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Graduate Studies

BUSINESS PROFESSIONALS' PERCEPTIONS OF COLLEGE STUDENTS'
VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCES

A Chapter Style Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of Master of Science in Education

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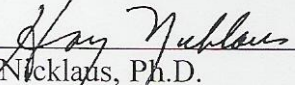
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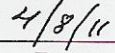
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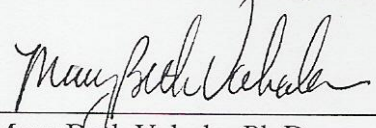
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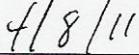
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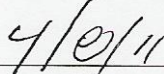
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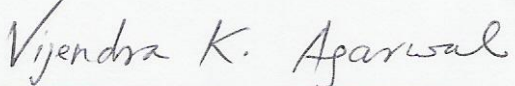


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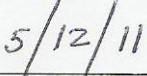


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ABSTRACT

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Volunteer centers across the country could be at risk for losing funding as universities' budgets decline due to American's Great Recession. This decrease of funding is a greater risk for volunteer centers because of the lack of evidence of support that the centers contribute to the career preparation of college students. Through convenient and referral sampling methods data was collect from business professionals, and a significant difference was found in the type of skills business professionals perceive college students develop through volunteer experiences. Also, the value contributed to volunteer experiences during the hiring process compared to other college students' attributes was significantly less. Additionally, data was collected to provide descriptive statistics and general information about business professionals' perceptions of college students' volunteer experiences. The data analysis suggests that although business professionals see merit in college students volunteering, they do not equate volunteer experiences to college students' employability. Based on the research gathered, recommendations were given on how to motivate students, changes that could be made to volunteer centers' services, and the need to educate business professionals about college students' volunteer experiences.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Volunteering is giving time freely to help and benefit a philanthropic organization, a local or global community, or a person or group of people. As America changed over the last 350 years, so too did people's purpose to volunteer; however, its foundation of people helping people without monetary gain remained the same. Volunteerism as a movement, whether organized by groups of people, a government, or encouraged by one individual, ebbed and flowed throughout America's history. Higher education's interest with volunteerism usually preempted national movements. Volunteerism also often increased in response to America's social changes or a national crisis, such as World War II, and volunteerism peaked in the mid 1960s (Musick & Wilson, 2008). During this turbulent time, the Peace Corps was founded by President Kennedy in 1960, President Johnson's War on Poverty occurred, and the Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA) was created in 1965. The United States government would again put out a call to revive a national volunteer movement with the passage of the National Service Act in 1990. The act was revamped three years later, when the Corporation for National and Community Service was created. This commission oversaw the continuation of past volunteer and service programs, and the creation of new ones, such as AmeriCorps (Wofford, 2005).

Just as volunteer movements increased and decreased in popularity, higher education's interest and dedication to educating students in a holistic manner followed a

similar pattern. Since the first U.S. college was established in 1636, higher education personnel have swayed back and forth between preparing a student to enter the workforce and helping students develop into strong individuals and contributing citizens (Rudolph, 1965/1990). Higher education institutions' curriculum has moved back and forth on the holistic education spectrum, at times almost reaching both extremes: teaching the student only in terms of development or focusing only on career preparation. In modern history, institutions have continued to struggle with striking a balance between these two ideas.

Statement of the Problem

The trend towards career readiness is not new in the history of higher education, occurring in previous spurts in the 1820s, 1860s, 1950s, (Rudolph, 1965/1990) and 1970s (Thelin, 2004). Currently, it appears U.S. institutions' curriculum has again moved away from the holistic focus towards the career preparation end of the spectrum. This shift is illustrated in several ways, including the decline of support for the liberal arts and the humanities at colleges and universities (Cohen, 2009). It is not surprising higher education's focus is now on producing students who can secure jobs, as America's Great Recession makes it a highly competitive job market (Ferguson, 2009; Editorial, "Poverty and recovery", 2011). The Great Recession has also caused financial strain for most colleges and universities. With higher education's focus on career preparation, a national economic crisis, and diminishing higher education budgets, a unique timing occurrence has transpired. Student affairs professionals need to ask what effect this occurrence will have on the funding of extracurricular activities, such as volunteer and service programs. Volunteering, service-oriented activities, and service-learning courses may be important

for student developmental benefits, but will this justification – holistic development - now be enough?

Numerous studies provide justification relating to a student's holistic growth and development through volunteerism (Wang & Rodgers, 2006; Lee, 2005; Jones & Abes, 2004). Business education literature also explores these benefits, as well as the academic advantages of volunteerism. Skill development and career benefits of volunteerism have not received the same amount of attention. Yet, several studies have been conducted on the skills and attributes business professionals want in college graduates (Gardner, 2007; National Association of Colleges and Employers, 2009, *NACE research job outlook 2009*; The Chartered Management Institute, 2002). The literature also examines whether individuals recognize personal job skill development through volunteerism (Tucker, McCarthy, Hoxmeier, & Lenk, 1998; Wittmer, 2004; Friedman, 1996; Musick & Wilson, 2008). Yet, little attention has been given to business professionals' views of the potential career benefits of volunteerism. Consequently, student affairs professionals have little timely career-focused justification for receiving financial support to fund volunteer centers during higher education's fiscal downturn.

To study business professionals' perceptions of volunteerism, this research will explore what skills business professionals perceive college students develop through volunteerism. This research will also investigate the extent and ways business professionals' value college graduates' volunteer experiences during the hiring process.

Significance of the Problem

Exploring these topics could provide much needed support and substantiation for the funding of volunteer centers at universities across the country during this unique time

of fiscal strain, economic hardship, and focus on career preparation. Additionally, there has been an increase in scrutiny by state and national government on higher education.

In 2006 the *Spelling Report*, also known as *A Test of Leadership*, was released by the U.S. Department of Higher Education. It calls for reform in higher education, specifically citing institutions' need to be more accountable for preparing students for today's workforce. The commission asserts, "Unacceptable number of college graduates enter the workforce without the skills employers say they need" (U.S. Department of Education, 2006, p. x). The report emphasizes the need for clear learning outcomes for all parts of a student's education – both in and outside of the classroom. The report continually emphasizes career preparation, employability, and students' job placement occurs through students developing relevant skills; however, holistic development of students is missing from the report (U.S. Department of Education, 2006). The report also insinuates a university's financial support – whether from students, alumni, or the government – should be directly connected to the university's success in achieving relevant learning outcomes. This assertion is occurring at the same time the report calls for universities to have smaller budgets.

If the assertions in the *Spelling Report* are followed by the current presidential administration, universities may find themselves making tough fiscal decisions. Volunteer centers are not without learning outcomes. However, the learning outcomes focus on the holistic development of students, not on career preparation and meeting employers' needs. Volunteer centers and programs need to provide up-to-date student learning outcomes related to career preparation or potentially be the first in student affairs to face deep budget cuts. However, they will also need to provide evidence – not just

learning outcomes – that their services contribute to the career development of students and their employability. Currently, as the reviewed literature illustrates, volunteer and service program advocates in student affairs have little evidence of their services contributing to students' employability. More concerning, the evidence provided is from practitioners, academicians, and students, not from the business professionals who hire students after their college graduation.

This research will explore whether there is congruence between higher education and the business world regarding the value of college students' volunteer experiences. It will also help determine whether higher education's volunteer centers need to reassess the types of volunteer experiences and services they provide to students, or whether more outreach and education is needed to inform the business world of the career benefits of volunteerism.

Objectives and Hypotheses

An objective of this research was to assess if business professionals value college graduates' volunteer experiences. Current literature does not explore whether business professionals consider service-learning courses valuable, or if the value of volunteer experiences will vary based on the length of time a student commits to an experience or the type of volunteer experience.

The research will specifically test whether to reject the following null hypotheses:

H₀: There will be no significant difference in business professionals' perceptions of the type of skills college students develop through volunteerism.

H₀: There will be no significant difference between the value business professionals place on college graduates' volunteer experience compared to other college experiences.

H₀: There is no significant relationship between the skills business professionals perceive college students develop through volunteer experiences and the value they place on college graduates' volunteer experiences.

Rejecting these null hypotheses will allow the research to suggest:

H₁: There will be significant difference in business professionals' perceptions of the type of skills college students develop through volunteerism.

H₂: There will be significant difference between the value business professionals place on college graduates' volunteer experience compared to other college experiences.

H₃: There is a significant relationship between the skills business professionals perceive college students develop through volunteer experiences and the value they place on college graduates' volunteer experiences.

Assumptions

The following assumption will be made during this research study:

- All business professionals who participate in this study will be truthful and honest with their responses as they complete the survey. The participants will not feel any obligation to answer the questions in order to be viewed more highly by members of society or the researcher.

Limitations

This research study has the following limitation:

- Although convenient sampling has been recognized as an appropriate method to collect data for educational research (Ravid, 2005), it does cause research limitations, as the demographics of the participants cannot be controlled. For example, variance across business fields or geographical regions cannot to be assured. Additionally, it cannot be

controlled that there will be an equal number of male and female participants. This could limit the generalability of the study's results.

Implications

The implications of this study are dependent on what the data imply.

- If the data suggest business professionals value college graduates' volunteer experiences during the hiring process, it could encourage more college students to volunteer during their collegiate career. It could also provide student affairs practitioners with data to motivate students to volunteer and secure more funding to develop service-learning curriculum and volunteer programs.
- If the data suggest business professionals value college graduates' volunteer experiences during the hiring process, it could help secure funding for the development of new volunteer centers at higher education institutions.
- The data might suggest business professionals do not value volunteer experiences and do not perceive skills are developed through volunteer experiences. This may indicate higher education needs to educate business professionals on the skills developed through volunteerism. Also, educating the business world about college students' volunteer experiences could be advantageous for students. It could let students market their volunteer experiences to business professionals and increase their overall employability.

- If the data suggest business professionals value select or certain volunteer experiences over others, it could help guide student affairs practitioners regarding the type of volunteer experiences they provide to students and the services they offer through their volunteer centers.

Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this study, the subsequent terms are defined as follows:

- **Business:** An establishment of any size in which the goal is to turn a profit for the benefit of an owner, shareholders, or individuals.
- **Business professional:** A person working at a business that participates or has participated in the hiring process of college graduates; or a person working at a business who could advance into a position that participates in the hiring process of college graduates.
- **Hiring process:** The time committed by a business professional with the goal of employing a person to work within a business.
- **Service-learning:** “Service-Learning is a teaching and learning strategy that integrates meaningful community service with instruction and reflection to enrich the learning experience, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen communities” (National Service-Learning Clearing House, Corporation for National and Community Service, 2011).
- **Value:** The importance, merit, and worth given by an individual to a skill or experience.
- **Volunteerism:** Giving time freely to help and benefit a philanthropic organization, a local or global community, or a person or group of people.

