Virtual Internships: Extending Beyond Geographical Boundaries

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Abstract: When higher education institutions collaborate with corporate partners, opportunities for students are created. A unique partnership has been established between Saginaw Valley State University, a Midwestern university, and Computer Network Solutions, a New York-based managed-service technology provider. Not only will students be able to apply theories learned within coursework to authentic, practical use, but the corporate partner is also able to take advantage of resources and expertise of the university. Other benefits include the introduction of current pedagogy and methodology to the existing workforce. No longer are internships bound by geographical ties; e-learning students can take advantage of opportunities afforded to them virtually. The presenters will focus on the details behind the initial stages of this win-win collaborative as well as the benefits specific to both institutions. Lessons learned from the initial stages of the partnership that may inform similar, future partnerships will be addressed, and the potential role of such partnerships in higher education settings will be discussed.

Introduction

Internships have long been a component of the university curriculum. So many objectives are met with this type of hands-on experience. There is a need for students to connect with experienced professionals to learn and work together to have a greater educational experience (National Center for Research on Teacher Learning, 2001). Further, the eLearning collaborative helps to build students’ future by learning to “implement our best ideas of today,” (Jilik, 1999).

This experience can help the business partner as well by providing these new ideas or theories to an established workforce. “Wisdom is not passed from an authoritarian teacher to a supplicant student, but is discovered in a learning relationship in which both stand to gain a greater understanding of the workplace and the world (Aubrey & Choen, 1995, p. 161)”

The benefits of the traditional model will be afforded to the student without any geographical boundaries. Technology will serve as the catalyst that enables the partners, which may be distant in time and place, to work more closely with one another to solve problems and build new futures (Reil, M & Fulton, K. 2001)

References

