

PCI Intern Program – A New Industry Initiative



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A joint subcommittee of the PCI Professional Member Committee and the PCI Student Education Committee has collaborated to develop the PCI Summer Intern Program. The purpose of this program is to offer summer employment opportunities to engineering and architecture students with PCI producer plants, industry suppliers, consulting engineering firms, and architecture firms. This article discusses the various components of this program and poses typical questions and answers regarding the program.

The goal of the PCI Summer Intern Program seeks to link engineering and architecture students looking for summer employment with PCI producer plants, industry suppliers, consulting engineering firms and architecture firms.

The program is also applicable to university co-op programs that operate

throughout the year. The PCI Professional Member and PCI Student Education committees are working to implement this program prior to the summer of 2001.

During the past several years there has been a reduced number of students entering engineering and architecture schools. As a result, there is an in-

crease in competition for a shrinking number of engineering and architect graduates. This is a general situation throughout the United States that is affecting both precast producing plants and their supporting engineering and architectural consultants.

Because of these competing job opportunities, PCI producers and their

supporting engineering and architect consultants are finding it increasingly difficult to attract new young technical people. The demand for bright, young engineers is likely to increase and have even more of an effect on the precast/prestressed concrete industry in the coming years unless some positive steps are taken to attract the necessary talent to the industry. The Summer Intern Program is one initiative that PCI is implementing to attract this young new talent.

Benefits to PCI Member Companies

The potential benefits to PCI member companies that participate in the Summer Intern Program are clear. This program provides participating companies with the opportunity to "test drive" bright and enthusiastic potential new employees, while at the same time getting needed staff help during the busy summer vacation season. In addition, it is also an excellent three-month long recruiting opportunity to interest the student intern to work within the precast/prestressed industry after graduation. Thus, all PCI member and affiliated companies are encouraged to take advantage of the opportunity to participate in this important initiative.

How Will the Program Work?

The current résumé posting option on the PCI web page (www.pci.org) will be incorporated with the new Summer Intern Program. This service will provide for the potential interns a listing of companies with summer intern opportunities. For each company, a brief description of the company's location, size, specialty of work, type of jobs available, intern salary and number of intern positions available will be posted. Contact information such as e-mail, phone and fax numbers will be provided to allow interested students to directly contact the appropriate person within each PCI company.

Students will also be able to post individual résumés, so that companies proactively looking for interns can contact interested students. Students may be interested in summer jobs near their universities or near their home-

towns if they plan to go home during the summer.

As intern positions are filled and as new openings become available, the PCI companies will communicate this information to the PCI webmaster for updating of the intern program database.

The PCI Summer Intern Program will be advertised within the industry and through direct mail to key university professors in civil and architecture engineering and architecture departments throughout the nation. These key university contacts will be provided with flyers and posters that describe the program and how to access the Summer Intern portion on the PCI web page.

Internships Enhance the Technical Education Experience

First-hand practical applications of the university course work to which a student is exposed generally leads to a greater interest in and understanding of the material. This results in better preparing students to enter the workforce and in students who can make active contributions to the work environment more quickly.

Student interns may be interested in everything from labor jobs in precast/prestressed manufacturing plants to design support assignments in consulting engineer and architect offices. Typical assignments might include:

- Manufacturing labor assignments
- Quality control technician work
- Inspector work
- Plant engineering office support
- Drafting support
- Shop drawing checking support
- Field work on job sites
- Project management support
- Design team support assignments
- Surveying and product measurement assignments
- Engineering specific load testing
- Development of new plant equipment
- Improving plant efficiencies
- Special task assignments

PCI has developed an intern program support package that includes a listing of suggestions that can be used by PCI member companies as a guide

to having a successful and productive intern experience for both the intern and the PCI company. Interested companies can download this summer intern support package from the PCI Summer Intern Support section on the PCI web page. The PCI Summer Intern Support section also includes a listing of frequently asked questions that may be of interest to both students and companies considering participation in the program.

Possibilities for Both Students and the Industry

As PCI member companies become known as providers of summer intern jobs, the visibility of PCI and the individual member companies will rise with university professors and with students themselves. The summer work/learning opportunities will allow PCI companies to directly provide the students many of the practical learning opportunities regarding our industry that they are not able to receive within the time constraints of a university curriculum. In addition, the exposure to the industry companies and people will serve as a powerful recruiting tool for the next generation of technical leaders within the industry.

