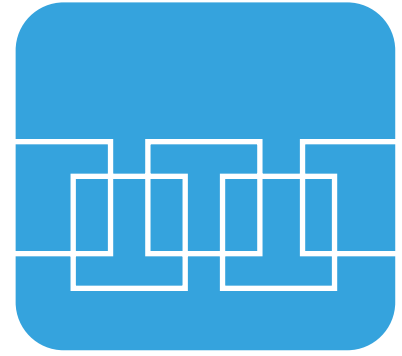




CORO

THE NEW GENERATIONS PROGRAM



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Regional Internship Center

Student Internship Survey

SUMMARY of FINDINGS

Southwestern Pennsylvania can do more to leverage the region's student population by maximizing student internship opportunities with local employers.

- **Students with internship experience are more likely to consider staying in Pittsburgh after graduation than students without internship experience.**
- **Most students are interested in internships but many are not making the connections to get one.** Fifty-seven percent of students have sought out internship opportunities, but

only 29 percent have taken them. However, two out of three students reported that they are planning to look for an internship in the next 6–12 months.

- **Students will take unpaid internships if the opportunity is right, but don't expect them to like working for free.** Of students who took internships, 44 percent were unpaid, and 46 percent complained that the worst part of their internship experience was not getting paid. When paid, undergrads expect to earn between \$6 and \$8 per hour, while graduate students expect to earn roughly \$10 per hour.
- **Paid or unpaid, students have had extremely positive internship experiences.** Eighty-three percent rated their experience a 7 or higher

on a scale of 1 to 10 (with 10 being the best). Students especially value the opportunity to work with a good supervisor or mentor and to learn a lot and make valuable contacts on the job.

- **Students want meaningful work, and plenty of it.** Internships that don't offer enough challenging work will not satisfy students' desire to get real work experience and make a contribution to their host employer.
- **Summer is the best time for students to take an internship.** Most students can work.

The Regional Internship Center (RIC) of SWPA has been created with the help of the Three Rivers Workforce Investment Board to increase the number of internships and to create a centralized internship system in the region.

INTRODUCTION

Regional internship opportunities are one piece of the talent attraction and retention puzzle. Internships can help transform southwestern Pennsylvania's concentration of college students into a regional competitive advantage and talent retention benefit. According to a study by the Pennsylvania Economy League, Pittsburgh ranks 6th in the nation in student concentration. How do we keep more of those students in the region after they graduate? Internships are an effective way to help connect students with regional employers, giving

them real world experience, mentors in the business world, and a better-developed network of contacts for when they graduate. Research also suggests that students are more inclined to remain in a region where they have completed an internship.

Internships can also meet the needs of the region's businesses. Ninety-four percent of businesses in the region have 50 employees or fewer; they often lack dedicated human resources staff necessary to

* The 27 schools are: Allegheny College, Bethany College, California University of Pennsylvania, Carlow College, Carnegie Mellon University, Chatham College, Clarion University, Community College of Allegheny County, Duquesne University, Geneva College, Grove City College, Indiana University of Pennsylvania, LaRoche College, Penn State Beaver, Penn State McKeesport, Penn State New Kensington, Point Park University, Robert Morris University, Saint Vincent College, Seton Hill University, Slippery Rock University, University of Pittsburgh, University of Pittsburgh Greensburg, Washington and Jefferson College, Waynesburg College, Westminster College, and Wheeling Jesuit University. Six other schools (mainly community colleges) that are covered by the Regional Internship Center had no responses to the survey: Butler County Community College, Community College of Beaver County, Penn State Fayette, Thiel College, University of Pittsburgh Titusville, and Westmoreland County Community College.

recruit talented workers. Internships are a cost-effective way to test-drive potential employees, allowing firms to gauge a potential employee's fit with the company at relatively low cost and risk. Several companies, like Intel and Union Carbide, hire 70 percent of their new hires from the ranks of their interns.

