

Opportunity Internship Program

Preliminary Report to Governor & Legislature



December 2012

Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board
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This report was prepared by the staff of the Workforce Board Training and Education Coordinating Board, including Mike Brennan.

Photos on cover are of recent participants in the Opportunity Internship Program

- Kristy Gale, with Tacoma Public Library and Ryan Patajo , student intern from Mt. Tahoma High School.
- Noel Solis, student intern from Ft. Vancouver High School and Kenan Marlin, with addidas America Inc.
- Valerie Elizondo doing her internship at the Land Development Engineering & Surveying, Inc. in Bellingham

These stories and others can be found at: www.wtb.wa.gov/OIPstudents.asp.

In 2012, the Opportunity Internship Program provided paid internships to over 490 low-income high school students through community-based networks of workforce development professionals, educators, mentors and more than 150 employers. Another round of 200-plus internships will launch this month.

The Opportunity Internship Program provides meaningful work experience to high school students eligible for free or reduced lunches. Internships last at least 90 hours, are in high-demand fields that pay at least \$30,000 annually and are supported by mentors who provide career guidance and motivation for completing high school and seeking further education and training.

The program currently operates in five areas of Washington by local consortia under contract with the Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board.

This is a preliminary report to the Governor and Legislature required under Chapter 238, Laws of 2009. In December 2014, the Workforce Board will submit a final analysis that examines graduation rates, postsecondary attendance and employment in high - demand occupations.

Program History

The Opportunity Internship Program was created by legislation in 2009 (RCW 28C.18.160 – 28C.18.168). The program received its first state funding from an appropriation to the Pay for Actual Student Success (PASS) Act (Chapter 288, Laws of 2012) which invests in “dropout prevention and intervention programs.”

A \$1 million appropriation for fiscal years 2012 and 2013 was part of a larger funding package to the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction for purposes of funding PASS Act dropout prevention and intervention programs. The funding was made available to community partnerships (referred to as consortia in the statute) starting January 2012. Two rounds of internships have been completed (Spring/Summer 2012 and Fall/Winter 2012). State funding will cover another round of internships beginning this month with funding ending June 30, 2013.

State Need Grant Eligibility

If an Opportunity Internship graduate enrolls within one year of high school graduation in a postsecondary program of study in an institution of higher education, including in an apprenticeship program with related and supplemental instruction provided through an institution of higher education, the graduate is eligible to receive a state need grant for up to one year.

Community Partnerships

A local Opportunity Internship Program consortium, by state law, must be composed of the area's Workforce Development Councils, high schools, Skill Centers (if available in the region), community or technical colleges, apprenticeship committees, and employers in a targeted industry. The consortium may also include Economic Development Councils, Chambers of Commerce, public and private four-year higher education institutions, private vocational schools, and labor organizations. State law encourages local consortia to designate a Workforce Development Council¹ as the fiscal agent.

Program Components

Each contracting consortia must do the following:

- Identify high demand occupations in targeted industries that provide a wage of at least \$30,000 for which internships and pre-apprenticeships will be developed and offered for low income students;
- Develop paid or unpaid internships and pre-apprenticeships of at least 90 hours in length for at least 50 low-income students per budget year;
- Provide mentoring, guidance, and assistance with college applications including Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and other financial aid applications;
- Guarantee a job interview if a participating student completes a postsecondary Program of Study;²
- Conduct outreach efforts to inform students about the program and high demand occupations in targeted industries;
- Inform students about the services available through the Career Bridge website;
- Obtain appropriate documentation of the low-income status of students who participate in the Opportunity Internship Program using the Free and Reduced Meal certification from the student's school district; and
- Maintain communication with program graduates who enroll in postsecondary Programs of Study.

Consortia are encouraged to also:

- Provide summer internships and pre-apprenticeships;
- Work with area high schools and skills centers to:

¹ Washington has 12 Workforce Development Councils that provide employer outreach, oversee the state's WorkSource employment centers and develop regional strategic plans that assess local employment to coordinate workforce activities throughout the state.

² Programs of Study help students move more quickly and effectively between high school and postsecondary education by providing college credits for high school level Career and Technical Education courses that tie directly to postsecondary courses in the same career field.

- incorporate the Opportunity Internship Program into their comprehensive guidance and counseling programs;
- incorporate the Opportunity Internship Program into available Career and Technical Education Programs of Study; and
- make the internships count as worksite learning experiences for high school credit;
- Coordinate with other workforce education, dropout prevention, and financial aid programs.

Local Opportunity Internship Program Reports

Five consortia were granted contracts in January 2012. What follows are the reports from these local partnerships.

Northwest Washington

The Northwest Washington Workforce Development Council and Mount Vernon Chamber Foundation staff partnered to provide information, guidance and assistance to secondary school staff, community partners and businesses on how to support and participate in the implementation of a successful Opportunity Internship Scholarship program. In its first cycle of internships, 43 local employers were recruited to provide internships for 51 students. Another 35 students participated in internships during the fall of 2012.

Southwest Washington

The Southwest Washington Workforce Development Council partnered with nConnect, the organization's youth and industry connecting contractor, and the local school districts' Career and Technical Education departments. This program focuses on Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) related internships. In the first round, 55 students were matched with one of 23 participating employers in their specified field of interest. Instead of a paycheck, each student received a final payment of \$500 as an incentive to complete the internship.

