

Hanford Site interns earn while they gain experience

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Kraig Williams, a mechanical engineering student working this summer at the Fast Flux Test Facility, is applying classroom concepts to his work. "In class, you learn about one small piece of a system," he said. "Out here, I'm working with an entire system, and I'm seeing how that one small piece affects the rest of the system."

Mentored by Hanford professionals, 45 students are assisting with Fluor Hanford projects. They're helping with marketing research for the Volpentest HAMMER Training and Education Center, compiling information in databases for the Spent Nuclear Fuel project, assisting in environmental compliance activities for the 300 Area, monitoring heavy metal content in various stages of wastewater treatment processes, and writing programs to transfer training to the Web for Hanford employees.

Twelve interns from seven different Northwest universities are a part of the Bechtel Hanford 2001 internship program. Their daily work is closely linked to the Bechtel-led Environmental Restoration Contractor team's day-to-day functions — from planning and controls to design engineering — giving them valuable hands-on experience.

The Waste Treatment Plant Project headed by Bechtel National has a Student Training Enrichment Program with 24 participants this summer. They include four local high-school graduates who received scholarships from either the Hispanic Academic Achievers Program or the African American Academic Society. The other 20 are college and university seniors from institutions as far away as the University of Southern California and Simon Bolivar University in Venezuela.

CH2M HILL Hanford Group has 21 summer interns through Associated Western Universities, including a student from France who is working for Numatec Hanford. Most are studying to become engineers or computer

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TOP: Jason Moy, communications intern for the DOE Office of River Protection, and CHG communications intern Erin Donahoe work together on a display for the River Protection Project. Moy will be a sophomore at University of Puget Sound in the fall. Donahoe will be a freshman at Syracuse University.

MIDDLE: At the William R. Wiley Environmental Molecular Sciences Laboratory, Ann Baker, right, of WSU Tri-Cities assists Nancy Foster-Mills in taking measurements related to waste-treatment research. Baker plans to teach middle school math and is one of 10 participants hosted by PNNL for its Pre-Service Teacher Project.

BOTTOM: Fluor Hanford chemical engineering intern Brian Chase performs lab work at the 310 Waste Water Treatment facility. Chase will be a senior at WSU in Pullman this fall.

Hanford Site interns earn while they gain experience, cont.

scientists, but CHG interns are also represented in the fields of business, finance, communications and English.

Several students work for the Department of Energy in either the Richland Operations Office or the Office of River Protection. Jason Moy, a 2000 graduate of Hanford High School, is an intern in the ORP Office of Communications. "It's definitely a different environment than college," Moy said. "It's extremely valuable to get the real-world job experience."

Career guidance

Students in the Fluor Hanford program participate in bi-weekly career development meetings. According to Fluor Education Outreach coordinator Theresa Quezada, the meetings give students the opportunity to discuss career skills with special speakers and learn more about the work at Hanford through student presentations. Topics and speakers have included "Diversity in the Workplace" by Human Resources specialist Kathy Norris, "Public Speaking" by Site Services account manager Ed Schwier and "Life Planning" by Quezada.

Internships help students achieve educational goals and gain confidence and knowledge before entering the workplace. "The impact of this internship experience transcends the classroom," said Quezada.

PNNL is hosting 126 students and 49 teachers this summer in programs funded by the Department of Energy Office of Science, the National Science Foundation and Battelle as well as PNNL itself and local school districts. "The programs link the students and teachers to the world beyond the classroom," said Jeff Estes, manager of the PNNL Science Education Programs. "They provide real-world experiences that enhance participant knowledge and skills while supporting the research and development efforts of the laboratory."

Mutual benefits

There are no make-work assignments, so interns make real contributions. Hillary Johnson of Kennewick, a junior majoring in biology at Pacific Lutheran University in Tacoma, works with Bechtel environmental specialists to gather data that help in reintroducing and promoting native plant populations at Hanford. "Bechtel is giving me a chance to put my education into action," Johnson said. "The program allows me to explore all my talents while helping to contribute to a worthwhile and important project at Hanford."

The programs aid Hanford recruiters too, according to Audra Goldie-Riedner, Bechtel Hanford's internship program coordinator. "The program allows Bechtel to gain a solid sense of the interns' capabilities for possible future consideration for the Bechtel staff," she said.

Any college student can submit his or her résumé to Associated Western Universities at www.awu.org to be considered for internship programs with many major companies. Students are selected based on their field of study. ♦

FH student program promotes diversity

Fluor Hanford initiated a unique program this summer, offered to female students and those from minority and other underrepresented groups. The program provides advice on the "intangibles" of being a member of today's workforce.

The program was the brainchild of Fluor's Kathy Norris, who works in Human Resources and has seen that some interns of high school and college age are well prepared in their given fields, but can be a bit "green" when it comes to other skills a successful professional needs.

"While our interns are no doubt skilled and capable in a given field," said Norris, "I started noticing that some had not been versed in the proper way to construct a résumé, for instance. Coupled with this, most had obviously never been in an actual work atmosphere and therefore weren't prepared in areas like personality conflicts, approaching superiors, prioritizing tasks, understanding pay, taxes and benefits, and even little things like appearance at work and where and when to use humor."

The mentors for the program were strictly volunteers, and their efforts supplement the guidance given by the students' mentors in their assigned projects.

Julie Donald, one of the students who took advantage of the supplemental mentoring, says it has already paid dividends in her job search, which will be centered in the Seattle area. "I received some excellent tips on résumé content and interviewing skills from my mentor," Donald said. "If I'm competing in the Seattle job market, I need a little something extra to make me stand out among all of the laid-off 'dot-comers.' With my mentor's help, I think I've got it — plus the added confidence of knowing that my résumé stacks up against the rest."

Fluor Hanford plans on continuing the program next summer. ♦