Internships have not yet been recognized as an integral part of the region's dual economic development and talent attraction and retention agendas. According to previous estimates, in a region with a potential internship pool of 100,000 college students, only one percent of students complete internships. Placing one percent of the region's students in internship opportunities does not meaningfully impact the region's ability to retain college students, nor will it resolve employers' workforce challenges.

Currently, information about the importance, prevalence and impact of internships in our region is scarce. Participation in and the benefits of internships have not been quantified for students or employers. In

order for the region to develop its internship infrastructure, we need to first gain a better understanding of the issues around internships.

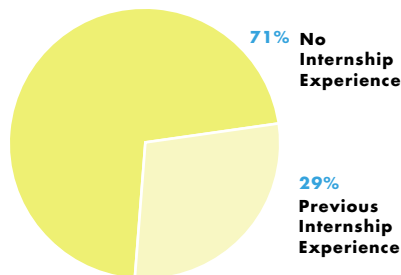
We developed an on-line survey to probe students' experience with and perceptions of internships. The survey was distributed to students via their schools' career services offices. Of the 33 schools served by the Regional Internship Center, we received responses from students at 27 schools, with a total of 3,889 responses in a three-month period (October through December 2003).⁷ The year in school of the responding students roughly corresponds to the general student population, with an over representation of seniors. Nine out of ten were undergraduates (21 percent freshmen, 21 percent sophomores, 23 percent juniors, 27 percent seniors), and 9 percent were graduate students.

FINDINGS

We asked students about their past experience looking for and getting an internship. **Less than a third (29 percent) of the students we surveyed had any internship experience. A large majority had never been an intern (71 percent), and nearly half had never actively looked for an internship (43 percent).**

While these figures suggest that many students never considered internships as an option, when we asked about future intentions, **two-thirds (65 percent) reported that they are planning to look for an internship in the next 6–12 months.**

What Percentage of Students Had Previously Held Internships?



"Been There, Done That": Students with Internship Experience

Slightly less than a third of the students we surveyed had held an internship. Where did these students look, and how did they find their internships? Did they enjoy their experiences, and what was frustrating about their internships? Do interns earn credit for their internship experience? And finally, on average, how much money do interns earn for the work they do?

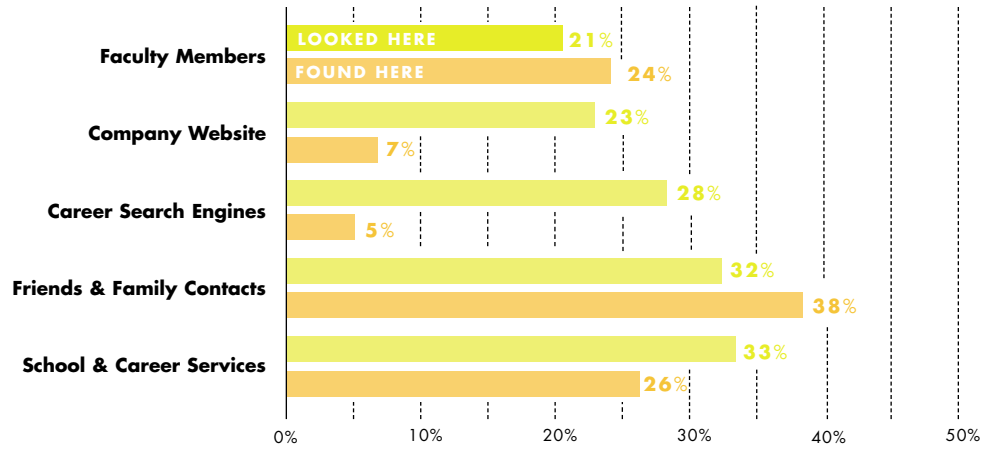
The Search

Students tried a variety of different avenues in their search for internships, but some were more fruitful than others and actually yielded a position. Students looked broadly for internships, with the most popular resources being their school’s office of career services (33 percent) and friends and family contacts (32

percent). Friends and family were the best bet for students and resulted in an internship for 37 percent of students. Other options were less successful: for instance, career search engines were widely used (by 28 percent of students) but produced internships for only 5 percent of students.

