

Part-time Internships with Local Construction Companies

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Internships have proven to be beneficial for both the intern and the company. The Construction Management (CM) department has proven to be able to well connect students with the industry for summer internships and full-time jobs. Programs like info sessions, job fairs, and meet and greets have allowed the CM department to make this connection. However, partaking in a part-time internship while taking coursework has not been emphasized in the department. This paper will gauge student interest in obtaining a part-time internship for a local construction company in San Luis Obispo. Student responses to surveys showed a clear interest in the possibility of working part-time for a local construction company, and the results of those surveys are discussed.

Key Words: Internship, Part-time, Local, Work, Construction Management

Introduction

The purpose of the paper is to gauge student and industry interest in info sessions, meet and greets, and or job board postings for part-time internships for CM students with construction companies in SLO. There is already a successful and established program for CM students to get internships and full-time jobs in the summer or after graduation, but there isn't any emphasis on continuing that hands-on education during the school year. It is apparent that an internship with a construction company helps with student success in the classroom. "Internships are a three-way partnership among university personnel, student interns, and industry sponsors, and while academia is limited in providing real world experience, internships are a way of integrating this experience into students' academic programs" (Moore & Plugge, 2006). This paper will survey CM students to gain student perspectives on the implementation of a system that would provide local part-time internships during the school year. A study at Colorado State University completed by Rondinelli, Allen, & Hauck studied the effects of a structured internship on student perception and performance in subsequent coursework. Although the results of the research regarding GPA differences between those who had an internship and those who didn't were inconclusive, there were still some positive takeaways. There is clear acceptance of internship programs by CM students due to the very positive perceptions gathered. "Many students found the work fulfilling and beneficial with regards to career growth and grasping of the concepts presented in future coursework" (Rondinelli, Allen & Hauck, 2000).

The construction internship has proven to be beneficial to both the Construction Management student and the company providing the internship. Pairing the internship with classroom experience allows students to apply knowledge learned from both areas in their respective counterpart. Additionally, the internship allows students to decipher what parts of an industry they are most interested in pursuing. It helps shape the decision process for students looking for jobs upon graduation. It is invaluable to be able to decipher what specific field of work within an industry a graduated student wants to begin their career in. A survey gathered by Jennifer Moore (2006) asked construction students at Colorado State about their perception of their internships. "Over 90% responded saying internships assist students' career development, assist students in determining appropriateness of their career decision, reinforce the knowledge students gain in the classroom, and provide students with relevant work references" (Moore & Plugge, 2006). This overwhelming positive response shows the student appreciation of a construction internship.

There are some clear benefits to having a job while in college. "Students who work part-time in college (up to 20 hours a week) have higher GPAs than students who don't work at all" (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2018). The idea behind this statistic is that organization and time management skills are developed. Thus,

creating a need to work effectively and balance priorities with limited time. “Benefits found by having a part-time job while completing coursework include the ability to network and distinguishing yourself from others”, (Holley, 2018). These are two simple ideas, but they are not always touched on part-time work discussion. More internship experience means more time to network within the targeted industry. Additionally, having a part-time job during school is experience that displays time management and hard work to an employer. These aspects of working part-time during school develop a students self and career.

The industry has also shown that hiring interns can be worthwhile to their company. Not only does the internship benefit the student, but also it forms a connection between academia and the industry. In Moore’s survey to industry sponsors there was a generally positive response. “Over 85% say internship programs provide a linking relationship for industry with colleges, can be used as a recruitment device for students upon graduation, and hiring an individual upon graduation who was previously an intern within your company increases employee retention” (Moore & Plugge, 2006). This paper seeks to understand if there is student interest in creating a program to connect local construction companies with CM students for part-time internships.

Methodology

This paper utilized an anonymous survey to gauge student interest in working part-time for a local construction company during the school year. Students were asked 10 questions to identify the details and parameters of their interest. A copy of the survey is located in Appendix A. The survey was divided into three separate sections: demographics, level of student interest, and internship program details and logistics. These surveys were conducted to obtain student feedback on the best method for getting a presentation from and meeting with a company on campus. Additionally, the survey obtained feedback on the specifics of the internship that would make it conducive to a CM student. The survey was sent electronically to the entire CM student population, and 23 students responded. After the self-identification questions, questions 3-5 were asked using a Likert scale of one through five, with five being most interested. By using a scale there can be a clearer favorite as opposed to a simple yes/no question.

Survey Results

A total of 23 responses were received from CM students. Of the 23 students, three were 1st years, two were 2nd years, four were 3rd years, 10 were 4th years, and four were 5th years or older. Of the 23 students, 87% have had one full-time summer internship; and 60% of the students have held two or more internships during their tenure at Cal Poly. Once the general demographic information was gathered, the next portion of the survey gauged CM student interest in various forms of on campus interaction with a possible employer. The first question asks, “What would your interest level be for a meet and greet for a local construction company?”. Figure 1 shows the interest level ranging from 2-5 with answers at 4 and 5 (high interest) making up about 74% of the responses.

