

WHY DO YOUNG US WORKERS PREFER COSTLY FOREIGN INTERNSHIPS, WHEN AMERICAN COMPANIES PAY THEM FOR INTERNING HERE?



For the American youth of today, the economic slump has been unusually harsh and not only are they finding jobs hard to come by, they are also facing new, hitherto unheard of competition, for places that earlier were presumed to be theirs by right. They often find themselves, vying with seasoned professionals for jobs once reserved for the inexperienced. Making matters worse, was that employers also showed a penchant for those who had international experience. This finding is what must have prompted Corrie Burdett, a University of Oregon graduate to take an internship with the Foundation for Sustainable Development (FSD), working in Nicaragua to gain valuable work experience and international knowledge. Back in America after completion of the internship, Burdett said that internship in a foreign country yielded valuable experience and she was amazed at the inputs she gained from working on a domestic violence project, in addition to making a number of valuable contacts. She told that four months ago if someone had asked her if she would be doing an internship abroad, she would probably had said yes, as such a possibility had crossed her mind and a belief that this would help her in her career. "I've really immersed myself in the work and the community, and I've learned to communicate better with people," she said. "I think this experience is absolutely going to make a difference on my resume." It would do well to remember that for internships within the country company's pay the intern for work done, whereas the interns pay the Foundation for Sustainable Development (FSD) for the experience. Burdett said that her Nicaragua experience cost her \$7,000 and lasted for about 6 ½ months. FSD executive director Mireille Cronin Mather said that on an average, interns pay approximately \$4,500 to take part in internships. The tenures of such internships vary from weeks to months. Interns work on a range of community projects. She said that at the moment there were 228 interns working in 6 countries, including Uganda and Argentina. The crucial factor is that the intern must immerse himself in local culture to best understand community projects and maximize its functional potential for the locals. There currently are more than 300 community partners with FSD. "We're in these communities to support the people who live there, and the other part is to give them a different perspective and help to educate them," Mather said. "We stress that our interns are to make the interests of the community a priority. They shouldn't have a preconceived notion or idea about a project." She said that FSD had partnerships with 17 universities and the programs are specially made for those students who seek "more rigorous training." The students are put through some really hard-core community development, she said. Mather said that the organization does not offer internships for young people alone, but there are volunteer experiences of lesser duration, for professionals or groups. "The professionals who participate find it really renews their enthusiasm or just gives them a break from their regular jobs," Mather said. "They make real personal connections with other people and make a real difference." Mather said it was wrong to bracket the youth of today as jaded and having wrong work ethics and said that she finds that they are not as lackluster as they are made out to be, but that they infuse new and fresh insights in what they perceive. This generation sees the community in different ways. They've got a globalized perspective on life. While that perspective available to them has sometimes been negative, we're very positive and give them that new perspective." The message is clear. An international internship is an important part of a student's education and could be the key to his landing a job in these difficult economic times. An international internship provides a global perspective to the student and makes him more competitive and gives him the added competence to negotiate foreign cultures, if it is required at his workplace – the youth of today view international internships as springboards to take off in their careers.