

# INTERNSHIPS: HOW DO THEY IMPACT COLLEGE ADMISSIONS?



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## ABSTRACT

Among high school graduates, it was found that 3/4 high schoolers attend a 4-year college after graduating. When applying to college, there are a lot of components to think about. The admissions process includes students' GPA, jobs, internships, clubs, essays, and many more aspects. With all these pieces of information that colleges may want to look at, it can be difficult to find out which aspect are more beneficial when it comes to college admissions. Therefore, this study was conducted with the goal of examining to what extent do various internships impact one's college admissions. We look to answer this question by interviewing college admissions officers to get an inside look into what they are searching for and how they view different achievements, as well as conducting a survey of students who got admitted to college in order to use correlational analysis and figure out what the data says. Overall, it was found that internships are viewed as a beneficial extracurricular activity when it comes to one's college applications, and how the extent of benefits is primarily determined by the student's depth of their responsibilities and impact.

## BACKGROUND

High school internships have become an increasingly crucial factor in college admissions, influencing both a student's application strength and their preparedness for higher education. Research suggests that internships provide students with valuable real-world experience, allowing them to develop specialized skills, demonstrate passion for a particular field, and gain insights into potential career paths.

Internships that are payed and from prestigious organizations often do look better on applications, however the important aspect college's are looking for are the tasks students complete during their time. Colleges and universities often value internships as indicators of a student's initiative, commitment, and ability to apply academic knowledge in practical settings. Some studies highlight that strong performance in internships can lead to positive predictions from admissions committees, therefore showing that internships are clearly viewed as beneficial by college admissions officers. Moreover, students improve their engagement, task quality, mentorship, and other factors within the context of educational leadership, in which factors dramatically increase students' readiness for college-level work.

Furthermore, internships can shape a student's academic and career trajectory by either confirming their interest in a field or revealing that another path may be more suitable. Given the increasing competitiveness of college admissions, internships serve as a strategic advantage in the admission process due to students already obtaining experience and learning valuable skills necessary, both in their specific field and also professional life in general. Therefore, understanding what an internship provides and the benefits high school students can gain from them will greatly assist them in the college admissions process.

