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Internships Of The 21st Century

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HARRISONBURG - The Shenandoah Valley Technology Council is in the beginning stages of marketing a statewide tool that will link businesses with students in the fields of science, technology, engineering and math, or STEM, for paid summer internships. The Commonwealth STEM Industry Internship Program, announced by the governor's office Thursday, is designed to prepare Virginia students for the "high-quality, high-paying jobs of the future," Gov. Bob McDonnell said in a press release.

The program, created with funding from the state, is a partnership between the Virginia Space Grant Consortium and the state's regional technology councils.

"Companies that have internships to offer in STEM fields are going to sign up hopefully over the course of September and October so that we're ready by the first of November," said **Nicky Swayne**, executive director of the Shenandoah Valley Technology Council, based in Harrisonburg.

Swayne said she will now begin alerting local companies about the free tool, which will allow students to search internships by region or job, or post their application to the website for employer review.

The program is open to full-time undergraduate students majoring in a STEM field who have completed at least 30 credits and attend an accredited Virginia college, community college or university. Virginia students who attend an accredited out-of-state institution may also apply.

Employers can now list internships on the site, www.csiip.spacegrant.org, and students can submit applications between Nov. 1 and Jan. 31 for summer 2013 internships. Companies can then view the application database in February.

"By providing quality opportunities for the next generation of Virginia leaders in the STEM industry, this program will make the

critical connection between Virginia's exceptional S I E M students and Virginia's growing high-tech business community," Laura Fornash, state secretary of education, said in a press release.

When told about the program, Krishna Kodukula, executive director of the nonprofit drug research institute SRI Shenandoah Valley, said that the free resource could be a welcome marketing tool for the business.

SRI, a local division of California-based SRI International, currently contacts college administrators and students directly to let them know about internships, or posts opportunities on its website, Kodukula said.

The company typically takes between four and seven interns for a 12-week program in the summer.

"I think this is a very timely and excellent way to attract quality students into an internship program," he said.

Lee Ward, director of career services at James Madison University, said that although he had not heard about the program, targeted resources are always helpful for students searching for jobs or internships.

Most internships at James Madison University are coordinated through individual colleges and academic departments, Ward said.

"There's so much out there for students and other people to look at right now," he said. "Sites that focus on certain types of industries and certain locations or are intended for students in certain states are better than the kind of worldwide sites that we see a lot of."

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