

Building the Future Workforce: Dobco and Hudson County's Self-Funded Internship Model

Presented by the **Hudson County Improvement Authority (HCIA)** in partnership with the **Hudson County Economic Development Corporation (HCEDC)**, and administered by SRL Enterprises, Hudson County's Internship Program bridges the gap between classroom learning and real-world career experience. The initiative connects businesses with bright local talent and gives students meaningful, career-boosting opportunities across sectors that drive the county's growth. With more than **28 business partners and 30+ interns** participating year to date in 2025, the program exemplifies how public-private collaboration can strengthen the local workforce and build pathways to long-term economic vitality.

Hudson County Executive **Craig Guy** emphasized how this public-private partnership strengthens the community: "Programs like this ensure that our local students gain meaningful work experience while helping our county businesses grow and thrive," he said. "It's essential for building a workforce that will support Hudson County's economy for decades to come."

The program's success is also made possible by funding from the **Citizens Philanthropic Foundation**, which provides stipends for participating students. By supporting paid opportunities, the foundation ensures that students can fully engage in professional learning without financial barriers.



Essex County Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Justice Building

A Partnership with Purpose

Among the program's standout participants is **Dobco Construction**, a full-service contracting and development firm known for shaping communities across New Jersey through innovative, high-quality projects. Dobco joined the initiative in 2024 through ongoing collaboration with county leadership and workforce development partners. The

company's decision to participate was driven by alignment with the program's mission — connecting students to meaningful, career-oriented experiences that can set the stage for lifelong success.

“When we learned about the program's mission, we knew we wanted to become part of that,” Dobco shared. “Our collaboration with county leadership and workforce development partners made the decision an easy one.” said Daniel Mladenovic, President and Hossam Ibrahim, Vice-President.



Kean University Green Lane Building

Dobco's leadership team has long believed in the power of mentorship. Many of its employees began their own careers through internships or apprenticeships, so offering the same kind of guidance to the next generation felt natural.

“Hosting interns allows us to share our expertise with those who are enthusiastic about learning what Dobco builds,” the executives said.

Investing in the Future

Accepting a grant funded intern, Dobco made the deliberate choice to **self-fund** its internship placements — a decision that reflects its deep commitment to both workforce development and community investment. And by self funding, Dobco intentionally

provided the opportunity for a grant funded intern to a smaller business with more limited resources.

“We view workforce development as an investment, not an expense,” Dobco explained. “Supporting local students aligns with our values and long-term vision for sustainable growth. By self-funding, we ensure high-quality, paid opportunities that truly reflect the professional standards of our industry.”

Dobco is one of several companies demonstrating leadership through this self-funded model, joining **Mast Construction, New York Waterway, eMazzanti Technologies, SRL Enterprises, Express Employment Professionals** (which hosted two interns), **Jersey City Apartment Owners Association**, and **Kismet of Kings**. Together, these employers are expanding the program’s reach by directly investing in Hudson County’s young talent — a collaborative approach that magnifies the program’s overall impact.

Real-World Experience on the Job

Dobco’s interns come from diverse academic backgrounds — engineering, architecture, project management, and business administration. Each student was paired with professionals across the company’s project teams, gaining firsthand exposure to the fast-paced, collaborative world of construction management.

“Our interns worked alongside project managers and site superintendents, supporting tasks like bid preparation, scheduling, and site logistics,” Dobco said. “Because we currently have an ongoing project on the **Hudson County Community College (HCCC)** campus, assigning interns to that job site proved to be an exciting and relevant experience.”



Ramapo College Learning Commons

Interns participated in on-site meetings, shadowed various teams, and engaged directly with vendors and clients, gaining a holistic view of the construction lifecycle. “They weren’t just observing — they were contributing to live project workflows. Their enthusiasm and attention to detail helped our teams stay organized and efficient,” Dobco added.

The Citizens Philanthropic Foundation’s stipend support has also been instrumental in ensuring equity of opportunity. “Providing paid opportunities allows all students to

participate,” said the foundation. “We want talented young people to gain experience and mentorship regardless of their financial circumstances.”

Building Skills — and a Stronger Hudson County Workforce

For Dobco, participating in the program reinforces the idea that construction and development are central to community growth. “Students see how their skills in design, technology, or management translate into tangible results that shape neighborhoods,” Dobco noted. “It’s also an opportunity to challenge outdated perceptions — modern construction is increasingly tech-driven, sustainable, and collaborative.”

The company sees strong demand for skills in project management, digital modeling (BIM), sustainable design, and construction technology — areas where young professionals can thrive. “Combining technical proficiency with communication and leadership abilities will open doors to a wide range of rewarding careers,” they said.

As Hudson County continues to grow, with new development and infrastructure shaping its skyline, the demand for skilled professionals is rising. “This growth creates opportunities for employers to build their future workforce locally, while giving students access to stable, high-paying careers without leaving their community,” Dobco emphasized. “Programs like this internship initiative bridge that gap perfectly.”

Leading by Example

For other local businesses considering participation — especially those contemplating self-funding positions — Dobco’s message is clear: the return on investment is invaluable. “We’d encourage them to view it as an investment in both their company’s future and the county’s economic vitality,” the company said. “Self-funding allows businesses to tailor the experience to their needs and demonstrate a genuine commitment to community development.”



The benefits to Dobco have been significant. The partnership has strengthened community connections, helped identify emerging talent early, and reinforced Dobco’s reputation as a company that invests in people as much as projects.

Jean & Ric Edelman Fossil Park Museum at Rowen University

Continuing the Momentum

With the success of its first year in the program, Dobco plans to continue hosting interns in future cohorts. “The experience has been a success on every level,” they shared. “We’re proud to help shape the next generation of professionals who will continue building a stronger Hudson County.”

“Investing in Hudson County’s youth is central to our mission,” said **Michelle Richardson, Executive Director of HCEDC**. “This program gives students paid, career-focused experiences while helping local employers build a pipeline of skilled professionals — it’s a win for everyone in the community.”

For HCEDC, HCIA, and their partners, the program demonstrates the power of collaboration to create **sustainable workforce development**. By pairing student stipends with self-funded employer mentorship, Hudson County ensures that its students gain skills, confidence, and real-world experience — while businesses gain local talent ready to contribute from day one.

In Hudson County, we’re not just preparing the next generation for success — we’re building it with them.

For more information about how the HCEDC can help grow your business, explore the HCEDC website!

Explore: www.hudsonedc.org

Dobco: www.dobcogroup.com