

HOUSE COMMERCE & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

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My name is Roxanne Vought and I am the Program Manager for the Vermont Intern Program, a program of Vermont Businesses for Social Responsibility. I am also on the Leadership Team for the Vermont Internship Professionals Network.

I will begin with an overview of the Vermont Internship Professionals Network (VIPN) and our priorities for 2015. I will then give a quick summary of the range of internship models currently in place statewide and the organizations that run internship programs in Vermont. We will close with testimony from 4 of these organizations:

- **University of Vermont** representing a large post-secondary institution
- **Sterling College** representing a small post-secondary institution
- **Brattleboro Development Credit Corporation/SeVEDS (Southern Vermont Economic Strategies)** representing a regional internship program
- **Vermont Intern Program** representing a statewide internship program

The Vermont Internship Professionals Network (VIPN) brings together Vermont internship coordinators to share best practices and resources. Our goals are to ensure effective internship programs, increase coordination between programs, adopt common professional and ethical standards for internships and serve as a resource for our partners engaged in workforce development.

Since November 2013, VIPN has met quarterly for networking, peer support, resource sharing and group initiatives. We are a volunteer-run, membership-based organization with 38 members representing 15 colleges and universities, 8 non-profit/government organizations and 2 high schools.

Our priorities for 2015 are as follows:

Employer Relations & Host Site Development:

Outreach, education and relationship-building with potential internship hosts through attendance and presentation at our meetings and possibly hosting an educational or networking event for employers to attend.

Evaluating Assessment Methods:

How are we tracking internship participation & outcomes? What are the best practices? How can we work together as a network to gain a greater understanding of the impact of our work?

Workplace Readiness for Interns:

How can we best prepare high school students, college students and recent graduates for internship opportunities? How do we move beyond placing outstanding candidates and create opportunities appropriate for various levels of education and experience? What do employers face challenges with? What education do applicants need before entering into an internship? How can we create clear expectations for both parties?

VIPN membership represents a variety of institutions and organizations, and within each there may be multiple models for what an internship looks like. In addition, there are countless internships taking place outside of our membership. Acknowledging that there are different interpretations of what constitutes an internship and there are inherent difficulties in tracking the existence and outcomes of these work-based learning experiences, I will attempt to provide a brief overview of the range of internship models currently in place statewide. I will not attempt to address the legality of any of these models.

Host sites may be in the private sector or public sector, including non-profit and governmental organizations. Interns may be compensated with an hourly wage, stipend, product credit or not at all. Interns may also receive academic credit. Still others may complete an internship solely for the experience, and do not receive compensation or academic credit. The host site may not necessarily be the employer. All or part of the compensation may be issued by an institution - such as a high school or college - or by a non-profit organization, such as Vermont HITEC.

This broad definition of an internship may also fulfill academic or professional requirements and be described as an externship, job shadowing, volunteerism, capstone, project, apprenticeship or other name.

Interns may be placed with assistance from a high school, college, statewide program or regional program, or they may see an advertisement placed by the host site and respond directly. They may also contact a host site whom they would like to intern with but has not advertised an opportunity, and see if one may be created. As with all work experiences, personal, academic, community, professional and social networking may also lead to a placement.

Statewide Programs include the Vermont Intern Program and Vermont HITEC.

Regional programs include the Brattleboro Regional Development Credit Corporation/SeVEDS and Franklin County Internships and Placements. High schools, career centers and tech centers also contribute to regional placements, especially in tandem with academic or certificate programming.

While they may look very different, every single college and university in the state has a model for creating, promoting and preparing students for internships.

Employers are increasingly creating their own internship “programs”, with recruitment, creation and compensation typically taking place “in-house”. For many of these employers, their intern programs serve as a recruitment model for sourcing, testing and training new talent. Examples include National Life, Keurig Green Mountain, Seventh Generation, Vermont Country Store, Vermont Energy Investment Corporation, Husky Injection Molding Systems and Mack Molding.

In just one short year the Vermont Internship Professionals Network has created a formal organizational structure; advanced our mission to build relationships, create partnerships, support our members and share resources; and doubled our membership. We are optimistic about our abilities to contribute to positive change in work-based learning in Vermont, and we look forward to working with our partners in state government to carry our initiatives forward and continue this important dialogue.

Thank you for inviting us to be part of the conversation.