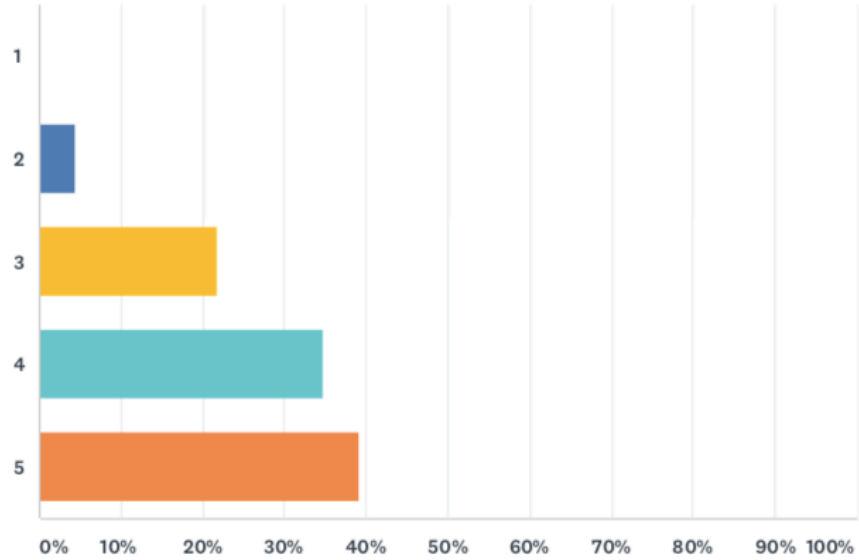


Figure 1: Response to Meet and Greet Interest (1-5)

The second question asks, “What would your interest level be for an info session for a local construction company”. Figure 2 shows the interest level ranging from 2-5 with answers at 4 and 5 (high interest) making up about 82% of the responses.

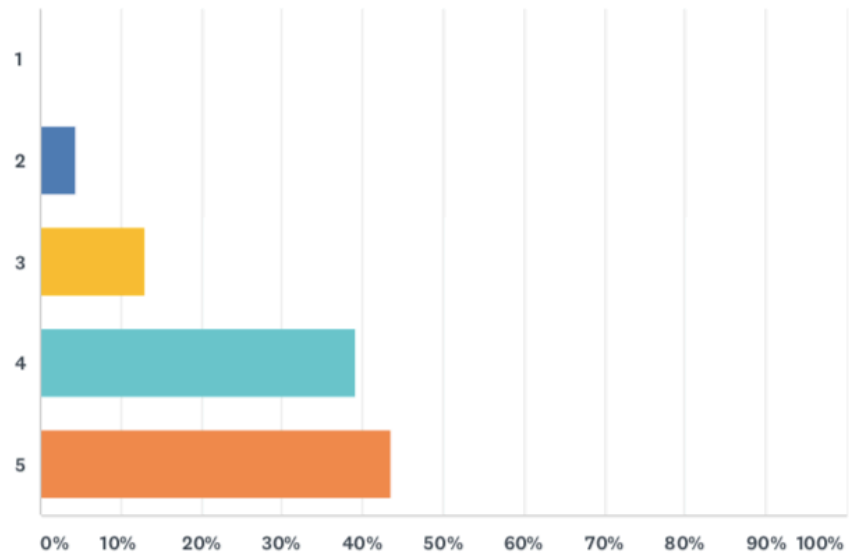


Figure 2: Response to Info Session Interest (1-5)

The last question asks, “What would your interest level be for a job fair for local construction companies”. Figure 3 shows the interest level ranging from 2-5 with answers at 4 and 5 (high interest) making up about 73% of the responses.

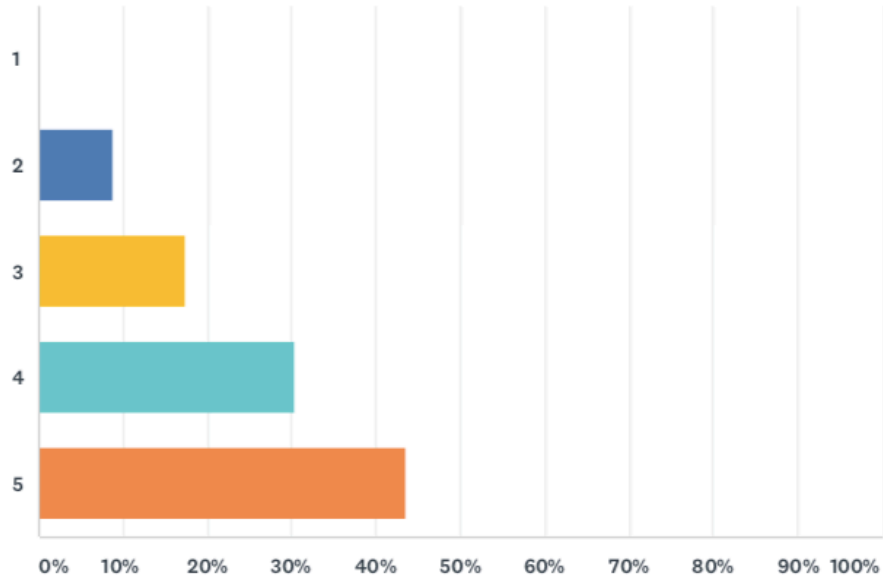


Figure 3: Response to Job Fair Interest (1-5)

Details of the Internship

The next set of questions focus on the details of the internship. Since it is part-time there are aspects to it that would make it feasible or not feasible to a student based on what the company can provide or allow. The first question asks, “How many hours could you work a week”. There were 30% of responders for 5-10 hours a week, 57% of responders for 10-15 hours a week, and 13% of responders for 15-20 hours a week.

