

UNCOVERING HIDDEN TALENT



COMMUNITY COLLEGE INTERNSHIPS THAT PAY
AND PAY OFF FOR STUDENTS AND EMPLOYERS

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Preface

Community colleges in Massachusetts serve more than 112,000 students—nearly half of all the undergraduates at public colleges and universities across the Commonwealth. And the majority of community college graduates remain here to live and work.

We overlook their talent at our own peril.

With slow workforce growth and an unemployment rate of 3.5 percent—the lowest in nearly two decades—employers in the Commonwealth face tremendous challenges in filling open jobs. What we have here is a unique opportunity to position the 15 community colleges in our state to be a part of a dynamic solution to our workforce needs. It can begin with a simple internship.

For students, internships and work-based learning can provide a springboard to successful careers in ways that entry-level, low-paying jobs simply cannot. Internships help students gain not just hard skills best learned on the job, but a better understanding of professional expectations and access to much-needed social capital networks. Paid internships make those opportunities possible for all students. And the benefits of paid internships flow both ways: Not only do they enable students to gain formative professional experiences while earning money, they also enable businesses to take hiring risks they may not otherwise, and connect them with candidates they can train, develop and retain.

As the authors of this report note, paid internships are particularly valuable for the community college population, many of whom are low-income students, students of color and/or first-generation college students. Historically, they have had little access to the internship opportunities and the social networks that their counterparts at four-year colleges may take for granted. In fact, community college students in Massachusetts are vastly underrepresented in internship programs that act as employment feeders to high-demand sectors.

This report explores the feasibility of a more systematic and structured approach to giving community college students the proverbial foot in the door through a paid internship. It lays out important design principles that any successful statewide policy initiative would need to incorporate, as well as important choices it will have to address. It also raises challenges and constraints that will need to be confronted—particularly those of capacity: on the part of community colleges to operate such an initiative, but also on the part of the state to design policies that are robust yet flexible enough to meet the diverse needs of regions, industries and, most critically, students.

The Boston Foundation has long believed in the transformative power of community colleges and proudly supports efforts to enhance the economic mobility they can activate. We are confident this report will generate healthy discussions as well as creative ideas, and we look forward to engaging with this idea further. The overlapping challenges faced by businesses in a tight labor market and by community college students entering that market demand it.



Paul S. Grogan
President and CEO
The Boston Foundation

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Executive Summary

Facing very low unemployment and slow labor force growth, many Massachusetts businesses complain of the difficulty they are having finding the talent they need to grow and succeed. At the same time, community college students in the Commonwealth often have a tough time getting the attention of quality employers as they compete with students from four-year schools for jobs in their field of study.

This paradoxical reality creates an opportunity.

There is growing evidence nationally that internships and other forms of work-based learning can

help improve the functioning of local labor markets *and* expand opportunity for students who might otherwise have limited options. Paid internships help students understand employer expectations, develop skills best learned in real settings, and build social capital. They can help students make connections with people in a position to hire them upon graduation. Paid internships also have real benefits for employers, too: they get to test out candidate skills and readiness, expose interns to their corporate culture, and take risks they would not in the regular hiring process.

These opportunities are particularly valuable for students with limited work experience and social networks: low-income students, students of color, and first-generation college-goers.

Evidence from Massachusetts indicates that community college students are underrepresented in internship programs in high demand sectors compared with four-year college and university students. (See Section II.) In programs designed to place both two-and

four-year students with employers, the overwhelming majority of those served are from four-year schools. A state budget line item of \$1 million annually for paid internships is restricted to the state universities; there is no comparable funding stream for community colleges. At the same time, Massachusetts employers that provide internships to community college students

tend to be enthusiastic about those interns' knowledge, readiness, productivity, persistence, diversity—and likelihood of staying with their employer upon graduation and into the future.

Is now the right time to consider a statewide policy initiative to support increased access for Massachusetts community college students to paid internships that can help them improve their employment and earnings trajectory?

This paper asks the question: Is now the right time to consider a statewide policy initiative to support increased access for Massachusetts community college students to paid internships that can help them improve their employment and earnings trajectory? Is this something that employers, colleges, and state leaders would see as a welcome component of a comprehensive approach to strengthening the state's talent pipeline and reducing inequities in access to good jobs?

We approach this important question in several steps. First, we report on the experience in Massachusetts and other states in designing and implementing paid internship programs for two- and four-year college students. There is some exciting experience with such initiatives around the country and in our state, though programs for students at four-year schools tend to dominate. We describe each program and summarize its design, scale, and impact. Each description ends with key takeaways from the program about design, implementation, and cost. We draw out lessons about how to:

- target a statewide program (by region, sector, and population);
- organize the business community to participate and level-set their expectations about intern capabilities;
- design programs that meet community college students where they are and accommodate their needs for income, transportation help, and work readiness support;
- strengthen regional and college capacity to organize and manage a large-scale internship program; and
- combine online technology and human outreach to improve the matches between potential internships and interested students.

Across these initiatives, the challenge of capacity stands out: capacity to organize and work with employers; capacity to identify appropriate students and get them ready to succeed in an internship; capacity of the region's public and private stakeholders to communicate effectively, and prioritize sectors and occupations; and capacity of the state to design and implement policies that are flexible enough to meet diverse industry and regional needs.

Next, we turn to the Massachusetts policy landscape to take the temperature of key stakeholders whose support will be critically important if any state-level policy initiative were to get traction. We interviewed more than two dozen leaders from business, the community colleges, state government, and students. We asked them whether they thought a paid internship initiative could help solve some of the problems they and their peers were facing. And we explored their willingness to work together on the design and advocacy for such an initiative. Although their answers reflect their own personal views and cannot be interpreted as representative, their enthusiasms and concerns paint a fairly clear picture of design priorities and pitfalls to avoid.

EMPLOYERS AND BUSINESS LEADERS want a more predictable talent pipeline. They will consider expanding internship opportunities to more community college students if the students come to them prepared for work and the mechanisms for their participation are simple and require minimal time commitment. They seem willing to pay interns' wages. They want to be sure, though, that a statewide policy initiative is flexible enough to meet the needs of the employers in different sectors and regions in the state.

COMMUNITY COLLEGE LEADERS are supportive of there being more opportunities for their students to get in front of employers in the state, develop the skills and knowledge that working affords, and prove what they can do. At the same time, they are concerned that their career services offices lack sufficient staff and capacity to manage employer relationships and advise a large number of students effectively. They do not want students to add another burden to their already difficult schedules balancing home, school, and work; as a result, they want to give priority to paid internships and want to make sure that students have good advice from advisors and faculty about their options. Community college leaders are supportive of expanding paid internship programs. But they see the value of other work-based learning opportunities, from short-term exposure to internships for dual enrolled high school students and apprenticeships for returning adults.

COMMUNITY COLLEGE STUDENTS are eager to get more and better work opportunities that align with their programs of study. They want to develop skills and social connections that they know they cannot get solely through classroom studies. At the same time, they feel time and resource constraints that can hold them back from participating. They may need to keep their current job to make ends meet. They often find transportation and child care obstacles to taking on an internship during the school year or the summer. Community college students feel that it is often difficult to get good information on available work-based opportunities, including paid internships. Many also note that a lack of self-confidence is a real hurdle for many with limited work experience.

STATE POLICYMAKERS are aware of the imbalance between opportunities available to community college students compared with their four-year peers in the Commonwealth. They want to be sure, though, that a new initiative that helps expand access to internships for community college students is crafted in a way that it aligns with and strengthens existing efforts to support regional economic development and workforce preparation and that it augments rather than competes with existing work-based learning opportunities and career pathway efforts targeted to high school students and four-year college and university students in STEM and other high value fields. They see an internship initiative that strengthens regional mechanisms for working with employers and addressing their needs as a potentially big plus. State policymakers also want to make sure that any program that is launched is thoughtful about accountability and about the metrics that will be used to assess progress and outcomes for students, employers, and regional well-being.

From this research, we distill a set of design principles that could guide a statewide initiative to expand access for community college students across the state to “an internship or cooperative education experience that provides career exploration and work experience, supports the development of critical work readiness and foundation skills, builds a student’s professional network, and opens doors to new opportunities.” This set of principles—informed by lessons around employer demand, student equity needs, and community college and regional capacity—is presented as a way to stimulate debate and discussion and build momentum for an idea whose time may be right for Massachusetts. The design highlights the importance of:

- Thinking regionally;
- Targeting industry sectors that are clearly important to particular regions and to the state overall;
- Prioritizing paid internships to address access and equity for community college students;

- Considering whether interns can also earn academic credit, so they can accelerate progress to completion;
- Drawing up clear expectations of employers, colleges, and other partners to ensure smooth implementation—along with metrics to hold partners accountable for results;
- Combining technology and human capability to improve the efficiency of internship matching;
- Aligning and coordinating public and philanthropic support, perhaps with a phase-in in regions that demonstrate readiness to build and sustain sufficient capacity to manage a quality large-scale program; and
- Focusing above all else on expanding the capacity of institutions and partners to support students and employers, so that public resources are used effectively and internship programs live up to their promise, for both students eager to advance their careers and employers seeking a predictable source of new talent.