Spokane

The Spokane Area Workforce Development Council partnered with the Next Generation Zone, the organization's youth and young adult sub-contractor. The Next Generation Zone worked with Spokane schools and the regional Skill Center to focus their internship offerings on health care, advanced manufacturing and aerospace, and professional and business services. Internships included placements for dental assistant students from the Newtech Skills Center. Fifty-one students completed internships with the 32 host employers during the spring and summer. In the fall of 2012, another 46 students enrolled into the program.

Olympic Peninsula

Olympic Workforce Development Council partnered with Olympic Educational Service District 114, a grouping of regional industries and a host of school districts on the Olympic Peninsula. In the first round of internships, nine local employers provided internships in ship building, health care, manufacturing, and business and professional services. Fifty-four students completed internships during the first cycle. Another 48 students enrolled for internships for fall 2012. In addition to the required financial and school application support, this local program also offered specialty classes in soft skills, business communication, team work, basic employment requirements, and interview skills.

Tacoma

REACH, a non-profit youth-focused community organization, formed a partnership with Goodwill, Americorps and 39 local employers. Students were able to experience work in positions such as: media associate, data entry, marketing, habitat restoration, digital media specialist, and teaching. Students were recruited from Franklin Pierce, Bethel and Tacoma School Districts. REACH presented a series of target classes to help students with soft skills, resumes, financial education, dress code, and mock interviews. In its first round, REACH provided internships to 50 students. In fall of 2012, 53 students enrolled in internships.

Other Program Partners

To provide support to the local partnerships and to lay the groundwork for future efforts, Workforce Board staff partnered with the **AWB Institute**, a non-profit affiliate of the Association of Washington Business (AWB). The AWB Institute hosted meetings across the state with targeted industries to gather input directly from industry decision makers. Sessions were held targeting: health care, manufacturing, advanced manufacturing, and business and professional services. Sessions were held in Vancouver, Olympia, Mount Vernon, Snohomish, Seattle, Spokane, Tri-Cities, and Moses Lake. The goal of this effort was to learn from employers the value and challenges in providing high school level internships. Additionally, the AWB Institute features articles in its electronic newsletter distributed to both AWB members and non-members alike. This connection will be expanded as additional focus group sessions and annual conference sessions are developed.

The Workforce Board maintains a membership in the **Washington Chamber of Commerce Executives**, the professional association for Washington chamber executives. This organization has worked with Workforce Board staff in forging closer ties to their members, particularly around the issue of providing work opportunities for young adults and improving the pipeline of skilled and educated workers.

White House Presentation

On May 23, 2012 a small team from Washington accepted an invitation from the White House and made a presentation, along with six other states, to staff from the White House and the Department of Education. The meeting, chaired by Assistant Secretary Dr. Brenda Dann-Messier, was an open discussion on high school internships and the potential use of federal Career and Technical Education funding for creating more work experiences for students. Daniel Popov, a Vancouver area student who completed an Opportunity Internship with Frito-Lay, attended the meeting and spoke about how his internship shaped his future plans to become an engineer.³

	Northwest Washington	Olympic Peninsula	Southwest Washington	Spokane	Tacoma	Totals
Student Interns (Jan. – Sept. 2012)	52	54	55	51	50	262
Employer Intern Hosts (Jan. - Sept. 2012)	43	9	23	47	39	161
Student Interns (Sept. – Dec. 2012)	35	41	58	47	53	234
Employer Intern Hosts (Sept. – Dec. 2012)	15	16	56	18	21	126

A third session of interns is set to start work in January 2013.

Program Recommendations

- **Change eligibility requirement to conform with State Need Grant** – The use of the federal free and reduced price meal for eligibility has created some problems. For example, if high schools hit 60-percent eligibility in the program, then all students at the school can be claimed to be eligible which can result in some non-low-income students qualifying for internships. Also, access to free and reduce meal eligibility information is not uniform. Instead, State Need Grant information could be collected upon application and eligibility determined before enrollment.
- **Allow GED track students to participate** – If the age limit is raised to 24 and eligibility expanded to include students actively pursuing a GED, the Opportunity Internship can be a component of the state’s dropout retrieval system.
- **Consider ways to extend program to students who are not citizens** - The citizenship and residency requirements disallow many low-income students who otherwise would qualify for the State Need Grant. If program eligibility was aligned

³ A copy of the article from the Columbian that features Daniel’s adventure in the nation’s capital can be found at www.columbian.com/news/2012/jun/12/vancouver-teen-dazzles-dc-officials-with-work-expe/

with the State Need Grant then students with Permanent Resident Cards would be able to participate in the program.

- **Consider expanding program to middle school and junior high students** – For some students, waiting until high school for a work experience may be too late. Creating volunteer and work-like opportunities for younger students could be part of a broader high school completion strategy.
- **Help with transitioning to post-high school education and training** – All five partnerships observed that students struggle to move between high school and their next education step in part because of a lack of support once they leave high school.
- **Streamline certification of host employers** – State regulations require each school district to “certify” the business offering an internship. In areas with multiple school districts, each district must independently certify a host employer.
- **Standardize the program’s name and brand it statewide** – While named the Opportunity Internship program at the state level, the program goes by different names at the local level—making it difficult for students and employers to connect to the program.

For more information on Washington’s Opportunity Internship Program

www.wtb.wa.gov/OpportunityInternship.asp