graduate assistants, who is paid \$30 per hour. It is important to note that graduate student staff certainly have an advanced skill set that may be necessary for some projects. Still, this year-long pilot has demonstrated that undergraduate interns have the interest, work ethic and capacity to be trained to perform many discrete tasks and often time-consuming tasks at a less expensive rate than full time professionals or graduate student staff. Also, as



evidenced by this pilot, with concerted effort, opportunities to refine their skills and mentorship, many interns can increase their speed and perform these tasks at a quicker rate over time.

With the time and effort they saved, PEER Group members were able to concentrate on more elaborate tasks that required a higher level of thinking and leadership.

“ *Being able to pass off some of the smaller tasks to the interns really helped to free me up to work on final report writing and supporting our new hires. This not only improved my productivity by being able to complete deliverables more efficiently, [but] it also improved the quality of the final deliverables and [allowed me] to provide needed support to ensure newer staff were gaining the skills and experience to be able to produce high quality research products in the future. I am also planning to utilize the intern program to free up more of my time to focus on developing more quantitative skills that are needed on our team and allow us to expand our evaluation offerings around the state.* ”

Edwards developed and administered anonymous mid-year and post-year inventories to gauge PEER Group members' perceptions. One PEER Group member commented,

“ *Having people available to complete some of the simpler tasks on my projects has been a lifesaver. The interns all seem motivated, and I'm glad that we are able to provide them with some real-world experiences in research.* ”

Another staff member shared,

“ *[It's] so great to have some extra hands for remedial tasks.* ”

A third staff member echoed,

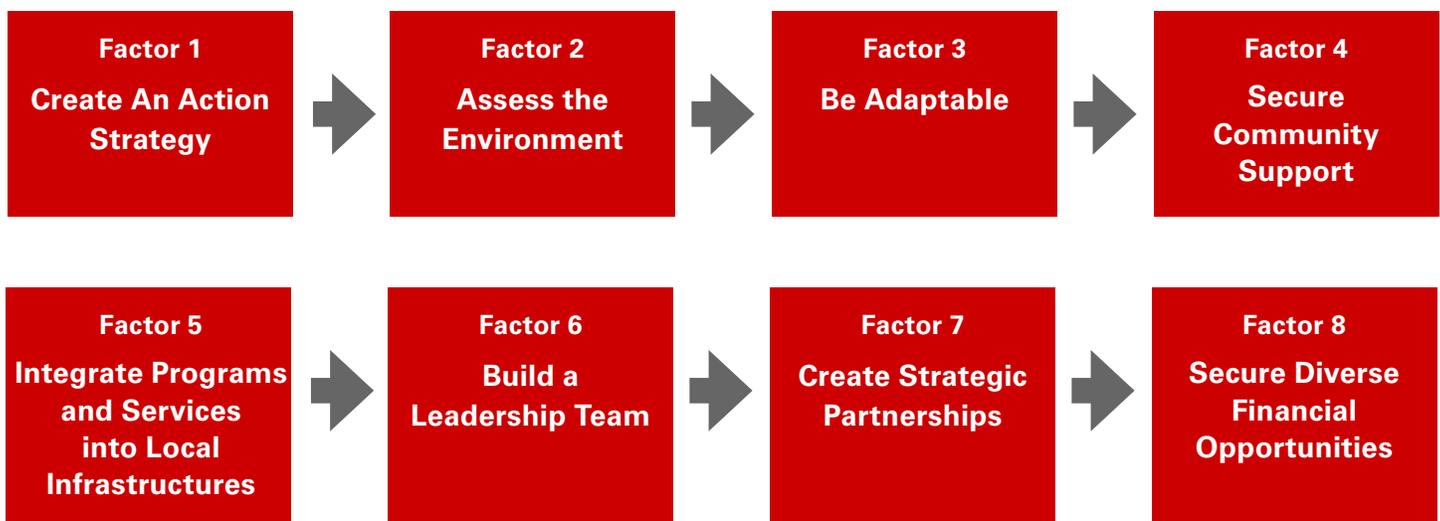
“ *The benefits went both ways—we benefited and they benefited. A win-win!* ”

On the post-year inventory specifically, 100% of PEER Group members strongly agreed or agreed that the intern program increased the group's efficiency, interns produced high-quality deliverables and interns completed assigned tasks within a reasonable time frame. Additionally, 50% of PEER Group members noted that the internship program “exceeded their expectations” and 50% of PEER Group members noted that the internship program “met their expectations”.