The Boston Foundation and the authors hope that the findings presented in this report stimulate a healthy debate and discussion. Now may be the best time in a long time for leaders in the state to come together and think creatively about how to turn an inequitable distribution of internship positions into an opportunity to expand and diversify the employment pipeline to the benefit of employers and students across Massachusetts.

Why Massachusetts Community College Students Could Benefit from Better Access to Paid Internships

Facing very low unemployment and slow labor force growth, many Massachusetts businesses have a serious challenge finding the talent they need to grow and succeed. At the same time, community college students have difficulty getting a serious look from many quality employers as they compete with students at four-year colleges and universities for jobs in their field of study.

Community college students are an untapped and diverse pool of talent in the Commonwealth. They tend to have a strong work ethic and they have demonstrated persistence in pursuing their dreams despite financial and other structural obstacles. Helping them connect more effectively with potential employers—through paid internships—could be a boon to the state’s economic vitality, particularly if expanded opportunities reach significant scale statewide.

Paid internships help students understand employer expectations, develop skills best learned in real settings, and build social capital. There are benefits for employers as well: They get to test out candidate skills and readiness, expose interns to their corporate culture, and take risks they would not in the regular hiring process. Massachusetts employers that provide internships to community college students tend to be enthusiastic about their knowledge, readiness, productivity, persistence—and the demographic diversity they can bring to the workplace.

Evidence from Massachusetts indicates that community college students are underrepresented in internship programs in high demand sectors compared with four-year college and university students. (See Section II below.) Employer bias in favor of four-year schools is a factor. In addition, the need of many community college students to work to make ends meet (often in low-paying jobs that do little to advance

their careers) can be a serious obstacle to enrolling in a major-related internship.

If the current situation is to change, the state cannot rely on incremental expansion of small innovative programs, no matter how successful they have been. Rather, a statewide policy initiative that creates incentives for employers and community colleges to participate and supports statewide expansion of internship opportunities is needed.

But is there any consensus in Massachusetts on what such an initiative might look like, how it might best be structured, and whether key business, college, and political leaders would welcome it? To explore this question, the authors spent several months interviewing program directors of internship programs in and outside Massachusetts along with influential Massachusetts stakeholders from the private, public and higher education communities. The full list of interviews is at the end of the report. We also held a focus group with community college students who could benefit from greater access to paid internships and work-based learning experiences.

This report summarizes what we learned—and points the way toward a policy approach that might be popular among those whose support is needed to make it a reality: college presidents, business and industry executives, and political leaders from the legislative and executive branches. In the following pages, we describe and summarize lessons from college internship programs nationally and locally. We then distill our findings into a set of design principles that could inform and increase interest in a statewide initiative to help more community college students get exposure to employers and workplaces in their field of study.

Design Lessons from State-Level Internship Efforts

In order to inform both a policy discussion and a design framework, the authors interviewed policymakers and directors of internship programs in other states as well as programs within Massachusetts. The interviews provided potential models for community college internship programs, information about the critical components of an internship program and lessons learned that are relevant to policy and program design considerations in Massachusetts. The following pages describe the evolution of these initiatives, highlighting insights that emerge from their design and implementation.

College Internship Programs Outside Massachusetts

Outside Massachusetts we identified several statewide or multi-state efforts to seed and support expansion of paid internships for college students. Interviews were conducted with individuals involved in funding and/or leading these initiatives. These are:

- Ohio Means Internships and Co-ops
- The Great Lakes Higher Education Corporation’s Career Ready Internship Program¹
- Indiana INTERNNet
- Skills for Rhode Island’s Future
- The Foundation for California Community College’s LaunchPath
- Iowa Student Internship Program and Work-Based Learning Intermediary Network

The first three serve students at both two- and four-year institutions. The Rhode Island initiative and LaunchPath are still in development. Rhode Island

is expanding from serving high school students to designing a program for college students; LaunchPath is transitioning from being an online platform for matching interns and internship opportunities to being an intermediary that can facilitate a range of work-based learning opportunities for employers and their partners. Iowa’s effort targets STEM fields at two- and four-year schools and supports intermediary capacity at the state’s community colleges.

OHIO MEANS INTERNSHIPS & CO-OPS

In 2012, with one-time funding from casino gaming licensing fees, Ohio created a statewide program to subsidize and promote internships and co-ops across the state. The \$11.45 million program, which will expend remaining funds in the next one to two years, provides annual funding to six regional consortia of local public and private colleges and universities and their business partners to promote internships and co-op placements. A lead postsecondary institution submits a regional proposal, working with multiple partners. The lead can be either a public or private higher education institution.

The legislation that authorized the program had one statutory requirement: a 1:1 private sector match (generally met by wages paid to students in internships or co-op placements). Then-Governor John Kasich wanted public support to promote private sector employment, so non-profits (other than hospitals) have not been eligible. Consortia develop program plans aligned with the needs of regional firms in particular industries and occupations. In 2017, the six consortia split \$1.7 million evenly. The program is managed by the Ohio Department of Higher Education.

¹ Although the sponsor of this multi-state internship program has recently been rebranded, we use the original name—Great Lakes—in this report, since the program was launched and run when that was still its name.

Regional proposals vary significantly in the allocation of funds and the populations prioritized. The state does not second-guess the proposals (unless they are really outside the guardrails). While most consortia use funds to subsidize wages, Cincinnati State's program has used its grant to pay for mock interviews, resume preparation support, and outreach to businesses. Lorain and Cuyahoga community colleges used funds to prepare adjunct faculty fact sheets, so adjuncts would be aware of the program and be more likely to consider how to incorporate an internship component into their instructional program. In some regions, large companies receive a lower wage subsidy than small to mid-sized firms.

Regional consortia have targeted different populations. The University of Cincinnati, for example, targeted first-generation students and Lorain Community College single parents. Some have prioritized veterans.

Consortia have also varied some in terms of industry focus. While most programs concentrate on STEM fields, there have been efforts to expand into other fields. The University of Cincinnati funded a curriculum to help undergraduate fine arts students get internships in private sector, non-museum, art-related jobs. A Northwest Ohio partnership led by Bowling Green University developed a strategy for encouraging suburban-born engineering students to connect to and then work for rural employers that need engineers. The partnership paid for summer housing and gas to the job for a small number of engineering students who would otherwise not have looked at employment in rural communities.

The state collects data twice a year on internship and co-op placements; number of business partners; and the amount of private-sector match.

The program has been quite popular. Through 2017, it served more than 5,700 individuals and engaged almost 1,000 businesses. All told, Ohio students have earned more than \$22 million in wages during their internships and co-op experiences.

However, OMIC funding is unlikely to be renewed. The government officials believe that if the program is indeed providing value to employers, they, and not the state, should absorb ongoing operational costs.

While employers do not fully agree, they have been disinclined to advocate for new funds for the program.

PROGRAM DESIGN TAKEAWAYS

OHIO MEANS INTERNSHIPS & CO-OPS

- Providing regional grants that cover the whole state enables institutions of higher education and employers in each region to design a use for modest annual funding that meets needs of the key partners—without the state setting inflexible priorities for industries, population, or activities.
- The state monitors grant use and collects a few common data elements, but the program is built on the premise that regional stakeholders should chart their own course.
- Student demand for internships is not always robust: this year and last, there were too many interested employers and not enough interested students to fill slots for internships and co-ops offered by participating employers.
- The lead educational institution tends to house the regional program in its Career Services office. An administrative hire at the lead institution appears to be critical to program quality and execution.
- Employers can feel positively toward a program and still not want to fund it with their own resources.

GREAT LAKES HIGHER EDUCATION CORPORATION'S CAREER READY INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

Great Lakes Higher Education Corporation (recently rebranded as Ascendium Education Group) is both a guarantor of federal student loans and also a grant-making philanthropy. In 2014, Great Lakes invested \$5.2 million in a one-year program to promote 2,200 new internships for students at 40 four-year colleges in Iowa, Minnesota, Ohio, and Wisconsin. Participating colleges were chosen through a competitive request for proposals process. Colleges were expected to create new internship positions for juniors and seniors with financial need, aligned with students' field of study. From 2015 to 2018, Great Lakes invested another \$12.7 million to support an additional 22 four-year colleges and universities, with the goal of reaching 7,000 internships. In 2017, the foundation created a separate \$2.1 million fund to support 1,000 paid internships at 16 community colleges in six Midwestern states.

Great Lakes established criteria for participating colleges: Internships would be targeted to students with financial need; internships would be paid; they would be part-time opportunities so participants' academic progress would not be slowed; work experiences would be meaningful and relevant to the students' program of study; transportation funding

would be provided for interns where possible; and the college would assume a small but increasing percentage of operating costs (20%) by Year III. Colleges were encouraged to create internships in both for-profit and nonprofit organizations.

