

THE VALUE OF PAID INTERNSHIPS FOR RURAL, FIRST-GENERATION COLLEGE STUDENTS

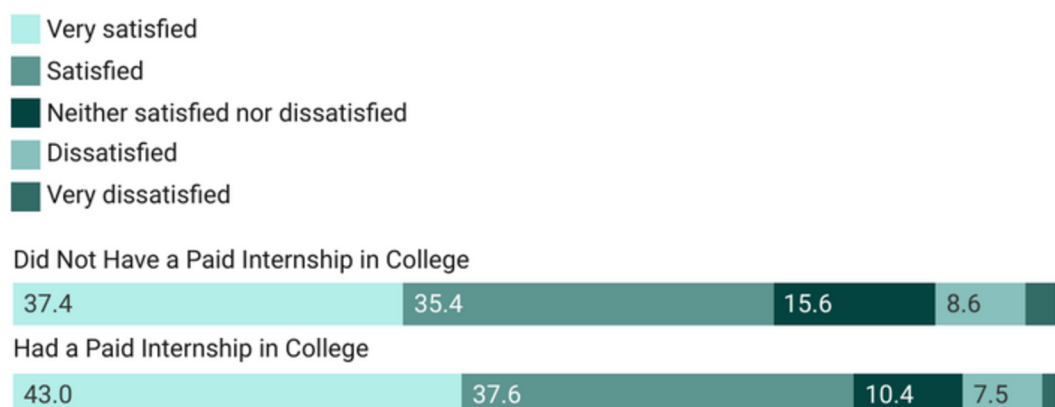
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

First-generation college students from rural communities often face challenges accessing paid internships, limiting their ability to gain critical work experience. However, students who participate in paid internships are more likely to secure full-time employment within six months of graduation and report higher job satisfaction. These internships provide financial support and help develop essential job-specific skills and professional networks. Expanding funding for paid internships and strengthening partnerships between educational institutions and employers is crucial to ensuring all students, regardless of background, can benefit from these opportunities.

PAID INTERNSHIPS

According to the data, rural first-generation students who participated in paid internships reported higher satisfaction with their choice of undergraduate major compared to those who did not (Figure 1). Among those with a paid internship, 43.0% were very satisfied, and 37.6% were satisfied with their major, while only 37.4% and 35.4% of those without a paid internship expressed similar levels of satisfaction. This indicates that paid internships contribute not only to career readiness but also to greater academic confidence and satisfaction. Despite challenges in accessing these opportunities, students who engage in paid internships experience clear benefits.

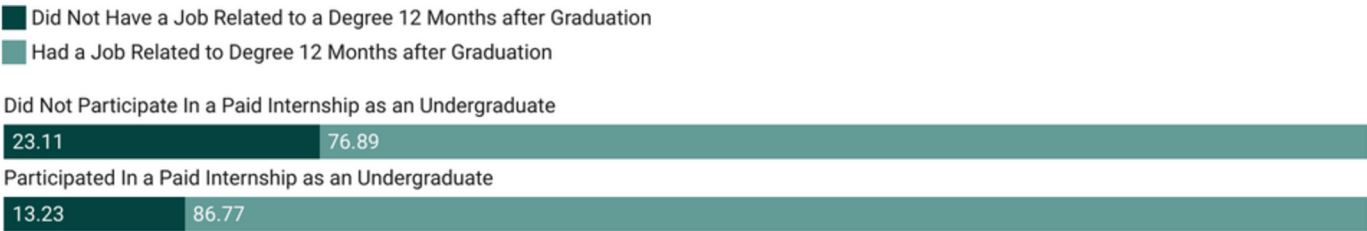
Figure 1. Rural First-Generation Students' Internship Experience and Satisfaction with Choice of Undergraduate Major



INTERNSHIPS AND CAREER OUTCOMES

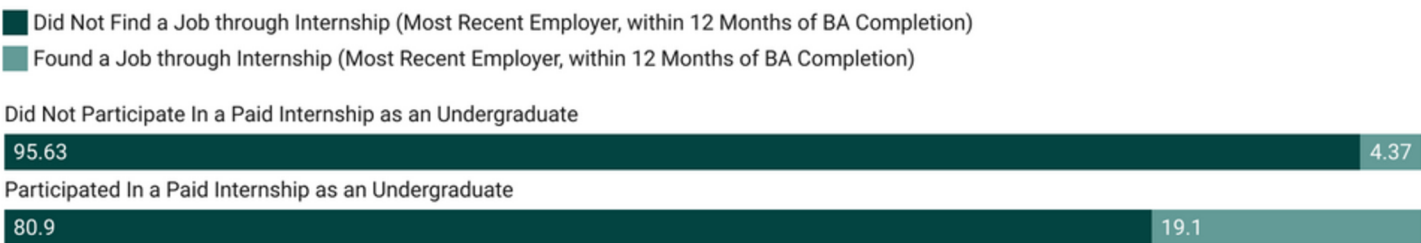
Rural first-generation students who participate in paid internships are more likely to find employment in their field within 12 months of graduation compared to those who do not (Figure 2). They are also more likely to secure their most recent job through their internship, demonstrating how paid internships can serve as a vital stepping stone from education to meaningful careers (Figure 3). These findings suggest that expanding access to these opportunities could help bridge gaps in career readiness for underrepresented students.

Figure 2. Rural First-Generation Students' Internship Experience and Whether Employment is Related to Academic Major or Field of Study



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Figure 3. Rural First-Generation Students' Internship Experience and Whether They Found Most Recent Job through Internship



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Recommended citation:

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Methodology:

We analyzed data from the 2016/2020 Baccalaureate and Beyond (B&B) longitudinal survey. The National Center for Education Statistics oversees data collection for the B&B, which follows graduating college seniors 1, 4, and 10 years after completing their bachelor’s degree. Learn more about the B&B at <https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/b&b/>.

Our research is funded by the Ascendium Education Group and the University of Idaho. Ascendium Education Group is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization committed to helping people reach the education and career goals that matter to them. Ascendium invests in initiatives designed to increase the number of students from low-income backgrounds who complete postsecondary degrees, certificates and workforce training programs, with an emphasis on first-generation students, incarcerated adults, rural community members, students of color and veterans. Ascendium's work identifies, validates and expands best practices to promote large-scale change at the institutional, system and state levels, with the intention of elevating opportunity for all. For more information, visit <https://www.ascendiumphilanthropy.org>.