BUMK744   Marketing Research and Analytics   Spring 2025

Team Assignment 1: Survey
Report

Team: 4

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By submitting this assignment, each team member acknowledges the following pledge:

"I pledge on my honor that I have not given or received any unauthorized assistance on this exam/assignment."

Introduction

Effective communication between career services and undergraduate students is crucial for improving internship and full-time placement outcomes. However, a common challenge faced by the Office of Career Services (OCS) is the low response rate from undergraduate students regarding internship or full-time placement status updates. This lack of timely feedback limits the ability of OCS to track student outcomes accurately and provide tailored career support. Understanding the factors that drive or deter student engagement with these surveys is essential for improving response rates and ensuring more accurate data collection.

This research aims to identify which factors increase the internship-update response rate among undergraduate students at the Robert H. Smith School of Business. Specifically, the study will explore three key aspects of this business problem:

1. How do student characteristics affect internship-update response rates among undergraduate students?

2. How does student exposure to OCS affect internship-update response rate among undergraduate students?

3. How do reward offers affect internship-update response rate among undergraduate students?

By addressing these questions, the study seeks to provide actionable insights that can help OCS develop more effective communication strategies, improve student engagement, and increase response rates for internship and placement surveys. The findings will inform the design and targeted outreach efforts and incentive structures to motivate student participation and enhance career service effectiveness.

Exploratory Research

Throughout our brainstorming sessions, we explored various factors to understand why undergraduate students at the Robert H. Smith School of Business are not responding to internship placement surveys. After analyzing exploratory data on the Smith School student population and internship experience, the data indicates approximately 80% of students participated in at least one internship in 2023. Given the large undergraduate population (3,000+ students), this suggests an estimated 2,370 students have had internship experience. If participation remains stable, we estimate a 1% increase last year and the years to come. However, internship trends, student enrollment, and economic conditions may impact this estimate.

If these external factors, along with potentially many more variables, affect internship participation, we began considering what internal, smaller factors could improve students' completion of the surveys. This led us to refine our observed problem—***the lack of timely responses from undergraduate students regarding internship offers or full-time placements***—into a potential business problem: ***identifying the factors that increase the internship-update response rate among undergraduate students.***

After discussing our own experiences with internships, OCS services, and UMD surveys, we narrowed the factors down to three specific areas that might influence response behavior. These are as follows: 1. How do student characteristics affect the internship update response rate among undergraduate students? 2. How does student exposure to OCS affect the internship update response rate among undergraduate students? 3. How do reward offers affect the internship update response rate among undergraduate students?

As a result, we refined our management decision problem: ***How can OCS encourage responses to internship or full-time placement surveys from undergraduate students?*** Then moving on to develop the necessary questions for our survey, we begin with screener questions, followed by influential variables such as the best time of the semester to contact students, their preferred mode of communication, and finally end with questions examining motivation, such as incentives for completion. By gathering insights on these factors, OSC can aim to develop targeted strategies that can boost student participation in these surveys.

Survey Explanation

Our 1st research question is: "How do student characteristics affect internship-update response rate among undergraduate students?" Our 1st - 6th questions in our survey aim to answer this research question.

Q1: Are you a current undergraduate student enrolled at the Robert H. Smith School of Business?

This is a screener question that ensures that only undergraduate students at the Smith School of Business participate in the survey. If a respondent selects 'No,' they are automatically exited from the survey to maintain data accuracy. This step prevents irrelevant responses from non-Smith students, ensuring that our findings reflect the actual population engaging with OCS.

Q2: What is your University ID number?
Collecting a University ID number helps in verifying student authenticity and removes duplicate responses if necessary. While responses will remain anonymous in analysis, the ID ensures that the data comes from legitimate UMD students.

Q3: What is your University email address? (@terpmail.umd.edu or @umd.edu)
This question ensures that the respondent is using an official university email, which guarantees that our data is coming from enrolled students. Additionally, this allows for follow-ups or verification if further analysis on response behavior is needed.

Q4: What year of undergraduate studies are you currently in?
This question captures academic year segmentation (1st year, 2nd year, etc.), allowing us to analyze how response rate may differ across student levels. Seniors (4th year students) may have higher exposure to OCS due to internship/job search activities, whereas 1st-year students may be less aware of OCS services.

Q5: What is your major(s) at Smith? (Select all that apply)

This question identifies the major(s) of the student. This helps us identify if academic majors affect response rates to OCS internship surveys.

Q6: What is your Employment Status after this academic year?

This question assesses whether students have secured an internship or full-time job. If a student has already been hired, it can be analyzed whether they were more or less likely to respond to the OCS survey, helping us understand the impact that student employment may have on response rate.

Our 2nd research question is: "How does student exposure to OCS affect internship-update response rate among undergraduate students?" Our 7th, 8th, and 9th questions in our survey aim to answer this question.

Q7: What is your preferred method for receiving UMD-related notifications?

Question 7 aims to gather information on identifying the best form of communication for undergraduate students. Discovering which distribution strategies are best for these students will allow OCS to identify if there are any popular methods (such as text) they are not currently implementing to promote their surveys. This can increase exposure to the OCS internship survey.

Q8: Have you received the OCS Internship Survey during this school year?

Q9: Have you completed the OCS Internship Survey during this school year?