Augmenting PEER Group Sustainability

While efficiency is rather straightforward to conceptualize, sustainability is a bit more nuanced. Sustainability here is defined as creating processes and procedures that endure despite personnel changes. On the post-year inventory, 50% of PEER Group members strongly agreed that the intern program increased the team's sustainability, and 50% of PEER Group members neither agreed nor disagreed that the intern program increased the team's sustainability. In [Building Sustainable Programs: The Resource Guide](#), the Office of Adolescent Health (OAH) (2014) identifies eight factors of sustainability and their keys to success. Although this resource was initially created for OAH grantees, it provides comprehensive guidance to "help programs and services achieve sustainable impacts" (p.1) that can be translated into a variety of contexts. This section will discuss the extent to which the PEER internship program meets OAH's sustainability factors to suggest that the PEER intern model is not only a cost-saving solution (as described above in the [Augmenting PEER Group Efficiency](#) section) but also has the potential to be sustainable.

Figure 2: OAH's Eight Sustainability Factors



FACTOR 1: CREATE AN ACTION STRATEGY

OAH (2014) advises initiatives to start planning early, establish a shared vision with their partners and develop a sustainability plan that includes measures of success. This factor was accomplished as the planning efforts began in summer 2020 and included the development of the [PEER internship program logic model](#), which illustrates the shared vision for the program. Although an explicit sustainability plan did not fit the context of this program, sustainability was a key consideration from the onset of planning, was outlined as a goal within the logic model and was embedded within the program's evaluation plan. As such, the program collected data to measure PEER Group perceptions of program sustainability. To enhance the program's achievement of this factor, future evaluations can collect more data about sustainability such as asking PEER Group members about the strengths and challenges of the operational tools used to facilitate sustainability such as the PEER Group's Needs Matrix and interns' project logs, and regularly assessing how the program aligns with OAH's eight sustainability factors.

FACTOR 2: ASSESS THE ENVIRONMENT

To increase the sustainability of strategies, it is important to match them with the community's environment of needs and embed continuous assessments throughout the life of the program (OAH, 2014). A core

element of the internship program is meeting the needs of both PEER interns and PEER Group members so that both stakeholder groups have an incentive to contribute to the success of the program. One PEER Group member alluded to this inherent win-win design in their post-year inventory. When asked to describe the internship in one word, they stated,

“ *Reciprocal. When I approach tasks to provide the interns, I typically begin with my own research needs first, but I also work to ensure that the interns are participating in activities that will benefit them in their professional and academic lives. For some, it is simply learning how to communicate effectively; for others, it is giving them short tutorials and opportunities to work in programs like Excel and Tableau. I see this type of relationship as a foundational element that will help to ensure the success and sustainability of the program. We may even end up finding some amazing research assistants in the process!* ”

On the post-year inventory specifically, 100% of PEER Group members strongly agreed or agreed that the intern program was relevant to their needs and that they felt comfortable working with the interns. Also, as will be explained in the [lessons learned](#), the pilot year application process demonstrated strong student demand for the program. NC State University has ample access to work-study students each year, which presents a continuous pool of prospective candidates. In addition, exceptional underclassmen interns, including the intern who was awarded Outstanding Intern, plan to continue with the internship next year. If the program continues to select underclassmen with strong potential, it will be able to form long-term mutually beneficial relationships with them where they contribute to PEER projects over several years while continuing to advance their skill sets. One PEER Group member explained this process in the focus group.

“ *We found some really good interns this year that are sophomores that plan to return the next year, so I definitely think the skill set that this one particular intern gained this year, we can utilize that in the years to come. And I think it's going to be a very reciprocal relationship, so when she gets done, she's going to have a whole skill set that most of her peers [don't have]... so I think it is very sustainable.* ”

Moreover, throughout this pilot implementation, Edwards has continuously used multiple sources of data to improve the program for future iterations. As will be described in the next section of this report, this pilot year has demonstrated important [lessons learned and recommendations](#) to better meet the needs of stakeholders. Taking these learnings into consideration will strengthen implementation moving forward.

FACTOR 3: BE ADAPTABLE

Environments are ever-evolving; longstanding initiatives remain relevant by adapting their practices to shifting needs (OAH, 2014). Launching in the midst of a global pandemic demonstrates the program's ability to adapt to unforeseen circumstances. There were several instances when the program had to pivot from its initial plan to accomplish its goals (e.g., being fully remote as opposed to a hybrid model, being flexible with intern “working hours”). Maintaining the willingness to revise strategies as needed while upholding implementation fidelity will be an important consideration for future years.

FACTOR 4: SECURE COMMUNITY SUPPORT

Initiatives that persist over time develop creative and compelling outreach strategies that motivate the community to support, buy-in and engage with the work (OAH, 2014). In the pilot year, the program utilized internal strategies (e.g., PEER Group PowerPoints and update memos) as well as external strategies (e.g., flyers, social media messages and a web page) to enlist the support, garner the buy-in and promote the engagement of internal and external stakeholders, including Friday Institute executive leadership, PEER Group members and prospective PEER interns. Next year, Edwards plans to repurpose the data shared in this evaluation report by crafting strong and clear outreach materials such as infographics, one-pagers and briefs to secure additional community support.

