RESEARCH ARTICLE

Intersectional Internship Experiences Across TPC Programs: Barriers, Supports, and Programmatic Change

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Abstract In this article, the author reports on interviews conducted with students from various intersectional positionalities and institutions regarding their experiences in TPC internship programs. The work contributes to scholarship on internships in higher education and TPC by focusing on barriers and supports that interns encountered throughout their internship experiences. Findings show that interns' experiences were affected by various factors, which include dominant cultural narratives surrounding internships, the liminal positionality that interns are often expected to occupy, the type of mentorship interns receive from faculty members, how well support for interns is integrated into their host site communities, and the material barriers/supports that interns face. Based on these findings, this study offers concrete recommendations for bolstering support structures in Technical and Professional Communication (TPC) internship programs for all students.

Keywords Internships, experiential learning, inequities, field experience, positionalities, mentorship

The US is in a transition period in the world of work. While our field has been expanding how we define professionalism (Bennett, 2024; Downs, et al., 2024; Racelis, 2024; Randazzo, 2024), sociocultural and political forces are narrowing what being a professional means and who "counts" as a professional, with the closure of workplace diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) programs, tightening of work visas, and use of generative AI (Visser & Terblanche, 2025).

Amidst this shifting landscape, technical and professional communication (TPC) programs continue to provide students with rhetorical training and adaptable workplace communication skills. Internships are a common component of our programs due to their well-established benefits for student learning. Fifty percent of undergraduate TPC programs require students to complete an internship (Katz, 2015; Melonçon & Henschel, 2013).

Despite the established benefits of internships, entrenched inequities persist within internship programs. Internships across higher education are not as accessible for Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) students or for women (Lake, 2021; NACE, 2021; Najmabadi, 2017).

As a field, we need to better understand our students' experiences in our internship programs so that we can address embedded barriers and design programs to be inclusive and supportive for all students. Toward these ends, this qualitative research project asked:

- What inequities/barriers do students experience in TPC internship programs?
- What programmatic factors best support students to succeed in TPC internships?

Through analysis of eight interviews with diverse participants at various institutions, this article identifies interconnected areas tied to programmatic support and/or barriers. Discussion of these categories extends current scholarship by offering empirical insight into how students experience internships within TPC programs and leads to concrete recommendations for bolstering student support structures.

Literature Review: Internships Across Higher Education and in TPC

What is an "Internship"?

The National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) defines an internship as "a form of experiential learning that integrates knowledge and theory learned in the classroom with practical application and skills development in a professional workplace setting" (NACE, 2023, para. 1). At the heart of this definition is experiential learning, which is widely acknowledged in TPC for helping students acquire key skills (e.g., Dubinsky, 2002; Sapp & Crabtree, 2002). What this definition looks like in practice can differ widely, however, pending factors like where an intern is placed, when an internship takes place, and how the "classroom" paired with the internship experience is structured (i.e., as a traditional, asynchronous, or hybrid course). I use the term "internship experience" throughout this piece to refer to a larger process of how participants found their internship(s), how they felt supported (or not) throughout those internship(s), and, if relevant, how they have reflected on and leveraged their internship(s) afterwards.

Internship Benefits

The benefits of internships are well documented in both TPC and higher education scholarship. Higher education research has identified internships as "high-impact

practices" that contribute to improved student retention and graduation. Other benefits include increased knowledge of career options, greater career readiness, higher professional confidence, improved professional skills, and larger professional networks (Callanan & Benzing, 2004; Gault et al., 2010; Kuh, 2008). Research has shown that interns are more successful when they develop so-called "soft skills," like self-regulation, self-awareness and self-direction, which are increasingly crucial in today's changing workplace (Downs et al., 2024; Visser & Terblanche, 2025).

TPC-specific scholarship has shown that internships can increase students' job opportunities and help students to improve key TPC skills like audience/genre awareness (e.g., Bloch, 2011; Bourelle, 2012, 2014; Crabtree & Zhang, 2009; Katz, 2015; Munger, 2006). TPC research on internships is typically couched within the field's scholarly traditions on experiential learning, situated knowledge acquisition, and transfer of learning, such as Chris M. Anson and L. Lee Forsberg's landmark piece (1990) on writing interns' transitional stages in nonacademic settings, and Anne Beaufort's longitudinal work (2007) on knowledge transfer from universities to workplaces. More recently, Kristin Pickering has offered compelling case studies of how interns construct their professional identities (2018a, 2018b).

Programmatic research on TPC internships includes ideas for adjusting programs during crises like COVID-19 (Sides, 2021), facilitating international internships (Ding, 2020), and including community stakeholders (St.Amant, 2003). Other work has focused on the legality of unpaid internships (Durack, 2013), the (un)availability of paid internships (Bay, 2006), online internship courses (Bay, 2017; Bay, Fillenwarth, & Masters-Wheeler, 2021), and the role of mentors both at the university and the internship site (Kramer-Simpson, 2018a, 2018b).

Inequities Within Internships

Emerging higher education research has shown that inequities persist across internship programs. Barriers to internship participation disproportionately affect BIPOC students—for example, financial barriers can prevent them from pursuing unpaid internships and/or a lack of social support can inhibit them from finding internships. These barriers particularly affect Black students at predominantly white institutions (PWIs), where they often do not receive adequate mentorship (Lake, 2021). BIPOC students are thus significantly underrepresented in internships, especially in paid internships (Collins, 2020; Jones, Win, & Vera, 2021). Women are also underrepresented in paid internships (NACE, 2021). Such underrepresentation can create a snowball effect, as people with paid internships are

more likely to land higher-paying jobs post-graduation (NACE, 2023). Inequities in TPC internships are currently underexplored.

This article builds on the current literature by adding rich qualitative data and analysis specifically on (a) diverse students' experiences across different types of internship programs, (b) barriers and supports that interns encountered, and (c) how interns' intersectional positionalities affected their experiences.

Methods

To gather this data, I interviewed both graduate and undergraduate students who had participated in internships sponsored by a TPC program across the US.[1] My goal was to understand better how internship programs shape diverse students' internship experiences and what barriers/supports interns encountered throughout those experiences.

Participants were recruited via an email that was sent to TPC program heads and internship coordinators across the country. In order to participate in the study, participants must have completed, or be currently in, at least one internship during college that was part of a TPC program.[2]

Because I was interested in participants' intersectional positionalities related to their internships, I asked participants to complete a short demographic survey before their interviews. The survey asked their racial identity, gender identity, family income level, where they completed their internship(s), where they attended college, and their parents' educational background. Interested participants then completed a semi-structured interview with me over Zoom (refer to Appendix A for interview questions). Interviews lasted between 30 minutes to an hour, and all participants received a $50 gift card for their participation.