Where Did Students Look For and Find Their Internship Positions?*

* “Looked Here” data totals more than 100% due to the surveyed students’ option to select more than one response regarding the places they looked for internships.

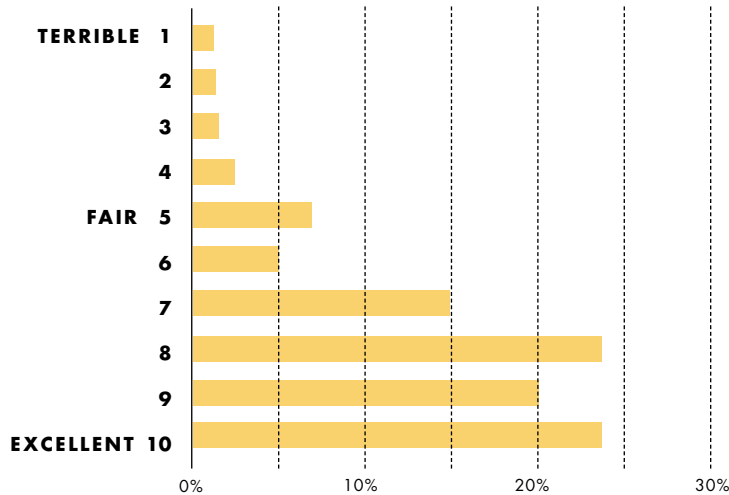


The Quality of the Experience

Students who took internships were overwhelmingly positive about their experiences. We asked students to rate their most recent internship on a scale of 1 to 10,

with 1 being terrible and 10 being excellent. Only 5 percent thought the experience rated a 4 or worse on a scale of 1 to 10, while 83 percent rated their experience a 7 or better.

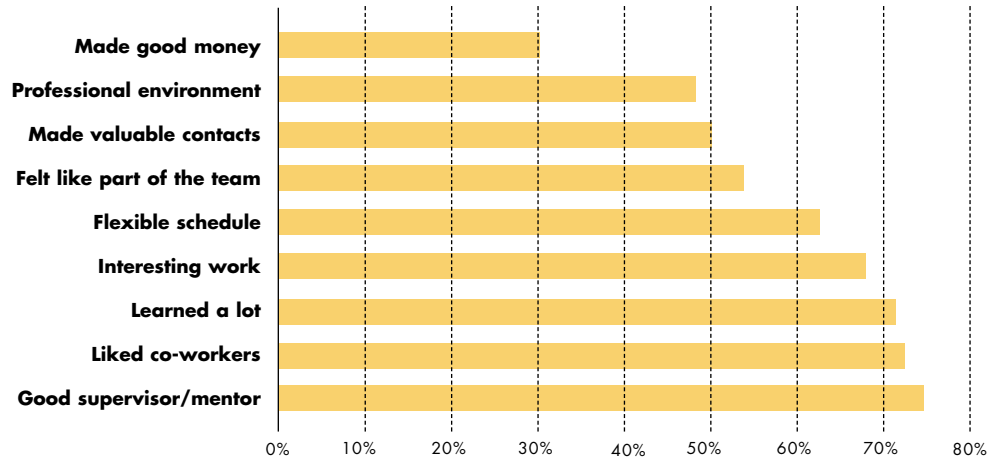
On A Scale of 1 to 10, How Did Students Rate Their Most Recent Internship Experience?



What Did Students Like About Their Internships?

