



**INTELLECTUAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP
PRE-GRADUATE INTERNSHIP PROGRAM**
Division of Diversity and Community Engagement
The University of Texas at Austin

Developing Citizen-Scholars

The IE Pre-Graduate School Internship Program, part of UT's Division of Diversity and Community Engagement, affords undergraduate students a unique mentoring experience that encourages them not only to explore graduate study, but to own their education and use it to make a difference in their communities. IE enables students to become "citizen-scholars." It provides a safe space for academic and personal exploration, allowing students to fully engage in the world of research, academic writing, and networking with the guidance of mentors who listen to and understand them, so that they can discover their own passions and strengths, embarking on a journey that makes most sense to them.

This distinctive vision of education, attractive to minorities, is also a unique methodology for expanding the minority graduate applicant pool and improving undergraduate education for all students. By shifting from institutional recruitment strategies to initiatives addressing students' intellect and passions, the IE philosophy has the capacity to help those who have never contemplated advanced study discover whether graduate education resonates with their personal and professional aspirations. In the language of public administration, this represents a shift from 'place-based' to 'person-based' policy. Traditional efforts, while well-intended and useful for many reasons, miss the point when it comes to dramatically increasing diversity in graduate education. To expand the national applicant pool, and thus increase the total number of students of color in the graduate school pipeline and eventually the number of minority faculty, programs should be inquiring of and engaging students not presently enrolled in graduate programs.

Program Elements

The IE Pre-Grad Internship is offered for academic credit, and student participants work closely with a graduate student mentor and faculty supervisor to create an internship experience aimed at exploring, anthropologically and from the ground up, their chosen field of study. Participants learn about the unique aspects of graduate study that make it different from their undergraduate experience (e.g. conducting research, writing for scholarly audiences, participating in seminars, serving as teaching and research assistants, publishing articles in professional journals, becoming members of scholarly organizations and learned societies, preparing for an academic or professional career, etc.).

Some examples of internship activities include attending graduate school classes, shadowing graduate student teaching and research assistants, attending seminars and departmental colloquia, working with their mentors on research projects, attending meetings for graduate professional organizations and lab sessions, and discussing graduate study and career development with faculty and graduate students. Additionally, all IE students attend workshops where they reflect on their experiences and exchange their insights on what they're learning about themselves, the culture of graduate school and academe, and how to obtain admissions and funding. At the end of the internship, students write a report about their experiences and insights and share it with their faculty supervisor, graduate school mentor, and fellow IE interns.

Since 2003, IE has evolved into an inter-collegial Consortium. Each year the number of interns has increased dramatically; in the spring of 2008, 93 interns are enrolled. In AY 2007-2008 over 60 faculty members (“supervisors”) and over 80 graduate students (“mentors”) representing 11 separate UT colleges/schools and over 35 different academic departments worked with IE Pre-Grad interns.

Evidence of Effectiveness

IE had very significant consequences for two important populations: underrepresented minorities and first-generation college students. Best thought of as an “entrepreneurial incubator,” the Pre-Graduate School Internship not only has been successful in bringing a new population into the graduate school pipeline (approximately 300-plus students have participated in the Pre-Graduate School Internship since 2004), but has been effective in making sure that students’ passions and professional aspirations are consciously reflected in their decision about whether to seek an advanced degree and if so in which field. Each semester, between 40 - 50% of IE Pre-Grad Interns are underrepresented minorities or first generation students. Hispanics made up nearly 30% of the IE Pre-Grad interns in spring 2008, consistently representing the largest group of participants. This is significant given that Hispanics represent only 15% of The University of Texas' total student population. Based on self-report, the program is confident in asserting that over 50% of Pre-Grad interns who received a baccalaureate degree now have entered graduate school.

Empowering students by letting them create an internship experience resonating with their unique passions attracts many minority students to the program. In the *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education* (2005), Cherwitz explains, "Minority students reported that by rigorously exploring how to succeed, IE demystified graduate school and the academic-professional world, helping them—many of whom were first-generation students—learn the unspoken rules of the game. More important, though, students told me that IE provided one of the few opportunities to contemplate how to utilize their intellectual capital to give back to the community as well as their academic disciplines—matters informing the career decisions of many first-generation and minority students" (p. 28).
<https://webspace.utexas.edu/cherwitz/www/ie/diversity.html>

“As a successful Chicana graduate student, I know first hand that mentoring is an integral piece of my story. I also know that mentoring is an essential tool in improving and diversifying higher education. It wasn't easy getting here and it took me longer to find my way; but I made it with the help of mentors.” –
Ruby Morua Olmanson

"The IE Pre-Grad School Internship was more than a learning experience—it was a life experience. For the first time, I got a taste of what graduate school is all about. A doctorate was something I had never considered, but now I feel it is one career path I would want to pursue. The IE program broadened my career choices." - Cristina Limas

Contact:

Richard A. Cherwitz, Ph.D.
Professor and Director, Intellectual Entrepreneurship (IE)
Office of the Vice President for Diversity and Community Engagement
Department of Communication Studies
The University of Texas
1 University Station A1105
Austin, Texas 78712
(512) 471-1939
spaj737@uts.cc.utexas.edu