Most funds were used by participating schools to pay intern wages (which proved particularly important for nonprofit organizations that had never before provided paid internships). Additional uses of funds were for transportation and for colleges' administrative costs for managing the program.

Great Lakes had several additional goals. The leadership wanted to promote expanded and regular feedback loops among participating colleges and employers: Employers might report back to colleges, for example, that of the seven interns sent to the firm, none had the qualifications and skills expected of new hires. Great Lakes also wanted to encourage colleges to break down the career services silo and involve faculty, the bursar's office and other departments to improve program design, targeting, and management.

While Great Lakes is unlikely to continue this level of investment over the long run, staff had discussions in 2018 with legislators in Wisconsin who expressed interest in a state-funded paid internship initiative.

GREAT LAKES HIGHER EDUCATION CORPORATION'S CAREER READY INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

- Since so many community college students already work, finding the right intensity and length of time for internships so that both student and employer interests are addressed is a huge design challenge.
- By design, the large number of community college students enrolled in general education transfer associate programs were not eligible for internships, a dynamic that both constrained the scale of internship participation and created pressure for colleges to accelerate student decisions about picking a specific program of study.
- A significant number of colleges had trouble identifying students for available internships, sometimes because of weak Career Services capacity and sometimes because employers judged many students as unprepared for available positions (even with 80–100% wage subsidy).
- Covering the cost of transportation to the worksite is an important incentive for low-income students.
- Paid internships in nonprofit organizations appear to be a good fit for humanities and arts students.
- Many community colleges found that students resisted leaving their existing paid jobs to take an internship, given their financial responsibilities and needs. After initially setting the internship wage at \$10/hour, many colleges ended up paying interns \$15/hour.
- Program ramp-up takes about a year. Since some colleges have more internships to offer in the spring than fall semester, planning needs to take that into account.

INDIANA INTERNET

In the late 1990s, the Indiana Chamber of Commerce and the Indiana Commission on Higher Education partnered to address brain drain in the state. With funding from the Lilly Endowment, the Indianapolis Chamber created an intern-matching platform for the capital region. After a successful launch, initiative leaders proposed a statewide expansion to the state Chamber. A separate 501(c)3 was created to manage the partnership between the Chamber and Indiana INTERNnet.

Here is how the program works: Participating employers register and can post available internships. Students from any public or private higher education institution in the state can register and post resumes. Students can apply to as many internships as they want, uploading their resume either to the general profile section, to specific positions, or both. Employer posts are also shared with college and university career services offices.

The typical internship post is for a general placement in a small to mid-sized firm. This year, about 7,000 employers are registered and about the same number of students are searching for positions statewide (i.e., they have logged on to the system in the past six months). In 2017–18, about 900 positions were filled (and verified). In fall 2018, there were about 545 active positions in the system. Internship postings for high school students are allowed, but comprise only about 3 percent of all postings.

The staff of three focuses on outreach to employers and colleges (career fairs, etc.); responding to employer questions; and continually updating and cleaning the active list of internships and students. Indiana INTERNnet has created an Employer Guide that is available to all Indiana employers. Impact Awards are given out annually to celebrate high performing employers and colleges. Staff members work hard to maintain strong relationships with colleges and universities, particularly with faculty who have deep connections with employers in their field.

Colleges can run reports on their students' participation. Employers can do an advanced search for interns—by school, county, major, key words—and can send messages to prospective interns through the site. Indiana INTERNnet licenses its software: The Maine Chamber of Commerce took it almost a decade ago and is still using it.

Indiana INTERNnet offers its services at no cost to employers or students. Planning for transition to a fee-for-service model for employers was shelved when the recession hit. Today, funding still comes from the Lilly Endowment, but also from a state line item in the Governor's budget. The annual budget is between \$600,000–700,000 a year.

Low-income students eligible for federal student aid have access to wage subsidies through a state program called EARN (Employment Aid Readiness Network), run by the Commission on Higher Education. The state pays employers up to 50 percent of wages paid to qualified student interns. Initially targeted to full-time students working in the nonprofit sector, EARN has been expanded to include for-profit organizations and part-time students. EARN-subsidized internships work like this: The employer posts the position and a student applies to the employer for the internship and to the state for certification as EARN-eligible. An employer can choose to make an internship available only to EARN-eligible students. EARN internships have to meet standards that do not apply for the program overall: internships must last six to eight weeks; there is a cap on weekly hours of work; no more than 25 percent of the position tasks can involve clerical or administrative tasks. Employers must also report to the state when an EARN-subsidized position is filled.

INDIANA INTERNNET

- The current business model is not sustainable: State funding is a biennial lift; and the Lilly Endowment is unlikely to fund the effort indefinitely. A fee-for-service model is a possible next step.
- Tracking whether students accept and enroll in internships is difficult and there remain gaps in the system of tracking outcomes. Indiana INTERNnet knows if a student logs on but not if a student who sets up an account actually applies for an internship. Only internships filled by EARN-eligibles have to be reported by employers.
- Staff put significant time into maintaining a strong relationship with state workforce personnel (e.g., the Office of Apprenticeship and Experience-based Learning and the Governor's Workforce Cabinet).
- The proactive engagement of faculty or staff in colleges and universities is needed to make the regional market for interns more efficient. In some regions, employer density is insufficient to support a significant number of internships.

SKILLS FOR RHODE ISLAND'S FUTURE

Skills for Rhode Island's Future (Skills) had its origin in Skills for Chicagoland's Future, launched with help from Penny Pritzker prior to her becoming President Obama's Secretary of Commerce. The Chicago model emphasizes demand-driven, apprenticeship-like workforce development initiatives.

In Rhode Island, thanks to a U.S. Department of Labor grant to bring the Chicago model to the state, Skills' initial focus was on improving direct placement hires for adults by reaching out to employers and getting a clearer understanding of their middle-skill labor needs. Employer dissatisfaction with the skill levels of many potential hires led leadership to add customized train-for-hire services to its portfolio.

Recently, the organization has launched its first internship effort—focused on high school students. The state has a goal that every Career and Technical Education (CTE) student should have a work-based learning experience with an employer. In summer 2018, the program's first year, 135 high school students across the state were placed in internships, mostly in the private sector (e.g., CVS, Bank of America). Skills is the employer of record for high school students who get internship placements and provides on-the-ground support to students and employers. Funds flow to districts through competitive grants. The state has aligned and coordinated existing workforce, K–12, CTE, and other available funds to build out this effort.

Participating employers have been impressed with the rigor and consistency of the high school work-based learning/internship program, and they would like to see something similar for college students, who they believe are more likely to contribute sooner and to take permanent positions. Rhode Island employers asked Skills to develop and pilot a college internship program. This is in development for piloting in the 2019–2020 school year.

The college initiative will be targeted to first-generation and low-income college-goers in Rhode Island and will include significant advising support for participants. It is likely to incorporate candidate screening; work-readiness preparation; financial literacy instruction; leadership development; and an emphasis on soft

skills mastery. It may begin with a summer boot camp. Colleges will be encouraged to offer credit for internships. Several insurance and manufacturing companies have committed to doubling the number of high school interns they take *and* to participating in a college-focused program. Rhode Island is exploring using a second statewide organization to manage the college program.

PROGRAM DESIGN TAKEAWAYS

SKILLS FOR RHODE ISLAND'S FUTURE

- Proactive political support from the Governor and state officials accelerated program growth and the ability to engage employers.
- Quality internships require significant planning and work with employers. It takes a lot of time to onboard employers to be ready to take interns and use them well.
- It is important to level-set employer expectations of what an intern can do. Companies, particularly small companies, frequently *underestimate* what young people can do at the workplace. It is important to spell out standards of quality for internships and jobs.
- It helps to engage early a few large, high-capacity employers who can be champions for this approach as a long-term human resource strategy. These firms must see themselves as developmental partners, making a patient and flexible commitment.
- Funding for pilots should encourage local flexibility so innovators can be creative and experiment broadly.
- The state believes that intermediary organizations outside the schools (both K-12 and post-secondary) are needed to build and manage work-based learning experiences. The state wants its high school and college internship efforts to be aligned and coordinated, but is likely to use a different organization to manage each.

LAUNCHPATH

LaunchPath was created to be a platform to link employers offering internships to both high school and community college students seeking to secure an internship position (either paid or unpaid). The seed money for the joint effort of the Foundation for California Community Colleges and a K-12-focused organization called Linked Learning came from JP Morgan Chase as part of its New Skills at Work initiative.

Initially, the goal was to build a platform for matching employers with students and an algorithm to improve the matching process: Students would create a personal profile of their education and experience; employers would create a business profile and describe the available learning opportunity. The algorithm was designed to create a ranking score to identify the top match, akin to the way medical intern applicants are matched to hospitals.

Developers realized quickly, though, that the market for paid workforce internships is underdeveloped. The platform's first iteration—which cost about \$3 million over five years to build and pilot—did not prove very useful to either employers or college personnel. LaunchPath realized that the matching process would need more high-touch support than the original model assumed. Rather than lead with its technology, LaunchPath has pivoted to becoming expert in helping partners figure out the regional educational and economic landscape, develop a plan to expand work-based learning/internship opportunities, and build out the capacity to execute a regional approach to expanded internships and work-based experiences.

