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Learning in the big leagues

Tech companies see internships as a solid recruiting tool

Baltimore Business Journal - by [Roger Hughlett](#) Staff

Lata Ahuja is two steps -- maybe three -- ahead of her peers, and she's loving every minute of it.

The 22-year-old senior computer science major at **Towson University** is one of 17 college students working as interns at **LCG Technologies Corp.**, a Web development and software firm in Timonium.

"After I talk to my friends who don't have internships, they want internships," Ahuja said.

Real-world experience -- dealing with a client instead of a professor -- is the primary benefit an internship with a technology company offers college students. In addition to that, companies are finding that internships are serving as a solid recruiting tool in one of the toughest labor markets in history.

Still, it's the benefits to students that inspired Tom Lang, president of LCG Technologies (<http://www.lcgtechnologies.com>), to create a formal program.

"We also tell them that we are doing the internships for the interns, not just the company," Lang said.

He admits, however, that the company has gotten quite a bit out of the program. In fact, 30 percent of the company's 60 workers are former interns.

The company draws interns from Towson University, Morgan State University, University of Maryland, Baltimore County, Loyola College in Maryland and Goucher College

Officials with these schools are more than happy to send students to the company. It's one of the more important roles universities should play in today's business world, according to internship advocates.

Jim Clements, executive director of the Center for Applied Information Technology and a professor of computer and information sciences at Towson University, said businesses and universities need to work together to make sure students are receiving the best possible training and businesses are receiving the best possible students. "We encourage our students to get their resumes online so companies can find them," he said. Clements also spends time talking with local technology companies to make sure his programs match the needs of business.

Officials with the career development centers at other local universities agreed that connecting their students with technology companies for internships is important.

Morgan State University sends at least three of its computer science students to San Jose, Calif., each summer to work with Hewlett-Packard Co.

Keeping the most talented students in Greater Baltimore is a concern shared by technology leaders and economic development officials. Because of this, local internships are seen as a productive recruiting tool.

Lang, who worked as an engineering intern while attending Cornell University in the mid-1980s, said introducing students to his company has paid off quite well.

The majority of college students who work at LCG Technologies stay on after graduation. Ahuja, who completed her first semester-long internship last spring before signing up for the summer and fall semesters as well, said there is more than a 90 percent chance that she'll stay on with the company after graduating in December.

"It's probably even a little more than 90 percent," she said.

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