FACTOR 5: INTEGRATE PROGRAMS AND SERVICES INTO LOCAL INFRASTRUCTURES

For an initiative to remain viable within an ecosystem, it must be “integrate[d] into the broader community fabric” (OAH, 2014, p.13). This program’s explicit focus on high-quality research and evaluation and expanding access to historically marginalized students is well aligned with both the goals of NC State broadly and the Friday Institute specifically. As a research-extensive land-grant university, NC State University is committed to serving the state of North Carolina and broader society. According to the university vision statement, NC State “will emerge as a preeminent technological research university recognized around the globe for its innovative education and research addressing the grand challenges of society.” Moreover, the Friday Institute is committed to cultivating equity through equity-mindedness so that all learners are prepared to succeed in a rapidly changing world. The internship’s alignment with institutional and organizational goals was clearly recognized by PEER Group members. When asked to describe the internship in one word on their post-year inventory, one PEER Group member said, “Service—because I see this program as the [Friday Institute] serving the students and the university.”

FACTOR 6: BUILD A LEADERSHIP TEAM

Efficacious initiatives can plummet without a strong team of leaders to help sustain and grow programs; thus, OAH (2014) recommends identifying internal and external champions, keeping organizational leaders engaged and cultivating leadership development. In the pilot year, the internship leadership team consisted of two champions external to the PEER Group (i.e., the Friday Institute executive director and deputy director) and two champions internal to the PEER Group (i.e., the PEER Group senior director and associate director/ internship supervisor). Leaders were kept engaged in the work via monthly update memos Edwards produced. Additionally, as will be explained in the lessons learned, Edwards participated in trainings to advance her management skills.

With the time and effort required to lead this program, it was also important to have a dedicated full-time staff person (i.e., internship supervisor) manage this program as a part of their job responsibilities. In the focus group, one PEER Group member spoke to the importance of having this particular champion.

“ Overall, I thought the program was really well run and designed, and I attribute that largely to your leadership and organization on this, Callie. I think you were very thoughtful with how you approached it and how you communicated with them. I really do think that [having a champion] really largely contributed to how successful this program was. ”

Continuing to embed this role into a staff member's job responsibilities increases the likelihood that this program will become a permanent part of the PEER Group culture.

FACTOR 7: CREATE STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

Forming and assessing strategic partnerships is another key factor OAH has identified among sustainable programs (2014). Partners provide new skills and resources that can be leveraged for program success and improvement. In the pilot year, the internship program utilized various campus partnerships for funding (i.e., FWS), recruitment (i.e., NC State's Office of Institutional Equity and Diversity, TRIO Programs, Office of Undergraduate Research, Multicultural Student Affairs, and the College of Education Office of Student Success), and professional development (i.e., NC State College of Education and NC State University Libraries). To enhance the program's achievement of this factor, the program can engage more partners (i.e., more colleges and departments at the university, the NC State Career Development Center, and First In the Pack) and assess those partnerships periodically.

FACTOR 8: SECURE DIVERSE FINANCIAL OPPORTUNITIES

Finally, OAH (2014) advises initiatives to have a clear understanding of how much it costs to fund their efforts, develop strategies for securing that funding from multiple sources and build fundraising and grant support as needed. This program is currently funded through a cost-sharing agreement between the FWS and Friday Institute. Conversations with FWS and Friday Institute business office staff suggest that the funding is secure and sustainable. While no changes are expected in the coming years, should either organization have a shift in their budget, it will be important to identify alternative funding sources.

Lessons Learned & Recommendations

Lessons Learned

This pilot year of the internship program illustrated nine important lessons for future iterations of the program related to intern selection, student development, remote programming and program management, which are:

Nine Key Lessons Learned During the Internship

1. High Student Demand



For the internship

2. Campus Partnerships



Help reach a diverse applicant pool

3. Explicit Expectations



Best provided early in selection process

4. "Why" and Real World Implications



Are curiosities of interns

5. Monitor Interns' Perceived Growth



Electronic journals help accomplish this

6. Explicit Virtual Expectations and Intentional Training



Can overcome communication mishaps

7. Instructions via Zoom Screen Share Recordings



Can increase clarity

8. Interns Desire Community



Even amid a virtual reality

9. Ongoing Management Training



Can enhance administration

Lessons Related to Intern Selection

Please see [Recommendation 1: Improve the Intern Selection and Onboarding Process](#) for details on how Edwards recommends operationalizing this lesson.

Lesson 1: High Student Demand

1



There is high student demand for this program as demonstrated by the selection process. In both the fall and spring, several highly qualified students were not selected due to budget restrictions. Two candidates expressed interest in applying for future semesters and volunteering with the PEER Group. In addition, after closing the application process, Edwards received several new inquiries. In essence, the program has a built-in waiting list if Friday Institute leadership chooses to invest more resources in the program in the future.