In Phase II, now underway, LaunchPath is working more at the high school than community college level. The team is focusing on the kinds and intensity of support that employers and students need to be ready to benefit from, and succeed in, an internship. They are building out a model rooted in the role of a regional intermediary to create and maintain relationships and to troubleshoot for both employers and interns. LaunchPath is also expanding its ability to track the range of work-based experiences, some intensive and some light-touch, that are common elements of high school career-focused educational programs. These

include job shadowing, mock interviews, and worksite visits, in addition to internships.

LaunchPath is testing its new model of support for regional work-based learning efforts in Portland, Oregon—for the city’s summer jobs program—and in San Diego County. With its less algorithm-centric approach, LaunchPath is seeing growth in the take-up of its services and tools.

LaunchPath is piloting its products and approach with 32 California community college districts involved in a *Work-Based Learning and Tools Pilot*. This effort is designed to help participating colleges expand the number and quality of work-based learning experiences (e.g., health-care placements; CTE-related and co-op work experience) and test the relevance of less intensive work-based experiences in the community college setting. Each participating school has to place at least 25 students in a work-based learning experience.

PROGRAM DESIGN TAKEAWAYS

LAUNCHPATH

- The online matching platform works best in regions with sufficient density of schools and employers (e.g., urban and suburban communities), where coordination is more complicated and technology can drive efficiency.
- LaunchPath has found more receptivity at the high school level, and with out-of-school youth initiatives than among community colleges.
- The Foundation for California Community Colleges underestimated the level of capacity and the types of activities that would be needed to serve as a statewide intermediary, relying too much on a technology tool and not enough on personal and institutional relationships to energize the internship market.

IOWA STUDENT INTERNSHIP PROGRAM AND WORK-BASED LEARNING INTERMEDIARY NETWORK

Iowa has two state-run and state-funded programs that are relevant to the possible design of a paid internship programs in Massachusetts. The *Iowa Student Internship Program* is a grant program in targeted industries to support internship programs in two- and four-year schools in the state. The statewide *Work-Based Learning Intermediary Network* is a state Department of Education initiative that supports the 15 Iowa community colleges to create and staff regional intermediary networks that organize work-based learning activities for K–12 students and teachers in each college’s catchment area.

IOWA STUDENT INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

In an effort to retain educated workers in Iowa, the state has created and funds a program of grants to small and mid-size businesses that offset some of the cost of paying a college student intern. Managed by the Iowa Economic Development Authority, the program works like this: Iowa employers in firms with fewer than 500 employees in the targeted industries of bioscience, advanced manufacturing, and information technology can apply for financial assistance on a 1:1 matching basis for wages paid to college student interns (up to \$3,100). The internship must pay at least twice the federal minimum wage. The position description must detail the substantive work-based experience that students will have in specific occupational areas (e.g., market research, process management, engineering).

Firms are limited to three internships per year. Students can be enrolled in a community college, a private college, or an Iowa Board of Regents university (e.g., Iowa State, University of Iowa)—or can be an Iowa high school graduate enrolled out of state—but they have to be within two years of graduation. Upon completion of the internship, both the firm and the student have to complete an end-of-project report before the reimbursement to the firm is released.

The idea for the program came from Governor Tom Vilsack in 2004 after he attended a national bioscience conference. The state hired Battelle to develop a state industrial innovation strategy, first in bioscience and then in advanced manufacturing and IT. The

internship was one of a number of strategies funded by the legislature in 2007–2008, but it is one of the few that survived budget cuts and an effectiveness audit.

The program has been funded at about \$500,000 a year over the last few years. In 2014, the Technology Association of Iowa lobbied for a STEM-focused program that would subsidize internships in additional industries. This program reimburses wages on a 1:1 matching basis up to \$5000 and does not have a size limitation on eligible firms. The annual budget for the STEM internship is \$1 million.

In fiscal year (FY) 2017, 32 companies were under contract in the STEM program to hire 296 interns; ultimately, 209 were hired. Of these most were enrolled at Regents universities; only 16 community college students and 30 students at private colleges took advantage of the program. In the original Student Internship Program, 94 companies were under contract for 245 interns, of whom 169 were placed. Again, the overwhelming majority came from Regents universities; nine community college and 19 private college students had subsidized internships. For neither program is the state able to track students long enough to know whether interns actually receive and take offers of permanent jobs after graduation.

Why do so few community college students participate? It appears that the community colleges have not been particularly proactive in pursuing employer participation in this program. They have tended to focus more on apprenticeships in high demand fields than internships tied to credential programs in those fields. The Career Services capacity for placing and managing an internship program is limited across the state's community colleges.

WORK-BASED LEARNING INTERMEDIARY NETWORK

Beginning in 2014, the Iowa Department of Education has allocated \$1.45 million annually to create and sustain a statewide intermediary network designed to better align career interests of secondary and postsecondary students with experiences needed for that career. The funding is split equally among the 15 community colleges in the state with the goal of creating a coordinating entity and single point of

contact for regional work-based learning efforts. (A 25 percent match is required from private or public funds or in-kind contributions from the college.) Resources primarily serve secondary school students, providing support for setting up job shadowing experiences, procuring student internships, and organizing student and teacher tours of workplaces. Participation in regional Career and Technical Education planning is required. About 20,000 students participated in worksite activities across the state in FY2017 through the intermediary network.

The program was launched in 2008, but the budget was cut to zero during the height of the recession. Kirkwood Community College maintained its intermediary throughout and became an active advocate for re-launching of the statewide effort, which happened in 2014. At a minimum, regional networks are expected to target industries related to STEM occupations, occupations related to infrastructure and construction, as well as advanced manufacturing, biosciences, and IT. The 15 intermediaries meet monthly to share leads and compare practices.

PROGRAM DESIGN TAKEAWAYS

WORK-BASED LEARNING INTERMEDIARY NETWORK

- Iowa has invested small but steady amounts of state money to support both an expansion of internships for college students and the creation of an infrastructure housed at the community colleges to support better alignment of employer needs and high school career exploration activities.
- The state recognized the need for funding and staff for the intermediary function.
- Community college capacity for and/or interest in proactively pursuing paid internships has been limited, even when partial state reimbursement of wages has been available for participating employers.

Massachusetts Internship Programs

Interviews were conducted with staff in five Massachusetts internship programs including the internship programs at the Life Science Center, Clean Energy Center and Mass Technology Collaborative, the Learn and Earn partnership between Bunker Hill Community College and the Massachusetts Competitiveness Partnership, and internship programs at the state universities. The only program that focuses exclusively on community college students is Learn and Earn. A description of Connecting Activities, a high school work-based learning program, is included as well.

LEARN AND EARN

The Learn and Earn program provides paid internships to Bunker Hill Community College students in a wide range of industries and occupations. The program was launched in 2012 through a partnership of the Massachusetts Competitive Partnership and Bunker Hill Community College. Five firms participated in Learn and Earn at the beginning and served 20 students. Currently 17 corporate, small business, civic and nonprofit partners are participating. Since the start of the program 525 students have been placed into internships. Interns work 16–40 hours a week, work for five or seven months or during the summer and earn at least \$15/hour. Companies provide mentors and professional development. Mentors are viewed as critical to fostering a sense of belonging in the workplace and building professional skills. The program also provides a travel stipend, which is considered an important part of the design as it removes a potential barrier from to student participation in the internship.

Eligible students are active degree- or certificate-seeking students in good academic standing enrolled in a minimum of two courses who have completed at least 12 college credits with two courses in their major. A required internship course provides three credits. Students are recruited for internships based on their coursework, major, interest, and experience. Students upload their resume and can apply for up to three internship positions. Staff support students in creating their profile, updating their resumes and participating

in mock interviews. Companies interview multiple students for internships and make the final hiring decision.

Faculty and staff build and sustain relationships with the internship sites. Faculty have content expertise and in many cases industry contacts. Internships and Career Development staff have more time than faculty typically do to be able to meet with potential internship sites and to support students during their internships.

PROGRAM DESIGN TAKEAWAYS

LEARN AND EARN

- Companies are impressed with the maturity and professional skills of the community college interns.
- 70 percent of community college students are already working, which can present challenges to their participating in an internship program.
- Expanding to smaller businesses opens up a broader range of opportunities but may require some level of wage subsidy. Similarly, non-profit organizations can provide work experience and professional development for students interested in careers in any of the broad range of positions in the nonprofit sector; but they may also require wage subsidies to participate.

