INCORPORATION OF INTERNSHIPS AND EXPERIENTIAL CAREER EXPLORATION TO DOCTORAL PROGRAMS THROUGH THE WAYNE STATE UNIVERSITY BEST PROGRAM

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Broadening Experiences in Scientific Training (BEST) is an NIH-funded initiative to study change in doctoral and post-doctoral training, which allows students to be more intentional in their exploration of career options. The WSU BEST program uses a three-phase process for students to inform their decisions regarding how to proceed after graduate school. In Phase I, students engage with alumni, faculty, and industrial partners in careers in the areas of business, communication, community engagement, government, law, and teaching. Students gain an understanding of the employment setting, its career opportunities, and challenges that might be faced. In Phase II, composed of day-long interactive workshops, students explore some of the work-related tasks that an employee in these sectors might encounter. For example, students in the communication track might write a press release for a scientific publication or orchestrate an effective social media campaign related to a science policy initiative. In Phase III, doctoral students pursue an in-service placement within a partner organization to experience first-hand the work-life of a Ph.D. within that setting. These experiences are coupled with Individual Development Plans so that students can plan for their desired careers by being intentional and proactive in the development of the skills necessary to both successfully land a position, as well as to succeed once there. In addition to presenting the structure of the WSU BEST Program, we will share 1) the benefits and outcomes for the students and 2) faculty response to the time away from the bench necessary to participate in such immersive career-development activities.