

INTERalliance

Program entices students to choose technology careers

By Lindsey Hilty

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Seven of the 10 fastest-growing careers are in information technology, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

The problem is students are typically ignoring this field of study, studies show.

"It is not a specialty anymore," said Doug Arthur, executive director of The INTERalliance of Greater Cincinnati. "(Information Technology) is in every single career a kid might be considering."

Formed in 2005, The INTERalliance has been working to attract students to the technology field and to keep them in the Cincinnati area by introducing them to businesses with technology-related careers.

"We do a terrible job of marketing ourselves to the community," he said. "As a result, we export our best and brightest. The bottom line is we're looking to keep the kids local for their college and careers."

"If you've got 45 as the first two digits of your zip code, you have home team advantage. We want to get the kids who went to church here, who went to school here, who have family here and can get their laundry done for free here," he said.

Miami University and the University of Cincinnati will host summer camps beginning July 7 for select students from nearly 30 Ohio schools, including the Lakota Local School District and Cincinnati Christian Schools.

Students will team up with sponsor companies to learn about various careers and to solve actual problems within local companies.

"The businesses give them problems that are really haunting them, because the kids are so darn smart," Arthur said.

Each week, four competing corporations work with students, giving tours of facilities, introducing them to the leaders of the company and encouraging them to take on internships.

The final project is to design a communication device for people with disabilities.

"It's a wonderful opportunity for students," said Aaron Klinefelter, technology director at Cincinnati Christian Schools.

Last year he led a team of students and will return this year.

"They got to see some of the best and the brightest of the Cincinnati business at work," he said. "They got to see how information technology is working in those places."

Once students attend camp, they become a part of a network for paid internship opportunities in high school, co-ops in college and eventually job opportunities from companies that will have courted them for years.

"We're not going to let them go," Arthur said.

This summer, 50 interns from the program are working with various businesses, including Fortune 500 companies.

The program is expanding, and eventually, Arthur said, he wants to include 57 regional high schools and 14 universities.

While 42 companies are participating at the moment, he said the goal is for every company, big or small, to get involved.

"The passion and the emotion is what we harness," he said.

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