- **Volunteer center:** A formal organization of any size on a college or university campus that receives funding from the higher education institution for the purpose of encouraging students to volunteer, through either formal or informal programs or events.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF SELECTED LITERATURE

History of Volunteerism in Higher Education

Volunteerism in higher education followed a pattern similar to the nation's volunteer movement – it ebbed and flowed throughout history. The most defined beginning of volunteerism and higher education together was influenced by the Progressive Movement in the late 1880s. The Progressive spirit of selflessness, service, and honor took hold at Smith College, the institution responsible for the college settlement movement in America. College students lived in houses in the poorest neighborhoods of cities, such as New York, to help provide health, social, and educational services to the residents. Later between 1905 and 1915, the Progressive spirit took hold at colleges with the creation of clubs of a civic nature, focusing on social ideas including service (Rudolph, 1965/1990).

Universities took a strong role in the U.S. government's volunteer movement in the 1960s. Students and faculty at the University of Michigan were instrumental in advocating and helping define President Kennedy's Peace Corps idea; the University of Notre Dame acted as an unofficial consultant when designing early Peace Corps missions; and VISTA recruited volunteers from higher education institutions (Wofford, 2005). However, with the rise of the Vietnam War the interest and support of volunteerism greatly declined and remained weakened for the next two decades. Renewed activism for incorporating service into higher education occurred with the

founding of Campus Compact in 1985. “Supported by leading college and university presidents, the Campus Compact was established at Brown University to build civic learning into campus and academic life through student service and all-round institutional involvement in the surrounding community” (Wofford, 2005, p. 26.) The last documented surge of volunteerism occurred when service-learning courses began to emerge in late 1980s (Strom, 2010), and picked up momentum in the mid-1990s. The U.S. government started to lend some support in 1993 with its Learn and Serve America program, under the direction of the Corporation for National and Community Service. Most recently there has been interest from the Obama administration to include volunteerism and other forms of civic engagement as part of their higher education agenda (Strom, 2010).

Studies on the Holistic Development of College Students

Most of the studies focusing on the holistic development of students – whether their cognitive growth, civic awareness, or identity development – studied students’ volunteerism occurring through service-learning courses. Wang and Rodgers (2006) researched the cognitive development of college students based on the influence of service-learning courses. Seventy-two students, in six service-learning courses, at a large Midwestern university participated in the study using the Measure of Epistemological Reflection (MER), an instrument designed to measure cognitive development based on the five positions in Perry’s Theory of Intellectual and Ethical Development. Wang and Rodgers administered the MER to students the first week and the tenth week of class during the 2003 spring semester. Wang and Rodgers found 38% of students moved

upward on the MER, a statistically significant increase. They concluded service-learning courses do advance cognitive development.

A qualitative study (Lee, 2005) conducted at the University of California – Los Angeles, utilized pre and post surveys of students taking a service-learning course that required six months of community service at an outreach program in some of the nation's poorest schools. The survey yielded a 75% response rate of 94 students. In addition, 14 in-depth interviews from students who volunteered from the initial sample were also conducted. The purpose of the study was to determine differences in students' perspectives based on their socioeconomic status. Lee established such differences; but more importantly, all the students acknowledged an increase in their sense of civic responsibility, a trait cited for its importance in the holistic development of students.

Another qualitative study (Jones & Abes, 2004) followed interviewing procedures similar to Lee's study (2005), but focused on the influence of service-learning on identity development and self-authorship. Self-authorship is the ownership and confidence in one's personal identity, no matter the impact of external influences. The sample consisted of eight participants who had completed a service-learning course two to four years previously, volunteering at either a food pantry or with an AIDS service organization. At the time of data collection, five participants were seniors in colleges and three were recent college graduates. Through the analysis of the interviews, many themes emerged. Similar to the study by Wang and Rodgers (2006), growth in cognitive domains, including the ability to think more complexly and with greater maturity was evident. Additionally, participants cited an increase in openness to new experiences, people, and ideas. Jones and Abes (2004) concluded service-learning did influence the

students' identities because it caused them to evaluate their "attitudes, values, decisions, actions, and relationships with others" (p. 159). This self evaluation and the encounter of new experiences incrementally caused them to develop self-authorship.

Business Education Recognizing Volunteering Benefits

Cognitive Development

Some scholars in business education have cited the holistic benefits for students who volunteer, especially the benefits of service-learning courses. They recognized the opportunities for learning increased when business students were outside of the "safe" zone, and were "called upon to construct new realities and make adjustments to ineffective personal concepts and models of the past" (Kolenko, Porter, Wheatley, & Colby, 1996, p. 135). Similarly, Kenworthy-U'Ren (2008) asserted personal insight and development are the most predictable outcomes for business students in service-learning courses because of the uniqueness of the learning environments – the community service organizations and sites. Zlotkowski (1996) pointed out this cognitive growth was likely to occur when white, middle class students were exposed to diverse environments, forcing them to step outside their psychological comfort zones, and hopefully learning to appreciate and value cultural differences. Several business schools agreed with these benefits and have integrated community service or service-learning courses into the schools' curriculum.

Daniels College of Business at the University of Denver committed itself to the personal development of students as part of the educational experience. As part of a required ethics course, students completed community service hours to achieve this cognitive growth goal. Wittmer (2004) asserted "the requirement provided an

opportunity for growth both intellectually and emotionally” (p. 363). The University of Michigan’s MBA program instituted a two-day action learning model, which sent teams to complete community service projects, exposing them to a range of social, economic, educational, and health issues. The programming focused on teaching students about community organizations’ challenges, and encouraged an understanding that privilege, power, and leadership also bring responsibility. The program reflected the business school’s goal of developing global citizens (Mercer, 1996). Bies (1996), a former faculty member at Georgetown University, utilized community service in a Leadership and Power course, as part of the MBA curriculum. He found not only did the community service projects benefit the students cognitively, but cited academic benefits to the volunteer requirement. Originally instituted because students lacked an understanding of power and powerlessness, Bies found it also reinforced other classroom concepts and allowed students to cognitively challenge the moral aspects of the projects.

Academic Benefits

Other business schools have also cited the academic benefits of students volunteering. Management classes at Colorado State University partnered with the community organization Junior Achievement, which brought business professionals into elementary school classrooms. The volunteering allowed students to reinforce and apply what had been taught in the classroom and put theories of intercultural communication into practice (Tucker et al., 1998). Similarly, Friedman (1996) found favorable academic outcomes in Wharton’s School’s MBA program through learning teams, groups of students who volunteered with community organizations. The projects were “a useful

and appropriate means in helping students synthesize and apply conceptual knowledge they acquired in the standard courses of the core curriculum” (p. 100).

Career Benefits

Compared to cognitive development and academic benefits, there were few scholars examining and documenting the career benefits of business students who volunteer. However, it is not totally unexplored. Zlotkowski (1996) emphasized the career benefits of service-learning courses stating, “Effective teamwork, cross-functional flexibility, interpersonal and communication skills (with people possessing many different levels of technical sophistication), and multicultural sensitivity are just a few of the more important non-technical skills community-based projects can naturally foster” (p. 9). Mercer (1996) echoed teamwork as a career skill gained through community service and also cited leadership, creative problem-solving and effective decision-making as other developed skills.

Volunteers’ Recognition of Career Benefits

Recognition in Academic Life

An important foundation for the research of business professionals’ perceptions of the value of college students’ volunteer experiences, is establishing that volunteers themselves recognize skills are developed through service. If individuals know they develop skills through volunteering, it increases the need to establish whether business professionals also recognize skill development occurs through volunteerism. Although not a key component of many of the scholars’ articles, analysis does show volunteers at the previously mentioned business schools, Daniels College of Business, University of Michigan, Georgetown University and Colorado State University, recognized skill

development. At Colorado State University, a business school student wrote that a required community service project increased communication and managerial skills stating, “The skills learned through this experience are nearly impossible to teach in the classroom. They could be useful for a career in sales, management or training” (Tucker et al., 1998, p. 92). A student in the MBA program at Daniels College of Business reflected on how his community service experience at the National Ski Patrol helped him develop into an individual valued by business employers. He cited his growth in becoming a competent and confident person, and being able to handle varied, changing, and dynamic situations (Wittmer, 2004). Finally, Friedman (1996) cited most students he worked with on community service projects acknowledged the projects forced them to work as a team, manage each others different skills and abilities, and forced them to use decision-making and conflict skills.

Recognition from Psychological Perspective

Musick and Wilson (2008) provided a psychological perspective on the motives of why individuals volunteer through the use of their Volunteer Function Inventory (VFI). The inventory identified six key motivations for volunteers, including obtaining career-related benefits such as work skills or business contacts. “Surveys [that are part of the inventory] typically find that only a small minority of people look upon volunteer work chiefly as a means of improving job prospects, but considering how uncomfortable people are with the idea that volunteers could materially benefit from their service, the proportion is quite high, especially in certain subgroups in the population” (p. 61). Enhancement is another motivation cited by Musick and Wilson (2008). According to the *American Heritage College Dictionary* (2002), “enhancement” is defined as making

something greater, improved, or increased in value. Enhancement for volunteers transpired when they gained a new experience or learned about a new concept, such as a different culture, place, or skill. This enhancement should also be labeled as a career-related motivation. For example, suppose a student gained direct, hands-on experience and improved a skill set. He may identify his motivation on the VFI as enhancement versus obtaining a career-related benefit. He likely labeled his motivation as enhancement instead of obtaining a career-benefit because he didn't reflect on his development of a marketable skill. Therefore, the motivations of enhancement and career-related benefits on the VPI should be combined when considering a volunteer's recognition of skill development from the psychological perspective.

Recognition from Sociological Perspective

Musick and Wilson (2008) also explored volunteers from a sociological perspective, looking at volunteering outcomes, such as better health, social networking opportunities, or contributing to a person's stock of human capital. Human capital, according to Musick and Wilson, refers to both formal education and job skills. Volunteering provided a training ground for the acquisition of job skills in an alternative setting. "Volunteer work is a form of occupational training in which important job skills are learned, which in turn make it easier to compete for good jobs" (p. 487).

Surveys Citing Skill Recognition

A few organizations and centers have studied volunteers' motivations. The United Kingdom's National Centre for Volunteering's 1997 National Survey of Volunteering asked respondents to indicate the reasons they were volunteering. The option, "I thought it would give me a chance to learn new skills", was chosen by 15% of

the respondents (Smith cited in Musick & Wilson, 2008, p. 73). A survey conducted in Canada in 1997, the National Survey of Giving, Volunteering, and Participating, cited one-third of “respondents believed volunteer work provided them with managerial, communication, and interpersonal skills they could use directly in their paid jobs or business” (Hall, cited in Musick & Wilson, 2008, p. 488).