MASSACHUSETTS LIFE SCIENCE CENTER (MLSC)

The Massachusetts Life Science Center's internship program, the Internship Challenge, has been operating for 10 years. It is a year-round program that runs May 1 to April 30 and companies can hire an intern at any point in the year. The duration of the internship varies, but MLSC provides companies with funding to support up to 12 weeks of full-time work. Participating companies can hire interns who are enrolled at Massachusetts postsecondary schools or who are residents of Massachusetts and are enrolled in colleges outside of the state. The internship program serves small and medium-sized companies, with 100 or fewer employees in Massachusetts and no more than 250 employees globally. Companies can hire up to two interns each program year but have the option of hiring two additional interns if at least two out of the four interns are community college students.

In the most recent program year, 530 students were placed in internships. Forty-one (8%) of the interns were community college students; 13 additional students were enrolled in other two-year or certificate programs. Over 10 years the program has supported more than 3,900 interns. Students from 13 of the 15 community colleges have participated in the program, with the majority (57%) enrolled at MassBay, Middlesex and Bunker Hill. Nearly 300 companies participated in the last program year and 750 companies have participated over the 10-year history of the program.

Students apply through the MLSC's website and companies apply in order to be able to access the database of student resumes and cover letters. Companies do not post position descriptions on the website. They reach out directly to students, interview them and hire them. When an intern is hired, the company notifies the MLSC and signs an agreement. The company is required to provide an offer letter that is signed by the student. The duration and hours are flexible; the internship can be full-time or part-time and the pay rate is determined by the company. The company is reimbursed for wages paid to the student up to \$17/hour and \$8,160 per intern per year.

The Massachusetts Life Science Center tracks the following metrics: student demographics, company information, full-time or part-time hires, and background information on majors.

PROGRAM DESIGN TAKEAWAYS

MASSACHUSETTS LIFE SCIENCE CENTER (MLSC)

- A robust database of candidates is needed, making outreach to qualified students important. Outreach relies upon a champion inside the college among the faculty or career services staff, with sufficient capacity for proactive participation in career fairs and campus events.
- Dedicated internship coordinators can foster employer partnerships and help identify potential opportunities for students.
- Colleges with faculty that reach out directly to employers and refer their students tend to be more successful in securing internships.
- There is an opportunity to grow the share of internships that go to community college students by promoting the opportunity to engineering and IT/computer science students, in addition to biology/biotechnology and chemistry students.
- Career services capacity and resources are uneven across the state's 15 community colleges.

MASSACHUSETTS CLEAN ENERGY CENTER (CEC)

The Massachusetts Clean Energy Center's Internship Program was launched in 2011 and since that time over 3,000 students have participated. Like the Life Science Center, students must be residents of Massachusetts or matriculating at a Massachusetts college. In the last program year, FY2018, 668 students participated with a budget of \$3.8 million. The Center will place 600 students for FY2019 with a budget of \$3.5 million. Students can participate in an internship for 12 weeks in the fall, spring or summer and work 20 hours/week in the fall and spring and 40 hours a week in the summer. In FY2018 38 community college students participated. The Center offers an incentive to companies to hire community college students by raising the allowable number of interns from two to three if one of the interns is a community college student.

The CEC internship program runs through a database. Employers enter a job description, which triggers the CEC to provide them with an access code to search the database of student resumes. When an employer has chosen a student, they send CEC an email so that the Center can confirm the student's eligibility. The employer pays the wage and the intern is on the employer's payroll. The CEC requires a minimum wage of \$15/hour and will reimburse up to \$16/hour.

Companies that participate in the program tend to be small and many are start-ups; 90 percent have fewer than 25 employees. The CEC does not have any rules regarding the size of companies that can participate. The CEC requires companies to fill out a survey, which tracks the following metrics: race, gender, school, major, graduate or undergraduate, industry sector, pay level, and whether the intern is hired.

PROGRAM DESIGN TAKEAWAYS

MASSACHUSETTS CLEAN ENERGY CENTER (CEC)

- A major obstacle to community college student participation is that they are already working and leaving a job for a 12-week internship may not make sense.
- A champion on faculty or in career services is important for boosting student outreach and for coaching and advocating for students.
- Career services capacity is uneven across the state.

MASSACHUSETTS TECHNOLOGY COLLABORATIVE (MASSTECH)

The MassTech Intern Partnership started in the summer of 2013 with funding through a 2012 state economic development bill (formally, An Act Relative to Infrastructure Investment, Enhanced Competitiveness and Economic Growth in the Commonwealth). The program supports internships for students who are attending school in Massachusetts or residents of Massachusetts. Subject to state appropriation, each summer MassTech has funds available to support approximately 150–175 interns. Very few of the interns for whom companies apply are community college students.

The MassTech internship program supports summer internships, providing a stipend to eligible companies and requiring a 1:1 match. The wage floor is \$12/hour. MassTech reimburses a company 50 percent of the hourly wage or up to \$8/hour, whichever is greater. MassTech makes up to \$3,200 available for reimbursement per summer intern. Any technology company can participate but outreach to four sectors is prioritized: digital health, cybersecurity, robotics, and the internet of things. Companies in these sectors are eligible for up to three interns while all other tech companies are eligible for up to two interns. Companies eligible to participate in the internship program are start-ups with 100 or fewer employees that are based in Massachusetts.

The MassTech staff focus their efforts on outreach to companies through other MassTech programs serving specific sectors of the technology community. In addition, MassTech leverages its relationships with its partners in the tech and economic development communities to spread awareness of the program. Students must be on the company's payroll in order for the company to be reimbursed.

At the end of the summer, companies fill out a web form that provides data to MassTech. The metrics that MassTech tracks include the number of full or part-time placements at participating companies and the impact of the program on students entering the job market.

PROGRAM DESIGN TAKEAWAYS

MASSACHUSETTS TECHNOLOGY COLLABORATIVE (MASSTECH)

- Cybersecurity is an area of opportunity for community college students.
- Companies find the students and make the hiring decision.
- The 1:1 match requires more detailed documentation from the company.

STATE UNIVERSITY INTERNSHIP INCENTIVE PROGRAM

The Massachusetts annual state budget includes a line item to support internships for students matriculating at one of the state universities: the State University Internship Incentive Program. This line item was established in the FY2013 budget and appropriates \$1,000,000 to the Program. The Program requires that the Commonwealth's contribution be equal to \$1 for every \$1 privately contributed to each university's board of trustees or foundation. The dollars are distributed to each state university based on its relative share of full-time equivalent (FTE) students. Each university operates a unique internship program supported by this line item and privately raised funds. Staff who coordinate the programs across the universities meet quarterly to discuss best practices and trends.

Bridgewater State University (BSU) receives the largest distribution of funds based on its share of FTE students enrolled in the university system. BSU has been raising funds in support of internships for over five years and has created an endowment for internships. BSU initiated this fundraising because university leaders realized that while their students would benefit from work experiences related to their chosen field, most were not able to take advantage of unpaid opportunities because they already work in entry-level jobs, not unlike community college students. BSU has a separate internship office. Through the Internship Incentive Program and fundraising, BSU is able to provide an intern with a stipend of up to \$1,000 when they are in an unpaid position. BSU will often match stipends that businesses are paying (such as transportation stipends). A growing number of businesses are providing paid internships; BSU has seen an uptick in the number of businesses willing to pay.

Roughly 90 percent of interns receive course credit for their internship. If for credit, internships are offered for 13–15 weeks in the Fall or Spring semester or for 10–12 weeks, often full-time, in the summer. To receive three credits, interns are required to work 135 hours, which works out to 8–10 hours a week.

Students hear about the program through word of mouth, courses, and activities organized by the

Internship Office. The office is very active in getting the word out to students: speaking at residence halls and in courses, and conducting workshops and career fairs. The Internship Office engages faculty as well. Internships are visible on campus and part of the university's strategic plan.

BSU has about 11,000 students. At last count the internship office is managing between 800 and 1000 interns. Some students are in internships that were developed outside of the office and are not captured in the data. The Internship Office is considering surveying all students to gather more comprehensive data.

Businesses post internship opportunities on the BSU system. The Internship Office sends notices to students to make them aware of postings in the system. Students apply for the internship directly with the company. In some cases, companies ask the Internship Office to screen candidates. Companies also recruit at campus career fairs.

PROGRAM DESIGN TAKEAWAYS

STATE UNIVERSITY INTERNSHIP INCENTIVE PROGRAM

- BSU will be piloting a job readiness workshop or process in Spring 2019. Internship staff have heard from employers and students that some candidates are not really work-ready; they may not know how to handle certain situations because they have not been in a professional work environment in the past.
- Proper staffing is needed to manage interest from businesses and students. BSU has been staffing the internship program with 1.5 FTEs and added an Assistant Director this year. The number of interns has grown each of the last five years.
- Faculty need to be compensated for supervision; adequate faculty capacity to supervise students in internships that are providing credit is critical.
- The internship is a transformative experience for many individuals for whom an internship is their first professional experience.

CONNECTING ACTIVITIES

Connecting Activities is a statewide program funded through a line item in the annual state budget to support school-to-career activities. The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education provides grants to the 16 Workforce Development Boards to support career specialists who work in the high schools in their region. The career specialists provide career counseling and work readiness training to students and build relationships with employers to provide student experiences. The program uses a Work-Based Learning Plan to structure the work-based learning experience around a specific set of learning goals. Connecting Activities requires a 200 percent match of private sector dollars for every public dollar spent. The match is usually met through private sector wages.