After the interviews were conducted, I edited the automatically generated Zoom transcripts for accuracy. I then took a grounded theory approach to analyze the data, by

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[1] This study was reviewed, approved, and judged exempt from further review by my institution's IRB board (IRB 2022-07-09).

[2] By "part of," I mean that participants received TPC credit for their internship, took a course paired with their internship in a TPC program, and/or found their internship via the direct mentorship of a TPC faculty member. Participants had all completed their internships between 2019–2022, so the COVID-19 pandemic may have affected participants' internship experiences; interestingly, none of the participants directly mentioned the pandemic in relation to their internships.

reviewing the transcripts several times to generate codes related to the research questions (Corbin & Strauss, 2015).

Because I was specifically interested in how internship programs shape students' experiences, I first coded for instances where participants mentioned factors tied to programmatic or institutional structures, such as degree requirements, interactions with internship program coordinators, and courses tied to their internships. I also coded for instances when aspects of participants' positionalities affected their experiences; these instances were almost always interwoven. Thus, while I narrowed to five main themes, I will draw attention in the findings section to these themes' interwoven nuances so as to account for complexities in participants' experiences.

The five emergent coding themes included: The Hard-Working Intern Narrative, Liminal Positionalities, Faculty Mentors, Networked Communities of Support, and Material Barriers/Supports.

Participants

This study interviewed eight participants, which is an ample sample size for such qualitative work because it allows for rich description and analysis of each participant's experience (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). Participants attended college and/or completed internships across the northeastern, southeastern, midwestern, and western US. Participants are a racial mix of Black, Asian, and white individuals, who all reported coming from either low- or middle-income families. Several participants were the first in their family to go to college. All but two participants were TPC or English majors or minors. They all conducted internship work typical to TPC, such as content creation, editing, informational design, and multimodal writing (Melonçon & Henschel, 2013).

I include a fuller description of each participant below, in order to highlight specificities of their positionalities and experiences:[3]

Ali is a cis man from Pakistan. After receiving his undergraduate degree in Foreign Service from a prestigious, private US university's Middle Eastern campus, Ali earned an MA in Museum Practice from a university in the UK. At the time of his interview, he was an MA in English student at a university in New England. He reported coming from a middle-income family and one of his parents having a four-year degree. At the time of his interview, he had recently completed a paid, remote marketing communications internship at a start-up

[3] All participant, organization, and location names are pseudonyms. Participants were given the option to select their own pseudonym. Pronouns were self-reported by participants.

company in California, where he worked in search engine optimization (SEO), content creation, social media research, and email marketing. Ali found his internship by applying to many large companies, with minimal support from his institution.

Ashanti is a Black, cis woman. She reported being a first-generation college student from a middle-income family. She was originally a business major, but after enjoying a few professional writing (PW) courses, she changed her major to PW with a business minor. Ashanti attended a liberal arts college in the Southeastern US, where she completed an internship with ABC Technologies, a company that creates software for non-profits. As part of her internship, she helped to create multimedia software tutorials, edit content, and track data. A PW faculty member directly helped her to find this internship. Ashanti had graduated two years before her interview. Immediately after graduation, she worked as a document control specialist for a sports medicine company. At the time of her interview, she was working as a digital accounts manager for a news agency.

Dana is a white, cis woman. She reported being a first-generation college student from a middle-income family. She began college at a small school in the Southeast as a psychology major with a creative writing minor. She switched to an English major after working on a volunteer basis with her campus's literary magazine and taking a few creative writing courses. For her internship, she worked as that same magazine's co-editor, a paid position that was funded via a grant awarded to her faculty mentor. Dana was in the middle of this internship at the time of her interview.

Jade is a Black, cis woman. At the time of her interview, she was working in higher education as an international student counselor. She began college at a large urban university, where she had been majoring in biology. After one year, she transferred to a small college in the Southeast, where she majored in TPC. She is a self-reported first-generation college student from a middle-income family. At her small college, she completed two internships—the first with a local media outlet, and the second as part of a study abroad trip to Ecuador with a tropical ecology class. For her second internship, she worked with another English student to document the ecology students' field work. Jade found both of her internships through direct support from faculty.

Justin is a white, cis man. He reported being the first in his family to go to college and coming from a low-income family. At the time of his interview, he was in his second year of a two-year MA in English program at a land-grant university in the northeastern US. He was in his fifth month interning as a podcast producer with the public policy center on his campus. Justin's faculty mentor directly approached him with this internship opportunity, which had been coordinated between his faculty mentor and the policy center director.

Several months after his interview, Justin reported back that he had landed a full-time job at the policy center.

Maggie is a Black, cis woman. At the time of her interview, she was in a graduate program for psychology at a mid-size public university in a mid-Atlantic state. As an undergraduate at a liberal arts college, she had taken on a TPC minor at the advice of her psychology advisor. While she had initially wanted to pursue an English minor as a "fun" complement to her major, her advisor recommended that she minor in TPC instead for its more "practical" application. She reported coming from a low-income family with one parent having a graduate degree. Maggie had an undergraduate internship with her college's Career Development Center, where she mainly created content.

Maryam is a cis woman from Iran. She did not report a family income level or parents' educational background. At the time of her interview, she was in her final year of an MA in English degree at a large university, where she was focusing on creative writing. She also has an undergraduate degree in geology and an MA in Cinema from an Iranian university. She had a remote, paid internship the summer before her interview with a large SEO company in Chicago. As part of that internship, she wrote blog articles about SEO for the company's website. Maryam found her internship by applying to large companies, with limited support from her institution.

Quinn is a white, transgender man. They reported being the first in their family to go to college and coming from a low-income family. At the time of their interview, Quinn was a history and education double major at the same small college in the Southeast as Dana. Quinn intended to become a high school history teacher. For their internship, they were the co-editor, alongside Dana, of their campus literary magazine. (Dana's and Quinn's interviews happened separately). Quinn noted that, even though they were not an English or TPC major, they valued writing, found their internship to be "fun," and felt that their internship would help them to mentor their future history students with writing.

Basic information about these participants' demographics can be found in Table 1 below for ease of reference.

