

## **Mike Curtis, Union Bank**

I have decided that my Economy Pitch is the establishment of five-year cooperative education degrees through the Vermont State College system. Five year cooperative education degrees typically require four semesters of academic work coupled with three semesters of paid employment at designated businesses in their major. The Vermont State College system is a lower cost in-state alternative to programs already in existence at schools like Northeastern University, Drexler and RIT. The goal would be to integrate the needs of Vermont businesses with the desires of Vermont students to have an on the job experience where compensation could partially offset the cost of their college costs. Students placed in Vermont businesses would not only learn real world skills that they can bring back to campus but hopefully see that there are quality jobs available in Vermont.

This comes from Union Bank's experience with paid internships with Johnson State College. Internships though are different than cooperative programs and I would explain the difference. With more than 50,000 Vermont workers scheduled to retire in the next 15 years the establishment of successful programs would fill the void that this would create and prepare students to enter industries that are vital to the health and fabric of Vermont.