COOPERATIVE EDUCATION PROGRAMS IN MARKETING: A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY

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Cooperative education programs have continued to gain popularity since their inception at the University of Cincinnati in 1906. The basic concept - that under academic supervision students work temporarily in a capacity related to their long-term career aspiration - has proven beneficial to students (e.g., Page, Wiseman, and Crary, 1982), employers (e.g., Nielsen and Porter, 1983), faculty (Stull, 1982), and the institution (e.g., Sparrow, 1981). Such programs have proved particularly useful in applied fields such as engineering, teaching, nursing, and accounting. Nationwide, the number of cooperative education programs has grown from 71 in 1960

to an estimated 1047 in 1980 (National Commission for Cooperative Education, 1980). Their usefulness for marketing students also is considerable, given the broad range of alternative career choices and the acknowledged gap between what is taught in the classroom and the "real world." In addition, there is evidence to suggest that students who have completed a cooperative education work experience find career placement more easily upon graduation than do classmates who have not, particularly in "tight" job markets. In a report of job placement determinants for advertising agencies, for example, Bearden and Teel (1980) reported that "apparently the best route to agency employment is still personal contact or summer internship programs with local agencies."

These benefits of cooperative education programs certainly apply to marketing students as well as other majors. However, virtually all of the "evidence" of the success and benefits of cooperative education programs for marketing students has been anecdotal, based on specific experiences of individual students, and confined largely to the institution where the particular cooperative education program was located. Very little empirical data exist of a more general nature describing cooperative education programs for marketing students on a national basis. What kind of programs are there? How are they administered, and by whom? What kinds of academic credit, if any, is granted for the experience, and how is that credit applied? What kinds of employers participate in cooperative education programs for marketing students? What kinds of jobs do the students hold? The current research sought answers to these and other descriptive questions in an effort to summarize the current state of cooperative education programs for marketing students.

Methodology

To explore the current state of cooperative education programs in marketing, a sample of 160 faculty members was selected from *The Directory of Members of the Cooperative Education Association.* This directory included over 800 faculty members associated with cooperative education at both AACSB accredited and non-accredited universities and colleges across the United States.

A questionnaire was designed, pretested, and mailed to the sample of faculty members accompanied by a personalized cover letter. The cover letter requested these faculty members to direct the questionnaire to the individual responsible for the cooperative education program in marketing (if it were not the recipient).

Of the 160 faculty members who comprised the sample, 118 returned questionnaires, for a response rate of 74%. Further, 73 of the 118

respondents (62%) indicated that their institutions had cooperative education programs in marketing. These institutions are the focus of this study.

Results

The respondents can be clustered into two groups - AACSB and non-AACSB - with 61.6% of the respondents coming from AACSB accredited business programs. The size of most marketing cooperative education programs was typically small: the number of students ranged from 1 to 200 and averaged 19.6. The distribution of program sizes, however, was highly skewed: 37% of the programs had fewer than six students, and the median number of students was ten. The small size is also reflected by the number of faculty actively involved, 2.2 per institution, and the average number of employers cooperating, 13.4. Participation in the cooperative education program was optional at 95.9% of responding institutions, and required at 4.1%. The most popular cooperative education calendar was the field experience, wherein students work one period of time on a full-time basis, reported by 68% of responding institutions. The parallel calendar, where students work part-time and attend college part-time, was offered by 45% of the institutions. Least popular was the alternating calendar, where students have more than one full-time work experience, which was offered by 27% of responding programs.

Marketing students are encouraged to become involved in cooperative education programs most frequently at the junior level: 69.4% of respondents reported encouraging students at the junior level, followed by sophomore (54.2%), senior (29.2%) and freshman (13.9%).

Credit

Academic credit was granted for marketing students' cooperative experiences at 83.3% of reporting institutions. For purposes of analysis, one-third of the reporting institutions were characterized as having "small" programs (fewer than five marketing cooperative students annually), one-third as "mid-sized" programs (five to sixteen students annually), and one-third as "large" programs (more than sixteen students annually). Mid-sized programs were significantly more apt to grant academic credit for the experience (96%) than either small programs (68%) or large programs (81%), ($p = .03$). In programs granting credit, 89.5% applied the credit as electives counting toward graduation, 26.3% as additive credit to the graduation degree requirement, and 14% as substitutes for degree program requirements. Non-accredited programs were significantly more likely to grant credit as electives counting toward graduation (100% vs. 82%,

p = .03), whereas AACSB accredited programs were more likely to apply the credit as additive to the graduation degree requirement (33% vs. 17%, p = .15). Mid-sized programs were more likely (25%) to apply credit as a substitute for regular degree program requirements than either small programs (0%) or large programs (12%), (p = .09).

