



A Workforce for the Future

State Chamber and Intern Delaware join forces to retain top talent in the First State

BY KANA TURLEY | PHOTOS BY NICK WALLACE PHOTOGRAPHY

ALTHOUGH BUSINESSES around the nation often struggle to find workers qualified to meet the demands of today's labor market, the challenge of recruiting talent is especially relevant to Delaware. According to Zippia, 71 percent of graduates from Delaware colleges and universities leave the state for their first job. Another study by the Wall Street Journal reveals that more than 42 percent of Delaware graduates move to Philadelphia, with another 26 percent moving to New York, Baltimore, or Washington, D.C. These trends are a source of growing concern for employers in the state and emphasize the need for a focus on talent retention, particularly around young professionals who are the leaders of tomorrow.

These are the concerns that underlie the mission of Intern Delaware, a nonprofit dedicated to building Delaware's future workforce by keeping talent in the First State. Since its launch in fall 2019, Intern Delaware

has partnered with over 21 Delaware companies to coordinate experiences for summer interns that focus on the benefits of living and working in the First State.

Through a series of educational events featuring state leaders in government, business, and law, interns learn about the advantageous aspects of Delaware's economy and culture, as well as professional development topics like networking, mentorship, and career advice. These unique experiences and conversations increase the likelihood of young professionals choosing Delaware as an ideal place to jumpstart their careers after graduating college.

After its inaugural summer in 2020, there's already hard proof that the concept is working. Intern Delaware's first cohort included 147 students with 37 percent of senior participants accepting a full-time job offer in Delaware after graduation. More than half of those students attended Delaware colleges.

“We’re in constant competition with other states and metropolitan areas around the country for young talent. I cannot think of anything more important than a program like Intern Delaware to attract young people to our state.” — Governor John Carney



“Intern Delaware is really about selling the Delaware experience, and that’s not just the tax structure,” explains Intern Delaware board chair, Scott Malfitano. “It’s our research and development sector, it’s our culture, it’s our accessibility. Everyone knows about the tax structure, but we need to show we can outweigh any place.”

Intern Delaware’s concept is one that can truly be accomplished in a place like Delaware whose dynamic business ecosystem and geographic size allows the program to provide participants with unique access to influential leaders, exposure to many industries and career opportunities, hard and soft skills development, a network, and more. Altogether, it creates a sense of community that is diverse and meaningful – something that studies show plays a large role in where young professionals to choose to live and work.

The 2021 cohort begins this June. Companies looking to become involved in the program by hosting summer interns should visit **InternDelaware.com** or contact Alexis Williams, program manager of The Partnership, Inc. at awilliams@dsc.com.

Opposite page: 2020 Intern Delaware participants, Grace Slate and Jonathan Martinez. Above: Grace and Jonathan pose next to the Wilmington W at the new CSC Station coworking innovation site in downtown Wilmington. The W was created by local artists through the It’s Time Wilmington Campaign.

Moreover, engaging businesses to be a part of this developmental process streamlines their own hiring process by filling positions with talent that has already begun training and is considered a culture fit. It’s a win-win for both young talent and employers.

These innovative aspects of the program are evident to the young professionals who experienced Intern Delaware’s inaugural summer of 2020. According to Eseosa Wilkinson, an intern with the Delaware Prosperity Partnership, “This organization has allowed me to meet interns from other companies, professionals from different businesses, and elected officials. This allows me to understand all that Delaware has to offer.”

In a similar vein, CSC intern Emma Gogol states, “I’ve had the opportunity to speak with government officials and high-level professionals. That would never happen in other places besides Delaware.”

Internships & Apprenticeships

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—Mike Quaranta, State Chamber President

Looking forward, Intern Delaware has big plans to expand and include more diverse businesses, especially those in Kent and Sussex counties. In March, the State Chamber announced that its nonprofit workforce development affiliate, the Partnership, Inc., will include Intern Delaware under its umbrella.

To meet the growing and changing talent needs of its member businesses, The Partnership realigned its mission and priorities to become better focused on workforce development and creating a pipeline of talent in Delaware. Joining forces with Intern Delaware was a natural fit to the workforce readiness pathway the State Chamber aims to create with The Partnership’s now four flagship programs: Delaware Principal for a Day, Superstars in Education, Intern Delaware, and the Delaware Young Professionals Network.

“We see a sequential progression of development and training that helps prepare new entrants to the workforce,” says State Chamber president, Mike Quaranta. “It starts by connecting our members to schools to clarify



workforce needs and skills challenges through Delaware Principal for a Day. We then recognize high schools, training programs, college and university classes that are innovative and targeted to employer needs through our Superstars in Education awards program. For those that go on to college and participate in an internship program, Intern Delaware is a way to connect interns from all participating employers and help build a talent pipeline of young, bright professionals for Delaware employers. New hires can then join the DYPN and grow their professional network, gain leadership skills, and further embed into a life here in Delaware.”

By joining the State Chamber and playing a crucial role in the Partnership’s efforts toward workforce development, Intern Delaware looks forward to reaching greater heights in 2021. “The main goal is to ensure a statewide offering to serve businesses throughout the state,” says Malfitano. “There are many incredible companies within our borders, and we’re just starting to scratch the surface with companies in Kent and Sussex counties. Joining up with the State Chamber will give this program the chance to grow and connect businesses with young talent.” ■






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Kana Turley served as a communications intern for Intern Delaware in 2020. She now works at CSC as a member of the business licensing team and continues to serve on the communications committee for Intern Delaware.



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