

Fostering Student Engagement through a Multi-Day Industry Tour

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Abstract

Student engagement may be enhanced by providing educationally purposeful activities outside of the classroom. This study considers the influence of a multi-day industry tour on student engagement for undergraduates majoring in Parks, Recreation and Tourism Management. Data were collected from students' reflections in journal entries focused on an entire semester in an integrated curriculum that included an industry tour. The results from the analysis revealed that students increased their knowledge of their future profession, improved their understanding of course content, and experienced opportunities to build relationships through networking. This study advocates for unique student learning experiences that build relationships with professional mentors to foster student engagement.

Keywords: *industry tour; professional mentors; student engagement*

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Introduction

Universities are concerned with developing student engagement to support professional learning outcomes and high frequencies of job placement for their graduates (Gordon, Ludlum, & Hoey, 2008). For this reason, alternative approaches to academic delivery such as field experiences have been used for several decades in traditional higher education to supplement classroom instruction and help students draw connections across disciplines (Ratcliff, 2001). Parks, Recreation and Tourism Management (PRTM) is a natural fit for incorporating field or travel experiences into the course structure due to its applied nature. The understanding of the benefits of field experiences is mostly anecdotal as measuring the effectiveness of these field experiences is complex and therefore often missing from the literature. Contributing to the body of knowledge on the benefits of field experiences is the motivation behind this study.

Another complexity is that many concentration areas are represented with PRTM degree programs. Large academic departments that house multiple emphasis areas or concentrations are challenged in delivering quality instruction and professional learning opportunities to students across emphasis areas because of students' wide ranging professional and personal goals (Henderson et al., 2009). Learning activities and opportunities provided in conjunction with the curriculum are particularly important for those departments that (a) use an integrated undergraduate curriculum for students from across the department's emphasis areas, and/or (b) have faculty members who specialize in a specific emphasis teaching core curriculum to students across emphasis areas. For example, the academic department in this study serves as the home for the emphasis areas of community recreation, sport, and camp management (CRSCM); parks and conservation area management (PCAM); professional golf management (PGM); recreation therapy (RT); and travel and tourism (TT). The common factor that binds these emphasis areas together is the management of the human experience in recreation-related programs, services and facilities. Consequently, an integrated undergraduate curriculum that focuses on common management sectors is offered to students across the emphasis areas early in the students' academic program. A team of the department's faculty members from across the emphasis areas collaboratively teaches the integrated curriculum.

Creating and implementing well-designed and implemented learning opportunities may help students draw connections across emphasis areas while enhancing student engagement among students (Kuh, 2003). One such learning opportunity afforded in conjunction with an integrated curriculum is a field experience in the form of a multi-day industry tour. Industry tours are site visits to industry-related agencies and organizations that allow students to "apply theory, see theory in practice, ask questions of professionals in situ, compare and contrast different sites of work, and connect curriculum and learning to professional practice" (Lawson, Fallshaw, Papadopoulos, Taylor, & Zanko, 2011, p. 64). While research has heavily explored the role of unique learning environments and opportunities in student engagement (e.g., Kuh, 2003; Porter & Swing, 2006), there is little known about how these opportunities lead to learning about holistic class concepts at the same time.

Literature Review

Student Engagement

The framework of student engagement is used by higher education administrators and professionals to address students' involvement in educationally purposeful activities that ultimately lead to various desired outcomes and overall satisfaction with the college experience (Zhao & Kuh, 2004). The level of student engagement is thought to contribute to growth in skills and dispositions needed to be successful after college, including those involved with career-related pursuits (Kuh, 2003). The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) has developed a systematic way to measure student engagement by outlining five benchmarks that institutions can use to enhance student learning and development. These benchmarks include the level of academic challenge, active and collaborative learning, student-faculty interaction, enriching educational experiences, and supportive campus environment (Gonyea & Kuh, 2009; Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh & Whitt, 2010). This study considers these five benchmarks and the role that industry tours can play in boosting student engagement.

Level of academic challenge. The level of academic challenge involves creative and intellectually challenging academic work that is used to promote and maintain student engagement (Gonyea & Kuh, 2009). Creative and critical thinking is especially relevant for professions that are strongly tied to public service and/or community development in that students must learn the science of the profession as well as the meaningfulness, novelties and complexities of the profession within the social and cultural context (Maudsley & Strivens, 2000). During an industry tour, students may be challenged to use critical and creative thinking skills as they experience and reflect on the course content in a real world context (Kuh et al., 2010).

