

HISTORY OF 'IMPACT'

Where Learning Meets Doing

By Rebecca Patrick

Internships often mark the moment when potential turns into purpose. For two decades, the Indiana Chamber's Work and Learn Indiana program has elevated the power of work-based learning by celebrating the employers and individuals who invest in developing talent through the Impact Awards.

These experiences do more than fill a résumé line; they build confidence, spark curiosity and create pathways to careers that benefit students and Indiana's economy. As we look back, we reconnect with a trio of past honorees whose stories show how meaningful internships can shape leaders, organizations and communities.

The Garrett Companies of Greenwood Fostering Future Talent

Every summer, a new class of college students steps into the halls, conference rooms and construction sites of The Garrett Companies – and many step out changed. It isn't a typical internship. It is intentional, life shaping and designed to develop individuals.

At the center of this transformation is the Garrett Internship Program (GIP), a 12-week experience designed to immerse students in the full lifecycle of real estate development, construction and property management.

From day one, interns realize the organization sees them differently than many other companies. They aren't observers or temporary helpers. Instead, GIP interns are treated as "emerging professionals and future leaders whose contributions directly impact active projects and business outcomes," shares Maddie Murdock, internship and career development specialist at The Garrett Companies.

That philosophy is visible in the way leaders engage with interns, the responsibilities they are entrusted with and the personalized learning paths each student follows. "Each intern receives personalized guidance, meaningful feedback and opportunities aligned to their strengths," Murdock emphasizes.

Since 2019, more than 110 young adults have completed the program. While the experience is designed to prepare interns for a range of career paths, 26 have chosen to continue their growth full time at The Garrett Companies. Many of these former interns have advanced into leadership roles or become mentors themselves, Murdock offers. Their continued involvement, she notes, "reflects both the strength of the program and the impact it has on developing future leaders."

One experience captures the program's spirit: the annual Denver learning trip. This past summer, interns were flown across the country for tours, career-path panels and candid conversations with senior leadership. For Colin Chapman – then a 2025 summer intern and today a full-time employee – the experience was pivotal. "We were able to meet with the executive team and hear insight into how they found success and the career paths they took," he relays. "The trip helped me better understand all of the different pieces that make up The Garrett Companies and how my role contributes to the company's overall success."

The Garrett Companies is an unmistakable leader when it comes to meaningful internships, and it values the role and support of statewide initiatives like Work and Learn Indiana.



The Garrett Companies offers immersive internship opportunities in construction, real estate development and property management.

"These programs help prepare young adults for the workforce, build their confidence and develop critical skills," Murdock begins. "They are essential for bridging the gap between education and career readiness. They provide students with access to meaningful, hands-on work experiences, guidance from industry professionals and opportunities to explore different career paths.

"By connecting students with companies like The Garrett Companies, Work and Learn Indiana fosters talent development and strengthens communities by supporting the next generation of professionals."

Ashley Herring Internship Proved a Launch Pad for Leadership

For Ashley Herring, director of enterprise Agile IT coaching at Cummins, the path to leadership started long before she stepped into roles guiding teams through complex organizational transformation.

Herring spent more than a decade navigating and influencing change inside large organizations. But she credits her perspective to an even earlier chapter. "Those experiences shaped how I lead today, each one building on the foundations that began during my internship, where curiosity, connection and a focus on meaningful outcomes first took root," she says.

Herring's career began at the Indy Chamber; there her internship became a catalyst for her future in Agile leadership. "It was the first place where I was encouraged to take initiative, improve processes and listen closely to customer feedback," she recalls. "That experience taught me the value of planning, iteration and continuous improvement. ... My internship taught me the power of listening, improving and leading from wherever you sit."

Today, Herring partners with leaders and teams across Cummins to strengthen how they plan, collaborate and deliver value, helping build the clarity and alignment needed to support the company's IT vision. Her leadership philosophy – steeped in empowerment, capability-building and shared purpose – grew from experiences that

trace back to her earliest professional steps.

Internships, Herring believes, create space for young professionals to learn, experiment and realize their potential while contributing meaningfully to real work. “As an intern, you’re encouraged to ask questions, test ideas and contribute in ways that help you understand how organizations operate,” she asserts. It’s often the first chance to take a professional risk – something she notes becomes “a muscle you carry into every chapter that follows.”

