

TURNING COLLEGE INTO A CAREER

INTERNSHIPS PLAY VITAL ROLES IN THE CAREER LAUNCH

Patricia Melton's first summer at the helm at New Haven Promise was enlightening. As she talked to student after student, she made it a point to ask what they were doing with their summer. The frequent answer was... nothing.

With a background as an athlete, Melton often found her motivation by thinking about what her future competition was doing to improve themselves. And, frankly, many of the Promise scholars needed to think about their future competition in the workforce. They needed to think: "I wonder what my competition is up to?"

So she took swift action and by the holiday break of the next school year, with the aid of the **Yale Hiring Initiative**, she pulled together Promise's first internship fair. It began with perhaps 60 scholars showing up to the Yale University Art Gallery lobby on a frigid night to vie for 23 positions at eight agencies.

In four years since, the program has expanded to **166 placements** at **60 agencies in 2018** and it includes not just a much bigger internship fair, but also resume workshops, career orientations with hiring managers and efforts to build pipelines into a variety of fields and organizations.

Much of the work involves giving students a greater understanding of the changing workforce and how to be a part. Many believe that getting the diploma puts them near the front of the line for a good, high-paying entry level job. But there is far more to it than that. Even great grades alone aren't enough.

Nowadays, for those entry-level jobs, companies are looking for the well-rounded candidate. Those at the front of the line combine good grades with work experience, leadership and essential skills for fast-paced efficiency. And the **competition** is not local or even regional as candidates come **from all over the globe**. And it is a seven-second scan of a resume that keeps a candidacy alive.

Internships provide students with skills, experiences and a professional network that often cannot be fully acquired in a school setting. That is why employers look for those with the experience that will allow for new hires to excel on the first day of the job.

A 2013 survey from the National Association of Colleges & Employers showed that 63 percent of students who had at least one paid internship during college received a job offer right out of college compared to 37 percent of students who have just volunteer experience and 35 percent of students who had no internship experience at all. Most positions that open are part of the "hidden

job market," which means they do not appear on traditional outlets for job announcements. That's where showcasing one's skills and building a network readily expands options and information.

Alejandra Rodriguez, a Promise scholar and 2016 graduate of Southern Connecticut State University, made such an impression during her internship with Yale ITS, they hired her for a full time position, years later. It isn't just having an internship that is an important step in setting the foundation for career goals, but it is what you do in that placement.

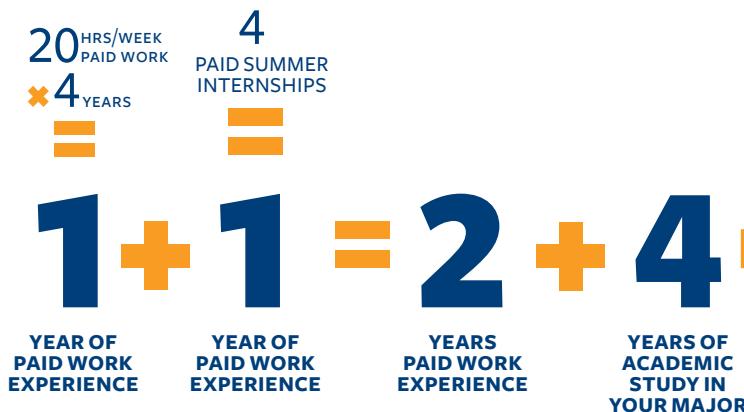
And young students shouldn't be overly concerned with matching their career interest with the type of internship, because working in a specific career field may require foundational work that can be the result of just being in a professional setting. Many find that what they thought they wanted to do will change. Others will discover a new field to explore in an internship not fully related to their studies. But, ultimately, moving toward a career requires professional feedback from managers, who often serve as long-term mentors and advisers.

It needs to be said that obtaining paid summer internships do not just position students for future financial success, but for students from low- or moderate-income families, they can be essential to keeping college debt to a minimum. Work-study jobs on campus can provide similar benefits. And having multiple internships while in college makes one stand out. Fewer than one-in-six college graduates have had three such placements prior to graduation.

In the cases of former Promise scholars **Jorgieliz Casanova** and **Breylin Jones**, having an internship for three summers allowed them to receive a position in their field right after graduation. Their experience showed that they were ideal candidates for the job and the job was also perfect for them.

**SO ALWAYS REMEMBER,
PAID SUMMER WORK
IS WHERE YOU CAN GET AHEAD
OF THE COMPETITION.**

Lawrence McGill — a graduate student at Rhode Island College — was last year's Promise Legacy Award winner after graduating from Eastern Connecticut State University. A 2013 graduate of Career High School, McGill is interning at New Haven Promise this summer.



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