Active learning environments. An active learning environment requires students to think about and apply what they are learning in different settings (Gonyea & Kuh, 2009). Higher levels of engagement were reported by students when they participated in courses that utilized active learning methods (Umbach & Wawrzynski, 2005). The industry tour takes students out of the classroom and presents course content in in the same context in which it is applied. The knowledge acquired during discussions about community-based projects and problems help prepare students for work in environments that require creative solutions to messy and unexpected problems that can often be found in applied fields (Kuh et al., 2010).

Student-faculty interaction. Interaction between students and faculty is important because students can find professional and personal mentors through interactions with their instructors. Faculty members who interact with students outside of the typical classroom environment may positively influence the students in serving as mentors for career plans; conveying implicit knowledge related to professionalism, ethics and values; and taking on roles as advisors for co-curricular activities, such as professional organizations (Gonyea & Kuh, 2009; Rose, Rukstalis, & Schuckit, 2005). During industry tours, particularly those that are multiple days in length, students have increased opportunities to interact with faculty members in a setting outside of the classroom, thereby increasing the potential for professional mentorship (Kuh et al., 2010).

Enriching educational experiences. Enriching educational experiences are novel learning activities often including unique pedagogical methods in the classroom or co-

curricular activities outside of the classroom that support the goals of an academic program (Kuh et al., 2010; Stupans, Scutter, & Pearce, 2010). An industry tour is one such example that provides students with opportunities to learn valuable information as they interact with their peers and professionals (Kuh, 2009).

Supportive learning environment. A supportive learning environment, often denoted as the campus, is defined by the quality of relationships students have with other students, faculty members and administrative personnel and services (Gonyea & Kuh, 2009). These relationships help engage students because they help them thrive socially. The cultures of PRTM academic departments themselves have been perceived to be positive, friendly and supportive (Henderson et al., 2009). However, there is a need to create an “academic connection” among different emphasis areas in addition to the social connections among students in the department (Henderson et al., 2009, p. 34). Also, student engagement as a result of a supportive learning environment has only been addressed in a campus setting (Gonyea & Kuh, 2009). Therefore, the literature on student engagement has failed to address student engagement in conjunction with practicing professionals and/or the professional community.

Methods

The Field Experience and its Participants

This study focused on the thoughts, observations, and perceptions of PRTM undergraduates at a mid-size land grant university in the southeastern United States. This department includes approximately 500 undergraduate students and offered a diverse sample of student groups who exemplify the range of PRTM foci. Students in the study were enrolled in a PRTM department that had recently implemented an integrated core curriculum as the fourth semester of undergraduate instruction. The integrated core curriculum was designed to provide undergraduates across the aforementioned five emphasis areas (i.e., CRSCM, PCAM, PGM, RT, TT) with a shared foundation of professional language, knowledge, and skillsets while developing further understanding of how the five emphasis areas are related to the human experience of leisure and recreation (see Anderson, 2013). Students were provided opportunities to interact with faculty members from various emphasis areas and participate in a series of small group projects to promote teamwork and communication in addition to hands-on experiences and real world application of the course concepts. The purposeful design of the integrated core afforded opportunities to increase student-faculty interaction, use active learning methods in nontraditional spaces (e.g., campus amphitheaters and gardens), and connect to community and industry partners.

In addition to other unique learning experiences such as team building exercises, a student conference, and activity facilitations held during the integrated semester, students Engaged in Guided and Diverse Experiences (EDGE) also participated in a three day industry tour. The students traveled and stayed overnight in a destination where they visited multiple agencies that provide PRTM services in one of five cities. Student groups represented all five emphasis areas, and to achieve the goal of efficiency during the field experiences, many agencies were specifically selected because their operation reflected more than one emphasis area. Table 1 displays examples of the types of agencies that were visited that provide services related to the multiple concentrations in the PRTM undergraduate program.

