PARKER
DEWEY

2022-2023
Student Sentiments
on Campus Recruiting

What students want

Each year, Parker Dewey surveys thousands of college students nationwide to help campus recruiters better understand how early-career talent prefers to be engaged by prospective employers and learn about roles at their organizations.

Even before the COVID pandemic, it was increasingly challenging to recruit college students for internships and full-time roles—and while on-campus opportunities have returned, the obstacles have remained. Interestingly, many college student preferences were almost paradoxical.

- While they expect to work with modern technology, **they value authentic relationships.**
- While they rapidly access information, **they love to learn through hands-on experiences.**
- While they appreciate opportunities to work remotely, **they want to be part of a community and see their impact.**

They're autonomous, career-driven, purposeful, and open-minded. College students are also passionate about finding the "right" role as opposed to prior generations that viewed work as just a paycheck. As a result, a company's recruitment process should reflect these trends. It provides a meaningful opportunity for organizations to brand themselves as a top-tier employer and a desirable workplace for students looking to launch their careers. In today's competitive talent landscape, an outdated hiring process puts a company at a clear disadvantage compared to more innovative organizations.

76%
of respondents identify as being from an underrepresented background.

When to engage

Many organizations focus their recruiting efforts on upper-level students as historically, career development planning was on the minds of soon-to-be graduates. **However, 72% of students surveyed indicated that they started thinking about their career planning development during freshman and sophomore years, and half indicated they would have even earlier.** With the majority of college students exploring career options earlier than recruiters are marketing opportunities to them, the impact of these efforts is limited as students have often established their preferences.

Recruiters, you can confidently engage potential candidates for internships and full-time roles earlier in their academic careers as they're determined and open to getting started.

72%

of students start thinking about career plans before sophomore year.

As a result, waiting to expose opportunities to juniors and seniors causes companies to miss out on talented early-career professionals eager to employ their skills and be an asset to your organization.

How they learn

It's important to note that **college students have preconceived notions about industries, companies, and roles.** College students who seek positions in the tech field may go for companies widely known to operate in that space. They might pass over, for example, a steel manufacturing or retail company that may not be a giant tech player, but could be actively recruiting tech talent for roles that align with the student's interests and skills. Unless recruiters are part of a highly recognized brand in the space, college students may overlook the career paths within their organization.

Beyond industry, students may not apply to roles at companies they haven't heard of, and this challenge is felt by large and small companies. In fact, many large corporations aren't widely known outside of their industries. For example, many students interested in roles supporting positive environmental impact are unaware of Xylem, a Fortune 500 water technology firm.

Less than 2% were interested in learning more about companies when participating in campus recruiting activities.

Even highly recognized brands are often overlooked. Consider Target, a major big-box department store and one of the largest retailers in the U.S. While Target has a strong brand, many college students may assume Target is solely recruiting for retail positions like sales associates, cashiers, and customer services representatives. Target's corporate career opportunities in administrative support, logistics, product design and development, project management, human resources, finance, accounting, or technology may not even cross students' minds.