Theory on How Volunteers Learn Skills

The learning that occurs for students during volunteer and service-learning experiences can be explained by Kolb’s Theory of Experiential Learning, as explained in his book *Experiential Learning, Experience as the Source of Learning and Development* (1984). Kolb identifies six key characters of what characterizes an experiential learning experience, and three of these characteristics illustrate how learning can occur through volunteerism.

First, “Knowledge is continuously derived from and tested out in the experiences of the learner” (Kolb, 1984, p. 27). Therefore, it is possible when college students volunteer, especially more than once, they are gaining and reinterpreting knowledge from the experiences, which could translate into skill development. One of Kolb’s other characteristics also explains learning is a process and should not be based on a specific outcome. This characteristic speaks to the fact college students may not see a clear outcome or objective reached while volunteering, as they are perhaps serving as part of the non-profit organization’s overall mission, instead of completing a specific project. However, skill development can still occur through the time given to volunteering. Finally, Kolb asserts learning involves a person actively interacting with an environment. “Through experiences of imitation and communication with others and interaction with

the physical environment, internal development potentialities are enacted and practiced until they are internalized as an independent development achievement” (Kolb, 1984, p. 133). Volunteer experiences involve college students serving in an environment outside of the college campus and with other individuals, such as clients receiving a service or an organization’s personnel. These interactions lead to the obtainment of knowledge, which can be internally processed and turned into the development of skills.

Studies on What Skills Employers Want in College Graduates

Before researching business professionals’ perceptions of skill development through volunteer experiences, it is important to establish what skills employers generally desire in recent college graduates. London’s College of Printing and the Institute of Practitioners in Advertising together underwrite the Charter Management Institute (CMI), a management think-tank and research center. In 2002, it researched employer’s perspectives regarding the quality of skills and competencies today’s graduates are bringing to the workplace. The survey was sent to 2,250 human resource managers, and yielded an 11% return rate or 253 replies. Although a low return rate, the survey provided a snapshot of college graduates’ skill levels upon graduation, and what skills graduates should possess to be considered highly valuable by employers.

Respondents rated graduates’ comprehension of key skill sets as either “good” or “poor”. The nine skill sets consisted of: computer literacy, basic literacy/numeracy skills, communication skills, interpersonal skills, creativity, presentation skills, reasoning/comprehension, problem-solving, and commercial awareness. The lowest ranked skills were: creativity, reasoning/comprehension, problem-solving and commercial awareness, with 24% or less of the respondents ranking graduates skill level

as “good”. It is interesting to note creativity and reasoning/comprehension declined in ranking as employers rated the two skill sets in the top half in 2000, when the CMI conducted a similar study. The CMI also explored in-depth what aspects of interpersonal skills graduates lacked. Diplomacy/political skills and understanding others were ranked the top two skills that needed further development. Finally, the survey explored the employers’ awareness of higher education employability initiatives. It found most employers were not aware of the initiatives higher education had taken to enhance graduates’ personal development.

Michigan State University’s Collegiate Employment Research Institute (CERI) took a different approach to exploring college graduate employability in a 2006 - 2007 survey (Gardner, 2007). The CERI asked employers questions in regards to the promotion and firing of new college hires. First, it asked respondents to list behaviors that could lead to someone being fired and received a list of over 1,000 behaviors. After sorting and grouping the behaviors, 84% of the responses were captured, and CERI presented a list with the top six behaviors resulting in a firing. They included unethical behavior, lack of motivation/work ethic, inappropriate use of technology, failure to follow instructions, late for work, and missing assignment deadlines.

The CERI survey then asked respondents to list “qualities or characteristics they seek when identifying recent hires for an assignment with more responsibility or potential promotion” (Gardner, 2007, p. 5). Respondents listed over 1,500 characteristics, with most respondents listing multiple factors. These were sorted into one of 15 categories. Taking initiative topped the list as the most frequently mentioned characteristic with 16%, and self-management, personal attributes, commitment, leadership, show and tell

(presenting one's ideas persuasively), and technical competence, followed in respective order. Gardner (2007) summarized stating, "except for technical competencies, the key factors that contribute to promotions and more responsible assignments are transferable or personal skills" (p. 6).

The National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) conducts annual surveys in an attempt to gauge the hiring intentions of employers and their views of what skills and attributes they value in new college graduates (National Association of Colleges and Employers, 2009, *NACE research job outlook 2009*). In 2008, NACE contacted 1,199 of its members and received 231 completed surveys, a response rate of 19.3%. Respondents were asked to rate individually the importance of candidates possessing 20 different skills or qualifications on a scale of one to five with one as "not important" and five as "extremely important". (See appendix B for complete question.) The top five skills, receiving a 4.3 rating or higher, were communication skills, strong work ethic, teamwork skills, initiative, and analytical skills. Communication skills received the top rank and same score of 4.6 as it did in NACE's survey the year before. In a separate question, employers noted the top two skills they rated as most important – communication and strong work ethic – were also the top two skills most-lacking in new college graduate hires. There was overlap in with CERI's study (Gardner, 2007), as two of the top rated skills in NACE's survey also appeared in the CERI's list of the top seven traits that lead to the promotion of new hires: initiative and strong work ethic (labeled as commitment in the CERI's study).

Finally, NACE identified employers' top preferences when hiring. Over 76% chose the statement, "I prefer to hire candidates with relevant work experience" over

statements relating to any type of work experience, and work experience not being a factor (National Association of Colleges and Employers, 2009, *NACE research job outlook 2009*). Again, this percent was also identical to the results of NACE's previous Job Outlook survey. Also, a large majority of respondents, 69%, noted they initially screen college graduates by their grade point average (GPA). This percentage reflected a consistent practice for the past five years.

Influence of Volunteer Experiences on Employability

NACE's Job Outlook Survey (National Association of Colleges and Employers, 2009, *NACE research job outlook 2009*) was the only study to address job candidates' volunteer experiences in any manner. Respondents were asked to rate the influence of attributes when deciding between two equally qualified candidates, with one as "no influence at all" and five as "an extreme influence". Academic major was ranked the highest with 4.1, followed by holding a leadership position at 4.0, a high GPA at 3.7, being involved in extracurricular activities at 3.6, the school attended at 3.1, and doing volunteer work was rated the lowest with 3.0. (See appendix B for complete question.)

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Overview of the Design

To study business professionals' perceptions of what skills college students develop through volunteerism and in what ways business professionals' value college graduates' volunteer experiences during the hiring process, a survey was e-mailed to business professionals. The electronic survey was designed using Qualtrics, a survey designer software, provided through the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse (UW-L).

Description of the Sample

A sample of 206 ($N = 206$) business professionals was gathered via convenient and referral sampling techniques. Convenient sampling selects portions of the population most accessible to the researcher. The original sample size was 191 ($n=191$) business professionals. One group of participants ($n = 90$) were business professionals who attended one of two career expos at UW-L: the Accounting Expo on September 24, 2010, or the Career Expo on October 13, 2010. The researcher, the director of UW-L's Career Service Office, and the coordinator for the Career Service Office's events, together decided the most appropriate way to collect participants' e-mail addresses. It was determined the researcher would approach the business professionals before the opening of each expo, introduce herself, explain her study, and collect e-mail addresses.

Another group of participants ($n = 101$) were previous business associates of the researcher or business professionals who graduated from the same educational institutions of the researcher, Birch Run High School (BRHS) or Northern Michigan University (NMU). Finally, participants were asked to recommend another business professional to take the survey. More participants ($n = 15$) were garnered from this sampling method called referral sampling. Any participant asked as a result of a referral was also given the option to recommend another business professional. The final sample was 206 business professionals ($N = 206$).

Method of Data Collection

Participants received an introduction letter, which introduced the researcher, described the study, and explained the participant's voluntary role in the study, as seen in Appendix C. Most business professionals who attended the UW-L's Career Expos received their introduction letters on October 18, 2010. Business professionals who graduated from BRHS or NMU, or who were previous business associates of the researcher, received their introduction letters between November 1 and November 15, 2010.

The second e-mail participants received was the survey instrument the Business Professionals Perceptions Instrument (BPPI). (See Appendix D for copy of the e-mail.) In most cases, the participants received the survey one week after the introduction letter. Exceptions to this procedure were the result of the researcher's attempt to avoid correspondence near national holidays, such as Thanksgiving, Christmas, or New Year's Day. Electronic issues, such as e-mail addresses originally being mistyped, also

contributed to a longer time period between the introduction letter and the survey's delivery.

The participants received individual e-mails for both the introduction letter and the survey, and when names of the participants were available, the e-mails were personally addressed. Final reminder e-mails to complete the BPPI were sent 21 days or later after the participants received the survey. (See Appendix E for reminder e-mail). The participants did not see each other's names due to the utilization of the e-mail's blind carbon copy feature.

The researcher noticed on November 15, 2010, the survey was being viewed by participants, but not completed. The researcher made the conjecture that participants were concerned personal information would be printed, such as their names or their employer's names, and hence were not completing the survey. Many business professionals likely assumed this because they received the survey through personally addressed e-mails. Additionally, they may have not been familiar with human subject protection principles established by the National Institute of Health Office of Extramural Research. The following phrase was inserted in the final reminder e-mail to participants as well as all other correspondence being sent to remaining participants in hopes of increasing the survey's return rate: "Your name or the name of your business will not be printed in any way and your answers can not be linked to you".

Survey Instrument

The Business Professional Perceptions Instrument (BPPI) collected data on business professionals' perceptions of what skills college students develop through volunteerism and whether they value volunteer experiences during the hiring process.

Before developing the BPPI, the researcher searched for a current instrument to accomplish the research goal; however, an instrument was not found. The National Association of College Educators (NACE) did broach the subject of volunteerism in one question on the 2009 Job Outlook survey (National Association of Colleges and Employers, 2009, *NACE research job outlook 2009*). This and another question were modified to fit the purpose of the BPPI. (See Appendix B for original questions). The reworked questions helped collect data on business professionals' perceptions of college graduates' volunteer experience and also provided a previously tested scale to use for the study. This increased the reliability of the BPPI by using a scale already tested on participants similar to those in the study's sample.

The BPPI contained 23 questions. Participants moved through the survey by clicking on an arrow button found at the bottom of the screen. The number of questions appearing on the screen varied. Questions were grouped according to the content or to make completion easier for the participants. Participants could not go back to the previous screen in order to change their responses.

A very straight forward and standard scoring method was utilized in the BPPI. The more a participant agreed with a statement, the higher the number his or her answer was given. Also, the more value a participant assigned to a skill or experience, the higher the number. The researcher was assisted with the scoring procedure by UW-L's Statistical Consulting Center (SCC). The BPPI data collected by Qualtrics was processed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software.

