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Office of the Secretary of Higher Education Highlights Grant Program Supporting Paid Summer Internships for New Jersey College Students

TRENTON – Career readiness is critical to students’ success in today’s workforce. In an effort to ensure that New Jersey college students are prepared to enter the workforce, the New Jersey Career Accelerator Internship Grant Program (Program), administered by the Office of the Secretary of Higher Education (OSHE), provides New Jersey-based employers with financial assistance to support paid summer internship opportunities for students attending in-state colleges and universities.

This year marks the second summer in which OSHE has supported New Jersey employers and students through the Program. Funding for 2023 provided 126 employers with grants of up to \$3,000 per student, supporting paid experiential learning opportunities for a total of 465 students. Participating businesses and organizations are wide-ranging, including companies from the construction, energy and technology industries as well as organizations from the non-profit sector. Opportunities are available to interns in areas such as marketing and communications, finance, data analysis, and more.

“The experiential learning opportunities supported by our grant program are critical to ensuring students in New Jersey not only have the opportunity to obtain a high-quality degree but are also prepared with the tools and first-hand knowledge necessary for career success,” **said Secretary of Higher Education, Dr. Brian K. Bridges.** “Supporting our businesses so they can provide paid opportunities also helps build stronger and more diverse talent pipelines to cultivate greater and more equitable opportunities for all New Jerseyans.”

The National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) has tracked the impact of paid internship programs. Their [research](#) demonstrates clear advantages of paid internships with findings that paid interns receive more job offers before graduation than unpaid interns as well as higher starting salaries. Additionally, companies offering paid internships more often employ interns and retain them over longer periods than those that do not.

Secretary Bridges on Monday joined the Chamber of Commerce Southern New Jersey to visit one of the Program's participating employers, Better Tomorrows, and hear directly about the impact of the Career Accelerator Internship Grant Program.

"This is the second year Better Tomorrows has participated in the program because we truly believe and have seen the impact of this program both for our organization and on the interns we have brought on to support our work," **said Better Tomorrows CEO, Patricia Schwartz.** "This program allows us to get additional assistance with fundamental activities that help the organization maintain its daily operations in our national office and at our sites in affordable housing communities. We are grateful to be a conduit for young people to gain professional skills and real-life experience."

"A number of our members are receiving grants this summer and, as a Chamber, we are grateful to have the Office of Secretary of Higher Education's partnership," **said Chamber of Commerce Southern New Jersey Director of Member Experience, Heather Sanderson.** "By supporting paid internships for New Jersey students, their work is helping cultivate a diverse and highly-skilled talent pool right here in South Jersey, which employers of various shapes and sizes will be able to draw from – a true boon to our local and regional economy."

Giuliana Auteri, a student at Rowan College of South Jersey and Better Tomorrows intern, said, "I started out at Better Tomorrows doing HR and finance work. I knew I wanted to do something with business since that's my major, but I wasn't sure exactly what. Through this experience, taking on different responsibilities and tasks, I realized I really enjoy finance. Having this internship has really allowed me to grow."

"Last year, I was in a transition state with my major trying to figure out what career paths I could follow. Thanks to the professional exposure I got from my internship opportunity with Better Tomorrows, I am now majoring in sociology with a minor in public health and have returned as an intern for a second summer," **said Jordan Wilson, another Better Tomorrows intern who is currently studying at Rutgers University.** "Compared with unpaid volunteer work I've done before, this experience is definitely different. It has better prepared me for what it's going to be like in the future and has truly shaped and helped me realize what I want to do."

Funding for the Program is provided by the New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development (DOL). This summer, with funding appropriated through the State's Fiscal Year 2023 budget, OSHE received \$2 million from the DOL to award employers up to \$3,000 per intern for a minimum commitment of 15 hours per week over 10 weeks.

"The work experience and networking connections these students gain from this program are invaluable. The Department of Labor and Workforce Development is proud to partner with our colleagues at Higher Education to support young workers at the start of their careers," **said Department of Labor Commissioner, Robert Asaro-Angelo.**