The challenge with these preconceived notions is that college students are not particularly interested in learning about what companies do. As a result, students only engage with companies they've already decided to apply to, disregarding the rest.
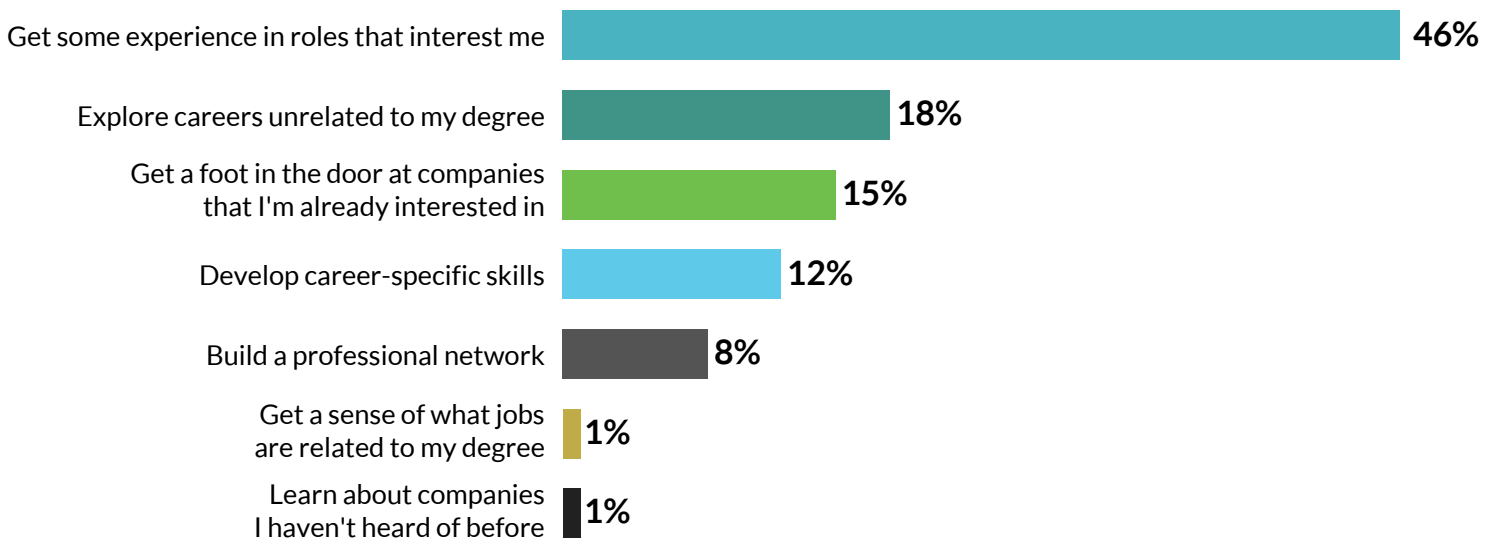
That's why recruiting students how they want to engage and learn is crucial so you can reach more of them.

How they connect

According to the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE), when they asked candidates to opine on the following, "I was more likely to decline [or renege on] an offer if I didn't feel a genuine connection to the employer," **80% of candidates agreed!**

Recruiters should keep in mind that if college students engage with their organization, they seek to gain relevant work experience, which is the perfect opportunity to build a genuine connection with early-career talent.

Why college students participate in campus recruiting activities:

Get some experience in roles that interest me	**46%**
Explore careers unrelated to my degree	**18%**
Get a foot in the door at companies that I'm already interested in	**15%**
Develop career-specific skills	**12%**
Build a professional network	**8%**
Get a sense of what jobs are related to my degree	**1%**
Learn about companies I haven't heard of before	**1%**

Recruiting Activities

Top Participated	Highest Rated	Lowest Rated
Looking at job ads	Resume review sessions	Virtual job simulations
Utilizing campus career services and advising	Volunteering	Looking at job ads
Networking with alumni and other professionals	Participating in professional organizations	Employer info sessions

Read on for data-supported advice!

Early-Career Talent Participation and Satisfaction with Recruiting Activities

College students participate in various recruiting activities throughout their academic careers. Their most and least preferred activities gave us insight into how recruiters can productively engage this pool of early-career talent.

Each tactic should be part of an overarching strategy that includes multiple touch points, types of communication, and engagement. If an entire strategy centers around career fairs, for example, you'll want to read about the lower cost, higher engaging methods to reach students where they are.

Of the college students that have had the opportunity to participate in Micro-Internships, short-term, on-demand professional projects, **89% rated the experience as positive.**

We found that **the activities that college students participate in and value the most are the following:**

Resume review sessions

Resume review sessions were popular among college students surveyed; after all, early-career candidates want to ensure their resumes are optimal, with their summary statement, skills, and education updated and adequately incorporated. It's also an opportunity for candidates to network and ask questions.

70%
participation

77%
rated positively

Limited outcomes
This interaction is not thorough enough for recruiters to assess fit, work ethic, or any other skill other than what's on a resume, which is often not the most effective way to identify possible future hires. In addition, many students struggle as they have few professional experiences to add to their resumes, especially those from populations underrepresented in the workforce.

Adding value
If you're looking to build a talent pipeline or hire immediately, you can go beyond a candidate's resume and have them work on a Micro-Internship that tests their skills. At the same time you assess them, they discover what working alongside your team will be like. Micro-Internships help students build their resumes while learning about your organization.

Networking with alumni and other professionals

Networking is an essential component for candidates looking to develop their careers. Building relationships with other professionals in their field can help connect them to potential job opportunities.

