

## **Applied Learning Experiences, Belonging & Preparedness for Career in Undergraduate Kinesiology Students**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Applied "hands-on" student learning experiences may help prepare them for future career success. Gaining knowledge on professional tasks, proficiency in job skills, or understanding workplace satisfaction are all factors to be explored prior to embarking on a career in the field/industry. In addition, a student's sense of belonging to their home "major" department when completing their bachelor's degree may be related to positive outcomes and the job market. Whether hands-on learning experiences are related to workforce/graduate school preparedness or a student's sense of belonging are yet to be determined (in all majors or specific to Kinesiology, KINE). **PURPOSE:** To assess the relationships between undergraduate student hands-on experiences, the perception of workforce/graduate school preparedness and a sense of belonging. **METHODS:** Undergraduate students (18+ years) at a public institution in California were recruited to participate in an IRB approved cross-sectional survey. Students were asked to complete demographic questions (age, gender, college major), a rating for hands-on learning experiences and preparedness for career/graduate school using a 5-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree) and eleven sense of belonging to the department questions (two domains; social acceptance and valued competence) with a 6-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree to 6=strongly agree). Statistical analysis software (IBM SPSS v.28) was used to investigate the relationships (Pearson Correlation) between the variables,  $p < 0.05$  for significance. **RESULTS:** Undergraduate participants ( $N=149$ , age;  $24.3 \pm 5.7$  years, gender identification;  $n=1$  other,  $n=111$  female, and  $n=37$  male, and Kinesiology,  $n=83$  or other majors,  $n=59$ ) reported highly significant correlations between their hands-on learning experiences (all students,  $n=32$ ,  $P < 0.001$ , and KINE,  $n=21$ ,  $P < 0.001$ ) and preparedness for career/graduate programs. Sense of belonging (valued competence) was significantly related to both applied learning and preparedness in all undergraduate students ( $P < 0.01$ ) and KINE ( $P < 0.05$ ). **CONCLUSION:** Students engaging in applied learning experiences during their undergraduate education may feel more prepared when entering the workforce and a greater sense of valued competence in their department.