Lesson 2: Campus Partnerships

2



The internship announcement was distributed to several campus partners, including representatives from NC State's Office of Institutional Equity and Diversity, TRIO Programs, Office of Undergraduate Research, Multicultural Student Affairs and the College of Education Office of Student Success. Utilizing campus partners to promote the internship application proved an effective strategy for diversifying the applicant pool. Two of the selected interns discovered the internship through an announcement by NC State's TRIO program, which is a federally funded program to help students overcome class, social and cultural barriers to higher education. In their final exit interview, one selected intern reflected on the value of having a personal connection recruit them to the program as follows:

I applied to the program because I was recommended to apply by one of my advisors over at the TRIO office, and they just told me good things about it and [told me] how it was a new [opportunity] starting up and [they knew] the person behind it, and that made me want to apply.

The other selected interns discovered the internship from NC State's work-study program page and NC State's Psychology department.

Lesson 3: Provide Explicit Expectations Early in Selection Process

3



Working with undergraduates, many of which have never had an internship before, requires a significant amount of expectation setting. Several expectations should be clearly set at the beginning of the selection process to ensure all interns are aware of the position requirements before hiring, including but not limited to:

- what kind of tasks and deliverables will interns be responsible for,
- how interns can set and adjust their working hours, including taking time off,
- how many hours interns are able to work both during this internship and for other on-campus jobs,
- how interns are to submit their timesheets, and perhaps most critically,
- the frequency of communication between interns and their supervisor.

Establishing clear expectations with prospective candidates at the onset of the selection process will safeguard against miscommunications. Please see [Recommendation 1: Improve the Intern Selection and Onboarding Process](#), to learn how Edwards recommends operationalizing this lesson.

Lessons Related to Student Development

Lesson 4: “Why” and Real World Implications

4



In weekly professional development sessions and one-on-one conversations, interns were consistently curious about the “why” of projects or tasks. Interns would ask about the origin of their projects or tasks and appeared to enjoy learning about the background information and how what they were doing mattered in the larger scheme of the project.

Moreover, when a task was somehow connected to interns’ future career interests or goals, they also appeared more engaged in the process and even more curious about its real world implications. Armed with this understanding, Edwards made a concerted effort to (1) align intern interests and tasks when possible, (2) provide interns with ample background knowledge, and (3) foster a welcoming learning environment where interns felt empowered to ask questions.

Moving forward, it would be advantageous to continue these practices. In particular, the importance of matching intern future career goals with the projects they work on was also described by one PEER Group member in the focus group:

“ I liked being able to work with the interns to kind of figure out what their career goals were and try to make sure that when I'm assigning them tasks that it really is relevant to things that they want to actually do in the future. That was really important, as I was trying to think through how best to utilize them. ”

Please see [Recommendation 1: Improve the Intern Selection and Onboarding Process](#) for details on how Edwards recommends operationalizing this lesson.

Lesson 5: Monitor Interns' Perceived Growth

5



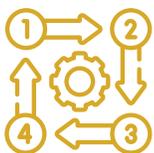
Quantifying growth requires triangulating multiple data sources. In the pilot year, electronic journals were a key data source to understand how the interns perceived their growth and development. Electronic journal entries are free-flow writing assignments where interns reflect on their progress on a weekly basis.

Please see [Recommendation 6: Infuse More Career Development Content and Reflection into the Internship](#) to learn how Edwards recommends operationalizing this lesson.

Lessons Related to Remote Programming

Lesson 6: Explicit Virtual Expectations and Intentional Training

6



Timely communication proved to be especially crucial in the virtual internship environment. Interns were assigned tasks with deadlines and were expected to communicate with Edwards, the internship supervisor, if they encountered any challenges completing tasks by their deadline as soon as possible. Over the course of the year, there were two instances when two interns were assigned tasks and did not effectively communicate their inability to complete those tasks by their deadlines. In those instances, interns' lack of communication interrupted the PEER Group workflow and productivity. To remedy both occurrences, Edwards facilitated individual conversations with each responsible intern to (1) inform them that their behavior was unprofessional and did not meet the internship expectations, and (2) brainstorm future strategies they could employ if they encountered that situation again either in the internship or a future work environment. Edwards also facilitated two whole group communication trainings with the intern cohort following each occurrence to explicitly reiterate two virtual communication expectations. First, interns were expected to respond to email correspondence from the PEER Group within 1 business day. Second, when interns committed to a task and could not complete it in the pre-established timeframe, they were expected to email Edwards as soon as possible. The combination of the individual conversations and group training sessions seemed to be a beneficial learning opportunity for interns, as these communication mishaps were isolated instances and did not become the norm for the internship. One PEER Group team member reflected on this experience in the focus group as follows:

“ [When] an intern would not respond or would turn something in late, we had to have those hard conversations. [But when] we did, I think it really was impactful for them. ”

Please see [Recommendation 1: Improve the Intern Selection and Onboarding Process](#), for details on how Edwards recommends operationalizing this lesson.