Herring also is passionate about broadening access to internship experiences. Programs like Work and Learn Indiana, she says, play a critical role by ensuring students can find placements and step into them with confidence. “(Unbiased) entry points matter,” Herring emphasizes.

One of the defining memories of her career beginnings was earning the Impact Award Intern of the Year in 2012. That moment she describes less as a personal accolade and more as a reflection of the women who supported her. “Their nomination meant more than the award itself, because it reflected the time, care and belief they invested in me,” Herring remarks.

“These women gave me a soft seat to learn, experiment and find my footing, and their example has deeply influenced the kind of leader I strive to be. I carry their support with me by celebrating others, creating space for growth and lifting people the way they lifted me.”

The International Center of Indianapolis Launching Global Careers

As Indiana deepens its footprint on the global stage, few organizations have leveraged work-based learning as effectively as The International Center. Since its founding in 1973, the Indianapolis nonprofit has played a central role in shaping the state’s international engagement strategy. Its internship program is now a key driver of that mission – developing globally-minded young professionals while strengthening Indiana’s workforce.

“Our interns are a vital part of our everyday operations. Their ability to learn quickly and adapt allows us to accelerate projects and introduce fresh ideas that push our work forward,” says Garth Eberhart, senior vice president of operations and chief of staff at The International Center.

Each year, the International Center hosts three internship cohorts, bringing in an average of eight to 10 students per term. These interns rotate through roles in accounting, finance, marketing, operations, diplomacy, business development and more – positions that provide hands on exposure to the complexities of global engagement.

The Center’s internship model is rooted in accessibility. “International experience isn’t required,” Eberhart notes. “What matters is a genuine curiosity about the world.” That openness has allowed the program to support both U.S. students seeking global exposure and international students wanting professional immersion in the United States.

Interns are treated as emerging professionals. They participate in weekly development workshops tailored to bridge the gap between classroom learning and real-world application.

The results are clear, Eberhart says. “Post internship surveys show a 23% increase in interns’ confidence in their professional development.” That confidence, he stresses, translates into strong outcomes and



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– Ashley Herring
2012 Impact Awards Intern of the Year

ultimately increases “the likelihood they will stay and thrive in Indiana’s workforce. In fact, Indiana remains the top destination for The International Center’s interns after graduation.”

The program’s long-term impact also is visible within the organization itself. Four of The Center’s current 16 employees began as interns – proof the model not only builds skills but also cultivates committed professionals.

One is Tess Milton, once a neuroscience student at Indiana University Bloomington, who served as a relocations intern. That experience ignited her interest in global engagement. After spending nine months in Madrid teaching English and building cultural exchange skills, she returned to Indianapolis – and to The Center – as a full-time relocations coordinator. She has since earned a Global Mobility Specialist certification and an Indiana real estate license, enabling her to help international executives transition to Indiana with confidence and care.

“Tess’s journey demonstrates how an internship at The International Center can

open doors to global experiences and long-term career success,” Eberhart surmises.

Yujin Seong arrived from Korea seeking applied experience in international affairs. Her internship quickly expanded when Kokomo’s mayor approached The Center for support with incoming Korean business. Eberhart shares that within months, Seong was promoted to Korea Project coordinator, helping advance a strategic initiative focused on strengthening ties between Indiana and the Republic of Korea. Her work ranged from assisting delegations to analyzing cultural considerations essential for attracting Korean talent to the region. Her contributions ultimately earned her a nomination for Work and Learn Indiana’s Work-Based Learner of the Year.

Reflecting on The Center’s longstanding participation in the Impact Awards, Eberhart emphasizes the importance of community collaboration. “These events remind us how education and business create meaningful opportunities for students – and for Indiana.”



The International Center hosts three internship cohorts annually, providing students with exposure to all facets of the organization and global engagement.

RESOURCES: Maddie Murdock, The Garrett Companies, at www.thegarrettco.com | Ashley Herring, Cummins, at www.cummins.com | Garth Eberhart, The International Center, at www.internationalcenter.org