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Employing Teachers Works

Silicon Valley Program Shows Benefit to Hiring Temporary Employees

For more than 20 years, hundreds of businesses in the Silicon Valley have benefited from hiring teachers as temporary summer employees through the Industry Initiatives for Science and Math Education (IISME) Summer Fellowship Program.

Since 1985, when IISME was founded, 1,351 teachers have participated in Summer Fellowships at companies and research institutions. These paid, eight-week Fellowships focus on the mathematics, science and technological fields. Teachers complete projects for host companies and then transfer their experiences back to their K-16 classrooms.

A major supporter of IISME is the Silicon Valley Leadership Group, a trade organization with more than 250 member companies.

Dennis Cima is Vice President of Education and Public Policy for the Leadership Group and sits on the IISME Board of Directors.



Monica (Molly) Cundiff, science teacher at Castlemont High School in Oakland, Calif. during her Fellowship at Lawrence Berkeley National Lab

He estimates about 85 percent of the IISME Teacher Fellows are hosted by Silicon Valley Leadership Group member companies. Helping teachers educate students (the future workforce) is important to the Leadership Group.

“These Fellowships really energize teachers,” Cima said. “They see firsthand the types of skills the current and future workforce will demand and the types of technology that students should expect to encounter in the workplace. Fellowships provide an opportunity to see how what they are teaching translates in the private sector.”

Return on Investment

Silicon Valley employers call IISME Teacher Fellows “resourceful” and their work “exceptional.” In fact, many teachers have saved sponsor companies thousands of dollars by improving processes and productivity. David Buseck, a Product Support Engineer at Varian Medical Systems, has seen these benefits firsthand.

“My Fellow’s summer project provided solid scientific data to support a change in our recommended periodic maintenance procedures, shortening the total sequence time for service engineers,” he said. “This change will save more than \$200,000 per year in labor costs on machines that are under service contract. Our customers will realize additional savings when they perform their own maintenance.”

Although more than 4,000 employees work at Varian’s locations worldwide, Cima emphasized that companies of all sizes have benefited from hosting IISME Teacher Fellows.

“IISME Summer Fellows can be placed at large and small companies alike,” he said. “Although many teachers might not have direct experience in the private sector, they are, after all, trained and degreed professionals who ultimately provide quality work in all types of research and project settings.”