

OPINION

Why professional internships matter to our future



Garner Holt of Garner Holt Productions, who specializes in animatronics, has a light moment with a life like robotic Abraham Lincoln created at his San Bernardino location. (Stan Lim, The Press-Enterprise/SCNG)

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How can we best prepare the next generation for a changing world of work?

Each day we witness the increased impact of automation, robots and artificial intelligence. While these advances are designed to encourage efficiency, they also impact the skills necessary for a successful career as well as redefining what those future jobs may be.

We need to prepare the next generation to ensure our County's economy remains strong. To do so will take the collaborative efforts of business, education and government. The San Bernardino County Workforce Development Board (WDB) is committed to helping students and young adults prepare for opportunities in growth-oriented industries across our County.

Generation Go! is an initiative launched by WDB. As part of this initiative, WDB is partnering with school districts, colleges, and business leaders to develop, expand, and support high-school-based career pathway programs that provide students exposure to career opportunities they never imagined possible, and receive hands-on training and certification they can use to obtain employment.

The WDB is working to make sure that every student in a career pathway in the County is co-enrolled in a career readiness class to teach them necessary workplace-oriented soft skills. Then they are placed in a work experience class where they participate in a professional internship with a local business to gain college credit. In this way, our students graduate with a high school diploma, community college credit and valuable real-world work experience. These early stage workplace experiences can be transformational by helping students to understand how their education will influence their future.

A number of students from San Bernardino's Cajon High School recently completed 120 hours of clinical practice in partnership with Arrowhead Regional Medical Center (ARMC). The students were introduced to a variety of career opportunities in the medical field while further propelling them along a valuable career path for college or technical training.

The world's largest designer and manufacturer of animatronics and specialty items for theme parks, Garner Holt Productions, Inc., is another WDB partner. The manufacturer took on seven interns for a 120-hour program. During their time with the company, every intern was given an introduction to each of the

WDB's pilot project started in two school districts with a goal to expand to all 33 school districts and career pathway programs in the County. This initiative is an extraordinary opportunity to develop core academic, technical, and employability skills. Moreover, through continuous education and training, our students will be better prepared for high-demand and high opportunity careers.

However, this program's success depends on our region's business community.

WDB is seeking businesses that are willing to provide work-based learning experiences in professional internships as part of a high school curriculum. Some of the targeted industries include utilities and energy, logistics and transportation, digital media, construction and engineering, automotive, manufacturing, and culinary arts, among many others.

ARMC and Garner Holt are great examples of how valuable the collaboration of our education, government and business community can be in helping our young people gain an upper hand. We know there are so many more businesses that are ready to make a difference by taking part in this important professional internship program. We invite you to learn more at <http://wp.sbcounty.gov/workforce/career-pathways/>

Tony Myrell is chair of the San Bernardino County Workforce Development Board

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