**Applied learning improves college graduates’ pay**

For years, college students have been encouraged to look for applied learning experiences as a way to augment what they learn in the classroom. The experiences — internships, apprenticeships, and working in research labs — are an opportunity for personal, professional and intellectual growth, and a chance to network with experts in the field.

These days, applied learning is practically a necessity. Preliminary data from two of the State University of New York’s leading institutions show that internships in three fields led students to higher-paying jobs.

Using combined data from Binghamton and Stony Brook universities, SUNY looked at median wages for undergrads who had applied learning experiences compared to those who did not. They found the greatest impact in business, information sciences and the visual and performing arts.

More specifically, those who majored in business, management and public administration and had experiential learning opportunities earned $8,000 more than students without. In the visual and performing arts, as well as communications technologies, these experiences made a $16,000 salary difference. In mathematics and computer and information sciences, the difference was nearly $23,000. In short, experience counts.

These experience are central to my vision of giving all students an individualized education.

In the 2017-2018 academic year, nearly a quarter of all SUNY students were enrolled in at least one applied learning course, and 40 percent of our programs require experiential learning.

Our technology campuses are especially strong in this area, with nearly 45 percent of all students enrolled in experiential courses. At Alfred State College, SUNY Cobleskill, Farmingdale State College, and SUNY Morrisville, all students are required to engage in internships, practicums, field experiences, laboratory work and capstone design courses with research components. And our community colleges enable applied learning by partnering with local companies to create workforce opportunities in fields ranging from advanced manufacturing to clean energy.

Applied learning is critical in the humanities and liberal arts as well. English students for instance, can gain valuable experience by working in a communications office. Psychology students benefit from working in a mental health clinic or research lab. History students can apply what they learn by curating creative works in museums.

As anyone who has ever had an internship or apprenticeship can tell you, the real world is often the best classroom of all.

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