LIKE MANY COLLEGE STUDENTS, MONIQUE TROMP LOVED HER FIRST INTERNSHIP. And what’s not to love? She enjoyed learning more about biology and the visual system, she was thrilled to find out about all the career opportunities that are available to her as a researcher, and she appreciated the guidance she received from the scientists she worked with at the Max Planck Florida Institute for Neuroscience (MPFI) in Jupiter.

“The technology is over the top,” Tromp said as she talked about the high-tech equipment she had access to as an intern that she might not typically see in a college lab setting. In addition to outstanding research faculty from throughout Florida and the U.S., she said, “Scientists at MPFI come from all over the world to work [and] thus you get an exchange of creative ideas that stem from unique backgrounds.”

Tromp was one of a few undergraduate students chosen in 2015 for the yearlong MPFI Scholars internship program designed to prepare undergrads for a career in research. Now that Tromp has graduated, the recent Florida Atlantic University (FAU) alumna decided that she’d like to continue to pursue her education in medicine to be an ophthalmologist.

Just ask MPFI Chief Operating Officer Matthias Haury. “While introducing a new life science research industry in Florida and simultaneously building a new institute presented an intriguing opportunity for our research organization, we weren’t completely sure what kind of access we’d have to high-quality graduate students,” he mentioned.

That quickly changed after Max Planck built its labs near FAU’s Jupiter campus and Scripps Research Institute’s biomedical research facility. Together they created a growing neuroscience center of excellence.

As part of the ongoing relationship, scientists from Scripps and MPFI organize lecture series and provide access to top facilities and equipment when coursework or student research calls for it. Also, FAU offers classes focusing on the information and soft skills graduates need to succeed in the STEM fields.

The efforts to work with employers don’t always have to be as extensive as FAU’s arrangements with MPFI. Sometimes all it takes is adding or modifying a class to meet a need in the market. As an example, Kelly mentioned the case of a drug development company that needs chemists who know how to respond to the demands of federal regulations. In that situation, all the school would need to do is add courses covering the regulatory side of chemistry.

Kelly says he isn’t trying to create a trade school, he just believes that universities should pay better attention to the job market and keep students informed.
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The partnership between FAU and MPFI is just one of many collaborations happening across Florida as higher education institutions and in-state companies collaborate to train the next generation of workers.

Welcome to the new world of recruiting, where many companies are discovering you can create the workforce you need by collaborating with schools and universities to develop programs that educate and train students simultaneously.

The success MPFI had finding Tromp through its Scholars program is one such way partnerships can work.

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“"You can’t tell a student what to major in, but you can tell them where the jobs are," he says.