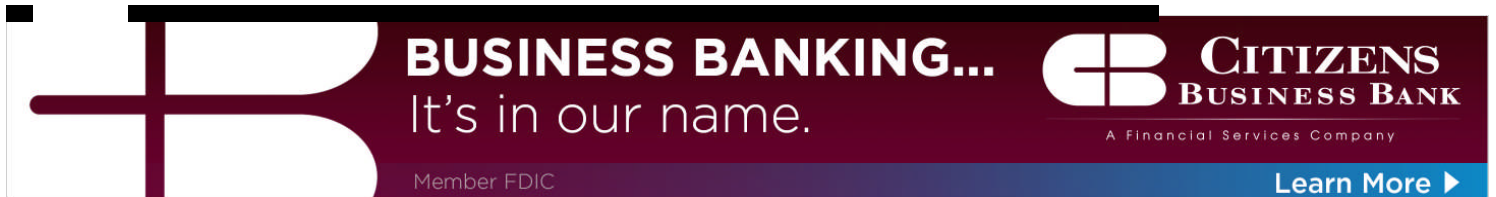


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## Teacher externships help employers

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By **Greg Gillespie and Paula Hodge**

Change is happening in business and industry at such a fast pace that high school and college course curriculums can quickly become outdated.

Students who are fortunate to obtain internships this summer can be exposed to the latest business advances, but it's not enough. The reality is that not every student can take part in an internship. Fortunately, there is another way employers can pass along real-world knowledge to future members of the workforce. It's through teacher summer externships.

Summer externships match faculty members with business and industry employers. During the school year, teachers focus on the business of teaching. While they are certainly experts in their field, there is often very little time or resources to help them stay current on what's taking place in the business world.

Externships provide faculty the opportunity to engage in the workplace and then incorporate new concepts and skills into their teaching. This real-world involvement helps keep curriculum relevant and provides students with skills employers value.

Faculty members from traditional career-technical education fields (i.e., automotive technology, computer networking, medical assistants, dental hygiene, welding) have been the focus of externships, but externships are also important when teachers discuss careers in such diverse occupations as sales, personnel management, finance, project management, operations and technical writing.

The length of time of the externships varies and depends on the instructor and company. It could be one day of job shadowing or a week as a member of a work project. The amount of engagement is up to the faculty member and employer.

In one case, a faculty member interviewed and observed staff at three locations — a large multi-doctor facility, a specialty medical group and a small medical practice — to learn about electronic health records management and workflow. She then incorporated what she learned into the certified medical assistant course she was teaching. Her students would not have been able to access this kind of back-office training but, because of the teacher’s externship, all her medical assistant students will be familiar with the latest electronic medical records processes upon graduation.

Employers benefit from externships as much as teachers and students. When you think about it, it makes perfect sense. When committing to an externship with a faculty member, businesses are reaching hundreds of students since the teacher will pass along the acquired knowledge in the classroom. These programs require only a time commitment since externships are nonpaying.

Businesses interested in offering externships should consider the information/concepts/skills that they would like to share with the faculty member, the school level of the students they want to ultimately reach and the amount of time needed for the externship.

Faculty members tell us that they want to participate in summer externships. Unfortunately, there aren’t enough openings to fill the demand. This summer, businesses can do their part by committing the time for teacher externships. The effort will pay dividends down the road.

To learn more about summer externships, go to the Workforce Development Board of Ventura County website, [www.workforceventuracounty.org/employers/open-doors-to-youth](http://www.workforceventuracounty.org/employers/open-doors-to-youth) and click on “Teacher Externship Guide.”

*• Greg Gillespie is president of Ventura College and, starting July 1, chancellor of the Ventura County Community College District. He is a member of the Workforce Development Board. Paula Hodge is regional director and deputy sector navigator of information and communication technologies and digital media for the California Community Colleges’ South Central Coast Region. She is a member of the Workforce Development Board’s Business Services Committee.*