Table 1*Example of agencies and their interdisciplinary nature*

	Community Recreation, Sport & Camp Management	PGA Golf Management	Park & Conservation Area Management	Recreation Therapy	Travel & Tourism
Professional sports arena	√			√	√
State park	√		√		√
Hotel, golf resort & spa	√	√			√
Wellness and recreation center	√	√		√	
Aquarium	√		√	√	√

Data Collection and Analysis

EDGE students were required to complete graded reflective journal entries throughout the semester. The final journal prompt asked the students to reflect on the entire semester and explain the three substantive experiences that most contributed to their personal and professional growth. These journal entries ($n=114$) were used for data analysis in an effort to explore the student perceptions of the industry tour when not directly asked about it, but volunteering the experience as meaningful two months after the experience. The majority of students (73.6%) selected the three day field experience as one of the substantive experiences that most contributed to their personal and professional growth. From the entries that included a discussion of the three day field experience ($n=84$), a purposeful sampling technique (Creswell, 2007) was applied to select the journal entries that contained rich text for analysis ($n=32$). The selected journal entries were transcribed and the transcriptions were coded for themes by two researchers using the qualitative analysis software MAXQDA.

The coding process of the text first required an inductive reading, with a discussion of topics present in the data, and meaningful clusters of the topics. All three researchers conducted this inductive step until consensus or “corroboration” was reached regarding the topics, and the themes present in the data (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Software assistance was employed by two researchers to link all substantive text passages with a theme developed, and agreement was measured as intercoder reliability. There were text passages that could be exemplary of more than one theme, and typically this was the disagreement between coders with the two researchers using MAXQDA. Intercoder agreement was estimated at 80% (Creswell, 2007).

Results

Three themes were developed from the analysis of the journal entries concerning the influence of the industry tour on student engagement. First, students increased their knowledge of the profession in terms of the importance of the profession, the work required from professionals, and the amount of job opportunities within the field. Second, students improved their understanding of course content. Third, students built relationships with their peers, faculty members and industry professionals.

Theme 1: Increased Knowledge of Profession

Importance and intrinsic value of the profession. The students explained that their visits to various agencies during the industry tour demonstrated the value added by the profession in a larger, holistic context. Student #2 shared, “We realized from the trip that our profession matters,” and Student #17 stated, “We are just as important as engineers and architects in this world.” Students made connections between the profession’s facilities and current global health-related issues:

I just don’t think of parks as something we don’t need or as something that is useless. Instead, from now on I see parks as places where people can reduce their stress and experience leisure. They really do have a positive impact on people’s lives. (#16)

Student #19 echoed this outlook by explaining, “It is important to understand that we are concerned with the big picture and making the quality of life better for the entire community.”

The industry tour also gave students the ability to explain the value of the field to others who may stereotype the profession and the associated academic major:

We realized from the trip that our profession matters. It would be hard to go through EDGE and have the stigma of being a PRTM student and go through scrutiny. After the trip I can effectively defend the profession and its importance and I can tell anyone what the PRTM professionals really do and achieve. (#2)

The industry tour introduced students to professionals in the field who were able to emphasize the importance of their positions and the magnitude of their impact.

Work ethic and professional knowledge required within the profession. The students also expressed an increase in their knowledge of the profession in becoming aware of the amount of work that is required and the common challenges faced in PRTM professions. Students were surprised and impressed by the work ethic needed to be successful. Student #9 expressed, “It showed us as students what it is going to take from us to be a professional once we enter the world of PRTM.” Student #8 agreed, “It helped me prepare for what is to come in my profession and how hard I will have to work at it.” Student #25 had a similar experience and expressed, “I learned first-hand what it takes to be a PRTM professional. The challenges, the advantages and even a few tedious tasks I may have to face as a PRTM professional in the future.” Student #23 learned that, “Being a PRTM professional is not all fun and games but it is very rewarding. A big issue that many professionals face is time. Working long hours and nights and weekends really is not most people’s ideal job.” Another student remembered how the professional stressed the importance of paying attention to detail:

Then he went on to tell us what he had to do on a daily basis and that is when I knew I had to work on some of my weaknesses. He explained to us how detailed he had to be in order to do his job the right way. I know my strengths and weaknesses better than anyone and one weakness I need to work on is how detailed I am. After visiting, something clicked in me and I realized that if I wanted to reach my career goals I had to be as detailed as possible in everything I do. (#28)

Thus, the industry tour prepared students with realistic expectations of challenges they might face in the future.

Awareness of the profession's career opportunities. The industry tours also provided information about career pathways in the field to help the students make educated decisions about their future employment:

Before this semester people asked me what kinds of jobs I could get with my degree and to be honest I could not really give them a good answer. My trip gave me an answer because of the variety of people and places we visited while we were there. (#21)

Several other students made similar remarks that the industry tour “showed me how many opportunities there are in this field” (#1) and that being able to meet the professionals in person was valuable in that students “got to see firsthand what kind of jobs were available in the PRTM field” (#10). Student #5’s eyes were opened to two potential careers at two separate agencies, noting that “both were unique outdoor adventure experiences that showed me how cool jobs can be [in our field].” One agency visit impacted student #28 by introducing a position they had not considered, “Our tour guide was the facility manager of the arena. After a tour of the facilities he told us his job description. When I heard the description I knew that was something I could see myself doing after college.”