Lesson 7: Instructions via Zoom Screen Share Recordings

7



Building on how vital communication is to a remote team, Edwards has found that one best practice is to increase the clarity of task instructions. Whenever possible, Edwards created a brief Zoom screen share recording to share with an intern to explain the instructions in a step-by-step manner. This audiovisual resource helped interns better understand what was being asked of them. In turn, interns had fewer follow-up questions, which increased efficiency and productivity.

“ I know that one of the things that we started off doing, which I really loved, was doing these like little mini recordings for each of the interns for the tasks that they were doing and just a very simple set of written directions in the file folders, and I found that was the best way to make sure that I wasn't getting 500 emails back and forth [...] and they saved me so much time on some of the simpler tasks. ”

–PEER Group Member, Focus Group



Lesson 8: Interns Desire Community

8



Although COVID-19 social distancing procedures required the internship to be virtual, interns desired a sense of community. In the fall, the group met once a week to discuss updates and participate in professional development trainings. In the spring, these meetings were remixed. On a rotating basis, each intern was assigned to facilitate a team icebreaker at the beginning of each meeting for approximately 5-10 minutes. Also in the spring, the team began using Slack for quick communication. Edwards was also more intentional about creating collaborative projects in which all interns had to work together, even if they had discrete tasks. During weekly meetings, interns provided individual updates and presentations. Additionally, Edwards awarded “Team Shoutouts” during spring meetings to recognize intern accomplishments and contributions. Data demonstrate that these changes helped foster community. For example, when asked on the post-year inventory to share a memory from the internship program that stood out to them, one intern shared:

“ *It would definitely be during one of the weekly meetings when [Dr. Edwards] gave an award that just acknowledged the work I had done. It was meaningful because it made me feel proud of the work I had done and made me want to continue the hard work.* ”

Lessons Related to Program Management

Lesson 9: Ongoing Management Training

9



Operating this internship requires an in-depth understanding of both university and Federal Work-Study guidelines. To that end, Edwards scheduled one-on-one training sessions with the Friday Institute business office and completed the university’s professional development course, Management Essentials: An Orientation for Managing at NC State. Through this continuing education, Edwards deepened her understanding of management policies and procedures at the university and federal levels. It is advisable to continue coupling management training with this program to navigate the intricacies of supervising student workers.

Recommendations

Recommendations

Given that the program has achieved its goals of (1) exposing interns to the environment and expectations of educational research and evaluation, (2) developing interns' transferable workforce skills, and (3) enhancing PEER Group operations, Edwards recommends making this program a permanent part of PEER Group culture. Building on the lessons learned, Edwards suggests the following seven recommendations, also known as **the 7 Is**, to improve future cohorts:

Seven Recommendations



1. Improve the Intern Selection and Onboarding Process



2. Increase the Size of the Intern Cohort



3. Implement Lead Intern Roles



4. Incorporate More Opportunities for Interns to Serve as Co-Researchers/Co-Evaluators



5. Include Interns in Quarterly PEER Group Meetings



6. Infuse More Career Development Content and Reflection into the Internship



7. Institute Weekly Office Hours for Internship Supervisor

Recommendation 1: Improve the Intern Selection and Onboarding Process

1



Although the pilot year selection process was useful to identify the five inaugural interns, several improvements can be made to refine the process for future years, such as:

- ✓ **Explicitly stating internship expectations and characteristics that would make a prospective candidate successful in the role:** Informed by [Lesson 3: Provide Explicit Expectations Early in Selection Process](#) and [Lesson 6: Explicit](#)

[Virtual Expectations and Intentional Training Can Overcome Communication Mishaps](#), it is advisable to refine the position description to more clearly state internship expectations and characteristics that would make a prospective candidate successful in the role. These expectations and characteristics should also be reiterated in candidate interviews to provide an opportunity for further clarification and to lessen the probability of future misunderstandings if selected. Such expectations and characteristics were perhaps best described by one intern in their post-year inventory when they said:

“*Being able to communicate and be an advocate for yourself are two of the most important characteristics I believe an intern should have. Being able to ask questions, inquire about projects they are working on, setting boundaries for yourself and what you're capable of within the program, etc. comes with adequate communication with your peers/team and being able to speak on your behalf. Also being able to take initiative is a characteristic that will take an intern a very long way.*”

- ✓ **Asking more targeted behavioral interview questions:** By providing interns with actual examples they may face in the internship (i.e., “Imagine you are given a task during midterms week and you are unable to complete it. How would you handle that?”), interviewers can provide a more clear understanding of what interns’ future roles and responsibilities would be if selected, and they can discern interns’ decision-making as well as detect and prevent any avoidable challenges.
- ✓ **Seeking at least one bilingual intern:** By happenstance, there were two bilingual Spanish-English interns in the pilot cohort, which allowed the PEER Group to provide meaningful translation services to its clients. It is expected that the need for translation services will increase over time. As such, in future years, the internship supervisor can be more intentional about seeking this skill set in at least one intern.
- ✓ **Seeking at least one intern to focus on research communication tasks:** There are a considerable amount of research communication tasks embedded into the work of the PEER Group such as creating, copy editing and finalizing deliverables and managing website content. In addition, the Friday Institute Senior Communications Manager Heather Bronson is a team of one who often has limited capacity. In an effort to alleviate some of the PEER Group tasks requested of her, it is advantageous to highlight research communications tasks in the position announcement and identify at least one intern in the cohort who will be responsible for research communication tasks such as copy editing and assisting with the PEER Group and internship website content.