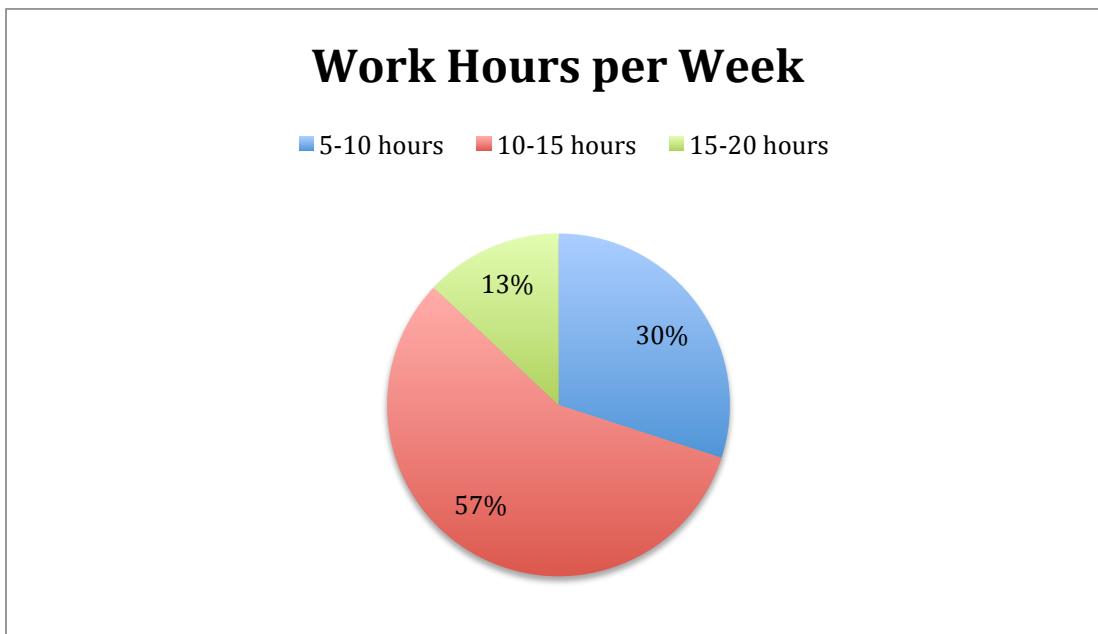


Figure 4: Work Hours per Week

The next question asks, "How much would you want to get paid an hour". There were 4% of responders for \$11 per hour, 22% of responders for \$12-\$15 per hour, 52% of responders for \$16-\$19 per hour, and 22% of responders for \$20+ an hour.

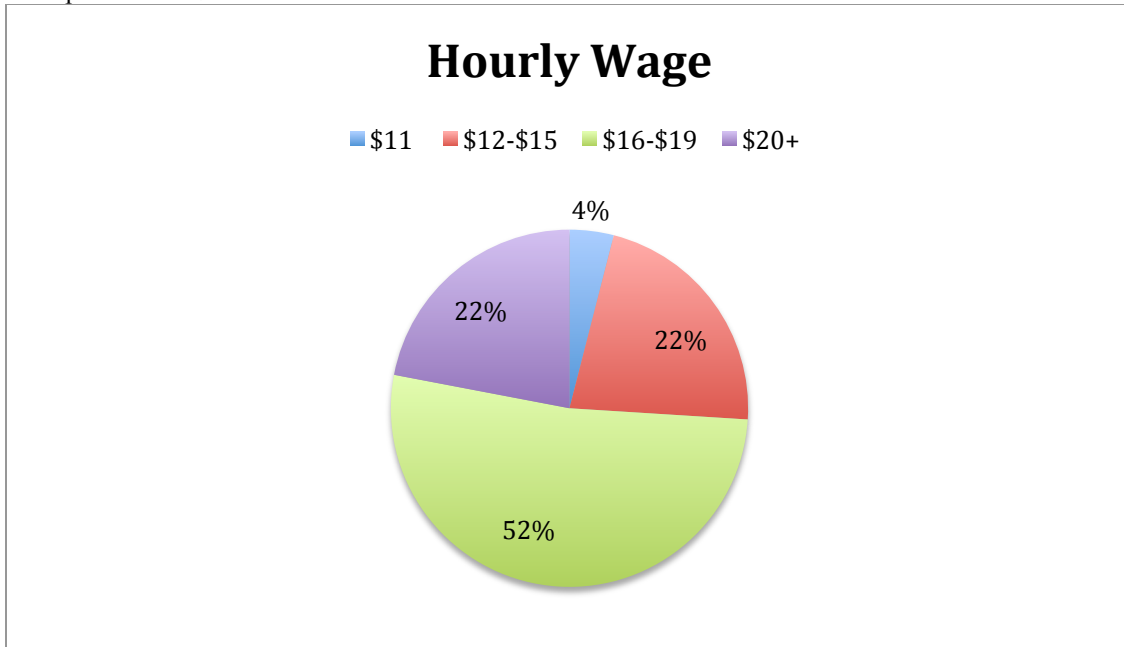


Figure 5: Hourly Wage

The last question asks, "How far would you be willing to commute to the internship?" There were 4% of responders for less than 10 minutes, 35% of responders for 10-15 minutes, 43% of responders for 15-20 minutes, and 17% of responders for 20+ minutes.