Students liked many aspects of their internships, but especially appreciated the **opportunity to work with a good supervisor or mentor** (74 percent). More than two-thirds of the students reported that they liked their

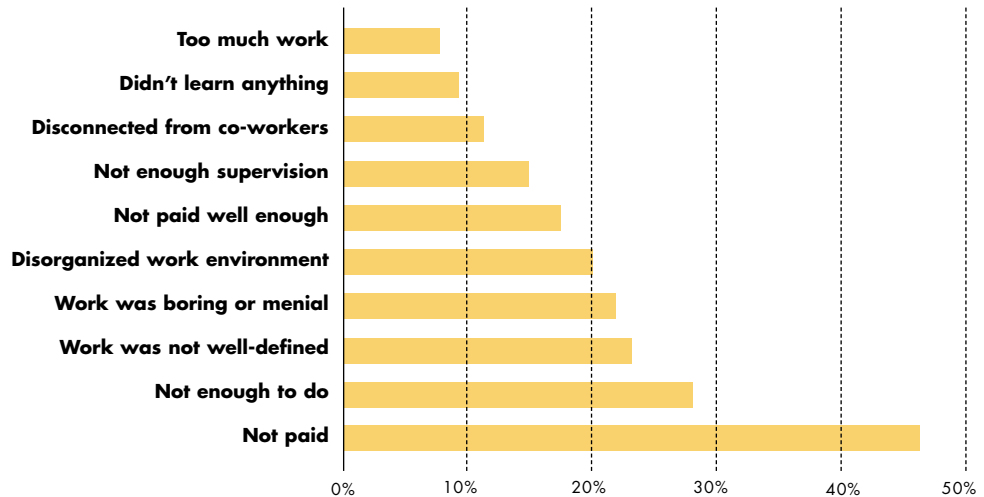
co-workers, valued the opportunity to learn on the job and develop transferable skills, and had interesting work assignments.



Students had much more praise for their internship experience than complaints. Students' main frustration centered on money, or more precisely, a lack of money — almost half of students surveyed reported that **not getting paid at all was the worst part of their internship**, and another 17 percent complained that they were not paid well enough. (However, having "made good money" was lowest on students' list of things they liked about their internships.)

Other frustrations revolved around the nature of the work during the internship. More than one in five former interns complained that there was not enough work for them to do or that it was not well-defined, that the work assigned to interns was boring or menial, and that the work environment was disorganized. Fewer than one in ten former interns said they didn't learn anything during the course of the experience, and only 7 percent complained that they were given too much work during their internships.

What Did Students Dislike About Their Internships?



The Host Employers (Industry & Location)

The most popular industries for internships are **healthcare, communications** (advertising/marketing/public relations), and **information technology**. Other popular fields include community and social services, arts (fine arts/design/entertainment/media), and education (teaching/training/library).

While schools from around the region were represented in our survey, **most students reported that their internships were in the City of Pittsburgh** (35 percent) or outside of the city in Allegheny County (12 percent). Westmoreland and Washington counties were also represented with 9 and 6 percent of reported internships, respectively.

Hourly Wages & School Credit

Of students who had held an internship, **56 percent were paid and 44 percent were not paid for their work. A majority of students (60 percent) received school credit** for their internship experience.

Unpaid interns were more likely to receive school credit; 76 percent of unpaid interns got school credit, while only 47 percent of paid interns got credit. Not surprisingly, unpaid interns complained more about the money: 88 percent of unpaid interns said that not being paid was a negative aspect of their internships, while only 31 percent of paid interns complained that they were not paid well enough. However, not being paid had

little impact on the interns' overall satisfaction with the experience. Eighty-one percent of unpaid interns and 84 percent of paid interns were very satisfied, ranking their experience a 7 or higher on a scale of 1 to 10 (10 being the most satisfied).

Wages for interns varied by year in school. Most freshmen averaged about \$6 per hour, while most seniors averaged between \$8 and \$10 per hour. Wages for graduate student interns were all over the map. While 41 percent of graduate interns were unpaid, about half of paid graduate interns made between \$5 and \$10 per hour, and the other half made between \$11 and \$15 per hour.

What Hourly Wage Are Interns Paid?