- ✓ **Requesting at least one professional reference as a part of the application process:** By speaking to prospective interns' professors, advisors or former supervisors, supervisors will gain more insight into interns' technical and soft skills before hiring.

All the above strategies will help make more informed intern selections. Once the new cohort of interns is identified, Edwards plans to expand the internship orientation from a one-hour session to a half-day event. With the additional time, Edwards will include more dialogue and activities focused on professional communication and workplace etiquette.

Operationalizing [Lesson 4: Interns Express Curiosity About the “Why” and Real World Implications](#), Edwards will also include a Task Interest Inventory as a part of the onboarding process for all interns. This inventory will list tasks previous PEER Group interns have performed to gauge new intern interest and also include open-ended questions for interns to share items not listed. Edwards will use this inventory to inform task assignments.

Recommendation 2: Increase the Size of the Intern Cohort

2



To meet the current and anticipated needs of PEER Group members, it is recommended to increase the size of the cohort to at least six interns. Hiring at least six interns would allow the PEER Group to have adequate coverage if interns need to take time off for school or personal matters. In the pilot year, there were several instances when interns needed to take multiple weeks off from the internship because they were dealing with unexpected challenges, including one intern contracting COVID-19. In those instances, there were capacity gaps and project delays. Hiring at least six interns would minimize this occurrence in future years.

For reference, hiring an additional student intern would equate to a maximum supplemental investment of \$250 per semester, or \$500 per year. Therefore, hiring at least six interns would cost the Friday Institute approximately \$2,500 at maximum, which is only \$1,000 more than the Friday Institute invested this year. It is also important to note that all work-study students do not receive the maximum work-study award. For example, while some students can earn up to \$2,000 per year (which equates to a Friday Institute contribution of \$500 per year), others can only earn up to \$1,500 (which equates to a Friday Institute contribution of \$375 per year).

In addition, acknowledging the considerable student interest in the internship (see [Lesson 1: There is a High Student Demand for the Internship](#)), securing additional interns for the program is not likely to be an issue. When recruiting for the next cohort, it will also be important to continue to utilize campus partners (see [Lesson 2: Campus Partnerships Help Reach a Diverse Applicant Pool](#)).

Recommendation 3: Implement Lead Intern Roles

3



As the number of interns increases, it is efficacious to consider adding a new role of Lead Intern, detailed below:

- ✓ Lead Interns are individuals who have participated in the internship for at least one semester and are experienced working with the PEER Group members. There will be up to two Lead Interns each semester.
- ✓ Lead Interns will serve as liaisons between the interns and the intern supervisor. They will mentor the new members of the program and be paired with new interns on projects to explain how certain projects work.
- ✓ Lead Interns will also be the first point of contact if intern questions or issues arise, thus streamlining communication. For example, if an intern is unable to meet deadlines, a phenomenon described in previous sections of this report, their first action step would be to inform a Lead Intern as soon as possible. From there, the Lead Intern will send an email to both the intern supervisor and the PEER Group project contact to inform them of the situation.
- ✓ Because of how attuned they are to the pulse of the program, Lead Interns will also assist the internship supervisor with program documentation efforts.
- ✓ The distinction of Lead Intern informs members of the PEER Group that they can assign a more complicated task to these interns.
- ✓ The distinction of Lead Intern also provides leadership for individuals who return to the internship for multiple years. Being a Lead Intern allows returners to have a more meaningful experience.

The intern that was awarded Outstanding Intern has indicated that they are interested in returning to the program next year. This intern is well suited to pilot this Lead Intern role next year.

Recommendation 4: Incorporate More Opportunities for Interns to Serve as Co-Researchers/Co-Evaluators

4



In analyzing intern project logs and the PEER Group's Needs Matrix, it became apparent that most intern tasks in the pilot year centered on data entry, copy editing transcripts and reports, and literature searching. All these tasks are valuable and should be continued in future years. However, to provide more advanced professional development, particularly for Lead Interns, and expand the range of assistance available to PEER Group members, it is advisable to expand the complexity of tasks by allowing interns to serve as co-researchers/co-evaluators on some projects. Being a co-researcher/co-evaluator would entail being involved in the entire lifecycle of a project, including preparing an IRB application, collecting and analyzing data, as well as developing and delivering dissemination products such as presentations and publications. Additionally, the participatory element of engaging undergraduate interns as co-researchers/co-evaluators on the projects is intended to model an innovative, high-impact practice.

