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## Academic Engagement Through Experiential Learning: Building Transferable Skills Within Undergraduate Education

Shara Lee  
*University of Central Florida*

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ACADEMIC ENGAGEMENT THROUGH  
EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING:  
BUILDING TRANSFERABLE SKILLS WITHIN  
UNDERGRADUATE HOSPITALITY EDUCATION

by

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of Doctor of Education  
in the Department of Educational and Human Sciences  
Higher Education & Policy Studies Program  
in the College of Education  
at the University of Central Florida  
Orlando, Florida

Fall Term  
2012

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## **ABSTRACT**

Presently, there is a national focus on the industry-benefitting skills developed through undergraduate education. The purpose of this study is to examine the effectiveness of an experiential learning course on building three ability-based transferable skills: communication, emotional intelligence, and professional qualities. These skills have been determined to be important components to the skill set of graduates intending to enter any career, including one within the hospitality industry. Results from an examination of three related instruments led to conclusions that an experiential learning course positively impacts self-perceived skill development among the three aforementioned skills as well as perception of overall performance. In addition, it was determined that experiential learning courses benefitted interns irrespective of self-reported learning style preference and that such courses may aid in narrowing the perceived gap between intern and employer perceptions of intern skill levels and thereby prepare graduates with increasing success for societal productivity.

“It is not our abilities that show what we truly are. It is our choices.”\*  
For their choice to provide unfailing support and encouragement, this work is  
dedicated with overwhelming gratitude to the Lee and Feltner families.

\*Quoted from a cinematic adaptation of a J.K. Rowling novel, *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*.

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# CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

## General Background

Institutions of higher education have become increasingly concerned with the realization of a skill level gap between their graduates and successful entrants into the workforce (Liptak, 2005; Planty et al., 2009). This has precipitated growth in the community and state colleges and has given rise to alternate for-profit forms of higher education that specialize in workforce preparation. Many traditional baccalaureate degree-granting institutions have responded to this preparation gap by offering experiential learning courses. These courses are designed to provide learning through a combination of academic assignments and an employment setting as a means to ease the transition from academia to the workforce (Rothman, 2007). The gained practical experience provides students with an important link between educational theory and applied practice (Quinn, 2003) and conjoins technical skills with non-discipline specific skills in a holistic approach (Shivpuri & Kim, 2004; Wolf-Wendel & Ruel, 1999). The National Association of Colleges and Employers' (NACE) 2012 Internship & Co-op Survey revealed that employers expect to increase internship program hires by over 8%; additionally, over 40% of their total 2011-2012 hires were predicted to be selected from the company's internship program (Koc, Koncz, & Longenberger, 2012).

One integral component of this experiential learning process is students' involvement in self-reflection and evaluation of the competencies needed to be successful in their chosen career or professional environment. This evaluation allows for

quantification of the impact of experiential learning on the skills important to overall student development, such as communication, emotional intelligence, and professional qualities. These types of skills have been identified by employers as “the number one differentiator” for applicants in a variety of industries (Sutton, 2002, p. 40); the strongest indicators of entry-level workplace success (Wilhelm, 2004); and the most relevant indicators of sustainable, successful workplace performance (Cranmer, 2006; Nunan, 1999). They have also been linked to positive personal outcomes related to life success, pro-social attitudes, and moral and civic virtues (Goleman, 1998).

Although these skills are important for the success of any graduate of a higher education institution, students studying hospitality in particular were selected for this study. As a service sector subset of the business industry, the United States Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS, 2012) continues to project growth in the hospitality industry, which seeks youth with a greater transferable skill set than is currently being imparted by the educational system. Hospitality programs have a long-standing history of preparing graduates for specific occupations through experiential learning (Airey & Tribe, 2005; Croy, 2009; Croy & Hall, 2003; Hawkins & Weiss, 2004; Lyons & Brown, 2003; Xie, 2004). For this reason, many hospitality programs require their graduates to complete internship courses. While valuable in any workplace, the skill sets of communication, emotional intelligence, and professional qualities serve as the focus for this current study, as they have been suggested by hospitality students, educators, and industry leaders to be particularly valuable for hospitality industry professionals.

### Statement of the Problem

Education has historically been viewed as a benefit to the public, prompting its continued subsidization in various capacities by federal and state governments in the United States. The colonial colleges in the United States were founded in response to the public desire for religious men, public officials, and professionals of the practical kind who were literate and college-trained (Brubacher & Rudy, 2008). As government economies and budgets struggle, it is natural that funding bodies would seek confirmation of the benefits gained through any spending. This has prompted a closer look at understanding the value of higher education through the lens of the graduate skill set. This skill set is valuable in its ability for the graduate to offer meaningful impact on the societal workforce at large and provide a return on the government's investment in the graduate.

There is presently a gap between higher education curricular design and industry skill expectations that results in the creation of graduates who are ill-prepared with the employer-sought skills required for gainful employment. However, this is not a recent phenomenon; employers in business sectors in particular have reported for decades that new graduates are deficient in these non-technical transferable skills (Cranmer, 2006; Gedye, Fender, & Chalkley, 2004; Holmes, 2000; Mitchell, Skinner, & White, 2010; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Tas, 1988). Life skills have been shown to be valued by industry employers, but are not consistently believed to be valued by academics, who often design curricula around technical or content-based knowledge and skills. The persistence of this disparity may be attributed to both the extended length of time often



taken by academia to responsively change (Keller, 2008) and the traditional acceptance of higher education as occurring inside a disconnected ivory tower (Brubacher & Rudy, 2008). One such solution to this skill gap may involve student participation in major-related academic internship courses. This approach can produce graduates able to provide higher quality work, accept supervision with increased understanding, demonstrate superior time management, interact more successfully with peers on team projects, and more rapidly transition from college to full-time employment, compared to those without work experience (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Additional research addressing ways in which higher education can more effectively build transferable skills is necessary in order to best advise hospitality instructional methodology (Mitchell et al., 2010). In sum, this skill gap between academically-created and industry-needed transferable skill levels among undergraduate students must be closed in order for educators to effectively prepare their students to become successful industry professionals.

### Significance of the Study

With American higher education moving towards student-centered learning, new approaches to increase learning outcomes must be examined (Harris & Cullen, 2008). Capitalizing on the recognized importance of faculty-student relationships in addition to this focus on student learning, it stands to reason that the ideal learning environment would involve customizing peer and faculty interaction to the individual developmental level of each student. Through internship courses, one-on-one interactions between faculty and students, coupled with reflective course components, meet student needs at

their individual levels of educational development. Internship courses take advantage of the socialized, contextual learning at a work site to provide the type of learning environment designed to foster individualized student-centered learning with a focus on both general and specific industry-relevant skills. These courses have the greatest andragogical opportunity to develop and respond to technical and non-technical skill needs currently present in industry, allowing learning to be guided by the individual student's experiences and choices as they encounter new situations (Mellor, 1991).

Higher education organizations are engaged in a struggle between acting as sociocultural organizations of knowledge transmission or as the transformative bodies that are able to influence the society through their teachings (deMarris & LeCompte, 1999). Even as higher education becomes more of an institution creating society instead of simply serving as an institution within society, such institutions cannot operate autonomously; they are beholden to, and influenced by, their constituents. Such constituents can include political leaders, trustees, administration, faculty, staff, students, alumni, primary education, parents, industry employers, and donors (Birnbaum, 1992). The knowledge that can result from this study becomes important in this context, as it will enable educators to understand several of the strengths and deficits faced by graduates of undergraduate hospitality programs as perceived by students and representatives of the industry. In turn, the results can provide guidance for the creation of college academic learning goals and improvement of curricular design for hospitality-related departments and colleges.

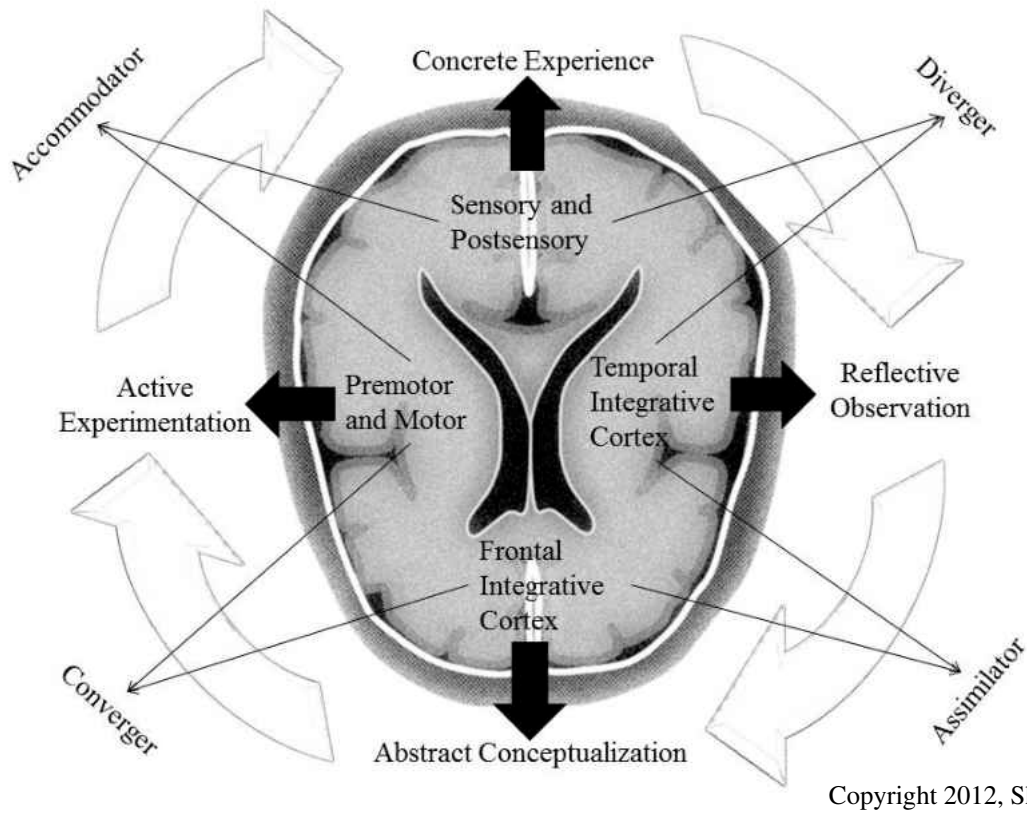
Experiential learning is also particularly important for universities to be able to prepare graduates in a well-rounded capacity, incorporating the benefits that come from the educational flexibility found in vocational, community, or state college schedules. These competing educational institutions offer a curricular schedule that oftentimes lends itself to being able to teach students who are already in the workforce and gaining industry experience concurrent with their pursuit of higher education. This university responsiveness is particularly important in fields such as hospitality that have historically not required degree attainment for industry preparedness. As internships evolve into a mainstay within hospitality curricula across the country, it is important to understand whether or not the academic experiential learning courses are enhancing the development of the skills that will provide these graduates with a competitive advantage within their industry of study.

### Conceptual Framework

The lens of Kolb's (1984) Experiential Learning Theory (ELT) will be used to ground this research. ELT is a constructivist learning model that views learning as an interaction between a person and the environment in which the individual engages in an integrative, personal learning-relearning cycle (Kolb & Kolb, 2005b). It defines learning as the process of grasping and transforming experience, where knowledge becomes the residual product (Kolb, 1984). The Experiential Learning Cycle (ELC) within the ELT demonstrates the individual's process of knowledge construction as information passes through the four regions of the cerebral cortex during processes of experiencing,

reflecting, thinking, and behaving. Learning style preferences are generated from the areas of the brain and the corresponding stage in the ELC that an individual feels most comfortable utilizing. This process recognizes the individuality inherent in student-centered learning and challenges prevailing educational notions of knowledge transmission.

The use of experiential learning-based teaching techniques has demonstrated the ability to positively influence learning for all four of Kolb's (1984) learning styles (Duman, 2010), and hence serves as a natural outflow of teaching technique. Kolb's ELT models the relationship between the classroom and the workplace, visually presenting learning as a four-stage cycle. The first stage is the occurrence of a concrete experience. The next stage requires observation and reflection on the part of the student in order to understand the experience. As the student makes sense of the experience, generalizations about experiences of this nature are formed while continuing through the cycle. From there, the student's thought process evolves the learning into a hypothesis that can be tested with future experiences of this nature. In turn, this process cycles back to a new concrete experience from which the cycle can restart (see Figure 1). A key component to furthering this learning process is reflection, a concept upon which many courses in experiential learning are based. Having an experience is not sufficient to incur learning; rather, the reflection upon it is an integral component.



*Figure 1.* Relationship between experiential learning cycle, learning styles, and the brain. Adapted from *The art of changing the brain: Enriching teaching by exploring the biology of learning*, by J. E. Zull, 2002.

This study conceptualizes transferable skill development (SD) of interns as a function of the interaction between an intern with a signature learning style (LS) and an environment (E) that combines internship site learning with internship course work. This relationship is expressed in Equation 1 and demonstrated pictorially in Figure 2.

$$SD_{\text{intern}} = f\{LS_{\text{intern}} \times (E_{\text{site}} + E_{\text{coursework}})\} \quad (1).$$

Interns will bring varying levels of many transferable skills into the internship course with them, as competencies are built through assorted life experiences. However, these skills are likely to be seen by interns as a conglomerate of unrelated, individual proficiencies until interns are exposed to the relationship between them through mediums such as experiential learning courses. This process is denoted in Figure 2 by the transition from scattered pre-internship competencies to post-internship skill groupings. The advantage to this organizational understanding for learning has been well documented through concepts such as instructional scaffolding (Applebee & Langer, 1983), demonstrating how new knowledge is integrated with existing knowledge.

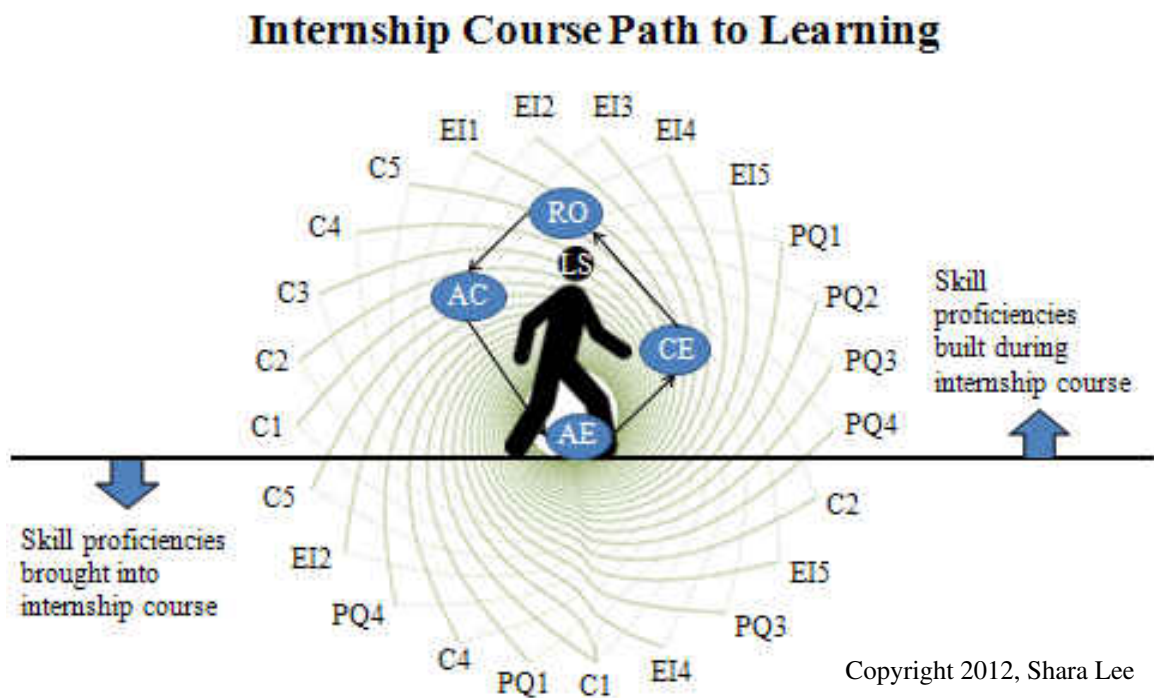


Figure 2. The internship course path to learning.

Sample individual transferable skills are on the outside: C = communication, EI = emotional intelligence, PQ = professional qualities. Numbers refer to a specific question within a skill scale. Surrounding the intern are the portions of Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle: CE = concrete experiences, RO = reflective observation, AC = abstract conceptualization, AE = active experimentation. Learning styles (LS) are at the center.

In Figure 2, sample transferable skills, paired with specific questions on the individual skill scale, are represented in a spiral sequence to demonstrate the nature of their continuous development throughout the internship course. The spires are shallower underneath the internship course path line to denote the lesser development level of the skills prior to an internship course. Learning style is denoted at the center of the diagram and serves to indicate that individual skill development could differ between interns even if the learning experiences were identical; knowledge that is able to be grasped and transformed according to the individual's preferred learning style can be expected to be integrated with less intentionality and therefore increase skill proficiency more rapidly. Two people encountering the same stimuli may come away from the interaction with different levels of skill proficiency due to the ease with which each is able to absorb the learning. The ELC (Kolb, 1984) can be seen continuously encircling the intern as he or she continues through the internship course, constantly encountering concrete experiences (CE), using reflective observation to process them (RO), generalizing the learning through abstract conceptualization (AC), and testing the conclusions through active experimentation (AE). The two stages of the ELC that are closest to the dividing

line between pre- and post-internship skill development (CE and AC) generate learning that is propelled by the internship site, as these two stages require experiences and settings for experimentation for learning to occur. The two stages that are closer to the intern's head (RO and AC) represent learning that is fueled by the academic internship course work, requiring cerebral reflection and conceptualization for learning to progress.

### Hypothesis and Research Questions

The study hypothesis is that experiential learning courses can improve the skills of communication, emotional intelligence, and professional qualities for undergraduate hospitality students of varying learning style preferences. The current study will explore this hypothesis through the use of the following research questions:

1. Is there a self-perceived change in a student's applied (a) communication, (b) emotional intelligence, and (c) professional qualities skills after the first semester of internship class?
2. Does amount of self-perceived change in a student's applied (a) communication, (b) emotional intelligence, and (c) professional qualities skills relate to self-reported learning style preferences?
3. Does the level of self-perceived proficiency in a student's applied (a) communication, (b) emotional intelligence, and (c) professional qualities skills after the first semester of internship class relate to their respective employer's perceptions on the same skills?



4. Is there a difference between the levels of overall intern performance as perceived by interns versus employers?

The intent of Research Question 1 is to test the effectiveness of the Experiential Learning Cycle (Kolb, 1984) in building communication, emotional intelligence, and professional qualities through students' participation as interns in an academic internship course that was designed to facilitate learning using the Cycle. Research Question 2 is designed to examine the relationship between the level of self-perceived change in skill proficiency and self-proclaimed Learning Style (Kolb, 1984), seeking any differences in skill change that may be related to learning style preference and the active nature of internship learning.

In Research Question 3 and Research Question 4, a measurement of the skill gap between student intern and employer perception ratings is tested. Research Question 3 examines the gap in perceived performance with respect to student intern communication, emotional intelligence, and professional qualities. Research Question 4 uses gap analysis through a single overall rating question that prompts consideration of performance related to additional skills such as conceptual and analytic ability, understanding and applying information, teamwork, technology, design and experiment skills, social intelligence, organization and planning, and work habits; all of these skills are also queried in the Evaluation. The relationship between the conceptual framework components, research questions, and variables is pictorially represented in Table 1.

Table 1

*Relationship Between Framework Components, Research Questions, and Main Concepts*

Research Question	Framework Component	Main Concept
1	Experiential Learning Cycle	Communication Emotional Intelligence Professional Qualities
2	Learning Styles	Accommodator Assimilator Converger Diverger
3	Experiential Learning Cycle	Communication Emotional Intelligence Professional Qualities
4	Experiential Learning Cycle	Overall Skills

Definition of Terms

The following terms will be used to describe specific concepts throughout the study.

*Communication skills* embody speaking, writing, presenting, listening, and questioning.

*Deep learning* is widely held to be a goal in higher education (James, 2000) and is best defined by Entwistle, Thompson, and Tait in the 1992 article “Guidelines for Promoting Effective Learning in Higher Education.” It can be considered to include (a) learning with intention to understand the material for oneself, (b) actively and critically interacting with content by relating ideas to previous knowledge and experience, (c) relating evidence to conclusions, and (d) evaluating the logic of the argument.

*Emotional intelligence* is the ability to manage emotions, understand emotions, use emotions to facilitate thinking, and perceive emotions accurately in oneself and in others (Mayer & Salovey, 1997). It has been present in studies over time through terms such as *people skills, interpersonal skills, interaction skills, human relations, employee relations, or customer relations*. This concept will be measured in the proposed study by assessing and understanding group culture, respecting diversity, recognizing action implications, understanding emotions of self and others, controlling emotions of self, and taking the perspective of others.

*Experiential learning* refers to internship and cooperative education courses in a higher education curriculum.

*Graduate* will be used to describe students who have completed their baccalaureate studies in Hospitality Management, Event Management, and Restaurant and Food Service Management, and to whom a corresponding degree has been conferred.

*The hospitality industry* is a service sector within the business umbrella that encompasses all aspects of travel and tourism. The main segments of this industry include food and beverage operations, event planning, recreation, theme park operations, and lodging operations (BLS, 2012).

*Industry position* is a course prerequisite and is defined as any hospitality or event position that is 16 or more hours per week and compensated. It is important to note that this position is any that provides industry-relevant worksite experience, even if the title does not always include the word *internship*.

*Internship* is defined as

a form of experiential learning that integrates knowledge and theory learned in the classroom with practical application and skills development in a professional setting. Internships give students the opportunity to gain valuable applied experience and make connections in professional fields they are considering for career paths; and give employers the opportunity to guide and evaluate talent.

(NACE, 2012a, para. 6)

*Internship course* is a term that describes a one credit hour class containing an online learning component that builds strategically upon concurrently gained hospitality industry experience.

*Learning styles* are affective, cognitive, and physiological traits that form relatively stable indicators of the ways in which learners perceive, respond to, and interact with the learning environment. They can be considered to be preferred information processing styles. The four learning styles referenced in the current study are accommodator, assimilator, converger, and diverger (Kolb, 1984).

*Professional qualities* encompass a skill set that includes responsibility and accountability for actions, self-confidence, ethics, self-motivation, and attitude towards change.

*Self-reflection* refers to thoughtful, intrapersonal consideration that can lead to learning through Kolb's (1984) experiential learning cycle. In the context of this research, it references the process in which interns are prompted to reflect upon their skill levels with respect to a number of transferable skills.

*Transferable skills* are intrapersonal and interpersonal skills that students can build within higher education curricula and subsequently use to succeed in post-graduation workplaces. Synonyms in literature include *non-technical skills*, *soft skills*, *life skills*, *employability skills*, and *core competencies*.

### Limitations

The current study has been affected by the following limitations:

1. The data were collected from a large, Southeastern, public, High Research-designated institution in which internship course participation by the hospitality student population is required. This data may not be transferrable to other institutions, additional majors, or internship programs in which participation is voluntary.
2. The data collected are based on student and employer perceptions rather than objective measures of skill. While there are sociocultural benefits to using this method and objective measures exist with varying measures of validation, the ability to use a constant measure to assess skill improvement could prove valuable.
3. A major theme park employer of students has a company policy that prevents leaders from completing the Employer Evaluation. This systematically removes a group of students from analysis and effectively increases coverage error.

4. Students have the flexibility to change positions during the course of the semester. Although this may not have a meaningful effect on their self-assessments, it will affect the amount of exposure that their employers will have to students' skills and consequently render the results of the Employer Evaluation assessment less robust.
5. Employers are asked to complete the Employer Evaluation for students as part of students' course grades. Inflated results may be due in part to the desire to allow the student to succeed in the course and reflect less truthful assessment to this end.

### Summary

Within a society that looks to higher education institutions to create the nation's competitiveness, both technical and non-technical skill sets play important roles in the achievement of goals. Experiential learning transcends discipline-specific skills and frames the focus of academic learning towards the skills necessary to succeed in life as well as within an industry of choice. It has shown itself to be a successful strategy to increase the level of involvement and learning retained by students. The subsequent literature review in Chapter 2 will further explore the impact of experiential learning as well as examine learning style, transferable skills, the hospitality industry, academic engagement, and study setting-specific experiential learning courses.

## CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter will review the literature relevant to experiential learning, learning styles, transferable skills, and the andragogy associated with the academic components to an internship course.

### Experiential Learning

For the purposes of this study, the term *experiential learning* can be viewed as encompassing internships and cooperative education. It can be defined as a structured, educational strategy integrating classroom studies with learning gained through productive work experiences in a field related to a student's academic or career goals. Furthermore, it provides progressive experiences that integrate theory and practice with responsibilities that lie with students, educational institutions, and employers alike (Accreditation Council for Cooperative Education, 2012). The following sub-sections outline the history and theoretical underpinnings associated with experiential learning.

### History

The academic practice of using experiential learning in higher education spans over 100 years. Experiential learning has received varying levels of support throughout its history and, in consequence, has moved slowly but steadily into educational favor (Sovilla & Varty, 2004). While the learning ideals behind experiential learning have been around for many years, Herman Schneider was the first to put them into practice.

Schneider was a professor in the College of Engineering at the University of Cincinnati. In 1906, he conceived the first cooperative plan of education for his engineering students, conjoining theory and practice through linkage with engineering employers. Engineering was a logical curricular beginning for cooperative education due to the inherent applied nature of the field and the significant industrial expansion taking place in the United States at the time. The program that Schneider created was so successful that people across the country began to inquire about “The Cincinnati Plan”. By 1920, eight different institutions had cooperative education plans within engineering. The popularity of the program was solid enough to prompt the formation of the Cooperative Education Division of the American Society of Engineering Education in 1929 (now the Cooperative and Experiential Education Division) and the Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology in 1932, which both continue today.