In FY2017 10,780 students participated in work-based learning experiences statewide at 4,044 employer sites. Of those students, 8,633 placements either used the Work-Based Learning Plan or were connected to classroom and workshop instruction. The employer contribution in the form of paid placements was \$14,670,583. The budget for the program was \$2.98 million in FY 2017, \$3.52 million in FY2018, and \$3.9 million in FY 2019.

PROGRAM DESIGN TAKEAWAYS

CONNECTING ACTIVITIES

- School-to-career infrastructure could be leveraged in designing a community college internship program.
- At a minimum, a coordinated strategy in reaching out to a region's employers will be important.
- Workforce Development Boards and community colleges participate in the Workforce Skills Cabinet's Regional Planning Initiative, which could be a vehicle for a shared strategy and implementation plan.

III.

What Massachusetts Stakeholders Think About Expanding Support for Paid Internships for Community College Students

The authors spoke to leaders from business and from community colleges, as well as state policymakers who are engaged in designing and/or implementing internship and work-based learning strategies. A focus group was held with community college students who have participated in internship programs at Bunker Hill Community College.

These stakeholders provided important perspectives about what they valued in internship programs as well as the opportunities and challenges to piloting and scaling a program. We share their experiences, perspectives, and advice here, acknowledging that these views reflect those of individuals who have been active in strategies to improve the links between higher education and employers in the Commonwealth. These are not the views of a representative sample of Massachusetts business, college, and government voices. The names and affiliations of individuals we interviewed can be found in Appendix.

Businesses

All of the business associations and individual businesses that were interviewed spoke about the tight labor market, the challenges finding talent, and, in particular, the challenges finding employees from underrepresented populations. Business stakeholders agreed that this is a good time to be having this discussion because businesses are much

more likely to come up with the resources to support paid internships when they are struggling to fill open positions. With the tight labor market, businesses are taking another look at community colleges as potential sources of skilled talent.

Businesses are concerned with the readiness of their departments to take on interns and provide a quality learning experience. As with community colleges,

internship programs are often decentralized with little data at the corporate level about their design and impact.

Businesses emphasize the importance of students' being prepared for the type of work they will be doing but also having strong professional and work readiness skills, including showing up every day and on time, communicating effectively, taking feedback and instruction, and showing respect. Any internship learning design should ensure that managers are interviewing multiple candidates and actively selecting the intern (versus an intern being assigned a position). Community colleges need to support retention; if the retention rate falls below 50 percent the business is unlikely to continue to participate.

Businesses are interested in community college students as potential employees and designing the internship as a capstone would be attractive to businesses. This would give interns a semester to show their skills and fit with the company.

“We had two great interns with amazing customer service skills and strong professional skills.”

“This is a good time to have this conversation because departments are willing to find the money.”

“Talent is a top issue and there is a real need and awareness of diversity.”

— BUSINESS STAKEHOLDERS

With the exception of small businesses, individual businesses and associations did not view wage subsidies as a major driver of business participation. They emphasized the importance of an efficient relationship with the business and the readiness of students to succeed in the workplace. They noted that hosting interns requires a lot of work for businesses. The goal on the part of the college should be for repeat business; the key to doing that is understanding the culture and needs of the business and ensuring that students are adequately prepared to go to work. Businesses suggested piloting the internship model; if it is successful, businesses will vouch for it and it will start to get attention.

For firms participating in Learn and Earn, the impetus for participation often comes from the CEO. As a result, funding is available for the internships and the program is prioritized among key staff at the firm. The participating companies have been consistently impressed with the quality of their interns. Some businesses cited the limits to scaling the program both in terms of wages and support infrastructure at the colleges; others were less concerned about absorbing the wage costs.

Community Colleges

Community Colleges see value in providing a broad range of work-based learning opportunities to their students. “Work-based learning” is viewed flexibly and ranges from career exploration and reflective learning opportunities to paid internships and formal apprenticeship programs. Paid internship, co-operative education, and apprenticeships would provide students with the income necessary to take advantage of intensive, full-time programs. These programs also provide the opportunity for employers to “road test” students before potential hiring. Designing a system that provides access to work-based learning

opportunities for community college students is also an issue of equity: Experiences like study abroad and internship opportunities are taken for granted by more affluent students in four-year colleges.

Community colleges face challenges getting the attention of employers as they compete with four-year colleges that have better-known brands. The opportunity to participate in work-based learning opportunities is more limited for community college students both because many employers have not recognized them as a source of talent and because they are often already working—usually in entry-level employment—to support themselves and pay for school. Many lack time in their schedule to also pursue an internship. Students may also be carrying health insurance for the family through their entry-level job. In regions or sectors of the economy dominated by small businesses or nonprofits, some form of a wage subsidy may be necessary in order to open work-based learning experiences to more students.

Given the regional differences in labor markets, community colleges are responding to very different labor demand and economic development needs in their communities. One president suggested that each school needs a business relationship manager who can partner with local businesses to create win-win opportunities that respond to the needs of businesses and students. Faculty and career services staff agree that companies want to talk with the faculty person

who “speaks their language,” understands their business, and knows the students. Faculty are critical for effective outreach to companies and ongoing relationship management. Career services departments provide students support in preparing resumes, practicing interviews, and acquiring job-seeking and professional skills. The collaboration between faculty and career services is critical to success.

“Internship and apprenticeship would be excellent tools for students.”

“At the high school level, exposure is the expectation. At postsecondary levels, experience is the expectation.”

“Today experiential learning opportunities are more important than ever before.”

— COMMUNITY COLLEGE LEADERS

Community colleges have limited capacity to do the kind of convening and organizing necessary to develop and implement complex partnerships of multiple employers. This was considered less a matter of not having the right skills on the campus, but that the people with the right skills lacked time to commit to building partnerships that lead to sustained work-based learning efforts.

Because so many community college students are working, there may be an opportunity to provide a classroom experience that leverages the learning and context of the students' workplaces. The *Ethnography of Work* course at Guttman Community College in the City University of New York system was cited as an example. This approach would provide an opportunity for students who cannot afford to give up their job for an internship to reflect on the dynamics and culture of the workplace and develop professional skills necessary to find and succeed in jobs related to their field of study. Providing the opportunity for multiple internship experiences during a college career ensures that students can gain experience, skills, and networks in their field of study and have the opportunity to reflect on what they have learned in their studies.

Community college presidents also saw an opportunity to link work-based learning to other state-supported efforts such as Early College. One of the pillars of Early College is career literacy and work experience.

Building a community of practice among community college staff who are engaged in work-based learning was regarded as a priority. Through the community of practice, professionals can share promising practices, do joint problem solving, and engage in professional development that enhances the systems and experiences for students and employers.

An organization that partners with community colleges to design internship programs and other work-based learning experiences counseled that community colleges do not uniformly have the competencies necessary to partner with businesses to design internship strategies. Therefore, the design should be an opt-in model, provide support for the development of professional/work readiness skills, and be flexible in the development of specific hard skills industry by industry.

State Policymakers

The Commonwealth has invested in a regional planning process that brings together education, workforce development, and economic development organizations to identify regional priorities and strategies that are shared across systems. This process is being driven by the Workforce Skills Cabinet composed of the Secretaries of Education, Labor and Workforce Development, and Economic Development. This process presents the opportunity to build a work-based learning strategy and system for community college students (and potentially high school and other targeted populations) through the regional planning process and relationships.

The Workforce Skills Cabinet is also interested in a broader framework of work-based learning/experiential learning that includes internships and apprenticeships. The state has invested in community college programs through a series of scholarship programs and \$90 million in capital equipment grants over the last several years.

Some of the questions that state leaders are considering include:

- Can the Commonwealth devise a technology platform to support development and implementation of work-based learning for students in high school and in higher education?
- Can any existing statewide or regional entities serve as an “expeditor”—an intermediary organization whose primary function is to develop talent solutions for businesses that include internships and other work-based experiences for high school and postsecondary students?
- How would such an entity work with and across different public systems and the private sector?
- How would the state/region support such an entity?

If the state did develop this expeditor capacity—probably at a regional level—the priority sectors would need to align with the regional blueprint developed through the regional planning process. This would present a branding opportunity for the state, not

unlike the approach that other states have taken to work-based learning initiatives. It may also facilitate bringing the voice of business directly into the regional planning process to ensure that regional workforce, education, and economic development entities are working with real-time, nuanced data and information for policy analysis and program design purposes.

State policymakers also see an opportunity for accelerated learning initiatives to be a complement to work-based learning. Internships could be integrated into certificate and degree programs and accelerated learning would be the front end of apprenticeship programs. Accelerated learning models can be designed to tap Pell Grant dollars for low-income students, making it possible to fill program seats in fall, spring, and summer. The FY2019 state budget includes a first-time tax credit of \$4,700 for apprenticeships that could present an opportunity for community colleges to incentivize regional businesses to develop apprenticeship programs.

