



Developing Hands-on Industry Knowledge:

A Student Internship at an EMA



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INTRODUCTION

Problem Statement

Emergency management education often relies heavily on classroom instruction and theoretical frameworks. While foundational knowledge is essential, students may lack exposure to the real-world complexity of emergency management agencies, limiting skill development and career readiness

Mini Literature Review

- Experiential learning has been shown to enhance student understanding of crisis response and interagency coordination (Kolb, 2014).
- Internships and fieldwork provide opportunities for students to apply classroom concepts to real-world settings, promoting critical thinking and problem-solving (Eyler, 2009).
- FEMA and IAEM have emphasized the need for developing a professional pipeline through hands-on student engagement (FEMA, 2020).

Claim / Thesis

Immersive, mentor-supported internships in emergency management significantly improve student learning outcomes by bridging theory with practice and preparing future professionals for complex field realities.

Recommendations

- **Standardized frameworks** for EM internships across academic programs.
- **Active mentorship models** to guide skill-building and reflection.
- **Greater collaboration** between academic institutions and emergency management practitioners.
- **Integration of experiential learning** into core emergency management curricula.

AGENCY HIGHLIGHTS

Methods / Study

Internship Location: New Hampshire Homeland Security & Emergency Management (HSEM).

Approach:

- Participated in mitigation, recovery, and grant administration operations (HMGP & BRIC).
- Engaged in interagency meetings and grant evaluations.
- Field experiences with the NH Department of Safety, including conservation officer ride-along and NH Fire Academy site visit.

Mentorship: Guidance provided by agency staff and academic advisors.

Agency Engagement Highlights



RESEARCH FINDINGS

Results / Observations

- **Agency Integration:** Direct contribution to federal grant processes provided practical insight into community resilience planning.
- **Operational Awareness:** Field experiences deepened understanding of interdepartmental coordination and preparedness strategies.
- **Professional Growth:** Internship developed critical skills in communication, analysis, and decision-making.
- **Educational Value:** Structured mentorship elevated the experience beyond observation, promoting engagement and confidence.

Conclusion

Structured, hands-on internships within emergency management agencies strengthen educational outcomes by connecting classroom knowledge to operational practice and fostering professional readiness.

Research supports this. According to the National Association of Colleges and Employers, graduates with internship experience report more job offers and higher starting salaries compared to their peers without such experience. This reinforces my claim that immersive internships aren't just beneficial — they should be considered the gold standard in emergency management education."

References