As understanding of the idea of cooperative learning grew, additional disciplines began to realize the benefits to similar programs for their students (Sovilla & Varty, 2004). Once again, the University of Cincinnati pioneered cooperative education in this sense, establishing the first program outside of the College of Engineering. The College of Business began to offer such learning opportunities to its students in 1919. Just two years later, Antioch College began the first cooperative education program within liberal arts. By the mid-1930s, over 80% of the Antioch student body elected to participate in the institution’s immersive experiential learning track. By 1956, cooperative education’s 50th anniversary, over 60 institutions of higher education offered programs. Cooperative



education had survived two world wars, a major depression, numerous recessions, and massive cultural shifts, growing slowly but steadily into the culture of higher education.

Seeing the expansion of cooperative education programs, but concerned about the slow pace of growth, influential leaders persuaded the Ford Foundation to commission a two-year study on the educational benefits of cooperative education (Sovilla & Varty, 2004). The 1961 report, *Work Study College Programs*, represented the first time that the benefits to cooperative education were documented. Bolstered by the promising results, the National Commission for Cooperative Education (NCCE) was founded in 1962 to lobby the federal government for funding and support the national expansion of the field of cooperative education. Just one year later, the Cooperative Education Association (now the Cooperative Education and Internship Association) was established to lobby for program funding as well.

The success of these two agencies cannot be overstated, as federal funding was the single main cause of the expansion of cooperative education into universities across the country (Sovilla & Varty, 2004). It coincided with the national agenda to increase access, affordability, and educational relevance that was sweeping the country through court mandates and legislation. The Higher Education Act of 1965 provided the first direct federal funding for cooperative education programs. By 1971, there were approximately 225 documented programs. Between 1976 and 1996, over \$275 million was allocated to the creation and expansion of cooperative education programs nationwide. This boon climaxed in 1986 with over one-third of all higher education institutions documenting cooperative education programs (Sovilla & Varty, 2004).

Over time, cooperative education has evolved to meet the needs of the different institutions in which it is housed. For instance, new structures were added to the original model, which involved alternating between semesters in a work-type experience and semesters in the classroom. These structures included parallel programs (part-time, mostly in the U.S.) and sandwich programs (one year, mostly in Europe and Asia). The new structures accommodated for shorter programs, such as those found in two-year institutions, and mitigated the course repetition required in alternating programs. Federal funding contributed to program expansion, but perpetuated the idea that cooperative education was appropriate for all institutions in all settings, which may not have necessarily been the case. Programs were implemented quickly to take advantage of federal funding without respect for the grassroots efforts needed to gain the support of administrators and faculty members. This lack of support precipitated changes in the U.S. with respect to overall reporting structures, causing many programs to be moved from an academic affairs division to a student affairs division within the university for expediency purposes. Because this movement was often made without regard for program educational integrity, U.S. experiential learning programs consequently now vary widely in academic rigor. Research on the impact of experiential learning on student learning is mixed, with contributing factors that include institutional commitment to learning and the caliber of faculty dedicated to bringing the learning experiences to their potential (Haddara & Skanes, 2007). As an example, in some programs, students take experiential learning courses for credit that meet graduation requirements; in other situations, no educator is involved and the experience is a job with no academically-guided learning.

This variation in program structure does not come without consequences. The definition of experiential learning programs and their differential contribution to student education has become hazy for those without a solid understanding of the associated learning outcomes. Academicians have difficulty with the lack of quantifiable research from experiences (Bartkus & Stull, 1997, 2004; Ricks et al., 1990; Ryder, 1987; Weaver, 1993; Wilson, 1988) and unclear theoretical underpinnings (Ricks et al., 1990; Wilson, 1988). Data have been collected simply to record the number of students enrolled rather than for quantifying learning. Even with these setbacks, experiential learning programs have been established in every state in the United States and in 43 countries, clearly illustrating its broadly recognized value and ability to sustain in difficult economic times (Sovilla & Varty, 2004).

### Theoretical Underpinnings

Experiential learning is largely devalued among faculty members because of its connection to industry, lack of meaningful research on learning outcomes, and uncertain theoretical underpinnings. Faculty members in collegiate disciplines have had difficulty recognizing industry work as a means of education, viewing it instead as “anti-intellectual” (Van der Worm, 1988). However, cooperative education faculty will cite enhanced learning from industry partnerships, growing research in learning outcomes, and several learning theories to validate the field. Two of the learning theories that highlight various benefits to cooperative education along with Kolb’s ELT are the Theory of Experience and a body of sociocultural views.

American philosopher John Dewey explained cooperative education through his Theory of Experience, first published in 1938. He recognized that for deep learning to occur, education needed to be grounded in experience and accompanied by active student reflection. He believed that any experience was influenced by the two concepts of continuity and interaction. He defined continuity as the sum of the experiences that a person has had that has led to the current world view; interaction is the learning that results from continuity in the context of the present situation. Combined, Dewey theorizes that no experience has a predetermined value because the resulting learning depends greatly on the experiences that have created a person's perspective over time. This concept is important to the academic nature of cooperative education because the influence of a faculty member to help guide the learning of each individual is paramount. It demonstrates the crucial role of a faculty member versus the appropriateness of a job developer in leading these experiences, which is what oftentimes occurs in institutions with a diminished understanding of academic experiential learning. Left without guided learning, a student may learn lessons counterproductive to personal and professional growth in the direction of a productive citizen.

The body of sociocultural learning theories also concerns itself with impacts both to and from society. These theories maintain that learning is a social process with a culturally determined community of practice (Eames & Cates, 2004). As such, learning can only be understood within the context of social situations. Meaningful learning is derived from the interaction between people and their surroundings, a similar concept to Dewey's (1938) Theory of Experience. This interaction is affected by tools and signs that

are inherently situated in a social environment. Sociocultural theories provide a theoretical basis for the importance of learning that occurs in a social context, such as a workplace, as a complement to classroom learning. While the classroom-based study of a field is important, sociocultural theories postulate that concepts are only fully understood within a live context. For example, in the study of cost reduction, a business student may fully understand and support layoffs. It is only when the student is able to see the true effects of the layoffs in a social setting, viewing social constructs such as the undermined level of trust between an employer and employee and the impacts of layoffs to employees or a company's reputation, that the student can truly understand the multiple facets inherent to the concept.

James (2000) remarked on a studied population of students in a science field, "during their environment-oriented work experience students expected and reported that the problems they experienced were by and large not technical and not knowledge based....They were problems that required application and/or synthesis and/or evaluation" (p. 164). These skills originate from the deep learning associated with the upper levels of Bloom's (1956) widely used Taxonomy of Educational Objectives. The problems in James's study were largely associated with skills (35.5%), all of which were non-subject specific; one of the identified solutions to these problems lay with communication. This result clearly suggests that internship courses provide an important opportunity to focus on the development and assessment of these skills.

Kolb's (1984) ELT demonstrates that the most effective manner in which an individual can learn is by incorporating all four regions of the brain. The experiential

learning cycle and learning styles are based upon the structure of the brain (Zull, 2002); this relationship is illustrated in Figure 1. While a plethora of theories related to student learning, student development, and student achievement and success exist (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005), at the core of all education is the brain's ability to learn and assimilate information. Brain-based learning (BBL) uses the evolving field of neuroscience to draw conclusions regarding cognitive processing. It is a neurophysiological theory that analyzes information processing through an understanding of the way in which the brain's hemispheres aid in the perception and processing of information (Hebb, 1949). Theorists explain that the left and right hemispheres of the brain serve distinct but equally specialized functions (Gazzaniga, 1998) and create each person's individualized cognitive, affective, and physical activity abilities (Jensen, 2008). The different strategies used by the hemispheres of each individual's brain to process information determine a person's learning style strengths (Dunn & Dunn, 1992; Felder, 1996; Hebb, 1949; Kolb, 1984). BBL explains cognitive information processing based on the physiological structure of the brain. Furthermore, it advocates that successful instruction will help individuals achieve meaningful learning through these structural considerations (Caine & Caine, 1995). It seeks to maximize the brain's natural learning course, theorizing that the art of teaching is actually the art of changing the brain (Zull, 2002).

### Learning Styles

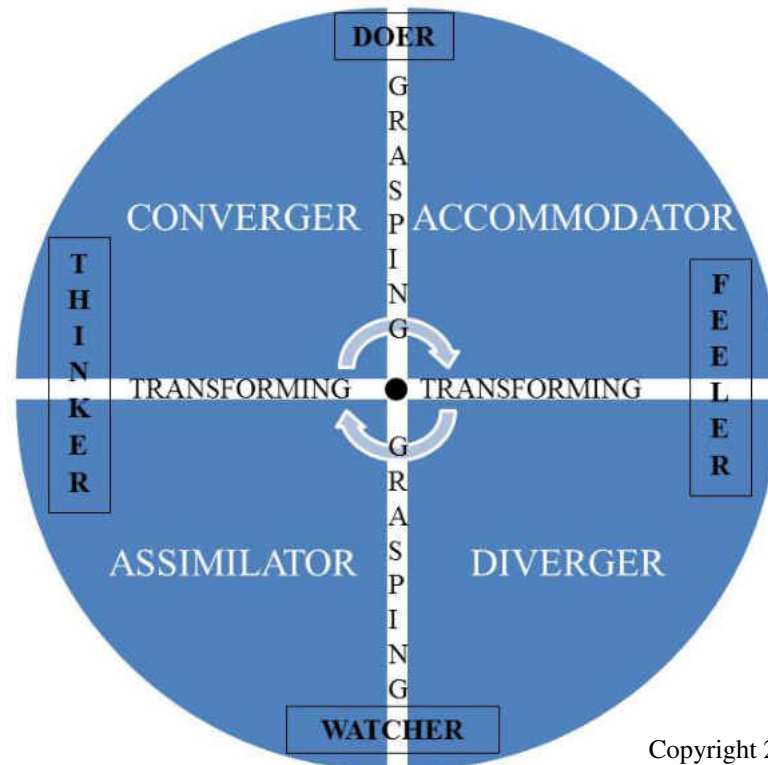
Kolb's ELT provided the framework for Kolb's Learning Style Inventory (versions in years 1971, 1976, 1985, 1993, 1999, 2005) and Honey and Mumford's

Learning Style Questionnaire (versions in 1986 and 2000). Both frameworks describe four interdependent learning styles that are based upon brain hemisphere dominance and served as the basis for the creation of the learning styles question in the Skills Assessment that will be used for the current study. The use of learning styles in teaching is founded on the notion that students prefer to learn differently (Diaz & Cartnal, 1999; Lemire, 1996; Snyder, 2000) and that educators should therefore craft lessons that engage all styles (Doolan & Honigsfeld, 2000; Ebeling, 2001; Harris & Cullen, 2008; Kolb & Kolb, 2005b; Nulty & Barrett, 1996; Terry, 2001; Zull, 2002). Their most common instructional relevance is illustrated by this meshing hypothesis, which states that instruction is most effective when delivered in the preferred style of the learner (Pashler, McDaniel, Rohrer, & Bjork, 2009). Under this hypothesis, for instructors who rely on a lecture style of classroom presentation by habit or necessity, this is a vital framework for prompting the use of teaching methods that will increase student learning and general satisfaction (Terry, 2001). Learning styles are often influenced by educational specialization, career choice, current job, personality type, and culture (Kolb, 1984; Kolb & Kolb, 2005a).

According to Kolb (1984), learning styles are created from the interaction of two continua that reflect preferences for information packaging and processing. Information packaging examines a preference for learning in either an abstract or concrete method along a feeling-thinking continuum and comprises the learning modes of concrete experience and abstract conceptualization. Processing, on the other hand, is concerned with the practice of learning through activity or reflective thought along a sliding scale

ranging from watching to doing, encapsulated by the modes of reflective observation and active experimentation. Kolb's learning styles are created from the intersection of these continua: the accommodator style most naturally uses concrete experience and active experimentation; the assimilator relies on abstract conceptualization and reflective observation; the converger characteristically draws upon abstract conceptualization and active experimentation; and the diverger most often utilizes reflective observation and concrete experience. Figure 3 pictorially illustrates the grasping and transforming constructs that combine to create the four learning styles. The circling arrows in the center of the diagram serve as a reminder that information is grasped and transformed using each of these methods regardless of individual learning style preference; congruence between learning style preference and information presentation is a means through which learning can be achieved more effortlessly.





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Figure 3. Learning styles.

Adapted from *Experiential learning: Experience as the source of learning and development*, by D. A. Kolb, 1984.

Meta-analysis of learning styles revealed that learning activities tailored to learning styles created greater academic achievement and that hospitality students trend towards a particular learning style (Hein & Budny, 2000). Research conducted with hospitality undergraduates in the United Kingdom and Australia revealed that students drawn to hospitality majors tend to prefer concrete and active learning styles as opposed to abstract and reflective ones (Barron & Arcodia, 2002; Lashley, 1999). Not enough significant cultural differences exist between these countries and the United States to

presume that this conclusion would not hold true for American undergraduate students as well. It is consequently hypothesized that transferable skills such as communication, emotional intelligence, and professional qualities will be most readily built through concrete and active learning experiences such as internships. In the current study, Research Question 2 will rely on student interns' selection of self-perceived learning style preference to examine a possible relationship between perceived learning style and transferable skill development through an experiential learning course. It has been demonstrated that by providing a lesson that is structured with BBL in consideration, all four learning styles will demonstrate statistically significant academic achievement that does not vary significantly by learning style (Duman, 2010). However, there are ways identified through learning styles that explain how individuals prefer to assimilate and process information that aid with the ease of individual learning.

Concrete and active learning styles arise from the sensory and motor lobes of the brain, combining to create the learning style that is referred to as the accommodator (Lashley & Barron, 2006). Accommodators are feeler-doers who thrive when they work with others, experience variety, and find themselves in unpredictable situations (Honey & Mumford, 1986). Each of these situational characteristics can be said to describe a hospitality working environment, providing an anecdotal understanding of why this is the preferred learning style for hospitality students (Lashley & Barron, 2006). Conversely, these situational characteristics are not commonly found in a traditional classroom, making the student-centered education of hospitality students a challenging prospect for educators. In a similar fashion, a tailored hospitality curriculum may be described as

“vocation/action in orientation” (Airey & Tribe, 2005), as it attempts to best match teaching philosophy to accommodator learners.

Although research has demonstrated that most students drawn to a career in hospitality most closely identify with the accommodator learning style, the three additional learning styles are decidedly also present. While accommodators prefer working with people rather than conducting technical analysis, assimilators prefer to learn through informal rational theory, building knowledge by transforming a wide range of information into a concise, usable form. The importance of the theory logic trumps the practical value; ideas and abstract concepts are of greater interest than people, making these learners most effective in careers in which they can work with information fields and scientific topics. Convergents are skilled at finding solutions to problems and making decisions based on practical application of theory and ideology. They share the assimilator preference for working with technically-based challenges instead of social and interpersonal ones, leading them towards technology and specialist careers. Conversely, divergers prefer to work with people, tending to be emotional and imaginative. They prefer to view situations from a diverse set of perspectives and are consequently very good at exercises such as brainstorming and careers involving the arts. While the acquisition of information through these three stylistic preferences represent learning preferences, it is important to note that knowledge and skills are built through the experiential learning cycle, irrespective of learning style (Kolb & Kolb, 2005b).

## Transferable Skills

There are several terms used to describe a set of skills that have been recognized as valuable to societal success. The term *soft skill* carries an implication of weakness or diminutive qualities, contrasting them with hard or technical skills. The phrase *life skill* does not accurately portray this set of tools as one that can be developed, particularly within the realms of academia or industry. A similar term, *employability skill*, places the skill set within the context of industry and largely divorces it from academics. A *core competency* connotes a fundamental skill that is common to all, implying the ability to develop a potentially innate skill. These phrases are both functional and dangerous due to their inherent implications or neglected pieces of an explanation. As such, the researcher will use the phrase *transferable skill* in hopes that it enriches the perception of the skills discussed to encompass both the developmental aspect as well as the notion that the skill is useful in a variety of settings. The transferable skills analyzed in the proposed research will be emotional intelligence, communication, and professional qualities.

Employers identify transferable skills as the top differentiator for job applicants and entry-level success in all industry types (Sutton, 2002; Wilhelm, 2004). The recognition of this documented need for a national transferable skills agenda was spurred by the U.S. Department of Labor's (1991) Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS) and the Education White Paper from the Pew Institute (Edgerton, 1997). However, it waned in visibility and momentum in during the national push for academic performance improvement that was driven by both the standards movement and the federal No Child Left Behind Act (2002). Its present-day resurgence

has been attributed to a renewed concern surrounding competitive pressures on the U.S. in an increasingly global economy (Gewertz, 2007).

To compete in this increasingly global marketplace, the U.S. has begun requiring more interpersonal interaction, as the combination of interpersonal competencies with technical knowledge is a necessity (Glenn, 2003; Perreault, 2004; Timm, 2005). This poses a unique challenge for educational administrators, who are being pressured to expand courses using web-based mediums in lieu of delivering additional face-to-face offerings to meet the scheduling needs of today's students; evidence of this can be seen in the recent proliferation of online, for-profit universities. In previous decades technical skills sufficed for obtaining and retaining employment, but more recent history has shown that the exclusive possession of this skill set is insufficient for job retention (James & James, 2004). In addition, the international Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, or OECD (2005), published a "skills strategy", recognizing skills as the global currency of the 21st century and calling for an interdisciplinary, collaborative approach to building them.

Three specific transferable skills have arisen continuously as ones that graduates of academic programs lack, particularly within the hospitality industry. Mitchell et al.'s (2010) study of business educators revealed that over 50% of the respondents identified communication, time management and organization skills, and ethics as "extremely important" for workplace success. Likewise, teamwork, business etiquette, diversity, customer service, problem solving, and critical thinking were considered to be "very important". The following studies provide the backdrop to this gap, offering validation of

the importance of communication, emotional intelligence, and professional qualities within the industry.

### Communication

Building communication skills have remained a top priority for higher education stakeholders throughout time (Ashley et al., 1995; Breiter & Clements, 1996; Enz et al., 1993; Goh et al., 2001; Mitchell et al., 2010; NACE, 2012; Su et al., 1997; U.S. Department of Labor, 1991). Both public and private party inquiries have found corroborating evidence of communication value across disciplines. Langford and Cates (1995) concluded that communication skills “are more sought after by employers than technical capabilities and high grade point averages” (p. 13). NACE’s Job Outlook studies in 2011 and 2012 surveyed employers and each revealed that candidates who have the strongest communication skills are among the most desirable (NACE, 2011, 2012b). A collaborative effort between Corporate Voices for Working Families, Partnership for 21st Century Skills, and Society for Human Resource Management produced “Are They Really Ready to Work?,” a reflection of employer perspectives on the applied skills and foundational knowledge present in graduates entering the 21st century workforce with recognized need for communication skills (Casner-Lotto & Barrington, 2006). OECD has touted communication as an essential higher-order skill that must be developed for success in the modern workforce (Fadel, 2012).

Hospitality-specific research has produced corroborating results for its sub-sector. Tas (1988) organized the first list of hospitality management trainee competencies as

ranked by the general managers of the top 75 U.S. hotels, finding that oral and written communication skills were among the top three. Chung-Herrera, Enz, and Lankau (2003) developed a competencies model for the hospitality industry leader that defined communication as a top competency with respect to the aspects of speaking, facilitating open communication, listening, and writing. Johanson, Ghiselli, Shea, and Roberts (2011) conducted a 25-year review of key competencies required by industry for hospitality graduates and found communication skills present in each study reviewed.

The topic of communication is as varied as the accompanying skills levels found in today's students. It is divided by literature into specialized sections such as verbal, nonverbal, technical, interpersonal, intrapersonal, oral, written, formal, informal, visual, and electronic. Therefore, the five skill-based questions that will be asked in the current study seek an understanding of proficiency with respect to speaking, writing, presenting, listening, and questioning.

### Emotional Intelligence

Deemed the *sine qua non* of leadership (Rao, 2006), emotional intelligence (EI) has been recently conceived of as a greater indicator of success than intellectual intelligence or IQ (Watkin, 2000). Since its inception, the term emotional intelligence has evolved to encompass two different types of EI: ability models (Mayer & Salovey, 1997) and trait models (Bar-On, 2001; Goleman, 1995, 1998; Petrides & Furnham, 2001). Mayer and Salovey's (1997) model characterizes ability-based EI as a set of cognitive skills related to emotional functioning, including emotional perception, expression,

understanding, and regulation. Goleman's (1998) work popularized the term in the business world, explaining it through four constructs: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management. Through his 1995 work, Goleman also found that emotional intelligence has been determined to serve as a stronger predictor for success in academic, home, and professional life than the more traditional concept of analytical intelligence.

EI has been consistently ranked as one of the top three foundational skills for success in the service-driven United States hospitality economy (Annaroud, 2006; Ashley et al., 1995; Breiter & Clements, 1996; Enz, Renaghan, & Geller, 1993; Goh, Blum, & Shumate, 2001; Jonker & Jonker, 1990; Mitchell et al., 2010; Nelson & Dobson, 2001; Okeiyi, Finley, & Postel, 1994; Scott-Halsell, Blum, & Huffman, 2008; Su, Miller, & Shanklin, 1997; Tas, LaBrecque, & Clayton, 1996; U.S. Department of Labor, 1991). Research completed by Dulewicz, Higgs, and Slaski (2003) revealed that EI accounts for 30% of the variance in management performance. Higher levels of EI correlate to hospitality industry longevity (Abraham, 1999; Goleman, 1998; McClelland, 1999; Scott-Halsell et al., 2008; Spencer & Spencer, 1993). Researchers have repeatedly found that this skill set can be taught, which is positive news for the academic community desirous of producing increasingly industry-ready graduates (Ashkanasy, Zerbe, & Haertl, 2002; Caruso, Mayer, & Salovey, 2002; Kolb, 1984; Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2004; Neisser et al., 1996; Sternberg, 2001).



## Professional Qualities

The importance of the specific skills encompassed by the term “professional qualities” has also been well-documented, but has gained increasing importance for educators and industry professionals in recent studies (Annaraud, 2006; Enz et al., 1993; Goh et al., 2001; U.S. Department of Labor, 1991). The scale of professional qualities used in the current study will include ethical and self-management behaviors (Cates & Cedercreutz, 2008), exemplified by the questions regarding assuming responsibility/accountability for actions; exhibiting self-confidence; possessing honesty, integrity, and personal ethics; and demonstrating a positive attitude towards change. Organizations are expecting to find entry-level graduates who possess these professional qualities and can respond appropriately to the changing face of the industry (National Business Education Association, 2004).

In Tas’s 1988 organization of the first list of hospitality management trainee competencies as ranked by the general managers of the top 75 U.S. hotels, he reported that professional and ethical standards in the workplace were among the top three. Chung-Herrera et al. (2003) developed a competencies model for the hospitality industry leader that defined self-management as a top competency, recognizing the included construct of “ethics and integrity” as not only statistically significantly more highly rated by industry leaders than any other construct within the category, but also the highest-rated competency overall. After a review of studies that focused on needed hospitality skills, it was concluded that concerns regarding ethics had become increasingly prominent in recent years (Johanson et al., 2011).

To understand the value of each of these three transferable skills, it is important to understand the context in which they are being used. The following sections include an overview of the hospitality industry and the academic endeavors that have been taken to build the aforementioned skills within the field.

### Hospitality Industry Overview

The hospitality industry is a subsection of the service-providing industries that employs over 13.5 million workers in the United States (BLS, 2012). It encompasses areas such as food and beverage operations, event planning, theme park operations, trade show and convention planning, marketing, meeting planning, lodging operations, and transportation operations. The BLS, which classifies leisure and hospitality as hotels, recreation, arts, entertainment, and food service, estimated that for management and non-management positions in 2012, average hourly wage earned by employees exceeded \$13.00 and average hours worked were approximately 26 per week. Furthermore, between January 2010 and January 2012, the hospitality industry saw one of the country's largest private sector employment gains, with increases approximating 44,000. Of all employed U.S. residents between 16 and 24 years of age, a total of 26%, or 4.8 million, earned their income from this sector in 2011. Employment for meeting, convention, and event planners is predicted to far exceed the occupational average with a projected 44% growth from 2010 to 2020. Job opportunities are projected to be the richest for those with a degree in hospitality management or a related field (BLS, 2012). According to the job search site Indeed (2012), hospitality job postings have increased

48% and clicks on hospitality jobs have increased 27% between April 2011 and April 2012.

The increase in labor is a logical outgrowth of a succeeding industry. The U.S. hotel industry's total revenue grew by 7.5% in 2011 to \$137.5 billion, the largest annual percentage change over the previous 10 years, according to the Hotel Operating Statistics (HOST) Study for 2011 (STR, 2012). The National Restaurant Association expects total restaurant industry sales to reach a record high of \$632 billion in 2012—a 3.5% increase over 2011—marking the second consecutive year that industry sales have topped \$600 billion. In addition, the restaurant industry will continue to be the nation's second largest private sector employer; overall restaurant industry employment is expected to reach 12.9 million in 2012, representing 10% of the total U.S. workforce. The trending internationalization of businesses continues to fuel the growth being seen and anticipated in the meeting, convention, and event fields.

#### Academic Engagement through Undergraduate Education

The current study intends to justify academic courses, such as general education requirements that seek to develop the student as a holistic learner, in addition to those that teach technical skills. A goal of higher education is to develop learners who engage with material through interacting critically with content, relating new ideas to previous experience, and examining the logic of an argument (James, 2000); this goal can be developed most readily through a program in the arts (Fyfe, 1996). Science curriculum, which creates technical knowledge akin to the community college model, is much more

likely to be devoid of non-technical skill development and therefore is more likely to create only superficial learners (Fyfe, 1996). The study of hospitality falls between the fields of the arts and the sciences, using the emotion of the arts to increase interpersonal performance and the science of theory to guide best practices. It is hoped that the research will provide awareness of the importance of the oft-neglected study of interpersonal and intrapersonal skills (Liptak, 2005). Dewey (1997), considered the first scholar on experiential learning with his 1938 work *Experience and Education*, recognized that “when the schools depart from the educational conditions effective in the out-of-school environment, they necessarily substitute a bookish, pseudo-intellectual spirit for a social spirit” (p. 46). In order for institutions to remain relevant, they must understand their roles in the lives of the students they serve.

