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Savannah River Nuclear Solutions Summer Interns and Year-Long Apprentices Help Fill Job Pipeline

AIKEN, S.C., July 19, 2021 – Dozens of year-round Savannah River Nuclear Solutions (SRNS) student interns have been reclassified as apprentices at the Savannah River Site (SRS). This change has benefited both students and the company.

“This is important, since they can receive a certification at the end of their apprenticeships once they are registered into one of our 13 Department of Labor (DOL) approved apprenticeship profiles,” said Rainer Neely, who manages the SRNS intern program. “It’s a significant advantage over our largely ‘experienced-based’ summer interns, who still play a very important role within our company.”

Currently, seven DOL paid apprentice “profiles” are available: Facility/Production Operators, Software Engineers, Records Management Clerks, Process Software Engineers, Systems Engineers, Computer Systems Support Technicians and Maintenance Mechanics.

An additional six apprentice profiles will soon include: Electrical and Instrumentation Mechanics, Project Controls personnel, Fire Protection Engineers, RadCon Inspectors, Supply Chain Management Resource employees and Associate Chemical Management Center Analysts.



Former Savannah River Nuclear Solutions intern and newly-hired employee Cassie Sistare evaluates a training session utilizing a dynamic learning activity she developed during her internship. Dynamic learning activities raise employee safety awareness at the Savannah River Site.

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Neely explained that SRNS' multi-mission contract with the Department of Energy provides opportunities for a wide range of occupations.

"We're working within our missions to accomplish, if not exceed, goals in areas such as safety, security, nuclear operations, environmental cleanup and the nonproliferation of nuclear materials," said Neely. "How better to fill these needs than with a year-round intern who is now an apprentice? It's someone who has proven they can handle the responsibilities of a currently open, full-time position in an area where they have related experience and displayed an aptitude to excel.

"Though we will continue to appreciate and support traditional summer interns, the SRNS management team recognizes the substantial and long-term value of apprenticeship programs and the job pipeline they naturally generate for our company," Neely said. "Without a doubt, registered apprentice programs are the wave of the future here at SRS and throughout South Carolina. We're confident this change in policy will lead to an even stronger workforce ready to take on the challenges of the future at SRS."

Though the conversion of year-round employees to apprentices has impacted the number of interns in the program, more than 120 summer interns are expected to make significant contributions to SRNS this year.

In fact, this year's interns will fill 37 different types of jobs and support 97 managers.

"Summer interns enjoy a wide range of potential careers to test drive. Many will find a vocation they had not previously considered; others might pivot to another dream job. At the least, each will experience life at SRS and get a glimpse of work within a U.S. industrial complex," said Neeley.

"It's not unusual for us to extend job offers to temporary employees, occasionally before their internship is complete," he added. "We now know their skill set, potential for growth and work ethic. And they know our expectations and the advantages of working for SRNS."

A graduate of Augusta University, Cassie Sistare completed her second internship in December 2020. In that time, she learned about Human Performance Improvement (HPI) principles, which provide a systematic approach to improving individual and organizational performance with an emphasis on enhancing safety.

"All through college, I did not know what career field to pursue. I just knew I wanted to help people. That's my personality and passion," said Sistare. "And now I'm able to do that with HPI. During my time at SRNS as an intern, I've come to greatly value the importance of safety, and I want to instill that same value in others. My internship was a blessing and has had such an enormous impact on my life."

The SRNS organization that hired Sistare as an intern recently offered her a full-time position, which she accepted.

"Our internship program is excellent," said Daryl Smoldt, SRNS Conduct of Operations Program Manager. "Cassie performed at a very high level as an intern last summer and continues to impress us now as a full-service employee. We hope she enjoys a long and rewarding career with our company."

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“We hope each intern and apprentice has the best possible experience,” said Neely. “We want them to thoroughly enjoy the process of finding a career that meets their needs. And, we hope, when all is said and done, they will consider joining our family at the Savannah River Site.”

Savannah River Nuclear Solutions, a Fluor-led company with Newport News Nuclear and Honeywell, is responsible for the management and operations of the Department of Energy’s Savannah River Site, including the Savannah River National Laboratory, located near Aiken, South Carolina.

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