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EVALUATION OF THE SBI PROGRAM FROM AN EXPERIENTIAL VIEWPOINT:
FOCUS ON THE STUDENT

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ABSTRACT

The importance of experiential learning within higher education has been amply reflected by the growth of the Small Business Institute Program. The SBI program is a joint venture between the Small Business Administration and some 400 schools of business located throughout the United States. The role of students in the SBI program is that of a small business consultant. Senior and/or graduate students work in assigned teams to provide managerial counseling to thousands of small entrepreneurs. Academic credit is granted to students for this internship. A faculty member serves as the project director. It is estimated that over 25,000 students have participated in this experiential program.

With the above in mind, it seems imperative that this learning experience continue to be evaluated and researched on a formal basis. The purpose of this symposium is to foster professional interest in this area. Each panelist has contributed observations and/or tentative research regarding the students' learning within the SBI program. Examples of some of the topics to be discussed are the following: the dimensionality of a self-reporting instrument purported to measure student satisfaction with the SBI program and a descriptive model highlighting the educational benefits accruing to the student from their participation in the SBI program.

In short, the purpose of this round table discussion is to provide seeds for future research in the area of experiential learning within the SBI program. Comments and suggestions from the audience are most welcomed.