The industry tour offered opportunities to be exposed to a variety of career paths and was particularly useful for students who lacked confidence in their choice of major. Student #8 reported that, “This experience gave me hands on, real life opportunities. I got a taste of what PRTM really has to offer which confirmed that this major really is right for me.” A student who had recently switched their major to PRTM also acknowledged the benefit of being exposed to a variety of career options:

I changed my major from Graphic Communications to Parks, Recreation, and Tourism Management because I knew that I wanted to do something related to leisure services. The trip allowed me to see the variety of things available in the field. By visiting a resort, a museum, a white water activity center, and several stadiums, I got to see more of what my major is all about. (#10)

Awareness of the job opportunities may help students have a better understanding of the information that they learn in the classroom and have more confidence about how it will be useful to help them achieve success in their future careers.

Theme 2: Improved Understanding of Course Content

The second theme that was identified in data was that the industry tour influenced the students’ propositional knowledge, or the concepts that had been discussed in the classroom by seeing class concepts in action. Students explained that the industry tour provided them with opportunities to develop personal knowledge through concrete examples that they saw behind the scenes in the industry tour agencies. Student #6 expressed, “It is one thing to go through and educate ourselves about the field and different aspects of the field, but to actually get hands on experience and learn about real life situations really brought this

semester to life for me.” Student #26 explained that the trips prompted understanding, “I grasped so much more information by learning from the agencies first hand.” One student was able to explain the value of seeing class concepts in action:

Many of the stories and examples learned at sites we visited made more sense and stuck with me better than reading something out of a text book. I undoubtedly am much more knowledgeable about my role as a PRTM professional and how to better serve my target population as a result of this semester. (#24)

Student #19 echoed the appreciation of seeing the operation in action, “We were introduced to real world situations and problems that these agencies deal with every day.” One student compared the trip experience to their educational experience in a different major:

I’m a hands-on learner and a visual learner so getting to see real people running agencies and being there to get feedback was a pretty humbling learning experience and something you don’t get to do very often. In my other major I never got to do that. The trip was just awesome in that aspect. (#14)

Further, students reported that the field experiences allowed them to develop a deeper understanding of the concepts that were being taught in the classroom once they saw these concepts in action. For more specific evidence of these results please see Table 2.

Theme 3: Enhancing Opportunities to Build Meaningful Professional Relationships

Students expressed that a key benefit of the industry tour was the opportunity for networking. This topic emerged into three subthemes: networking with other students, networking with faculty members, and networking with industry professionals.

Networking and learning with fellow students. Developing meaningful relationships with their peers was consistently reported in the students’ journals. Student #29 expressed how the field experience provided opportunities to connect with their peers, “Prior to going on the trip, communication in class was at minimum. Going on the trip changed that. As a student I learned how to step out of my comfort zone and develop relationships with my classmates.” Student #1 described the value of interacting with students with diverse backgrounds and opinions, “This trip also allowed me to get to know the people in the PRTM major and gave me a chance to talk about my views and find out how they are similar or different from theirs.” Student #24 explained the uniqueness of the relationships that were built during the trip, “The trip led to new friendships and a ‘we’re all in this together’ mentality. The EDGE semester encouraged growth as a person and student because it was different than any other academic experience I have ever had.” One student expressed that the new friendships with fellow students added confirmation to their decision to major in PRTM:

The trip helped me bond with others. Getting to know everyone and making new friends really made me realize I switched to the right major. Everyone got along and we all wanted to stay longer so that we could just be together. (#14)

Table 2*Selected Evidence of Propositional Knowledge Learned During Industry Tour*

