

Cook Systems International's CollegeCareerCorps® Program Develops Region's I.T. Workforce in New Partnership with UALR and the State of Arkansas

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MEMPHIS, Tenn.--Cook Systems International today announced its partnership for its CollegeCareerCorps® program (CollegeCareerCorps.com) with the University of Arkansas at Little Rock (UALR) and the State of Arkansas. The partnership helps develop the area's Information Technology workforce by strategically placing students in real-world situations through the CollegeCareerCorps® program.

Despite the economic downturn, Information Technology jobs represent one of the fastest-growing sectors in the U.S. economy, with more than 1 million new jobs projected to be added through 2014. Six of the 30 occupations expected to grow the fastest are I.T.-related, according to data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

The CollegeCareerCorps® is a “real world technology apprenticeship” program that integrates students into professional technology teams working on actual I.T. projects over a long-term basis. Cook Systems International has developed project technical and certified management professionals using their specific project methodologies and procedures for achieving the highest quality. Students typically work 20 hours per week and continue with the same client partner for up to two years. Cook Systems International is currently working with over 20 colleges and universities nationwide through CollegeCareerCorps® efforts.

Students at UALR will benefit in the CollegeCareerCorps® program by receiving both technical and professional skills training while working directly for a professional I.T. services firm at major regional corporations and governments, thus giving them exposure to key leaders in the business community and adding real-world work experience to their resume. Students earn money year round and receive possible credit hours while gaining an inside track to jump-starting a career.



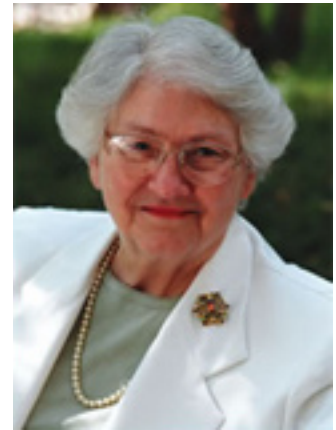
Arkansas Governor Mike Beebe

“Students today are caught like anyone entering the job market with a Catch 22,” said Kenneth Kinney, National Education Director for the CollegeCareerCorps®. “Even after completing a degree they already need experience to get the job and need the job to get the experience. The CollegeCareerCorps® program gives students an exciting opportunity to get the real-world experience and the professional leadership skills needed while in school and prepares them to compete in the global marketplace for when they graduate. This further helps UALR both recruit and train the best and brightest students and give them a phenomenal experience.”

As part of its partnership with UALR, Cook Systems International will actively identify corporate and government partners that can benefit from the CollegeCareerCorps® program. Because partners contract directly with Cook Systems International, projects do not begin and end like a traditional internship. These “real world technology apprenticeships” provide real and critical services to partners and long-term employment opportunities as well as professional level experiences to participating students.

UALR will benefit by using Cook Systems International’s CollegeCareerCorps® for several reasons including improving student recruiting. Colleges and universities have seen computer science-related degree enrollment drop by as much as 70% on a nationwide basis since 2000, according to the Computing Research Association. The CollegeCareerCorps® program gives colleges and universities a better ability to attract more students to the field and give those students better chances at landing jobs by offering more intense, hands-on experience.

“One of the goals of UALR is to help find employment for our highly qualified students,” said Mary Good, Dean of the Donaghey College of Engineering and Information Technology. “Placing our students in the local I.T. workforce not only enhances their career opportunities following graduation but it also allows us as a premier university to learn from these experiences and to structure our curriculum in a way that better prepares our students for the ever changing world of IT. This unique partnership with Cook Systems International’s CollegeCareerCorps® is a win-win for UALR and businesses in the Arkansas region.”



UALR's Dr. Mary Good

Colleges and universities also benefit by possible collaboration opportunities with regional corporate and government partners, opportunities to strengthen advisory boards, curriculum refinement to better match changing technology environments, and new revenue streams.

“We at Cook Systems International are excited about introducing our CollegeCareerCorps® model to the University of Arkansas at Little Rock and the entire Arkansas area,” said Ben Bryant, Chairman of the CollegeCareerCorps®. “This has been a tremendous success in other regions of the country and we know it will be here as well. In addition to providing I.T. students with real-life project experience, this model serves as a significant workforce development

initiative and globally cost-effective alternative to off-shore outsourcing for the corporate and government partners who support this.”

Cook Systems International’s primary CollegeCareerCorps® initiative in Arkansas began with the State of Arkansas.

“Many of the jobs in this growing global economy will be based on information technology,” said Governor Mike Beebe. “It is critical to the long-term success of Arkansas’s economy to prepare our workforce for job opportunities in these industries.”



Claire Bailey,
Director of DIS for
the State of Arkansas

“State governments such as ours have retiring employees like any other business. Many of the critical skills that those retirees take with them must be replaced over time. Through the partnership with UALR and the CollegeCareerCorps® program, we are developing a future workforce for the State of Arkansas and providing students the opportunity to present new ideas to help government improve the delivery of public services,” said Claire Bailey, Agency Director of the Arkansas Department of Information Systems.

“This is truly a win-win situation for both the UALR students and the Department of Workforce Services. The students will be able to get real workplace experience and the Department of Workforce Services will benefit from their contributions to our Information Technology Program. The state’s economy will also benefit by developing job opportunities for young graduates that will keep them in Arkansas. This is a very exciting program.” Artee Williams, Director of the Department of Workforce Services and Tom Bohannon, Assistant Director Information Technology.

Clients benefit with the CollegeCareerCorps® by receiving services at globally, cost-competitive rates while developing a future workforce. Cook Systems International’s unique expertise with the model helps address critical business challenges. Unlike traditional student models, the teams support real, operationally budgeted activities. Under the CollegeCareerCorps® program, the risk of using students is greatly reduced through Cook Systems International’s delivery accountability. Clients further benefit by retaining the best and brightest students in the local area and by finding and managing students with less corporate resources.