Instrument Development Process

In order to create a more valid measure, the BPPI underwent an instrument development process, also known as a pretest study. Seventeen people were sent an invitation to pretest the survey. Each was designated one of five categories – business, career services, academic, student affairs, or graduate student – to assist with analysis of the pretest results. “Business” represented individuals who currently or previously worked in the business field, and “academic” represented individuals currently serving as a faculty member at a higher education institution. The participants in this process answered questions about the BPPI, such as ease of completing the survey, understanding of the questions and definitions, and whether their opinions were represented in the choices listed in closed-ended questions. Twelve people completed the survey and 10 returned feedback. Considering the 10 people who provided feedback, the categorization was as followed: three in business, two in academic, two in career services, one in student affairs, and two in graduate student. (See Appendix F for the letter, instructions, and questions sent to the instrument development process participants.)

Many of the participants expressed similar confusion about the same questions, leading the researcher to rewrite or redesign the questions. Based on the participants’ feedback, the following adjustments were made to the BPPI:

- Participants felt a high GPA was 3.5 versus 3.0, so the final BPPI was changed to reflect this in questions one and two.
- Some participants did not clearly understand question two, explaining they thought it was the same as question one. Therefore, it was rephrased to: “Without

considering a student's major, which of the following characteristics would have the greatest influence when making your final decision?"

- Participants struggled in completing questions three and seven. Many expressed their answers depended on the college graduate's volunteer experience. For example, if it was a long term volunteer commitment, they would place more value on it and believe more skills were develop through it, versus a one time volunteer experience. The researcher did not want business professionals to consider just one specific volunteer experience because it greatly limited the scope of the research. Also, describing one specific volunteer experience did not reflect the reviewed literature or correctly represent the diverse field of volunteer centers or service-learning curriculum. Therefore, the researcher rewrote the question and asked participants to think about a worthwhile volunteer experience a college student could complete. Allowing participants to imagine their own ideal volunteer experience helped the focus of the research remain on business professionals' perceptions of skill development and volunteerism's general employability, instead of examining participants' reactions to a specific type of experience participated in by college students.
- Considering participants' answers to questions four and five, the results did not produce enough variance between the two questions. For example, participants should have agreed with one question and disagreed with the other; however, they were agreeing with both questions. This led the researcher to believe the questions were too vague and not clear enough for participants to fully understand and express a clear response. Therefore, the two questions were combined into

one very direct question written as: “Please complete the following sentence.

How much value I place on a college student’s volunteer experience is influenced most by: (a) the type of volunteer experience. (b) the length of the volunteer experience”.

- Participants felt questions eight and nine were very leading or suggestive in what answers should be selected. Additionally, some participants expressed general confusion about the questions. Therefore, the researcher combined the two questions into one, simpler question written as: “Please complete the following sentence about the skills listed in question six, the previous question. These skills would be most valuable to me if a college student developed them through: (a) an internship experience. (b) a volunteer experience. (c) either a volunteer or internship experience.
- One of the participants from the business category, cited confusion as to why transgender was listed as an option on question 17, a demographic question. Although only one participant questioned this category selection, it was removed because the participant most closely represented the population being sampled. This action also recognized “transgender” is not a term readily recognized by individuals outside of higher education.

The instrument development process also identified the approximate length for participants to complete of the survey. The time for the participants to complete the survey ranged between six to 15 minutes. The average was 12.4 minutes, and looking at just the three business representatives, the average time was 13.6. The researcher had hoped to keep the length of the BPPI at 10 minutes to help ensure participants would

complete it. As a result of the changes made during the instrument development process, two questions were eliminated. Three categories listed in question seven – computer skills, friendly/outgoing personality, and detailed-oriented – were also eliminated. These changes shortened the instrument to a more appropriate time. (See Appendix G for the original BPPI used in the instrument development process and see Appendix H for the final BPPI.)

Ethical Considerations

There were few, if any, risks for the participants to complete the BPPI. One possible risk was if a business prohibited completing surveys and a participant chose to complete the survey, putting himself or herself at risk for disciplinary action. However, this risk could easily be avoided as completing the survey was optional for all subjects, as clearly stated in the introduction letter. The introduction letter also stated, “By completing the survey, you will be giving me permission to add your responses to my overall research in order to complete my thesis,” so participants fully understood their involvement in the study once they completed the BPPI.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Respondents

The sample size studied was 206 ($N = 206$) participants. The response rate was 49%, with 101 ($n = 101$) business professionals completing parts of the Business Professionals Perceptions Instrument (BPPI). Although it was attempted to ensure the sample only contained business professionals and not individuals working in the non-profit sector, participants were asked to classify their profession on the BPPI to ensure the accuracy of the results. One participant's results were removed from the data as he selected "non-profit" and described his field as "health care". Therefore, 100 ($n = 100$) responses were included in the data to be analyzed.

Demographic Information

Of the 100 ($n = 100$) respondents, five respondents chose not to answer the demographic questions of gender, age, current residency, and level of education. The gender proportion of the respondents were evenly split with 49% ($n = 47$) identifying as male and 50% ($n = 48$) identifying as female. The age range of respondents was distributed with 49% ($n = 47$) being born between 1961 and 1981, 47% ($n = 45$) born after 1982, and only 3% ($n = 3$) born between 1943 and 1960. The majority of respondents, 83% ($n = 80$), were from the Midwest with the additional respondents being from the West (8%), Northeast (4%), and Southeast (3%). (See question 16 in Appendix

H for regional breakdown by state). The majority of respondents, 84% ($n = 80$) had their bachelor's degree and 9% ($n = 9$) had their master's degree. Six respondents (6%) possessed an associate's degree, some college course work, or a high school diploma or GED.

Participants were also asked in an open-ended question to classify their employment field. Responses were grouped into general categories as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Employment Field Classification

	Frequency	Percent
Accounting/Finance	36	38%
Travel/Hospitality	15	16%
Sales	10	11%
Technology/Science	9	10%
Other Fields	9	10%
Insurance	7	7%
Artistic Design/Composition	4	4%
Manufacturing	4	4%
$n = 94$		

Statistical Measures

On the recommendations of the Statistical Consulting Center at UW-L, the following statistical measurements were used for data analysis:

- **Analysis of Variance (ANOVA):** “Used to compare the means of two or more independent samples to test whether the differences between the means are statistically significant” (Ravid, 2005, p. 135).

- **Correlation:** Used to define the relationship or association between two or more variables through the use of a correlation coefficient.
- **Paired *t*-test:** Two means being compared with each other, with the means representing two sets of scores that are paired.
- **Tukey method or Honestly Significant Difference (HSD):** A post hoc comparison used after an ANOVA to determine if the difference between the means are significantly different from each other.
- **Wilson-Agresti-Coull (WAC):** A confidence interval with the adjustment of moving $\hat{\pi}$ slightly away from zero and one (Ott & Longnecker, 2010).

Data Analysis

Hypothesis One

Null Hypothesis One stated: “There will be no significant difference in business professionals’ perceptions of the type of skills college students develop through volunteerism.” This was rejected and Hypothesis One stating, “There will be significant difference in business professionals’ perceptions of the type of skills college students develop through volunteerism” was accepted.

To determine if there was significant difference in the types of skills business professionals perceived college students develop through volunteerism, a *t* test for paired samples was used. The business professionals rated 16 different skills. Table 7 provides the means for each of these skills. In order to conduct meaningful comparisons, three skills were chosen to represent messaging and human-interaction: communication skills, interpersonal skills, and teamwork skills; and three skills were chosen to represent

intellectual process skills: analytical skills, problem-solving skills, and strategic planning. All nine pairs were statistically significant as shown in Table 2. This suggests business professionals perceived volunteer experiences to more strongly influence the development of the messaging and human-interactions skills rather than intellectual skills.

Table 2. Paired Samples t values for the Rating of Skill Development through Volunteer Experience Comparisons

		Messaging and Human Interaction Skills		
		Communication	Interpersonal	Teamwork
Means		4.13	4.24	3.98
Intellectual Skills				
Analytical	2.82	13.882*	14.820*	11.231*
Problem-solving	3.43	8.072*	9.840*	5.834*
Strategic planning	3.23	10.455*	11.970*	8.216*

*p = .001

Note: Higher mean scores indicate a higher rating of skill development during volunteer experiences as perceived by business professionals.

Hypothesis Two

Paired *t* tests were also used to determine whether to accept or reject Null Hypothesis Two stating: “There will be no significant difference between the value business professionals place on college graduates’ volunteer experiences compared to other college experiences.” Participants were asked to rate the influence of the following attributes when making a final hiring decision: “major”, “has held a leadership position”, “high GPA”, “has done volunteer work”, “the college/university attended” and “has been involved in activities or organizations at a college”. The rating given to “has done volunteer work” was compared to each of the other attributes.

The results of the *t* tests as shown in Table 3 determine there was significant difference between some of the comparisons, so Null Hypothesis Two was rejected and Hypothesis Two is accepted. It stated: “There will be significant difference between the value business professionals place on college graduates’ volunteer experience compared to other college experiences.” These findings suggest the volunteer work a college graduate completes has statically less significance on a business professionals’ influence in making a final hiring decision when compared to the major of the college graduate, a leadership position held by a college graduate, or the involvement in activities or organizations by a college graduate. There was no statistical difference found when comparing a college graduate’s volunteer work to a graduate’s high grade point average (GPA) or the college or university attended.

Relating to Hypothesis Two, the BPPI asked business professionals to choose one characteristic as having the greatest influence on making a final hiring decision. The frequency and percent of the characteristics: “has held a leadership position”, “high

GPA”, “has done volunteer work”, “the college/university attended”, and “has been involved in activities or organizations at a college/university” are listed in Table 5. Only one person indicated that having done volunteer work has the greatest influence, causing “has done volunteer work” to be in the lowest position. Using the WAC statistical measurement it can be determined, that the 95% confidence interval for the proportion of employers choosing “has done volunteer work” is between 0 and 5.6%. This suggests business professionals rarely view a college graduates’ volunteer experience as the greatest influence in making a final hiring decision.

The BPPI also examined where college students’ skills would be most valuable to a business professional: developed through a volunteer experience or developed through an internship experience. The frequency and percent of the results are shown in Table 4. Again using the statistical measurement WAC, it was determined the 95% confidence interval for the true proportion of business professionals looking for volunteer experience is between 5% and 17%. This suggests business professionals believe skills are better developed through an internship instead of a volunteer experience.

Qualitative data. Analysis of the responses from question 7a on the BPPI, “Why do you feel the skills are most valuable if developed through an internship experience?”, assists in explaining why business professionals believe college graduates’ skills are more valuable when developed through an internship versus a volunteer experience. In the 61 responses from participants, two strong themes emerged. First, respondents cited internships replicate similar business environments the students will be encountering as they enter the work force. One participant captured this theme writing, “An internship, if in their field of study, will most replicate similar real life work experiences the student

will realize out in the workplace.” The second theme that emerged was business professionals wanting students to develop skills right in their field as they felt this increased the reliability of those skills. Similarly, some respondents simply described the skills being developed through an internship as “better”. The qualitative data suggests business professionals highly value college graduates who can quickly adjust to the office or work environment; and they feel college graduates will more likely be able to do so if having completed an internship. The responses also suggest many business professionals do not place a large emphasis on transferable skills in college graduates as they cited wanting graduates with skills or experience that very directly relate to their field.

