

## An Initial Analysis of High-Impact Practices Quality Survey

November 8, 2019

*This exploratory analysis was produced by OPEIR in response to a request by UTC Academic Affairs. Results are not necessarily generalizable and attempts to use results outside the scope of this project should be avoided.*

Four hundred and sixty-four UTC students completed a High-Impact Practices (HIPs) quality evaluation for the 2018-19 academic year. Study abroad programs, collaborative research projects, and work experiences (i.e. internships, student teaching, and clinical placements) provide significant opportunity for experiential learning and post-graduation prospects. Service-based learning allows students to create connections and challenges them with real-world issues. Students who participated in a first-year college success course for their HIP reported less overall satisfaction and quality than all other HIPs. Additionally, learning communities received better quality ratings in areas where first-year courses scored lower than average: understanding concepts related to their courses or major, solving real-world problems, and preparing plans for after graduation.

### Introduction and Population Definition

The purpose of this analysis is to share the results of a quality evaluation on high-impact practices (HIPs) UTC students participated in during the 2018-2019 academic year. The survey was distributed in 8 waves to 4,205 students, primarily sophomores and juniors, from April 2019 to June 2019. For this analysis, the focus will be measuring HIP quality and experience satisfaction based on student responses.

In the survey, students were asked about several qualities of their HIP experience: how much time was spent on the experience, the clarity of expectations as part of the experience, feedback from associated roles (e.g. faculty or staff, supervisor, other students), frequency of experiential activities, and the extent the experience contributed to their personal development. If a student participated in more than one HIP experience, they were instructed to respond to each question only in regards to their most recent experience. HIP experiences are categorized as the following:

- A service-based learning experience
- An internship, co-op, field experience, students teaching, or clinical placement<sup>1</sup>

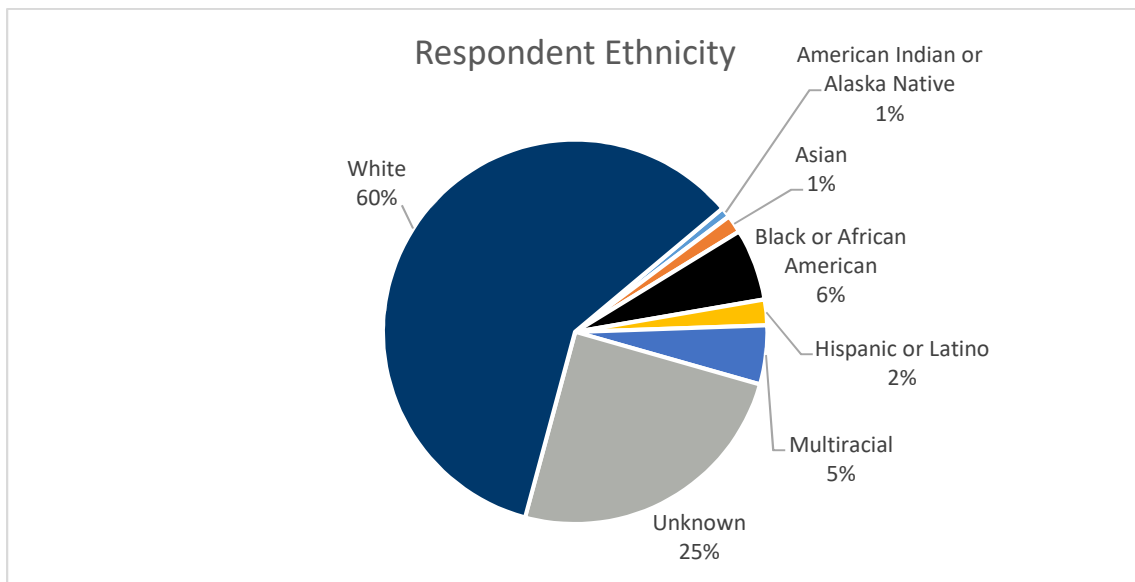
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<sup>1</sup> This category is shortened to internship for the remainder of the report but encompasses co-op, field experience, student teaching, and clinical placement activities.