Table 1: Participants' demographic and internship information

Name	Identity	1st-gen	Interned at	Major/Program
Ali	Cis man from Pakistan	No	SEO start-up	MA in English
Ashanti	Black, cis woman	Yes	Software company	PW with a Business minor
Dana	White, cis woman	Yes	Campus literary magazine	English
Jade	Black, cis woman	Yes	-Local media outlet -Study abroad trip to Ecuador	TPC
Justin	White, cis man	Yes	Public policy center	MA in English
Maggie	Black, cis woman	No	Career development center	Psychology with TPC minor
Maryam	Cis woman from Iran	Unknown	Large SEO company	MA in Creative Writing
Quinn	White, transgender man	Yes	Campus literary magazine	History and Education

Findings

Five themes emerged with regard to how programmatic structures, participants' intersectional identities, and other contextual factors shaped participants' internship experiences:

1) **The Hard-Working Intern Narrative**: A cultural narrative suggesting that interns must work harder than other workers to succeed.
2) **Liminal Positionalities**: An "in-between" positionality in which interns feel somewhat part of their internship sites and somewhat not.
3) **Faculty Mentors:** The particular faculty members at participants' institutions, who helped them to find and succeed at their internships.
4) **Communities of Support**: Support for interns that was tied to their workplaces' or institutions' larger communities.
5) **Material Barriers/Supports**: The ways in which participants were supported to balance their internships with material necessities such as paying their bills, completing their degrees, and putting food on their tables.

The following sections report on each theme in turn, with particular attention to interwoven nuances of participants' experiences.

The Hard-Working Intern Narrative

All of the participants reported feeling strongly that they should complete an internship at some point in their college careers. Echoed in this pressure was the cultural narrative that interns should work extra hard.

For Maryam, an international student, this narrative was couched in her perception that domestic students were starting out more experienced than her:

> I think many students here [in the US] do internships when they are in high school or stuff like that. That was something that I found out when I was applying for internships. And that was something that I really regretted, because I wasn't here to do an internship when I was in high school or after that… Probably you have to work harder here [in the US]. They expect more things from you here.

Reflecting the Hard-Working Intern Narrative's pervasiveness, Maryam expressed repeated regret later in her interview that she was somehow "behind" domestic students:

> One thing that I regretted was that I don't probably seem as experienced as many, I don't know, Americans. Probably many Americans had the fortune to work as a fiction writer, for example, earlier, but I didn't get that chance, so they have more experience, and they can find, I don't know, more professional-level, higher-level internships. But as an international person I might not be able to do something like that, because I somehow started later.

Maryam acknowledges that, on the one hand, internship opportunities are beyond an individual's control: "Americans had the *fortune* to work" (my emphasis). On the other hand, through her repeated use of phrases like "I regretted," she implies that she somehow put *herself* behind by not coming to the US or pursuing internships earlier. [4] Implicit in this belief is the Hard-Working Intern Narrative that interns must create their own opportunities and work hard to distinguish themselves from other interns.

Ali echoed Maryam's sense that international students have to work harder not only to obtain an internship, but also to prove themselves once there. After explaining that he applied to 100 companies for an internship and only received a few interviews, Ali shared his feeling that international students:

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[4] We can assume that not being in the US for high school was not solely up to Maryam, and research shows that only 2% of US high school students complete internships (ASA, 2020).

> need to just be thankful that you got it [an internship], and you want to bend over backwards to accommodate the employer rather than standing your own ground, and whether it's, you know, asking for an hourly wage, or if it's just, you know, time off. You kind of have to double, triple things because you're like, "Oh, it's not my country. I'm not from here. Like, they're giving me this opportunity." So I feel like in terms of power dynamics, I feel like there's a big, big imbalance over there, and I feel like companies probably know that, and they know how much they can push you to get work out of you.

In addition to echoing the Hard-Working Intern Narrative ("you want to bend over backwards to accommodate the employer,") Ali identifies the problematic power structure that this narrative both emerges from and adds to: "[companies] know how much they can push you to get work out of you."

Jade, a domestic student, similarly invoked the Hard-Working Intern Narrative, when she described how she made decisions that positioned her for more opportunities. She explained, for example, her decision to transfer from a PWI in a large city to a smaller college, which was less expensive:

> [My prior institution] is predominantly white, and even though my high school was about fifty-fifty, it was still kind of a culture shock to me, and I did not expect that feeling, didn't expect it at all. Um, I had a group of friends because I'd got to go with a multicultural program over the summer. And so I got to, like, create a group of friends who are students of color, who actually ended up getting me through the year, which was fantastic, but it was still very different, and [that institution] was expensive...I'm the first in my family to go to a four-year university. Like, I couldn't handle the cost of living there, so I transferred. I wonder what would have happened if I would have stayed all four years. I would have been a lot more in debt.

Jade acknowledged that she was working within a context where structural, social, and cultural barriers persist for first-generation and Black students like herself. Within that context, she felt that her hard work and outgoing personality created opportunities:

> I'm also a person who really enjoys making connections, and, like, always seeks those out. So I feel like sometimes that makes a little bit less barriers for me, which is a good thing. But I know that everyone's not that way. So if things are, if things are explicit...if, like, opportunities aren't asked or told to people, then that creates barriers, you know. I feel like I've always had to, like, push for these things to

> happen rather than just happening, or just being available, or opportunities just being explicitly out there.

Jade's comments reflect the Hard-Working Intern Narrative in that she feels that her work "making connections" and "push[ing] for these things to happen," resulted in "a little bit less barriers" for her personally. At the same time, she recognizes that more institutional or programmatic support is necessary to make opportunities transparent for all students: "If like opportunities, aren't asked or told to people, then that creates barriers."

Ashanti expressed a similar sentiment in describing how her perseverance led to internship opportunities:

> I did have friends who kind of struggled more than I did, and I think it was because I would go into anyone's office, and I will ask questions. I'll sit outside the door and wait. Um, so, and I feel like a lot of people may not be that social. And so I would encourage them, especially in this field [TPC], when it's not well-known to make a good relationship with your professors, because chances are they have much more resources than you can get on your own. So definitely talk to them. Speak up!

Like Jade, Ashanti recognizes that support is necessary to bolster interns' hard work: "Chances are [professors] have much more resources than you can get on your own." Yet, she also evokes the Hard-Working Intern Narrative in placing responsibility on students to seek out such support: "Speak up!"

As the next theme will highlight, such support is not always present, or can be difficult to find, as interns tend to occupy a liminal space both "inside" and "outside" of their host organizations.

Liminal Positionalities

Participants expressed challenges associated with occupying a liminal positionality as an intern—that is, someone who is expected to contribute to their host organization, but who is not a fully integrated employee.