How to Become a PCI Summer Intern Program Participant

For Companies with Summer Intern Jobs – If you are a PCI company with summer intern positions, go to www.pci.org and click on the "Summer Intern" button on the PCI home page. The Summer Intern front page will then appear. Click on the "Intern Company Information Input" button and fill out the online information form. This form has a location for an active link to your company web page, if you wish to use it. When you complete the form, click the "Submit" button at the bottom and your company will then be listed as a participant in the intern opportunity database both by company name and location.

For Students Seeking Summer Intern Jobs – If you are a civil engineering, architectural engineering, or architecture student looking for a summer intern opportunity, go to www.pci.org and click on the "Sum-

mer Intern" button on the home page. When the Summer Intern front page appears, click on the "Intern Opportunity" button. This will provide access to the listing of PCI companies participating in the Summer Intern Program and show the number of remaining intern positions available from each of the participating companies.

Participating companies are listed by state and alphabetically by company name. Clicking on the company name brings up information about the company, their web page link and a contact e-mail address that interested students can use to e-mail a letter of interest and résumé. (See the sample outline résumé by clicking the "Sample Résumé" button on the Summer Intern front page.) Each student intern applicant should be sure to mention in the letter of interest that he/she is interested in participating in the PCI Summer Intern Program.

Where to Send Your Comments and Ideas for Improvement

A joint subcommittee of the PCI Professional Member and PCI Student Education Committee is collaborating to develop the PCI Summer Intern Program.

The program provides a web page location where employers and potential summer employees can make an initial contact. Employment agreements, if any, are developed directly between the student intern employee and the employer offering summer employment. PCI is not a party to the employment agreement.

As with any new program, there are many opportunities for improvement. We are interested in your input. If you have comments, questions, or suggestions for improvement regarding this program, address them via e-mail, fax or letter to:

Technical Director – PCI Summer Intern Program
Precast/Prestressed Concrete Institute
209 West Jackson Boulevard
Chicago, IL 60606
Phone 312-786-0300
FAX 312-786-0353
E-mail info@pci.org

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q1: Does PCI screen the employer's and the student intern applicants?

A1: No. While PCI companies are reputable businesses, students seeking intern positions are advised to investigate the companies and type of positions they are offering. This will enable the student to verify that the available working conditions and opportunities serve their interests.

Similarly, PCI companies hiring summer intern students should verify that the students applying for positions have the qualities and capabilities they are seeking in a summer intern employee.

Q2: How much does a summer intern position pay?

A2: Generally, the pay for an intern position is hourly and varies from company to company. The pay may also depend on the qualifications of the intern. The basic hourly intern rate for each company is listed with the company information provided in the company database on the "Summer Intern Program" section of the PCI web page.

Q3: Do companies provide living accommodations?

A3: No. Arrangement of living accommodations is the intern's responsibility. In some cases, PCI companies may provide contact information regarding accommodations in their area. Accommodations vary from location to location and the intern is encouraged to search the Sunday newspaper classified advertising section from the city where the intern employer is located.

Q4: Do companies pay relocation and travel expenses for interns?

A4: No. This is a responsibility of the intern.

Q5: Do interns need specific technical qualifications?

A5: The technical course work students have been exposed to in their university program will generally provide sufficient background for participation in the Summer Intern Program. To participate in the program, it is required that student interns be currently enrolled in a recognized civil engineering, architectural engineering, or architecture program. Students should indicate in the résumé submitted their year in school, the types of courses taken and any previous job experience they have had to date. (Click "Sample Résumé" on the Summer Intern Program front page for an outline résumé.)

Q6: What if the student can only work part of the summer?

A6: This is an issue for the student to discuss with the company. Generally, companies like to have interns for at least 10 weeks to allow time for the intern to be exposed to the various activities within the company.

Q7: Can the student get college credit for an intern experience?

A7: Obtaining college credit for an intern experience is the student's responsibility. Students are encouraged to check with their guidance counselors to see if obtaining college credit is possible.

Q8: If I am a foreign student, do I need a valid work visa to participate in the Summer Intern Program?

A8: Federal law requires that all job applicants provide potential employers with proof of United States residency and/or certification that the individual is authorized to work in the United States. If the student is not a permanent resident of the United States, he/she should check with university guidance counselors and the Immigrations and Naturalization Service to determine his or her eligibility to work in the United States.

Q9: What if I do not like the job or have other problems with my place of employment? Can I contact the PCI for assistance?

A9: No. Any employment or other issues related to the work place should be handled directly between the student intern and the summer intern employer.

Q10: Do I need any special equipment, reference materials, clothing, or other requirements for the summer intern assignment?

A10: This is something each student intern should ask the summer intern employer prior to starting the job.