62%
participation

72%
rated positively

Barriers to participation
Networking can be complex for early-career candidates who are eager to find a job, may lack the confidence to venture out of their comfort zone, or may be reluctant to attend organized networking events. Plus, these events favor those students who already have strong social capital.

Adding value
Candidates have the prime opportunity to remotely build a network starting with the professional leading the Micro-Internship—often a key decision-maker—and others while working on the project. And to amplify the impact, you can engage your ERGs to welcome prospective candidates as you demonstrate the importance of creating equitable pathways to existing employees.

Utilizing campus career services and advising

Campus career services are usually the first to reach out to early-career talent to develop students' career knowledge, confidence, and self-awareness to make informed career decisions.

80%
participation

69%
rated positively

Limited outcomes

Unfortunately, despite high student engagement, too many students continue to graduate feeling unprepared to enter the workforce and with no professional work experience.

Adding value

Career services professionals are passionate about supporting their students and are excited to find new ways to collaborate with employers. By collaborating with these teams to offer Micro-Internships, you can deepen relationships with existing schools and build relationships with new ones. Plus, short-term projects provide career services professionals with insights to best support their students and your company.

Looking at job postings

While students apply for jobs posted on their school's career site, they are not effective in engaging prospective candidates who weren't already planning to apply. As a result, they should not be the only part of a recruiter's hiring campaign.

90%
participation

48%
rated positively

Limited outcomes

While job postings may build an applicant pipeline, they don't drive new engagement and may deter highly-qualified candidates from applying. Candidates tend to focus too much on meeting every requirement listed on a job posting instead of thinking about how their current skill set makes them viable contenders.

Adding value

Students are hungry to learn about job opportunities and want to do so before applying for an internship or full-time role. Micro-Internships help supply students with insights not captured in a job posting before they have chosen a career path.

Participating in professional organizations

Students who participate in professional organizations, annual conferences, and other networking events may find resources that are accessible and support their professional development.

60%
participation

75%
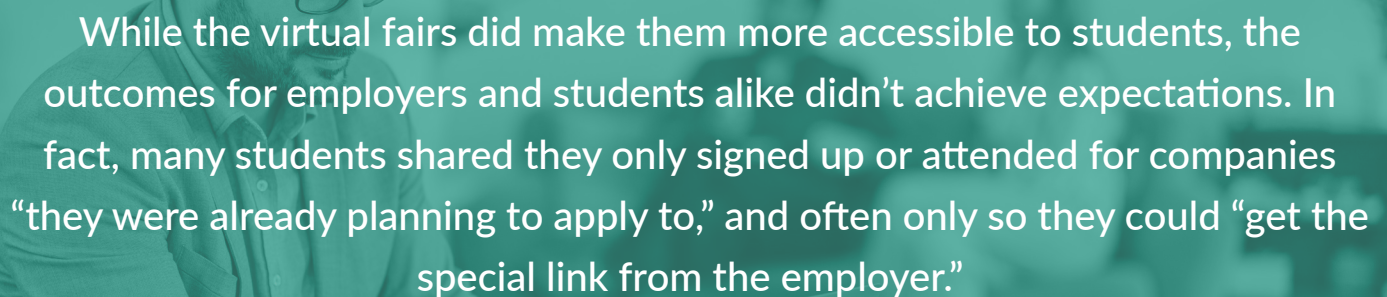### rated positively

Barriers to participation

Many students are unaware of these organizations or feel they are only relevant once they've chosen an area of focus. In addition, many students are unable to participate given their other work, family, and academic commitments.

Adding value

Micro-Internships help you engage students as they are still exploring career pathways, and the short-term, paid nature ensures they are accessible to all. In addition, for organizations that aren't the expected sponsors of these groups, this provides a great way to reach students who do participate.

We found that the activities that college students did not participate in and value the least are the following:

College students reported that in-person and virtual career fairs are not their preferred methods of engaging with employers. **Virtual career-fair participation was higher (65%) than in-person career-fair participation (49%); however, half of the virtual career-fair participants found the experience to be negative.**

While the virtual fairs did make them more accessible to students, the outcomes for employers and students alike didn't achieve expectations. In fact, many students shared they only signed up or attended for companies "they were already planning to apply to," and often only so they could "get the special link from the employer."

Similarly, most college students did not participate in job simulations or in-class projects.

Less than

30%

of college students participated in job simulations, and only 38% of those that did participate found them to be a positive experience.