In today’s market-driven society, learning is geared toward pleasing stakeholders and generating assessable outcomes. Because of the commonalities of employer relationships and work that is linked to student employability between experiential learning offices and career services departments, the two have increasingly been merged together across the country. However, while the two departments may share the same goal of societally productive graduates, the means through which the goal is accomplished makes them demonstrably different at their core. Should these departments exist in a context outside of higher education, a structural association may have further merits; however, within an institution of higher education whose structure is purposefully delineated by the two organizational prongs of academic affairs (academic education) and student services (support of and for education), the academic and non-academic process

differentiations between the departments is significant (S. Dressler, personal communication, August 30, 2012).

While career services departments provide a link between students and jobs through relationships with industry employers, experiential learning offices build and guide learning experiences through relationships with industry mentors and andragogically supported coursework. Experiential learning builds the student skills that both make them competitive for positions (Sutton, 2002) and ensure that they retain positions, enabling them to thrive within the societal marketplace (Cranmer, 2006; Nunan, 1999; Wilhelm, 2004). The connection to faculty, centerpiece of reflection and feedback, and orientation toward learning outcomes produce the greatest benefits to the student and the institution, enabling such career centers to produce more impressive graduate employment metrics (Grubb, 1995).

### Role of Accreditation

Accrediting bodies have been significant drivers of continuous educational improvement and outcomes-based assessment since the 1990s. Experiential learning roots grew within the field of engineering and through the Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology (ABET), an accrediting body that also was to become a pioneer for changing accreditation criteria. ABET (1998) developed their Criteria 2000 to emphasize outcomes-based skills from the backdrop of professional engineering industry organizations touting the importance of an update to accrediting criteria. This development was made in response to the growing emphasis on the value of deriving

curricular components from societal needs. In addition to this context, the U.S. Department of Labor's (1991) Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS) and the *Education White Paper* from the Pew Institute (Edgerton, 1997) turned the focus from simply teaching to measuring learning, which spread to accreditors, legislators, parents, and students. The Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA), which legitimizes a large number of regional institutional accrediting bodies, reported that increasing numbers of regional accrediting organization are now collecting evidentiary student learning outcome data to determine accreditation standing in response to these market-driven stakeholder needs. CHEA (2012) has explained the importance of the use of results that can be assessed against "externally informed or benchmarked level of achievement," similar to this study's use of an employer evaluation, and "engagement in...active learning practices" (p. 6).

Just as sociocultural theories emphasize the importance of experiential learning in a relevant context, one of the tenets of assessment protocol dictates that the assessment process must be completed in the context of the environment in which the education prepares the student (Suskie, 2000, 2006). This connection to contextual evaluation is important to note as it affirms the value of learning occurring from internships, which create learning in the context in which skills will be used. In the current study, this notion will be engaged through the incorporation of evaluations by employers.

The assessment movement led to the ability for internship programs to evaluate student site and skill performance through self-perception and analysis of stakeholder views. Assessment of student learning outcomes provides an excellent opportunity for

cooperative education programs to document the academic outcomes associated with experiential learning courses and further its recognition as an academic endeavor (Hartley & Smith, 2000). Regarding the assessment of efficacy of educational processes, parameter averages and standard deviations of internship assessment data have been shown to be valid metrics for determining which educational processes are stable and which require further improvement from both practical (Cedercreutz, Cates, Maltbie, Miller, & Uwakweh, 2005) and conceptual (Cedercreutz & Cates, 2006) viewpoints. University faculty and administrators are increasingly utilizing the assessment built into experiential learning courses as a powerful source for gathering primary data from community partners related to the success of student learning application and relevant skills acquired.

### Characteristics of the Undergraduate Population

The undergraduate population today is very different than in previous decades. Growing up in the context of 80 bits of feedback per minute through video games (Nelson, 2005) and unparalleled information access creates expectations and skills that have never before been seen or put to use in a work environment. The 21st century workplace has evolved rapidly through technology (Redmann & Kotrlick, 2004), with the primary motivation for college attendance being to achieve greater compensation and employment opportunities (Chung-Herrera et al., 2003; Coplin, 2003; Green, Hammer, & Star, 2009). However, the “shortage of skills confronting today’s dynamic workforce goes beyond academic and hands-on occupational skills” (National Business Education

Association, 2004). The high expectations of self, strong confidence, and unmatched level of collective education that accompany this generation promise to distinguish them from any previous generation (Nelson, 2005), and as they assess their skills sets in relation to the needs of the hospitality industry, different skill gaps and gap sizes will invariably occur than were seen among previous graduates. Millennials tend to display less empathy and engage in unprecedented levels of social media (2005). These qualities have been shown to affect skills deemed as important for success in industry and life, such as emotional intelligence and communication (Bryner, 2010). Arguably the best way in which to prepare graduates to become employees in this context is to develop both technical and soft skills through educational curricula.

Nevertheless, this generation is not the only one seeking education from colleges and universities. With gratitude due in large part to the Serviceman's Readjustment Act of 1944 (GI Bill), over 43% of today's college students are non-traditional (Altbach, Berdahl, & Gumport, 2005; MacKinnon & Floyd, 2011). This demographic includes those over 25 years of age who most often are seeking part-time, night or weekend education due to job responsibilities, epitomizing the need for instructors who can relatedly conjoin industry experience with classroom learning (Keller, 2008).

### Hospitality in Academe

Change in higher education is often slow to come, and when it does, it can be met with suspicion and resistance (Keller, 2008). This quality is evidenced by the slow adoption of experiential learning courses over the past century, despite their andragogical



soundness. This trend can be seen in the skepticism with which the undergraduate degree in hospitality has historically been met (Casado, 2003; Jafari & Ritchie, 1981; Lefever & Withiam, 1998; Pavesic, 1984; Scott, Puleo, & Crofts, 2007; Tribe, 2002; Umbreit, 1992).

The degree serves several stakeholders and requires justification of its credibility in the same manner as experiential learning courses. Just as with experiential learning courses, hospitality curricula's applied nature and industry ties cause faculty to maintain a watchful eye on the academic fortitude of its course of study. Again, as in the case of experiential learning, its industry partner stakeholders demand these programs to produce graduates with both technical and non-technical skill sets designed to serve the closely connected industry community. Similarly to the experiential learning organizational structures that fluctuate between academics and student services, hospitality management's programmatic housing within areas such as interdisciplinary studies, geography, recreation, and business, as well as its placement within its own college, has created a veritable identity crisis that is not yet overcome by a widely recognized and accepted body of knowledge (Scott et al., 2007). Although the study of hospitality dates back to Cornell University in 1922 (McIntosh, 1992), its growth within community colleges (Fletcher, 1991) and historic ability to allow workers in this industry to succeed without a specialized degree continue to cloud program credibility 90 years later.

Although the first hotel management curriculum was developed in 1922, Michigan State University developed the world's first four-year degree in Travel and Tourism Management in 1969 (Jafari, 2003). Industry incepted the creation of such a

program of study (Hunt & Layne, 1991), which focused largely on skills training and developed prior to the existence of much of the relevant scholarly literature. With the rise of industry, the proliferation of four-year degree programs and industry recognition of the necessity for a broadened base of academic and transferable skills came about as well (Jafari, 1993). In a study of 168 four and five star hotel general managers in Turkey, it was revealed that approximately 50 percent received formal vocational education in hospitality (Okumus et. al, unpublished). This closely mirrors statistics from similar studies in Australia (Ladkin, 2002), but is vastly overshadowed by the estimated 83 percent of hospitality degree-earning hotel general managers in the United Kingdom (Ladkin & Riley, 1996).

National and international professional associations and academic journals have furthered the legitimacy of the need for, and existence of, this field of study. The accompanying curricular design often included academic internships, such as Reigel and Dallas's (1999) multiple approaches, as well as Ritchie's (1995) Hotel School Model, General Management with a Tourism Focus (GMTF), and Hybrid Model of Tourism and Hospitality Education. In addition, Koh's (1995) model categorized experiential education as one of the four necessary elements of a four-year tourism management curriculum while Chen and Groves' (1999) models, founded on the differentiating definitions between tourism and hospitality, showcase the importance of internships in the two of their three educational models that generate workforce-prepared graduates. The needed curricular blend of vocationalism and theoretical study is served in many ways, including the hiring of faculty with hospitality industry experience and the

curricular counsel of industry advisory boards. Experiential learning is a crucial aspect in these curricular designs for ensuring the successful preparatory balance in modern hospitality degree programs (Jafari, 2003).

### Academic Internship Course

In their exhaustive review of literature, Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) concluded that active participation in major-related academic internship courses has been shown to produce graduates able to provide higher quality work, accept supervision with increased understanding, demonstrate superior time management, interact more successfully with peers on team projects, and more rapidly transition from college to full-time employment, compared to those without work experience. Furthermore, Pascarella and Terenzini note that this immersive, deep approach to learning has been shown to significantly enhance dimensions of student career development, positively impact transferable skills, and provide a positive impact on job satisfaction approximately equivalent to the magnitude that is provided by salary.

Experiences within a working environment cause individuals to further develop a deep approach to learning (Fyfe, 1996; Sadler-Smith, 1996) and thereby create more involved and academically engaged students. “An important consideration for environmental education is to consider the relevance of developing reflective practitioners” (James, 2000, p. 159). James (2000) additionally noted,

If a major role of higher education is to encourage the development of a deep approach to learning then an environment, certainly in the final year of a

programme, needs to be developed which encourages and builds on the experiences of the work experience. (p. 165).

The vast majority of the top hospitality undergraduate programs in the U.S. offer curricular practical training as a required component to their academic degree and a variety of program examples follow. Examples of such requirements are summarized in Table 2. Less-recognized hospitality programs, such as the one found at Georgia State University's Cecil B. Day School of Hospitality Administration, still encourage work-study courses with practicum and hands-on management experiences as well, recognizing the importance of industry experience in developing professional work habits and self-confidence through a required, noncredit course (GSU, 2012). Even if the level of knowledge acquired by the student at their experiential learning internship site is varying, as is intimated by the spectrum of curricular components, the experience will invariably and significantly impact classroom experience (Canjar, 1987; Morgan, 2004).

Table 2

*Examples of Hospitality Management Program Requirements at Various Institutions*

Institution	Program	Requirement
Cornell University	School of Hotel Administration	Total of 800 hours of industry practice to balance theoretical teaching (Cornell University, 2012)
Florida State University (FSU)	Dedman School of Hospitality	12 credit hours and 1,000 work hours through management internship (FSU, 2012)
Michigan State University (MSU)	The School of Hospitality Business	Two-tiered, paid internship program required Tier 1: Participation in entry-level or hourly position Tier 2: Performance in rotational position within three or more departments or supervisor, management, or shadow management capacity (MSU, 2012)
Northern Arizona University (NAU)	School of Hotel & Restaurant Management	Formalized or informal internship experiences totaling 1,200 hours in hospitality management (NAU, 2011)
University of Houston	Conrad H. Hilton College	Two hospitality practicum courses, 300 hours of industry experience each Two management training work experience courses offered; three credits each (UH, 2012)
University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV)	William F. Harrah College of Hotel Administration	Two senior-level capstone internship courses to ensure employer recruitment of well-rounded graduates (UNLV, 2012)

## Summary

Research on experiential learning, learning styles, transferable skills, the hospitality industry, and academic components of an internship course synergize through hospitality programs with experiential learning components, where student interns learn through classroom courses as well as internship courses. The research questions posed using the data from these courses aim to further understand experiential learning's role in the facilitation of transferable skill development that is occurring within present-day hospitality degree-seeking undergraduates. The call for the development of skills in communication, emotional intelligence, and professional qualities in graduates of hospitality baccalaureate programs has been chronicled throughout time, indicating a need for a focused solution. Based on the literature, it is anticipated that transferable skill development will be positively impacted by the participation of an experiential learning course.

## **CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY**

The proposed study is designed so that hospitality student interns can reflect exclusively on their learning in an experiential learning course when assessing personal skill development. The pre- and post-course questionnaires seek the reporting of learning which occurred exclusively through experiential learning so that it can be isolated and measured. Intern self-reported learning styles will be compared to the self-reported change in skills over the semester. The post-course intern skill rating will then be compared to the intern's employer's perception of skill level for comparison.

### Research Questions

This study will explore the following questions:

1. Is there a self-perceived change in a student's applied (a) communication, (b) emotional intelligence, and (c) professional qualities skills after the first semester of internship class?
2. Does amount of self-perceived change in a student's applied (a) communication, (b) emotional intelligence, and (c) professional qualities skills relate to self-reported learning style preferences?
3. Does the level of self-perceived proficiency in a student's applied (a) communication, (b) emotional intelligence, and (c) professional qualities skills after the first semester of internship class relate to their respective employer's perceptions on the same skills?

4. Is there a difference between the levels of overall intern performance as perceived by interns versus employers?

### Research Design

The student intern research was conducted as part of a pre-post survey design for intern self-assessment of skills and perception of learning style preference. The pre-internship intern survey (Skills Assessment) questions were based upon the post-internship survey (Student Evaluation) questions asked by the University of Central Florida's (UCF) Office of Experiential Learning (OEL) in the previous semester (Fall 2011). Changes made at the end of the Fall 2011 semester and during the Spring 2012 semester through a departmental survey revision led to a change in verb tense from the infinitive to plural, but the Student Evaluation stems otherwise match those from the Skills Assessment as they relate to the transferable skills being studied. The OEL created an evaluation for internship employers (Employer Evaluation) that corresponds with the Student Evaluation for all relevant skills-based questions. Through the Employer Evaluation, intern employers are surveyed on their perceptions of their intern's skills using a post-internship survey completed during the final weeks of the internship, which is the same time frame during which the interns complete the Student Evaluation.

This specific semester was chosen for further examination because it had the largest internship enrollment for any internship course to date, offering the possibility for the largest possible number of respondents. HFT 3940 Internship 1 was chosen in an effort to measure the self-perceived skill levels of students both before and after their first



internship course. If students' second or third required course was instead selected as a focus, students would have been previously exposed to the benefits of an experiential learning course, hence negating the pre-post benefits of this study.

### Instrumentation

The following section introduces the questionnaires and their evolution of development to aid in understanding the various instruments used by interns during the Spring 2012 HFT 3940 Internship 1 course.

### Reliability and Validity

The three instruments used in this study all originated from an instrument created in 2007 by the Division of Professional Practice at the University of Cincinnati (UCDPP). UCF's OEL adopted the UCDPP questionnaires as UCF's Student Evaluation and Employer Evaluation; the Skills Assessment that will be used in the current study is a shortened version of the Student Evaluation that includes an additional question regarding learning styles as well as an open-ended question for sharing additional student thoughts. Content validity of the original survey was ensured through a review process conducted by consultation with national colleagues; review by internal staff; and focus groups with faculty, students, and employers (Cates & Cedercreutz, 2008).

The UCDPP survey was normed on a group of 4,900 people and displayed a strong Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .98. Of the 504 employers in various disciplines, 97.5% of them found each skill parameter to be important. Each of the skill constructs

produced an alpha coefficient greater than .80, evidencing a high level of reliability. In analyzing variance, 80.6% of the observed score variation on the Communication scale and 88.2% of the observed score variation on the Professional Qualities scale could be explained by the true scale scores (Cedercreutz, 2007). In its original form, the survey was used in the experiential learning courses at the University of Cincinnati.

The Student Evaluation and Employer Evaluation instruments were modified only slightly for use at UCF's OEL. Both the UCDDP instrument and the OEL instrument have undergone several slight revisions to reflect the changing societal interests within skill development. The OEL questionnaire added a category for Emotional/Social Intelligence from which the Emotional Intelligence scale used for this study was derived. The Emotional Intelligence scale also utilized one question from the Professional Qualities section, consequently altering the original UCDDP scale for Professional Qualities. The Communication scale remained the same in content in the OEL survey, but separated two constructs that were previously joined as "listening and questioning skills." The changes to Professional Qualities and Communication are not of sizeable magnitude and therefore the reliability of the instruments were not expected to be significantly affected, but the reliability of these two scales, in addition to that of the created Emotional Intelligence scale, were tested nonetheless using Cronbach's alpha.

Table 3 showcases the relationship between the research question, the questionnaires, and which item numbers correspond to each.

Table 3

*Relationship between Research Questions and Survey Instruments*

	Skills Assessment	Student Evaluation	Employer Evaluation
1	Comm: Q4, 5, 6, 7, 8 EI: Q16, 28, 29, 30, 31 Prof. Qual: Q13, 14, 15, 17	Comm: Q19, 20, 21, 22, 23 EI: Q32, 42, 43, 44, 45 Prof. Qual: Q29, 30, 31, 33	
2	Comm: Q4, 5, 6, 7, 8 EI: Q16, 28, 29, 30, 31 Prof. Qual: Q13, 14, 15, 17 LS: Q40	Comm: Q19, 20, 21, 22, 23 EI: Q32, 42, 43, 44, 45 Prof. Qual: Q29, 30, 31, 33	
3		Comm: Q19, 20, 21, 22, 23 EI: Q32, 42, 43, 44, 45 Prof. Qual: Q29, 30, 31, 33	Comm: Q11, 12, 13, 14, 15 EI: Q24, 37, 38, 39, 40 Prof. Qual: Q21, 22, 23, 25
4		Overall: Q62	Overall: Q48

*Note.* Comm = Communications. EI = Emotional Intelligence. Prof. Qual = Professional Qualities. LS = Learning Styles.

## Skills Assessment (Pre-Survey)

The questionnaire was constructed using questions from the Fall 2011 administration of OEL's Student Evaluation. As with the Student Evaluation, skills were divided into questions regarding behaviors, knowledge, abilities, and values that combine to exemplify aspects of the skill. Responses were collected using a five point Likert-type scale with choices of *outstanding*, *very good*, *average*, *marginal*, and *unsatisfactory*.

Based on the researcher's recommendations and position as a faculty member within OEL, several changes were instituted for the Spring 2012 administration of the Student Evaluation to increase the validity of the metrics and collect contextually relevant results that reflect the skill interests of today's global society. This change effectively reduced the number of questions in the Skills Assessment delivered at the beginning of the Spring 2012 semester that remained identical to those in the Student Evaluation administered at the end of the term, and consequently eliminated the possibility of analyzing certain questions and skill categories in a pre-post survey design methodology. These changes minimally affect the three transferable skills used for analysis in this study through the Communication question regarding presentations. In the Skills Assessment, the question asks generally about making effective presentations, while in the Student Evaluation, the question scope is clarified by referencing both "formal and informal" presentations. This change was recommended and instituted to clarify the intent of the question and decrease nonresponse error.

## Learning Styles Question

The researcher developed a learning styles question in an attempt to understand the learning styles with which hospitality students most and least identify. The learning styles question (Question 40 on the Skills Assessment) was constructed as a forced choice ranking of 1 to 4 in the same way in which Kolb's (1985) revised LSI Version 2 (LSI-II) and three subsequent versions. This set of questions prompts participants to rank alternate endings to 12 sentences from 1 to 4. The use of this question style assists with the presentation of alternatives and encourages reflection on the process of learning (Lashley & Barron, 2006). It was also confirmed that individual self-matching has been shown to be an effective method for categorizing a student's learning style (Terry, 2001).

Kolb (1984), as well as Kolb and Kolb (2005a, 2005b), described four interdependent learning styles that are based on brain hemisphere dominance: accommodator, assimilator, converger, and diverger; these served as the basis for the four sentences that the interns were asked to rank. Kolb and Kolb described an accommodator as one who learns primarily from "hands on" experience, which led to the sentence option "I learn through experience in concrete situations." The assimilator is described as best with "understanding a wide range of information and putting it into concise, logical form", leading to the student option of "I learn through processing information and assimilating it into coherent theories and models." Students with the converger learning style find practical uses for ideas and theories while solving problems; this style was represented as the option "I learn by relating new information to practical solutions and problems." Finally, the diverger is imaginative and enjoys viewing situations from

multiple points of view, so the option “I learn through pondering experiences and observing them from different perspectives” was provided to represent this group of student learners.

Research has supported internal reliability for the four LSI-II learning style constructs, resulting from Cronbach’s alpha coefficients ranging from .77 to .87 (Geiger, Boyle, & Pinto, 1993; Kayes, 2005; Loo, 1996; Willcoxson & Prosser, 1996). While historical research on construct validity has been mixed, recent research has supported the validity of the improved instrument, indicating empirically distinct constructs (Kayes, 2005). Subsequent LSI version did not alter the validated instrument, instead simply providing additional resources and materials such as an extended ability to convert raw scores into LSI results (Kolb & Kolb, 2005a). This provides assurance that the four styles used to create the single learning style question in the Skills Assessment were developed from a tested, validated instrument. The LSI 4.0, released in 2012, represented the first substantive revision since the 1999 and suggests the existence of nine learning styles (Experience Based Learning Systems, Inc, 2012). However, as this was not released at the time of study construction and the instrument has not yet been tested by independent sources, the time-tested four style model was used.

#### Emotional Intelligence Scale

Additional researcher-developed material includes a skill set designed to assess perceived Emotional Intelligence. A category of skill assessment that had not appeared on the Student Evaluation or Employer Evaluation prior to Spring 2012 was that of

Emotional/Social Intelligence. Questions relating to applied emotional intelligence were derived from the Wong and Law (2002) Emotional Intelligence Scale survey questions, which continue to be relevant in the study of EI today (Devonish & Greenidge, 2010). Wong and Law's EI measurement instrument was designed to be used in leadership and management studies on job outcomes. The instrument was created to address the need for an EI scale that was appropriate for use when conducting research on the workplace. Due to the focus of the currently proposed study's research on skill sets that are built in conjunction with and on the site of a workplace, it was a natural choice as a foundational questionnaire from which questions for the Skills Assessment, Student Evaluation, and Employer Evaluation could be built.

Wong and Law's (2002) scale was derived using Mayer and Salovey's (1997) ability model philosophy of EI measurement. This is an ability-based set of constructs that are distinguished from the trait-based constructs of other models such as Bar-On (2001) and Goleman (1995, 1998) and chosen because of the goal of assessing changing skills and abilities versus inherent, less mutable personality traits. When viewed as a set of abilities, EI is often reliably measured through the use of self-report instruments. This result has been evidenced in studies by Barchard and Hakstian (2004); Mayer and Stevens (1994); Salovey, Mayer, Goldman, Turvey, and Palfai (1995); Schutte et al. (1998), and Goldenberg, Matheson, and Mantler (2006). This evidence provides confidence in using a self-report method of assessment instead of a performance-based one. Although self-reported metrics are more sensitive to social desirability motives (Dillman, Smyth, & Christian, 2009), the comparison to employer perceptions on the

Employer Evaluation will assist in mitigating this bias. As EI is often conceptualized as predictive of functioning and affective well-being, the self-report measure may actually offer a superior index of important EI components (Goldenberg, et al., 2006).

The Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale validated EI as being distinct from personality and has been shown to be a solid predictor of job performance (Law, Wong, & Song, 2004). Four questions are asked of each of the four central aspects of EI: self-emotion appraisal, others' emotion appraisal, regulation of emotion, and use of emotion. When answered using a self-rating scale, the scale showed strong content validity and a coefficient alpha measuring reliability of .78 (Law et al., 2004).

The use of one question from each of the four major EI categories found on the Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale resulted in the creation of three of the five EI questions that appeared on the study's assessments: understanding emotions, controlling emotions, and understanding the emotions of others. A question that existed in the Professional Qualities section of the Student Evaluation and Employer Evaluation prior to the creation of the Emotional/Social Intelligence survey category that is related to self-motivation correlates with Wong, Law, and Song's (2004) Use of Emotion category and will be included when creating an EI composite variable instead of maintaining its presence as part of the Professional Qualities composite variable.

The perspective-taking question that appears in the Emotional/Social Intelligence category will be an addition to the construct and composite variable for Emotional Intelligence in recognition of the importance of this ability to hospitality students. The inclusion of such a measure is not unprecedented and can be seen in scales such as the



renowned and widely employed Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test, or MSCEIT (Maul, 2012; Mayer, Salovey & Caruso, 2002), in the form of a Perceiving Emotions category of assessment. The four added questions have been retained on the Student Evaluation and Employer Evaluation for use in future semesters by the OEL. A depiction of the questions on which the study questions were based and corresponding assessment questions can be seen in Table 4.

Table 4

*Derivation of Emotional Intelligence Questions*

EI Instrument	Instrument Construct & Question Number	Instrument Question Text	Skills Assessment Question Text	Assessment Question
Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale	Self-Emotion Appraisal (SEA): Q2	I have good understanding of my own emotions.	Understanding my emotions <sup>a</sup>	SA: Q28 SE: Q42 EE: Q37
	Others' Emotion Appraisal (OEA): Q8	I have good understanding of the emotions of people around me.	Understanding the emotions of others <sup>a</sup>	SA: Q30 SE: Q44 EE: Q39
	Regulation of Emotion (ROE): Q16	I have good control of my own emotions.	Controlling my emotions <sup>a</sup>	SA: Q29 SE: Q43 EE: Q38
	Use of Emotion (UOE): Q11	I am a self-motivated person.	Showing initiative/being self-motivated	SA: Q16 SE: Q32 EE: Q24
Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test	Perceiving Emotions: Branch 1	Perceiving Emotions questions on faces and pictures	Ability to take the perspective of others <sup>a</sup>	SA: Q31 SE: Q45 EE: Q40

<sup>a</sup>Questions created for this study and retained for continuous use on the Student Evaluation and Employer Evaluation administered by OEL

## Student Evaluation (Post-Survey)

Student interns enrolled in internship classes at UCF complete a 42-item Student Evaluation at the end of each semester. The instrument measures intern self-perception of proficiencies through the categories of Communication, Conceptual/Analytic Ability, Understanding and Applying Information, Professional Qualities, Teamwork, Technology, Design/Experiment Skills, Emotional/Social Intelligence, Organization/Planning, and Work Habits. Responses to these questions are collected using a five-point Likert-type scale with choices of *outstanding*, *very good*, *average*, *marginal*, and *unsatisfactory*. In addition, a five-point Likert-type scale with options of *agree completely*, *agree somewhat*, *neither agree nor disagree*, *disagree somewhat*, and *disagree completely* is used to understand responses to nine questions evaluating the intern's work site.