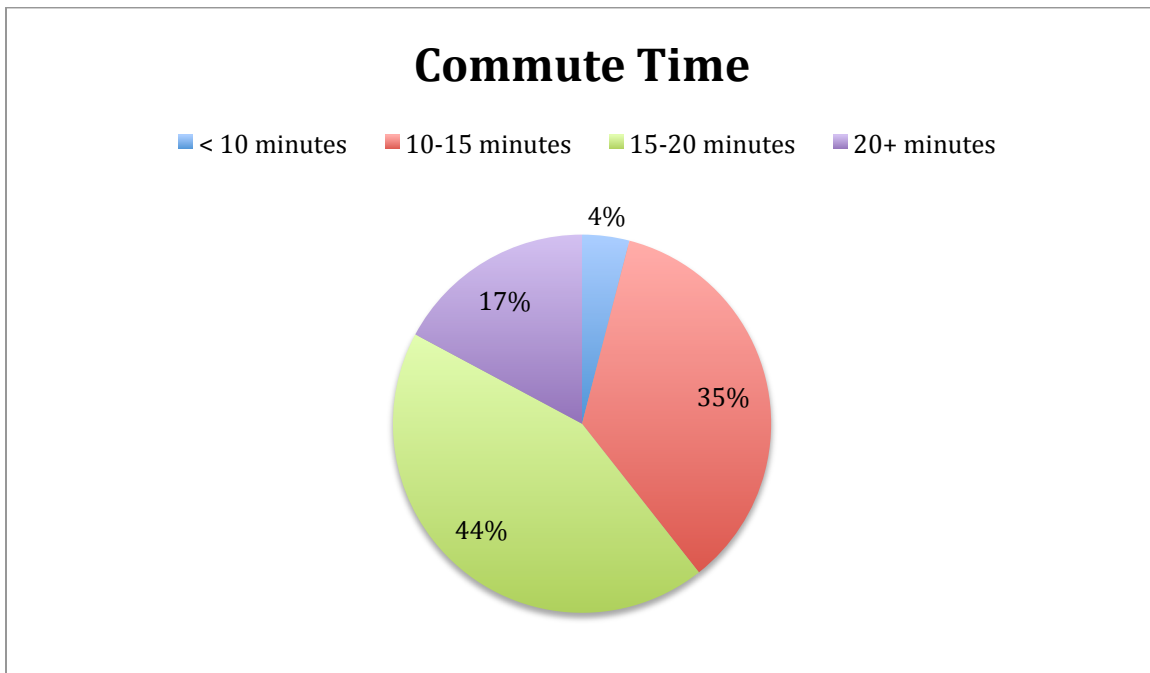


Figure 6: Commute Time

Finally, all the responders agreed that having a part-time internship could or would build their construction knowledge. This question was set as a reflective question on why students chose to take part in internships.

For the industry portion of the survey, a yes/no question asked “would you be willing to hire Construction Management students for a part-time internship during the school year”. For the industry survey 50% companies responded saying they would be interested in hiring Construction Management students for a part-time internship during the school year. The other three out of six didn’t have a response at all, since they weren’t reachable.

Discussion

The first set of questions analyzed gauged the experience level of the students responding. The first question asked what year the students are. It was good to have a range of experience level responding. This allows for the results to be analyzed within the each age group/ experience level. As stated before, the majority of responders were a 3rd year or older. The next question to set up some credibility in responses, aimed to see how many internships the responders had. Credibility is measured in 2 ways for this survey. The older the student is the more understanding of time management importance. The more internships a student has the better they understand what the job would encompass. 87% had at least one internship and 60% had 2 or more. The takeaway from this statistic is that the majority of responders know what it would take to work part time in an internship, since they have had one before. Also there is going to be some varied workload based on the company hosting the internship but for the most part they are generally similar.

The next set of questions analyzed gauged the interest level of the students responding. Based off those results there seems to be an overwhelming interest in meeting with local construction companies to negotiate a part-time internship. Then the next question gave a response of 87% saying they would be interested in having a part-time local construction work internship during the school year. The majority of responders showed almost equal interest in either a meet and greet, an info session, or a job fair for local construction companies. All Construction Management students are familiar with the campus setting used for acquiring an internship. It has proven to be a highly successful way to get students involved in pursuing an internship. These results make it clear that there would be a positive response to implementing a program that connected local construction companies with Construction Management students for part-time internships during the school year.

The data from the 23 responders displayed an evident interest in a realistic possible part-time local internship program. The three questions that identified details of the internship gave a good sense for some of the parameters the internships should have. Since there is interest shown, the details of the internship are also critical because both the employer and student have to see the internship as beneficial to both parties. As an average, most would be willing to accept an internship that pays around \$17 an hour, takes around 15 minutes to get to, and demands around 12 hours a week. Without collecting data from the industry, the general sense for these requirements are they seem to be reasonable. Additionally, there are people on both extremes of the spectrum for the respective questions. Thus, making more options for employers on the flexibility of the possible employee.

Finally, all the responders agreed that having a part-time internship could or would build their construction knowledge. This is the underlying motive for this whole idea. Summer internships have proven to be immensely beneficial for Construction Management students and continuing that education throughout the school year would do the same. Due to the aspect of it being part-time work, there are some critical factors to making the internship worth it. I think this survey made it clear that students see the feasibility in the opportunity.

The benefits of working part-time during school coupled with the benefits of an internship point to the likely success of CM students participating in local part-time internships.

There was enough of an industry response to know that the viability is there. There have been a handful of CM students each year that have worked part-time for a local construction company. This portion of the senior project shows that there is some room for more information to be gathered.

Lessons Learned

Several specifics become clear during my compiling of the information for this senior project. Despite being sent out to a few hundred students, very few responded. That being said, it was enough to conduct an analysis. Another lesson learned was in regards to the logistics of conducting research. I had two types of responders in my collection of data. The first was the CM student population, and the way I worded the questions and developed responses worked pretty well. When I reached out to the local industry there were less results than I had desired. First, there were several companies that without a doubt will hire part-time interns during the school year. They have done it before and it has benefited them. Second, there are some companies that simply didn't have the time or desire to respond to me. Overall there are enough companies that show interest both formally and informally to set up something like a meet and greet or info session.

Future Research

There are three important takeaways from this senior project for future research. First, there wasn't enough of a response from the local industry to warrant a comprehensive portion in the survey results section. Next, since there is evident interest, one could implement a program to connect local construction companies with CM students. Last, there is potential for beneficial future impact the program could have on the Construction Management department and its relationship with the local construction industry. The San Luis Obispo construction industry has a difficult time retaining Construction Management students during the summer for internships and after graduation for full-time jobs. Having a system that increased the number of CM students that worked for local companies (even if it was part-time during the school year) could in return better the relationship between the CM department and the local construction industry.