Operationalizing this recommendation would require providing additional training for interns and adding interns to Institutional Review Board (IRB) protocols as necessary. Edwards has identified several existing workshops led by NC State University Libraries that interns can participate in to build their skill sets, including:

- ✓ Beginning Tableau
- ✓ Communicating Your Research using impact metrics
- ✓ IRB Basics: eIRB Application Workshop
- ✓ IRB Topical Workshop: The IRB and Qualitative Research
- ✓ Qualitative Social Research - Basics I
- ✓ Qualitative Coding and Codebook Development - Basics II
- ✓ Welcome To My TED Talk...Preparing for a Stage-Worthy Presentation

This recommendation is also supported by PEER Group post-year inventory and focus group responses. For example, one group member stated,

“ We do a lot of survey work and work in Excel, Stata, R, Tableau, Atlas.ti, etc. The interns may benefit from taking some of the hour-long crash courses already offered at NC State in order to familiarize them with these platforms. I would suggest letting this be optional and used as a way to help them develop the skills they are interested in. I also think it is helpful to have some training in professional communication, identifying when your skill set does not match the task you were asked to do, and other general work-related skills that they have not experienced as part of their undergraduate work. We do a lot of lit review and qualitative work, so some seminars/workshops on doing a lit review, conducting interviews, etc., may be useful. ”

In addition, Edwards has identified one project to pilot this new intern co-researcher/co-evaluator role. Edwards has been named a 2021 NC State University Impact Scholar. The culminating deliverable of the Impact Scholar program is to design and implement a project that has broad impacts on society. Edwards' project, *Developing an Equitable Talent Pipeline for Educational Researchers*, will seek to understand what undergraduates at NC State University know and believe about the field of educational research. The goal of this study will be to establish if and to what extent an equitable talent pipeline is necessary for the field of educational research. Two interns will be selected to participate as co-researchers on this project.

Recommendation 5: Include Interns in Quarterly PEER Group Meetings

5



While interns work on very discrete tasks, they expressed a great deal of interest in seeing the progression of each project they worked on. They wanted to know what happened next and what the ultimate deliverable looked like. Similarly, PEER Group members indicated that they wanted to get to know the interns more. A solution to solve both of these needs would be to invite interns to join PEER Group meetings on a quarterly basis. Interns would be able to meet all PEER Group members, learn about the current project updates and get an inside look into how team meetings are conducted. Likewise, PEER Group members would become more acquainted with each intern, and it would serve as an important reminder to them to utilize the interns. Regularly inviting the interns to join PEER Group meetings would mitigate the fact that some PEER Group members regretted underutilizing the interns in the pilot year.

“ I am looking for more opportunities to work on consistent projects so I can follow them through the research process. Even if they do not require our help, it would be cool to get updates on the status of the projects that we have worked on so that we can understand why we did the work we did.

–Intern, Mid-Year Inventory

Recommendation 6: Infuse More Career Development Content and Reflection into the Internship

6



Career awareness emerged as an important impact of the internship in its pilot year. As such, it is recommended that the internship include more career development content, such as conducting sessions focused on career tools like resumes, cover letters and LinkedIn; inviting guest speakers to discuss their career journeys; and inviting career services professionals to discuss ways for leveraging this internship experience for future professional development opportunities.

“ Another PD that I think could be useful would be cover letter writing. It could be helpful to do this at the end of the internship and help guide them through how they will write about their internship experience as they move on and apply for jobs.

–Intern, Mid-Year Inventory

“ A professional development class could be helpful to younger interns. For example, how to improve your resume and make it stand out or even a class on how to use LinkedIn. This will ensure future success of the interns in the next endeavors.

–Intern, Post-Year Inventory

Coupled with the addition of more career development content, Edwards also recommends being more intentional about interns’ reflection on their growth and development throughout the internship. While all interns completed journal entries to monitor their perceived growth over time, some interns reflected more intentionally on their progress than others. Thus, to standardize this tool more and improve the quality and usefulness of data collected from electronic journal entries for next year, Edwards plans to include prompts for the first, mid-point and closing weeks of each semester. Examples of some potential journal prompts include:

- What I've learned so far...
- What I want to continue to learn...
- My career interests and goals are...

Such prompts would foster intentional reflection from all interns.

Recommendation 7: Institute Weekly Office Hours for Internship Supervisor

7



In addition to the weekly professional development meetings, some interns also found supplemental support by scheduling one-one-one check-in meetings with Edwards throughout the year. During these one-on-one sessions, interns would discuss questions related to their internship work as well as career and professional development questions. While advantageous, only the interns who demonstrated initiative to schedule these meetings benefited from them. To institutionalize this support feature for all students, Edwards suggests creating a one-hour weekly office hour where interns can “drop in” either virtually or in-person, as allowable by COVID-19 restrictions. This optional hour will provide an opportunity for all interns to gain more personalized resources and guidance throughout the program.