- A first-year course focused on specific academic topic or major that teaches new students college success skills
- A learning community—a formal program where groups of students take two or more classes together
- A study abroad program
- A research project with a faculty member
- A culminating senior experience (capstone course, senior project or thesis, comprehensive exam, portfolio, etc.)

Out of the 4,205 UTC students the HIPs survey was sent to, 464 (11%) completed and submitted their responses. Only 231 of the 464 respondents provided their classification with the majority being freshmen (n=96), followed by sophomores (n=76) and juniors (n=59). Less than 1% of respondents self-classified as seniors (n=2). Table 1 shows the percentage breakdown of ethnicity of all respondents.

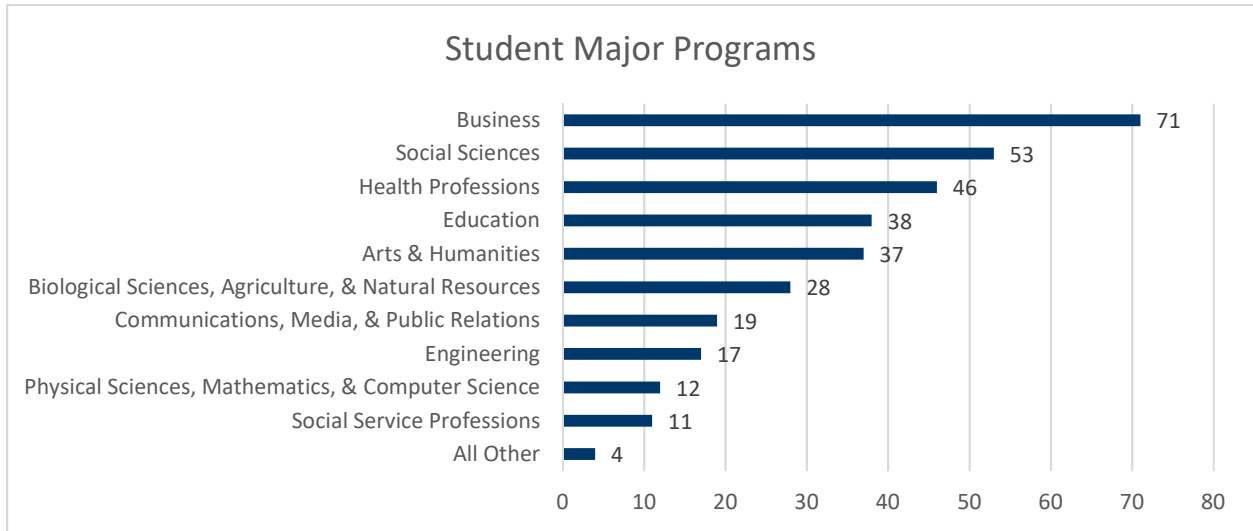
*Table 1. Ethnicity of Respondents*



Most of the respondents (n=322) reported pursuing a single major, and nearly three-fourths (74.4%) were enrolled as full-time students. Table 2 lists all represented programs,<sup>2</sup> but the top three are Business (n=71), followed by Social Sciences (n=53), and Health Professions (n=46).

<sup>2</sup> Programs defined by National Survey of Student Engagement (<http://nsse.indiana.edu/>) and not standard UTC programs.