While job simulations provide an experiential learning opportunity, students don't rate them positively. Some of the reasons why job simulations fall short as a recruiting strategy are:

- Job simulations require a significant amount of a candidate's time. As a result, prospective candidates choose not to participate, including those with other academic, work, and family obligations. This is amplified by the unpaid nature, especially for those who rely on part-time jobs.
- Students perceive simulations to provide few benefits beyond the possibility of being interviewed.
- The hypothetical nature of simulations makes them less important for students and may negatively impact candidates viewing the activity as "make-believe" work.

College students ranked their top four ways of engaging with employers to be:

- **Real, paid work experience with a company**
- **Understanding the responsibilities of a role through hands-on opportunities**
- **Connecting with professionals in their chosen field**
- **Building job-specific skills for a certain field/ employer**

The common theme from the students' responses is that they want to build real relationships. Some traditional recruiting models aim for this, but they're often too superficial to be memorable. Furthermore, they are often not accessible for many who aren't comfortable with networking, can't meet on-site requirements, or cannot afford to take on unpaid work. Incorporating Micro-Internships into your early-career recruiting strategy can help address internal pain points, while driving increased engagement and value for candidates and hiring managers alike.

Overcoming obstacles they face

The biggest obstacles college students identified when applying for jobs were:

- They're not getting interviews
- They're getting interviews but no offers
- They lack confidence

The competition for jobs is tough, and many factors contribute to candidates not getting interviews. Irrespective of the actual reason, many students perceive this process as unfair as they often believe that their resume doesn't effectively capture their skills or potential. Those who cannot convert their interviews to offers often point to an interview process that feels "artificial" or "fake," especially if the student lacks prior professional experiences to discuss. As a result, this process makes it difficult for college students to develop confidence and eliminates potentially strong employees from the process.
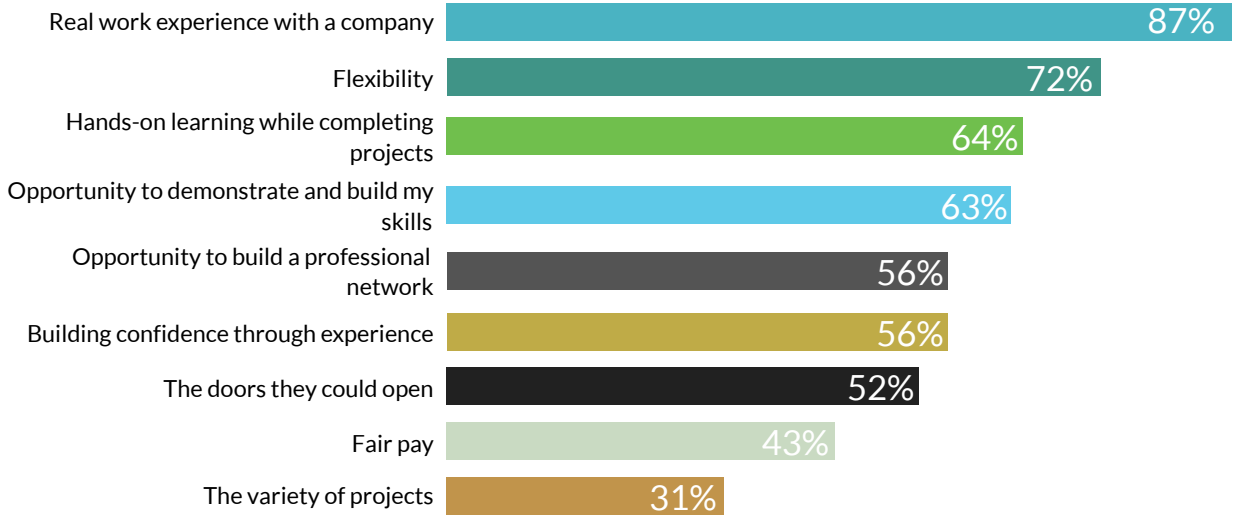
Recruiters, if you're looking to build a talent pipeline or assess candidates for long-term positions, Micro-Internships allow you to do both in a way that overcomes these obstacles! Here's how:

- Through these projects, college students can employ their skills and build a work portfolio that enhances their job prospects and self-esteem.
- College students see this as a more fair process and appreciate the opportunity you provide to demonstrate who they are beyond the resume. Beyond the impact on the specific candidate, this helps build the employer brand on campus as students share their experiences.
- You can post projects that will be open to college students ranging from first-year students to seniors.
- You see the candidates in action and assess their fit for your company in a way that is difficult from a resume or interview. This includes not just hard skills but also competencies in problem-solving, communication, empathy, creativity, grit, and other core skills vital for a successful professional.

