



National Association of Colleges and Employers - 2019 Inclusion Committee

Transcript: Leveraging an Internship Program to Build a More Diverse Work Force

Hello, I'm Brian Case, manager of Corporate Talent Management for PPL and a member of the NACE Inclusion Committee.

Today, I'm going to talk to you about leveraging an internship program to build a more diverse work force.

In the past five years alone, PPL has welcomed interns from 60 different majors, 17 states and two-thirds of PPL's interns represent female and under-represented groups. In fact, we have hired more than 60 percent of interns as full time PPL employees after graduation.

PPL's program follows several simple principles: Recruit early and often, broaden the reach, think long term and create a meaningful experience.

It all starts with recruitment. I like to say: recruit early and often. Don't wait until January, start in the Fall and attend events early in the semesters. Don't rely on just career fairs for recruiting -- attend symposiums, send speakers to talk about career development, attend events organized by different majors and clubs on campus. Every interaction can lead to finding a great employee.

That brings me to the important topic of broadening the reach. Be cautious about limiting the organizations that you work with to one region or narrow focus. The goal is to find interns with diverse backgrounds and perspectives that reflect the workforce that you want to build. Partner with institutions that closely match your company's diversity goals and objectives. Also, include involvement in organizations such as NACE, or local chapters like PennACE here in PA. Think long term. Don't think of an internship as a three-month stint for a student. Think of it as a really long job interview. Provide real work experience and situations to help identify interns as potential employees after graduation.

Last but not least, remember create a meaningful experience so your interns want to work for you in the future. Provide hands-on project responsibilities, networking opportunities, and professional development training for personal growth. Add some fun activities too, such as volunteer projects in the community and teambuilding events.

At PPL, each intern has a coach — we think this is a best practice — in addition to their supervisor. They are routinely given feedback throughout the program to provide ways to apply what they have learned going forward.

It is undeniable, research shows, that a diverse work force leads to increased innovation and better results. For companies, building the pipeline of diverse candidates can be a challenge. A well-planned internship recruiting program can reap rewards for years to come.