The next tangible step for future research would be for someone to implement. The only initial research needed would be to get into contact with more local companies to respond affirmatively. Besides the meet and greet or info session option, a job fair is also a possibility. There would need to be more research conducted with the local industry to get enough companies on board for it to work. There is clearly an overwhelming interest by CM students in working part-time during the school year. The requirements for it to be feasible for a student are within reason and the local companies could meet them. The time and effort needed to start this program is minimal, and the outcome could heavily outweigh any initial work. The data is known, now it's up to someone else to see it through.

Conclusion

In general, there could be room for more emphasis on a part-time internship during the school year. "Internship experience assists construction management students to learn from their experience while seeking to meet the needs of the construction profession" (Adcox, 2000). Internships develop tangible skills for a student, while creating value for the industry itself. Moore's (2006) survey highlighted a majority of students saying internships assist students' career development, assist students in determining appropriateness of their career decision, reinforce the knowledge students gain in the classroom, and provide students with relevant work references. This positive response shows the student appreciation of a construction internship. With only 3 or so summers to have internships before graduation, there are only so many fields one can be exposed to. By opening up that work to the school year too, CM students can learn about even more facets of the construction industry. This in return benefits the CM industry because implementation of my senior project would create more, well-rounded students. "Moreover, all participants of the pilot-internship felt that field experience should be mandatory for all program graduates" (Weber,

1998). Creating a program to connect local construction companies in SLO with CM students for part-time internships will be mutually beneficial for both parties. There is enough of an industry interest combined with the overwhelming student interest to move forward with the implementation process.

References

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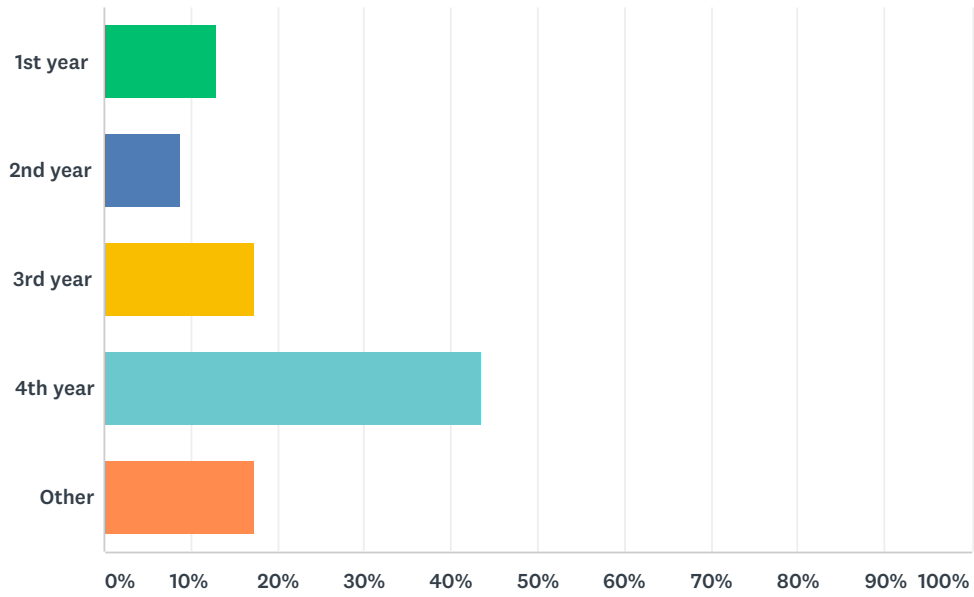
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Appendix A

Q1 What year are you?

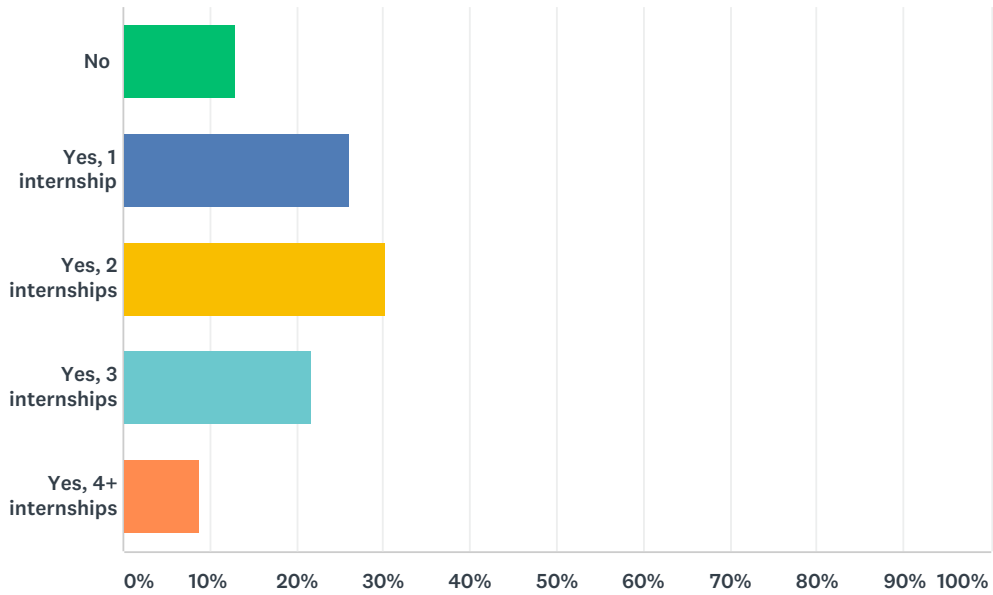
Answered: 23 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
1st year	13.04%	3
2nd year	8.70%	2
3rd year	17.39%	4
4th year	43.48%	10
Other	17.39%	4
TOTAL		23

Q2 Have you had a construction related internship before? If so, how many?