Interns are given the opportunity to rate the OEL and offer suggestions for their courses and processes through an open-ended question. Additional open-ended questions ask about favorite aspects of the course experience, challenges during the course experience, favorite part about learning outside the classroom in a professional setting, and solicit any further comments. There are also survey items that included personal identifiers (name and student's university-assigned ID), confirmation of degree, major, company name in which the internship was completed, intent to return to internship site, graduation status, offer of employment with internship site, and an overall experience rating. Students who were offered employment at an internship site are also asked to answer questions regarding target acceptance of offer, job title, job responsibilities, and

starting salary. The questions analyzed through this study are ones related to emotional intelligence, communication, professional qualities, and overall rating of semester performance. Appendix E contains a copy of the Student Evaluation.

### Employer Evaluation

The Employer Evaluation was provided to employers by their interns in the form of an electronic link that delivered the questionnaire through the survey software provider Qualtrics. Questions analyzed in this study were identical to ones asked in the Student Evaluation. Other questions included student identifiers, including student name, degree program, and major; employer's phone number and e-mail address, to which survey responses would be sent to upon survey completion; and overall rating of student intern performance. There are open-ended response opportunities prompting the employer to share intern strengths and needed improvements. Responses to the questions analyzed in this study regarding emotional intelligence, communication, and professional qualities were collected using a five point Likert-type scale with choices of *outstanding*, *very good*, *average*, *marginal*, and *unsatisfactory*. Additionally, the overall rating of the intern's performance will be used for analysis. Appendix F contains a copy of the Employer Evaluation.

### Variables

There are two sets of dependent, ordinal variables used for analysis to address Research Question 1. The first set of dependent variables come from the intern's pre-

internship self-perceived skill rating from the Skills Assessment, while the second set comes from the post-internship self-perceived skill rating from the Student Evaluation. Both sets address the skill sets of emotional intelligence, communication, and professional qualities and contain matching questions. In addition to the ordinal variables representing each individual question, a pair of matching sets of continuous composite variables will also be formed for each of the three skill sets. Composite variables will be calculated by summing the responses to each individual question constituting a construct and dividing by the number of questions in the construct. In doing so, each composite variable will remain on the same scale, regardless of the number of items within the construct. Time will serve as the matching factor for this analysis, so no additional independent variables were necessary.

The change in self-perceived skill rating between pre-test and post-test for each of the continuous composite variables formed for analysis in Research Question 1 produced a set of continuous dependent variables for use in Research Question 2. Due to the fact that the change being measured by this research question should be controlled for by prior performance, it is not wise to utilize the individual question response changes that are ordinal in nature and hence would necessitate the use of a nonparametric analysis method. The independent, four-level ordinal learning style variable will originate from the Skills Assessment. Finally, a set of control variables will be utilized to correspond with each of the composite dependent variables representing change. These control variables will consist of the pre-test composite scores for each factor.

Research Question 3 will use two matching sets of ordinal dependent variables, consisting of the post-test Student Evaluation questions and the corresponding Employer Evaluation responses in the areas of emotional intelligence, communication, and professional qualities. Similar to the approach taken in Research Question 1, in addition to the ordinal variables representing each individual question, matching sets of continuous composite variables will also be formed into one pair for each of the three skill sets. Composite variables will be calculated by summing the responses to each individual question constituting a construct and dividing by the number of questions in the construct. In doing so, each composite variable will remain on the same scale, regardless of the number of items within the construct. Intern-employer relationship will serve as the matching factor for this analysis, so no additional independent variables were necessary.

A single question between the Student Evaluation and Employer Evaluation addressing overall intern performance will be matched and compared through matching sets of ordinal dependent variables to answer Research Question 4.

### Setting and Population

The following section includes information on the study's hospitality environment, UCF's OEL, the structure of the internship course completed by UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management (RCHM) students, and population information particular to the semester of study.

## Hospitality Setting

The setting from which this population was derived is particularly conducive to a large, hospitality-focused population of interns. UCF is located in Orlando, Florida, which is consistently ranked as a top tourism destination in the U.S. Compared to UCF's main campus, the RCHM is strategically located 30 miles closer to the major tourism sector of the region, placing it directly behind one of the city's major tourist strips and minutes from the area's most popular theme and water parks (Visit Orlando, 2012).

Tourism has a large influence on the Orlando vicinity. Orlando hosted 51.5 million visitors in 2010, making it the first domestic destination to host over 50 million guests in one year. It is the site of approximately 450 hotels containing an estimated 115,000 guest rooms, the second-largest exhibition space in the country at Orlando's Orange County Convention Center, over 5,000 restaurants, and 176 golf courses. Orlando has over 100 attractions, including the world's first water park and most-visited theme park. The tourism market generated \$28.3 billion in spending in 2010 and accounted for 216,018 direct industry jobs, which equates to 24.4% of total private employment (Visit Orlando, 2012). The Walt Disney World Resort is one of the area's most popular vacation locations and employs approximately 62,000 cast members, making it the largest single-site employer of any industry in the country.

Within this panacea of hospitality, UCF has been recognized as the second largest university in the country as of 2011, with a total student enrollment of over 58,000. It was named one of the top ten national universities to watch in U.S. News & World Report's *America's Best Colleges* in 2010 and 2011. It is a large, public university with a "very

high research activity” designation from the Carnegie Foundation (U.S. News & World Report, 2012). Growth for the RCHM has increased to approximately 2,800 students, all of whom will complete three semesters of internship courses as part of their required curriculum for degree conferral. A total of 92 bachelor’s degrees are offered at the university; the RCHM confers the sixth most on the campus (UCF Institutional Knowledge Management, 2012). The RCHM is widely recognized as one of the top-ranked national and international hospitality programs in the country (Campus Explorer, 2012; The Best Schools, 2012; Zuri, 2012). As few institutions have the location or an industry focus beyond hotels and restaurants, the eminence of the RCHM program is evident.

#### UCF’s Office of Experiential Learning

The OEL at UCF is a nationally recognized model for excellence in experiential learning. It received the National Society for Experiential Learning 2007 Program of the Year award for quality, innovation, collaboration, and institutional commitment, as well as the 2008 Engaged Campus Award by the Florida Campus Compact for excellence in service learning (UCF Office of Experiential Learning, 2009). The program has expanded continuously, growing from 60 students engaged in cooperative education experiences in the 1970s to 1,700 cooperative education and internship students each academic semester, attributable both to university expansion and the academic orientation of the department within Undergraduate Studies in the Division of Academic Affairs.



## Hospitality Experiential Learning Courses at UCF

The experiential learning courses offered by the OEL at UCF for the RCHM require targeted assessments to ensure that students are learning through the process associated with Kolb's (1984) Experiential Learning Cycle. They are offered online through UCF's online course management program, Webcourses. Recognized curricular components could be utilized to further increase academic rigor, but in concert with the requirement for at least 16 hours per week of on-site internship experience and a single credit hour of academic credit, the researcher as the instructor of the programs attempts to mitigate unreasonably cumbersome academic expectations.

After completing several regulatory components, interns meet with their site supervisors to establish three learning outcomes, or Learning Objectives, for the semester. These Learning Objectives prompt the intern to utilize Doran's (1981) S.M.A.R.T. method of setting specific, measureable, attainable, relevant, and timely semester goals. Whether or not the specific Learning Objectives are achieved, learning can be increased by up to 50% through the exercise of setting clear, meaningful goals (Kolb, 1985).

A section at the beginning of the assignment asks interns to select any competencies on which they may wish to focus during the semester, which is intended to prompt awareness of opportunity to build skills and provide named items to guide learning. Each Learning Objective is divided into sections specifying what the intern will learn and do, how it will be done, and how it will be recognized as accomplished. It is during this beginning of semester time frame that students enrolled in the Spring 2012

HFT 3940 Internship 1 course volunteered to complete the Skills Assessment used for analysis in Research Questions 1 and 2.

After this written statement of goals has been completed, the intern is tasked with weekly reflection through dividing their number of worked hours between contact-based guest services (front of the house), preparatory-based guest services (back of the house), and leadership/management responsibilities. Additional fields have been added for the Summer 2012 course and beyond that prompt the intern to further delineate the activities that are being considered when recording the hours in each aforementioned section using words in addition to numbers. These assignments are structured to continue the intern through Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle (1984) by aiding the process movement from the first stage of concrete experience to the second and third ones of reflective observation and abstract generalization. By requiring a minimum of 16 hours per week rather than a total number of hours to be achieved at any time during the semester, the course structure provides hospitality industry opportunities to regularly further the intern learning from abstract generalization to active experimentation.

With only a few weeks remaining in the semester, interns complete the Student Evaluation, their employers complete the Employer Evaluation, and interns write a reflection paper. The Student Evaluation requires the intern to reflect upon skill levels post-internship, while the Employer Evaluation prompts employers to rate their interns' skill levels at the same point in time. Between the two, these survey instruments are used for analysis in all four of the research questions. In addition to these largely quantitative metrics, interns write a Semester Report of approximately two to five pages in which they

reflect upon their semester. The guidelines are purposefully thin, allowing for reflection in the directions that meet the intern at an individualized level of developmental need. It is intended that this stage offer the opportunity to solidify abstract conceptualization (Kolb, 1984) through a lengthened reflection assignment.

Overall with respect to Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle stages (1984), the course is designed such that the internship site provides the opportunities to engage in the concrete experience and active experimentation while the academic assignments prompt learning advancement through the reflective observation and abstract conceptualization stages. The rigorous process of continuous learning is evident as interns continue to engage in concrete experiences within their hours of weekly internship experience and complete the required weekly reflection. This reflection prompts understandings of the ways in which the professional industry operates, thereby creating the mental norms that are a function of abstract conceptualization. Weekly, on-site experiences provide opportunities to test newfound understanding through the next similar situation, pushing the intern through the learning cycle once again.

Courses that intend to meet students at their individual levels of development must ensure that the grade scales reflect progress rather than abject, standardized levels of performance. Interns receive a grade of *satisfactory* or *unsatisfactory* for their UCF RCHM internship courses based upon their completion of all course assignments and unique reflection. Consistent with the conceptual foundation of experiential learning theory, learning is most effective when conceived of as a process rather than in terms of outcomes (Kolb & Kolb, 2005b). Instant feedback for virtually all assignments is

provided through the grade book, with the notable exception of the Semester Report, which is graded and commented upon by the instructor.

### Study Sample and Population

The population of students enrolled in UCF's HFT 3940 Internship 1 course in Spring 2012 was surveyed. These undergraduate student interns are majoring in Hospitality Management, Event Management, and Restaurant and Foodservice Management in the RCHM. All interns enrolled in the course were provided the option to complete all pieces of the study and self-selected into participation. It is hoped that research conducted will be generalizable to all students participating in experiential learning courses during their undergraduate education, irrespective of major.

### Data Collection

There were 378 interns enrolled in the Spring 2012 HFT 3940 Internship 1 course. Of these, the 276 interns who voluntarily agreed to complete the Skills Assessment were considered for further analysis. Attrition was due to interns unsuccessfully completing the semester's course work. There is a slightly smaller sample size for Research Question 2 due to respondent difficulty in understanding the forced choice question instructions. There is also a reduced sample size for Research Question 3 because not all intern employers completed the Employer Evaluation.

Skills Assessment data were collected during the first three weeks of the Spring 2012 semester, from January 9 through January 31. After the questionnaire was

introduced during face-to-face class meetings on January 9 and January 10, two e-mails and one announcement were sent during the window of completion to remind interns through Webcourses of their opportunity to participate in the questionnaire. This approach followed survey delivery protocol of utilizing multiple contacts and varying the message medium when possible. Additionally, the questionnaire deadline for completion matched the deadlines for course materials, in accordance with the survey delivery practice of strategically timing contacts and responses with the population in mind (Dillman et al., 2009).

Student Evaluation and Employer Evaluation surveys were delivered during the last three weeks of the Spring 2012 semester, from March 26 through April 16. Although communication surrounding these instruments was sent through Webcourses mail and announcements, they were sent in the ordinary rhythm of teaching the class, as these are required internship course components. At a minimum, there was an eight-week period of at least 16 hours per week of on-site learning between the completion of the Skills Assessment and the Student Evaluation. This is an acceptable minimum exposure to the learning site for this single-credit hour class because the UCF OEL requires 45 internship site hours, per semester, per credit hour for other university majors to incur meaningful learning (UCF Office of Experiential Learning, 2009).

#### Authorization to Conduct the Study

The OEL collects data on perceived intern skill levels each semester through the Student Evaluation and the Employer Evaluation. However, it does not collect data

regarding individual intern's perceived skill level prior to the internship course that would offer an understanding of their subsequent change in perceived skills as provided through the internship experience. The researcher obtained exempt status from the UCF Institutional Research Board (see Appendices A and B) and was granted permission from the UCF OEL (see Appendix C) to administer the Skills Assessment questionnaire (see Appendix D). The researcher was also given permission to utilize intern responses from additional HFT 3940 Internship 1 course assignments such as the Information Form, Student Evaluation, and Employer Evaluation from the Spring 2012 semester. The Skills Assessment and the Student Evaluation (see Appendix E) were designed to measure self-perceived skill level prior to and after experiencing an internship course. The Employer Evaluation (see Appendix F) was designed to be compared directly to the Student Evaluation and provide valuable perspective of interns' skill levels.

### Data Analysis

The data relevant to this study were collected through assessment questionnaires containing demographic questions, five-point Likert-type questions, and a forced-choice question. The questionnaires were delivered to respondents through UCF's online course management software Webcourses for the Skills Assessment and through the online survey management system Qualtrics for the Student Evaluation and Employer Evaluation. IBM Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 20 was used for analysis. The selected statistical methods for analysis of each research question will be explained in this section.

Some data analysis was conducted prior to answering the specific research questions. As the scales for Emotional Intelligence, Communication, and Professional Qualities were adjusted by the researcher, tests of reliability were run using Cronbach's alpha. In addition, descriptive statistics were collected to understand frequencies and distributions of scores for demographic information on gender, age, ethnicity, residency, year in school, major, hours worked per week, and hourly pay rate.

For Research Question 1, continuous composite variables for Communication, Emotional Intelligence, and Professional Qualities were created consistent with the pre- and post-test design. Three separate dependent *t*-tests were utilized with these continuous variables to determine any potential changes over time in these overall composite areas. Time (pre-test versus post-test) served as the matching factor for pairing. In addition, differences between pre-test and post-test among individual item responses were analyzed using the nonparametric Wilcoxon matched pairs signed rank test. The Wilcoxon test is designed to compare the difference between two related ordinal variables and it is not required that the data be normally distributed, which makes it an ideal choice for Likert-type data from individual items. The sets of variables are related in that the same intern is completing the same questions at two different times with an intervening course between completions. A median difference of zero would indicate that the internship course did not affect the transferable skills measured.

In Research Question 2, the relationship between change in various qualities and self-reported learning style was explored through a one-way analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) for each construct (Emotional Intelligence, Communication, and

Professional Qualities). By using this analysis, differences in the change in construct values over the course of the semester were measured between the various levels of the independent variable of learning style while controlling for pre-test values of the construct. Because of the necessity to control for a pre-test value, the individual question response changes were not measured, due to limitations regarding the use of control variables in nonparametric analysis.

Research Question 3 used the previously created post-test composite variables for Emotional Intelligence, Communication, and Professional Qualities from the Student Evaluation to contrast against the same variables from the Employer Evaluation. As in the case of Research Question 1, three separate dependent *t*-tests were utilized with these continuous variables to determine any potential differences between interns and their employers in these three areas. In addition, differences between interns and employers among individual item responses were analyzed using the nonparametric Wilcoxon matched pairs signed rank test.

The Wilcoxon test was also used to seek differences between intern and employer answers to the question of overall rating of intern performance during the term for Research Question 4.

#### Originality Score

Per the guidelines set by UCF's College of Graduate Studies, this study is presented in compliance with originality and plagiarism policies. As defined by the dissertation committee chair, the expected similarity index was not to exceed 10%. To



ensure that this expectation was met, the contents of this dissertation were submitted to Turnitin, the online plagiarism tool to which UCF subscribes. When submitted without appendices or the reference section, an originality score similarity index of seven percent was returned. Following the removal of direct quotes, an index of six percent was returned. Of this six percent, groupings of student papers comprise three percent, internet sources related to three percent, and publications linked to two percent. Examples of student paper similarity included the cover page and previous papers written by the author; internet sources included in-text quotations and common data-based phrases; and connected publications included in-text citations and information from cited studies. Each individual source returned less than a one percent match, with the highest match derived from the author's own previous work.

## **CHAPTER 4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### Introduction

This chapter will report the results and include a discussion of the population demographics, factor analysis, and tests performed to answer the four research questions. Data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics Version 20. All inferential statistics were tested at the  $\alpha = .05$  level. Findings provided evidence of improvements in communication, emotional intelligence, and professional qualities after taking an internship course; primary learning style preference was not a significant indicator of skill development through an internship course; and an internship course may very well aid in closing the perceived skill gap between graduates and entrants to the workforce.

### Population

There were 276 students enrolled in the Spring 2012 HFT 3940 Internship 1 course offered through the University of Central Florida (UCF) Rosen College of Hospitality Management (RCHM) who volunteered to complete the Skills Assessment at the beginning of the course. An assignment that students completed during the regular core of the course called the Information Form (Appendix G) served as the source of the demographic data that is represented in this section.

Internship 1 is designed to be completed by those in their junior year of study. This intention was realized through this sample, as the vast majority, 71%, categorized themselves as juniors. Of the remaining 80 respondents, 1.8% were freshmen, 10.5%

were sophomores, and 16.7% were seniors. Seventy-seven percent of the respondents were female, closely approximating the female-to-male ratio reported by the UCF for the RCHM (UCF Institutional Knowledge Management, 2012).

In response to a question on ethnicity, 71.7% of respondents classified themselves as Caucasian, 14.9% as Hispanic, 5.4% as African American, 5.1% as multi-racial, and 1.8% as Asian American. Although UCF enrollment numbers by ethnicity per college are unavailable, the survey response approximates the university's ethnic distribution that includes 60.8% Caucasian, 17.7% Hispanic, 9.8% African American, 1.5% multi-racial, and 5.4% Asian American students (UCF Institutional Knowledge Management, 2012). Over 96% of respondents were U.S. citizens and 70% were born between 1989 and 1991, which corresponds with the age distribution for students with junior standing at UCF (UCF Institutional Knowledge Management, 2012). Hospitality Management and Event Management are both among the top 15 most selected majors at UCF (UCF Institutional Knowledge Management, 2012); of the studied sample, approximately 54% of students were Hospitality Management majors and 40% were Event Management majors, with the remaining 6% declaring the Restaurant and Food Service Management major.

Although the course requires a paid industry position of only 16 hours per week, students at the RCHM tend to work approximately 24 hours per week (UCF Office of Experiential Learning, 2009). The sample of the current study did not indicate an exception to this trend, as students reported an anticipated average of approximately 24.5 hours worked per week. The mean hourly pay rate reported was \$8.68 with a range from

\$0.42 to \$40.00 per hour; approximately 15% of students were earning \$10.00 per hour, which is a common approximate reported by servers when including anticipated tips.

## Discussion

There were 360 interns who completed the Information Form and 276 who volunteered to complete the Skills Assessment. This would intimate a respectable 77% response rate. However, of the 360 who began the course, 277 completed the required Student Evaluation at the end of the semester, which serves as an indicator that approximately 83 interns did not successfully persist through the course. Some of these students dropped the course, others withdrew later in the semester, and yet others received an unsatisfactory course grade due to performance below expectations. Therefore, while it may initially appear as though the current study utilized an approximate 77% response rate, the rate is actually much closer to 100% for those who successfully completed the course. The responses of these students represent the only possibilities for use in comparisons for the current study.

In further examination of data usability, the percentage of respondents by major warrants additional consideration. There were 37 degrees awarded for Restaurant and Food Service Management majors during the 2011-2012 academic year (UCF Institutional Knowledge Management, 2012), making the comparable number of respondents necessarily less than was seen for the other two majors due to its limited size. Less than five percent of total degrees awarded were for this degree, rendering the available *n* of 17 (or six percent of the total sample) safely generalizable.

Another result that justifies discussion is the sizeable difference between the required number of internship site weekly hours (16) when compared to the average number of hours reported over time (24) and of this sample (24.5). It is common for employers in the hospitality industry to require part-time availability that includes three days per week, a requirement that many students attending RCHM are able to meet due to sparse class offerings on Fridays, Saturdays, or Sundays. Three days per week of eight-hour shifts equates to the 24 hours that interns are reporting that they work. Another factor may include the need for income as a dual purpose for the internship position, not a surprising explanation with the documented state of economic difficulties facing students in this decade.

To compound this economic challenge, the hourly rate of this sample marks an average of an approximate \$0.75 decrease from previous hospitality student reporting (UCF Office of Experiential Learning, 2009). This can be understood in the context of the rising number of institutions seeking interns that do not need to pay minimum wage according to the U.S. Department of Labor Fair Labor Standards Act, including primarily non-profit organizations seeking event interns and companies such as start-up events or travel agencies that do not engage in a minimum of \$500,000 in sales/business (2009). When students report hourly wages of less than minimum wage, this indicates a payment by stipend, which is a means for such companies to meet the pay requirement of the RCHM internship program without needing to be able to afford an hourly wage. In these situations, interns are choosing to exchange income for relevant career experience. This is

the same relevant experience that aids interns in building the skill sets that employers expect graduates to possess.

### Missing Data

Intern responses to the Information Form and Student Evaluation were completed fully, as settings within the Webcourses and Qualtrics systems required students to answer every question. Intern responses to the Skills Assessment did not employ the same requirements for each question to be answered, but resulted in the same outcome – each of the 276 interns who voluntarily completed this questionnaire answered all questions. However, 25 of the 276 employers either did not complete the Employer Evaluation or completed a company-specific internal evaluation in lieu of it. As a result, data were not available for comparison between employer perception of intern skill level with intern self-perception of skill level (Research Questions 3 and 4). However, these cases were not discarded entirely because of their utility for Research Questions 1 and 2.

Data were coded as “missing” for two types of information. The first type was for the 25 employers who did not complete the Employer Evaluation instrument on behalf of an intern who had completed the Skills Assessment. The second type of missing data was derived from cases within the Skills Assessment, Student Evaluation, and Employer Evaluation where respondents indicated that the skill was either not observed or not built upon through the internship course. The *N/A* designation was an option in addition to the five-point Likert scale rating of *outstanding* (coded as numeric value 5), *very good*

(coded as numeric value 4), *average* (coded as numeric value 3), *marginal* (coded as numeric value 2), and *unsatisfactory* (coded as numeric value 1).

To illustrate, the number of respondents included for the composite Communication variable in Research Question 3 is lower than for other performed tests primarily due to missing data for the question *makes effective formal/informal presentations*. Of the 276 cases, 25 employers did not complete the Employer Evaluation and 51 employers responded that the skill was not applicable. Interns themselves chose the *N/A* response 26 times on the Student Evaluation, but no cases were unanswered, resulting in 253 cases available for analysis. Responses to this question recognized and employed both types of missing data. Along with missing data for the other related questions, the composite Communication variable was able to be analyzed with 185 cases once both types of missing data were filtered out.

#### Limitation Mitigation

While recognizing study limitations in Chapter 1, the researcher made every attempt to moderate their effects during the research process. The first limitation established the concern for generalizability of results, which is present in any sample study by virtue of the inability to survey the entire population and was unable to be effected by the researcher. However, mandatory participation increased generalizability compared to the common sample issue of ability to survey only self-selected participants. This population likely already has an understanding of the benefits associated with EL and may be more primed to increase them at a rapid rate that the general student

population. The second important recognized caveat is that the data collected are based on student and employer perceptions rather than objective measures of skill. While this is recognized as subjectivity that is inherent in the results, it correlates with the method of evaluation used by employers in the hospitality industry, which served as the study's industry of analysis. Following a constructivist line of inquiry that is in line with Kolb's ELT, the researcher offers the perspective that, regardless of study type employed, knowledge itself is subjective by virtue of its social construction. Norm-referenced tests such as these, which are common to the social sciences, depend on subjectivity to understand and interpret measurement (Crocker & Algina, 2006).

There were several employer-related limitations presented. Although little action could be taken to minimize the systematic bias inserted by the policy of one employer that prevents leaders from completing the Employer Evaluation, the researcher decided not to remove the interns affiliated with the employer from analyses that were unrelated to the Employer Evaluation. This ensured that the coverage error would be reduced only to Research Questions 3 and 4. This limitation was auspiciously further mitigated by 15 of the company's 21 participating intern leaders completing the Employer Evaluation in spite of the company policy. Effectively, the concern for systematic exclusion of intern ratings from one particular employer is negated by these findings, making this limitation unnecessarily disclosed.

Another employer-related concern was that interns have the flexibility to change positions during the course of the semester. Although it is recognized that this may not have had a meaningful effect on their self-assessments, it affected the amount of exposure



that the employer had to students' skills and consequently rendered the results of the Employer Evaluation assessment less robust. In comparing the student's reported company from the Information Form at the beginning of the semester to the Student Evaluation at the end of the semester, only ten interns who participated in the study fell within this circumstance.

The final employer-related risk to study result integrity was identified as the acknowledgement of the possibility that employers may have inflated evaluations to ensure favorable course grades for students. This limitation is mitigated by communication from the OEL to explain the process as one that will not negatively affect student course grades and is discussed in further detail in Chapter 5.

### Factor Analysis

Factor analysis is a statistical process which attempts to identify overarching factors that serve to explain the pattern of correlations within a set of observed variables. It is often used to identify a small number of factors that explain the majority of the variance observed in a larger number of variables. An exploratory factor analysis was conducted with all 14 questions that comprised the questionnaire categories of Communication, Emotional Intelligence, and Professional Qualities found on the Skills Assessment, Student Evaluation, and Employer Evaluation in order to understand the internal structure evidence of the three categories with the changes proposed by the researcher. The Skills Assessment was chosen as the primary questionnaire for conducting this analysis, as it was the first opportunity for the students to rate themselves;

additionally, this instrument was created by the researcher for this specific study. A choice of the Student Evaluation for this factor analysis would subject the results to less thoughtful consideration from respondents due to question repetition. Likewise, the Employer Evaluation would utilize a group of raters less central to the study to form construct alignment decisions, so it was also not selected for use.

The maximum likelihood estimation procedure was used to extract factors from the 14 variables and resulted in a successful convergence after only four iterations. Kaiser's rule was employed to indicate which factors yielded an eigenvalue of greater than one, indicating that these factors could explain the variability of at least one entire variable and were therefore appropriate for interpretation. Together, the three identified factors are able to account for over 53% of variability among variables. Communalities were examined for appropriate factor variance explanation and did not present any cause for concern, providing further evidence that the results were appropriately interpretable.

