

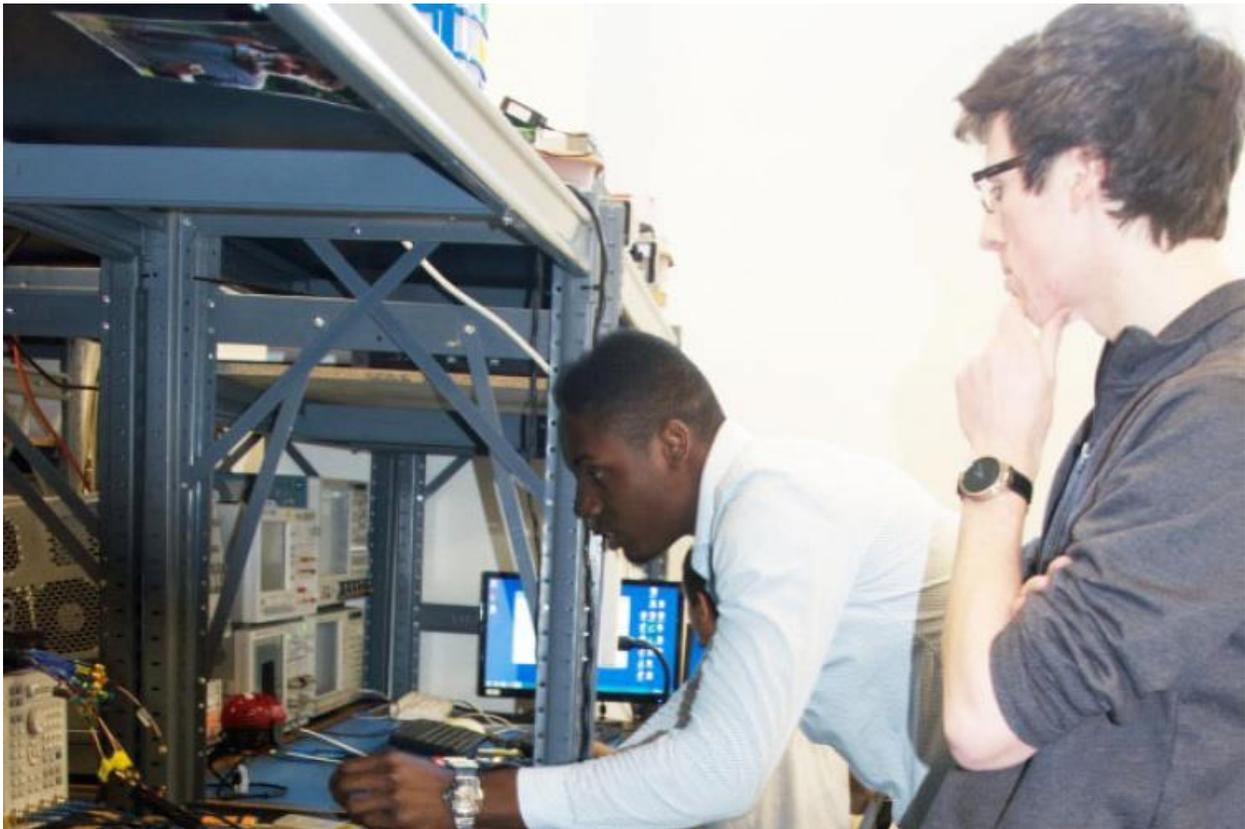
# Engineering the Future

## IOL now accepting applications for high school internship program

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Monday, January 25, 2016

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JOEL NKOUNKOU '18 AND BRANDON SMITH '18, WHO ARE NOW STUDENT EMPLOYEES AT THE INTEROPERABILITY LAB (IOL), WERE BOTH INTERNS DURING THE SUMMER BEFORE THEIR SENIOR YEAR IN HIGH SCHOOL.

The application period for the UNH InterOperability Lab (IOL) summer internship [program for high-school students](#) is now open, and for those who are accepted, the program provides the chance to work with some of the world's top data communication companies.

Last summer, 10 interns were selected, with eight working on projects related to the IOL and two in an interdisciplinary internship working with faculty, undergraduates and graduate students from UNH's civil engineering department on the [Living Bridge Project](#). During this summer's program, which will run from June 27 to Aug. 5, student interns will work at the IOL's [brand new, state-of-the-art facility](#), just a short walk from campus in downtown Durham.



NKOUNKOU AND SMITH OUTSIDE

THEIR WORK AREA AT THE IOL.

The IOL founded its high school summer internship program more than a decade ago, and sponsors have included such industry representatives as Extreme Networks, Liberty Mutual Insurance, QA Café and Verizon. Geared toward students entering their senior year in high school, the program offers paid internships where the students take part in hands-on activities, visit high-tech corporations, explore potential career paths and work directly with IOL engineers to solve problems in new technologies.

“The projects vary from year to year but involve working with computer networking companies and devices,” explains Suzanne Snow, the IOL’s STEM outreach and development manager, noting, “It is an experience of a lifetime and allows them to get industry experience and get familiar with an academic and professional culture.”

Snow explains that the ideal student for the program “would be one who is eager to learn about technology, methods and standards for testing devices and who wants to gain real-world experience.”

Some of those interns go on to become UNH students, explains Samantha Martell, the IOL’s academic program coordinator.

Joel Nkounkou ‘18 and Brandon Smith ‘18 first met as IOL interns during the summer before their senior year in high school. Now both undergraduate students at UNH, Nkounkou, a resident of Dover, New Hampshire, is majoring in electrical engineering, while Smith, who comes to UNH from Rutland, Massachusetts, is majoring in computer science.

Nkounkou and Smith worked in a home networking consortium during their summer internship in 2013, learning the TR-069 protocol, which was developed for configuring and managing Internet-access devices such as modems, and getting a firsthand look at high-tech companies during site visits specifically for IOL interns.

“We made a lot of contacts and learned about what they do,” Nkounkou explains.



NKOUNKOU AND SMITH FIRST MET AS IOL INTERNS.

Smith laughs, recalling how he and Nkounkou would compete to collect as many business cards as possible, and Nkounkou adds he would go home after his internship and keep in touch with those future connections in the field in which he plans to work.

Both agree their internship sparked new interests and the desire to keep working on what they were learning at the IOL.

Later in that academic year, when the college acceptances began rolling in, both chose UNH in part because of their experience that summer at the IOL and have continued to work in paid positions at the IOL since enrolling.

The summer internship program is funded through external sponsors, and the IOL is seeking organizations to host 12 students this year. To learn more, [click here](#).

“We retain at least 30 percent of interns who go on to choose UNH,” Snow notes, adding that about a dozen past interns currently work at the IOL as UNH students, and the program has more than 75 alumni as it enters its 11th year.

For Nkounkou and Smith, that summer at the IOL provided educational experiences they could not have received in high school.

“The IOL internship really taught me how to learn and how to explore,” Smith says.

Nkounkou agrees. “I’d go home and have that hunger to keep going.”

Internship applications are being accepted through March 18, with interviews to follow. Find out more by downloading the [brochure](#) or emailing [internship@iol.unh.edu](mailto:internship@iol.unh.edu).

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