

A Strong Start to Ward and Smith's Staff Internship Program

September 14, 2021



In January, Ward and Smith rolled out its first Staff Internship Program to foster new talent, increase the diversity pipeline, and provide mentorship opportunities for existing employees.

Consisting of nine high school and community college students in three offices, the inaugural year of the five-month-long program was a runaway success.

Ward and Smith hired three interns as new full-time employees as a result of their work during the program. Other interns worked with the firm through August, and several are continuing their education as rising freshmen in college.

Michael Christman, Ward and Smith's Director of Human Resources, attributes the program's success to the firm's commitment to investing in the development of its future team members.

"The firm as a whole, from the Co-Managing Directors and attorneys to our support staff members, including Paralegals, Marketing, Administration, and Mailroom, really embraced our interns." And in return, Michael noted, "our interns embraced our company culture and were energetic and enthusiastic about learning and succeeding."

For 2021, Ward and Smith partnered with five schools, including Durham Tech, Pitt Community College, Hillside High School in Durham, South Central High School in Greenville, and West Craven High School in New Bern, to launch the Staff Internship Program. For the next round, the firm will recruit interns from two additional schools, South College in Asheville and Cape Fear Community College in Wilmington, to expand the program to all five Ward and Smith locations. Future plans include adding a high school in each city as well.

"It was important to us to build a well-managed program with high-quality candidates sourced from local talent," stated Jessica Denoyer, the firm's Human Resources Coordinator. "And we're thrilled to be able to expand the program and work with more schools and colleges to open the door for more students to gain valuable experiences and develop professional connections."

Ward and Smith's interns were placed in a few different departments, including Legal Administration and Office Services. And considering that one of the major goals of the Staff Internship Program was to prepare the interns for the rigors of the working world, it only made sense for them to be exposed to all facets of the legal profession.

"Not only did they get the paralegal and administrative experiences, but they also worked in other

departments, like Marketing and the Mailroom, so that they can see the full cycle of the function of a law firm, which they found valuable," Jessica said.

The 2022 Staff Internship Program interviews are set to begin this fall, with the new crop of interns starting in January.