

## 60-Second SoTL

### Episode 10 – Outcomes of Supervisor and Mentor Support in Internships

(Piano Music)

00:03

**Jessie L. Moore:**

How does having a workplace mentor – in addition to a site supervisor – inform students' socialization experiences, learning, and job offer acceptances at internship sites? That's the focus of this week's **60-second SoTL from Elon University's Center for Engaged Learning**. I'm Jessie Moore.

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In "Developmental relationships matter: Examining the joint role of supervisor support and mentor status on intern outcomes," published in the open access *International Journal of Work-Integrated Learning*, Abdifatah Ali, Philip Gardner, and Brandy Edmondson explore how the addition of a mentor shapes students' internship outcomes.

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The researchers analyzed a subsample of responses to an internet-based survey of students and recent graduates at over 200 U.S. colleges and universities. Their analysis focused on 6,802 responses from participants who had completed an internship. Although not the primary focus of their discussion, the authors share interesting statistics about students' demographics and internship experiences:

- While a 2021 National Association of Colleges and Employers – or NACE – study suggests that women are less likely than men to participate in internships, 67% of Ali, Gardner, and Edmondson's participants were women.
- 73% of the subsample participants were white.
- Most worked more than 31 hours a week at their internship site.
- 53% of those sites were for-profit, 30.3% were non-profits, and 16.7% were government organizations.
- 57% of participants had paid internships. Men were more likely than women to be in these paid internships; similarly White students were more likely than students of color to hold paid internships.

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Ali, Gardner, and Edmondson explored how supervisor support related to student learning, how learning, in turn, related to internship satisfaction, and how the serial effect of learning and satisfaction informed the likelihood that a student would accept a job offer from their internship site if one were extended. They also explored how a mentor who wasn't the assigned supervisor could contribute to student learning, although it's worth noting that the researchers advance a definition of mentoring

focused on a more senior employee mentoring a more junior employee. This conception of mentoring may overlook the rich potential of peer- and near-peer mentors, co-mentors, and mentoring networks. With that caveat noted, 59.6% of the survey participants reported having a mentor.

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The team identified a positive relationship between supervisor support and learning, as well as a positive relationship between learning and internship satisfaction. Moreover, learning and internship satisfaction serially mediated the relationship between supervisor support and job offer acceptance. In other words, having supervisors who anticipate and address their socialization and task needs and who offer feedback to support student learning not only positively informs students' experiences in their internships but also increases the likelihood that students would accept an offer of full-time employment at the internship site.

Ali, Gardner, and Edmondson's findings also suggest that if an intern's supervisor provides limited support, having a separate mentor at the internship site can help compensate and can facilitate the student's learning.

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Given these results, the authors suggest that host sites should make deliberate decisions about who supervises interns – particularly if the host organization hopes to recruit interns for subsequent full-time employment. They also suggest that both host sites and universities should foster mentoring relationships. Although the authors focus on senior employees as mentors, embracing a broader definition of mentoring relationships could open up additional models for universities wishing to foster mentoring in internship experiences. For example, recent hires might be well-prepared to offer both instrumental and socialization support that bridges interns' positionality and senior employees' perspectives.

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To learn more about this study and related research on internships, follow the link in our show notes to read the open-access article and to review our supplemental resources for this episode.

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(Piano Music)

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Join us next week for another snapshot of recent scholarship of teaching and learning on **60-second SoTL from Elon University's Center for Engaged Learning**. Learn more about the Center at [www.CenterForEngagedLearning.org](http://www.CenterForEngagedLearning.org).

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(Piano Music)