Table 3. Comparisons of Rating of Volunteer Work to Other Attributes when Making a Final Hiring Decision

	<i>Means</i> (<i>n</i> = 100)	<i>t-values</i>
Has done volunteer work	2.94	
Has held a leadership position	3.77 ^a	8.155*
Major	3.70	5.005*
Has been involved in activities or organizations at college/university	3.39	2.80*
High GPA (3.5 or above)	3.24	2.670
The college/university attended	2.83	.976

**p* = .005

^a*n* = 99

Table 4. Business Professionals' Most Valuable Skills if Developed Through an Experience

	Frequency	Percent
An internship experience	65	68.4%
A volunteer experience	9	9.5%
Unable to determine	21	22.1%

n = 95

Table 5. Frequency Chart for Characteristic Having Greatest Influence on Hiring Decision

	Frequency	Percent
Has held a leadership position	53	54.6%
High GPA	19	19.6%
Has been involved in activities or organizations at a college of university	19	19.6%
The college/university attended	5	5.2%
Has done volunteer work	1	1.0%

$n = 97$

Hypothesis Three

An ANOVA test was used to determine whether to reject Null Hypothesis Three stating, “There is no significant relationship between the skills business professionals perceive college students develop through a volunteer experience and the value they place on college graduates’ volunteer experiences.” The ANOVA compared the results of questions three and six from the BPPI. Question three asked: “Generally speaking, during the hiring process of recent college graduates, what value would you place on this volunteer experience?” Question six asked: “In your opinion, to what extent do you think volunteering influences the development of each of the following skills in a college student?” Table 6 shows the descriptive statistics for question 3 and Table 7 shows the descriptive statistics for question 6. The ANOVA test determined there is a significant difference between the five different categories – “no influence at all”, “not much influence”, “somewhat influence”, “very much of an influence” and “an extreme influence”, as shown in Table 8. Therefore, we reject the null hypothesis and accept Hypothesis Three stating, “There is a significant relationship between the skills business professionals perceive college students develop through a volunteer experience and the value they place on college graduates’ volunteer experiences.”

Next, the Tukey method of post hoc comparisons or the Honestly Significant Difference (HSD) statistical measurement was performed to determine which means are significantly different from each other. As shown in Table 10 and summarized in Table 9, there is a statistical difference between 3 (not much influence) and 5 (very much of an influence). Additionally, there is a statistical difference between 5 (an extreme influence)

and 2 (not much influence) as well as between 5 (an extreme influence) and 1 (not influence at all).

Finally, a Pearson correlation was performed to further explain the relationship between business professionals' perceptions of skill development and the value placed on volunteer experiences. The more a business professional believes college students develop skills through volunteer experiences, the more likely the volunteer experience will have an influence during the hiring process of recent college graduates, as indicated in a moderate, positive Pearson correlation (r) of 0.49.

Table 6. Descriptive Statistics of the Value Placed on Volunteer Experience

		Frequency	Percentage
(1)	No Influence at all	2	2%
(2)	Not much influence	9	10%
(3)	Somewhat of an influence	64	69%
(4)	Very much of an influence	15	16%
(5)	An extreme influence	3	3%

$n = 93$

Table 7. Descriptive Statistics of Skill Development through Volunteer Experiences

	<i>Mean</i> (<i>n</i> = 96)
Interpersonal skills	4.24
Initiative	4.17
Communication skills	4.12
Strong work ethic	4.08
Teamwork skills	3.98
Flexibility/adaptability	3.81
Leadership skills	3.79
Self-confidence	3.78
Organizational Skills	3.54
Problem-solving skills	3.43
Tactfulness	3.34
Strategic planning skills	3.23
Creativity	3.19
Entrepreneurial skills	3.06
Sense of humor	2.85
Analytical skills	2.82

Table 8. ANOVA Statistical Measurement Summary of Development of Skills and Value of Volunteer Experience

	Sum of Squares	Mean Square	<i>F</i>	Significance
Between Groups	10.927	2.732	9.384	.000
Within Groups	25.617	.291		
Total	36.544			

Table 9. Tukey's Honestly Significant Difference (HSD) Statistical Measurement Summary^{ab}

	<i>N</i>	Subset for alpha = 0.05		
		1	2	3
		Significance		
		.067	.131	.249
(2) Not much influence	9	2.7014		
(1) No Influence at all	2	3.0938	3.0938	
(3) Somewhat of an influence	64	3.6230	3.6230	3.6230
(4) Very much of an influence	15		3.9167	3.9167
(5) An extreme influence	3			4.3333

^a Uses Harmonic Mean Sample Size = 4.870.

^b The group sizes are unequal. The harmonic mean of the group sizes is used. Type I error levels are not guaranteed

Table 10. Tukey's Honestly Significant Difference (HSD) Statistical Measurement

		Mean Difference			95% CI	
		(I-J)	SE	Sig.	LL	UL
(1) No Influence at all	2 Not much influence	.39236	.42178	.884	-.7824	1.5671
	3 Somewhat of an influence	-.52930	.38743	.651	-1.6083	.5497
	4 Very much of an influence	-.82292	.40615	.262	-1.9541	.3083
	5 An extreme influence	-1.23958	.49253	.096	-2.6114	.1322
(2) Not much influence	1 No Influence at all	-.39236	.42178	.884	-1.5671	.7824
	3 Somewhat of an influence	-.92166*	.19208	.000	-1.4566	-.3867
	4 Very much of an influence	-1.21528*	.22749	.000	-1.8489	-.5817
	5 An extreme influence	-1.63194*	.35969	.000	-2.6337	-.6301
(3) Somewhat of an influence	1 No Influence at all	.52930	.38743	.651	-.5497	1.6083
	2 Not much influence	.92166*	.19208	.000	.3867	1.4566
	4 Very much of an influence	-.29362	.15478	.327	-.7247	.1375
	5 An extreme influence	-.71029	.31872	.179	-1.5980	.1774
(4) Very much of an influence	1 No Influence at all	.82292	.40615	.262	-.3083	1.9541
	2 Not much influence	1.21528*	.22749	.000	.5817	1.8489
	3 Somewhat of an influence	.29362	.15478	.327	-.1375	.7247
	5 An extreme influence	-.41667	.34124	.739	-1.3671	.5337
(5) An extreme influence	1 No Influence at all	1.23958	.49253	.096	-.1322	2.6114
	2 Not much influence	1.63194*	.35969	.000	.6301	2.6337
	3 Somewhat of an influence	.71029	.31872	.179	-.1774	1.5980
	4 Very much of an influence	.41667	.34124	.739	-.5337	1.3671

Note: SE = Standard Error; Sig. = Significance; CI = Confidence Interval; LL= Lower Limits; UL = Upper Limits

*p = 0.05, mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level

Additional Data Analysis

An additional objective of this research was to investigate business professionals' general perceptions of college graduates' volunteer experiences, to provide greatly needed research in this undocumented area. Also, it would be beneficial to explore if business professionals have preferences in regards to the kind of volunteer experiences college students complete. Secondly, investigating business professionals' views will help establish if there is congruence between higher education and the business world regarding the value of college students' volunteer experiences as well as service-learning courses.

Tables 6, 7, and 11 provide descriptive statistics of business professionals' perspectives of college students' volunteer experience. As illustrated in Table 6, 12% of business professionals rated college graduates' volunteer experience as "no" to "not much influence" during the hiring process. Only a slighter larger percentage, 19%, stated it was "very much" to "an extreme influence" during the hiring process. The greatest majority (69%) of business professionals stated college graduates' volunteer experience was "somewhat of an influence" during the hiring process. Although "somewhat of an influence" can be interpreted as a positive remark about volunteerism, it could also show business professionals' indecisiveness about their sentiment towards volunteer experiences.

Further analysis of Tables 7 and 11, on the other hand, suggest business professionals do have clear opinions on college graduates' volunteer experiences. As shown in Table 7, business professionals perceive volunteer experiences influence the development of some skills more than others. As shown in Table 11, the type of

volunteer experience (77%) a college student completes is more influential on the value business professionals give the experience than the length of the volunteer experience (8%).

Whether there is congruence between the business world and higher education about the value of volunteer experiences is not clearly answered. Business professionals' indecisiveness as shown in Table 6 on the influence of volunteer experience during the hiring process does not provide a clear answer to business professionals' views of volunteer experiences. Additionally, as shown in Table 13, a high percentage of business professionals don't know what is a service-learning course. This suggests there is not strong congruence in the knowledge of volunteer experiences between business professionals and student affairs practitioners. With 63% ($n = 60$) of business professionals identifying they don't know what a service-learning course is and another 29% ($n = 28$) being unable to define the term, it can be suggested business professionals lack the knowledge about volunteer experiences and service-learning courses to be able to understand their career-related benefits for college students.

On the other hand, over 70% of business professionals look "quite often" (43%) or "very often" (26%) at the content listed under "Community Involvement" or similar titles on resumes, as shown in Table 12. This suggests business professionals do consider college graduates' volunteer experiences during the hiring process.

Qualitative data. The qualitative data provided by the open-ended question five, "Staff and faculty at universities and colleges routinely encourage students to volunteer while in college as a way to enhance their employability. Do you think that this is good advice to give college students?", also provides additional support that suggests business

professionals do believe volunteer experiences improve employability for college graduates. Eighty-three respondents answered this question, with 67% ($n = 56$) of respondents answering in the affirmative – yes, it is good advice. Within the business professionals' answers, five themes emerged as to what volunteer experiences demonstrate to business professionals.

Often cited as a reason for college students to volunteer was that volunteer experiences showed the students were involved in the community. Business professionals also felt volunteering represented college students having experienced more diverse situations and situations outside of the university. Respondents also cited volunteering represented college students having a strong work ethic, showing initiative and dedication, and also allowed students to gain abilities, such as leadership, teamwork, or time management skills.

Another pattern that emerged was volunteer experiences showed that the college students had good moral character. One participant wrote, "It takes time and energy to do volunteer work and this shows strong character." Several business professionals also expressed belief that if college students volunteered, they may be more likely to help their colleagues in a place of business. As one professional wrote, "Seeing a candidate has volunteered shows me that they understand going above and beyond for someone else. It also shows they are not self-centered and are willing to help others."