The amount of credit granted and the final grade for the co-op experience were determined in three primary places, in about equal proportions: the Marketing Department chairman determined these in 34% of the cases, the central co-op education office in 34% and individual marketing faculty in 32%.

Administration of the Program

The survey revealed a diversity of administrative styles. All programs had a coordinator of some type, varying from only one faculty member assigned responsibility, to a university-wide central cooperative education office. The degree of faculty involvement in the program also varied considerably. A surprisingly high proportion of the schools (24%) reported that no faculty were actively involved with the administration of the program.

Table I

Monitoring Activities Required of Marketing Faculty

Activities	All Schools	Non-Accredited	AACSB Accredited
None	21%	18%	23%
Term Papers	53%	63%	46%
Objectives/ Evaluation[a]	38%	52%	29%
Experience Diary[b]	25%	41%	15%
Other Forms	29%	30%	29%

a P-Value Less Than .10
b P-Value Less Than .05

As shown by Table 1, the marketing co-op programs required some involvement by the faculty, with the most common method being the evaluation of term papers students submit at the conclusion of the co-op experience. Faculty involvement regarding the academic integrity aspects of the program is also reflected in Table 2, where faculty were most apt to be involved with the evaluation of educational objectives, student reports and

monitoring the amount of credit granted. The central office, on the other hand, took the lead role with student counseling, coordination and recruitment as well as the development and evaluation of worksites. Responsibility for these latter two activities - student recruitment and work site development and evaluation - frequently was shared between faculty and the central office.

Table 2

Administrative Roles in Cooperative Education for Marketing Students

Role	Faculty Only	Central Office Only	Both	Not Applicable
Development and evaluation of work sites	3%	65%	31%	1%
Student recruitment, screening and selection	4%	46%	44%	6%
Coordination of students including on-site visitations and employer evaluations	9%	72%	18%	1%
General counseling for students including dealing with work adjustment problems	10%	72%	17%	1%
Development and evaluation of cooperative education employment objectives	24%	53%	17%	6%
Development and evaluation of the end of semester/quarter student's final report	37%	39%	20%	4%
Assignment and monitoring the credit(s) granted for the student's cooperative education experience	31%	24%	21%	24%

Table 3

Marketing Cooperative Education Program Size

	Small	Medium	Large	P-Value	Total
Number of students	1-4	5-16	17-200		
Percentage breakdown of schools	36%	35%	29%		
Average number of faculty members involved	1.1	2.1	3.6	.06	2.2
Percentage of schools without faculty involvement	35%	27%	15%	.35	26%

The size of the marketing cooperative program, as measured by the number of marketing students (Table 3), was positively related to the number of faculty actively involved. However, neither the nature of the monitoring activities shown in Table I, nor "administrative" role (Table 2) were related to size of the program. Faculty at accredited schools were less apt to be involved with student evaluation (see Table 1) and with the administrative roles of student counseling. Student counseling activity was handled exclusively by the central office in 80% of AACSB schools versus 62% at non-AACSB (p-value = .07) and the final report was evaluated exclusively by the central office in 48% of the AACSB accredited schools versus 31% in non-AACSB schools (p-value = .03).

As expected, the amount and nature of faculty involvement is strongly affected by the credit-granting policy of the institution. In those institutions granting academic credit for the cooperative experience, 17% did not have a faculty member active in the program. This proportion increased to a majority (67%) in those programs that did not grant credit. While some schools without credit still required faculty involvement with term papers (25%) or establishing learning objectives (12%), even these roles were most often handled exclusively by the central office. The administrative roles of work site development and evaluation, student recruitment, coordination and counseling were handled exclusively by the central office at all the schools not offering academic credit for the co-op experience.

Employers

Overall, the median number of participating employers in cooperative education programs for marketing students was 8.0, but because of a few

very large programs, the mean value was 13.4 employers. Smaller programs tended to have fewer participating employers, and larger programs more employers, as Table 4 indicates. While this is not surprising on the surface (i.e., smaller programs naturally would have fewer participating employers), a very real possibility is that the number of participating employers may be a major factor in limiting the size of the program.

