

INTERNSHIPS, VALUABLE FOR THE CAREERS OF WINE STUDENTS

Marianne McGarry Wolf, California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo
Benoît Lecat, California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo

Keywords: Internship, Wine students, USA, Careers

Introduction & purpose of the study

Doing internships in any university curriculum is very important to get a practical experience. The motto of the California Polytechnic State University, in San Luis Obispo (USA) is “Learn-by-Doing” and therefore, studying how internships are valuable for the careers of wine students is fundamental to check if the program managers are proposing the right curriculum for their students to comply with the philosophy of the University.

Research methodology

The survey was conducted at the California Polytechnic State University, in San Luis Obispo, USA. The wine program has approximately 300 students. They are bachelor students and must specialize in one of the three concentrations: viticulture, enology and wine business. The mission of the department is to provide the students a better understanding of the whole wine supply-chain: from grape to glass. Irrespective of their concentrations, the students must follow minimum three classes in the three concentrations. Internship is compulsory in the students’ curriculum.

During the 2015 Summer and Fall Quarters, 91 students received internship credit and answered the survey. Among the 91 students, 53% were in enology, 14% in viticulture and 33% in wine business concentrations.

Results / findings

Here are some findings that will be discussed during the conference:

- (1) Students, 94%, believe that the internship is extremely or very valuable to their careers.
- (2) Enology students are more likely to take an internship Fall Quarter only while Wine Business students are more likely to take an internship Summer Quarter only. The fall survey asked if the internship experience made the student think of changing their concentration. Only 2 enology students responded yes with the following reasons:
 - “I realized how much I would love to apply my knowledge of viticulture and that working in a winery alone cuts out a huge portion of the winemaking process.”
 - “My internship was focused on DTC, which I have dedicated my career to. My concentration is in enology. While my school work has been indispensable in assisting me in understanding and explaining to others the ins and outs of wine making as well as communicating with those in the wine making field. I think that wine business concentration would have been slightly better suited for my end career.”
- (3) Most students take their internship when they are Juniors or Seniors.
- (4) Students work approximately 12 weeks during an internship. Wine Business students work less hours each week than Enology and Viticulture students. Most students worked at a winery. A third of the Viticulture students worked at vineyards that were not associated with wineries. Wine Business students that have summer internships also indicated that they worked for the following: Distribution Company, a wine shop, PR

Firm, a wine bar/restaurant, winemakers' association, wine shop, PR and marketing firm that represents wineries and other luxury beverage related companies and producers.

- (5) As expected, the Enology students were more likely to participate in jobs that involve winemaking. The Viticulture students were more likely to participate in jobs in the vineyard. The Wine Business students were more likely to have business related jobs. However, they also had winemaking and vineyard related tasks. Our program is the only program in California where all the students have a minimum of three classes in each area irrespective of their concentration. All the students will have chemistry, fundamentals of enology, sensory analysis, basic viticulture, viticulture practices, irrigation management, economics, branded wine-marketing and accounting.
- (6) Most of the students indicated that their job tasks changed over time.
- (7) The average salary for wine business and Viticulture students are the same. Wine Business students have a lower wage than Enology students, but the same as Viticulture students based on the Post Hoc test at the .10 level.
- (8) 51% of the students think they were extremely or very well prepared for their internship job from the coursework they have received at Cal Poly
- (9) Over half of the students felt that other jobs made them extremely or very prepared for their internship.
- (10) Most students believe the internship experience will be extremely valuable to their careers.

Practical implications and recommendations for education

These findings are helpful as program manager in order to adjust the course offering during the junior and senior years. If the students do make their internship in Summer Quarter (wine business students), no adjustment is needed. On the other hand, if they make their internship during Fall Quarter (harvest), classes that are only offered once a year should be postponed to Winter and Spring Quarters in order to accelerate the graduation rate.