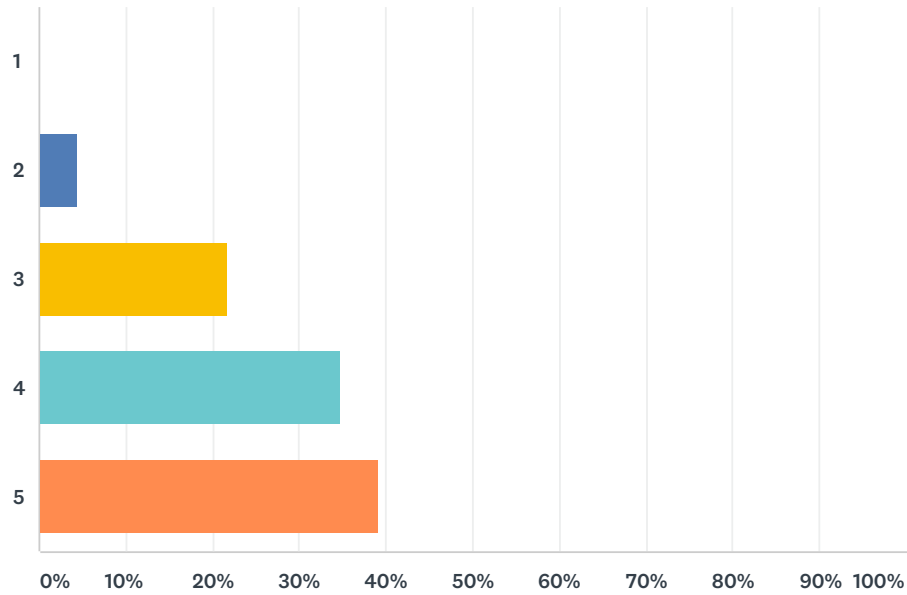
Answered: 23 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
No	13.04% 3
Yes, 1 internship	26.09% 6
Yes, 2 internships	30.43% 7
Yes, 3 internships	21.74% 5
Yes, 4+ internships	8.70% 2
TOTAL	23

Q3 What would your interest level be for a meet and greet for a local construction company? (1-5) 5 being most interested

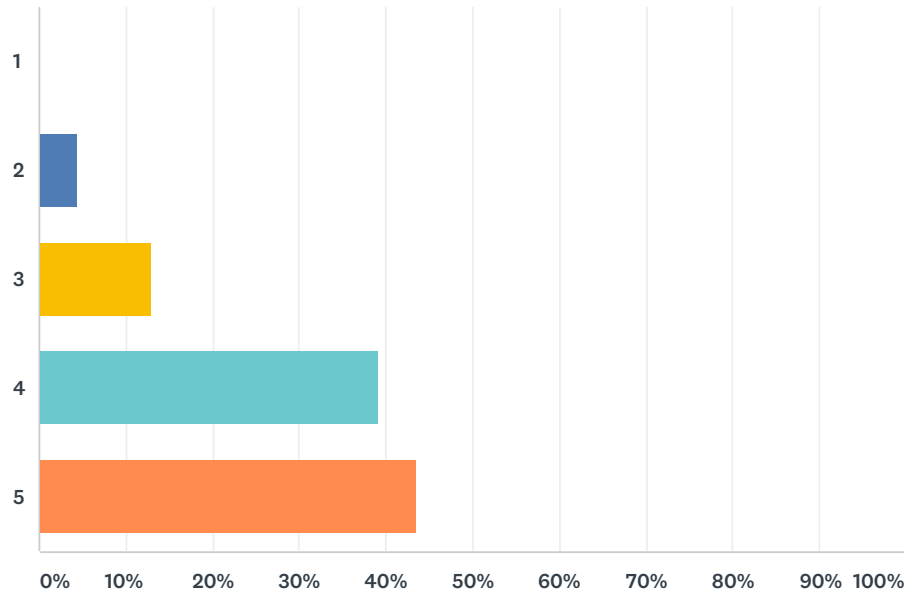
Answered: 23 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
1	0.00%	0
2	4.35%	1
3	21.74%	5
4	34.78%	8
5	39.13%	9
TOTAL		23

Q4 What would your interest level be for an infoession for a local construction company? (1-5) 5 being most interested

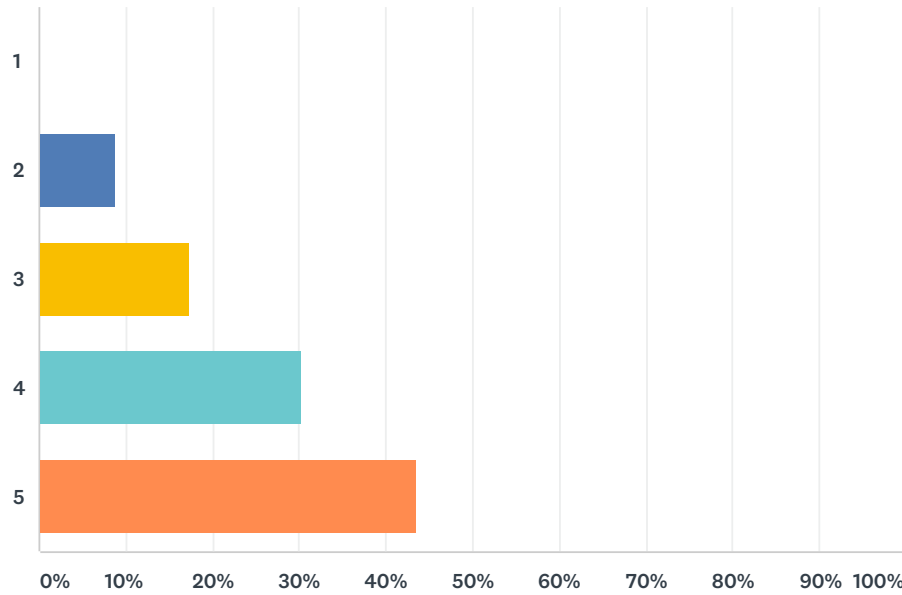
Answered: 23 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
1	0.00%	0
2	4.35%	1
3	13.04%	3
4	39.13%	9
5	43.48%	10
TOTAL		23

