

Rahim Nichols

Internship Coach

ECEC

The Early College Early Career (ECEC) program helps manufacturers find and train talent by connecting them with local high school students. As ECEC's Internship Coach, Rahim Nichols focuses on building foundational relationships with both the students and the program's industry partners. These relationships are key for developing and maintaining smooth and consistent communication with employers. Whether it is an employer letting him know about an intern's great day or their habit for tardiness, Nichols learns about it quickly.

"Once students start their internships, I speak with the employers on a regular basis," explained Nichols. "We receive feedback and monitor our students' progress using our Three-C Model: where can we coach, correct, and congratulate?" Nichols obtains these progress reports from employers during monthly phone calls. For example, an intern who completes a task and then picks up their phone until receiving further direction might receive a feedback of "correction." Nichols' job is to let that student know that instead of wasting downtime, they can demonstrate initiative by asking their supervisor if there is anything else that needs to be done, even sweeping the floor. By listening to this correction, the intern can show the employer their commitment and engagement.

"Whenever we get those coaching or correction moments from an employer, I follow up with the students and make sure that we're addressing those moments in a timely fashion," explained Nichols. "We help them with these soft skills in their junior year before they've officially started their internship, and then we continue to do the work during their internships as well."

When Nichols provides feedback to an intern, he approaches it from a positive and constructive angle, highlighting areas of success and opportunities for growth. He may congratulate the student on their overall demonstrated work ethic and enthusiastic engagement on the job as well as coach them in the importance of not coming back from lunch late. "We don't want the interns to feel like we're just trying to beat them down," explained Nichols. "We want to congratulate them, but also hope they see that there are some things that they need to correct at the same time."

Between the monthly phone calls, Nichols receives texts and emails from employers giving him snapshots of how interns are doing. These small moments of communication allow him to deal with problems in real-time, before a concern escalates. "I don't want to wait for a month to go by, then to finally hear about an issue that happened three weeks ago," Nichols explained.

He wants industry partners to know that he is there to support them as they support their students. These close relationships, which he built over lengthy phone calls and quick texts, benefit the interns because it gives them support as they are trying to get into manufacturing.



Nichols has only been with MAGNET since February 2020, but he has enjoyed seeing how enthusiastic students are about the program and manufacturing. As he got to know the students, and hear how the program has changed their lives, it encouraged him in his new job. When interns enter the workforce, they have the support of people who really believe in them.

“It really motivates us when we get great feedback from employers,” said Nichols. “We put that in our monthly newsletters and make sure our CEO hears those stories.”