

## The Predoctoral Internship Crisis

### Results from the Revised Internship Survey

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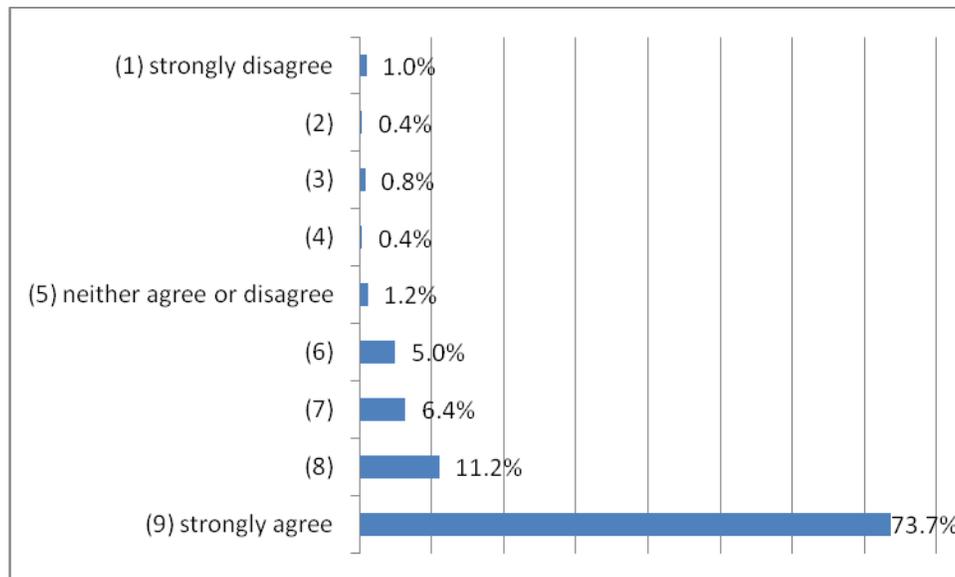
In response to the worsening match rate of the psychology predoctoral internship (77 - 79% of students matched in the 2010, 2011, and 2012 application cycles), an Ad Hoc Internship Committee was developed to take a closer look at the current state of the internship process. The committee distributed a survey in November 2010 to assess the extent to which the current internship process is perceived as problematic and to begin to identify possible solutions for addressing the worsening match rate. Results of this survey were published in *Clinical Science* and reported at the annual SSCP membership meeting in 2011.

Between October 2011 and April 2012, we circulated a revised version of the Internship Survey, including updated items asking about experiences with the Phase II Match, as well as perceptions on the effectiveness and feasibility of several suggested potential solutions to the internship crisis, including solutions that had been suggested by previous respondents. Below are selected preliminary results from this survey, reflecting responses from 501 individuals.

The majority of respondents to the Revised Internship survey were graduate students (46%); responses were also received from current interns (12.5%), internship directors (2.8%), internship supervisors (6.7%), postdoctoral fellows (12.7%), directors of clinical training in doctoral programs (2.6%), and faculty members in doctoral programs (16.8%).

#### **Does the psychology community believe that we are facing a crisis?**

*The worsening match rate suggests that the current predoctoral internship program is facing a crisis that should be addressed by the psychology community.*



### **A Closer Look at the Nature of this Problem**

19% of post-doc fellows and 20% of current interns completing the survey reported that they did not match to an internship site the first time they applied.