Table 4

***Program Size (Students) Versus Number of Employers*[a]**

Number of Students in Program	Number of Employers ≤3	4-11	≥12
<5	77.3%	22.7%	0%
5-16	10.7%	64.3%	25.0%
>16	0%	10.5%	89.5%

a P-Value = .001

The nature of employers also was investigated. Overall 58.3% of the programs reported the participation of national firms, 52.8% the participation of regional firms, 50.0% the participation of state level firms and 73.6% the participation of local firms. Mid-sized and larger programs (those with more than five marketing students annually) in particular enjoyed the participation of state and local firms more than smaller programs (p = .01 and .03 respectively).

Salaries for beginning marketing co-op students on a full-time basis averaged $762 per month. Upon graduation, the estimated monthly salary for those who had participated in a cooperative education experience averaged $1145. Most respondents (91.3%) reported that students who have completed a cooperative work experience earn higher starting salaries upon graduation than those who have not, and no respondents reported co-op students earning lower salaries upon graduation. In addition, 60% of co-op students were offered full-time positions with their co-op employers, with smaller programs faring even more successfully (72.3%) than mid-sized programs (61.2%) or large programs (47.8%), (p = .03).

Positions held by marketing cooperative students, as seen in Table 5, tend to be in Sales or as Sales Trainee, although there is strong representation in positions of Management Trainee, Marketing Trainee, and Marketing Research.

Table 5

Positions Held by Marketing Students in Cooperative Education Experiences

Position	Percentage of Programs Reporting Students in Position
Sales and Sales Trainee	81%
Management Trainee	74%
Marketing Trainee	66%
Product Manager	10%
Marketing Research	53%
Other (most typically in Purchasing or general management)	18%

In smaller programs, cooperative students tended toward holding positions as Sales Trainees or Management Trainees ($p = .03$), while larger programs tended to place proportionately more students into positions of Management Trainee and Marketing Research ($p = .02$ and .06 respectively).

Summary and Implications

Cooperative education marketing programs are a substantial and viable part of the rapid growth of cooperative education in the United States. Most schools offering co-op programs include marketing students and enjoy the active involvement of faculty, central office administrators and employers. The benefits to marketing students seem substantial. Employment opportunities are increased and the salary during the program is relatively high (i.e., well above minimum wage). Student academic benefits, while not measured directly, were apparent. Faculty were involved in setting educational objectives, assigning term papers and other methods of evaluation. Faculty and central offices worked together, in most cases, during the evaluation and coordination of a cooperative work experience. Thus, it appears that the educational aims of both students and faculty were met, directly benefiting the student academically.

While these positive aspects are very encouraging, the study also revealed aspects of marketing co-op programs which were disappointing. Most, but certainly not all, programs are small, casting some doubt on the cost-effectiveness of program administration, with so few students able (or willing ?) to take advantage of the opportunities. While the cause of this is probably a complex set of factors beyond the power of an exploratory

descriptive study to resolve, it appeared that the number of cooperating employers was the major limiting factor. Given the frequently voiced complaint that marketing education has become too divorced from marketing practice, the cooperative education concept is one which employers should embrace enthusiastically. The apparent lack of widespread industry involvement in co-op programs is in this respect somewhat contradictory.

The level of faculty involvement, while sufficient to maintain quality, was also found to be relatively low. Since low faculty involvement has been isolated as a problem in other studies (Stull, 1982), it is not surprising that it is also a problem with marketing cooperative education. Nonetheless, the high incidence of programs with no faculty member actively involved and the prominence of the central administration in administering even the "academic" aspects of the experience seem contrary to the academic goals of cooperative education. The lack of academic credit clearly mitigates the problems of academic integrity, yet without credit cooperative *education* seems to be little more than a coordinated effort to find part-time employment for students. Since the purpose of this study is to describe, not explain, the state of cooperative marketing education, the data do not yield the reasons for the low involvement. A previous study by Stull (1982) found the lack of perceived reward for faculty involvement in cooperative education programs. The relatively higher involvement by faculty at non-AACSB accredited schools suggests that reward is also a problem for marketing faculty.

Clearly, these issues should be addressed by future research. If the promise of cooperative education is to be realized, the factors limiting its success must clearly be revealed. Study of the attitude and experience of marketing co-op employers, for example, may indicate what can be done to measure their involvement.

The concern over faculty involvement described above is based on weak measures of involvement that may not be sensitive to the real motivators. It may be, for example, given the low extrinsic reward for faculty involvement, that those few who are involved are intrinsically highly motivated. Thus perhaps even one such individual is more than adequate to insure the success and quality of the program. Similarly, given the structural nature of faculty reward systems, perhaps the system of no or low credit programs supervised by administrators is the best way to meet the expectation of a cooperative experience. Obviously, these issues can only be resolved by future research utilizing better measurements of involvement, quality and goal achievement.

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