

## LINC Program Provides ECU Students Work Experience in Kentucky's Appalachian Counties

By Mikayla Estep, ECU Regional Stewardship Public Relations Intern

Sep 17, 2018 RICHMOND--For nearly five years, ECU Regional LINC (Liaison for Improving Networks and Connections) has provided Eastern Kentucky University students with opportunities to gain paid work experience within the Commonwealth's Appalachian counties.

Through the LINC Internship Program, students can fulfill their co-op requirements, and businesses/non-profits in the region can benefit from the extra work. In some instances, the students can work from the University's campuses: in ECU's Regional Stewardship offices on the Richmond campus, the LINC classroom at the Corbin Campus or the LINC office at the Manchester campus.

LINC was created with the student intern and the employer in mind. Regional Stewardship Director Melissa Newman, already operating an internship program for the University, learned from employers that they needed student help but didn't have extra time to dedicate to the process. Employers would ask about interns for special projects, promotions, event planning and even asset mapping, Newman said. But some also told her they didn't have the time to devote to the educational components of hosting an intern. Others were saying they didn't have extra workspace or computers, or they didn't want to set up a new payroll just to take them off after 10 weeks.

"The LINC Program takes all the burden off the employer," Newman said. "Through our program, we take care of payroll, workspace, computers and software, and, in some cases, even mileage pay. Employers can feel good about providing an internship and in turn get the help they need. It's a win for both."

The LINC Program gives employers an opportunity to be as involved or uninvolved as they want to be with the internship. Some employers like the idea of a traditional-type internship in which the student shows up to their place of work each day and reports to someone on their staff. Others, however, need a more hands-off approach and simply don't have time to train an intern on job specifics. In these instances, LINC Program directors will meet with the employer to get an understanding of needs and then create a task list for the intern. LINC staff will then supervise the intern through the projects. Also providing workspace and a laptop with necessary programs to complete employer-directed work.

The program now boasts a 100 percent career placement rate for students after graduation.

Regional Stewardship Outreach Specialist Maggie Bill, a direct supervisor for the interns and a liaison for employers, has seen many interns go straight into career jobs once they complete their internship and graduate. "When these students complete the internships, their resumes demonstrate successful project management and show a diverse skill set," Bill said. "Their portfolios reflect real hands-on work experience which lands them jobs that are in most cases better than entry level."

Regional Stewardship staff has worked to strategically place qualified interns into fields they want to pursue and with employers who need their expertise. In many instances, interns are placed with employers located in communities where the student lives or is familiar, making the

internship even more meaningful for both the employer and intern.

Just in the past year, LINC has placed interns with Jackson Energy, U.S. Forestry-London Ranger District, London-Laurel Chamber of Commerce, The Promise Zone, All "A" Classic, Shaping Our Appalachian Region, The Promise Zone and Partners for Appalachian Families. The interns have built and maintained websites, created and maintained social media, written and disseminated news releases, directed community events and community engagement activities, written articles for magazines, designed printed materials, created PowerPoints, and written speeches and presentations.

Annie Zomaya, a recent graduate of ECU's public relations program, worked as an intern for Harlan County Economic Development Authority, helping bolster the county's presence within global economic development circles. She worked to improve HCEA's digital marketing of the county's available industrial space offerings and helped to shape the Authority's social media. Immediately after graduation, Zomaya secured a position with Berea Partners for Education, where she works for the office of Strategy and Finance.

"LINC helps everyone involved," Zomaya said. "It benefits the service region, and it opens doors and is great for networking. ECU reaches out to rural areas, and students can apply the tools they are mastering and use them in real-world situations."

At \$10 an hour, 20 hours a week, for 10 weeks during the fall and spring semesters and 29 hours a week in the summer for 10 weeks, students and businesses alike can benefit from the opportunity. Currently, LINC has numerous positions available throughout the region:

- Berea Partners for Education Promise Neighborhood-Promise Neighborhood Event Planner and Public Relations Intern. Duties include: 1) Plan ECU campus visits and activities for middle school students from ECU's service region counties 2) Host campus visits, give tours, engage with ECU academic departments for tours and speakers 3) Use social media to promote such events before, during and after visits 3) Engage media regarding such events - this includes news release writing, photography, video, and interviewing.

- Believe in Clay-Public Relations Intern. Believe in Clay is a multi-organizational entity that is interested in promoting Manchester and Clay County with regard to tourism, community development and community image. The public relations intern will act as a social media coordinator and serve as an extension of the organization's communications team, responsible for marketing and promoting various projects throughout the term of the internship. The internship will be located in the regional stewardship offices in the Perkins Building on the ECU Richmond campus or the LINC classroom at the Corbin campus, or the LINC office at the Manchester campus (student preference).