Table 2. Major Programs



### High-Impact Practices

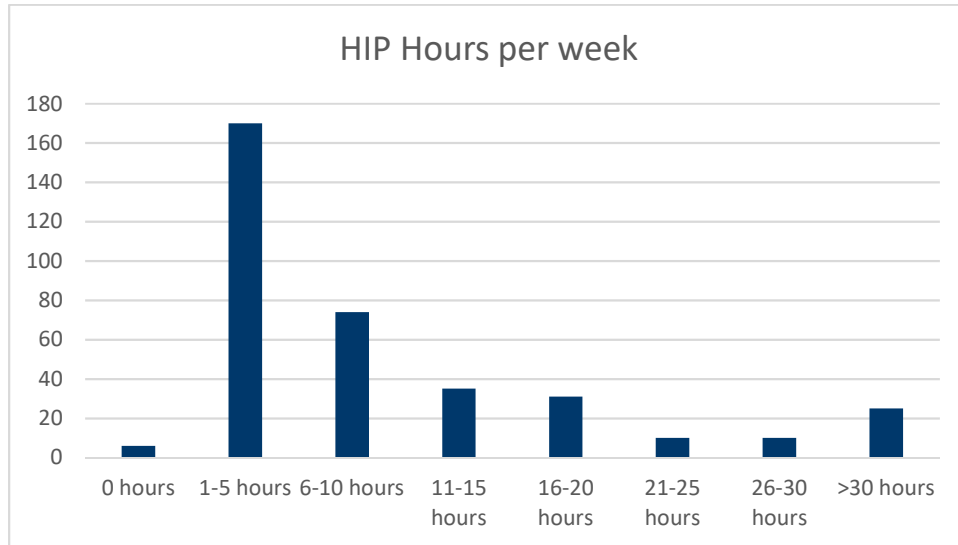
Table 3 shows the primary HIP students participated in. The top three were a service-based learning experience (30%), an internship, co-op, field experience, student teaching, or clinical placement (25.4%), and a first-year course focused on a specific academic topic or major to teach college success skills (21.3%). Based on classification, freshmen were most likely to take the first-year course as their HIP (n=61), followed by learning community or service-based learning (n= 13). Both sophomores and juniors reported participating in service-based learning (sophomores n=38, juniors n=22), followed by internships (sophomores n=18, juniors n=16).

Table 3. HIP Participation by Category

High-Impact Practice	N
A service-based learning experience	139
An internship, co-op, field experience, students teaching, or clinical placement	118
A first-year college success course	99
A learning community	55
A study abroad program	31
A research project with a faculty member	16
A culminating senior experience	6

Most of the respondents reported that they had completed the HIP they in which participated (n=283) and completion took approximately 3-4 months (n=141, 30.4%). For those who either did not complete their HIP, or were still in progress at the time, most reported spending more than 3 weeks at the time of the survey (n=86). Table 4 shows the amount of hours students reported spending per week on their HIP.

Table 4. Hours Spent Weekly on HIP



### High-Impact Practice Outcomes

Fifty-seven percent of students reported receiving academic credit for their HIP (n=266). However, out of the 283 students who reported their HIP as completed, 48 reported that they were unsure or did not receive academic credit. The majority of these students uncertain about receiving academic credit completed an internship (n=21).

Students rated their overall experience on their HIP on a 7-point scale from 1-*Poor* to 7-*Excellent*. Overall, all HIPs were significantly rated positively. Study abroad programs, research projects, and senior experiences were rated just below *Excellent*. However, the response sizes for these HIPs are significantly smaller compared to other options. When looking at the three largest selections, a first-year college success course, an internship, and service-based learning, internships received the highest mean score, whereas first-year college success courses received the lowest mean score across all HIPs (Table 5).

Table 5. HIP Quality Mean Scores

High-Impact Practice	N	Mean Score
Study abroad program	29	6.38
Research project	15	6.13
Senior experience	5	6.00
Internship et al.	94	5.83
Service-based learning	98	5.22
Learning community	41	5.12
First-year college success course	76	4.74

Experience outcomes were evaluated for each HIP category regarding the following areas:

- A.) Understanding concepts in the student’s courses or major,
- B.) Applying theory to practice,
- C.) Solving complex, real-world problems,
- D.) Acquiring job- or work-related skills, and
- E.) Preparing for plans after graduation

Results for each experience outcome are included in Table 6. Overall, research projects, study abroad programs, and internships were reported as highly beneficial across all five experience outcomes. Service-based learning and learning communities were generally rated well across all outcomes. An interesting finding to note is the diverse opinion on the outcomes for first-year college success courses. Most of the respondents believe that the courses contribute between “Some” and “Quite a Bit” for each outcome. The areas that scored the lowest were in solving complex, real-world problems and preparing for plans after graduation.