Several participants expressed how they navigated this liminal positionality with other intersectional aspects of their identities. Quinn described how their identity as a transgender man shaped how they performed their "intern" positionality at the literary magazine:

> Just existing as a trans person in this internship makes, makes me nervous and makes me a little bit more hesitant to go and talk to classes and people about [the

> literary magazine], because I'm worried about, like, how they perceive me, but also worried about, like, pushing the journal on to people...[I deal with that by] kind of just like ignoring it, and like just presenting myself as [Quinn], and, like, presenting as I am the managing editor for [the literary magazine], and, like, surely if people are confused, they're just gonna, like, stay confused, but kind of trying to put that part of my identity aside and just be like, "Okay. I am here for [the magazine], and I should only be worried about the [magazine] stuff." But sometimes I leave or, right before, I get, like, real nervous, real anxious. And I'm like, "Hmm. Are they seeing like, how? How are they perceiving me?"... But it is really demeaning sometimes when you have people on your own editing staff, or people that are, like, trying to talk about your event. And you just get mis-gendered randomly, and it's like it's not even a second thought. They're not doing it maliciously, but it's still a thing that happens, and I was like, "all of the work I've put into this."

Quinn's comments indicate that they feel cultural pressure to live up to the Hard-Working Intern Narrative by asserting a competent ethos: "I am the managing editor." In order to do so, however, they feel that they must put other aspects of their identity aside: "I should only be worried about the [magazine] stuff." Quinn highlights the liminality positionality that doing so places them in: "I'm worried about, like, how they perceive me, *but also* worried about, like, pushing the journal on to people" (my emphasis). Their frustrated reaction to being misgendered by colleagues shows the emotional toll of performing to a sort of "disembodied, hardworking professional" ideal, while also negotiating positionalities perceived to be at odds, such as "transman" and "editorial intern."

Sometimes participants' liminal positionalities as interns directly affected the level of support they received at their internship sites. When asked whether she experienced any barriers throughout her Career Center internship, Maggie replied:

> I don't feel like there was any barriers. The only thing I would say— It was a— I'm thankful, but I would say, the person who was in charge of the Career Center—he was sometimes involved [but not] one hundred percent involved. Um, Dr., the woman, um, she was the one who really helped me. ... He was in charge of the—he was the director. So that's the only real barrier. It could be because of time. ... Dr. [Kirk] [her faculty mentor] was the one who was helping me all the time. I mean we would have meetings every once in a while. But, I just knew that maybe if I had any problem I could go to Dr. [Kirk].

Maggie ultimately concludes that her supervisor's lack of mentorship was a "real barrier." She is careful to couch her critique in the Hard-Working Intern Narrative, however, by first

mentioning that there were not any barriers, then expressing gratitude for the experience, and finally excusing her supervisor: "It could be because of time." The number of "false start" sentences (e.g., "It was a.") and "ums" in this passage was uncharacteristic of Maggie's more confident tone throughout the rest of her interview; her hesitation here suggests an unsurety in how to describe her supervisor's shortcomings. The Hard-Working Intern Narrative promotes the idea that interns should navigate unsupportive workplaces without complaint and with gratitude. Cultural pressure to conform to this narrative can thus leave interns feeling that they have little language to name inequities, as could be the case with Maggie's hesitation here.

The liminal positionality that interns occupy reinforces this idea. As an intern, Maggie occupied a precarious positionality in which she was expected to contribute to her host organization yet was not provided the mentorship necessary to do so. She thus defaulted to asking her professor for help, perhaps because she felt more comfortable with that person and/or because she had come to expect a higher level of support in academic spaces.

Gendered dynamics are also at work in Maggie's account. When I asked her how Dr. Kirk became her default mentor, Maggie replied:

> She just kind of fell into it because she was a part of the Career Development Center, so...she ended up just kind of falling into it. But I think she wouldn't mind it either, because, you know, she was still a part of it.

Maggie's comments highlight the often-invisible labor of mentorship, which is culturally coded as feminized "care" work. In this case, Maggie's female professor was taking on additional work to provide needed support for Maggie, while Maggie's male supervisor had the named recognition as her official "supervisor." Dr. Kirk thus also occupied a somewhat liminal positionality by effectively performing as both Maggie's faculty *and* site supervisor.

Jade similarly had to navigate a liminal intern positionality within gendered and racialized dynamics at her first internship with the local media outlet:

> The person who I reported to just didn't seem interested or invested in anything else I wanted to do, like, would just kind of like, be very nonchalant and kind of like shut down my ideas for things to [do]. If I wanted to write certain articles, it wasn't like, "Go for it and try and present it to me and see what happens." It was very much like, "No, this is what we do. Don't give us any more ideas." And so that person like made it a very, not a good experience.

Jade's comments indicate that she and her supervisor were operating from different assumptions about the positionality an intern should occupy. Jade assumed that she should have the opportunity to suggest fresh ideas and take initiative, while her supervisor wanted her to fall in line with "what we do."

When Jade noted that her supervisor was a white male, I asked her if she felt that gendered or racialized dynamics shaped their interactions, to which she responded:

> It's just that supervisor was such a huge barrier, and honestly, it's hard. It's hard for me to tie things to race because I have no idea, honestly, like I don't remember very many people of color at that newspaper…especially not writers…but it's just, it's hard for me to make that connection, you know, because there wasn't anything— It wasn't anything explicit. It's just— And he might have been like that with all interns and [it was] his personality. But it was just awful. Yeah, Yeah, it's hard to say, but it wasn't encouraging.

Like Maggie, Jade hesitated to blame her supervisor and described turning to her female faculty mentor for support:

> Yeah, it was actually that same professor, Dr. [Hall], that I would go to for support, and she would make suggestions and things like that, so that helped me like finish the experience. But I think when I, like, kind of gave her feedback on how I felt, I think that started the conversation of like, "Oh, well, do you want to do something else."

On the one hand, we could read Jade's faculty mentor as being more supportive than her supervisor, as in Maggie's situation above. On the other hand, in an echo of the Hard-Working Intern Narrative, her faculty mentor connects Jade's declining interest in journalism to a failing on her part: "Oh well do you want to do something else," rather than interrogating the problematic workplace context that led Jade to that conclusion. Recall from the previous section that Jade attributed fewer barriers to her experiences because of her willingness to work hard. And yet, this part of her story shows that individual hard work is not always rewarded in the ways that the Hard-Working Intern Narrative would lead us to believe, partly due to the liminal positionalities and structural inequities that some interns must navigate.

As Maggie's and Jade's stories show in this section, faculty mentors can play a significant role in influencing how students navigate such complexities.