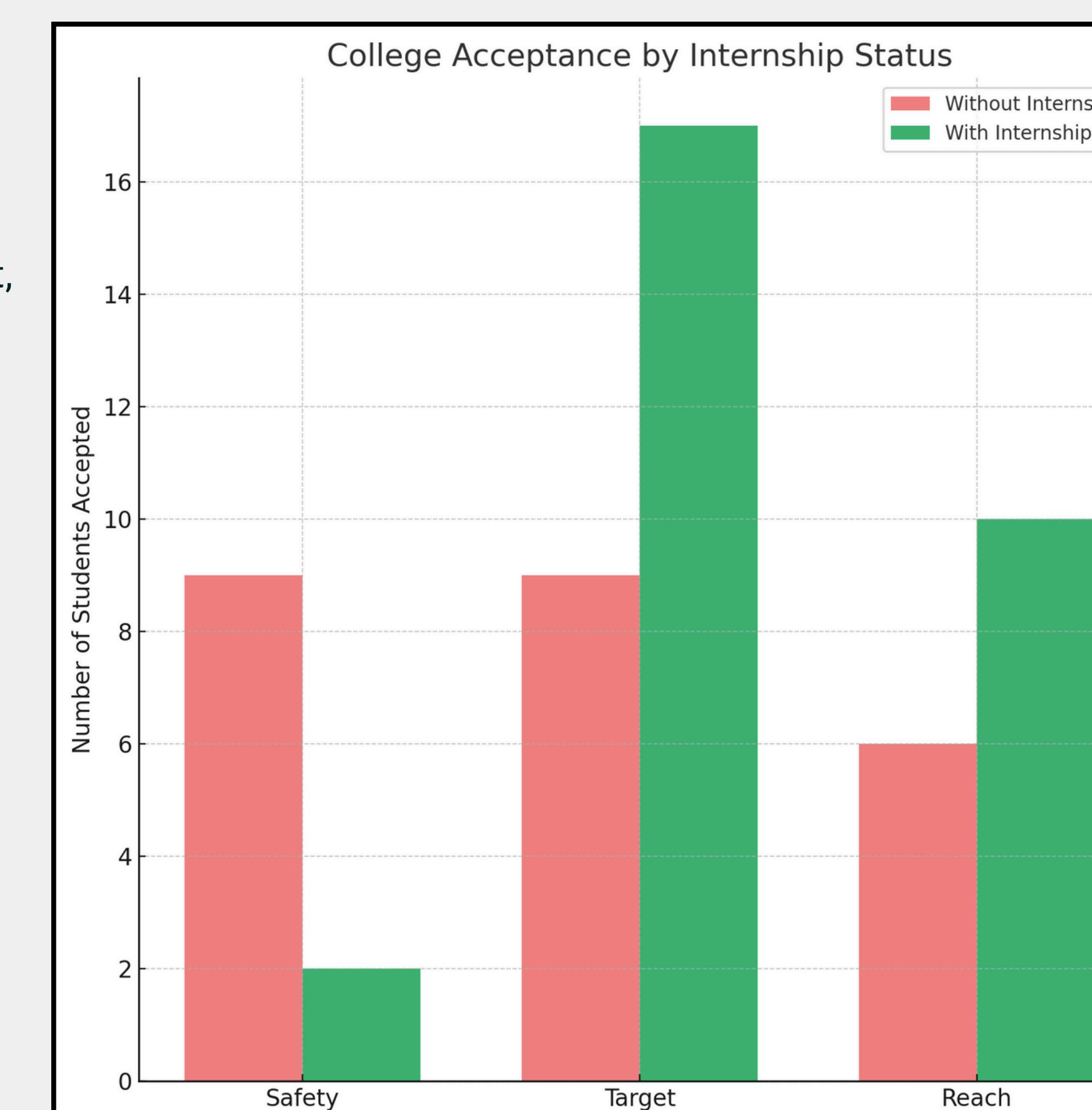
## METHODS & METHODOLOGY

We gathered data in a couple different ways. Firstly, we interviewed college admissions counselors at a number of different universities in order to gain an understanding of what they are looking for in suitable students. This gave us insight into the mind behind the process and allowed us to have a better feel for what type of internships help the most in terms of admissions. Secondly, we surveyed students who have been/were accepted into college in order to gather quantitative data that pointed us to an answer. We will gather information such as type of internship, GPA, extracurricular activities, community service, and more. We will then use a correlational analysis methodology, inspired by an existing model used by Malak, Malakeh et al. in their 2022 study titled "Correlation between psychological factors, academic performance and social media addiction: model based testing."

## HYPOTHESIS & CRITERIA FOR SUCCESS

We hypothesize that more prestigious internships, such as high level paid internships, will paint participants in a more professional and educational light, than a low level unpaid or family internship. This would therefore lead to colleges being more likely to accept students who have attended high level, paid internships because it showcases their field-specific skills, knowledge, experience, and interest. Moreover, we hypothesize that the top 5 skills that college admissions officers value the most when viewing an internship experience are field interest, problem-solving, field proficiency, dedication, and responsibility. We know that our research is successful when we:

- Complete a survey of 50+ students.
- Use our model to find a correlation between certain aspects of internship experience and higher admissions chances.
- Interview 5+ college admissions officers in order gain insight into the specifics of what colleges are looking for in an internship experience.
- Draw a decisive correlation between types of internship experiences and higher college admissions, or a lack of correlation



## RESULTS

Overall, internships are viewed as a beneficial extracurricular activity when it comes to one's college applications. According to Loudine Louis, Senior Assistant Director of Regional Enrollment at Miami University, internships are often viewed on the same or sometimes above the level of other extracurriculars such as research, leadership positions, volunteering, etc. According to Louis, internships serve as a great way for a student to explore their field of interest, gain experience, and improve their working skills, which is why it is viewed as beneficial to one's application. However Richard Clark, the Executive Director of Strategic Student Access at the Georgia Institute of Technology, offered insight as to what determines the extent of an internship's benefits. Clark outlined that the extent to which a high school internship benefits one's college application is dependent on the depth to which the student is involved within the company, and their impact. "Not all internships are good internships," states Clark, showcasing how student involvement in an internship is by far the most important quality when evaluating an internship from an admissions officers' perspective.

Our survey data points towards a similar conclusion. Many students that participated in internships reported that they were accepted into more selective universities, despite sometimes having less impressive academic performance. Based on our survey results, the majority of students who participated in internships stated that they felt their internship not only prepared them for college by providing valuable qualities such as experience, interest, knowledge and skills, but also helped contribute to their admissions outcome. This is seen by their school acceptance rates, where the majority of the students with internships reported they were accepted into their target and reach schools, while those without internships had a higher share in safety school acceptances. There is not, however, a major difference in the found admissions outcomes between students who participated in more prestigious internships as opposed to those with a smaller scope.

Both our professional interviews and our student survey suggest that academic performance is an important factor in the college admissions process. Clark explained how the grades a student makes and the courses that they take are vital to the outcome of a student's application. Our survey matches this, showing a trend between higher GPA and SAT/ACT scores and a higher chance to be admitted into target or reach schools. Despite this, all of our interviews and surveys pointed in the same direction, as they agreed that internships are an exceptional way for an applicant to show passion, skill, dedication, and knowledge in a certain subject, making them stand out as an applicant. Similarly, our surveys indicated that internships allowed students to further their passion in their desired field. Upon talking to college admissions officers, we now understand that the officers can see this furthering passion, giving the officer an improved perspective of the student.

## CONCLUSION

This research project set out to explore the extent to which various internships influence college admission outcomes, drawing insights from admissions officers, survey responses, and peer-reviewed sources. The findings highlight that internships are viewed as a great extracurricular activity for high school students, due to the experience providing students with passion, skills, dedication, and knowledge in a certain subject. In terms of college decisions, the most important quality admissions officers are looking for is the students' depth of involvement and impact within their internship. While our initial hypothesis was wrong, and we didn't meet every criteria for success, our research was successful in finding a correlation between participation in an internship and stronger college admissions outcomes.

## FUTURE STEPS

Moving forward, the furthering of our research should aim to quantify the impact of internships on college admissions by examining application data from a broader pool of universities, both public and private, across various selectivity levels. Conducting surveys and interviews with a larger sample of admissions officers and university alumni could provide more generalizable insights and trends into how internships are assessed relative to other extracurriculars, and therefore provide a clear answer of the extent of various internships in a larger scope.

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