Q5 What would your interest level be for a job fair for local construction companies? (1-5) 5 being most interested

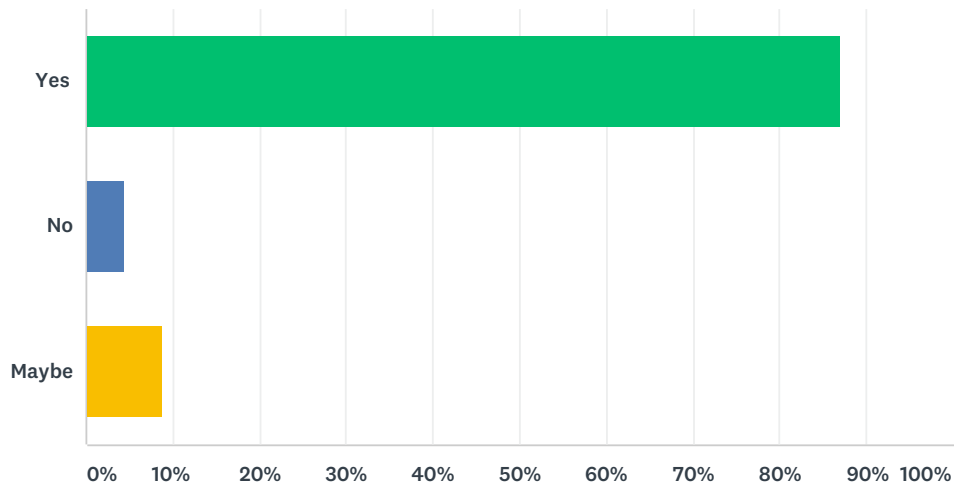
Answered: 23 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
1	0.00%	0
2	8.70%	2
3	17.39%	4
4	30.43%	7
5	43.48%	10
TOTAL		23

Q6 Would you be interested in having a part-time local construction work internship during the school year?

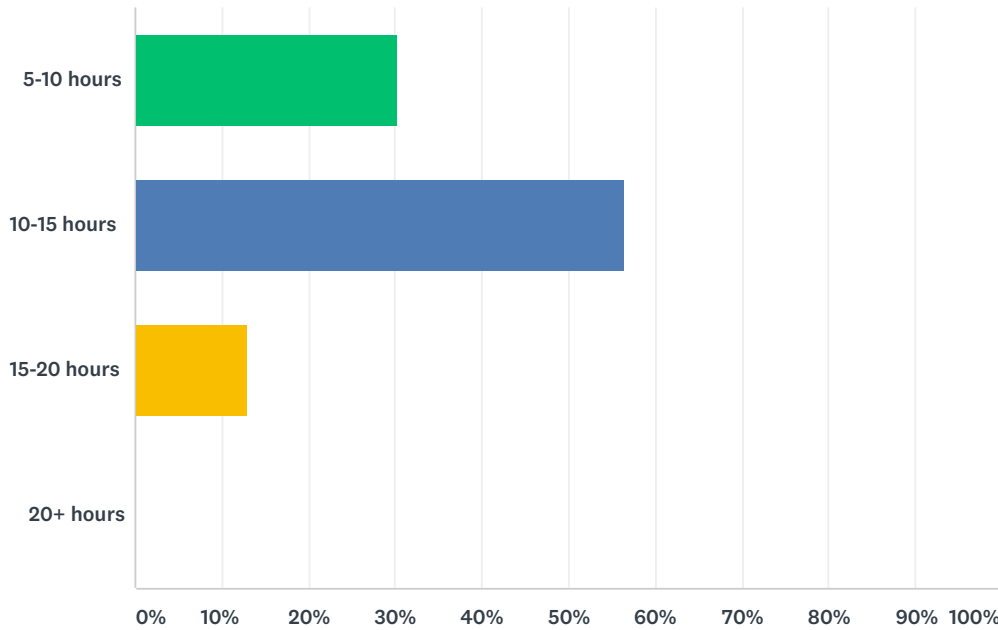
Answered: 23 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Yes	86.96% 20
No	4.35% 1
Maybe	8.70% 2
TOTAL	23

Q7 How many hours could you work a week?