Faculty Mentors

Most of the participants reported having strong faculty mentors, who helped them at various stages of their internship experiences, such as brainstorming opportunities and providing ongoing support. Ashanti recounted:

> I really didn't have any ideas of where I wanted to intern, because I wasn't sure...like I knew from my classes that these two subjects, business and professional writing, I knew that they went together, but I didn't know if there were a lot of employers that kind of saw the value of it; or if they would see me on paper and understand that my degree did relate to the type of work. But Dr. [Smith] put me into contact with, um, ABC Technologies out in [small city], and they had taken, um, some students from [my college]. And so that was how I got my internship. I wasn't really sure how to get one on my own, or what companies would be, um, interested in my degree combination. Um, so a lot of that was thanks to Dr. [Smith].

Ashanti's account shows that faculty mentors can particularly help with the creative thinking required not just to figure out what to do with a certain degree, but also with a certain degree combination. Offering such creative thinking as a form of support requires careful listening to each student's particular interests, contexts, and needs. Jade noted about her English faculty mentor, who was influential in helping her to acquire her second internship with the international ecology project:

> [My English professor] knew my interest in like writing and science. She actually posted this to Dr. [Jones], who is the science professor who is teaching the tropical ecology class...I like dropped National Geographic or something at some point, and she just ran with the idea...It was very helpful to have, like, a faculty ally like [my English professor].

This form of tailored faculty support typically required participants to become involved in their department's larger community. Ashanti noted:

> So I had been hanging around the English department and gotten pretty connected with the English professors, and I guess I was doing really well with Dr. [Smith], and so that kind of turned into a lot of encouragement for me to change my career path. She was very helpful in kind of securing a position for me, because I really just had no idea how to get one or where to start.

A high level of departmental involvement partly reflects the Hard-Working Intern Narrative—participants who were already working hard to make connections with faculty

mentors were more likely to acquire their help in finding internships. Dana, for example, discussed changing her major to creative writing and then taking a specific class taught by the faculty advisor for the literary magazine where she later interned:

> [My creative writing professor] was talking about it [the internship], and she invited me to [literary magazine meetings] a couple of times, and I was like, "No, I'm really not interested. Um, it's not really something I like. I have a lot of my plate right now." And so I went to one of the campus events run by [the literary magazine]. I interview, and she handed me an application, and she was like, "Hey, applications are already done. But I've read your fiction work. I want you to be my fiction editor." And so I was like, "Okay, if she's this adamant, I'll do it."

Dana's experience shows that faculty support is not neutral. Even though other students had already applied for the editor position, Dana's professor hand-picked her for that role, based on her prior assessment of her work.

In contrast, Quinn discussed feeling like they were not as well supported by the same faculty mentors who advise the literary magazine, because they were not an English major:

> [The English faculty members] don't have the same kind of repertoire [with me]. They don't know me like they might know some of the other people. So there's that barrier that I'm just like unknown. But I'm always there just doing things...I [work through it] by putting as much effort into everything that I can, and trying to be as organized as possible, just to like, prove that I am doing things, and I do know how to, like, do the more technical side of what people might consider this internship would need.

Both the Hard-Working Intern Narrative and liminal positionalities are at work here, in that Quinn felt that they had to work harder to "prove" themselves to their faculty mentors, because they were both "outside" of the English department as a non-major and "inside" of it via their internship. These participants' experiences demonstrate that faculty and other types of support are closely tied to the contexts in which they are given.

Communities of Support

The participants who reported feeling the most comfortable and confident in their internships were those who were more fully integrated within their host organizations' communities. In discussing how he adapted to working on the policy center podcast, Justin recounted:

> I think I felt pretty assimilated from the start, and I think part of it was that the podcast was sort of this new thing that we [the podcast team] were brainstorming together. Um, I think if it was like already a formed podcast, and then I was kind of the new hire in that way, I think I would have felt a little, you know, like there would have been more, um, not hesitation, but I would have felt, I guess, more like an outsider to start. But I felt like, since you're sort of starting from the beginning with it—there only being two episodes previously—I think that I sort of felt assimilated right away because I was, you know, we were all doing it sort of at the same time.

Justin worked on a podcast team, which included the director of the policy center, Justin's English faculty mentor, the editor of the center's academic journal, and several of the center's staff researchers. As Justin suggests, he was part of this team from the start and thus felt less like a liminal "outsider" and more like an integrated member of the policy center. His quick integration into the policy center "community" directly impacted how he perceived his work there:

> [We] like created this whole podcast, basically you know, working on it through the summer. So it felt a lot more involved because we were doing that. But at the same time, I think it was really beneficial to have that experience [of] sort of deciding on what articles we were going to use, and you know, making sort of decisions about the like, the podcast logo, for example, like all of those things that don't necessarily have to do with the writing itself, that were really good experiences to have, and especially working with the, like, a whole team of people doing different things and working on the same project. [It was] almost a hopeful experience.

As part of a team, Justin had the chance to experience how writing is threaded throughout coordinated work in organizations. Justin's work with "a whole team of people doing different things and working on the same project" helped him to see how his work impacted the larger project and organization in "almost a hopeful experience."

This community of support also affected the type of feedback Justin received. For example, when I asked him how he adapted to writing podcast scripts, Justin replied:

> The more I did it, and the more I understood sort of what the policy center was looking for and who the audience would be…that made it sort of easier to sort of adjust to that mode of writing…and then, of course, the feedback routine of having it looked at by [my faculty mentor], and having it looked at by the team…that's been really helpful to have somebody else sort of look at the writing and say, "You know,

> this may be complicated for [the podcast host] to say, or this may be, this might get lost on the audience," and having that kind of feedback was helpful, so kind of having that, like, culture of a team and then getting consistent feedback.

Because Justin's hard work ("the more I did it") was well supported by a team, it was a more generative experience for him, as opposed to other participants, who strived to reach the Hard-Working Intern ideal without support. Recall Jade's story of going to her supervisor with ideas only to have those ideas rejected, and Jade deciding that journalism was not for her. "Consistent feedback" that was integrated within the "culture of a team" helped Justin feel less like a liminal outsider and more like a valued member of his host organization, who could take a "safe to fail" approach.

Justin is one of three participants who reported internship experiences where faculty mentors were directly involved in their host organizations. Dana recounted the networked support she felt at her campus literary magazine:

> I've been very blessed to have my office right next to [Dr. Will, who runs the literary journal], so it's very easy to just kinda like pop over, or I'll send her a text or something. I have a huge amount of support, though, like I constantly have English professors that know about [the magazine] that come and are like, "Hey! If you need help with anything..." The people from campus activities boards have also been very, very nice to me. A lot of the professors. Um, if I have a question about like internship hours and stuff, I can always go to my supervisor, Dr. [Martin], but usually I just kind of stick with my advisor for [the literary magazine].