Among the various rotational procedures available, Promax was chosen because it assumes that some correlation among the factors is plausible. The resulting factor correlations were significantly large, ranging from  $r = .55$  to  $r = .63$ , and therefore indicate that the results are valid for continued interpretation.

The structure coefficient matrix structurally aligns each of the variables into three factors while presenting a numerical representation of the weight of alignment. The results from this test are presented in Table 5. The first extracted factor grouped four items that comprise the Emotional Intelligence construct: *understanding my emotions*, *controlling my emotions*, *understanding the emotions of others*, and *ability to take the*

*perspective of others*. These four constructs appeared on the Skills Assessment in a category entitled Emotional/Social Intelligence with three other questions related to the concept of social intelligence. These three social intelligence questions were not analyzed in recognition of the distinction between the two concepts. Literature has suggested that social intelligence is perhaps one component of EI (Goleman, 1995) or vice versa (Wong & Law, 2002), but the majority of research indicated that they can be distinguished from one another regardless. As such, the three items included in the scale that do not represent EI as suggested by the EI scales upon which the questions were based will not be added for EI construct analysis.

The second extracted factor was comprised largely of items related to the Communication construct and included *speaking with clarity and confidence, writing clearly and concisely, making effective presentations, exhibiting good questioning skills, and exhibiting self-confidence*. The Communication category of the questionnaires included the first four constructs that loaded in the factor along with *exhibiting good listening skills; exhibiting self-confidence* appeared in the questionnaire in the category of Professional Qualities.

The third factor can logically be termed Professional Qualities, as it was comprised of *assuming responsibility/accountability for actions, possessing honesty/integrity/personal ethics, showing initiative/being self-motivated, demonstrating a positive attitude towards change, and exhibiting good listening skills*. The first four variables can be found on the Skills Assessment under Professional Qualities, while the last is grouped with Communication.

## Adjustments to Factor Analysis Results

Several variables aligned in a manner that contradicted prevailing research and general conceptual understanding. For example, the item *showing initiative/being self-motivated* was indicated to load most strongly with the Professional Qualities category on the Skills Assessment (factor loading = .67). However, there is not research to suggest that this item should be considered alongside an amalgamation of professional qualities as opposed to a series of emotional intelligence variables (factor loading = .43). Although each of the studied variables could be considered to be professional qualities, literature aligns initiative/self-motivation with emotional intelligence (Law, Wong, & Song, 2004; Mayer & Salovey, 1997). This factor load could be attributed to response error, which explains the common tendency of a study participant to respond to an item using criteria other than item content (Crocker & Algina, 2006), through its survey placement inside the Professional Qualities category. For these reasons, an exception will be made in this analysis to manually group this item as a member of the Emotional Intelligence factor.

In addition, the variable *exhibiting good listening skills* aligned more closely with the Professional Qualities variables (factor loading = .46) than with the Communication variables (factor loading = .39). While certainly a professional quality, research has demonstrated that this skill is most closely conjoined with the more specific category of Communication (Bodie & Jones, 2012; Brownell, 2010), and will therefore be considered as such for subsequent analysis.

Similarly, *exhibiting self-confidence* loaded most significantly with the Communication factor (factor loading = .64), but as this quality is more broadly

manifested than simply with respect to communication skills (factor loading = .48), it will be analyzed with other professional qualities. Self-confidence is generally regarded as an intrapersonal construct about beliefs in one's ability, which could easily be expressed through communication. To compound the association, the communication-related question *speaking with clarity and confidence* utilizes a lens of confidence to prompt applicability and evaluatory context, but may inadvertently construe invalid associations with *exhibiting self-confidence* that impacted this result. The ensuing factor alignment once each of these three adjustments was made is illustrated by the bolded text in Table 5.

Table 5

*Factor Analysis Structure Matrix for Skills Assessment*

Scale	Factor		
	Communication	Emotional Intelligence	Prof. Qualities
Others' Emotions	0.43	<b>0.77</b>	0.42
Own Emotions	0.34	<b>0.72</b>	0.48
Perspective	0.43	<b>0.71</b>	0.49
Control Emotions	0.35	<b>0.63</b>	0.39
Speaking	<b>0.79</b>	0.34	0.40
Confidence	0.64	0.46	<b>0.48</b>
Presenting	<b>0.55</b>	0.27	0.33
Writing	<b>0.53</b>	0.36	0.32
Questioning	<b>0.46</b>	0.38	0.42
Ethics	0.27	0.36	<b>0.67</b>
Initiative	0.52	<b>0.43</b>	0.67
Responsibility	0.46	0.41	<b>0.58</b>
Attitude	0.42	0.48	<b>0.55</b>
Listening	<b>0.39</b>	0.32	0.46

## Scale Reliability

Scale reliability with factors aligned through factor analysis and adjusted to match relevant research was measured with Cronbach's alpha coefficient based on standardized items from the Skills Assessment and Student Evaluation. A generally accepted level of reliability is signified by a Cronbach's alpha of  $\alpha = .70$  or above, indicating a high degree of internal consistency among the data collected (Hsu et al., 2003).

Although the Skills Assessment provides the primary data set used for analysis in this section, to confirm the decision to load the three factors with the variables as adjusted by the researcher, reliability results from both the Skills Assessment and Student Evaluation are reported. The individual communication variables analyzed included *speaking with clarity and confidence, writing clearly and concisely, making effective presentations, exhibiting good listening skills, and exhibiting good questioning skills* and comprised the Communication factor. Intern responses were judged to be reliable for the undergraduate students to whom it was given, with a reliability coefficient of .70 from the Skills Assessment and .80 from the Student Evaluation. Furthermore, the variables related under the category of Emotional Intelligence were *understanding my emotions, controlling my emotions, understanding the emotions of others, ability to take the perspective of others, and showing initiative/being self-motivated*; they produced a reliability factor of .79 from the Skills Assessment and .84 from the Student Evaluation. The Professional Qualities variables known as *assuming responsibility/accountability for actions, exhibiting self-confidence, possessing honesty/integrity/ethics, and demonstrating a positive attitude towards change* generated a reliability value of .64 from

the Skills Assessment and .77 from the Student Evaluation. All of these factors can be deemed reasonably reliable for the purposes of research for the current study. However, it is not surprising that the Professional Qualities factor is comprised of variables that are most loosely correlated as the category itself is very broad.

## Discussion

Industry employers expect that graduates of higher education institutions have built many skills. Three of these skill sets which were researched in this study included communication, emotional intelligence, and professional qualities. The scales that were used for each of these factors were based on an instrument with demonstrated construct validity and score reliability. However, physical and conceptual changes instituted by the researcher affected the factor loading during factor analysis in important ways and lead to some recommendations for future assessment modification.

Prior to instrument analysis, there were four questions under the Communication category instead of five. The researcher recommended the division of the question *exhibiting good listening and questioning skills* due to its measurement of more than one skill, which created a fifth question. Although both questions appeared in the Communication section of the questionnaire, *exhibiting good listening skills* loaded most closely with other constructs found within the Professional Qualities factor. This serves to validate the separation of the two concepts, and although the listening question rejoined other communication constructs for analysis, the factor loading suggests that this skill level may be able to be explained more aptly as a general professional quality. An



additional consideration may include rejoining the question but conceptualizing it as a communications-based active listening question, as active listening combines both listening and questioning (Jones, 2011).

There were five emotional intelligence questions studied, four of which did not exist prior to the conceptualization of the study. The researcher recommended the addition of an emotional intelligence skill category, which was subsequently merged with several existing questions into a new questionnaire section entitled Emotional/Social Intelligence. Four of the five emotional intelligence questions studied appeared in this section, while one question that pre-dated the category remained in its original location. *Is self-motivated/shows initiative* not only remained in its original questionnaire category of Professional Qualities, but it loaded with the Professional Qualities factor as well. While this is not conceptually a wholly inappropriate alignment, research has demonstrated that this skill is best categorized as an aspect of emotional intelligence and it was subsequently analyzed as such. For future questionnaires, it is recommended that this question of self-motivation be relocated to a category with other emotional intelligence questions to determine if this changes factor loading results due to different response patterns.

The Professional Qualities factor appears to serve as a catch-all for demonstrable skills or qualities that have been proven to be important, but do not have a multi-question measurement scale. The category, which is described as ethical and self-management behaviors (Cates & Cedercreutz, 2008), suffers from a vagueness that allows for the inclusion of many other key facets such as individual follow-through, flexibility,

adaptability, leadership and/or conflict management that are not currently measured. An illustration of the over-broadened nature can be seen in this section's question *possessing honesty/integrity/personal ethics*, which innately intimates the possibility of three individual questions. Separate categories entitled Ethics and Self-Management may better elucidate the current composite variable. With increased societal focus on ethics (Johanson et al., 2011), there is already research to support an expansion the questionnaire to include this topic. The greater the overarching topic specificity, the more it will allow for the understanding, isolation and development of specific skills. Lower reliability in the category can be attributed in part to fewer categorical questions and the diversity of variables measured.

### Research Question 1

Research Question 1 queried the existence of a self-perceived change in a student's applied communication, emotional intelligence, and professional qualities skills after the first semester of internship class. Dependent *t*-tests were conducted with composite variables for each of the three skills in addition to individual Wilcoxon signed-rank tests that were designed to evaluate differences between the pre- and post-course self-perceived levels of proficiency for each individual question. Results for each item will be addressed alongside the other items from the same composite grouping – Communication, Emotional Intelligence, and Professional Qualities. Tabular summaries for the results from each composite grouping are included as well for more straightforward comparison.

As a note of interpretation, when examining the results from the Wilcoxon signed-rank tests, it is important to observe the directionality of the results. Negative ranks represent the number of cases in which the post-course score showed a decreased value from the pre-course score. Likewise, positive ranks represent the cases in which the post-test score showed an increased value from the pre-course score. Although the inferential tests conducted were two-tailed in nature, it should be noted that having a greater number of positive ranks was the more desirable result.

### Communication

A paired-sample *t*-test was conducted to compare the composite Communication variable levels at the beginning of the internship course with the level reported at the end. The difference in scores between the pre-test self-reported skill level ( $M = 3.96$ ,  $SD = 0.50$ ) and the post-test self-reported skill level ( $M = 4.35$ ,  $SD = 0.48$ ) was statistically significant,  $t(247) = -10.93$ ,  $p < .001$ . As a whole, scores increased from pre-test to follow-up, with a beginning of semester mean rating just below the *very good* demarcation and an ending rating between *very good* and *outstanding*. These results indicate the potential presence of a positive effect of an experiential learning course on intern self-perceived communication abilities. Results for the *t*-test are located in Table 6, while individual descriptive statistics are located in Table 7.

Table 6

*Paired Differences with Dependent t-Test Results for Self-Evaluation Scores (N = 276)*

Scale	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	95% CI		<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
			<i>LL</i>	<i>UL</i>		
Communication <sup>a</sup>	-0.39	0.56	-0.46	-0.32	-10.93**	< .001
Emotional Intelligence	-0.40	0.58	-0.47	-0.33	-11.47**	< .001
Professional Qualities <sup>b</sup>	-0.24	0.55	-0.31	-0.18	-7.34**	< .001

*Note.* CI = confidence interval, *LL* = lower limit, *UL* = upper limit.

<sup>a</sup>*N* = 248. <sup>b</sup>*N* = 275.

\**p* < .05. \*\**p* < .01.

Table 7

*Descriptive Statistics for Pre-Course and Post-Course Self-Evaluation Scores (N = 276)*

Scale	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	95% CI	
			<i>LL</i>	<i>UL</i>
Communication <sup>a</sup>				
Pre-Test	3.96	0.50	3.90	4.02
Post-Test	4.35	0.48	4.29	4.41
Emotional Intelligence				
Pre-Test	4.08	0.57	4.02	4.15
Post-Test	4.48	0.50	4.42	4.54
Professional Qualities <sup>b</sup>				
Pre-Test	4.28	0.50	4.22	4.34
Post-Test	4.53	0.47	4.47	4.58

*Note.* CI = confidence interval, *LL* = lower limit, *UL* = upper limit.

<sup>a</sup>*N* = 248. <sup>b</sup>*N* = 275.

Individual communication items analyzed included *speaking with clarity and confidence, writing clearly and concisely, making effective presentations, exhibiting good listening skills, and exhibiting good questioning skills*. Each individual result is detailed in this section and summarized in Table 8. The results for the question *speaking with clarity and confidence* indicated a statistically significant difference in ranking ( $Z = -6.07$ ,  $p < .001$ ). A total of 32 ranks were negative, while 98 were positive; the remaining 146 ranks were ties. This result suggests that interns' self-perceived speaking ability collectively increased after participating in an experiential learning course.

Likewise, the results addressing *writing clearly and concisely* indicated a statistically significant difference in ranking ( $Z = -6.38, p < .001$ ). A total of 27 ranks were negative, while 98 were positive; the remaining 144 ranks were ties. The test provides evidence of increased self-perceived writing ability among interns upon participation in an experiential learning course.

*Making effective presentations* followed the same trend, indicating a statistically significant difference in ranking ( $Z = -7.88, p < .001$ ). A total of 26 ranks were negative, 121 were positive, and the rest of the 103 compared responses were ties. Results suggest a potential linkage between experiential learning course participation and a significant increase in interns' self-perceived presenting ability.

Furthermore, *exhibiting good listening skills* indicated a statistically significant difference in ranking ( $Z = -5.64, p < .001$ ). A total of 40 ranks were negative, 103 were positive, and the remainder of the 133 ranks consisted of ties. This result suggests that interns' self-perceived listening ability collectively increased after participating in an experiential learning course.

The final communication question, *exhibiting good questioning skills*, indicated a statistically significant difference in ranking ( $Z = -8.57, p < .001$ ). A total of 26 ranks were negative, 133 were positive, and 117 consisted of ties. As with the rest of the communication results, evidence exists of increased levels of interns' self-perceived questioning ability among students participating in experiential learning courses.

Table 8

*Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test Results for Student Pre-Course and Post-Course Proficiencies, Communication (N = 276)*

Item	Negative Ranks	Positive Ranks	Z	p
Speaking	32	98	-6.07**	< .001
Writing <sup>a</sup>	27	98	-6.38**	< .001
Presenting <sup>b</sup>	26	121	-7.88**	< .001
Listening	40	103	-5.64**	< .001
Questioning	26	133	-8.57**	< .001

<sup>a</sup>N = 269. <sup>b</sup>N = 250.

\*p < .05. \*\*p < .01.

### Emotional Intelligence

A paired-sample *t*-test was conducted to compare the composite Emotional Intelligence variable levels at the beginning of the internship course with the level reported at the end. The difference in scores between the pre-test self-reported skill level ( $M = 4.08$ ,  $SD = 0.57$ ) and the post-test self-reported skill level ( $M = 4.48$ ,  $SD = 0.50$ ) was statistically significant,  $t(275) = -11.47$ ,  $p < .001$ . Scores increased from pre-test to follow-up, with a significant increase in mean score from the lower end of *very good* to a score closer to *outstanding*. These results indicate the possible presence of a positive effect of an experiential learning course on intern self-perceived emotional intelligence

abilities. Results for the *t*-test are located in Table 6 and individual descriptive statistics are located in Table 7.

Individual emotional intelligence items included *understanding my emotions*, *controlling my emotions*, *understanding the emotions of others*, *ability to take the perspective of others*, and *showing initiative/being self-motivated*. Each individual result is detailed in this section and summarized in Table 9. The results for the question *understanding my emotions* indicated a statistically significant difference in ranking ( $Z = -7.47, p < .001$ ). A total of 26 ranks were negative, while 121 were positive; the remaining 129 ranks were tied. This result suggests that interns' self-perceived ability to understand internal emotions collectively increased after participating in an experiential learning course.

Likewise, the results addressing *controlling my emotions* indicated a statistically significant difference in ranking ( $Z = -5.975, p < .001$ ). A total of 43 ranks were negative, while 113 were positive; the remaining 120 ranks were ties. This test provides evidence of increased self-perceived ability to control internal emotions among interns upon participation in an experiential learning course.

*Understanding the emotions of others* followed the same trend, indicated a statistically significant difference in ranking ( $Z = -7.95, p < .001$ ). A total of 24 ranks were negative, while 122 were positive and the rest were ties (130). Results suggest a potential linkage between experiential learning course participation and a significant increase in interns' self-perceived ability to understand the emotions of others.



Furthermore, *ability to take the perspective of others* indicated a statistically significant difference in ranking ( $Z = -8.39, p < .001$ ). A total of 22 ranks were negative, 131 were positive, and the rest were tied (123). This result suggests that interns' self-perceived ability to take the perspective of others collectively increased after participating in an experiential learning course.

The final emotional intelligence question, *showing initiative/being self-motivated*, indicated a statistically significant difference in ranking ( $Z = -5.98, p < .001$ ). A total of 34 ranks were negative, 102 were positive, and 140 ranks consisted of ties. As with the rest of the emotional intelligence constructs, evidence exist that an experiential learning course increases levels of interns' self-perceived ability to demonstrate initiative and self-motivation.

Table 9

*Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test Results for Student Pre-Course and Post-Course Proficiencies, Emotional Intelligence (N = 276)*

Item	Negative Ranks	Positive Ranks	Z	p
Own Emotions	26	121	-7.47**	< .001
Control Emotions	43	113	-5.98**	< .001
Others' Emotions	24	122	-7.95**	< .001
Perspective	22	131	-8.39**	< .001
Initiative	34	102	-5.56**	< .001

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ .

## Professional Qualities

A paired-samples *t*-test was conducted to compare the composite Professional Qualities variable levels at the beginning of the internship course with the level reported at the end. The difference in scores between the pre-test self-reported skill level ( $M = 4.28$ ,  $SD = 0.50$ ) and the post-test self-reported skill level ( $M = 4.53$ ,  $SD = 0.47$ ) was statistically significant,  $t(274) = -7.34$ ,  $p < .001$ . Scores increased from pre-test to follow-up. These results indicate mean skill levels between *very good* and *outstanding* both before and after the experiential learning course, but that interns are statistically significantly closer to *outstanding* by the end of the course. This shows a likelihood of a positive effect of an experiential learning course on intern self-perceived abilities as related to professional qualities. Results for the *t*-test are located in Table 6, while individual descriptive statistics are located in Table 7.

Professional Qualities variables included *assuming responsibility/accountability for actions*, *exhibiting self-confidence*, *possessing honesty/integrity/ethics*, and *demonstrating a positive attitude towards change*. Each individual result is detailed in this section and summarized in Table 10. The results for the question assuming responsibility/accountability for actions indicated a statistically significant difference in ranking ( $Z = -4.58$ ,  $p < .001$ ). A total of 37 ranks were negative, while 89 were positive and the remaining 153 ranks were ties. This result suggests that interns' self-perceived level of responsibility/accountability collectively increased after participating in an experiential learning course.

Likewise, the results addressing *exhibiting self-confidence* indicated a statistically significant difference in ranking ( $Z = -7.16, p < .001$ ). A total of 31 ranks were negative, while 119 were positive; the remaining 126 ranks were ties. This test provides evidence of increased self-perceived level of responsibility/accountability among interns upon participation in an experiential learning course.

*Possessing honesty/integrity/personal ethics* followed the same trend, indicating a statistically significant difference in ranking ( $Z = -2.30, p < 0.05$ ). A total of 36 ranks were negative, 60 were positive, and 180 were ties. Results suggest a potential linkage between experiential learning course participation and a significant increase in interns' self-perceived level of responsibility/accountability.

The final professional qualities question, *demonstrating a positive attitude towards change*, indicated a statistically significant difference in ranking ( $Z = -4.99, p < .001$ ). A total of 43 ranks were negative, 109 were positive, and the remaining 123 ranks were ties. As with the rest of the professional qualities results, evidence exists that participation in an experiential learning course facilitates a significant increase in interns' self-perceived ability to demonstrate a positive attitude towards change.

Table 10

*Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test Results for Student Pre-Course and Post-Course Proficiencies, Professional Qualities (N = 276)*

	Negative Ranks	Positive Ranks	Z	p
Responsibility	37	89	-4.58**	< .001
Confidence	31	119	-7.16**	< .001
Ethics	36	60	-2.30*	0.02
Attitude <sup>a</sup>	43	109	-4.99**	< .001

<sup>a</sup>N=275.

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ .

## Discussion

The most significant change in intern self-perceived skill levels (those results with  $p < .001$ ) included *making effective presentations* and *exhibiting good questioning skills* in the Communication construct, *understanding the emotions of others* and *ability to take the perspective of others* under Emotional Intelligence, and *exhibiting self-confidence* within Professional Qualities. As the first internship course, it is intuitive that questioning skills would need to be developed as the intern sought the balance between asking too many and too few questions in an effort to complete the initial training and develop appropriate workplace competencies. Although the results for the presentation construct indicate an increasing ability to be able to tailor communication effectively to an intended audience, the magnitude may be skewed by the Student Evaluation clarification of this question that inquires about effective “formal and informal” presentations; with the

clarification of the specific scope of the question, interns may have been able to focus the reference material used to answer it from a connotation of formal presentations to ones of informal situations of persuasive communication as well.

As emotional intelligence skills necessary in the hospitality industry are among the highest of any field (Scott-Halsell et al., 2008), it is significant that even one internship course increases the understanding of others in multiple facets as demonstrated by the significant change in all of the questions that ask about relating to “others”. With respect to confidence, Sweitzer and King describe the first phase of the intern experience as typically characterized by concerns of competence and confidence (2009). When successfully undertaking a new experience, confidence can be expected to increase, and although it can be expected to continue to grow with new successes, the difference is hypothesized to be greatest when transitioning from no internship experience to the first in comparison to moving from the first to second and second to third. These factors, along with the generation’s characteristically high confidence level (Nelson, 2005), explain the strength of change reported.

For each Wilcoxon test, results indicated a large number of tied rankings. Although the positive change was statistically significant, the number of interns who did not see either a decrease or increase in the measured variable deserves discussion. This could be due to in part to scale sensitivity measurement error, with the variation between the five ranking options proving insufficient for assessing the incremental skill development over the 15-week course. In addition, this could also be interpreted as a

justification for multiple internship courses as a means to effect change in magnitude and for a broadened intern base.

### Research Question 2

Research Question 2 asks if amount of self-perceived change in a student's applied communication, emotional intelligence, and professional qualities skills relate to self-reported learning style preferences. A one-way analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was performed for each of these three skills to gain an understanding of the difference in students' self-perceived level upon completion of an experiential learning course between different self-selected primary learning styles, while controlling for initial self-perceived level of skill. The independent variable, learning style preference, included four choices that represented Kolb's (1984) learning styles of accommodator, assimilator, converger, and diverger; the learning style identified as the one most likely to be used by the intern was considered the primary style for the purpose of this analysis. The dependent variable was the intern's post-course score composite variable for each of the three skills and the covariate was the pre-course composite score of the same variable.

Critical assumptions were checked prior to running each ANCOVA. An assumption unique to the presence of covariates involves multicollinearity. Its presence suggests the possibility of over-explanation of the dependent variable through interaction among explanatory factors; in this case, the independent variable of learning style preference and the covariate of pre-test composite variable score. Levene's test for

homogeneity of variance was also examined to ensure that the error variance of the dependent variable was equal across all learning style groups.

### Communication

An initial test was completed to query the appropriateness of the relationship between learning style and the covariate, pre-test perceived communication level. The statistically significant results,  $F(3, 248) = 3.31, p = .02$ , indicated that the strength of the relationship between the two variables was too strong to be able to proceed with the analysis. Although Levene's test indicated that the error variance was appropriately equal across both groups,  $F(3, 244) = .44, p = .72$ , it was still unwise to proceed with including the covariate of pre-test perceived communication level in the analysis.

As such, a one-way ANOVA was run to test for an impact of learning style preference on post-course communication. Levene's test for equality of error variances indicated that there was no statistically significant difference in error variance across groups and therefore the homogeneity of variance assumption was met,  $F(3, 248) = 1.31, p = .27$ .

As indicated in Table 11, the ANOVA results demonstrated that there was not a statistically significant mean difference in the post-course self-rated communication scores produced by interns with different primary learning style preference,  $F(3, 248) = 1.39, p = .25$ . Furthermore, less than two percent ( $\eta^2 = .017$ ) of the variance in scores was accounted for by treatment group. Descriptive statistics for means are located in Table 12. All of the means for each learning style can be interpreted as falling between *very*

*good* and *outstanding*; however, the highest score belonged to those students who most identified with the converger learning style ( $M = 4.54$ ,  $SE = 0.11$ ). The diverger learning style group, while still presenting a high mean communication rating, was the lowest of the four groups ( $M = 4.36$ ,  $SE = 0.07$ ). Again, however, these differences were not significant.

Table 11

*Analysis of Variance Results, Primary Learning Style on Communication (N = 252)*

Source	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>	$\eta^2$	<i>p</i>
Learning Style	3	1.39	.017	.25
<i>S</i> within-group error	248	(0.23)		

*Note.* Value enclosed in parentheses represents mean square error. *S* = subjects.

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ .



Table 12

*Descriptive Statistics, Primary Learning Style on Communication (N = 252)*

Status	<i>M</i>	<i>SE</i>	95% CI	
			<i>LL</i>	<i>UL</i>
Accommodator ( <i>n</i> = 161)	4.33	0.04	4.25	4.40
Diverger ( <i>n</i> = 43)	4.36	0.07	4.22	4.51
Assimilator ( <i>n</i> = 27)	4.30	0.09	4.11	4.48
Converger ( <i>n</i> = 21)	4.54	0.11	4.34	4.75

### Emotional Intelligence

An initial test completed to determine if there was a confounding relationship between learning style and the covariate of pre-test perceived emotional intelligence demonstrated that there was no significant interaction effect,  $F(3, 276) = 0.53, p = .67$ . Additionally, Levene's test showed desirably that the error variance of the dependent variable was equal across both groups,  $F(3, 272) = 0.69, p = .56$ . The ANCOVA was therefore deemed suitable for this analysis.

