

Impact of Paying Interns: Internship Recruitment and Performance

Nonprofit Leadership Alliance
University of Northern Iowa

Project Description

The purpose of this study was to analyze if paying interns had a significant impact on a student's ability to take an internship and to understand how nonprofit organizations regarded paying their interns.

We conducted two surveys. One was given to students at the University of Northern Iowa in the fields of Leisure, Youth and Human Services and Social Work. 52 students completed the survey. The other was given to 32 nonprofit organizations in the Cedar Valley.

Research Question: Students

- Does payment affect a student's ability to take an internship?

Research Method

Along with descriptive statistics, Kruskal-Wallis, Mann-Whitney U and Chi-Square tests were conducted between:

- Sex/Ethnicity/Age and capacity to take an unpaid internship
- Sex/Ethnicity/Age and the affect of pay or lack of pay for an internship
- Sex/Ethnicity/Age and choosing a quality internship experience that is unpaid over a less quality internship experience that is paid

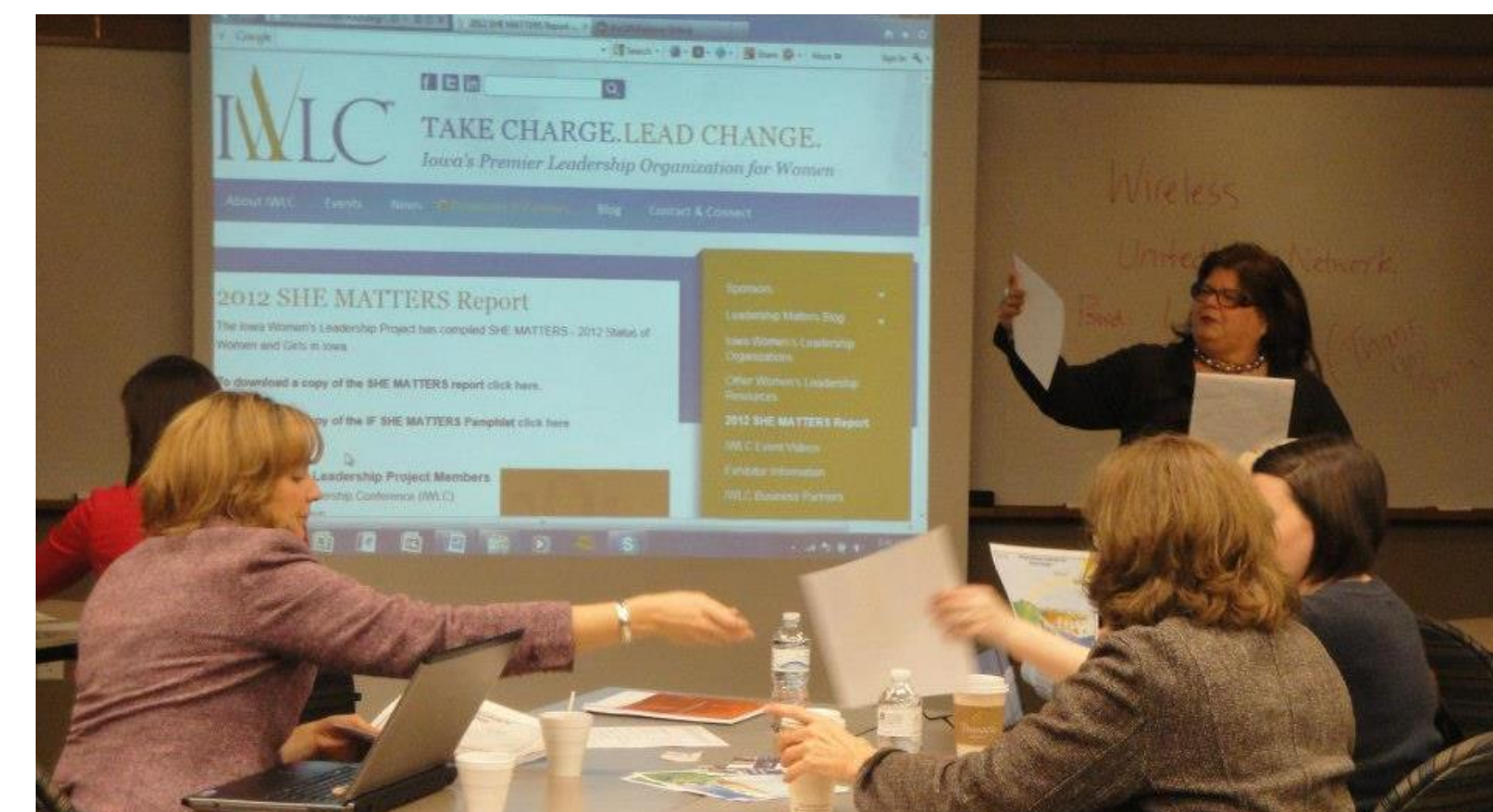
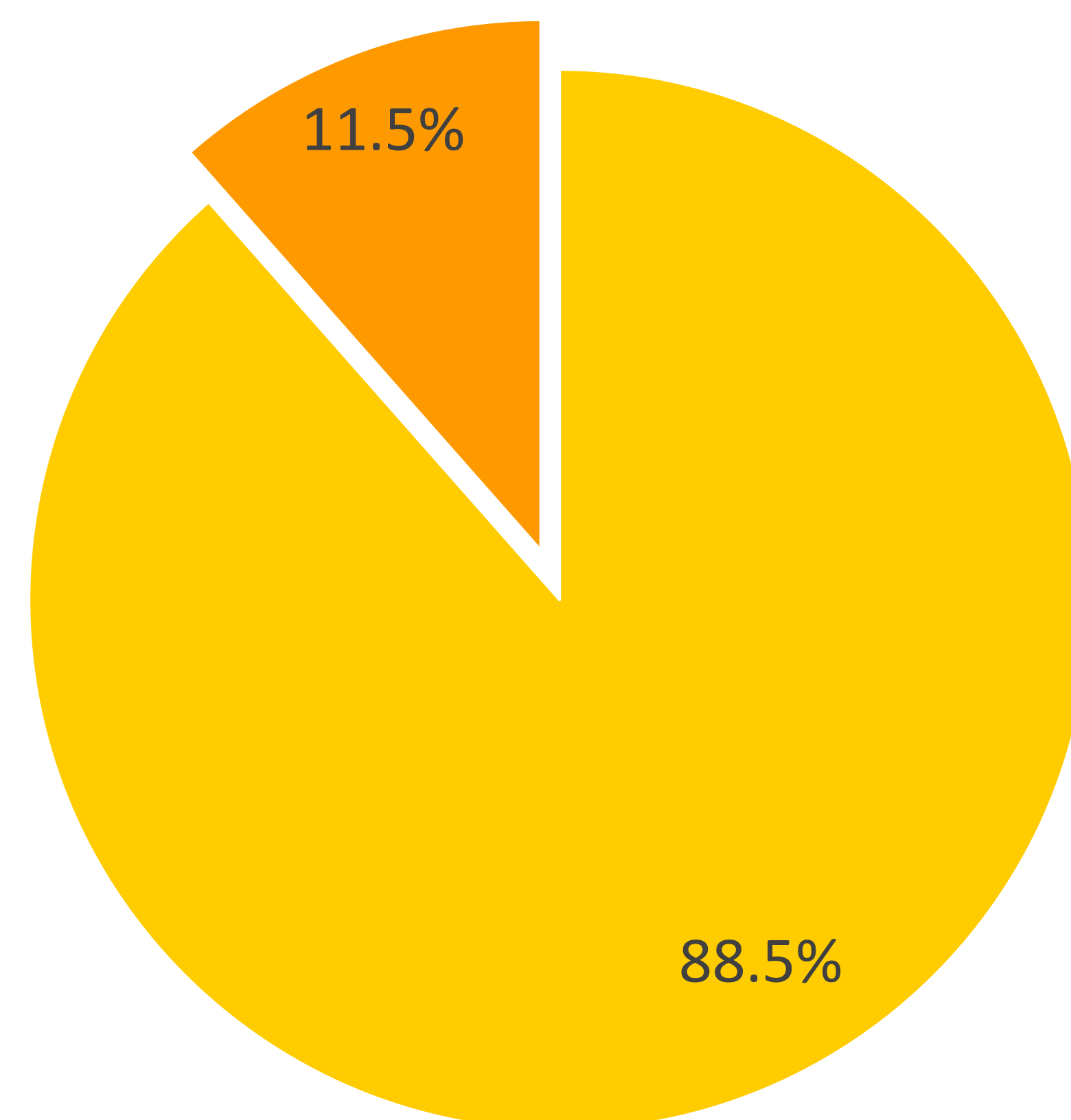
There was not any statistically significance between these variables ($p=.05$)