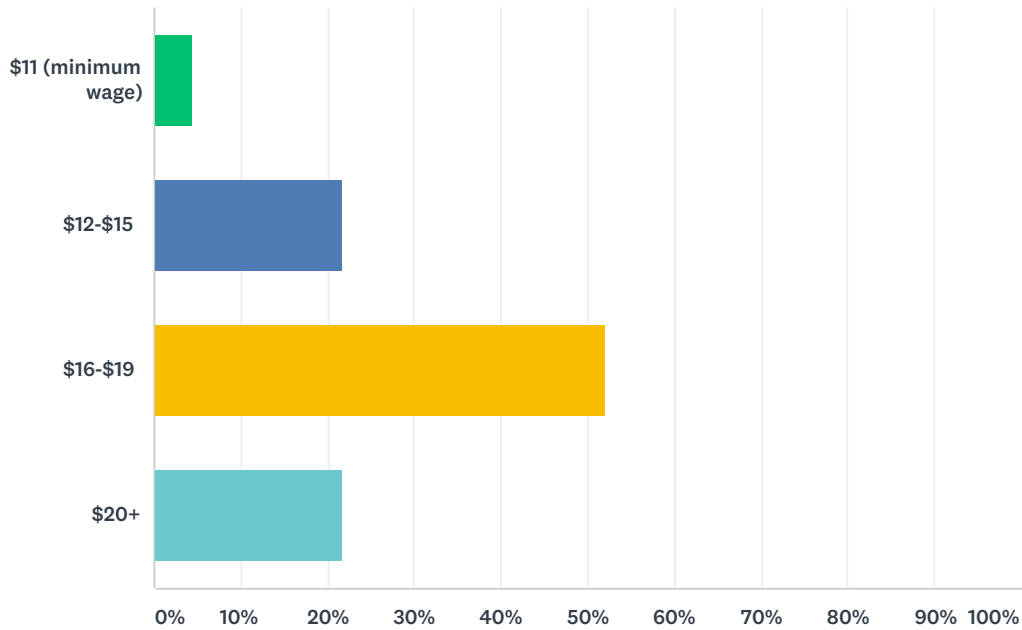
Answered: 23 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
5-10 hours	30.43% 7
10-15 hours	56.52% 13
15-20 hours	13.04% 3
20+ hours	0.00% 0
TOTAL	23

Q8 How much would you want to get paid an hour?

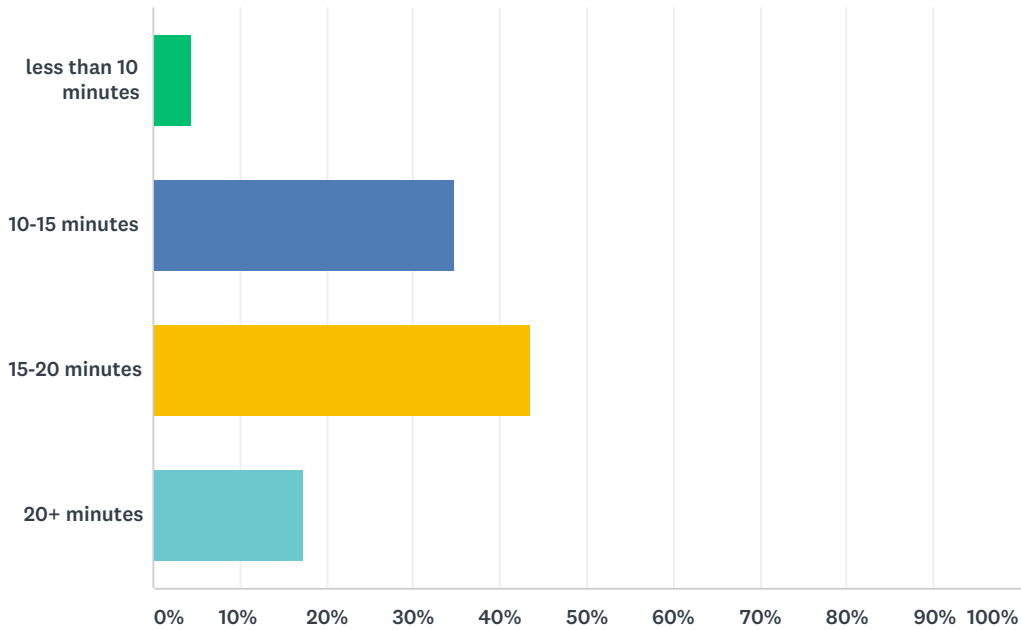
Answered: 23 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
\$11 (minimum wage)	4.35% 1
\$12-\$15	21.74% 5
\$16-\$19	52.17% 12
\$20+	21.74% 5
TOTAL	23

Q9 How far would you be willing to commute to the internship?

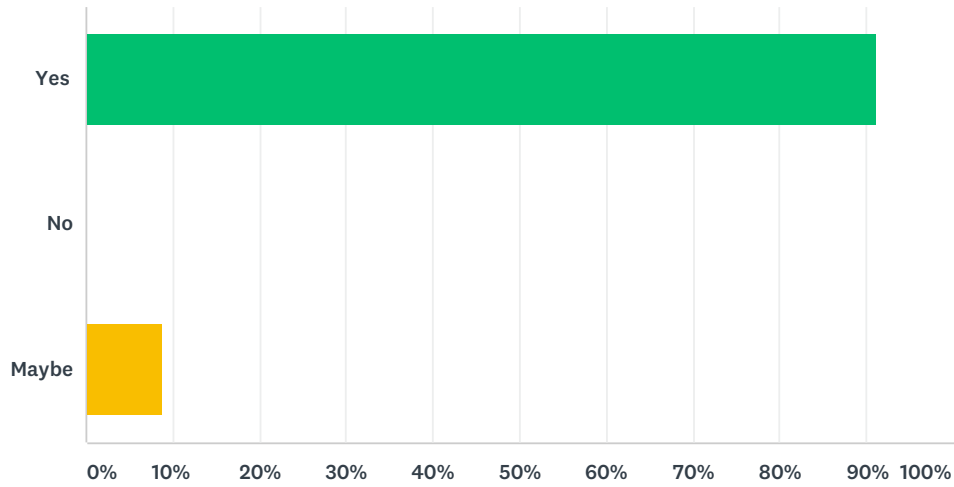
Answered: 23 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
less than 10 minutes	4.35% 1
10-15 minutes	34.78% 8
15-20 minutes	43.48% 10
20+ minutes	17.39% 4
TOTAL	23

Q10 Do you think having a part-time internship in SLO would build your construction knowledge?

Answered: 23 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	91.30%	21
No	0.00%	0
Maybe	8.70%	2
TOTAL		23