The result of the ANCOVA indicated no statistically significant difference,  $F(3, 276) = 1.13, p = .34$ , in self-perceived emotional intelligence among students with different primary learning styles while controlling for pre-test emotional intelligence. The  $\eta^2$  value of .012 further indicated only a modicum of practical significance in this

relationship, as 1.2% of the variability in post-test emotional intelligence could be explained by learning style. Most of the explanatory value in this ANCOVA originated from the covariate, as it explained 17.2% of the variability in post-test emotional intelligence. Results for this ANCOVA are located in Table 13. Descriptive statistics are located in Table 14. All of the means for each learning style while controlling for pre-test emotional intelligence can be interpreted as falling between *very good* and *outstanding*; however, the highest score belonged to those students who most identified with the accommodator learning style ( $M = 4.52, SE = 0.03$ ). The diverger learning style group, while still presenting a high mean communication rating, was the lowest of the four groups ( $M = 4.40, SE = 0.07$ ). Again, however, these differences were not significant.

Table 13

*Analysis of Covariance Results, Primary Learning Style on Emotional Intelligence (N = 276)*

Source	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>	$\eta^2$	<i>P</i>
Learning Style	3	1.13	.012	.34
Pre-Test Emotional Intelligence	1	56.33**	.18	< .001
<i>S</i> within-group error	271	(0.21)		

*Note.* Value enclosed in parentheses represents mean square error. *S* = subjects.

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ .

Table 14

*Descriptive Statistics, Primary Learning Style on Emotional Intelligence (N = 276)*

Status	<i>M</i>	<i>SE</i>	95% CI	
			<i>LL</i>	<i>UL</i>
Accommodator ( <i>n</i> = 177)	4.52	0.03	4.45	4.58
Diverger ( <i>n</i> = 48)	4.40	0.07	4.27	4.53
Assimilator ( <i>n</i> = 28)	4.41	0.09	4.24	4.58
Converger ( <i>n</i> = 23)	4.48	0.10	4.30	4.67

*Note.* Covariate evaluated at Pre-Test Emotional Intelligence = 4.08.

### Professional Qualities

An initial test analyzing the relationship between learning style and the covariate of pre-test perceived professional qualities demonstrated that there was no significant interaction effect,  $F(3, 276) = 1.51$ ,  $p = .21$ , and that analysis could therefore proceed. Additionally, Levene's test showed desirably that the error variance of the dependent variable was equal across both groups,  $F(3, 272) = 1.34$ ,  $p = .26$ . The result of the ANCOVA indicated no statistically significant difference in self-perceived professional qualities among students with different primary learning styles while controlling for pre-test emotional intelligence,  $F(3, 276) = .40$ ,  $p = .75$ . The  $\eta^2$  value of .004 further indicated only a modicum of practical significance in this relationship, as 0.4% of the variability in post-test emotional intelligence could be explained by learning style. Most

of the explanatory value in this ANCOVA originated from the covariate, as it explained 11.0% of the variability in post-test emotional intelligence. Results for this ANCOVA are located in Table 14, while descriptive statistics are located in Table 15. Descriptive statistics are located in Table 16. All of the means for each learning style while controlling for pre-test emotional intelligence can be interpreted as falling between very good and outstanding; however, the highest score belonged to those students who most identified with the diverger learning style ( $M = 4.78$ ,  $SE = 0.06$ ). This mean score was exceptionally close to outstanding. The assimilator learning style group, while still presenting a high mean communication rating, was the lowest of the four groups ( $M = 4.51$ ,  $SE = 0.01$ ). Again, however, these differences were not significant.

Table 15

*Analysis of Covariance Results, Primary Learning Style on Professional Qualities (N = 276)*

Source	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>	$\eta^2$	<i>p</i>
Learning Style	3	0.40	.004	.75
Pre-Test Professional Qualities	1	33.45**	.11	< .001
<i>S</i> within-group error	271	(0.19)		

*Note.* Value enclosed in parentheses represents mean square error. *S* = subjects.

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ .

Table 16

*Descriptive Statistics, Primary Learning Style on Professional Qualities (N = 276)*

Status	<i>M</i>	<i>SE</i>	95% CI	
			<i>LL</i>	<i>UL</i>
Accommodator ( <i>n</i> = 177)	4.53	0.03	4.47	4.60
Diverger ( <i>n</i> = 48)	4.78	0.06	4.35	4.60
Assimilator ( <i>n</i> = 28)	4.51	0.08	4.34	4.67
Converger ( <i>n</i> = 23)	4.59	0.09	4.41	4.77

*Note.* Covariate evaluated at Pre-Test Professional Qualities = 4.28.

## Discussion

These results demonstrate that learning style does not significantly impact the development of communication, emotional intelligence, or professional qualities skills during an internship course. This confirms the effectiveness of the Experiential Learning Cycle (Kolb, 1984) in developing learning for all who engage in it, irrespective of learning style.

### Research Question 3

The results of Research Question 3 aimed to understand if the level of self-perceived ability in a student's applied communication, emotional intelligence, and professional qualities skills after the first semester of internship class relate to their

respective employer's perceptions of their students' abilities in the same skills. As with Research Question 1, this question used dependent *t*-tests and Wilcoxon matched-pairs signed rank tests. However, instead of using pre-course perceived skill level data from interns, this question compared post-course perceived skill level data from interns with post-course perceived skill level data as reported by respective intern employers. Results for each item will be addressed alongside the other items from the same composite groupings – Communication, Emotional Intelligence, and Professional Qualities. Tabular summaries for the results from each composite grouping are included as well for more straightforward comparison.

As noted in the results section for Research Question 1, it is important to closely observe the directionality of the results when interpreting the results from the Wilcoxon signed-rank tests. Negative ranks represent the number of cases in which the intern score was higher than employer score. Likewise, positive ranks represent the cases in which the employer score showed an increased value when compared against the intern score. Although the inferential tests conducted were two-tailed in nature, it should be noted that having a large number of ties constitute desirable results because of their indication of a skill gap closure. Presuming that the employer ranking is norm-referenced to employer expectations, this serves as a reasonable barometer for the level of skill performance expected of interns and soon-to-be graduates. Another favorable outcome is presented when results show more overall positive ranks, as this demonstrates a greater level skill appreciation on behalf of employers and thereby a satisfaction with intern skills that would not be intimidated by a higher intern score.

## Communication

A paired-samples *t*-test was conducted to compare the composite Communication variable performance levels at the end of the first internship course as perceived by interns and their respective employers. The difference in scores between the intern self-reported skill level ( $M = 4.37, SD = 0.48$ ) and the employer rating of the intern's skill level ( $M = 4.46, SD = 0.51$ ) was statistically significant,  $t(184) = 2.22, p = .03$ . The skill gap between intern's views of their performance and the views of their employers indicate that employers find the interns to have statistically significantly greater communication skills than the interns believe themselves to possess. Both composite scores indicate intern communication levels are between *very good* and *outstanding* by the end of the first internship course. Results for the *t*-test are located in Table 17, while individual descriptive statistics are located in Table 18.

Table 17

*Paired Differences with Dependent t-Test Results for Employer-Intern Scores (N = 248)*

Scale	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	95% CI		<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
			<i>LL</i>	<i>UL</i>		
Communication <sup>a</sup>	0.10	0.60	0.01	0.19	2.22*	.03
Emotional Intelligence <sup>b</sup>	-0.12	0.72	-0.21	-0.02	-2.51*	.01
Professional Qualities	-0.01	0.62	-0.09	0.07	-0.23	.82

*Note.* CI = confidence interval, *LL* = lower limit, *UL* = upper limit.

<sup>a</sup>*N* = 185. <sup>b</sup>*N* = 243.

\**p* < .05. \*\**p* < .01.

Individual Communication category questions included *speaking with clarity and confidence, writing clearly and concisely, making effective presentations, exhibiting good listening skills, and exhibiting good questioning skills*. Each individual result is outlined in this section and summarized in Table 19. The results for the question *speaking with clarity and confidence* indicated a statistically significant difference in ranking ( $Z = -3.55$ ,  $p < .001$ ). With a higher employer ranking 84 times, higher intern ranking 42 times, and a tie 125 times, this demonstrates that employers perceive interns' speaking skill level to be higher than interns perceive their collective speaking abilities to be at the culmination of an experiential learning course.

Table 18

*Descriptive Statistics for Employer and Intern Evaluation Scores (N = 248)*

Scale	M	SD	95% CI	
			LL	UL
Communication <sup>a</sup>				
Employer	4.46	0.51	4.40	4.54
Intern	4.37	0.48	4.30	4.44
Emotional Intelligence <sup>b</sup>				
Employer	4.37	0.61	4.30	4.45
Intern	4.49	0.50	4.43	4.55
Professional Qualities				
Employer	4.53	0.51	4.46	4.59
Intern	4.53	0.46	4.48	4.59

*Note.* CI = confidence interval, LL = lower limit, UL = upper limit.

<sup>a</sup>N = 185. <sup>b</sup>N = 243.



However, the results associated with *writing clearly and concisely* did not demonstrate a statistically significant difference in ranking ( $Z = -0.64, p = .52$ ). There was a higher employer ranking 63 times, higher intern ranking 54 times, and ties 113 times. This indicates that employers tend to rank interns higher than interns rank their own writing skills after an experiential learning course, but not by a statistically significant margin. In addition, this shows that there is not a statistically significant gap between intern self-perception of skills and employer perception of the same skills upon completion of an experiential learning course.

This same conclusion can be drawn for *making effective presentations*, which also did not show statistically significant differences between employer and intern rankings ( $Z = -0.90, p = .37$ ). There was a higher employer ranking 50 times, a higher intern ranking 43 times, and 113 occurrences of rank ties. This suggests that employers tend to rank interns higher than interns rank themselves with respect to presentation skills. However, there is not a statistically significant difference in the way that employers and interns perceive intern presentation skill level after an experiential learning course.

*Exhibiting good listening skills* also did not show a statistically significant difference between the two groups ( $Z = -0.78, p = .44$ ). However, this question was unique among the communication-related constructs in that the number of times the employer ranked the construct more highly (55) was lower than the number of times the intern ranked themselves more highly (60), with 136 rank ties. These results indicate that interns tended to view their listening skills as more advanced than did their employers

after a semester of an experiential learning course, but not by a statistically significant amount.

Contrarily, the final Communication variable of *exhibiting good questioning skills* was both statistically significant ( $Z = -2.07, p = .04$ ) and had higher employer ranks of 70 when compared to intern ranks of 52. The remainder of the pairs yielded 129 ties. This demonstrates that an experiential learning course may statistically significantly positively impact intern questioning skills and create a scenario in which employers believe intern questioning skills to be of a higher level than do the interns themselves.

Table 19

*Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test Results for Employer-Intern Proficiencies, Communication (N = 251)*

Item	Negative Ranks	Positive Ranks	Z	p
Speaking	42	84	-3.55**	< .001
Writing <sup>a</sup>	54	63	-0.64	.52
Presenting <sup>b</sup>	43	50	-0.90	.37
Listening	60	55	-0.78	.44
Questioning	52	70	-2.07*	.04

<sup>a</sup>N = 230. <sup>b</sup>N = 188.

\*p < .05. \*\*p < .01.

## Emotional Intelligence

A paired-samples *t*-test was conducted to compare the composite Emotional Intelligence variable performance levels at the end of the first internship course as perceived by interns and their respective employers. The difference in scores between the intern self-reported skill level ( $M = 4.49, SD = 0.50$ ) and the employer rating of the intern's skill level ( $M = 4.37, SD = 0.61$ ) was statistically significant,  $t(242) = -2.51, p = .01$ . These results indicate that there is a skill gap between intern's views of their performance and the views of their employers in which interns have a higher regard for their emotional intelligence abilities after one internship course than do their employers. Both results demonstrate that intern emotional intelligence skill level is between *very good* and *outstanding* at the end of the first internship course. Results for the *t*-test are located in Table 17, while individual descriptive statistics are located in Table 18.

Emotional Intelligence individual questions included *understands own emotions, controls own emotions, understands the emotions of others, able to take the perspective of others, and is self-motivated/shows initiative*. Each individual result is outlined in this section and summarized in Table 20. The results for the question *understands own emotions* indicated a statistically significant difference in ranking ( $Z = -2.96, p = .003$ ). With a higher employer ranking 46 times, higher intern ranking 82 times, and a tie 116 times, these results indicate that interns' perception of their skills with respect to understanding their own emotions is less than employers perceive their collective emotional understanding skills to be.

Unlike the previous question, employer and intern rating of intern skills of *controls own emotions* was not found to be statistically significantly different in ranking ( $Z = -0.89, p = .37$ ). Employers ranked intern skills higher 60 times, interns ranked their own skills higher 70 times, and there were 118 ties. This signifies that self-perceived skill in controlling emotions is higher for interns than for employers, but not a statistically significant amount. This also suggests a non-significant gap in perceived emotional control skill level between the two sets of raters.

There is also a non-statistically significant ranked skill difference for *understands the emotions of others* ( $Z = -1.48, p = .14$ ). A total of 75 ranks were negative, while 61 were positive and the remaining 112 were ties. While there were more times when interns ranked their skills in understanding the emotions of others at a higher level, it was not a statistically significant number of times. This implies an insignificant skill gap between employer and intern perception of skill in understanding others' emotions.

In contrast, the results for *able to take the perspective of others* revealed a statistically significant difference in ranking ( $Z = -2.90, p = .004$ ). With 83 negative ranks, 54 positive ranks, and 112 ties, it is clear that employers did not perceive intern skill levels to be as high as interns did. As such, there appears to be a significant gap in ranked intern skill in ability to take the perspective of others.

The final question, *is self-motivated/shows initiative*, also suggested a statistically significant difference in ranking ( $Z = -2.19, p = .03$ ). Employers ranked intern skill levels higher than did the intern 47 times, interns ranked their own skill level higher than employers did 68 times, and the remaining 136 responses were tied. This indicates a

statistically significant ranking gap in perceived intern skill with respect to motivation and taking initiative after one semester of an experiential learning course.

Table 20

*Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test Results for Employer-Intern Proficiencies, Emotional Intelligence (N = 248)*

Item	Negative Ranks	Positive Ranks	Z	p
Own Emotions <sup>a</sup>	82	46	-2.96**	.003
Control Emotions	70	60	-0.89	.37
Others' Emotions	75	61	-1.48	.14
Perspective <sup>b</sup>	83	54	-2.90**	.004
Initiative <sup>c</sup>	68	47	-2.19*	.03

<sup>a</sup>N = 244. <sup>b</sup>N = 249. <sup>c</sup>N = 251.

\*p < .05. \*\*p < .01.

### Professional Qualities

A paired-samples *t*-test was conducted to compare the composite Professional Qualities variable performance levels at the end of the first internship course as perceived by interns and their respective employers. The difference in scores between the intern self-reported skill level ( $M = 4.53$ ,  $SD = 0.46$ ) and the employer rating of the intern's skill level ( $M = 4.53$ ,  $SD = 0.51$ ) was not statistically significant,  $t(247) = -0.23$ ,  $p = .82$ . By producing results that were not statistically significantly different from each other, this

indicates that the intervention of an experiential learning course closed the commonly recognized skill gap between intern and employer perception of professional qualities. This suggests that interns and employers both view intern skills as rating between *very good* and *outstanding* by the end of the first internship course. Results for the *t*-test are located in Table 17, while individual descriptive statistics are located in Table 18.

Individual Professional Qualities questionnaire items included *assumes responsibility/accountable for actions*, *exhibits self-confidence*, *possesses honesty/integrity/ethics*, and *demonstrates a positive attitude towards change*. Each question's results are detailed in this section and summarized in Table 21. The first question, *assumes responsibility/accountable for actions*, did not indicate that there was a statistically significant difference between employer perception of intern skill and intern perception of the same skill ( $Z = -1.23, p = .22$ ). There were 65 negative ranks, 58 positive ranks, and 127 ties. This implies a relatively consistent perception of intern ability to assume responsibility and accountability between employers and students, and therefore a minimal gap.

In the same vein, *exhibits self-confidence* also did not reveal a statistically significant gap in perceived skill level rank between interns and their respective employers ( $Z = -0.48, p = .63$ ). With a ratio of negative to positive ranks of 63 to 61 and the remaining 126 as ties, there was a decided similarity in the two groups' perceptions of intern self-confidence skill level.

There was also no statistical significance to the ranked difference in results for *possesses honesty/integrity/ethics*, ( $Z = -1.30, p = .19$ ). There were 47 negative ranks, 38

positive ranks, and 165 ties. There was an equivalent perception of skill level between employers and interns with respect to intern characteristics of honesty, integrity, and ethics and therefore an insignificant gap.

Inconsistent with the rest of the constructs in this variable category, there was a statistically significant difference in ranking for the final construct, *demonstrates a positive attitude towards change* ( $Z = -1.97, p = .05$ ). There were 48 negative ranks, 65 positive ranks, and 136 ties, which signified a higher employer regard for intern skill level than interns perceived themselves to hold. Although a statistically significant difference in ranks for intern skill in demonstrating a positive attitude towards change was reported, with a true  $p$  value of .049, results were very close to indicating an insignificant gap between skill perceptions of the two groups.

Table 21

*Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test Results for Employer-Intern Proficiencies, Professional Qualities (N = 250)*

Item	Negative Ranks	Positive Ranks	Z	p
Responsibility	58	127	-1.23	.22
Confidence	63	61	-0.48	.63
Ethics	47	38	-1.30	.19
Attitude <sup>a</sup>	48	65	-1.97*	.05

<sup>a</sup>N=249.

\*p < .05. \*\*p < .01.

## Discussion

The results for this research question were not as homogeneous as for the previous two. The first level of analysis is derived from the three composite variables while the second is based on individual constructs that comprised each composite.

Data indicated that employers viewed intern communication skills as statistically significantly more advanced than interns believed their own skills to be. While three of the constructs were not rated significantly differently by employers and interns, the two constructs that factored strongly into the overall composite result were *exhibiting good questioning skills* ( $Z = -2.07, p = .04$ ) and *speaking with clarity and confidence* ( $Z = -3.55, p < .001$ ). This result may be able to be explained by each group's reference group. Not all employees have had the benefit of higher education, let alone higher education in a field related directly to their jobs. To employers, this perhaps makes the speaking and



questioning skills of interns involved in undergraduate studies and a hospitality management program stand out among employees as higher education curricula. For example, courses at the RCHM such as HFT 4286 Hospitality Communications build speaking and questioning skills through classroom learning. From the interns' perspective, it is likely that they compare themselves readily to other interns and classmates, as well as to the site employees for whom they are serving in a mentee capacity. Compared with this reference group, their overall communication skills may be perceived as less competent.

Interns may also see asking questions as a weakness rather than a skill, or a need for those not comfortable or confident in their roles. With this perspective, they may perceive the volume of questions needed to be asked as a weakness in questioning skill, whereas employers perceive the sought-after clarification of responsibilities as a strength. Regardless, it is reassuring that, after one of three internship courses, employer overall rating of hospitality interns' communication skills is *very good* and perceived by their employers to be of a higher caliber than interns themselves realize.

The opposite results were showcased for intern level of perceived overall emotional intelligence. The difference in scores between the intern self-reported skill level ( $M = 4.49$ ,  $SD = 0.50$ ) and the employer rating of the intern's skill level ( $M = 4.37$ ,  $SD = 0.61$ ) was statistically significant,  $t(242) = -2.51$ ,  $p = .01$ , indicating that interns have a higher regard for their emotional intelligence abilities after one internship course than do their employers. While both overall results demonstrate that intern emotional intelligence skill level is between *very good* and *outstanding* at the end of the first

internship course, it is apparent that there is a statistically significant difference between employer and intern perception. Part of this could be due to the difficulty for any person to accurately perceive the emotional intelligence of another individual. Although these constructs were designed to measure applied emotional intelligence (Wong & Law, 2002) and chosen in hopes of the behaviors being observable, constructs such as *understands own emotions* ( $Z = -2.96, p = .003$ ) may still prove difficult for others to assess. This was one of the three constructs that showed a statistically significantly lower employer rating of intern skill level. It joins another construct that may prove difficult to observe, *able to take the perspective of others* ( $Z = -2.90, p = .004$ ) and the more observable *is self-motivated/shows initiative* ( $Z = -2.19, p = .03$ ). These significant disparities also intimate that work around knowledge about and understanding of emotional intelligence may very well need to increase in the undergraduate curricula, as observed by Scott-Halsell, Shumate, and Blum (2007) as well as Scott-Halsell, Blum, and Huffman (2011).

Interns and employers viewed intern overall Professional Qualities at the same level, with results indicating an identical mean level of proficiency perceived by both groups ( $M = 4.53$ ). Similar to the results for Research Question 2, a lack of statistical significance is meaningful in itself. Each of the individual constructs were consistent in their lack of statistical significance with the exception of *demonstrates a positive attitude towards change* ( $Z = -1.97, p = .05$ ). Even with this construct, although statistically significantly higher employer rankings were reported, the  $p$  value of .049 shows that results were very close to indicating an insignificant gap between skill perceptions of the two groups. The Millennial generation is defined by an abundance of confidence (Nelson,

2005), and although results from Research Question 1 indicate that this is one of the most significant self-perceive skill increases in the study, it is relieving to understand that employers perceive this same level of confidence rather than a disproportionately large one. Overall, this category of Professional Qualities carries the most consistent perception of performance among employers and interns.

Each of the category results is potentially affected by interrater reliability, a risk that occurs anytime multiple raters complete the same assessment while evaluating the same information (Crocker & Algina, 2006). Observational consistency is cause for concern, with different raters attending to varying impressions of the scale and of intern behaviors in order to form a response.

#### Research Question 4

Research Question 4 queries if there is a difference between the levels of overall intern performance as perceived by interns versus employers. A comparison between the employer ranking and intern ranking of the single question *overall rating of performance this term* was conducted using a Wilcoxon matched-pairs signed rank test. Negative ranks represent the number of cases in which the intern score was higher than employer score, while positive ranks represent the cases in which the employer score showed an increased value when compared against the intern score. The most auspicious results would occur with a preponderance of positive ranks.

The results indicated a statistically significant difference in ranking with 33 negative ranks, 85 positive ranks, and 133 ties ( $Z = -4.23, p < .01$ ). With statistically

significant frequency, employers ranked intern overall performance more highly than interns rated their performance after one semester of an internship course. This result presents the possibility that interns approached their own performance more modestly than did employers.

### Conclusion

Data analysis for this study indicated that an experiential learning course produces a significant self-rated increase in overall intern communication, emotional intelligence, and professional qualities. There was not found to be a significant difference in skill development based on self-selected preferred learning style. Results indicated that many of the individual components of the three studied intern skill levels were rated similarly or more favorably by employers than by the interns themselves, including a question summarizing overall intern performance.

## **CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine the level of change within the transferable skill sets of communication, emotional intelligence, and professional qualities between the beginning and end of a hospitality student's first experiential learning course. Statistical tests were completed to attempt to understand the effects of experiential learning on the development of these three skills. These tests measured self-perceived intern skill change and analyzed the effect of self-determined preferred learning style on intern skill development. Industry employers were queried in order to make comparisons between employer and intern perception of the three transferable skills and overall skill level. This chapter contains an interpretation of these results.

### Summary of Results

The study hypothesis is that experiential learning courses can improve the skills of communication, emotional intelligence, and professional qualities for undergraduate hospitality students of varying learning style preferences. The data indicated that, regardless of learning style, composite variables for these three essential graduate skill sets each improved over the course of the completion of an experiential learning class. Although there was not a pre-course assessment of intern skill levels completed by employers, the gap acknowledged between intern skill sets and employer expectations in the hospitality industry was shown to be less than expected after the intervention of an

experiential learning course. In particular, a general question querying overall intern performance demonstrated significantly higher employer ratings of intern performance as compared to the ratings provided by the interns themselves. This result is very encouraging for explaining the ability of experiential learning courses to positively impact the baccalaureate graduate skill set.

The formulaic conceptualization of the study as shown in Equation 1 should be altered to reflect the study results. While the importance of the site and academic environments have not be contradicted, the necessity for the inclusion of the learning style preference has been. As a reflection of the results from Research Question 2, the new formula would read as follows:

$$SD_{\text{intern}} = f(E_{\text{site}} + E_{\text{coursework}}) \quad (2).$$

While the study results served to clarify the necessary components in the formula, it is argued that they did not prompt a needed adjustment of The Internship Course Path to Learning (Figure 2). The components were not contradicted by the study findings, and the importance of learning style is placed appropriately inside the learning lens of the intern rather than reflected as a necessary consideration for skill development. However, as a result of the study findings, it is important to represent the learning style component accurately as a preference rather than a determinant for skill development.

### Research Question 1

Research Question 1 sought to determine if there was a self-perceived change in a student's applied communication, emotional intelligence, and professional qualities skills

after the first semester of an internship class. Analysis of the composite variables as well as each individual component of them showed statistically significant increases, intimating that an experiential learning course serves as a positive conductor for each of these skills.

These results support Kolb's theory that meaningful learning can occur through the Experiential Learning Cycle (1984), the concept upon which this internship course was built. Creating awareness of skills while employing a cycle of experience, reflection, theorization, and active experimentation appears to assist significantly in the development of workforce-relevant skills. These results unilaterally support the institution of a required internship course within undergraduate curricula.

### Research Question 2

The goal of Research Question 2 was to determine if the amount of self-perceived change in a student's applied communication, emotional intelligence, and professional qualities skills relates to self-reported learning style preferences. As tested with each composite variable, results indicated that there was no statistically significant difference in the amount of skill development based on reported primary learning style. This result implies that the positive effects of experiential learning courses are experienced equally across interns irrespective of learning style preference.

This conclusion supports the Experiential Learning Theory (Kolb, 1984) and brain-based learning (Zull, 2002) in the assertion that, regardless of learning style preference, students will demonstrate superior information retention when engaging in

the Experiential Learning Cycle (Duman, 2010). An important distinction that was discovered implied that learning styles-based teaching increases achievement of all students, regardless of learning style identification. Many researchers have taken the naming of learning styles as a reason to construct curriculum specific to each, but experimentally designed research has shown that there is little evidence to support this common use for them or the assumed link between learning preference and aptitude (Pashler et al., 2009). The study hypothesizes that learning style rhetoric enjoys mainstream popularity more because of the human desire to understand how the individual fits with existing typological frameworks as well as the innate concern that each person be treated as individuals by educators, rather than because of a preponderance of scientific evidence.