There was a clear theme for the 22% ($n = 19$) of respondents who answered volunteer experiences do not enhance employability of college students. Overwhelming, they simply stated it was good to volunteer, but it does not enhance employability. Finally, 10% ($n = 8$) of business professionals didn't respond to question five in the

affirmative or negative, citing it varied depending on the situation on whether volunteer experiences enhanced employability.

Table 11. Value of Volunteer Experience Based on Length or Type of Experience

	Frequency	Percentage
The length of the volunteer experience	8	8%
The type of volunteer experience	77	77%
Unable to determine	15	15%

Note: Question was stated as: “Please complete the following question. How much value I place on a college student’s volunteer experience is influenced most by:”

$n = 100$

Table 12. Business Professionals Review of Resumes

	Frequency	Percentage
Never	1	1%
Rarely	6	6%
Sometimes	21	22%
Quite Often	41	43%
Very Often	26	27%

Note: Question was stated as: “As you review resumes, how often do you (or would you) look at the content listed under a title labeled “Community Involvement” or “Volunteerism” or a similar title?”

n = 95

Table 13. Business Professionals’ Service-Learning Knowledge

	Frequency	Percentage
Yes, and I took a course myself in college	2	2%
Yes	6	6%
I have heard the term, but can’t define it	28	29%
No	60	63%

Note: Question stated as: “Do you know what a service-learning course is?”

n=96

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

Interpretations of Findings

The research explored what, if any, skills business professionals perceive college students develop through volunteer experiences and the influence of volunteerism on business professionals' hiring decisions of recent college graduates. Another objective of the research included learning if the business world aligned with higher education's view of the importance in continually supporting and advocating for college students to volunteer. The purpose of exploring these concepts was to help volunteer centers transition into this next phase of career-focused education at American institutions (Cohen, 2009). As higher education shifts away from emphasizing holistic development of students and instead focuses on students' career-preparation, volunteer centers could become fiscally vulnerable as their emphasis in the past has been on students' holistic development. Having evidence of support directly from business professionals about the benefits of volunteering and developing corresponding career-focused learning outcomes, will assist the centers in protecting their funding during these difficult financial times.

The data analysis suggested business professionals do perceive college students develop skills through volunteer experiences, specifically effective messaging and human-interaction capabilities, such as communication, interpersonal, and teamwork skills. However, business professionals felt intellectual processing abilities, such as

strategic planning, problem-solving, and analytical skills, were less likely developed through volunteer experiences. Also, those business professionals who felt college students could develop skills through volunteering gave more value to volunteer experiences during the hiring process.

Nevertheless, a college graduate's major, leadership experience, or being involved in activities or organizations was of greater influence in making a final hiring decision than a volunteer experience. Also, if given the option, the majority of business professionals still favored the development of skills through internships versus volunteer experiences. The qualitative data suggested business professionals have very positive views about internships, especially when compared to volunteer experiences. The participants cited internship experiences as being valuable to them because students learned to work in a business environment and gained "direct" and "reliable" skills. Conversely, there was a lack of value in college graduates' transferable skills by business professionals.

Data from the BPPI presented mixed conclusions of the influence of volunteer experiences during the hiring process. Considering the quantitative data from question three, "Generally speaking, during the hiring process of recent college graduates, what value would you place on this volunteer experience?", a very low percentage, 19%, of participants found it to be of any considerable influence. The large percentage of participants (69%) choosing "somewhat of an influence", paired with the support towards internships or other attributes in making a final decision, suggests business professionals do not relate college graduates' volunteer experiences to employability.

However, other data supports the idea business professionals still find it advantageous and constructive for college students to volunteer. First, 70% of business professionals identified reviewing college graduates' volunteer experiences on their resumes. Secondly, there is the qualitative data from question five: "Staff and faculty at universities and colleges routinely encourage students to volunteer while in college as a way to enhance their employability. Do you think that this is good advice to give to students?" The themes emerging from the responses to this question suggest business professionals see merit in students volunteering. They want to hire individuals who are not self-centered or narcissistic, but instead of good moral character and willing to be a team player. For business professionals, volunteer experiences represent these qualities in recent college graduates.

Implications of Research

The research starts to provide an understanding for student affairs professionals about business professionals' views and knowledge about volunteering. It is encouraging business professionals believe volunteer experiences "very much influence" the development of certain skills, as illustrated in Table 7. However, there is also a lack of awareness and knowledge about volunteer experiences among business professionals. Skills such as sense of humor, analytical skills, or tactfulness, very likely are also developed through volunteer experiences, but they were rated lower by business professionals. Business professionals also lack knowledge about service-learning courses, with only 8% identifying they know what is a service-learning course.

The themes emerging from the qualitative data about why skills developed through an internship are more valuable than volunteer experiences show a bias toward

internships based on assumptions made by the business professionals. For example, business professionals automatically assumed students learned about a work environment and had worthwhile tasks to develop solid skills through an internship. Business professionals also seemed to assume volunteer experiences couldn't provide challenging projects and strong learning environments. This showed insufficient knowledge of how a college graduate's volunteer experience can produce strong and developed skills, and how these skills can be transferred and utilized in a work environment in the business world.

Volunteer centers can benefit from the data that 70% of business professionals review college graduates volunteer experiences on resumes. It is greatly encouraging and provides career related relevance to students volunteering. The themes that emerged from the question five's qualitative data illustrate business professionals saw worth in college students volunteering because it represented students thinking outside themselves, showed a strong work ethic, and students taking the initiative to help others – all qualities that contribute to creating a healthy team environment in a business. Again, this insinuates volunteer centers have a role in helping prepare students for the workforce after college. However, the research did not provide substantiation that business professionals perceive volunteer experiences directly increase employability. This concept would have been advantageous for volunteer centers during this career-focused time in higher education.

Recommendations

Student Motivation

Many volunteer centers have the goal of motivating their campus' students to volunteer, and data from the research can assist in this goal. Highlighting that 70% of business employers review content listed under "community involvement" on resumes may motivate students who are not yet volunteering. Using the extrinsic motivation of getting a job may help reach those students who aren't yet feeling an intrinsic motivation to volunteer. Focusing on the abilities business professionals perceive are developed through volunteer experiences, such as communication and interpersonal skills, could also be a motivation. Students looking to improve those skill sets, especially students not gaining these skills through other avenues, may find a volunteer experience provides the opportunity they needed. Finally, another motivation for students could be providing a comparison between the skills business professionals perceived are developed through volunteer experiences to those skills employers rated as important for candidates to possess in NACE's 2008 survey (National Association of Colleges and Employers, 2009, *NACE research job outlook 2009*). Three of the top four skills employers rated as very important – communication skills, strong work ethic, and initiative – were also three of the top four skills business professionals rated in the BPPI as volunteer experiences having "very much an influence" on their development. Additionally, initiative was also the top rated skill by employers that leads to promotion or new assignments, according to the Collegiate Employment Research Institute (Gardner, 2007).

Changes in Volunteer Centers Services

Volunteer centers should also view the research as a way to improve current services provided to students as well as use the research to start or continue to relate volunteerism to career preparation. From the data analysis, business professionals cited favoring students who held a leadership position when making a final hiring decision, as shown in Table 5. They also placed more value on internships because they directly related to a career field. Lastly, as shown in Table 11, the type of volunteer service college students complete was more valuable than the length of the volunteer experience. All this information can be used to by student affairs practitioners who assist students in selecting a place to volunteer. For example, encouraging an accounting major to volunteer to take the lead in reorganizing the financial system of a Good Will Store may be more beneficial from a career development point of view than her participating weekly an entire semester at the Humane Society as a volunteer. Although both are excellent volunteer experiences, the first scenario provided a leadership role and related to fiscal management, which may make it more valuable to a business professional. It is important note this scenario can still lead to holistic development for the student, especially if she reflects on the experience.

Additionally, volunteer centers need to be providing to students education on how to articulate their volunteer experiences, specifically those in which the students feel they gained skills. The data analysis suggested business professionals do think skills, especially certain skills, are developed through volunteer experiences. However, if students are not articulating these skills on their resumes, what good is it for business professionals to think the latter? To make volunteer centers more career relevant and to

increase the chances of business professionals one day equating volunteer experiences to employability, students must fully and clearly articulate volunteer experiences on resumes and in interviews.

Educating Business Professionals

Student affairs practitioners often identify as educators for college students. However, as the research shows, there is also a need to educate business professionals about the career benefits for college students who volunteer. First, educating business professionals about the different kinds of volunteer experiences, including service-learning courses, is essential. Business professionals labeling volunteer experiences as having “somewhat” or “not much” influence in the development of strategic planning skills, entrepreneurial skills, and analytical skills, for example, suggests a lack of understanding of the wide variety of serve opportunities and how in-depth and advanced some volunteer experiences can become. Similarly, it is important to educate business professionals about how the aspects of an internship that they value can be found through volunteer experiences. For example, established service-learning courses often produce strong relationships between the college’s faculty and staff members and the service organizations. This allows for elements business professionals value, such as a traditional work environment and direct, career-related skills, to possibly be replicated.

Finally, as Table 6 shows, 69% of business professionals identified the value placed on the volunteer experiences during the hiring process was “somewhat of an influence”. Hence, now is the time when business professionals may be on the fence, to educate them and to hopefully move more of them into the “very much of an influence” category. Educating business professionals about the skills developed through volunteer

experiences, the benefits of service-learning courses, and the concept that volunteer experiences can be as beneficial as internships, will eventually enhance students' employability.

Additional Research

As previously mentioned, this study shows 69% of business professionals identified volunteer experiences as “somewhat of an influence” during the hiring process. This does not provide a clear understanding about what value business professionals place on volunteer experiences during the hiring process. Changing the BPPI's scale to include only four options – “no influence at all”, “not much influence”, “very much of an influence”, and “an extreme influence” could provide better variance among the four categories. Also, results of the BPPI could be analyzed in other ways than conducted for this study, leading to different, but still relevant research. For example, it would be beneficial to compare how often business professionals volunteer in their personal lives to how much value they place on college graduates' volunteer experiences. Finally, instead of convenient and referral sampling the BPPI could be distributed through a more traditional sampling method. This could possibly increase the generalization capabilities of the results or allow for analysis of whether there is significant difference in the results based on the participants' employment fields.

There are also other areas of research that should be conducted to complement the finding of the BPPI. Studies with business professionals about the psychology associated with the words “intern”, “volunteer”, “internship”, and “volunteerism” should be pursued. Musick and Wilson (2008) explained the word “volunteering” still often has a negative connotation associated with it. “Although volunteers are widely admired

because they give their time freely to help others, their work is devalued precisely because it is given away. If a job were worth doing, someone would be paid to do it” (p. 3). It would be helpful to understand business professionals’ intrinsic connotation of the word “volunteering” as student affairs practitioners try to increase volunteerism’s employability. Also, further research is needed on if college students recognize skills are developed through volunteer experiences, they know how to articulate the experiences, and if they are actually highlighting their experiences on their resumes. If they are not in fact doing so, the research conducted for this study loses part of its foundation. Before business professionals can recognize the skill development that occurs through volunteer experiences, college students themselves have to recognize this occurrence.