College students are building confidence in their skills through Micro-Internships. Thanks to the real and professional work that takes place during project engagement, many employers have extended full-time offers to Micro-Interns that have worked on their projects, effectively reducing renege rates.

Beyond overcoming candidate obstacles, here's why college students are eager for Micro-Internships.
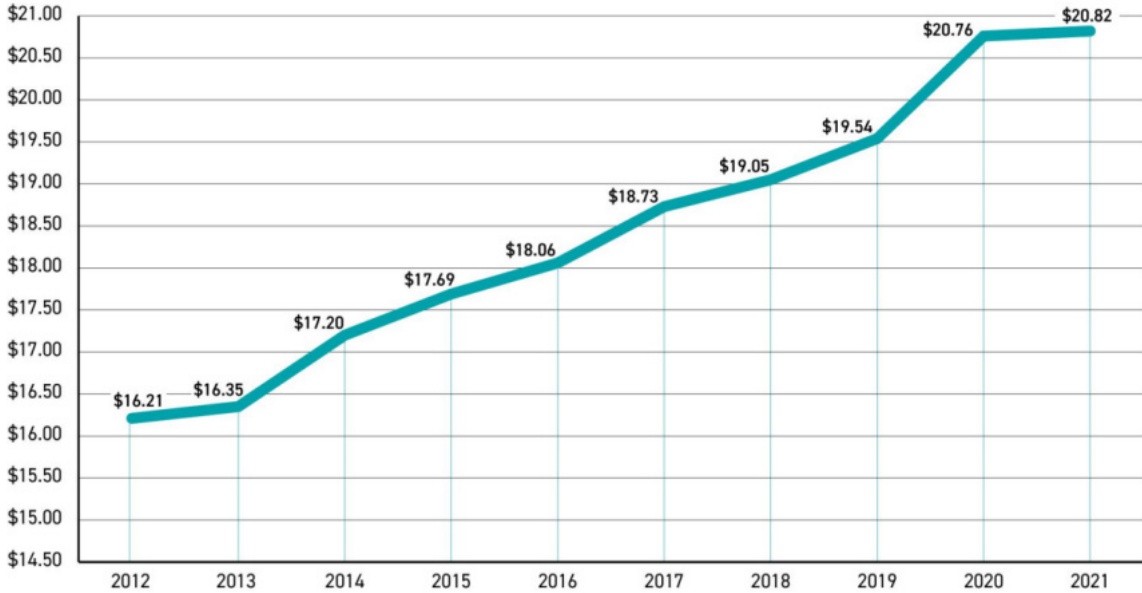
Why students value Micro-Internships

Real work experience with a company	87%
Flexibility	72%
Hands-on learning while completing projects	64%
Opportunity to demonstrate and build my skills	63%
Opportunity to build a professional network	56%
Building confidence through experience	56%
The doors they could open	52%
Fair pay	43%
The variety of projects	31%

While fair pay wasn't the primary driver of why students were eager for Micro-Internships, it ensured they were accessible to all! In addition, students' perception of not being paid for their work can damage the employer's brand and hinder relationship development, which impacts conversion, reneges, and retention.

According to NACE, the mean hourly wage rate for bachelor's-level interns is $20.82, which is consistent with the average implied rate for Micro-Internships.

Mean hourly wage rates for bachelor's-level interns: 2011-12 – 2020-21

Year	Rate
2012	$16.21
2013	$16.35
2014	$17.20
2015	$17.69
2016	$18.06
2017	$18.73
2018	$19.05
2019	$19.54
2020	$20.76
2021	$20.82

Source: 2022 Internship & Co-op Survey Report, National Association of Colleges and Employers

Student Voices

We asked college students to tell us more about what they wish to share with recruiters regarding their career development and job search process.

College students want more employers to offer paid Micro-Internships. Here's why:

Micro-Internships are flexible

"Many students do not have time for traditional internships. Micro-Internships allow students with less flexible schedules to build skills."

