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Teeing Up Internships

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Looking for an internship in real estate investment? Advance to Avant Capital Partners' website in Greenwich. Hospitality? HEI Hotels & Resorts in Norwalk still has the welcome mat out.

Think you might end up spending the summer on the golf links? Put those clubs down. Mill River Country Club is looking for an accounting intern.

This year's college graduates are hitting a better job market than alumni of the previous three years, but only a slim majority of employers say they plan to hire recent college graduates.

The Business Council of Fairfield County is referring prospective interns to a website called InternHere.com, which at press deadline had posted just over two dozen internship opportunities so far this year. For its part, Fairfield University listed just short of 100 internships on an internal website dedicated to helping students find opportunities, and major employers like General Electric Co. and Boehringer Ingelheim Pharmaceuticals Inc. were still looking to fill some available slots heading into May.

"I think the grad market will be marginally better in the area," said David Lewis, CEO of OperationsInc, a human resources advisory company in Stamford. "Still on the quiet side in terms of any major shift upward in hiring, so grads should not expect to see more offers, or even interviews, unfortunately," he said. There's just no industry up here that is hot or taking the lead. Social media (in New York City) is where it is happening right now."

In a Harris Interactive poll commissioned by Chicago-based CareerBuilder L.L.C., 54 percent of employers reported that they plan to hire new college graduates, up from 46 percent in 2011 and the biggest year-over-year gain since the start of the recession.

Harris Interactive polled more than 2,000 hiring managers in February and early March. The survey did not break down hiring plans by geography.

"Companies across industries are placing a strong emphasis on recruiting fresh talent for technology-related roles and positions designed to drive revenue, and they're willing to pay more for high-skill, educated labor," said Brent Rasmussen, president of CareerBuilder's North American operations, in a written statement.

Of those hiring, just 29 percent plan to offer higher starting salaries. While employers were most likely to report that they would pay between \$30,000 and \$40,000, a significant portion will extend offers exceeding \$50,000, CareerBuilder noted.

Business majors were most in demand, followed by computer and information sciences and engineering.

For its part, Connecticut Innovations is recruiting businesses to apply for grants of up to \$25,000 to create high-tech internships that solve real problems. As of mid-April, more than 30 companies had inquired about the program.

“Research indicates students with internships attract 24 percent higher salaries in their first job,” stated Christine Gemelli, a Connecticut Innovations staff member focused on the state’s Small Business Innovation Research programs. “That certainly makes a strong case for supporting internships.”