Dana traces a network of support here that is aided by her office being physically down the hall from the magazine's supervisor. This office space enabled a kind of *kairotic*, just "pop over" and chat, form of sustained, immediate support. At the same time, this network also included the student who had worked in her editorial role previously, who provided a useful form on "internship memory":

> I think that like in terms of editing styles and such, we have like a set list of guidelines that we follow every year that my previous editor had sent to me. And she also made a huge Google Doc of like training and stuff like that. She's like, "This is what you can do. This is what you can't do." But in terms of, like, actual guidelines and stuff, Dr. Will is very, very lenient with me, thank goodness, and she trusts my judgment on a lot of editorial stuff because of my skill with writing that I kind of came to her with. If I kinda call a shot she, she trusts that I'm right. And I really, really appreciate that, because it does make me feel like I have more footing.

Having access to the prior intern's documented knowledge creates a continuity of professional practice that helps Dana to know, "what you can do" and "what you can't do" in the editorial role, which helps her to claim greater agency within it. Dana feels like she has "more footing," or agency, to make decisions and that her faculty supervisor "trusts" her, partly because she is situated within a network of sustained support where her skills are recognized and valued. As with Justin, Dana's positionality as an intern is thus markedly different than the liminal positionality experienced by interns who were less integrated into their workplaces.

Jade similarly described feeling much more supported in her second internship with the tropical ecology class, because she was part of a team:

> That was very cool. I got to make a brochure for practice in Mako, and worked on like a manual with another English student, who is actually also a Black woman. And I don't know where she is now, but we got to work on that project together. It was three weeks in Ecuador over the summer. … We were the first English students to do this. So this was kind of, like, creative for us. Um, so there wasn't really much guidance to give. … I do wish that I had, like, done more planning on the front end to do more, like, more targeted observation while we were there to have like a better product.

Jade claims ownership over her work ("we were the first" and "I do wish") that frames the lack of "guidance" she received as less of a problem and more of a generative challenge. Her sense of agency stems partly from her peer community at this internship; she got to be "creative" with a colleague with whom she identified, both as "also a Black woman" and as the "first English students to do this." She also expressed agency in how she retrospectively analyzed her work: "I do wish that I had, like, done more planning."

These participants' experiences show that working on a team can provide interns with supported forms of agency to run with ideas and take ownership over projects. Such agency thus helps them to adopt a collaborative growth mindset, rather than a competitive "work hard to prove oneself" approach.

Material Barriers/Supports

All of the participants noted material factors such as getting paid (or not) for their internship and navigating their internships with other jobs as influential to their experiences. Justin noted about his internship search:

> I was looking for something paid because I don't get funded through being a TA in the summer because we don't teach in the summer. So that was definitely something I was looking for...I would rather do an internship in the field that I'm interested in than get a job that isn't necessarily in my interest in the summer. So I saw an internship as sort of an opportunity to be able to pay for things in the summer, and have sort of field experience at the same time.

Justin's comments highlight the benefits that an internship can have when it is both paid and in the student's desired field. Quinn similarly echoed the need to get paid for work that was important to them:

> But most people [at the literary magazine], they have like part-time jobs just to make a little bit of money. Like some people who live on campus, and they make a little bit of money to like pay for groceries and stuff. But, like me, I have the internship, and I have my actual real-world job of cashiering. Um, but I make the money to pay for my gas and to squirrel away money for grad school. [But] having the internship, having the hours and the money aspect to it definitely makes it feel a lot more real and sharpened my focus to it. More versus last year, when I was doing very similar things.

Quinn had volunteered at the literary magazine before obtaining the paid internship position. Their comment partly reflects interns' liminal positionality by setting up a binary between their internship and their "real world job." By suggesting that they approach their work with more "focus" now that they are paid, Quinn also suggests the cultural, conceptual, and material value that labeling students' work as a "paid internship" can evoke.

Dana, who also started with the magazine as a volunteer, echoes both material and non-material value in having her work named an internship:

> It's definitely gonna look way better on my resume. ... I've always taken my job with [the literary magazine] very seriously. So in terms of work ethic it hasn't really changed, but it's been very nice, having it labeled as an internship, because it definitely feels more like, self-fulfilling and having that office space has really, really helped me get my work done way better than before.

The material reality of having office space down the hall from her faculty mentors has supported Dana to get her "work done way better." Dana feels that having the intern label not only will look "way better on my resume," but is also "more self-fulfilling." Her

comments show how material support is intertwined with affective support in that it puts more actual and perceived value on interns' work.

Just like social and affective support, financial support for participants varied depending on their institution and host organization type. Jade, for example, tied her paid internship opportunity to the small, liberal arts setting in which she connected with her professors:

> I'm a huge proponent of small liberal arts colleges like [my college], because I got to get really close to my professors, and like we're still close to this day...I mean I'm pretty self-motivated too at the same time. But I would have never come up with that tropical ecology thing, and the fact that [my faculty mentor] allowed me to use some of her grant money to do it—I would have never been able to go if it hadn't been for that, because I wouldn't have been able to afford going abroad. It covered everything.

Not only did Jade's smaller college facilitate her relationships with faculty, but her professor got creative both in using her grant money to support Jade's internship and in creating an internship out of what was otherwise defined as a study abroad trip. Recall that Jade proactively integrated with the English department, which likely added to the extra level of support she received from its faculty.

Not all participants experienced this level of material support and community-based mentorship. In discussing his experience applying for internships with big companies as an international student, Ali explained:

> Sponsorship was quite a big barrier. ...And one thing is really interesting in the applications: Almost every application has a...[are you] "eligible to work starting like as soon as possible without any hindrances" [question], and I feel like as soon as I press "No" over there that might signal something to the employer. Now I don't remember exactly if I pressed "No," because technically I knew I could get [university sponsorship] without an issue. But I feel like that would become an issue if someone does press "Yes," for instance. ... And then just juggling interviews, people asking, you know, if you're allowed to work and all is just, it's not the easiest process. And then, because you're an international student, people would, I would assume, prefer people from the US, who are citizens whose first language is English, especially in a field where you have to write.

As Ali pinpoints, the way that employment applications ask students about their visa status can present rhetorical roadblocks even for students who have clear paths to sponsorship. While international students face added layers of liminality and

discrimination that program directors and instructors cannot control, communities of support, for example in departments and international student offices, can help international students rhetorically navigate complex employment processes that have serious material consequences.