"Temporary work projects not only give students real-world experience in applying new skills, but they allow the employer to try out potential future employees without any of the commitments or liabilities of a full-time employee."

"Micro-Internships allow college students to acquire relevant work experience in fields that interest them. Micro-Internships are structured in a way that allows students to work around their busy schedules, build up their confidence, and gain valuable industry knowledge."

Micro-Internships are hands-on and allow students to apply their skill set

"Great way to apply knowledge from school to real-world experience, network, and develop skills."

"It helps students build applicable workplace skills, a necessity in today's labor market."

"Micro-Internships can lead to future opportunities for the employer and person participating in the Micro-internship. It also provides a great way for both parties to see if the working relationship will be a good fit."

While working on Micro-Internships, college students can assess an employer based on communication, expectations, and instruction during the project. Employers can also evaluate a college student's skills, work ethic, and ability to get the job done.

Micro-Internships are paid

"Paid Micro-Internships are a mutual benefit for a company and students: They allow students to have a hands-on experience while being compensated, and the company can expand their talent recruiting through a project rather than a full ten-week or three-month internship. At the same time, they can receive a completed project."

"I wish more employers offered paid Micro-Internships because it helps build skills and confidence. Those things are significant."

We asked college students to identify elements of the early-career hiring process that create unnecessary barriers to getting hired. **Here's what they said:**

Avoid filtering out great candidates due to rigid GPA requirements that are not defining markers of a candidate's career readiness.	"I dislike companies that only focus on grades and technical knowledge. So much is about your willingness to learn on the job and your attitude."
Steer clear of losing student engagement due to a lack of flexibility.	"I dislike when companies have several hour-long interviews, mainly when those interviews are essentially the same with different people. In addition, they are a burden to students who work part-time and may need to cut back on hours that week to accommodate potential employers." "Too many companies want current college interns; however, for some students, it's hard to study and travel to an internship. I wish more companies offered post-college internships or allowed current and recent grads to apply."
Whether on-site or fully online, circumvent surface-level connections and build stronger, meaningful relationships.	"In general, most hiring processes have become highly automated. Companies are making it very difficult to get that face-to-face interview where the truth can shine. Job descriptions have become standardized or boilerplate, and keyword matches sort resumes. Without inside knowledge, it's challenging to stand out and get noticed." "For one company, the interview process felt like I was reciting my resume without allowing me to properly expand on my experiences that I could not put in my resume."

College students also shared what keeps them from accepting a job or internship offer:

Disorganized onboarding process

"Feeling like there is a negative and unaccepting work environment would keep me from accepting a job or internship offer."

"Lack of organization and coordination during the interview or onboarding process."

"If the work environment is negative or hostile within a potential team. If management is excessively disorganized in the hiring process."

"Companies who are reluctant to discuss compensation, hiring managers with poor communication skills, and companies who take a very long time to make a decision."

Stringent location requirement

"Time constraints due to school work"

"The only thing that has kept me from accepting an offer was a lack of flexibility with my schedule."

"The job location, as many locations are too far to transport daily physically."

"Location, salary, and current time commitment to the university."

The lack of monetary compensation

"Pay rate, location, skills, the quality of mentorship, work culture, mission values, etc."

"Unfortunately, finances are a significant factor, not just for me. Many students coming from low-income households cannot afford to relocate or accept relatively low pay for the experience."

Many recruiters rely on career fairs, job postings, email outreach, info sessions, resume reviews, and other recruiting activities. While this approach has historically been effective, the benefits of complementing it with Micro-Internships are significant. In particular, these short-term projects engage, assess, and build relationships with prospective candidates in the ways students most value.

To be clear, companies should continue to develop relationships with colleges, collaborate with student organizations, and participate in on-campus events. However, as students have shared both in this survey and through their actions (e.g., lower career fair attendance, higher renege rates, decreased retention, etc.), this is not enough. Fortunately, adding an experiential component to your recruiting strategy has never been easier to implement.

Experiential recruiting benefits both early-career candidates and employers as they get to know what it's like to work with each other. While you may currently host traditional internships, you'll find those limit how many candidates you can engage with and the types of candidates that can participate. Micro-Internships with Parker Dewey are scalable and fast-paced, and within a matter of days, you'll learn whether or not a Micro-Intern is an appropriate fit.

PARKER DEWEY