Class concept	Evidence
Organizational mission and vision	I also learned that everyone has their own way of doing things, and the way they do things depends on their purpose as an agency along with their mission and vision. Of course, we were told this as a class several times, but it did not click until this trip. As a student, I saw that what I was learning in the classroom was actually being applied in the field so then I wanted to learn the material more. (#27)
Inclusive services	The aquarium also helped me form my views on having an inclusive facility and organization mission. It was very inspiring to see how the entire facility was accessible to all ages and abilities. They made it so everyone could see and experience all the different sites throughout, including the touch tank. They had made it so everyone could reach whether they were a young child or someone in a wheelchair. Seeing this has instilled in me the want and desire to try to encourage inclusion. (#1)
Finances and funding	By visiting a variety of agencies (public, private, non-profit) I got to see similarities and differences on how each one runs and operates. I saw how money and funding greatly impacts all the facilities as well as how each organization is staffed. (#16) Now when I go places I ask myself, "I wonder how much profit they made off of this concert." Things I would never consider are popping up in my head. (#3)
Promotion (marketing, public relations)	I learned that to be successful you must appeal to a diverse group of people. The amount of visitors/customers you have depends on how wide you can cast your net. When casting your net, you must also keep in mind your mission, your financial plan, your facilities, and how you intend to market yourself as a business. (#27)
Risk management	I was talking to the Superintendent of the military park in regards to their risk management plan. Through the discussion I learned crucial tips that I will use one day running my park; like having a set aside fund just for lawsuits. (#25)

One student from out of state said the relationships they built with their peers provided a profound change to their college experience and the professional network that they intended to maintain in the future:

I gained personal relationships with many of my classmates. Then those friends introduced me to their friends in the PRTM major and my social capital sky rocketed. This made my life a lot easier. When I needed help with work, or had a question about something or needed a ride somewhere I had many different friends I could call. This also helped my attendance rate. I believe one of the reasons was because I had all my friends in my classes. I have learned that school is a lot more enjoyable when you know your classmates. The funny thing about making new friends is we learn how to do it in kindergarten. Except now when

we make friends we are also networking and gaining contacts because most of my classmates will be working in the same field as I will be. (#28)

The relationships that students built with each other helped enhance a positive learning environment both during and after the industry tour.

Networking with faculty members. The field experience also provided an atypical opportunity for students to build relationships with their faculty members as mentioned by student #2, “I also grew much closer to my grad student instructor as well as my faculty instructor. I love having a connection with the classroom leaders because it makes the classroom experience so much more enjoyable.” Student #30 enjoyed getting to know their faculty member better on the trip, “I realized it is very beneficial to get to know your teacher because they can guide us through anything.” Student #12 attended a trip with two professors and found that, “Getting to know them really enhanced the quality of the trip. We all got to know each other and it created a little bond that has stuck with us ever since.” Student #19 expected the relationships to carry on into the future, “I can’t wait to continue working with them (students, TA’s and faculty) over the next couple years.” One student was intimidated by a professor before the trip and was able to overcome their fear by interacting with the professor on the trip:

I didn’t want to go on his trip because I had heard that he was a hard teacher. Not only did I learn a lot and enjoy the trip, but I was also able to meet and form a relationship with the not so scary [professor]. The trip taught me the personal lessons of not judging something/somebody until you’ve experienced them and to make the best of the hand you’re dealt. (#21)

Building relationships with faculty and graduate students outside of the classroom helped create a supportive campus environment once the students returned home from the industry tour.

Networking with industry professionals. Student engagement emphasizes the importance of student interaction with peers and faculty members but networking with professionals was another benefit of the industry tours that was reflected in the students’ journals. Student #19 acknowledged the importance of building a support system with members of the industry and said, “Networking and your relationships with those people are so important. I have learned that my success depends a lot on who I know and the impressions I have left on those people.” Student #30 explained the value of building their network when it comes to searching for jobs, “We got first-hand experience on how to network. We learned that having many connections will help us when looking for jobs.” Other students were able to connect the importance of networking as a student to the importance of networking as a professional:

I now see how networking can really be beneficial. [The professional] talked about all the people he knew and what he can do if he ever needs anything. I knew that networking was important as a student, but until this trip I did not understand how important it was as a professional. (#27)

In the PRTM field it is important to get your name out there and meet as many people as possible. Each person we talked to at each agency stressed the importance

of internships and getting out there and meeting people in the field. As a PRTM professional I will be dealing with people, so the more people I know that can help me out, the better. (#16)

Student #13 shared how the trip helped them gain experience in professional communication with members of the industry, “It allowed me to shine in the area of communication because I am a people person. After this experience I feel better equipped to talk to professionals in a sophisticated manner.” Another student was also able to identify the value of having mentors who have climbed the career ladder in the industry:

The trip helped me grow as a person because I got to interact with people who had once been in my shoes. I got to ask questions and see what I need to do not only as a professional, but as a person to one day make it in the PRTM field. (#16)

Student #32 agreed that meeting professionals and developing relationships with a mentor in the industry will help guide them in the future, “Now that I went on the trip, I have understood how true PRTM professionals conduct themselves and how they manage their programs in the work force. I now have something to model myself after.”

