

Your report for Tuesday, January 20, 2009

SPOTLIGHT

Kettering sees co-op as a stimulus for business

During President Barack Obama's visit at Kettering University in Flint last June, he said: "It's great to be at Kettering -- a university that is teaching the next generation of leaders and training workers to have the skills they need to advance their own careers and communities."

The key to this, according to Kettering's Frank Hribar, is professional co-op.



"Cooperative education is the best way to develop innovation and create new jobs," said Hribar, the university's vice president for Enrollment Services. "That's why we think the new President would like our slogan: 'Co-op is my stimulus package.'"

Currently, more than 78 percent of all Fortune 500 companies participate in co-op or internship programs, Hribar said.

"Co-op jobs have replaced summer jobs as the number one feeder program for full-time talent among the top companies," said Hribar, pictured at left. He added that "co-op is an excellent opportunity to groom students early in their careers."

Rachel Wood, a sophomore from Warren and graduate of Center Line High School, agrees.

"Students learn the value of quality work, responsibility, initiative and professionalism before they graduate college," she said. "Co-op students can comprehend course material at a new level because they can incorporate real experiences into the learning process."

Hribar noted there are big benefits for business, too.

"Co-op students allow employers to defray costs and get early access to an extremely talented young pool of workers," he said. "These students are trained to critically review a company's work process and assist in the design of new work models for their co-op employers. That innovation is then carried back into the classroom for fine-tuning and then back into the corporate setting to help advance the corporate employer."



Near the end of their academic preparation, Kettering students complete a thesis project, which Hribar said "allows for original research that is cost-effective for the employer and taps into the talents and resources of Kettering's experienced faculty members. Thesis projects are guided and shaped by faculty experts but serve the direct needs of our corporate partners."

Hribar said Kettering's corporate partners realize an earlier return on its investment because the transition to full-time employment is mitigated.

"Co-op cuts the annual costs for recruiting, training and orientation because co-op students already have experience inside their employer's organization," Hribar said. "It is an excellent and cost-effective way for companies to develop future employees within their own organizational culture. It's a win-win stimulus package." (In fact, that's the theme of a new Kettering T-shirt being worn at right by co-op student Joseph Kowalczyk of Flint, whose co-op is with the FBI.)

Gov. Jennifer Granholm declared February as Cooperative Education Month in Michigan. See the State of Michigan proclamation at this link. For more about Kettering's co-op program, visit www.kettering.edu. Kettering University is the home of the country's most modern professional co-op program.

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