The state also sees work-based learning, especially apprenticeship, as an opportunity to scale career pathways models. But state officials also understand the obstacles for scaling these models that are presented by limited capacity to engage business, develop talent solutions using work-based learning models, and manage that work. This is both an infrastructure and a branding issue. Where work-based learning is happening, for the most part it is paid for with grant dollars and may not be sustained over time.

Massachusetts has a long history of supporting work-based learning for high school students that may present a platform for providing a broader range of work-based learning opportunities across both higher education and high schools. The decision about whether to build infrastructure and a brand across

systems or to create two intermediaries and brands that focus on high schools and higher education, respectively, is a fundamental design question. Limited resources to invest in infrastructure and marketing and

ease of use on the part of businesses may argue for a more integrated approach. State officials noted that the system of expeditors/business intermediaries will need to have the capacity to deliver to businesses before the model could be scaled or widely marketed.

Some state officials want to see a clearly articulated connection

between the colleges and their workforce development mission before investing in community college work-based learning. Evidence of community colleges embracing workforce development is critical to making a decision to invest in the systems, capacity, and market-building necessary for a robust work-based learning environment. Equity—providing the same opportunities for community college students to take advantage of internship and other work-based learning opportunities as four-year college students—is a compelling argument for investing in work-based learning systems at community colleges. However, a successful proposal for state investment will need to be concrete, address the barriers to community college students taking advantage of work-based learning opportunities, and demonstrate buy-in on the part of college leadership for workforce development as an important mission of their institutions.

On a policy level, one stakeholder observed that creating a state incentive that ties employment outcomes to funding at community colleges is critical to changing behavior. Since educational value is rarely measured in terms of employment outcomes, strategies and models that lead to more robust employment outcomes end up being further down the list of priorities in a time of resource constraints and pressure to improve academic performance.

“The key is to have a model that everyone agrees on to increase alignment and scalability.”

“[We would] need to tap into and deliver a structured program with a statewide brand that will build student and employer interest.”

“Any proposal should be specific and concrete and demonstrate the community college commitment to workforce development.”

— STATE POLICYMAKERS

Community College Students

Community college students see the value of internship experiences in a number of areas: learning and mastering technical skills, building professional skills, growing their network and social capital in industry, and developing their confidence to pursue new learning and internship opportunities. For many community college students, their internship is the first time they work in a professional environment and are expected to learn new job skills quickly. Mastering those new skills is particularly important to building students' confidence in their ability to thrive in both professional and academic environments.

Students who work in internships typically juggle school, work, family responsibilities, and the internship. As noted earlier, 70 percent of community college students are already working, usually in jobs not related to their field of study. In order to accept internships in which they may work two days a week, many students work their existing job on weekends and cluster courses into two days a week. Paid internships make it easier for students to accommodate their internship and their job. For students who also have family responsibilities, the scheduling challenge becomes even more complex. Transportation can be a challenge, though transportation accommodations or costs are often absorbed by the employer.

Community college students do not necessarily see internships as leading directly to their first job out of college. Their experience is that internships open doors by building their resumes, providing work experiences, and, most importantly, teaching them professional skills necessary to be competitive in the occupation or industry for which they are studying. Their internship experience provides context for career and program

decisions. Students see advantages to working in multiple internships while they are in school.

When asked what advice they would provide to college administrators, students recommend advising about internship opportunities earlier in their college experience, increasing flexibility on GPA requirements, and broadening the industries providing internships. For employers, students recommend that they have clear job descriptions and tasks and a better understanding of the skills interns bring to the job and their goals.

**“The first internship is the hardest to get.
That internship opened doors for me.”**

“I feel more confident because of my technical skills.”

**“I’ve been able to build networks and connections
and ask for personal advice.”**

**“I learned how to work in a professional environment.
The way that you talk and dress in a professional
environment is different than on campus.”**

— COMMUNITY COLLEGE STUDENTS

Students perceive the major impediments to other students pursuing internships as self-confidence and a lack of information. Hearing from students who have been successfully hired as interns may be one way of overcoming student hesitancy to apply.

Reconciling Massachusetts' Stakeholder Perspectives

Stakeholder groups we interviewed agreed on the need for a more structured approach to connecting community college students to internship opportunities, but expressed differences in consideration of scope and timing. Community colleges and state policymakers are interested in advancing a broad framework for work-based learning. Students we spoke with had little knowledge of work-based learning opportunities beyond internships and thought they should experience multiple internship opportunities. Some businesses suggested that a capstone experience may more directly lead to an offer of employment following an internship experience.

Businesses are clear that any work-based learning effort needs to prepare students for the workplace prior to their being hired. Work readiness and retention services provided by their college or a local partner are seen as important for student success—and for colleges

to secure repeat business as a provider of interns and future workers.

Students emphasized that the internship was often the first time that they had worked in a

professional environment and understanding basic expectations like dress and communication was important to their learning. Career services capacity at community colleges (and high schools and arguably some four-year colleges) is perceived by and large as under-developed. The system for preparing students for work and supporting them during their work-based experience will need to be developed in a way that pays attention to quality but is also scalable.

The variation in regional industries and demand is an area of agreement across stakeholders. The sectors and scale of demand in Metro Boston are very different from the demand in the Pioneer Valley, the Berkshires, and Cape Cod and the southeastern part of the state. Building a model of work-based learning that is regional in design and aligns with regional

Building a model of work-based learning that is regional in design and aligns with regional planning efforts in the state makes sense.

planning efforts in the state makes sense. Even in Boston—the part of the state with the most public transportation options—transportation to internships proved to

be a challenge for some students.

In terms of resources, businesses did not see the expectation that they pay wages to interns as a significant obstacle (though we did not talk to a lot of small business owners). Community colleges and state policymakers articulated some potential for using Pell Grants and tax credits to support accelerated learning and work-based learning. There is little capacity across the state in organizations that can play the expeditor role, and colleges' career services capacity is widely seen as inadequate. Stakeholders agreed that funding these roles and services is necessary if the state is to build and sustain a successful and scalable model of paid internships for students, and for community college students in particular.

IV.

Key Design Elements and Options in Community College Internships

The stakeholders and organizational leaders we spoke with who have implemented or worked with internship programs in Massachusetts tended to emphasize a common set of lessons and guides for policy. These can be distilled into design principles related to employer demand; equity opportunities and challenges facing community college students; and institutional capacity challenges facing community colleges seeking to support and manage a large-scale internship program.

Design Considerations

EMPLOYER DEMAND

- The labor market in Massachusetts is highly conducive to a community college paid internship program because of skill shortages and talent challenges facing employers across the state.
- Talent demand varies by region and the mix of industries and employers in each region.
- Employers want to trust their talent pipelines and keep their interactions with institutions and talent programs simple and predictable.

STUDENT EQUITY

- Community college students are frequently overlooked. This is particularly true in a state like Massachusetts with such a large number of four-year baccalaureate programs.
- Internships, and work-based learning generally, can be a transformative experience, especially for low-income students who have limited professional networks and experiences.
- Low-income students tend to be working and face financial challenges accepting short-term internships, even when paid.

- Paid internships, along with apprenticeship slots and work-based learning opportunities, could open up some technical/occupational programs with intense academic demands to students who could not otherwise afford the time and cost commitment these degrees or certifications require.

COMMUNITY COLLEGE CAPACITY

- Community colleges have limited bandwidth when it comes to employer outreach and the development and ongoing support of robust internship programs.
- No intermediaries operating regionally have sufficient capacity to partner with businesses to design talent pipeline solutions across high schools, community colleges, and career centers.
- Interns need their colleges to provide work-readiness and professional skill training necessary to succeed in a professional work environment.
- Online matching portals are not the answer to limited staff capacity; market development and capacity building are more critical.

Program Design

The design of an internship program for Massachusetts needs to take advantage of the opportunities of a tight labor market, address the access challenges facing community college students, and build the capacity of community colleges to successfully implement a quality program. The foundational goals of a statewide effort can be summarized as follows:

PROGRAM PURPOSE: To provide a pathway to a job with career opportunities related to a student's field of study and to expand the work-ready talent pool for Massachusetts businesses.

POLICY GOAL: To develop the infrastructure and market demand to launch, scale, and sustain a sizable paid internship program for community college students.

CORE STUDENT EXPERIENCE: To provide community college students with an internship or cooperative education experience that provides career exploration and work experience, supports the development of critical work readiness and foundation skills, builds a student's professional network, and opens doors to new opportunities.

Here is one synthesis of how the Commonwealth might design a statewide internship program that expands community college students' access to paid work in their field while they are still enrolled in school.

ORGANIZE BY REGIONS

A statewide program or platform with regional customization and focus would address the differences in regional labor market demands and prioritize investment in regional capacity to engage with employers and build strategic partnerships. A regional approach would build from the investment that the state has already made in regional planning, bringing together representatives from economic development, workforce development, and education to examine labor market data and establish regional priorities. Building out work-based learning and intermediary capacity would be a logical next step. State policy should drive which organizations carry out this role and support expansion of local capacity to play this role successfully.