Conclusion

The review of the literature shows the majority of research related to the benefits of volunteering has greatly focused on the cognitive growth of students. As America’s Great Recession continues, the focus of education at many colleges and universities in the United States has shifted towards career preparation. Additionally, higher education institutions are facing difficult fiscal challenges as federal and state funding declines, while more scrutiny of higher education’s accountability continues. These occurrences cause volunteer centers to need evidence of support about the career benefits of volunteer experiences directly from business professionals.

The research suggests business professionals perceive merit in college students volunteering as skills can be developed through these experiences. On the other hand, business professionals do not perceive volunteer experiences enhance college students’ employability, seeing more value in leadership or internship experiences. However, the

data analysis also suggested business professionals lack knowledge about the depth and variety of volunteer experiences available to college students. Based on the data collected from the BPPI, it is recommended student affairs practitioners educate business professionals about the career relevance of volunteer experiences. Finally, further research about business professionals' intrinsic connotation about the words "volunteerism" and "internship" needs to be conducted. This will assist student affairs practitioners in developing intentional education for business professionals.

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APPENDIX A

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL

UNIVERSITY of WISCONSIN
LA CROSSE

To: Brianne Rogers

From: Bart Van Voorhis, Coordinator
Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the
Protection of Human Subjects

Date: September 24, 2010

Re: **RESEARCH PROTOCOL SUBMITTED TO IRB**

The IRB Executive Committee has reviewed your proposed research project entitled: *“Business Professionals Perception of College Graduates Volunteer Experiences: Skills Obtained and Value Assigned.”*

The Committee has determined that your research protocol will not place human subjects at risk. **The protocol has been approved under expedited review procedures, and declared exempt from further review in accordance with 45CFR46, 46.110(a)(b). Also, a waiver of signed consent has been granted in accordance with 46.117(c)(1)(2).** IRB records should be retained for at least 3 years after completion of the project.

Since you are not seeking federal funding for this research, the review process is complete and you may proceed with your project.

Good luck with your project.



cc: IRB File
Harry Nicklaus, Faculty Advisor

Graduate Studies and Research & Sponsored Program
220 Morris Hall, University of Wisconsin-La Crosse
1725 State Street, La Crosse, WI 54601
Phone (608)785-8124 and (608) 785-8007
An affirmative action/equal opportunity employer

APPENDIX B

ADOPTED QUESTIONS FROM NACE'S 2009 JOB OUTLOOK SURVEY

National Association of College and Employers' 2009 Job Outlook Survey

Adopted Question 1:Employers rate the influence of attributes when deciding on two equally qualified candidates.

- 1 No influence at all
- 2 Not much influence
- 3 Somewhat of an influence
- 4 Very much of an influence
- 5 An extreme influence

Major

Has held leadership position

High GPA (3.0 or above)

Has been involved in extracurricular activities (clubs, sports, student government, etc.)

School attended

Has done volunteer work

Adopted Question 2:Employers rate the importance of candidate skills/qualities.

- 1 Not Important
- 2 Not Very Important
- 3 Somewhat Important
- 4 Very Important
- 5 Extremely Important

Communication skills

Strong work ethic

Teamwork skills (works well with others)

Initiative

Analytical skills

Computer skills

Flexibility/adaptability

Interpersonal skills (relates well to others)

Problem-solving skills

Technical skills

Detail-oriented

Organizational skills

Self-confidence

Leadership skills

Tactfulness

Friendly/outgoing personality

Creativity

Strategic planning skills

Entrepreneurial skills/risk-taker

Sense of humor

APPENDIX C

INTRODUCTION LETTER SENT TO PARTICIPANTS

Good morning,

My name is Brianne Rogers and I am a graduate student at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse in the Student Affairs Administration in Higher Education program. I introduced myself at the UW-L Career Expo on October 13, 2010. This e-mail is to inform you that an electronic survey will be sent to you within one week.

As part of my graduate requirements I am working on my master's level thesis. I am studying business professionals' opinions on the value of volunteer experiences and their perceptions of the impact these experiences have on college graduates' skill development.

Participating in the survey is completely voluntary, and it should take between 5 to 10 minutes for you to complete. By completing the survey, you will be giving me permission to add your responses to my overall research in order to complete my thesis.

All responses are completely confidential and anonymous.

If you would like to be removed from this study and not receive the survey, you can contact me at rogers.bria@uwlax.edu, and you will be removed immediately.

Thank you in advanced for your participation!

Sincerely,
Brianne Rogers

APPENDIX D

E-MAIL SENT TO PARTICIPANTS WITH SURVEY INSTRUMENT

Good morning,

Please click on the link (or paste it into your browser) to complete the 5 to 10 minute survey about your opinions on college graduates' skills.

https://uwlacrosse.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_4Yp0gQ5eFKauUrG

You were contacted last week via e-mail about my study. I introduced myself at the UW-L Career Expo on October 13, 2010

Any questions or concerns, please contact me at rogers.bria@uwlax.edu.

Thank you for your participation!

Sincerely,

Brianne Rogers

University of Wisconsin – La Crosse Graduate Student

APPENDIX E

FINAL REMINDER E-MAIL SENT TO PARTICIPANTS

Good morning,

If you haven't already done so, please consider completing this survey.

Thank you to those who already participated.

Sincerely,

Brianne Rogers

University of Wisconsin – La Crosse Graduate Student

Click on the link (or paste it into your browser) to complete the 10 minute survey about your opinions on college graduates' skills.

https://uwlacrosse.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_4Yp0gQ5eFKauUrG

All answers are completely confidential and anonymous. Your name or the name of your business will not be printed in any way and your answers can not be linked to you.

I am a former business associate and I am now a graduate student at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse.

Any questions or concerns, please contact me at rogers.bria@uwlax.edu.

APPENDIX F

CORRESPONDENCE SENT TO INSTRUMENT DEVELOPMENT PARTICIPANTS

Dear ,

Thank you for volunteering to be part of my pre-test study for my thesis. Your feedback on my instrument is appreciated as it will help ensure a successful research study. Please remember your name or institution will not be printed in my thesis.

Your instructions and the link to the survey are below. If you are unable to open the survey, please let me know.

Please return your feedback by Friday, October 1, 2010 at 7 p.m.

Thank you again for your participation.
Brienne

First, open the attached Word document. You will first see the introduction letter participants in the study will receive before taking the survey. If you choose, review the letter for background on my research study.

Then, you will see 8 questions. Please review the questions.

Next, have a pencil and piece of paper available before you start the survey. Write down any numbers you might later want to reference when completing the 8 questions.

You are now ready to complete the survey. Please complete it in one sitting. Record the time you begin the survey and record the time you finish. (Example: Began at: 7:01 p.m. Finished at: 7:12 p.m.)

Please note your pre-testing code is **academic**. You may now begin the survey.

https://uwlacrosse.qualtrics.com/SE?SID=SV_cwpDTGKsyErIsiE

Attachment to e-mail:

Instrument Development Questionnaire for Brienne Rogers' Thesis

Good morning,

My name is Brienne Rogers and I am a graduate student at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse in the Student Affairs Administration in Higher Education program. I introduced myself at the UW-L career expo on October 13, 2010. This e-mail is to inform you that an electronic survey will be sent to you within one week.

As part of my graduate requirements I am working on my master's level thesis. I am studying business professionals' opinions on the value of volunteer experiences and their perceptions of the impact these experiences have on college graduates' skill development.

Participating in the survey is completely voluntary, and it should take between 7 to 15 minutes for you to complete. By completing the survey, you will be giving me permission to add your responses to my overall research in order to complete my thesis.

All responses are completely confidential and anonymous.

If you would like to be removed from this study and not receive the survey, you can contact me at rogers.bria@uwlax.edu, and you will be removed immediately.

Thank you in advanced for your participation!

Sincerely,
Brianna Rogers

Began at: Finished at:

1. Did you think the length of the survey was too long? If yes, ideally how much time are you usually willing to contribute to completing an on-line survey?
2. Was it easy to complete and submit the survey? If not, what difficulties did you encounter?
3. Think about the multiple choice questions on the survey. Did any force you to choose an answer that did not represent your personal opinion? If so, please list the question number and provide details on how you would have liked to answer the question.
4. One question referenced a college graduate having a high GPA. What do you consider a high GPA, 3.0 and above or 3.5 and above?
5. For the survey, "volunteering" was defined as "Volunteering is giving time freely to help and benefit a philanthropic organization, a local or global community, or a person or group of people."

Did you understand this definition of volunteerism? If not, please explain what part of the definition was confusing or hard to understand.

6. Were there any questions you did not understand? (The question did not make sense to you.) If so, please list the number and provide details on what aspect of the question was confusing or hard to understand.

7. Did you feel uncomfortable answering any of the questions? If so, please list the number.

8. Any final comments or concerns you would like to share?

APPENDIX G

ORIGINAL BUSINESS PROFESSIONALS' PERCEPTIONS INSTRUMENT

USED FOR INSTRUMENT DEVELOPMENT

Please enter your pre-testing code.

Thank you for volunteering to complete my survey. Your responses are important to my research and I value them. Please remember there are no correct or incorrect answers

First, I am interested in your views regarding qualifications of recent college graduates.

For the purposes of this survey, volunteering or a volunteer experience will be defined as follows: Volunteering is giving time freely to help and benefit a philanthropic organization, a local or global community, or a person or group of people.

Imagine you are hiring a person to work for your company and are deciding between two recent college graduates. Both candidates have the same amount of related job experience and you enjoy both of their personalities.

1. Rate the influence of the following attributes in making your final decision with 1 as “no influence at all” and 5 as “an extreme influence”.

- 1 No influence at all
- 2 Not much influence
- 3 Somewhat of an influence
- 4 Very much of an influence
- 5 An extreme influence

- A. Major
- B. Has held a leadership position
- C. High GPA (3.5 or above)
- D. Has done volunteer work
- E. The college/university attended
- F. Has been involved in activities or organizations at a college/university

2. If you had to pick only one characteristic of B-F, as having the greatest influence when making your final decision, which would it be?

- B. Has held a leadership position
- C. High GPA (3.0 or above)
- D. Has done volunteer work
- E. The college/university attended
- F. Has been involved in activities or organizations at a college/university

3. Generally speaking, during the hiring process of recent college graduates, what value do you place on a college graduate’s volunteer experience during this process?

- 1 No Influence at all
- 2 Not much influence

- 3 Somewhat of an influence
- 4 Very much of an influence
- 5 An extreme influence

Please respond to the following statements with 1 as "strongly disagree" and 5 as "strongly agree".

4. The length of time a college student commits to a volunteer experience influences how much value I place on the skills they develop through it.