- London-Laurel County Chamber of Commerce-Marketing Assistant/Office Associate. The intern will act as a social media coordinator for the London-Laurel County Chamber of Commerce, serve as an extension of the organization's communications team and will be responsible for marketing and promoting various projects throughout the term of the internship. The intern will also work as an office associate at the London-Laurel County Chamber office every Tuesday, 10 a.m.-4:30 p.m.. The internship will be located in the regional stewardship offices in the Perkins Building on the ECU Richmond Campus or the LINC classroom at the Corbin campus, or the LINC office at the Manchester campus (student preference) but travel one day a week (Tuesday) to the chamber office in London is required.

- Rural Newspaper-Journalist Internship. The job includes covering beats ranging from education to police and local governments to features, business and analytical stories. Covering community events is a must, and some weekend work will be required. Capable candidates will have a working knowledge of cameras and the ability to take photos while covering meetings, events and breaking news. Reporters must be capable of building relationships with sources to ensure the flow of information, and are responsible for the use of social media and loading stories and information onto the news website. A typical issue will see reporters filing three to five stories. The successful applicant must be a strong writer and have the ability to work in a self-paced atmosphere.

For more information, visit [regionalstewardship.eku.edu/linc&lt;http://regionalstewardship.eku.edu/linc&gt;](http://regionalstewardship.eku.edu/linc&lt;http://regionalstewardship.eku.edu/linc&gt;)

## September Money Tip for Students

If you're having trouble paying a bill, contact the company immediately to work out a payment plan. Whatever you do, don't ignore letters and calls from your creditors, according to the Kentucky Higher Education Assistance Authority (KHEAA).

It's best to explain everything in a letter so you have a written record. Before writing the letter, look at your finances to come up with a payment amount you can handle. That lets your creditor know you still plan to pay what you owe and will pay as much as possible during your financial crunch.

Most companies will work with you if you're up front about your difficulties. Ask if your creditor will waive any penalties and will extend your payment period if you find yourself temporarily in a tight money situation.

KHEAA is the state agency that administers the Kentucky Educational Excellence Scholarship (KEES) and other programs to help students pay for higher education.

### September Financial Aid Tip

High school seniors should keep track of deadlines for applying for college financial aid. Here are some tips from the Kentucky Higher Education Assistance Authority (KHEAA):

File the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) as soon as possible after October 1.

Check with the financial aid offices of the schools to which you've applied to determine if they require any forms other than the FAFSA.

Look for scholarships using KHEAA's "Affording Higher Education" and a free online scholarship search. You can find a link to a free search site under the "Paying for College" tab on [www.kheaa.com](http://www.kheaa.com).

Attend any college fairs and financial aid seminars offered at your high school or in your area. If a company charges a fee for helping with applications, remember that you can do that yourself for free. If you decide to pay for help, make sure the company is reputable by checking with the state Attorney General's office or the Better Business Bureau in your area, as well as the area where the firm is located.

For more information about Kentucky scholarships and grants, visit [www.kheaa.com](http://www.kheaa.com); write KHEAA, P.O. Box 798, Frankfort, KY 40602; or call 800-928-8926, ext. 6-7214.



The past 4 years have come and gone rather quickly. It has been an honor to serve as your Judge Executive. During this time, we have been able to make some positive changes to the face of local Government in Jackson County and get the ship headed in the right direction. We have seen over 400 jobs created, several miles of roads resurfaced, 4 new cruisers obtained for the Sheriff's Department, a newer and better fleet of ambulances for our EMS, a new 911 center open and operating, new turnout gear for our Fire Departments and the old Mid-South property back in County possession.

In 2016 corruption from within the Treasurer's Office was uncovered and turned over to authorities. Since that time, we have seen the deficit our County was in turn completely around. In the September 2018 Fiscal Court meeting, I presented the Court with a Financial Statement that had no negative numbers on it. This is the result of all our elected officials working together for the betterment of our Community. It's going to be a challenge to keep these numbers positive, but I believe together we can make it happen.

I am seeking re-election this November because I believe we are headed in the right direction. I don't deserve any credit because none of this was accomplished on my own. I am grateful to be able to serve you. I, along with my Family, humbly ask for your vote and support in the upcoming November Election.

**Thank You and God Bless.**

Paid for by Shane Gabbard.