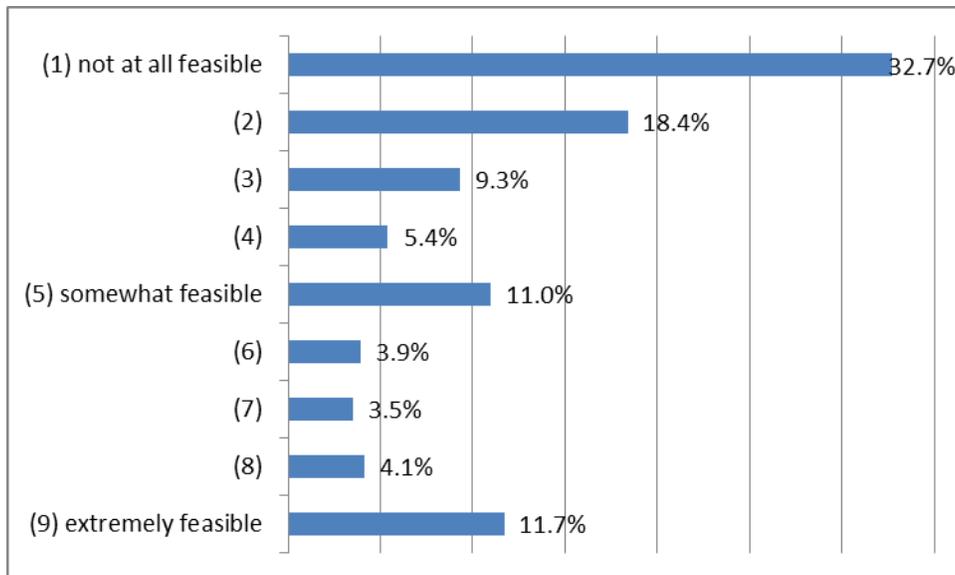
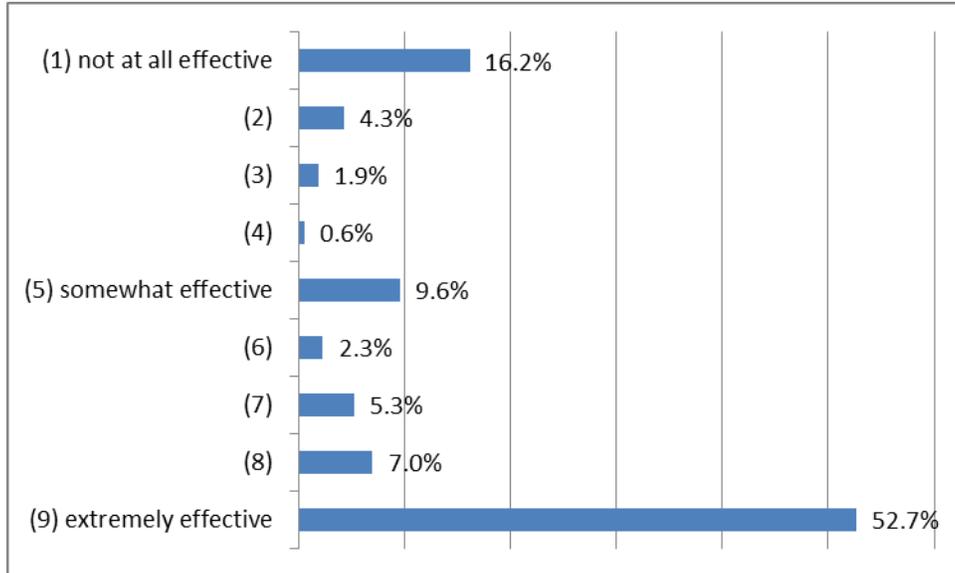
The majority of graduate students (61.5%) and current interns (83.6%) who completed the survey indicated that, when interviewing at their current graduate programs, no one explained to them that a predoctoral internship is not guaranteed and there is a possibility they may not match to an internship. In contrast, 100% of directors of clinical training and 70% of current faculty members of doctoral programs reported that applicants are routinely informed of the possibility that they may not match to an internship program.

### **Identifying Solutions**

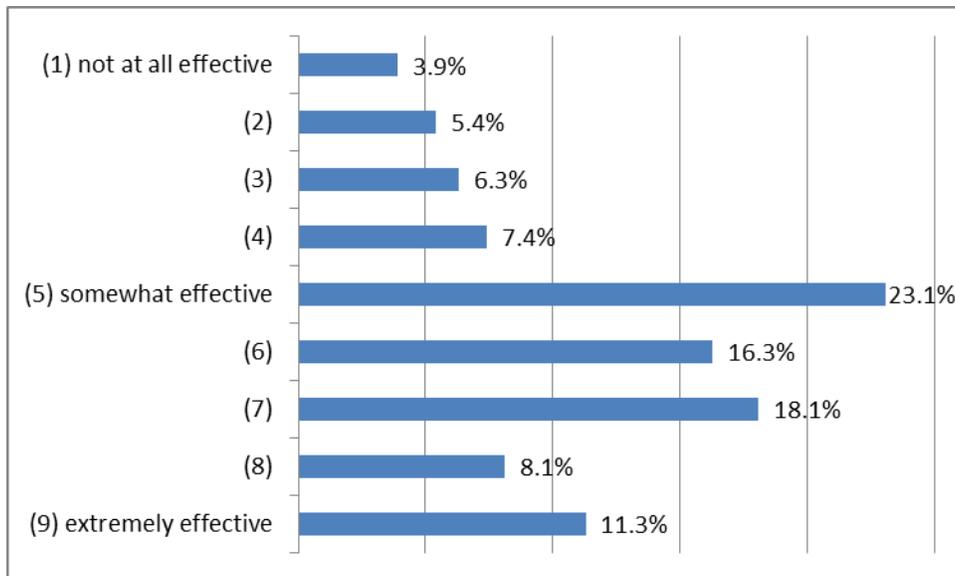
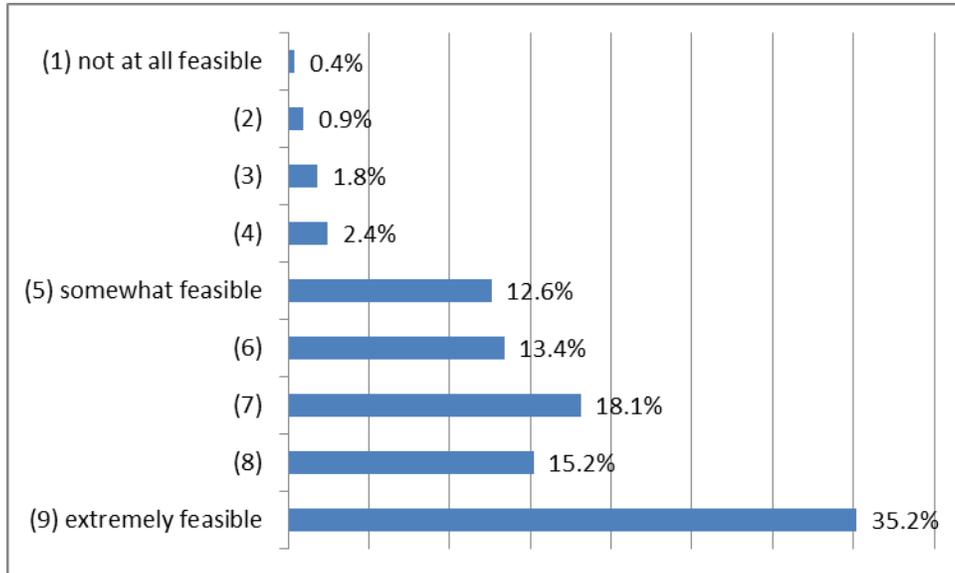
The following potential solutions for addressing the worsening match rate were presented and respondents were asked to rate the degree to which they believed each solution would be both effective and feasible:

- Clearer guidelines provided by internship sites explicitly stating what constitutes a competitive candidate (e.g., clarifying the criteria that are most strongly considered when reviewing applications) so that students can make more educated decisions about whether to apply to certain sites.
- More guidance and supervision at the departmental level for students who are preparing to apply for a predoctoral internship (e.g., a weekly or monthly seminar helping students navigate the internship application process, stricter guidelines with regard to determining whether a student is “ready” to apply).
- Increased funding to create additional internship positions (e.g., from the Graduate Psychology Education program).
- Development of “in-house” internships created by psychology departments.
- Elimination of the predoctoral internship requirement altogether.
- Making the predoctoral internship requirement a post-doctoral internship, as in medicine.
- Adding fewer students to graduate programs.
- Making the accreditation process less expensive and cumbersome for internship sites.
- Replacing the internship requirement with a requisite number of clinical hours to be completed at some point during graduate training.
- Having a Phase II to the match for students who do not match during the initial phase.

Similar to our previous report, results of the revised survey suggest the majority of respondents view the most effective solution to be *eliminating the predoctoral internship requirement altogether*; however, this was also viewed as the least feasible solution.



The most feasible solution that was identified was *having a Phase II to the match for students who do not match during the initial phase*; however this option was viewed as being only somewhat effective.



***Perceived Effectiveness and Feasibility of Other Proposed Solutions***

Solution	% say it's Extremely Effective	% say it's Extremely Feasible
Elimination of internship	<b><u>52.7</u></b>	11.7
Admit less students	45.9	19.3
Funding for new sites	38.9	8.5
Replace with an hours requirement	32.8	14.6
Make internship post-doc	24.6	17.6
In-house internships	24.0	6.7
Make less expensive/cumbersome for sites	22.9	11.3
Implement a Phase II	11.3	<b><u>35.2</u></b>
More guidance	9.5	14.3
Clearer guidelines	6.2	30.3

**Ninety-four respondents** also shared their *own ideas for addressing the worsening match rate*. Some of the most common responses included: (a) establishing different internship sites and match procedures for different types of programs (e.g., PhD., PsyD., etc.); (b) restrict the number of applicants that can apply for internship from each program; (c) penalize or eliminate programs that do not meet a specified student match rate.

**How did students experience Phase II of the Match?**

Of those respondents who applied for internship in 2012, **36.4%** reported that *knowing that there was going to be a second round to the match* made them feel *less anxious*, whereas **7.3%** reported it made them feel *more anxious*.

Of the respondents to our survey, **7.3%** reported that they participated in Phase II of the Match. Students were asked to complete an open-ended question asking about their experience with Phase II. The most common responses indicated that the Phase II process was *difficult to navigate* because (a) parameters were *less strictly defined* than in Phase I; (b) there was *not a standardized process* for the Phase II applications; and (c) it was difficult to get guidance from graduate programs due to a *lack of understanding* of the new process.