

STCC internship program allows students to 'learn and earn'

SPRINGFIELD – An internship program at Springfield Technical Community College gives students a chance to “learn and earn” and area companies an opportunity to “test-drive” new talent.

STCC launched the Learn and Earn Internship Program in 2017. Since it began, the program has placed more than 40 students, said Elliot M. Levy, senior director for the Workforce Development Center at STCC.

Levy spoke about the internship program during a recent meeting at STCC with the Board of Directors for the Western Massachusetts Chapter of the National Tooling and Machining Association (WMNTMA), an organization that promotes the precision manufacturing industry.

“This is a phenomenal way to test-drive your future talent,” Levy said. “As we visit various companies, we find they are looking for the next generation to come work for them. We have that next generation right here.”

The program started with students from STCC’s Mechanical Engineering Technology department, but will expand into other areas, Levy said.

At least 40 companies are interested hiring interns from STCC, including employers in the fields of biotechnology, advanced manufacturing, civil engineering, optics and photonics, architecture,

construction and automotive, Levy said.

Kristin Carlson, president of the board of directors of WMNTMA, hired a mechanical engineering technology student as an intern last year.

“We got her in May 2017. It was supposed to be a summer internship. After two months, we asked her to be a permanent employee,” said Carlson, president of Peerless Precision in Westfield.

“I’m a big fan of hiring students in general,” Carlson said. “When we bring the students in, it gives them a chance to earn money while they’re learning, and it gives Peerless a chance to groom them and help turn them into the employees that they need to be – and we need them to be. Their minds are a lot more moldable, and they’re more open at that age than people who are not currently in school.”

Carlson said she particularly likes working with STCC graduates.

“Most of them have made the decision to go into manufacturing or the engineering field on their own without their parents, grandparents or friends telling them that’s what they should do,” Carlson said. “When they’ve made the decision on their own, they’re more apt to buy into it. They are more passionate about it, and they want to grow. The intern we have is getting trained all over the shop. She just wants to learn more.”

Carlson cited another advantage of hiring mechanical engineering technology graduates from STCC. They were trained in a state-of-the-art program.

“It’s probably one of the top in the state,” Carlson said. “They’re using the same software programs that we’re using. They’re using everything that’s current within our industry.”

As part of the Learn and Earn Internship Program, student interns work during traditional semesters and during the summer, putting in 10 to 15 hours or more per week based on their schedules and employers’ requirements. Student interns must complete 150 internship hours to receive academic credits, but may choose to complete a non-credit internship. Employers are required to pay interns.

“The programs at STCC prepare students for careers that have a high demand for skilled employees,” said STCC Vice President of Academic Affairs Geraldine de Berly. “We’re excited to offer the Learn and Earn Internship Program, which will connect students to area companies and give them the opportunity to receive college credit and a paycheck. It’s a win for students and employers.”

If you are interested in finding out more about the program, contact Elliot M. Levy at emlevy@stcc.edu or call (413) 755-4893.