Findings/Results/Analysis

73.6% of students chose quality of the internship over being paid.

40% of students chose "help me decide what I want to do in the future" as their most important feature of an internship.

- 88.5% of students would need at least one additional part-time job during an unpaid internship
- 11.5% Do not need the money or have another source of income or scholarship during an unpaid internship



Research Question: Organizations

- What is the organization's point of view regarding paying interns?

Research Method

Along with descriptive statistics, Kruskal-Wallis tests were conducted between:

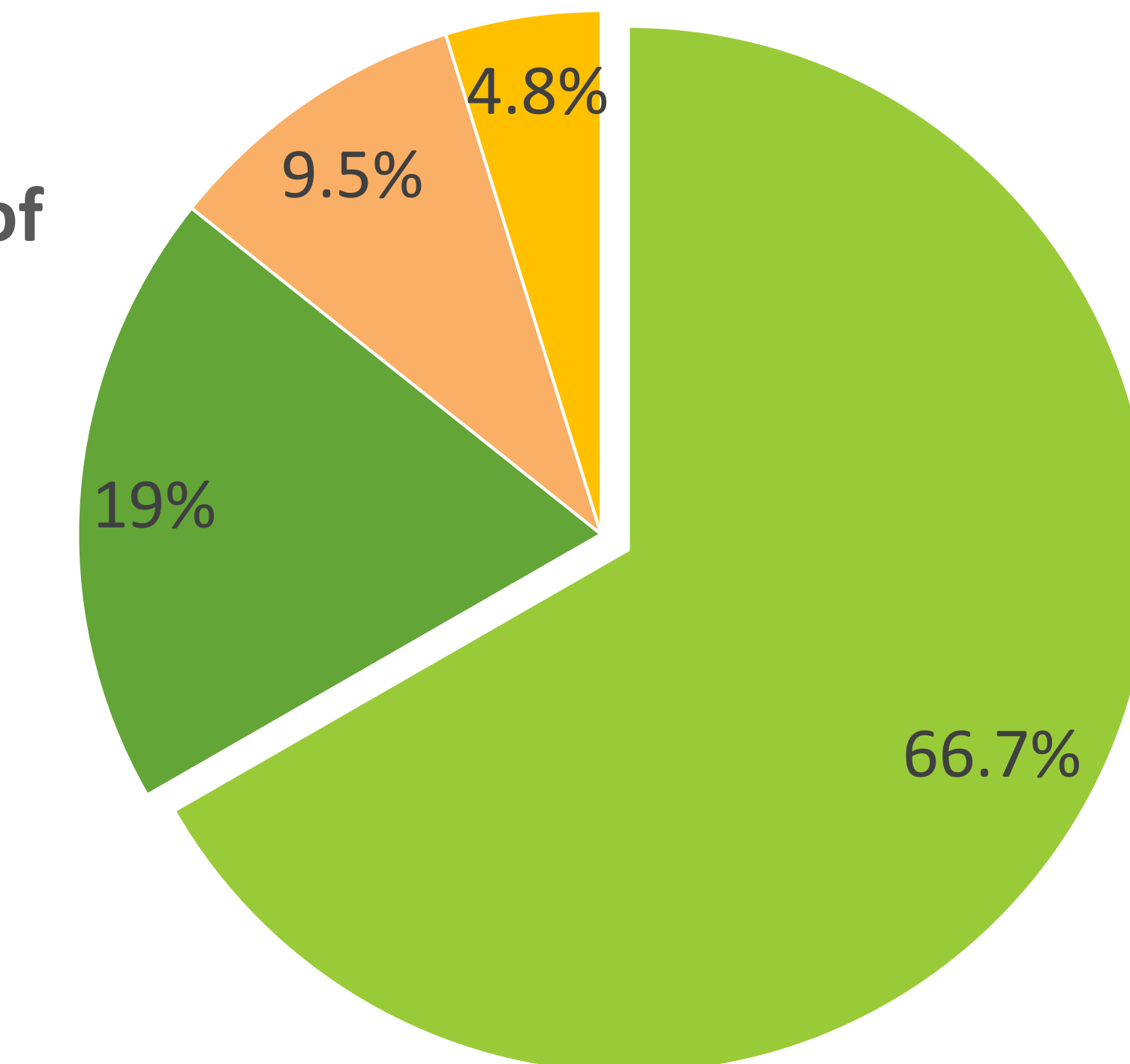
- Organizational size and having an internship program
- Organizational size and whether or not the organization had a formal job description
- Organizational size and whether or not they had a paid or unpaid program
- Organizational size and if the organization had enough capacity to host an intern

There was not any statistically significance between these variables ($p=.05$)

Findings/Results/Analysis

65% of the organizations currently have an internship program.

- 66.7% Do not pay any of their interns.
- 19% Pay at least one of their interns.
- 9.5% Offer a stipend.
- 4.8% No answer.



The most common reason not to pay the interns was it is not in the budget.

Literature

- A person's satisfaction with their internship experience is not significantly affected by pay (Beebe, Baylock & Sweetser, 2009).
- "Paid and unpaid interns reported similar levels of satisfaction, as well as career development benefits, from their work experience" (Rogers, 2013, p. ii).
- Unpaid internships are tied to academic performance, while paid internships are more closely connected to professional skill development (Crain, 2016).
- "Unpaid interns often report being used for labor and not doing meaningful work....In a National Association of Colleges & Employers study, students who were paid reported having a generally more positive experience" (Burke, 2013, para. 12).
- Nonprofits seem to be the highest source of unpaid internships, with government next and for-profit last (Gardner, 2011).

"It is important work and the student should be reimbursed—we do not want to just offer internships to students who can 'afford' it" (Survey Respondent).

"They're important to our organization's success, paying them helps recognize their value. We want students of different backgrounds to be able to access this special opportunity. We know most students at UNI and Wartburg work, so paying makes sense to ensure they can meet the requirements of the internship" (Survey Respondent).

Implications for Research and Practice: Students

Students value their education and the experience an internship has on their future. Ideally, the students would like to have a paid quality internship. If asked to choose between the two, they consistently chose quality, but they would have to find another job to support themselves.

Implications for Research and Practice: Organizations

Organizations may not have the budget to pay interns but they recognize the value of the internship to the students' growth.