

Found: Temporary housing for summer interns

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Area companies now have another option when trying to overcome the challenge of recommending accommodations for their college interns.

Through the efforts of the Business Council of Fairfield County, the University of Bridgeport, Fairfield University and Sacred Heart University, have agreed to make their campus housing available.

The business council has published the information on its Web site, www.businessfairfield.com. It also includes apartments in the Stamford area for short-term rental.

"Sacred Heart University is excited to work with the business council in providing this data sheet to help local businesses meet the challenge of temporary summer housing for interns," said Rick DeVecchio, director of career placement. "It should of tremendous benefit to businesses utilizing interns in Fairfield County."

Some college students from outside the area have been forced to reject internship offers because they could not find suitable accommodations.

"It's impossible to rent rooms for that level of time," said Robert Stokes, manager of education and workforce initiatives at the business council. "When employers offer an internship to a student, they can tell them to go to the business council Website to connect to housing."

Companies in southwestern Connecticut, where it is difficult to attract young workers because of the high cost of living, see internships as a way to lure needed staff.

"Chances are if they are offered a college internship, and they do well, they are offered a job," said Lisa Mercurio, director of the Fairfield County Information

offered a job," said Lisa Mercurio, director of the Fairfield County Information Exchange, a unit of the business council. "We found interns turning down internships because they couldn't find housing."

Dan Taylor, president of Taylor Design, a graphic and Web design studio in Stamford, has resorted to extremes to help his interns find housing in the past eight years.

"We usually have interns, and boy we've had tough times with housing - some real horror stories. We often do the legwork. They have stayed with a widow or an empty nester," he said, adding that occasionally an intern stays with one of his employees.

Larger businesses, such as Stamford-based Pitney Bowes, also plan to use the resource.

"The summer intern housing information sheet is an invaluable piece of information," said Stephanie Williams, human resources associate at Pitney Bowes. "This guide shows interns how to find affordable rooms in Fairfield County, as well as the transportation needed to get to and from work."

The data was provided by the Internship Stakeholders Council, a network of business and academic representatives established last year by the business council and part of the One Coast, One Future project, an effort to stimulate economic growth and job creation, through a \$1 million federal grant secured by U.S. Rep. Christopher Shays, R-Bridgeport.