Year in School	Percent Unpaid	Average Wage
UNDERGRADUATE		
Freshman	51%	\$6/hr
Sophomore	41%	\$6 - \$7/hr
Junior	38%	\$7 - \$10/hr
Senior	43%	\$8 - \$10/hr
GRADUATE		
	41%	mixed

Regional Students: The Untapped Intern Pool

Just as important as understanding what former interns think about internships is understanding what students who have never taken an internship think. What's appealing

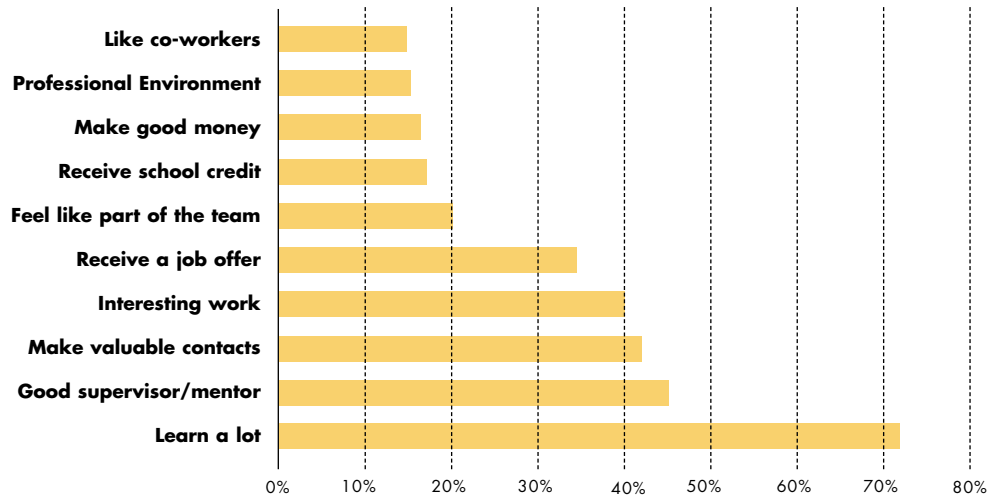
about the prospect of having an internship? What do they want out of it? When is the best time for them to take an internship? How many hours can they work, and for how much money? We asked all students about their perceptions, attitudes, and wishes for possible future internship experiences.

Most Important Qualities

What Are The Most Important Qualities of An Internship?

We asked all respondents about what they thought were the 3 most important qualities of an internship. **Learning a lot, having a good supervisor or mentor, and making valuable**

contacts topped students' priority list. Tellingly, only 16 percent thought making money was very important.

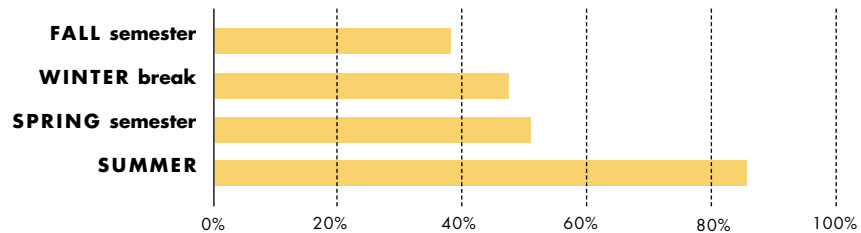


Time of Year

Summer is by far the best time for students to take an internship (86 percent). Internships over winter break and during the spring semester work for about half of students, while fall semester appears to be the worst time for internships, with fewer than 4 in 10 students available in the fall. Students are able to work

more hours during summer and winter breaks than during the school year. About half of students are willing to work almost full-time (30 or more hours per week) during breaks, while part-time hours (6 to 20 hours per week) are more realistic during the school year.

During What Time of Year Are Students Willing To Take An Internship?