Discussion

This study adds to the understanding of how interns negotiate various positionalities throughout TPC internship experiences, which can help administrators create stronger programmatic support. Although this study's small sample size precludes generalizability, it provides rich qualitative insight into overlapping factors that can affect interns' experiences. Based on these findings, I couch my discussion in concrete, iterative actions that TPC programs can take toward building more supportive and inclusive internship programs.

Defining Internships Clearly, Capaciously, and Creatively

Several of the barriers discussed by this study's participants emerge from how internships are defined. Some participants conceptualized their internships more in the ways administrators and faculty might expect professionals to define early-career jobs—for example, Ali's sense that companies were primarily trying to get work out of him, and Maryam's feeling that she was not competitive enough for "professional-level" internships. These conceptualizations partly emerge from the Hard-Working Intern Narrative telling us that interns need to work harder to prove themselves. This view of internships is at odds with the higher education definition of internships as primarily a *learning* experience (NACE, 2023).

Although internships have been well documented as "high-impact practices" (Nunley et al., 2016; Ocampo et al., 2020; Parker et al., 2016; Wolfgram & Ahrens, 2022), this study illustrates that internships are not positive learning experiences for all students. It is difficult to embrace a growth mindset if one feels that they must come into an internship already highly skilled. Further, as we saw with Quinn's negotiation of their trans identity, feeling that one must adopt a "professional" ethos at the expense of other identities requires a significant amount of emotional labor, a finding supported by recent scholarship in TPC on professional identity negotiation (Racelis, 2024). These findings add additional layers to literature demonstrating that internships can vary widely in terms of student learning (O'Neill, 2010) and that the US economy's increased focus on internships can function more as a gatekeeping mechanism than a commitment to student growth (Wolfgram & Ahrens, 2022).

Programmatically, our operational definitions of *internships* can contribute both to how liminal students feel within them and how they are supported in navigating their intern positionalities with other aspects of their identities. There has been some push in TPC to connect interns with more organizations off-campus and internationally so that they can experience new contexts (Ding, 2020). While there is certainly merit to such approaches, the participants who reported the most generative experiences in this study were those who worked with campus units, either directly on campus like Dana, Quinn, and Justin, or via a study-abroad course like Jade. Participants working on campus may have felt less liminal simply due to their familiarity with those spaces. However, these participants were also given greater agency to pursue projects within a network of support. In other words, regardless of where an internship takes place, a supportive context that embraces a growth mindset is necessary. Setting up such contexts is partly definitional work that departments, internship coordinators, and host sites should ideally do together.

Such growth-minded, team-based contexts can be fostered by defining internships creatively. For example, internships can be formed from student organizations when paired with dedicated faculty support, like in Dana's and Quinn's literary magazine experience; from service-learning courses (re)defined as internships, such as Jade's tropical ecology class; and from on-campus teams of students, faculty, and staff across campus units, like in Justin's policy center internship. Indeed, such non-traditional internships may particularly help students who face additional barriers to finding work with larger companies, such as the international students in this study. While there has been some research in TPC advocating for such approaches (St.Amant, 2003), additional research is needed to determine how non-traditional or on-campus internships affect diverse students' experiences.

These findings are supported by a deep history of literature on situated learning both in TPC and other fields showing how professionals learn by following stages of apprenticeship alongside more experienced practitioners within "communities of practice" (e.g., Anson & Forsberg, 1990; Lave & Wenger, 1991). This study adds needed attention to how students negotiate other aspects of their intersectional identities while learning specifically as interns, negotiations that are heavily affected by mentorship.

Mentoring Interns via Distributed, Community-Based Networks

This research contributes to other TPC literature showing the importance of faculty and supervisor mentorship for interns (Kramer-Simpson, 2018a, 2018b). Some higher

education research has found that interns, particularly from marginalized groups, benefit from mentorship in their communities and from peers as well (Lake, 2021). Scholarship in other fields has shown that a team-based approach to internships can be particularly impactful for underrepresented students (Murray et al., 2025).

This study adds that mentorship works best when it is integrated within larger networks of support, because such networks can (a) provide interns with more consistent and contextualized feedback; (b) help them to understand the larger impact of their work as part of ongoing projects; (c) contribute to interns feeling more integrated and less liminal; and (d) help interns to feel less of a perceived divide between their "academic" and "work" spaces. When other interns are part of these networks, as we saw with Dana's and Quinn's literary magazine experiences and Jade's work in Ecuador, interns can feel more ownership over their work.

Negative sides to mentorship also emerged in this study's findings. Mentorship can be a burden on mentors when they are not well supported, as we saw with Jade's and Maggie's default female mentors who shouldered extra mentoring responsibilities. Research has shown that in the absence of strong social support, women tend to pick up the slack of care work, which includes mentorship (Calarco, 2024). Programmatically, administrators need to ensure that faculty members who spend extra time working with interns are first recognized, and then fairly compensated and well supported by their departments and institutions.

Additionally, mentorship is not neutral. For example, Dana's faculty mentor singled her out for the editorial internship, while Quinn received the same internship, but felt like an outsider as a non-English major. As faculty members, we have to be mindful of the strong role that we can play in shaping students' lives. As we saw with Jade's faculty mentor who suggested that she try a different career path based on one unsupportive supervisor, the power of suggestion—and the related power to define competencies—functions within gendered, raced, and classed structures that are not always equitable (Fine, 2025).

Rethinking mentorship as *networked* and *distributed* rather than as a duty designated to one individual can help both to spread out mentorship work and level out biases, while providing students with additional layers of support. For example, networks of mentorship can include other peer interns, former interns, departmental faculty, community members, and a variety of staff or volunteers at host organizations. Mapping mentorship networks is an activity that internship supervisors can do together with site coordinators to ensure that multiple mentorship layers are in place; this exercise can also be done

iteratively with students in internship courses to help them visualize who they can go to for support and what type of support works best for them (refer to Appendix B).

Supporting Interns Materially

This study joins other scholarship showing that material support is often a prerequisite for students to pursue internships. Students from marginalized groups face additional barriers to internship participation that are shaped by systems of power (Hora, Wolfgram, & Chen 2019; Wolfgram, Vivona, & Akram 2021). While large systems of power are difficult to change, individual programs and faculty members can get creative to find/create material support for students. For example, Dana's and Quinn's faculty mentor used grant money to turn the editor position into a paid internship with office space, and Jade's faculty mentor used grant money to support her tropical ecology internship. My department uses funds from an endowed chair to provide fellowships to students pursuing non-profit and/or social justice internships that would otherwise be unpaid (Swacha, 2022). While such funds will not be available in all departments, other material factors—as we saw with the office space provided for Dana and Quinn—can make a difference. Other examples include access to computers and printers, transportation, or even professional clothing.