Considering current evidence, the most effective means for incorporating learning style preferences are twofold. First, simply raising awareness of learning style preferences encourages active reflection (Lashley & Barron, 2006) and pushes interns further through Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle (1984). Second, as concluded by a 2009 study commissioned by the journal *Psychological Science in the Public Interest*, the palatability of learning style theory may serve as a valuable and salient way to encourage instructors to consider the delivery method most appropriate to the material and audience (Pashler et al., 2009). As Terry (2001) suggested, the optimal way to incorporate this knowledge may be to structure learning through assignment choices that enable learners to choose their preferred learning platforms, making knowledge acquisition as effortless as possible for each individual.



### Research Question 3

At the core of Research Question 3 was an attempt to understand if the level of self-perceived ability in a student's applied communication, emotional intelligence, and professional qualities skills after the first semester of internship class relates to their respective employer's perceptions on the same skills. This question was designed to probe the recognized gap between graduate skills and employer expectations. Utilizing the intern self-perceived skill level as a representation of undergraduate skill level, a comparison can be drawn between undergraduate workforce preparedness and industry expectations in the form of the employer perceptions. Each of these findings aids in the illumination of skills that need further development through undergraduate education in order for students to meet the performance expectations of hospitality industry employers.

Research Question 3 and Research Question 4 both reported differences in intern and employer ratings, seeking an understanding of the underlying question of why these differences exist. There are several categories of self-other rating disagreement that serve to illuminate the discrepancy. The first conceptual disagreement occurs when raters use different frames of reference or value weights when evaluating performance dimensions (Cheung, 1999). A second source of variance includes measurement error stemming from questionnaire aspects such as psychometric principle interpretation and scale interval definitions. Although these disagreement types are far more controllable by survey design principles, they are nonetheless subject to rater construal (Dillman et al., 2009). Finally, the tendency to generalize performance across dimensions (or "halo effect") creates a

mental correlation between multiple variables sourcing from disproportionate influence of a single dimension, tendency to discount inconsistent information, and overall impression (Cheung, 1999). This effect is particularly evident in overall performance ratings, such as the one examined in Research Question 4.

#### Research Question 4

Research Question 4 examined a single question of overall intern performance rating in an attempt to understand if a difference existed between the level of overall intern performance as perceived by interns compared to intern performance as rated by their employers. In addition to communication, emotional intelligence, and professional qualities, questionnaire skill categories that were queried and therefore most salient to both sets of respondents pertained to composite conceptual and analytic ability, understanding and applying information, teamwork, technology, design and experiment skills, social intelligence, and organization and planning skills. The results indicated a statistically significant higher employer ranking of intern performance, ceding the possibility that interns perceived their own performance more modestly than did employers.

It is generally acknowledged that questions of overall performance ratings are subjective, grounded by biases and interpretation instead of more concrete, ability-based metrics. However, a leniency or stringency effect based on referent group typically creates higher self-rating (Cheung, 1999). One hypothesis for this study's contradictory results is that employers recognized the purpose of the evaluation as grade-based and

therefore in existence for the benefit of the intern's course success; as such, in spite of an e-mail sent by the OEL to encourage otherwise, employers may have rated interns more highly than was accurate to help the intern to receive a favorable course grade. As these data comprise the results of the first of three required internships for hospitality students, it is evident that every opportunity exists for the successful development of lacking skills, as long as students are provided with the proper focus.

### Recommendations for Undergraduate Education

As a result of this study, several suggestions emerged that will serve to ensure undergraduate liberal arts education's continued relevance and success in building the skill set expected of today's graduate. With industry-connected community colleges and trade schools proliferating, the university liberal arts education must respond to the call for technical curricular relevance while firmly recognizing its signature offerings. Liberal arts education exists to teach the very skills that are exceptionally relevant to society and are non-industry specific, such as communication, critical thinking, and problem solving. Without these adaptive skills, college graduates are equipped to regurgitate what they are taught rather than lead companies into the next generation. The ability to think as well as perform is not only what creates industry leaders, but also what provides the competitive edge created by the four-year liberal arts education.

In order to design experiences that will foster this niche, it is important that educators be provided with professional development designed to assist with the effective integration of transferable skills into curriculum (Mitchell et al., 2010). Faculty members

often serve as experts existing in silos, necessarily possessing a predominance of discipline-specific knowledge that meets the criteria for college hiring. Offering concrete strategies to integrate skills such as emotional intelligence can foster the importance voiced by university rhetoric and thereby the curricular incorporation of such skills.

Universities would do well to take a unified approach to holistic student education that not only transcends disciplines, but crosses boundaries between academic affairs and student affairs. A second differentiator between the four-year liberal arts education and the community college or trade school model is the funding for student engagement outside of the classroom. The goal of creating transferable skills through higher education should be leveraged through out-of-classroom experiences, which have the flexibility to design activities that are both entertaining and rich with opportunities for skill development. This could be accomplished through stated university goals for development of certain transferable skills for all baccalaureate graduates; academic affairs units would address goals through classroom instruction, while student affairs units would address the same goals through outcomes-based activities. For example, to increase problem-solving skills, classroom professors might employ case studies while their educational partners in student affairs may offer a team-based challenge course.

Another intersection of the four-year liberal arts education and industry is clearly seen through experiential learning courses. As demonstrated in the current and prior studies, experiential learning courses serve as an effective method through which transferrable skills can be built. Education provides ways of thinking, while work site experience puts knowledge into context through the improvement of innumerable and

relevant skills. However, the vast differentiation between the definitions of these types of job site and academic experiences leave learning outcomes, and thereby strategic partner support, as variable at best. The first step to building learning through the industry-connected experiential learning field is to use existing and continuing research to create specific, recommended parameters for optimal learning. These will undoubtedly include goals and expectations set in the beginning of the semester between the intern and student, as well as continued reflection (Kolb, 1984; Owen, 2009; Sweitzer & King, 2004). Academic leaders of these programs must be faculty and not staff, as these leaders are charged with the learning and development of each student through targeted and meaningful coursework. They provide the foundation that propels students repeatedly through the Experiential Learning Cycle (Kolb, 1984) in a manner that uses reflection and conceptualization to create constructive understandings of encountered occurrences (Dewey, 1938; see Figure 2). A pedagogically sound basis for creating meaningful learning from the intersection of academia with a work site exists, requiring the practiced hand of a faculty member to guide learning.

Another current circumstance presents itself with the economic downturn in the recent 21st century. As employers attempt to stay in business, it is suspected that they are using unpaid interns in place of hiring or re-hiring new employees. As a result, the Department of Labor's Wage and Hours Division issued an official declaration to the Congress of the United States in April 2009 that necessitated a "crack down" on the enforcement of the six guidelines for use of unpaid interns. Rather than exalting the government for its efforts to protect students, higher education administrators

representing 13 colleges and universities issued a concerned response that claimed that the resurgence of enforcement of these guidelines could deter employers' willingness to offer valuable internship opportunities (Eisenbrey, 2010). This incident begs the question of the role that institutions of higher education should play in guiding these sanctioned internship experiences.

### Experiential Learning Programs

The most fundamental recommendation for administrators of experiential learning (EL) programs is to carefully and clearly define the role of these programs in the institution and in the community. Although the recent educational assessment movement has been met with great skepticism, experiential learning holds a unique place in the higher education landscape: it can provide credentialing bodies, funding agencies, and strategic constituents with evidence of industry-relevant skill improvement. If programs are able to position themselves as academic units teaching a variety of relevant skills, the data received will increase credibility of the institution in its entirety. Programs are currently led by a range of institutional leaders that include a team of tenure-earning faculty, designated faculty members within colleges, and staff that report through a career services department. Above all, the most important commonality necessary for programmatic success is the possession of educational authority over teaching, learning, and curricular matters. A suggestion to tighten the focus on specific skill development would be to structure work site experiences around several skill-based learning objectives. For example, the hospitality industry has recognized a need for a greater

graduate skill level in communication, so EL programs could require that one learning objective for each student pertains to the development of communication skills in a site-relevant context.

Strengthening EL faculty education in the pedagogy and theoretical underpinnings of the field will also aid with improved curricular decisions and student developmental outcomes. Recent research places brain-based learning (Zull, 2002) in close conjunction with the ELC (Kolb, 1984), providing a neuro-scientific base to a conceptual theory (see Figure 1). This will assist in validating experiential learning as a reputable pedagogy and encourage a broad base of university, employer, and government support. However, if experiential learning faculty members are uncertain of recent research and therefore have difficulties in effectively marketing the discipline, the field will not continue to enjoy a justified amount of support.

With academic credibility of EL programs in doubt at some institutions, as well as the consideration of program instructors to be staff rather than teaching faculty, it remains crucial that EL programs are vigilant about collecting and reporting meaningful data. EL offices should be data-driven and serve the broader community as a liaison for assessment, outcomes, and effectiveness. Regular analysis and communication of results to key stakeholders in the university and community is crucial to recognition of program value. It is also important that the data be collected, analyzed and reported with the highest degree of academic rigor and integrity. For example, the analysis associated with Research Questions 1 and 3 in the current study could have involved a simple aggregation of results and subsequent analysis via independent *t*-test. Instead, the more

involved and robust method of ensuring that data points had a matching element to allow the use of a dependent *t*-test was taken. In a paired test, the overall effect of individual differences of each matched pair is able to provide results that are stronger and more meaningful. The extra time taken to match student-student and student-employer data comes at a far smaller cost to program credibility than does the choice of a less academically rigorous method, in particular consideration of an academic audience that will undoubtedly understand and respect the appreciable difference.

#### *Recommendations for OEL Survey*

Several opportunities exist for ensuring meaningful and reliable results from future questionnaires. The first recommendation is to include a broader base of questions related to attitude and ethics, as these constructs have been noted as particularly important for this sample's industry success (Johanson et al., 2011; Kuo, Chen, & Lu, 2012). Alignment of variables into meaningful skill sections would involve relocating three of the loosely defined Professional Qualities variables into scales that were more topic-specific: *showing initiative/being self-motivated* to the Emotional Intelligence category, *demonstrating a positive attitude towards change* to a newly created Attitude category, and *possessing honesty/integrity/personal ethics* into an Ethics section. This would leave only two remaining questions, *assuming responsibility/accountability for actions* and *exhibiting self-confidence* appearing in the Professional Qualities section, which could then be replaced with the increasingly descriptive Individual Responsibility, Intrapersonal Qualities, or Internal Locus of Control title. This arrangement would also provide the opportunity to unlink questions that have multiple parts (such as



*honesty/integrity/personal ethics*) and examine each of these three truly distinct concepts for continued relevance and subsequent specific measurement. More meaningful, transferable results for this population would subsequently result. In addition, in recognition of the applied nature of these questions, it is suggested that verbs such as “possessing” (as in *possessing honesty/integrity/ethics*) be changed to a verb more outwardly visible and therefore measurable by the perception of others such as “displaying”.

With respect to the Communication questions, it was demonstrated that there may be value to continuing the separation of *exhibiting good listening skills* and *exhibiting good questioning skills*, with the latter loading primarily with a factor other than Communication. An alternate suggestion was made to re-combine the two questions under the phrase *active listening*. However, additional questions merit consideration for inclusion, including electronic communication and nonverbal communication. Electronic communication through e-mail, telephone, and social media mediums has become a staple in the present-day workplace. A question regarding electronic communication should be phrased to seek the intern’s understanding of the norms particular to workplace applicability of electronic and social media such as appropriate access and content. On an opposite end of the communication spectrum are the nonverbal methods of communication, which have been shown to be important differentiators in successful service delivery. This category includes observables such as eye contact, hand gestures, and fluctuations in the voice such as tone and volume (Sommers, Greeno, & Boag, 1989). Due to their relevance and ability to affect workplace performance, it is strongly

recommended that electronic and nonverbal communication be afforded a minimum weight of one question each within the existing Communication section.

Another questionnaire recommendation is to use a broadened set of questions related to Learning Styles, perhaps in conjunction with Kolb's recently released LSI 4.0 that expands identified styles from four to nine (Experience Based Learning Systems, Inc, 2012) in order to ensure accurate student identification of personal Learning Style. This recommendation comes in spite of the lack of significance found through the study in recognition of the value of Learning Style understanding to the ELC (Kolb, 1984). It is not, however, recommended that assessments such as Kolb's LSI or Honey & Mumford's Learning Style Questionnaire be administered, as the cost-benefit ratio for doing so would not be advantageous (Pashler et al., 2009). If a single learning style-type question similar to the one created for this study were to be used, an example of how to complete a forced-choice question as well as a restriction of answer options once selected would facilitate more accurate data collection. The recognized human interest in typology combined with principles of survey design suggests that this learning styles-related question could serve as an excellent choice to begin a questionnaire; this type of question would serve to increase interest in completing the questionnaire and decrease the chance of the question directions being misunderstood due to the effects of completion fatigue (Dillman et al., 2009).

The measurement scale of the questionnaire could be adjusted to produce increasingly robust results. A Likert-type scale measurement creates ordinal data that cannot be analyzed with the robustness of continuous data and therefore an exploration of

alternate measurement scales is encouraged. Even if the questionnaire were to continue to utilize a Likert-type scale, although a 5-point Likert-type scale is sufficient by research standards, more accurate results could be obtained with a 7-point Likert-type scale. This change could improve in understanding the skill gap between graduating hospitality students and the skill perceptions and expectations of hospitality employers. In addition, there is a potential for adjusting the verbal portion of the scale to increase accuracy. The Likert-type scale verbal descriptors associate scale level three with *average*. This word carries an academic connotation of a grade letter “C” and associates negatively to achievement-orientated Millennials (Nelson, 2005). As the middle of the scale, this category is intended to evoke neither a positive nor negative reaction, forming a centered balance to the two more negative (*marginal* and *unsatisfactory*) and two more positive (*very good* and *outstanding*) categories. Commonly, Likert-type scales verbally refer to this center number as *good*, which falls appropriately between the current scale descriptors of *marginal* and *very good*.

### Hospitality Colleges

Hospitality colleges are particularly well-versed in the merits of experiential education as evidenced by the volume of programs with a related type of education in the curriculum. The perfect number of hours of internship experience for maximum growth potential has yet to be determined, but this is not unexpected. Until there is an understanding of the collective industry expectation of each level of needed graduate skill, this will continue to be the case. In addition, not all internship experiences will

foster the same development of skills in the same interns. This reality helps make education an art, not a science. However, it is expected that the failure to recognize the requirement for a minimum of one semester of experiential learning would create less competitive graduates and significantly impact the ability of the college to prepare its students for this applied field in a negative fashion.

The recognition of the importance of experiential education to the education of hospitality professionals is a meritorious first step. However, colleges may tend to disregard, fail to seek, or fail to maximally use the data generated by experiential learning programs. Broadened conceptual purposes may include accreditation, internal promotion, and external promotion of graduate skill sets to employers. This will build relationships, collegiate and university reputations, and elicit conversation that illuminates further understandings through reactions that either support or negate presented results.

One of the strongest vehicles through which hospitality colleges can continue to respond to changing industry needs is a strong, mutually beneficial relationship with industry employers. Although these relationships may be most readily forged through university foundation development officers and career services professionals, it is essential that faculty members within experiential learning and the hospitality college create a curriculum advisory board of reputable professionals from whom they can learn. Forums such as these could be further exploited for anecdotal evidence of internship challenges and successes, guiding research agendas, and ensuring a current knowledge base in the professoriate. They can serve as barometers for graduate skill preparedness, closing the gap between the presumption of successful skill development by

undergraduate hospitality educators and the reality with respect to types of and magnitude of skill development.

### Recommendations for Employers

In partnership with experiential learning programs, the university shares a significant opportunity with employers in its ability to serve as joint educators. It is never more important than with interns in designated learning capacities that well-intentioned feedback is provided regularly in the name of building future industry professionals. The quality of the intern produced is a direct reflection on the host property in every aspect, from hiring to growth to parting. In the age of social media, both caring and irreverent experiences can be carried rapidly and with broad strokes, fostering a reputation that will undoubtedly affect future recruiting prospects. A carefully crafted internship program with a developmental mentor and stated expectations is more than just a recommendation for curricular program components; it is a necessity for successful experiences to prevail.

In addition to functioning as a recruiting mouthpiece, internships serve as an extended job interview, providing employers with the opportunity to screen for necessary skills and potential development of further skills. Employers can significantly impact learning and capability of future learning for each intern that passes through their doors and harvest the brightest new talent. They have the ability to impact the direction and magnitude of growth for their interns, but can also rise to the opportunity to influence the broad-based platform from which all interns are trained. By developing a productive, consultant-type relationship with universities through formats such as a curriculum

advisory board, employers bolster their reputation with the university. In turn, this reputation cascades to university students through avenues such as employment recommendations, classroom speaking, event attendance, scholarship or physical plant sponsorship, and recruiting. While internships in general offer a strategic plan for staffing without the cost of benefits, this arrangement provides a tangible savings of training funds, pushing all possible preparation into the willing arms of the hospitality college and the university as a whole.

#### Recommendations for Professional Associations

The Department of Labor's (DOL) Wage and Hours Division (2010) offers six guidelines to govern the establishment of unpaid internships and none to guide the labor requirements for paid internships. These guidelines resulted from the U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Walling v. Portland Terminal Co.* in 1947 and reflected the view of an unpaid internship as an apprenticeship, with an employer providing constant supervision and ensuring that no immediate advantages could be gained from the activities of the student. These regulations leave an intern vulnerable to suffer the lack of protection afforded to paid employees such as discrimination and harassment prohibitions, as demonstrated in the 1997 case of *Bridget O'Connor v. James Davis, Dr., and the State of New York*. Given the vagueness of the regulations, a lack of consistent government enforcement, and widespread student ignorance of internship regulations, many employers either do not pay their interns or pay stipends that are less than minimum wage (Edwards & Hertel-Fernandez, 2010).

Both paid and unpaid internship guidelines offered by the DOL are in need of an update to reflect current practices, purposes, and environment. However, judicial courts cannot act without a concrete case, just as legislation will rarely change without interference by lobbyists. Associations such as NACE, NSEE, and ACCE must organize alongside the actively involved Economic Policy Institute to increase governmental education on current issues facing interns. As experts, these professional associations have a duty to propose a viable, implementable solution that undoubtedly would include curricular length, breadth, and structural recommendations for EL courses that build upon those offered by the Council for Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (2011). With the helpful hand of the institution of higher education, the ability to receive academic credit while reflecting on career-related experiences through a faculty-led class that can benefit industry with current, relevant knowledge can exist for students.

#### Recommendations for Further Research

Numerous research agendas elucidate aspects of the puzzle that affect the creation of the graduate skill set. Psychometric expertise coupled with industry understanding will continue to refine the metrics collected and meanings derived from them. As with all education, research into the effects of experiential learning on these skill sets in the context of student maturity and development would be wise in order to isolate the impact of the academic experience. In the same vein, measuring skill development of interns enrolled exclusively in an experiential learning course would assist in isolating the effects of the course, providing more credible results. As multiple semesters of internship

courses are common, further research on the longitudinal impacts of experiential learning could serve to narrow the breadth of guesswork with respect to maximum longevity of experiences that currently plagues the experiential learning educator. The variety of internship program examples illustrated in Table 2 represent a sampling of programmatic features that, through a combination of andragogy and administrative necessity, have evolved; research into the application of ELT in order to understand the effectiveness of each of these program permutations is vital. It has been shown that setting goals increases achievement irrespective of that achievement's relationship to the stated goals; in the same regard, it may prove valuable to study whether the same holds true for intern skill self-rating in the beginning of a semester or experience.

Critics of the use of self-evaluation may find value in using performance-based metrics to evaluate intern skills, with an added level of interest found in the comparison of performance metrics with the subjective employer evaluation of skills. Additional qualitative research opportunities can build upon the recent work of authors such as Chan (2012) to understand how skills are developed, why such methodology is successful, and the feelings surrounding skill development through experiential education. In addition to the skills upon which the current study was focused, it would be prudent to specifically study problem solving for hospitality students as well. This set of skills appears in every area of hospitality, including guest service, crisis management, and service recovery.

It would be helpful for research to provide perspective on the percentage of industry leaders who obtained an industry-relevant degree in the United States. It is hypothesized that the number has increased with the ability of degree proliferation to



influence hiring criteria, but no such study was able to be found at the time of this study. If the results show an increased number of industry leaders with a related degree, it could assist educational institutions in addressing the industry population that claims the degree is superfluous based on a historic lack of existence.

Finally, a recommendation to expand the learning styles questions is offered. Although the results of Research Question 2 concur with recent studies that showcase experiential learning as equally effective for learners of all learning style preferences, there are indications that hospitality students may be drawn much more solidly to certain learning style preferences than were found in this study. A single learning styles question was created, but it is imprudent to suggest that it is as effectual as instruments such as Kolb's LSI (Experience Based Learning Systems, Inc, 2012).

### Conclusion

As the United States continues to be a strong player in the global economy, further devices to ensure its prominence in the landscape will need to be employed. One of the many ways in which this can be done is through an analysis of the societal skills that its citizens need and the ways in which those skills are acquired. These needed skills have been acknowledged with similar conclusions drawn by both public and private research entities, but have yet to be successfully addressed in their entirety through prevailing educational doctrines within higher education. Many of the skills needed continue to evolve to include proficiencies in areas such as ethical decision making and technology, while others such as communication and emotional intelligence have be

recognized as insufficiently developed by institutions of higher education for decades. Experiential learning courses are pedagogically sound curricular practices that assist in building skill sets relevant to today's society. Due to their widely acknowledged success, their expansion within all higher educational disciplines is recommended, but at minimum is encouraged in programs with close ties to industry such as hospitality.

**APPENDIX A**  
**UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL FLORIDA INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH BOARD**  
**INITIAL APPROVAL LETTER**



University of Central Florida Institutional Review Board  
Office of Research & Commercialization  
12201 Research Parkway, Suite 501  
Orlando, Florida 32826-3246  
Telephone: 407-823-2901 or 407-882-2276  
[www.research.ucf.edu/compliance/irb.html](http://www.research.ucf.edu/compliance/irb.html)

### Approval of Exempt Human Research

From: **UCF Institutional Review Board #1  
FWA00000351, IRB00001138**

To: **Shara Michelle Lee**

Date: **December 08, 2011**

Dear Researcher:

On 12/8/2011, the IRB approved the following activity as human participant research that is exempt from regulation:

Type of Review: UCF Initial Review Submission Form  
Project Title: Examining Soft Skills through Undergraduate Experiential Learning: An Exploration of the Development of Industry Relevant Soft Skills in Hospitality Students  
Investigator: Shara Michelle Lee  
IRB Number: SBE-11-08055  
Funding Agency: None

This determination applies only to the activities described in the IRB submission and does not apply should any changes be made. If changes are made and there are questions about whether these changes affect the exempt status of the human research, please contact the IRB. When you have completed your research, please submit a Study Closure request in iRIS so that IRB records will be accurate.

In the conduct of this research, you are responsible to follow the requirements of the Investigator Manual.

On behalf of Sophia Dziegielewski, Ph.D., L.C.S.W., UCF IRB Chair, this letter is signed by:

Signature applied by Janice Turchin on 12/08/2011 02:22:58 PM EST

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Janice Turchin".

IRB Coordinator

**APPENDIX B**  
**UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL FLORIDA INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH BOARD**  
**SUPPLEMENTAL APPROVAL LETTER**



University of Central Florida Institutional Review Board  
 Office of Research & Commercialization  
 12201 Research Parkway, Suite 501  
 Orlando, Florida 32826-3246  
 Telephone: 407-823-2901 or 407-882-2276  
[www.research.ucf.edu/compliance/irb.html](http://www.research.ucf.edu/compliance/irb.html)

**Approval of Exempt Human Research**

From: **UCF Institutional Review Board #1  
FWA0000351, IRB00001138**  
 To: **Shara Michelle Lee**  
 Date: **December 15, 2011**

Dear Researcher:

On 12/15/2011, the IRB approved the following activity as human participant research that is exempt from regulation:

Type of Review: Exempt Determination  
 Modification Type: Data from additional assessments/ assignments completed by in the course will be used to analyze change in participants' skill development. Revised consent document has been approved for use.  
 Project Title: Examining Soft Skills through Undergraduate Experiential Learning: An Exploration of the Development of Industry Relevant Soft Skills in Hospitality Students  
 Investigator: Shara Michelle Lee  
 IRB Number: SBE-11-08055  
 Funding Agency:  
 Grant Title:  
 Research ID: N/A

This determination applies only to the activities described in the IRB submission and does not apply should any changes be made. If changes are made and there are questions about whether these changes affect the exempt status of the human research, please contact the IRB. When you have completed your research, please submit a Study Closure request in iRIS so that IRB records will be accurate.

In the conduct of this research, you are responsible to follow the requirements of the Investigator Manual.

On behalf of Sophia Dziegielewski, Ph.D., L.C.S.W., UCF IRB Chair, this letter is signed by:

Signature applied by Joanne Muratori on 12/15/2011 04:24:54 PM EST

IRB Coordinator

**APPENDIX C**  
**UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL FLORIDA OFFICE OF EXPERIENTIAL**  
**LEARNING DATA USE AND RESEARCH PERMISSION**

**From:** [Sheri Dressler](#)  
**To:** [Shara Lee](#)  
**Subject:** Re: Approved data use  
**Date:** Monday, February 27, 2012 4:17:58 PM

---

I am happy to confirm that I have given approval for Shara Lee to use the data listed in the email below for her dissertation research. Consistent with the statement below, it is my understanding that the students involved have already signed agreements that allow for the use of this data for research.

Sheri Dressler  
Director, Office of Experiential Learning  
UCF, CSEL 300  
Orlando, FL  
32816-1700  
(407) 823-5000

---

**From:** Shara Lee <[Shara.Lee@ucf.edu](mailto:Shara.Lee@ucf.edu)>  
**Date:** Tue, 14 Feb 2012 12:00:48 -0500  
**To:** Sheri Dressler <[dressler@ucf.edu](mailto:dressler@ucf.edu)>  
**Subject:** Approved data use

Hi Sheri,

I was counseled by my dissertation chair to make sure I had permission in writing to use the OEL hospitality data for my dissertation. You and I discussed use of regular student course work including the Information Form, Agreement Form, Learning Objectives, Work Hours, Student Evaluation, Employer Evaluation, and Semester Report data longitudinally for the students who completed the survey I created and delivered Spring 2012 (the Skills Assessment). I included the possibility for use of any course work in my disclosure to students who completed the Skills Assessment. Would you be able to confirm your support for my use of this data?