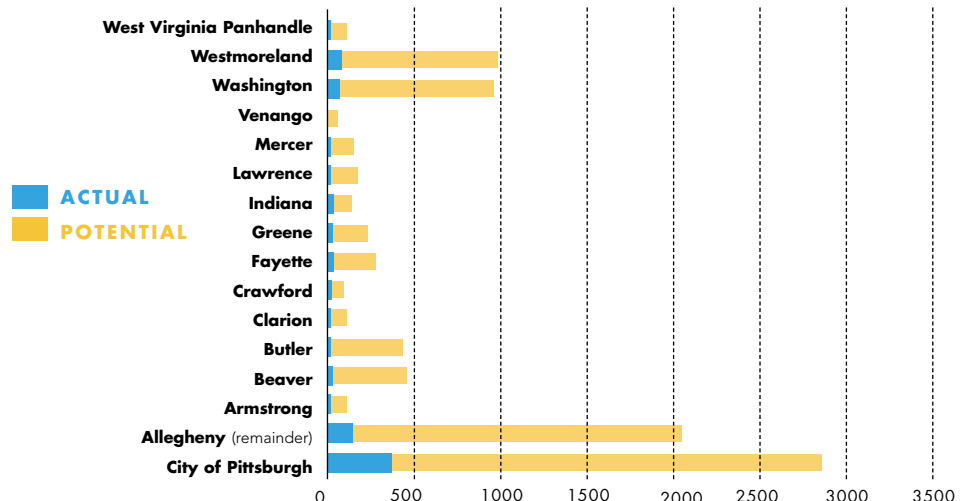


Location

We asked students to choose the top three counties where they would consider taking an internship. We compared where students were willing to take internships and where students had actually taken positions. Actual positions

and demand for internships were highest in the City of Pittsburgh and the remainder of Allegheny County, but in all counties, potential demand for internships far outpaced the supply.

Where Have Students Taken, And Are They Willing To Take, Internships?



Wages

What Is The Minimum Wage For Which Students Are Willing To Work?

We asked students to tell us the lowest hourly wage that they would consider for a paid internship. **Undergraduates reported being willing to work for between \$6 and \$8 per hour, and graduate students averaged \$10 per hour.**

Year in School	Lowest Wage Considered
UNDERGRADUATE	\$6 - \$8/hr
Freshman	\$6/hr
Sophomore	\$6 - \$7/hr
Junior	\$6 - \$8/hr
Senior	\$6 - \$8/hr
GRADUATE	\$10/hr

Students are willing to take unpaid internships as well, and certain circumstances can take the sting out of working for free. Students' willingness to take an unpaid internship increased when there was the possibility that the internship could lead to a job. For particularly fun or prestigious internships and internships required for a class or to graduate, students were also willing to take an internship without pay.

Perceptions of Pittsburgh

The majority of students (72 percent) are thinking about staying in the Pittsburgh region after graduating. We filtered responses to see if former interns and students without internship experience differed on this question.

Students with internship experience were more likely to report that they are considering staying in Pittsburgh after graduation than students without internship experience (75 and 70 percent respectively).

IMPLICATIONS

In response to demographic declines and concerns about future workforce gaps, regional leaders are looking for ways to retain a larger percentage of the young people currently enrolled in the region's colleges and universities. Internships are a promising way for students to build stronger connections to local employers and for employers to identify and "test-drive" future employees. Internship experience also appears to make students more likely to consider staying in the region after they graduate.

If students are considering Pittsburgh as a viable location to make a home and start a career, and local employers and political leaders need those students to stay and form the next generation of the tax-paying workforce, then internships are an important tool to connect students and employers.

In our region, however, 57 percent of the students we surveyed have sought

out internship opportunities, and only 29 percent have taken them. What's happening to nearly half of students who are looking but never find an opportunity? Students' desire for an internship is not always translating into an actual internship position.

In order to take full advantage of internships' potential, there are several things that the region can do.

Make internships a regional priority.

Talent attraction and retention is already a major issue for regional leaders, yet we continue to struggle to find ways to impact our demographic destiny. We've zeroed in on the large student population as an important asset, but are still working to identify strategies that can affect their location decisions. A regional internship strategy is tailor-made to leverage our student assets in a way that benefits students and employers. Other places have already seized on internships as a practical

strategy: the Governor of Indiana has designated an Internship Week, and given it high-level visibility to reach students and employers.