- 1 Strongly Disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 3 Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 4 Agree
- 5 Strongly Agree

5. The type of volunteer activity a college student experiences influences how much value I place on the skills they develop.

- 1 Strongly Disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 3 Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 4 Agree
- 5 Strongly Agree

6. Staff and faculty at university and colleges routinely encourage students to volunteer while in college as a way to enhance their employability. Do you think that this is good advice to give college students? Why or why not? Please be detailed in your answer.

7. To what extent do you think volunteering influences the development of each of the following skills in a college student, with 1 as "no influence at all" and 5 as "an extreme influence"?

- 1 No influence at all
- 2 Not much influence
- 3 Somewhat of an influence
- 4 Very much of an influence
- 5 An extreme influence

Analytical skills
Communication skills
Creativity
Detailed-oriented
Entrepreneurial skills/risk taker
Flexibility/adaptability
Friendly/outgoing personality

Initiative
Interpersonal skills (relates well to others)
Leadership skills
Organizational skills
Problem-solving skills
Self-confidence
Sense of humor
Strategic planning skills
Strong work ethic
Tactfulness
Teamwork skills

Please respond to the following statements with 1 as "strongly disagree" and 5 as "strongly agree", in the context of hiring a recent college graduates and considering the skills listed in the previous question.

8. These skills would be less valuable to me if they were developed through a volunteer experience.

- 1 Strongly Disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 3 Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 4 Agree
- 5 Strongly Agree

9. These skills would be more valuable to me if developed through an internship experience.

- 1 Strongly Disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 3 Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 4 Agree
- 5 Strongly Agree

If "Strongly Disagree" is selected, then skip to question 10.

If "Disagree" is selected, then skip to question 10.

If "Neither Agree nor Disagree" is selected, then skip to question 10.

9a. Why do you feel these skills are more valuable if developed through an internship experience? Please be detailed in your answer.

10. Do you know what a service-learning course is?

- Yes and I took a course myself in college
Yes
I have heard the term, but can't define it
No

*If "I have heard the term, but can't define it" is selected, then skip to question 11.
If "No" is selected, then skip to question 11.*

Please respond to the following statement with 1 as "strongly disagree" and 5 as "strongly agree".

10a. A college student can develop valuable job-related skills through a service learning course.

- 1 Strongly Disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 3 Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 4 Agree
- 5 Strongly Agree

11. As you review resumes, how often do you (or would you) look at the content listed under a title labeled "Community Involvement" or "Volunteerism" or a similar title?

- Never
- Rarely
- Sometimes
- Quite Often
- Very Often

12. Since January 1, 2010, have you reviewed resumes to fill any position within a company?

- Yes
- No

Now, please respond to questions about you and your current profession.

13. Please select the following categories that best classifies your current profession.

- For-profit
- Non-profit

14. Please indicate your specific field. (For example, insurance, computer science, automotive, hospitality, etc.)

15. Is your current title considered a human resources position?

- Yes
- No

16. Regardless of your job title, what percentage of your work time do you spend on hiring new employees in an average year?

_____ %

Finally, just a few more questions.

17. Please indicate your gender.

Male

Female

Transgender

Prefer not to answer

18. Please indicate the region of your current resident.

Northeast Region (CT, DC, DE, MA, MD, ME, NH, NJ, NY, PA, RI, VT) (1)

Midwest Region (IA, IL, IN, MI, MN, MO, ND, NE, OH, SD, WI) (2)

Southeast Region (AL, AR, FL, GA, KY, LA, MS, NC, SC, TN, VA, WV) (3)

West Region (AK, AZ, CA, CO, HI, ID, MT, NM, NV, OK, OR, TX, UT, WA, WY) (4)

19. Please indicate your age range.

Born prior to 1942

Born between 1943 and 1960

Born between 1961 and 1981

Born after 1982

20. Would you classify your company as having a philanthropic corporate culture?

Yes

No

Unable to determine

21. Since January 1, 2010, have you personally been involved in a volunteer activity?

Yes

No

If "No" is selected, then skip to question 22.

21a. Approximately how often have you volunteered since January 1, 2010?

1-3 times

Once a month

Twice a month

Once a week

More than once a week

22. Please select your highest level of education.

- Some high school
- High school diploma or GED
- Some college
- Associate's Degree
- Bachelor's Degree
- Master's Degree or higher
- Prefer not to answer

Thank you for completing the survey. If you would like a copy of the study's results, please contact me at rogers.bria@uwlax.edu. It should be available by June 1, 2010.

To increase the scope of my research, I am asking for referrals from each survey participant of others business professionals who may be willing to complete the survey. The same communication process of notification of this survey will be used. Any name provided will be kept confidential and will not be shared with any other party or printed in any final report.

Are there any other business professionals you can recommend to complete the survey?

Name (Optional)

E-mail Address

Name (Optional)

E-mail Address

Name (Optional)

E-mail Address

APPENDIX H

BUSINESS PROFESSIONALS' PERCEPTIONS INSTRUMENT

Thank you for volunteering to complete my survey. Your responses are important to my research and I value them. Please remember there are no correct or incorrect answers

First, I am interested in your views regarding qualifications of recent college graduates.

For the purposes of this survey, volunteering or a volunteer experience will be defined as follows: Volunteering is giving time freely to help and benefit a philanthropic (charitable) organization, a local or global community, or a person or group of people.

Imagine you are hiring a person to work for your company and are deciding between two recent college graduates. Both candidates have the same amount of related job experience and you enjoy both of their personalities.

1. Rate the influence of the following attributes in making your final decision with 1 as “no influence at all” and 5 as “an extreme influence”.

- 1 No influence at all
- 2 Not much influence
- 3 Somewhat of an influence
- 4 Very much of an influence
- 5 An extreme influence

- A. Major
- B. Has held a leadership position
- C. High GPA (3.5 or above)
- D. Has done volunteer work
- E. The college/university attended
- F. Has been involved in activities or organizations at a college/university

2. Without considering a student’s major, which of the following characteristics would have the greatest influence when making your final decision?

- B. Has held a leadership position
- C. High GPA (3.5 or above)
- D. Has done volunteer work
- E. The college/university attended
- F. Has been involved in activities or organizations at a college/university

Think about a worthwhile volunteer experience a college student could complete.

3. Generally speaking, during the hiring process of recent college graduates, what value would you place on this volunteer experience?

- 1 No Influence at all
- 2 Not much influence
- 3 Somewhat of an influence
- 4 Very much of an influence

5 An extreme influence

Please complete the following sentence.

4. How much value I place on a college student's volunteer experience is influenced most by:

the length of the volunteer experience.

the type of volunteer experience.

Unable to determine

5. Staff and faculty at university and colleges routinely encourage students to volunteer while in college as a way to enhance their employability. Do you think that this is good advice to give college students? Why or why not? Please be detailed in your answer.

Think about a worthwhile volunteer experience a college student could complete.

6. In your opinion, to what extent do you think volunteering influences the development of each of the following skills in a college student, with 1 as "no influence at all" and 5 "as extreme influence?"

1 No influence at all

2 Not much influence

3 Somewhat of an influence

4 Very much of an influence

5 An extreme influence

Analytical skills

Communication skills

Creativity

Entrepreneurial skills/risk taker

Flexibility/adaptability

Initiative

Interpersonal skills (relates well to others)

Leadership skills

Organizational skills

Problem-solving skills

Self-confidence

Sense of humor

Strategic planning skills

Strong work ethic

Tactfulness

Teamwork skills

Please complete the following sentence, thinking about the skills listed in question 6, the previous question.

7. These skills would be most valuable to me if a college student developed them through:

- an internship experience
- a volunteer experience
- Unable to determine

If "a volunteer experience" is selected, then skip to question 8.

If "Unable to determine" is selected, then skip to question 8.

7a. Why do you feel these skills are most valuable if developed through an internship experience? Please be detailed in your answer.

8. Do you know what a service-learning course is?

- Yes and I took a course myself in college
- Yes
- I have heard the term, but can't define it
- No

If "I have heard the term, but can't define it" is selected, then skip to question 9.

If "No" is selected, then skip to question 9.

Please respond to the following statement with 1 as "strongly disagree" and 5 as "strongly agree".

8a. A college student can develop valuable job-related skills through a service learning course.

- 1 Strongly Disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 3 Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 4 Agree
- 5 Strongly Agree

9. As you review resumes, how often do you (or would you) look at the content listed under a title labeled "Community Involvement" or "Volunteerism" or a similar title?

- Never
- Rarely
- Sometimes
- Quite Often
- Very Often

10. Since January 1, 2010, have you reviewed resumes to fill any position within a company?

- Yes
- No

Now, please respond to questions about you and your current profession.

11. Please select the following categories that best classifies your current profession.

For-profit
Non-profit

12. Please indicate your specific field. (For example, insurance, computer science, automotive, hospitality, etc.)

13. Is your current title considered a human resources position?

Yes
No

14. Regardless of your job title, what percentage of your work time do you spend on hiring new employees in an average year?

_____ %

Finally, just a few more questions.

15. Please indicate your gender.

Male
Female
Prefer not to answer

16. Please indicate the region of your current residence.

Northeast Region (CT, DC, DE, MA, MD, ME, NH, NJ, NY, PA, RI, VT)
Midwest Region (IA, IL, IN, MI, MN, MO, ND, NE, OH, SD, WI)
Southeast Region (AL, AR, FL, GA, KY, LA, MS, NC, SC, TN, VA, WV)
West Region (AK, AZ, CA, CO, HI, ID, MT, NM, NV, OK, OR, TX, UT, WA, WY)

17. Please indicate your age range.

Born prior to 1942
Born between 1943 and 1960
Born between 1961 and 1981
Born after 1982

18. Would you classify your company as having a philanthropic corporate culture?

Yes
No
Unable to determine

19. Since January 1, 2010, have you personally been involved in a volunteer activity?

Yes
No

If “No” is selected, then skip to question 20.

19a. Approximately how often have you volunteered since January 1, 2010?

- 1-3 times
- Once a month
- Twice a month
- Once a week
- More than once a week

20. Please select your highest level of education.

- Some high school
- High school diploma or GED
- Some college
- Associate's Degree
- Bachelor's Degree
- Master's Degree or higher
- Prefer not to answer

Thank you for completing the survey. If you would like a copy of the study's results, please contact me at rogers.bria@uwlax.edu. It should be available by June 1, 2011.

To increase the scope of my research, I am asking for referrals from each survey participant of others business professionals who may be willing to complete the survey. The same communication process of notification of this survey will be used. Any name provided will be kept confidential and will not be shared with any other party or printed in any final report.

Are there any other business professionals you can recommend to complete the survey?

- Name (Optional)
- E-mail Address
- Name (Optional)
- E-mail Address
- Name (Optional)
- E-mail Address