

For Immediate Release
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Washington Legislature continues funding of Opportunity Internship Program

The Washington State legislature included continued funding for the Opportunity Internship Program in its recently passed budget. This program has to date enabled 260 low income students in Southwest Washington to participate in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math) internships with Southwest Washington companies.

Participating youth all obtain first-hand experience in how STEM is used by local companies to create products and services. As 16 of the projected top 20 fastest growing occupations in the next decade are STEM related, these fortunate students are well on their way to family wage jobs.

Greg Kulander, Executive Director of nConnect said, "Providing students with experiential learning opportunities is vital to their understanding of how classroom based knowledge is applied in the real world. It also helps them discover their interests and sometimes even lands them a job. Without the funding to support such experiences, youth would find it very difficult to get a foot in the door at local companies. I especially thank Representative Tim Probst for being the driving force behind the legislation and funding that supports this important program."

"The internship really helped me make my decision about my major; I loved the work so much that I now know for sure that I want to study mechanical engineering," said Chelsea Dole, a previous nConnect intern at Sigma Design.

Philipp Shutenikov conducted his internship at SEH America. "If it hadn't been for the internship, I wouldn't have my current job. My supervisor noticed my work ethic and hired me right after high school," said Shutenikov.

Participating businesses are critical to the success of this program. To get involved, businesses should contact nConnect at info@nConnect.org or call 360-718-1603.

The Opportunity Internship Program began in 2009 and has engaged nearly 1,000 students statewide thus far. The Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board (WTECB) administers the program at the state level and the Southwest Washington Workforce Development Council (SWWDC) is the local agent. The WTECB is a partnership of labor, business and government, dedicated to helping Washington residents obtain and succeed in family-wage jobs, while meeting employers' needs for skilled workers. The mission of the SWWDC is to prepare and promote a highly-skilled and adaptive workforce for a healthy, sustainable economy in Southwest Washington. Funding for the program stems from a contract with the state's Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction. The program is also included in the 2011 PASS Act.

nConnect is a local non-profit established with the purpose of leveraging local human capital in STEM fields to help produce the next generation of engineers, scientists and technicians. nConnect provides mentors and facilitates career learning opportunities like internships, job shadows, "speed" networking, and mock interviews, for Southwest Washington students pursuing rigorous academic subjects.

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See attached link to photos