I really appreciate it,  
Shara

*Shara Lee*

Faculty, University of Central Florida  
Office of Experiential Learning  
Serving the Rosen College of Hospitality Management  
[Shara.Lee@ucf.edu](mailto:Shara.Lee@ucf.edu)  
Phone: 407-903-8018  
Fax: 407-903-8104



**APPENDIX D**  
**SKILLS ASSESSMENT**

**Skills Assessment**

Lee Shara  
 Started: January 26, 2012 1:34 PM  
 Questions: 41

Finish Save All Help

**Instructions**

Please assess yourself on your skills and understanding with respect to the categories below.

Unless otherwise stated, please use the following definitions when evaluating yourself:

OUTSTANDING: I am the best or one of the best.  
 VERY GOOD: I am above average but not outstanding.  
 AVERAGE: I am average when compared to others.  
 MARGINAL: I am lacking in some important aspects or less than average.  
 UNSATIS.: I need quite a bit of improvement.  
 N/A: Not applicable - I did not have the opportunity to develop this skill.

**1-3 GENERAL INFORMATION**

1. (Points: 1)

Current semester:

1. Spring

Save Answer

2. (Points: 1)

Current Year:

1. 2012

Save Answer

3. (Points: 1)

Company name:

Save Answer

**4-8 COMMUNICATION**

4. (Points: 1)

SPEAKING WITH CLARITY AND CONFIDENCE

1. Outstanding  2. Very Good  3. Average  4. Marginal  5. Unsatis.  
 6. N/A

Save Answer

5. (Points: 1)

WRITING CLEARLY AND CONCISELY

1. Outstanding  2. Very Good  3. Average  4. Marginal  5. Unsatis.  
 6. N/A

Save Answer

6. (Points: 1)

MAKING EFFECTIVE PRESENTATIONS

1. Outstanding  2. Very Good  3. Average  4. Marginal  5. Unsatis.  
 6. N/A

Save Answer

7. (Points: 1)

Time 13:34:42

Allowed ---:---:---

Remaining ---:---:---

**Question Status**

Unanswered

Answer not saved

Answered

1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30
31	32	33	34	35
36	37	38	39	40
41				

Assessment

EXHIBITING GOOD LISTENING SKILLS

1. Outstanding  2. Very Good  3. Average  4. Marginal  5. Unsatis.  
 6. N/A

Save Answer

8. (Points: 1)

EXHIBITING GOOD QUESTIONING SKILLS

1. Outstanding  2. Very Good  3. Average  4. Marginal  5. Unsatis.  
 6. N/A

Save Answer

9-12 CONCEPTUAL/ANALYTICAL ABILITY

9. (Points: 1)

EVALUATING SITUATIONS EFFECTIVELY

1. Outstanding  2. Very Good  3. Average  4. Marginal  5. Unsatis.  
 6. N/A

Save Answer

10. (Points: 1)

SOLVING PROBLEMS/MAKING DECISIONS

1. Outstanding  2. Very Good  3. Average  4. Marginal  5. Unsatis.  
 6. N/A

Save Answer

11. (Points: 1)

DEMONSTRATING ORIGINAL AND CREATIVE THINKING

1. Outstanding  2. Very Good  3. Average  4. Marginal  5. Unsatis.  
 6. N/A

Save Answer

12. (Points: 1)

IDENTIFYING AND SUGGESTING NEW IDEAS

1. Outstanding  2. Very Good  3. Average  4. Marginal  5. Unsatis.  
 6. N/A

Save Answer

13-17 PROFESSIONAL QUALITIES

13. (Points: 1)

ASSUMING RESPONSIBILITY/ACCOUNTABILITY FOR ACTIONS

1. Outstanding  2. Very Good  3. Average  4. Marginal  5. Unsatis.  
 6. N/A

Save Answer

14. (Points: 1)

EXHIBITING SELF-CONFIDENCE

1. Outstanding  2. Very Good  3. Average  4. Marginal  5. Unsatis.  
 6. N/A

Save Answer

15. (Points: 1)

Assessment

POSSESSING HONESTY/INTEGRITY/PERSONAL ETHICS

1. Outstanding  2. Very Good  3. Average  4. Marginal  5. Unsatis.  
 6. N/A

Save Answer

16. (Points: 1)

SHOWING INITIATIVE/BEING SELF-MOTIVATED

1. Outstanding  2. Very Good  3. Average  4. Marginal  5. Unsatis.  
 6. N/A

Save Answer

17. (Points: 1)

DEMONSTRATING A POSITIVE ATTITUDE TOWARDS CHANGE

1. Outstanding  2. Very Good  3. Average  4. Marginal  5. Unsatis.  
 6. N/A

Save Answer

18-21 TEAMWORK

18. (Points: 1)

WORKING EFFECTIVELY WITH OTHERS

1. Outstanding  2. Very Good  3. Average  4. Marginal  5. Unsatis.  
 6. N/A

Save Answer

19. (Points: 1)

UNDERSTANDING AND CONTRIBUTING TO THE ORGANIZATION'S GOALS

1. Outstanding  2. Very Good  3. Average  4. Marginal  5. Unsatis.  
 6. N/A

Save Answer

20. (Points: 1)

DEMONSTRATING FLEXIBILITY AND ADAPTABILITY

1. Outstanding  2. Very Good  3. Average  4. Marginal  5. Unsatis.  
 6. N/A

Save Answer

21. (Points: 1)

FUNCTIONING WELL ON MULTIDISCIPLINARY TEAMS

1. Outstanding  2. Very Good  3. Average  4. Marginal  5. Unsatis.  
 6. N/A

Save Answer

22-24 LEADERSHIP

22. (Points: 1)

GIVING DIRECTION, GUIDANCE AND TRAINING

1. Outstanding  2. Very Good  3. Average  4. Marginal  5. Unsatis.  
 6. N/A

Save Answer

Assessment

23. (Points: 1)

MOTIVATING OTHERS TO SUCCEED

1. Outstanding    2. Very Good    3. Average    4. Marginal    5. Unsatis.  
 6. N/A

Save Answer

24. (Points: 1)

MANAGING CONFLICT EFFECTIVELY

1. Outstanding    2. Very Good    3. Average    4. Marginal    5. Unsatis.  
 6. N/A

Save Answer

**25-31 EMOTIONAL/SOCIAL INTELLIGENCE**

25. (Points: 1)

UNDERSTANDING AND WORKING WITHIN THE CULTURE OF A GROUP

1. Outstanding    2. Very Good    3. Average    4. Marginal    5. Unsatis.  
 6. N/A

Save Answer

26. (Points: 1)

RESPECTING DIVERSITY

1. Outstanding    2. Very Good    3. Average    4. Marginal    5. Unsatis.  
 6. N/A

Save Answer

27. (Points: 1)

RECOGNIZING POLITICAL AND SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF ACTIONS

1. Outstanding    2. Very Good    3. Average    4. Marginal    5. Unsatis.  
 6. N/A

Save Answer

28. (Points: 1)

UNDERSTANDING MY EMOTIONS

1. Outstanding    2. Very Good    3. Average    4. Marginal    5. Unsatis.  
 6. N/A

Save Answer

29. (Points: 1)

CONTROLLING MY EMOTIONS

1. Outstanding    2. Very Good    3. Average    4. Marginal    5. Unsatis.  
 6. N/A

Save Answer

30. (Points: 1)

UNDERSTANDING THE EMOTIONS OF OTHERS

1. Outstanding    2. Very Good    3. Average    4. Marginal    5. Unsatis.  
 6. N/A

Save Answer

31. (Points: 1)

Assessment

ABILITY TO TAKE THE PERSPECTIVE OF OTHERS

1. Outstanding    2. Very Good    3. Average    4. Marginal    5. Unsatis.  
 6. N/A

Save Answer

**32-35 ORGANIZATION/PLANNING**

32. (Points: 1)

MANAGING PROJECTS AND/OR OTHER RESOURCES EFFECTIVELY

1. Outstanding    2. Very Good    3. Average    4. Marginal    5. Unsatis.  
 6. N/A

Save Answer

33. (Points: 1)

SETTING GOALS AND PRIORITIES

1. Outstanding    2. Very Good    3. Average    4. Marginal    5. Unsatis.  
 6. N/A

Save Answer

34. (Points: 1)

MANAGING SEVERAL TASKS AT ONCE

1. Outstanding    2. Very Good    3. Average    4. Marginal    5. Unsatis.  
 6. N/A

Save Answer

35. (Points: 1)

ALLOCATING TIME TO MEET DEADLINES

1. Outstanding    2. Very Good    3. Average    4. Marginal    5. Unsatis.  
 6. N/A

Save Answer

**36-37 RELATIONSHIP TO ACADEMIC PROGRAM**

36. (Points: 1)

MOTIVATION TO PERSIST TO GRADUATION

1. Outstanding    2. Very Good    3. Average    4. Marginal    5. Unsatis.  
 6. N/A

Save Answer

37. (Points: 1)

MOTIVATION TO LEARN IN THE CLASSROOM

1. Outstanding    2. Very Good    3. Average    4. Marginal    5. Unsatis.  
 6. N/A

Save Answer

**38-39 RELATIONSHIP TO CAREER GOALS**

38. (Points: 1)

CLARITY OF CAREER GOALS

1. Outstanding    2. Very Good    3. Average    4. Marginal    5. Unsatis.  
 6. N/A

Save Answer

Assessment

39. (Points: 1)

AWARENESS OF OPTIONS/SPECIALIZATION WITHIN THE DISCIPLINE

1. Outstanding    2. Very Good    3. Average    4. Marginal    5. Unsatis.  
 6. N/A

Save Answer

40-41 LEARNING STYLES and FEEDBACK

40. (Points: 1)

Please rank the learning styles below in the order that you are most likely to use them, using 1 as "most likely" and 4 as "least likely".

Matching pairs

I learn through experience in concrete situations	<input type="text" value="- Select one -"/>
I learn through pondering experiences and observing them from different perspectives	<input type="text" value="- Select one -"/>
I learn through processing information and assimilating it into coherent theories and models	<input type="text" value="- Select one -"/>
I learn by relating new information to practical situations and problems	<input type="text" value="- Select one -"/>

Save Answer

41. (Points: 1)

Is there any additional information that you would like to share?

1.

Save Answer

Finish

Save All

Help

**APPENDIX E**  
**STUDENT EVALUATION**



## UCF OFFICE OF EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING Student Evaluation

Your First Name

Your Last Name

Your email address

What is your NID?

What is your PID?

Current Semester

- Spring
- Summer
- Fall

[https://us2.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV\\_89e09UrfyRTUiri&Preview=Survey.&BrandID=ucfchm](https://us2.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_89e09UrfyRTUiri&Preview=Survey.&BrandID=ucfchm)[6/12/2012 1:11:52 PM]

Current Year

2012

2013

2014

Which degree are you pursuing?

Bachelor's

Master's

Specialist

Doctorate

Not Sure

Other

What is your primary major? Please select only one. If you are unsure, please select NOT SURE at the end of the list.

www.explearning.uct.edu (407) 323-2887 oel@uct.edu

## UCF OFFICE OF EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING Student Evaluation

Please confirm the name of the organization in which you worked this term.

Are you graduating this term?

- Yes  
 No

[www.explearning.ucf.edu](http://www.explearning.ucf.edu) (407) 823-2667 [oei@ucf.edu](mailto:oei@ucf.edu)

## UCF OFFICE OF EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING Student Evaluation

Are you planning to return to your present work position next semester?

- Yes  
 No (please explain below)

[www.explearning.ucf.edu](http://www.explearning.ucf.edu) (407) 823-2667 [oei@ucf.edu](mailto:oei@ucf.edu)

Survey Powered By [Qualtrics](#)

BACK

NEXT

## UCF OFFICE OF EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING Student Evaluation

Use the following scale to assess your skills this semester.

- Outstanding -- The best or one of the best in this category
- Very Good -- Above average but not outstanding
- Average -- Average when compared to others in this category
- Marginal -- Lacking in some important aspects or less than average
- Unsatisfactory -- Needs quite a bit of improvement in this area
- N/A -- Not applicable or no opportunity to develop this skill

### Communication

	Outstanding	Very Good	Average	Marginal	Unsatisfactory	N/A
Speaks with clarity and confidence	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Writes clearly and concisely	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Makes effective formal/informal presentations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Exhibits good listening skills	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Exhibits good questioning skills	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

### Conceptual / Analytic Ability

	Outstanding	Very Good	Average	Marginal	Unsatisfactory	N/A
Evaluates solutions effectively	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Solves problems/makes decisions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

[https://us2.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV\\_89e09UrfYrTUin&Preview=Survey&BrandID=ucfchm](https://us2.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_89e09UrfYrTUin&Preview=Survey&BrandID=ucfchm)[6/12/2012 1:15:55 PM]

Identifies and suggests new ideas	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>Understanding and Applying Information</b>						
	Outstanding	Very Good	Average	Marginal	Unsatisfactory	N/A
Accesses and applies specialized knowledge	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Applies classroom learning to work situations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>Professional Qualities</b>						
	Outstanding	Very Good	Average	Marginal	Unsatisfactory	N/A
Assumes responsibility / accountable for actions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Exhibits self-confidence	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Possesses honesty/integrity/personal ethics	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Is self-motivated /Shows initiative	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Demonstrates a positive attitude toward change	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>Teamwork</b>						
	Outstanding	Very Good	Average	Marginal	Unsatisfactory	N/A
Works effectively with others	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Understands and contributes to the organization's goals	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Demonstrates flexibility / adaptability	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Functions well on multi-disciplinary teams	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>Technology</b>						
	Outstanding	Very Good	Average	Marginal	Unsatisfactory	N/A
Uses technology, tools, instruments, and information	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Understands the technology of the discipline	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>Design and Experiment Skills</b>						
	Outstanding	Very Good	Average	Marginal	Unsatisfactory	N/A
Demonstrates ability to design and deliver a component, process, system, or experiment	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Analyzes and interprets data efficiently	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>Emotional / Social Intelligence</b>						
	Outstanding	Very Good	Average	Marginal	Unsatisfactory	N/A
Understands and						

works within the culture of the group	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Respects diversity	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Recognizes political and social implications of actions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Understands own emotions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Controls own emotions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Understands the emotions of others	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Able to take the perspective of others	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>Organization/Planning</b>						
	Outstanding	Very Good	Average	Marginal	Unsatisfactory	N/A
Sets goals and priorities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Manages several tasks at once	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Allocates time to meet deadlines	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>Work Habits</b>						
	Outstanding	Very Good	Average	Marginal	Unsatisfactory	N/A
Professional attitude toward work assigned	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Quality of work produced	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Volume of work produced	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Attendance and	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

punctuality

**Relationship to Academic Program**

	Outstanding	Very Good	Average	Marginal	Unsatisfactory	N/A
Motivation to persist to graduation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Motivation to learn in the classroom	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ability to apply work concepts to classroom learning	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Degree of similarity or "match" between position and academic program of study (Please rate and then explain below)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**Relationship to Career Goals**

	Outstanding	Very Good	Average	Marginal	Unsatisfactory	N/A
Clarity of career goals	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Awareness of options/ specializations within the discipline	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Degree of similarity or "match" between position and career goals (Please rate and then explain below).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



### Relationship to University

	Outstanding	Very Good	Average	Marginal	Unsatisfactory	N/A
Relationship with the university	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Attitude about overall education	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Overall rating of your performance this term:

Outstanding     Very Good     Average     Marginal     Unsatisfactory

Describe the most beneficial features of your experience in terms of your:

Career development	<input type="text"/>
Development of work / professional skills	<input type="text"/>
Personal development	<input type="text"/>
Academic development	<input type="text"/>

### Evaluation of Work Site

Neither

	Agree Completely	Agree Somewhat	Agree Nor Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Disagree Completely	N/A
The position matched my expectations.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My supervisor was approachable.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I felt welcome and included in my department / organization.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I received sufficient on-the-job training.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I was satisfied with my work tasks.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The quality of the work was challenging.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The quantity of the work was challenging.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My position provided me with in-depth learning.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I was able to apply my education to my work.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Who is your Experiential Learning faculty member?

- Tom Barr / Shara Lee / Suzan Bunn
- Jackie Herold
- Ulla Isaac
- Sandra Macaulay Leon-Barth
- Denise Moore
- Bob Williams

Please rate the Office of Experiential Learning on the following scale:  
 1 star: Poor  
 2 stars: Needs Improvement  
 3 stars: Satisfactory  
 4 stars: Very Good  
 5 stars: Outstanding

The advising you received from your Experiential Learning faculty member	★★★★★	<input type="text"/>
The responsiveness of your Experiential Learning faculty member	★★★★★	<input type="text"/>
The front office staff	★★★★★	<input type="text"/>
The Office of Experiential Learning overall	★★★★★	<input type="text"/>

Please describe your favorite aspects of the Experiential Learning course this semester.

Please describe challenges, if any, that occurred during the Experiential Learning course this semester.

Please offer suggestions, if any, to improve the process and courses offered by the Office of Experiential Learning.

What do you like best about learning outside the classroom in a professional setting?

Please rate your experience this semester (5 stars = best).

OVERALL ★★★★★

Any additional comments?

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**APPENDIX F**  
**EMPLOYER EVALUATION**

UCF OFFICE OF EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING  
Employer Evaluation

Student First Name

Student Last Name

Which degree is your student pursuing?

- Bachelor's
- Master's
- Specialist
- Doctorate
- Not Sure
- Other

What is your student's primary major? If you are unsure, please select NOT SURE at the end of the list.

Your First Name

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Your Last Name

Your Email Address (You may be contacted by UCF Faculty if needed).

Your Phone Number (###-###-####)

I confirm that the person completing this form is the same as the employer name listed above.

- Yes
- No (Please Explain)

Use the following scale to assess the skills ability of the student named above. When making determinations, please be sure you are assessing your student's skills as they compare to new professionals in this field.

- Outstanding -- The best or one of the best in this category;
- Very Good -- Above average but not outstanding;
- Average -- Average when compared to others in this category;
- Marginal -- Lacking in some important aspects or less than average;
- Unsatisfactory -- Needs quite a bit of improvement in this area;
- N/A -- Not applicable or no opportunity to develop this skill

**Communication**

	Outstanding	Very Good	Average	Marginal	Unsatisfactory	N/A
Speaks with clarity and confidence	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Writes clearly and concisely	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Makes effective formal/informal presentations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Exhibits good listening skills	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Exhibits good questioning skills	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>Conceptual / Analytic Ability</b>						
	Outstanding	Very Good	Average	Marginal	Unsatisfactory	N/A
Evaluates solutions effectively	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Solves problems/makes decisions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Identifies and suggests new ideas	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>Understanding and Applying Information</b>						
	Outstanding	Very Good	Average	Marginal	Unsatisfactory	N/A
Accesses and applies specialized knowledge	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Applies classroom learning to work situations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>Professional Qualities</b>						
	Outstanding	Very Good	Average	Marginal	Unsatisfactory	N/A
Assumes	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



Employer Evaluation

responsibility / accountable for actions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Exhibits self-confidence	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Possesses honesty / integrity / personal ethics	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Is self-motivated / shows initiative	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Demonstrates a positive attitude toward change	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>Teamwork</b>						
	Outstanding	Very Good	Average	Marginal	Unsatisfactory	N/A
Works effectively with others	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Understands and contributes to the organization's goals	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Demonstrates flexibility / adaptability	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Functions well on multi-disciplinary teams	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>Technology</b>						
	Outstanding	Very Good	Average	Marginal	Unsatisfactory	N/A
Uses technology, tools, instruments, and information	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Understands the technology of the discipline	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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Employer Evaluation

Design and Experiment Skills						
	Outstanding	Very Good	Average	Marginal	Unsatisfactory	N/A
Demonstrates ability to design and deliver a component, process, system, or experiment	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Analyzes and interprets data efficiently	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Emotional / Social Intelligence						
	Outstanding	Very Good	Average	Marginal	Unsatisfactory	N/A
Understands and works within the culture of the group	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Respects diversity	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Recognizes political and social implications of actions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Understands own emotions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Controls own emotions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Understands the emotions of others	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Able to take the perspective of others	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Organization/Planning						
	Outstanding	Very Good	Average	Marginal	Unsatisfactory	N/A
Sets goals and priorities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Manages several tasks at once	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Allocates time to meet deadlines	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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Employer Evaluation

Evaluation of Work Habits						
	Outstanding	Very Good	Average	Marginal	Unsatisfactory	N/A
Professional attitude toward work assigned	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Quality of work produced	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Volume of work produced	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Attendance and punctuality	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Overall rating of this student's performance this term

<input type="radio"/> Outstanding	<input type="radio"/> Very Good	<input type="radio"/> Average	<input type="radio"/> Marginal	<input type="radio"/> Unsatisfactory
-----------------------------------	---------------------------------	-------------------------------	--------------------------------	--------------------------------------

Is this your first appraisal of the student?

Yes

No

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Employer Evaluation

Have there been significant changes since last semester's appraisal?

- No
- Yes (please specify)

Please describe the student's strengths.

Please describe any areas of improvement you would like to see. What suggestions would you make to help the student become more successful? If none, please write N/A.

Has this report been discussed with the student?

- Yes
- No, but it will be.
- Other

Any additional comments?

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**APPENDIX G**  
**INFORMATION FORM**

**Information Form**

Lee Shara  
Started: July 17, 2012 9:51 AM  
Questions: 36

**Instructions**

Please ensure that all applicable information is filled in and that no relevant blank spaces remain before submitting. If you need to find information outside of the assessment for correct completion, please select "Save All" at the top or bottom of the assessment (but not "Finish") and exit the assessment in order to return with all of your answered questions saved. Select "Save All" and "Finish" when you are ready to make your final submission.

**Please complete all questions that apply to you and disregard the point values.**

**1-14 GENERAL INFORMATION**

1. (Points: 1)

UCF PID:

2. (Points: 1)

Current semester:

1. Spring

3. (Points: 1)

Current Year:

1. 2012

4. (Points: 1)

What is your class level?

1. Freshman

2. Sophomore

3. Junior

4. Senior

5. Graduate Student

5. (Points: 1)

Select ALL of your course faculty members:

1. Shara Lee

2. Tom Barr

3. Suzan Bunn

Save Answer

6. (Points: 1)

This is semester number \_\_\_ in which I am taking a course offered through the Office of Experiential Learning.

1. 1       2. 2       3. 3       4. 4       5. 5       6. 6  
 7. 7       8. 8       9. 9       10. 10       11. 11+

Save Answer

7. (Points: 1)

How many credits are you earning from the Office of Experiential Learning for your course this term?

1. 1       2. 0

Save Answer

8. (Points: 1)

What are the total number of credit hours that you are enrolled in this semester?

1. 0       2. 1-3       3. 4-6       4. 7-9       5. 10-11       6. 12-15  
 7. 16-18       8. 19+

Save Answer

9. (Points: 1)

Major:

1. Hospitality Management - no track  
 2. Hospitality Management - Theme Park and Attraction Management Track  
 3. Hospitality Management - Golf and Club Management Track  
 4. Event Management  
 5. Restaurant and Foodservice Management

Save Answer

10. (Points: 1)

Second major, if applicable (if not, type "N/A"):

Save Answer

11. (Points: 1)

Minor, if applicable (if not, type "N/A"):

Save Answer

---

**12.** (Points: 1)

Expected graduation date:

- 1. Spring 2012
- 2. Summer 2012
- 3. Fall 2012
- 4. Spring 2013
- 5. Summer 2013
- 6. Fall 2013
- 7. Spring 2014
- 8. Summer 2014
- 9. Fall 2014
- 10. Spring 2015
- 11. Summer 2015
- 12. Fall 2015

Save Answer

---

**13.** (Points: 1)

FREEBIE! Please select "Co-op" below.

- 1. Co-op

Save Answer

---

**14.** (Points: 1)

Are you:

- 1. Working part-time and taking a full load of courses concurrently
- 2. Alternating full-time semesters of work with full-time semesters of classes
- 3. Other

Save Answer

---

**15-21 PERSONAL INFORMATION**

**15.** (Points: 1)

Personal phone number:

Save Answer



---

**16.** (Points: 1)

University-issued knightsmail email address:

---

**17.** (Points: 1)

Gender:

1. Female     2. Male

---

**18.** (Points: 1)

Ethnicity:

1. African American  
 2. Asian  
 3. Caucasian  
 4. Hispanic  
 5. Native American  
 6. Multiracial  
 7. I'd rather not say

---

**19.** (Points: 1)

Residency status:

1. U.S. Citizen  
 2. Permanent Resident  
 3. F-1 Visa  
 4. Other

---

**20.** (Points: 1)

Military status:

1. Veteran     2. Active Duty     3. Reserve/ Guard     4. N/A

21. (Points: 1)

Birth year (four digits, for example "1994"):

**22-36 COMPANY/POSITION INFORMATION**

22. (Points: 1)

Company Name:

23. (Points: 1)

Number of hours/week you work (for example 20, not "twenty"):

24. (Points: 1)

Hourly wage (if stipend/salary, represent as an hourly amount in numbers, for example "9.50"): \$

25. (Points: 1)

Please write a brief job description to confirm your duties and special projects this semester.

1.

26. (Points: 1)

Are you having any problems (i.e. supervisor, transportation, housing, hours, salary, fellow workers, classes)? Please describe. If none, please type "N/A".

1.

27. (Points: 1)

Company Address:

28. (Points: 1)

Supervisor's title:

29. (Points: 1)

Assessment

Supervisor's name:

**30.** (Points: 1)

Supervisor's email address:

**31.** (Points: 1)

Supervisor's phone number:

**32.** (Points: 1)

I work for  department.

**33.** (Points: 1)

My position title:

**34.** (Points: 1)

My work phone number: . If none, type "N/A".

**35.** (Points: 1)

My work email address: . If none, type "N/A".

**36.** (Points: 1)

Position obtained with the assistance of Experiential Learning (Rosen listserv emails, resume/interview assistance, etc)?

1. Yes     2. No

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