



**Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee**

**March 12, 2015**

**Testimony**

**By**

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Members of the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony regarding H.B. 6959, *An Act Establishing a Task Force to Develop a Pilot Earn and Learn Program*. The University of Connecticut enthusiastically endorses H.B. 6959. Through interaction with our employer stakeholders throughout the state, in both formal and informal conversations, we have learned that students who have engaged in applied work-based learning (i.e.: internships, co-ops and work study programs) have a decided benefit when it comes to post graduate employability. Through the Center for Career Development, University of Connecticut students are offered a variety of experiential learning opportunities that accelerate learning and better position them to find meaningful employment upon graduation. An extension of these existing programs that offers incentives for both institutions of higher learning and employers throughout the state would further position our students to become contributing members of the state economy.

A 2014 survey conducted by the National Association of Colleges and Employers evidences the fact that internship and co-op experiences play a significant role in employer decision-making when hiring new graduates. Additionally, experiential learning during an undergraduate's education contributes positively to a new employee's level of success on the job within the first year of employment and starting rate of pay. The most notable finding from the survey is that it shows that being paid as an intern (vs. unpaid internships) leads not only to a higher initial salary, but also to a higher conversion rate. Selected findings from the survey include:

- More than 65 percent of students with paid internships received full-time offers; 40 percent of students with unpaid internships received job offers; 39 percent of students with no internship experience received a job offer.
- After one year, employers retain about 75 percent of their new college hires who have had a prior internship experience.
- 52 percent of those graduates receiving job offers before graduation held an internship.

A presentation by Burke Walls, Intern Program Manager at Intel, outlined the value of on-the-job experience for students and the ROI for employers. Intel concluded, through their research of 5,000 college hires, that "Interns are the best large hiring channel of college grads." When comparing

former interns to college grads that never interned, annual performance reviews were higher, stock awards were higher (90%), attrition was lower (33% lower), patent applications were higher (21% higher) and internal documented awards were also higher.

A compelling case can be made for the value of an earn and learn program here in Connecticut. It will provide tangible results for our students and employers alike, translating into untold benefits for our state's economy.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment and as always, thank you for your support of the University of Connecticut.