Questions 8 and 9 aim to gain an understanding of the overall exposure and conversion rate of their surveys. Question 8 asks if the student has received the OCS survey this semester. This allows OCS to gain a better understanding of the impression rate of their internship placement survey (relative to the sample size). Question 9 asks if the student has completed the OCS internship survey. By asking this question, it allows OCS to extract the conversion rate of their internship survey, (relative to the sample size) by comparing the number of surveys completed to the number of surveys received/viewed. Additionally, question 9 allows us to determine if the student characteristics gathered earlier in the survey correlate to students completing the OCS internship survey.

Our 3rd Research Question is: "How do reward offers affect internship-update response rate among undergraduate students?" Our 10th, 11th and 12th question in our survey aim to answer this question.

Q10: How likely are you to complete the OCS internship survey without a potential raffle prize?
Q11: How likely are you to complete the OCS internship survey with a potential raffle prize?
Questions 10 and 11 aim to gain an understanding of the impact of a raffle prize on the response rate of students. Question 10 uses a Likert scale to gauge user likelihood of responding to the survey without a prize. Question 11 uses a Likert scale to gauge user likelihood of responding to the survey with a prize. By implementing these questions, OCS can understand how much, if any, an impact that a raffle prize could have on user motivation to respond.

Q12: Allocate 10 points among the following raffle prize options. The more points you assign to a prize, the more that prize would motivate you to complete the OCS survey. Please make sure that your total adds up to 10.
Question 12 expands on the findings from the previous two questions by aiming to figure out precisely what raffle prizes would generate the most responses. The options include business-oriented prizes that would likely attract a Smith student. The options are chosen using a constant sum allocation, which allows OCS to gauge the extent of preferences that users have.

The target population consists of undergraduate students at the Robert H. Smith School of Business at the University of Maryland who are seeking internships. These students are the primary audience for OCS internship surveys, making them the most relevant group for this research. To reach our target population, we will use multiple distribution channels:
1. Email Invitations - Official UMD emails ensure verified responses and higher participation.
2. Student Organizations & Career Services - Collaborating with Smith School student groups and OCS career advisors to distribute the survey.
3. University Platforms & Social Media - Sharing on TerpLink, LinkedIn, and Smith School career pages to engage students.
4. In-Class Announcements - Requesting professors to announce the survey to students in career-related courses.

Survey Design Process

The survey was structured by the team to capture the intended essence of the research objectives, where the audience was specifically defined as undergraduate students who are currently studying at Robert H. Smith School of Business. They selected the survey to be all online to ensure convenience and speed; this enormously favored their daily routines along with the technological environment under which undergraduates live, except to increase the chances of a higher number of returns. The first five questions were supplemented as screen questions ensuring validity and relevance among the responses from the survey. The questions screened the Smith undergraduates based on current enrollment verification as receiving their university identification numbers, university email addresses, year of undergraduate study, and declared business major.

Such screening items ensured that all data following them were coming exclusively from our defined target population, hence improving validity and relevance for the entire body of collected data. We linked the confirmed eligible respondents through an orderly transition from general inquiries towards highly focused and potentially sensitive issues, and the first substantive question following our screener sought from the respondents their employment status about the end of the current academic year (question 6). While potentially sensitive because employment prospects involved personal issues, this question was placed strategically early enough to minimize fatigue but after less sensitive demographic data had already been collected.

The survey questions asked regarding the preferred communication methods (Q7) and previous experience with the Office of Career Services-OCS Internship Survey (Q8), which allowed us to get a context to the respondents' forthcoming evaluations. Questions 9 and 10 had Likert scales that captured how respondents would likely fill in the OCS Internship Survey under two definitions: without any incentive and with a potential raffle prize incentive. Thus, using a Likert-scale format here protected against leading respondents and allowed for accurate capture of attitudinal differences on an interval measurement level. Question 11 asked for the allocation of points, in which respondents were asked to distribute a maximum of 10 points in ranking the importance of several options to win a raffle prize. In this way, it gave fine-grained ordinal data within the minimal turmoil of thought. Thus, we employed neat radio buttons with clear instruction on what to do with points to prevent bias and misunderstanding linked with normal rank approaches.

Team Cooperation

The team approached the assignment with an open mind, but also relied heavily on critical thinking skills, particularly when creating the questions. After deciding to target undergraduate students and focus on their responses to internship surveys, the team began developing the survey questions. They spent the majority of their time in Qualtrics, carefully reviewing every question they decided to include, starting with the screener questions. From there, they dove into more specific questions regarding student characteristics and then focused on student exposure to OCS and then on reward offers. The survey was structured around three key areas: screener questions, student characteristics, awareness of OCS, and rewards and incentives.

While the screener questions were easy to develop, the other questions required more thought. The team went through each one carefully, debating how the question was phrased, how it might appear to the audience, and how they, as students, would feel if they were answering them. The main difficulty encountered was overanalyzing the questions. However, this process ultimately ensured the questions were effective.

While everyone collaborated on these questions, the work was divided when it came to writing the report. Elena took the lead on the introduction, summarizing the objective and opening the report with a strong start. Ashlynn handled the exploratory research; during the initial stages of creating the questions, the team gathered data from the Smith School, which was discussed, and Ashlynn expanded on that for her section. Niket and Nick took responsibility for explaining the survey itself, providing the type of questions, and its purpose to the overall survey. Finally, Jacky concluded the report by detailing the design process.