Pooling resources across departments can be fruitful; for example, at my home institution, we cross-listed the TPC internship course I regularly teach with the internship course in our Women, Gender, and Sexuality studies program, which had been running as unsupervised, asynchronous course credits. This merge allowed both units to offer a synchronous internship course, while also making WGS students eligible for our departmental internship fellowship. Working with other campus units that might be better funded and in need of communication interns—such as the policy center in Justin's case—can also help to create funded internships. These ideas have the added benefit of placing TPC students in interdisciplinary contexts, which can help them to experience the multi-dimensional work necessary to solve complex problems (Swacha & Heim, 2023). Internship coordinators can create other material support structures, such as databases of paid internships, to help students find more paid internship opportunities.

Creating Programmatic Structures of Support

While administrators cannot control for all of the intertwined factors that affect interns' experiences, we can build multi-layered support structures into our programs. I summarize a few ideas for doing so here, based on this study's findings, as a starting point rather than a prescriptive list:

1) Define ‘internships’ creatively, iteratively, and together with site supervisors and students, so that operating definitions create generative parameters for interns’ work.
2) Discuss cultural narratives of “professional,” “work,” and “intern” with both students and mentors to allow for critical thinking on how such narratives affect how interns are perceived, how they and others approach their work, and how other aspects of their identities shape their intern roles.
3) Provide students with growth-minded narratives that empower them to become a part of their internship communities and support one another, rather than fostering the individual, Hard-Working Intern narrative.
4) Support faculty mentors and internship coordinators to build well-supported programs, via course release time, dedicated committees, and/or faculty stipends. Advanced students can be involved in such work, for example via department-level internships that place them on planning committees, as TAs in internship courses, as content creators for internship marketing materials, and/or as peer mentors for other interns.
5) Create networks of mentorship, for example by
    a. Selecting internship sites that take a team-based approach;
    b. Forming cohorts of interns either in workplaces or in internship courses, where students can mentor one another;
    c. Critically thinking about and reflecting on mentorship styles across different spaces—for example, via “mentorship maps.”
6) Get creative with funding internships via departmental or institutional funds, grants, and/or standing internships with well-funded campus units.
7) Develop course sequences that teach theories of situated learning for students to take before, during, and/or after their internships. Such courses can help students to think through how they can engage with the “community of practice” at their internship sites as a novice learning from experienced practitioners, rather than as a liminal worker seeking to prove themselves (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Understanding how people learn in context can help students to develop the professional agility necessary to navigate shifting workplace contexts well beyond their internships.

Conclusion

Building from this study, some areas for future research include: more research on how internships are defined and operationalized across TPC programs to determine correlations between types of internships and their impacts on student learning; further research on how interns are mentored across TPC internship programs; additional studies to understand how internship barriers affect students with specific positionalities and the

types of support that can mitigate those barriers. This specific study can expand to include more participants at a greater range of institution types and geographic locations (rural, urban, etc.). As work landscapes rapidly change, it is imperative that program administrators iteratively research what makes internship programs most supportive for all students and shape our programs accordingly.

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Appendix A: Interview Questions

1) Tell me about your internship—what organization are you interning/did you intern with? What are some of your main responsibilities or projects there? Who do you work with/report to?
2) Tell me a bit about your internship search process: How did you find this internship, and why did you decide to pursue it? What most inspired you to pursue an internship? What resources/people did you rely on to secure an internship? Did you encounter any challenges or barriers when seeking an internship?
3) Tell me a bit about your prior experience going into your internship:
    a. Have you ever had an internship before?
    b. What concerns did you have going into this internship?
    c. What professional skills do you feel you had going into the internship, and which skills are you working to develop through the internship?
4) Can you talk generally about how you feel your internship is going/went?
    a. What were you confident/not confident about going in? What goals/visions did you have for your internship?
    b. How do you feel about those goals and confidence levels now? Are you reaching your goals? Why or why not? Has your confidence improved? Why or why not?
5) Can you talk about some of the challenges you have faced so far in your internship and how you have addressed them?
6) Can you talk about some of your successes so far in your internship? Why do you feel that you have been successful in these areas? What has fostered or supported your success? How would you define 'success' in your internship?
7) Are there any aspects of your identity that you feel have affected your internship experience?
8) Who/where have you gone to for support throughout your internship?
9) Which of these resources have been most helpful to you in your internship so far? Why?
10) Which resources have not been helpful? Why not?
11) Are there any additional types of resources or support that you think would be helpful for you to succeed in your internship?
12) What are your professional plans after this internship? Do you see this internship as preparing you in any way to pursue those plans? Why or why not?

Appendix B: Mentorship Maps

Site supervisors and faculty internship coordinators can use this heuristic iteratively both when setting up internship placements and throughout internships to ensure that a network of mentorship is consistently available for interns. Students can also do this activity both early on in their internship courses and throughout it. The goal is to help site supervisors, faculty, and students identify who interns can go to for support, what types of mentorship they can expect, and to think critically about what types of mentorship are most generative for each student. After discussing and/or writing reflectively about these questions, students can make visual 'mentorship maps,' which show who they can go to for support in various contexts, and where there might be overlap.

Defining Mentorship

How would you define "mentor"?

What characteristics make a "good" mentor?

Who have you gone to for mentorship in the past? What has been most useful to you about these mentorship relationships? What has not been useful? Who is the "ideal" mentor for you?

Mentorship at my Internship

Who is the main person(s) you can go to for support at your internship site? How can you contact them? How do you know that you can go to this person(s)? What type of support can you expect from them?

Who else can you go to for support at your internship site? How can you contact them? How do you know that you can go to this person(s)? What type of support can you expect from them?

Mentorship at my University

Who is the main person(s) you can go to for support at your university about your internship? How can you contact them? How do you know that you can go to this person(s)? What type of support can you expect from them?

Who else can you go to for support at your university about your internship? How do you contact them? How do you know that you can go to this person(s)? What type of support can you expect from them?

Mentorship in my Community

Who can you go to for support in your home community or your life off campus about your internship? How can you contact them? How do you know that you can go to this person(s)? What type of support can you expect from them?

Critical Thinking about Mentorship

Is there any overlap among mentors at your internship site, university, and in your community? How might this overlap be generative for you?

Are there any gaps among mentorship in these spaces? How might these gaps be generative, and how might they pose challenges?

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