*Table 6. HIP Experience Evaluation Results*

<b>A.) Understanding Concepts in Your Courses or Major</b>							
	<b>First-year college success course</b>	<b>Learning community</b>	<b>Research project</b>	<b>Service-based learning</b>	<b>Study abroad program</b>	<b>Internship et al.</b>	<b>Senior experience</b>
<b>Very little</b>	9	7	0	8	1	7	0
<b>Some</b>	25	7	2	33	5	14	0
<b>Quite a bit</b>	25	12	5	30	12	31	2
<b>Very much</b>	16	15	8	27	11	42	3
<b>B.) Applying Theory to Practice</b>							
	<b>First-year college success course</b>	<b>Learning community</b>	<b>Research project</b>	<b>Service-based learning</b>	<b>Study abroad program</b>	<b>Internship et al.</b>	<b>Senior experience</b>
<b>Very little</b>	17	10	0	12	1	9	0
<b>Some</b>	21	7	2	28	2	15	1
<b>Quite a bit</b>	25	15	3	33	15	31	1
<b>Very much</b>	11	9	10	24	11	39	3

Table 6. HIP Experience Evaluation Results (cont'd.)

C.) Solving Complex, Real-World Problems							
	First-year college success course	Learning community	Research project	Service-based learning	Study abroad program	Internship et al.	Senior experience
Very little	14	6	2	7	0	4	1
Some	28	10	1	31	4	20	2
Quite a bit	19	14	1	36	11	32	1
Very much	13	11	11	24	14	38	1
D.) Acquiring Job- or Work-Related Skills							
	First-year college success course	Learning community	Research project	Service-based learning	Study abroad program	Internship et al.	Senior capstone
Very little	11	7	0	7	0	2	0
Some	22	6	1	25	5	8	1
Quite a bit	22	12	5	38	10	27	2
Very much	19	16	9	26	14	57	2
E.) Preparing Plans for after Graduation							
	First-year college success course	Learning community	Research project	Service-based learning	Study abroad program	Internship et al.	Senior capstone
Very little	16	9	0	19	2	4	1
Some	22	9	3	31	5	14	1
Quite a bit	19	8	2	29	8	25	0
Very much	17	15	9	18	14	50	3

### Qualitative Analysis

At the end of the survey, students were asked to list the most and least satisfying aspects of their experience. Table 7 lists the most popular response topic for each HIP, summarized from student comments. Across all HIPs, finding the time to complete their HIP together with maintaining a standard curriculum and other personal responsibilities were what students

typically found least satisfying. However, students also tended to report that the chance to meet and work with others in the same professional field with similar interests was the most satisfying part of the experience. One student stated: “[It was] a sneak peek of what I will be doing post-graduation.”

*Table 7. Most- and Least-Liked Qualities of Each HIP*

<b>High-Impact Practice</b>	<b>Most Satisfying</b>	<b>Least Satisfying</b>
Service-based learning	Helping the community.	The amount of work associated with the service project.
Internship et al.	Real world experience.	Time commitment.
First-year college success course	Helped clarify what major to pursue.	Felt like busy work.
Learning community	Connecting and collaborating with other students.	Interpersonal conflicts.
Study abroad program	Learning about a new culture and living in it.	Financial issues.
Research project	Learning how to carry out research and present it.	Time commitment
Senior experience	Applying what was learned.	Completing the experience on top of coursework and personal obligations.

## Key Findings

Despite the small sample size, study abroad programs appear to provide a significant opportunity for experiential learning. However, the financial burdens to travel to another country keeps this from becoming an accessible option to all students. Internships, collaborative research projects, and other experiences that provide students an opportunity to apply their knowledge and skills to topics extremely relevant to their major are also incredibly beneficial in shaping student learning and post-graduation prospects. Service-based learning, while seemingly less impactful than internships, still provide students an outlet to create connections and an opportunity to address real-world problems.

An important finding is the general dissatisfaction students have participating in a first-year college success course. Several students believed that the course they engaged in was too general, and sometimes irrelevant, to their major. Additionally, students who participated in learning communities received better ratings in the areas first-year courses performed less than

average: understanding concepts related to their courses or major, solving complex real-world problems, and preparing plans for after graduation.

## **Conclusion**

Overall, students seem to provide positive feedback and satisfaction regarding participation in various HIPs offered at UTC. Several programs on our campus actively promote experiential learning opportunities for our students to apply their knowledge to real-world situations. In regards to first-year courses, several students reported that the courses helped them to decide on their major. Further research on student opinions of first-year college success courses could help with providing a direction on how to improve their quality to be beneficial for all.