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Appendix A: Inventory Links

The Intern Pre-Inventory: [Survey Preview](#)

The Intern Mid-Year Inventory: [Survey Preview](#)

The Intern Post-Year Inventory: [Survey Preview](#)

The PEER Group Mid-Year Inventory: [Survey Preview](#)

The PEER Group Post-Year Inventory: [Survey Preview](#)

Appendix B: Intern Exit Interview Protocol

Introduction

This year the PEER Group piloted its first ever undergraduate internship program. As the school year comes to a close, we want to learn from interns about the impact of the program, and how the program can be improved.

Thank you for your willingness to participate in this brief and optional interview! Your opinion is incredibly valuable to identifying the intern program's strengths and ways to improve it for future iterations. Please feel free to be transparent about what went well, and what didn't go well. We want to continue this program and make it program better, so celebratory and constructive feedback are both welcomed. This conversation should last no more than 30 minutes.

As mentioned previously, this focus group is completely voluntary. You have the right to choose to participate or to not participate at any time. You do not have to answer any question you do not wish to answer, and you may leave the interview at any time. Your participation has no impact on your student standing at NC State University.

I would like to request your consent to record this conversation via Zoom. My goal in recording is to have an accurate record of what is shared. If you are comfortable, we would like to request your consent to include excerpts from your interview into a brief promotional video for the program next year. Being recorded is completely your choice, as is sharing any excerpts from this interview with the public. If you are not comfortable we do not have to record or share the recording.

Finally, we would like to include this interview in analysis for an evaluation report for the intern program. In the final report, I will share themes and perspectives in the aggregate. Any exact quotes from this session will not have any identifying information attached to them. Do you have any questions or concerns?

Do I have your permission to begin recording?

Background

1. Tell us a little bit about yourself
2. Why did you apply to the Program Evaluation and Education Research (PEER) Group Internship Program?

Goals

3. One goal of the internship is to expose interns to the environment and expectations of educational research and evaluation. What did you learn about the roles and responsibilities of educational research and evaluation?
4. To what extent did the internship increase your confidence in performing educational research and evaluation tasks?
5. Another goal of the internship is to develop interns' transferable workforce skills. To what extent did the internship develop your soft skills? (examples: organization, leadership, teamwork, and attention to detail.)
6. To what extent did the internship develop your technical skills? (examples: written and verbal communication and data analysis)

Benefits

7. What was the most valuable part of this program for you professionally and personally?
8. What was one thing you learned that you will use/take with you to other internships/jobs?

Improvement

9. How can the internship program be improved?

Last Words

10. What would say to other students thinking about applying for the program?

11. Is there anything you would like to share that we haven't already discussed?

Appendix C: PEER Group – Focus Group Protocol

Introduction

This year the PEER Group piloted its first ever undergraduate internship program. As the school year comes to a close, I want to learn from my fellow group members about the impact of the program, and how the program can be improved.

Thank you for your willingness to participate in this brief, optional and confidential focus group! Your opinion is incredibly valuable to identifying the intern program's strengths and ways to improve it for future iterations. Please feel free to be transparent about what went well, and what didn't go well. We want to continue this program and make it program better, so celebratory and constructive feedback are both welcomed. This conversation should last no more than 30 minutes.

As mentioned previously, this focus group is completely voluntary. You have the right to choose to participate or to not participate at any time. You do not have to answer any question you do not wish to answer, and you may leave the focus group at any time. Your participation has no impact on your job standing with the PEER Group.

I would like to request your consent to record this conversation via Zoom. My goal in recording is to have an accurate record of what is shared. No one will have access to this recording but me, and I will only use it to analyze data for the evaluation report for the intern program. In addition, in all reporting, I will share themes and perspectives in the aggregate. Any exact quotes from this session will not have any identifying information attached to them. Do you have any questions or concerns?

Do I have your permission to begin recording?

Goals

1. The goals of the internship are to: (1) expose interns to the environment and expectations of educational research and evaluation, (2) develop interns' transferable workforce skills, and (3) enhance PEER Group operations.

We know a lot about the first two goals from the intern surveys and interviews, so I'd like to focus our conversation on goal three. However, before we jump to goal three, do you have feedback you would like to share about goals one and two?

2. When I say "enhance PEER Group operations" what I mean specifically is increasing group efficiency (i.e., completing tasks quicker and/or at a less expensive rate) and increase group sustainability (i.e., creating processes and procedures that endure despite personnel changes). Keeping those definitions in mind, to what extent did the intern program contribute to group efficiency or sustainability from your perspective?

Benefits

3. What was the most valuable part of this program for the PEER Group?
4. What was one thing you learned while working with the interns?

Improvement

5. How can the internship program be improved?

Last Words

6. Is there anything you would like to share that we haven't already discussed?



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