Commentary/Op-Ed - January 2024

To build a stronger middle class, boost paid internships for CUNY students

In this Crain's New York Business op-ed, Jonathan Bowles and Winston Fisher urge New York City leaders to harness CUNY as an engine of economic mobility by ensuring that far more CUNY students have access to paid internships during their college careers.

by Jonathan Bowles and Winston Fisher

Paid internships are critical for ensuring that far more City University of New York (CUNY) students—most of whom come from families that earn less than $30,000 annually—can channel their degrees into career opportunities and get on the path to the middle class. However, only 10 percent of CUNY students report having a paid internship during their time in college. As a result, too many students end up unemployed or underemployed after graduation, limiting the effectiveness of CUNY as an engine of economic mobility.

Fortunately, there's a growing appetite among employers across the city to find ways to bring CUNY students on board. Now is the time to rally far more of the city's employers to recruit from CUNY for their internship programs—and make it much easier for companies to do so.

In this op-ed, CUF's Jonathan Bowles and Winston Fisher urge New York City leaders to pull out all the stops to ensure that far more internships go to students at CUNY and outline three recommendations to make it happen: Mayor Adams and other top city officials should lead the charge to rally employers to recruit from CUNY; policymakers should work with CUNY to scale up the small but powerful programs that are already working—and help replicate them for other industries; and CUNY should double down on efforts to make it easier for employers to partner with colleges across the system.

Read the full op-ed here.

This op-ed builds on CUF's longstanding research on boosting CUNY as an engine of economic mobility to prepare more low-income New Yorkers for the city's growing and well-paying jobs, including *Harnessing CUNY as a Launchpad Into Tech Careers*, Investing in CUNY is the Best Way to Grow New York City's Economy, and *Boosting Tech Career Success for CUNY Students: Doubling Down on CUNY 2X Tech*

.

CENTER FOR AN URBAN FUTURE
120 Wall Street, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10005

cuf@nycfuture.org © All Rights Reserved.