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Civil Service & Pensions Committee Hearing

How to Create a Public Sector Pipeline in New York State

Chair Andrew S. Gounardes

Friday, February 21st
10:00am
250 Broadway, 19th Floor
New York, New York

My name is Martha Krisel and I currently serve as the Executive Director of the Nassau County Civil Service Commission. I am the Past President of the Nassau County Bar Association, a practicing attorney for close to 40 years and a resident of Nassau County since 1986.

Nassau County's Civil Service Commission's portfolio includes 50+ Nassau County agencies, including its hospital and community college, as well as two towns, 64 incorporated villages, schools, libraries and special districts. Nassau County has approximately 1.358 million residents and an unemployment rate of 3.4%, according to the New York State Department of Labor. In addition, its housing costs (home ownership as well as rental) are extremely high.

These factors contribute to the difficulty in recruiting public sector talent. In addition, civil service examinations may require college graduation prior to the exam application process, but the private sector can actively

recruit juniors and seniors, which further contributes to a shortage of applicants, especially when coupled with the extreme budgetary limitations of public sector salaries.

With these obstacles in mind, Classification staff at the Nassau County Civil Service Commission worked collaboratively with one of its largest agencies, the Department of Public Works. In doing so, staff designed two pathways to encourage college students to enter the public sector.

The first pathway is the creation of two *Intern* titles for current college students. *Administrative Intern* provides part-time employment opportunities to students who are enrolled full-time. *Cooperative College Intern* requires participation in a cooperative education program and allows students to work in a position related to their field of study.

The second pathway, which we are beginning to implement, is to hold exams using anticipated eligibility. This allows students who are approaching graduation to participate in exams that have traditionally required a degree. Candidates must submit proof of completion of courses but not until they are eligible for appointment.

These two options are intended to help public sector employers compete with the private sector in recruiting college students entering the workforce. The *Intern* titles allow students to gain exposure to the environment and advantages of public sector employment. After experiencing the benefits that the public sector offers, students are more likely to opt for full-time public sector employment after college. And allowing students to sit for examinations means that full-time employment becomes possible at the time of graduation, rather than merely sitting for the examination at that point. These strategies help the public sector compete against the private sector, which may offer jobs to students while they are still in school.

The interplay between existing competitive class titles and noncompetitive *Intern* titles must be considered. To be specific, the

Nassau County Civil Service Commission is cognizant that even though students may be afforded a wonderful professional experience as an *Intern*, their employment is temporary in nature and does not guarantee future full-time positions. Under the competitive Civil Service system, students, who work as Interns and who choose to take an exam, do not have any advantage over other exam participants, other than their exposure to the benefits of public sector employment and a commitment to continue in this very special environment. Going forward, the Commission's focus is on the development of a legally sound transition, in compliance with Civil Service law, from temporary, non-competitive positions to full-time, competitive positions. The Commission looks forward to working with New York State toward this end.

Nassau County also notes that on the State level, a Professional Career Opportunities (PCO) examination is held every few years. (<https://www.cs.ny.gov/pco/>). This generalized exam does lead to entry-level employment opportunities in a wide variety of fields. The only requirement for participation is a Bachelor's degree, but the State also uses anticipated eligibility, allowing students who are within 18 months (or so) of graduation to participate.

Thank you for this opportunity to participate in this important public hearing.