EMPHASIZE SECTORS IMPORTANT STATEWIDE AND REGIONALLY

Much of the Commonwealth's investment in internship capacity is sector-based and was created in the context of a broader economic development framework. The State University Incentive Program is an exception. As noted above, community college students make up a small share of the interns participating in the sector initiatives, in part due to limited career services capacity at the community colleges. A regional approach, even to a statewide framework that takes a sector approach, would allow the program to be

responsive to the unique opportunities and challenges in different regions of the state.

PRIORITIZE PAID WORK TO ADDRESS ACCESS AND EQUITY

A fundamental design challenge is the financial need of many students for ongoing income and benefits in order to make ends meet. Students often feel they have to choose their low-learning content, low-paying regular job over an internship opportunity in their field, even though the internship may have greater long-term value. Program design must address students' income needs and this may be a factor in the length of internship offered, decisions about how many internships one should be able to secure while in school, and when in a student's program internships are offered. Community college students want flexibility; they see value in the opportunity to experience internships in early semesters and to experience multiple internships.

PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES FOR ACADEMIC CREDIT

Academic credit for internships may be part of the solution by freeing up time that students would otherwise spend in the classroom. Providing academic credit would require faculty supervision; therefore, sufficient faculty would need to be available to supervise students at a substantially larger scale than exists today. There would be a cost associated with this in terms of faculty stipends and potentially additional headcount. A capstone opportunity would provide academic credit and be more closely timed to a student's job search, making it more of an attractive value proposition for the student to reduce entry-level job hours in order to get important work experience, build a network, and find potential references for a job in their field of study.

LEVERAGE EXISTING STATE-FUNDED INTERNSHIP PROGRAMS

Building capacity to support students in work-based learning opportunities would potentially allow community colleges to take greater advantage of internship programs already funded by the state and quasi-public authorities in the state. The relatively small number of community college students

accessing internships in the Life Science Center, Clean Energy Center, and Mass Tech Collaborative Internship programs is tied to the capacity of the community colleges to reach out to students, assist them in their resumes and interviewing skills, and advocate for them with businesses. The Legislature invests an annual appropriation of \$1 million for the State University Internship Incentive Program. State policy that equitably serves students at two- and four-year institutions would increase state investment so that paid internships and other work-based learning opportunities in their field were more readily available to community college students.

SET CLEAR EXPECTATIONS OF EMPLOYERS AND COLLEGES

Internships should be paid and wages counted as a match against state funds that support program management and quality at the college. In return, community colleges would ensure that internship candidates are screened, have mastered work readiness skills, have been referred by a reliable member of staff or faculty, and are supported during the internship. Community colleges would also be responsible for tracking metrics. Employers would need to provide information to inform metrics.

SIMPLIFY THE MATCHING PROCESS

Businesses strongly prefer the flexibility to interview students and make the final hiring decision. However, a well-designed online job matching portal could be a valuable, cost-effective way to expand community college capacity to identify a pool of applicants for specific internship opportunities and to prepare students to apply and interview for internships.

COLLECT AND REPORT PERTINENT METRICS

To show results to policymakers and funders and for purposes of continuous quality improvement, community colleges would need to track key student metrics including: number of interns, their demographics, their

fields of study, industries represented, wage levels, and hiring after internship or work-based learning opportunity.

COMBINE STATE AND PHILANTHROPIC DOLLARS

Of the out-of-state programs examined, three were supported with state funding, two with philanthropic dollars, and one was launched with a United States Department of Labor grant. Businesses in Massachusetts appear to be willing to pay interns' wages if their talent pipeline improves. The greatest resource need is in supporting the capacity of community colleges and/or their regional partners to be able to manage outreach to the business community and prepare and support college interns. Initial program launch should be funded through a combination of state and/or philanthropic support for college infrastructure and employer payment of intern

The greatest resource need is in supporting the capacity of community colleges and/or their regional partners to be able to manage outreach to the business community and prepare and support college interns.

wages. Recurring state funding would support the community college infrastructure. The State University Internship Incentive Program may be a model for funding a community college internship program. Additional revenue sources could be explored,

such as summer Pell Grants and/or reimbursement from companies that turn an internship into a permanent hire.

PHASE IN THE PROGRAM

To give the program a strong start, launch with a six-month regional planning process followed by a pilot for program-ready regions. A place to begin is to assess the capacity of community colleges and other regional partners to implement a work-based learning or internship program and then to scale that program. A self-assessment by the community college and perhaps with regional planning partners would identify strengths and gaps and provide a roadmap for building regional capacity necessary to implement the program. The Commonwealth could begin to scale the program after such a planning period.

IV.

Conclusion

The state's tight labor market creates an opportunity for community college students to gain access to the kinds of internships and work-based learning experiences that students from more affluent backgrounds have taken for granted for years and that are available to many four-year STEM students in the Commonwealth. Internships open doors to new careers, critical skills, and networks that can transform the lives of students—and they create a pipeline of talent for the state's employers. An internship program designed to serve community college students will

need to address their unique needs, build the capacity of the colleges to succeed, and engage employers in each region of the state. Key leaders and stakeholders are putting forward ideas for improved practice and policy. New approaches are being piloted across the state. The time may be right to tap into this energy and innovation and to design a policy initiative that meets the interrelated needs of both community college students and the Commonwealth's employers for a more robust and diverse talent pipeline in key industries.

Appendix

Interviewees

Tim Aldinger, Director of Workforce Development Services, Foundation for California Community Colleges

Diane Bell, Director, Internship Program Office, Bridgewater State University

Marybeth Campbell, Executive Director, SkillWorks

Gerald Chertavian, Founder and CEO, Year-Up

J.D. Chesloff, Executive Director, Massachusetts Business Roundtable

John Cox, President, Cape Cod Community College

Pam Eddinger, President, Bunker Hill Community College

The Honorable Cindy Friedman, Massachusetts State Senator

Nancy Hoffman, Senior Advisor, Jobs for the Future;
Member, Massachusetts Board of Higher Education

Tamika Jacques, Director of Workforce Development, Massachusetts Clean Energy Center

Stacey Kaminski, Executive Director, CONNECT Partnership, Bridgewater State University

Chris Kealey, Deputy Director, Massachusetts Business Roundtable

Ellen Kennedy, President, Berkshire Community College

Amy Kerwin, Vice President for Education Philanthropy, Ascendium Education Group
(formerly Great Lakes Higher Education Guarantee Corporation)

Gail Kotval, Iowa Innovation Council Liaison, Iowa Economic Development Authority

Allison Kuehr, Assistant Director, Indiana INTERNnet

J.D. LaRock, President and CEO, Commonwealth Corporation

Robert LePage, Assistant Secretary, Career Education,
Massachusetts Executive Office of Education

Richard Lord, President and CEO, Associated Industries of Massachusetts

Gary MacDonald, Executive Vice President, AIM HR Solutions

John Magill, Assistant Deputy Chancellor, Economic Advancement, Ohio Department
of Higher Education

Gretchen Manning, Deputy Director, Massachusetts Association of Community Colleges

Ashley Moore, Director of Academic, Career and Civic Engagement, Northern Essex Community College

George Moriarty, Executive Director of Workforce Development and Corporate Relations, Northern Essex Community College

Ryan Mudawar, Senior Director of Academic and Workforce Programs, Massachusetts Life Sciences Center

Beth Nicklas, General Counsel and Vice President for Academic & Workforce Programs, Massachusetts Life Sciences Center

Dan O’Connell, Former President and CEO, Massachusetts Competitive Partnership

Stephen Osborn, Chief for Innovation, Rhode Island Department of Education

Nina Pande, Executive Director, Skills for Rhode Island’s Future

Joanne Pokaski, Senior Director of Workforce Development and Community Relations, Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center

Jennifer James Price, Undersecretary for Workforce Development, Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development

Elena Quiroz-Livanis, Director of Academic Policy and Student Success, Massachusetts Department of Higher Education

Christina Royal, President, Holyoke Community College

Elizabeth Zachry Rutschow, Senior Research Associate, MDRC

M. J. Ryan, Director, Workforce Development, Partners HealthCare System

Jennifer Saubermann, Associate General Counsel and Director of Intragovernmental Affairs, Legal & Administration, Massachusetts Technology Collaborative

Shailah Stewart, Coordinator of High School Pathway Development, Office of College, Career and Technical Education, Massachusetts Department of Education

Bill Swanson, Former CEO, Raytheon; former Chair, Massachusetts Competitive Partnership

Jeremy Thompson, Senior Policy Analyst, Massachusetts Budget and Policy Center

Brett Visger, Associate Chancellor, Ohio Department of Higher Education

Focus Group of Bunker Hill Community College Students, with
Belinda Kadambi, Professor, Biotechnology, and
Austin Gilliland, Interim Assistant Academic Dean, Professional Studies