Invest in the existing infrastructure.

There's no need to reinvent the internship wheel, but we need to coordinate efforts and centralize the internship process. It is imperative that efforts to create a regional internship system include employers, colleges/universities and regional organizations and associations. Currently, there are several organizations in the region involved in the internship "system." This creates confusion and frustration among both employers and students. A region concerned with attracting and retaining talent should put its money where its mouth is and invest aggressively to streamline the system and expand the reach of existing and proven tools.



Acknowledgements:

Thanks to the Center for Economic Development at Carnegie Mellon University and the Regional Internship Center of Southwestern Pennsylvania for funding this research project. The authors would also like to thank the Advisory Board for this project for their invaluable assistance: Diana Bucco, Mona Dine, Justin Driscoll, Susan Hansen, McCrae Holliday, Steve Mitchell, Ron Painter, and Jerry Paytas. Finally, a special and heartfelt “thank you” to the career services staff at the 33 colleges and universities around the region. Without their cooperation, this research would not have been possible.

The New Generations Program was created by the Coro Center for Civic Leadership to help inform a wide range of regional demographic conversations and initiatives. New Generations staff conducts applied research that is aimed at developing a better understanding of the region’s talent attraction and retention challenges. Coro would like to thank the Richard King Mellon Foundation for their generous support of the New Generations Program.

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Please visit our website at www.newgenerations.info

Be aggressive with marketing and recruitment. How do we help the students who want internships find positions that are right for them? How do we convince students who may not even be considering an internship that it’s a good option? Marketing is the key to reaching the group of students that is looking for, but not finding, internships in the region. Marketing internships to firms and employers will help secure their buy-in and participation and ensure that there will be enough internship positions to go around. In Indiana, the Lilly Endowment invested one million dollars in a state-wide internship marketing effort. Marketing and buy-in is especially important in the outlying counties, where potential demand for internships far outstrips the supply.

Help colleges and universities help would-be interns. Colleges and universities have the most direct access to students, and they are a critical partner in the recruitment and placement of more students in internships. While one in three students uses their office of career services to look for internships, only one in four actually finds a position through career services. Career services staff and faculty members can help students broaden their networks beyond friends and family to a broader, more professional circle. When career services know more about internship opportunities, students will reap the benefits.

Help employers create meaningful internship positions and find the right interns. Students don’t take internships to answer phones or alphabetize files. They want to make significant contributions to their host employers, and want work that is interesting and challenging where they can learn a lot and make connections in the business world. It’s not always easy for employers to design a job description for an intern, but it’s important that they take the time to think through the intern’s scope of work and find the right intern with the right skills for their organization. Creating a challenging position and making a good match will yield a better experience for both the student and the employer.

Maximize summer internship programs. Summer is the most convenient time for students to take an internship. Expanding on existing summer programs like the Interns 2003 program sponsored by the Regional Internship Center and Pittsburgh Regional Alliance can leverage the students working here in the summer, and provide support to the employers who host them. The Interns 2003 program organized fun activities for Pittsburgh interns (e.g., Pirates games, kayaking through Three Rivers Rowing, plays at the Public Theatre). This kind of programming helps “sell” the region to students, reinforcing their work experience with fun events that showcase regional assets.

NEXT STEPS

This research project is part of an effort to increase the number of students and employers participating in internships and to define the impact of internships on the regional economy and talent attraction and retention efforts. This survey report helps us understand the “supply-side” of the internship transaction by tapping into the student perspective. A companion survey is underway to clarify the “demand”: how employers view their role in the internship process. How many employers host interns? What kind of projects do they use interns for? What are employers willing to pay for student interns? How do employers advertise their positions to students? What are the barriers that employers face in hosting interns? And how can regional programs help employers overcome those barriers?

This research will help fill the gaps in our knowledge about internships and will guide the refinement and expansion of the Regional Internship Center’s activities. The more we know about the internship “market” operates, the better equipped regional internship programs will be to connect students into the local economy.

