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The public policy research arm of the State University of New York



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SUNY Research Findings to Enhance Applied Learning Opportunities for Students

Rockefeller Institute of Government Studies Analyze Higher Education Efforts in the U.S. and Abroad

Albany — The State University of New York and Rockefeller Institute of Government (RIG) today released two research reports on applied learning at colleges and universities world-wide. The RIG studies were commissioned by SUNY Chancellor Nancy L. Zimpher in order to inform and enhance the university system's applied-learning opportunities at SUNY campuses across New York State.

Applied learning is one of several evidence-based programs and initiatives SUNY is bringing to scale as it implements a completion agenda and aims to increase the number of degrees awarded from 93,000 to 150,000 annually.

"These reports confirm what we already know — there is great value in learning by doing," said SUNY Chancellor Nancy L. Zimpher. "With this research in hand, SUNY will continue expanding internships, cooperative education, clinical placements, service learning and other valuable work-based learning experiences for students and partnering with our colleagues across New York to ensure that the state's workforce needs can be met by SUNY graduates."

Thomas L. Gais, director of the Rockefeller Institute of Government, said, "These reports not only provide guidance for extending work-based learning opportunities to a much larger number of students, they suggest that such opportunities can have positive effects on students' academic and labor market success. There's a real potential for using available data to track the effects of applied learning initiatives down to the program level, tracking that could be used by campuses and systems for relentless improvement."

Based on a scan of relevant experiences with and policies for applied learning, especially for students who participate in work-based opportunities, the studies reached the following conclusions, among others:

- Because SUNY is such a complex university system, there is no other state or system of higher education in the US that has advanced an applied learning initiative of its scale and scope.
- Successful applied learning experiences are well structured, foster opportunities throughout the degree program, are credit bearing, and incorporate alternative assessments.
- It is possible to evaluate the effects of internships on student retention, graduation, and employment by using administrative data already collected by colleges and state labor departments.

Research was conducted for two reports, both made possible by a grant from the Carnegie Corporation of New York.

The main report, [Applied Work-Based Learning at the State University of New York: Situating SUNY Works and Studying Effects](#), analyzes information on applied learning initiatives in California, Connecticut, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, New York, South Dakota as well as in Australia, Finland, Germany, and Switzerland. It also presents initial findings from a pilot study aimed at measuring the effects of work-based applied learning experiences on students' academic success. The pilot study, carried out at one SUNY campus, suggests that internships were associated with better retention and graduation rates.

The second report is a supplement to the main report, titled, [Supplementary Report on Assessing Labor Market Outcomes: A Pilot Study](#). This report explores the feasibility of using linked academic and employment/wage records to assess the effects of internships on students' employment outcomes. Although RIG researchers identify limitations in such assessments, they conclude that analyses using administrative wage record data can be used to inform changes in internships at program, campus, and system levels. Findings from the pilot study regarding labor market effects of internships are mixed, though some are suggestive. For example, business graduates with internships were more likely to be employed in New York, more likely to find in-state jobs sooner, and more likely to receive higher wages in New York jobs than their peers without internships.

Applied learning opportunities at SUNY include but are not limited to:

- **SUNY Works** — clinical placements, in which more than 20,000 SUNY students are already enrolled; internships, in which more than 21,000 students participate; and cooperative education programs ("co-ops"), in which SUNY faculty and area employers have jointly developed curricula that integrate classroom instruction and on-the-job experience. Approximately 1,740 students are currently enrolled in co-ops across SUNY.
- **SUNY Serves** — service-learning, community service, civic engagement, and volunteerism. More than 30,000 SUNY students are currently engaged in formal service-learning programs for which they earn college credit, while tens of thousands more participate in community service and volunteer locally, nationally, and around the globe.

SUNY Discovers — student research, entrepreneurial ventures, field study, and international experiences. While SUNY research has a proud history of breakthrough discoveries, inventions, and startups, our increased focus on applied learning has led to an unprecedented level of collaboration between SUNY students, faculty, and industry experts to enable commercialization of the best ideas and innovations born at our campuses.

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About the Rockefeller Institute of Government

The Nelson A. Rockefeller Institute of Government is the public policy research arm of the State University of New York. The Institute conducts fiscal and programmatic research on American state and local governments. Journalists can find useful information on the Newsroom page of our Web site, www.rockinst.org.

In addition, you can sign up to follow us on [!\[\]\(c50c8b7b2cc2cf9ff925edec0ee94c0d_img.jpg\) Facebook](#) or [!\[\]\(8bed43dc33ecdde61e2f76c8f5517125_img.jpg\) Twitter](#).

About the State University of New York

The State University of New York is the largest comprehensive system of higher education in the United States, with 64 college and university campuses located within 30 miles of every home, school and business in the state. In 2014-15, SUNY served nearly 1.3 million students, including nearly 600,000 in credit bearing courses and programs and nearly 700,000 through continuing education and community outreach programs. SUNY students and faculty across the state make significant contributions to research and discovery, resulting in nearly \$1 billion of externally-sponsored activity each year. There are 3 million SUNY alumni worldwide and one in three New Yorkers with a college degree are SUNY alumni. To learn more about how SUNY creates opportunity, visit www.suny.edu.