The opportunity to network with industry professionals was perhaps an unexpected surprise for the students. The introduction to potential mentors and future employers is an added value for purposefully meaningful education activities such as industry tours. Students were provided opportunities to build professional networks that will help differentiate them from job candidates who did not have access to similar real world experiences.

Discussion

The information that the students provided in their journals provides insight into the benefits of providing alternative approaches to education such as industry tours. If the goal of higher education is to develop student engagement that will transfer to professional success, this study suggests that industry tours are a useful tool based on the many aspects of student engagement that were represented in students’ journals. Comments that were consistent were developed into themes associated with increased knowledge of the profession, improved understanding of course content, and opportunities to build relationships for the future.

Of the five elements of student engagement: level of academic challenge, active and collaborative learning environments, student-faculty interaction, enriching educational experiences, and supportive learning environment (Gonyea & Kuh, 2009), all but level of academic challenge were found in the students’ description of the field experience. The level of academic challenge was not the focus of the journal assignment and therefore was not consistent in the students’ responses. Many of the students’ comments reveal that the other four elements of student engagement were enhanced during the field experiences. Being able to experience the industry by visiting and seeing operations first hand provided an active and collaborative learning environment. Students also commented on the value of developing relationships with the faculty members that enhanced the remainder of the semester. The educational experiences were enriching because students were able to better understand the application of course concepts in an interactive context. The journal entries also revealed that the students felt more positively about the campus environment based on the relationship that had been built between students and faculty during the trips.

The interpretation of the results shows a strong connection between student engagement and the experiences that were described by the students in their journals. The relationships that students built with each other and with faculty members were key drivers to the four elements of student engagement that were discussed. One relationship that is missing from the student engagement framework that was commonly found in the students' journals is the benefit of building relationships with industry professionals. The journal entries consistently described that meeting professional mentors in their chosen field helped motivate and prepare the students for their future careers. This study recommends that student engagement literature continue to consider the long-term benefits of providing students with the opportunities to meet mentors and potential future employers while they are still in college. Perhaps the student engagement model should be updated to include networking with industry professionals based on the profound impact these opportunities had on students.

Implications

The results of this study reveal practical implications for faculty, students, and industry professionals. First, faculty are encouraged to use pedagogical methods that connect content across multiple concentrations while still preparing students in each of those concentrations for employment (Henderson et al., 2009). Activities and interactions that are purposefully educational were found to aid learning for the students in this study by enabling them to have a deeper understanding of the course concepts. Second, agency visits provide opportunities for students to be exposed to their chosen field and be connected to current professionals in ways that students may not typically encounter. Students who have a higher degree of interaction with current professionals may have more realistic expectations for the future career in the field. Industry tours offer real world examples that allow students to express their knowledge in terms of its practical application which may be most attractive to hiring managers. Third, agency visits also connect professionals with potential interns and employees, thereby allowing the agencies to be more active in recruiting and more selective in hiring. Agency professionals are encouraged to participate in educational industry tours as these experiences can affect the quality of employees and their commitment to the organization and the field (Chase & Masberg, 2008).

Limitations

The findings of this study suggest that industry tours have the potential to contribute to several of the benchmarks for student engagement (Gonyea & Kuh, 2009). One limitation of this study is that the impact of the overall EDGE semester may have made it difficult for students to make a distinction between the benefits they experienced from the holistic experience and those from the three day industry tour. Researchers addressed this limitation by only selecting journal entries that referenced the industry tour specifically. It is possible however, that because the journal entries were written at the end of the semester that the reflections about the industry tour were influenced by the students overall experience in the EDGE semester. Another limitation of this study is that the students used in the sample were representative of several concentrations areas within the PRTM discipline and consequently this study is unable to make conclusions that are specific to students in a single emphasis area, or to other majors. Future research should consider the impact of industry tours on the different emphasis areas and majors to see if the results are consistent across areas of academic focus. Longitudinal studies are also recommended for further investigation into

the outcomes that result from student exposure to the professional community during the field experience, such as the number and quality of internships completed and full-time job placement.

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