



Partners in Education:

**Working together
to address Iowa's
workforce challenge.**



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A VIEW FROM THE TOP



Lori Schaefer-Weaton

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Business plays valuable role in educating Iowa students

This month, the feature article in Business Record Iowa highlights something about which I am quite passionate: the need to build strong partnerships between business and education.

When it comes to education, business involvement is essential to ensure Iowa students gain the resources and skills they need to be part of a world-class workforce. In addition, the more business is involved at every stage of education, the more our students will see and understand the opportunities that exist right here in Iowa. Great work is done when all the key stakeholders come together for a common purpose; look at Gov. Terry Branstad's STEM initiative for an example.

The results of these partnerships are overwhelmingly positive in terms of economic development and making Iowa communities, as a whole, stronger. In Fairfield, the business community was instrumental in bringing great programs to our schools, like Project Lead the Way and a Career Academy. With such strong partnerships comes the ongoing support from business in the form of field trips, industry advisers, scholarships, internships and financial awards for educators who go above and beyond in the classroom.

We rely on our partners in education to get students, educators and parents in to our advanced manufacturing facilities, so they can see firsthand the diverse and rewarding career opportunities available. Through these visits, we are changing the outdated perception of manufacturing. What they see today are clean, high-tech industries with talented teams, great pay and benefits. This is the model on which the Elevate Advanced Manufacturing campaign (www.elevateiowa.com) is based. Thanks to its ongoing success, Elevate recently received grants from the Department of Education and Iowa Workforce Development and continues to build momentum.

Finally, let me note the very busy summer being enjoyed by the ABI Foundation. The foundation's annual Business Horizons program took place at Central College in Pella last month. My daughter was one of the 100 high school students in attendance, and she had a fabulous week. She learned a lot, made new friends, had fun and found out that she has a bright future right here in Iowa.

For those of you who support Elevate Advanced Manufacturing, the ABI Foundation and ABI in general, thank you. That support is never taken for granted.

AHEAD OF THE CURVE

30 years of leadership in business education

For more than three decades, the Iowa Association of Business and Industry Foundation has been working with students, educators and business leaders to help introduce Iowa students to the opportunities available to them in the state.

The ABI Foundation has been at the forefront of business education in Iowa since the first Leadership Iowa class traveled the state in 1982. Since then, thousands of high school students, college students and professionals have participated in ABI Foundation programming, learning about themselves and ways to make Iowa a better place to live, work and raise a family.

Last month, the ABI Foundation hosted high school students from across Iowa at Central College in Pella for the annual Business Horizons program. Students who started the week nervous about spending five days surrounded by unfamiliar faces found themselves on day five wishing the program lasted just a little longer.

During their time at Business Horizons, students learned how to work together in teams to accomplish their goals, identified their own strengths, received unique business tours and gained a better understanding of the career opportunities available to them in Iowa.

"Students are influenced by what they know and experience, and Business Horizons is a great opportunity for them to learn from so many different professionals and what they do and the path that led them to their career," longtime volunteer Karen Rieck said.

Meanwhile, the 2016-17 Leadership University class is gathering over the next week in central Iowa where they'll tour the Capitol, meet legislators and visit a variety of businesses, including Grinnell Mutual Reinsurance, Musco Lighting and Dwolla. Each of the 20 students has their own mentor from their chosen field to provide guidance, advice and encouragement.

Two primary goals of the ABI Foundation are to fill the gap in Iowa's career education for college and high school students and to provide solutions for the state's workforce development needs. However, professional and personal development aren't enough. These future employees are only valuable to Iowa companies and organizations if they understand what is available to them here and choose to pursue careers in Iowa.

Both programs are designed to help students see their place in Iowa as they graduate, begin their careers and establish themselves as leaders in their communities.





◀ EVENT REWIND

Business Horizons

JULY 17-21 | CENTRAL COLLEGE, PELLA



Top: A Business Horizons participant shakes hands with a judge after presenting his company's product. Bottom: Students take notes while listening to presenter David Williamson. Right: BH students pose for a photo following their pitch to investors. Bottom left: Students complete a teamwork exercise; bottom right: Student Ambassador Zoe Hamstreet and Consultant Doug Strand pause for a photo.

Students begin building their product on day one of Business Horizons; Students enjoy a night of improv comedy.

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Rowena Crosbie, President

INSPIRATION IN IOWA

BOOSTING BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

West Des Moines city and economic development leaders recognize the importance of cultivating small businesses.

That's what led to a new educational series aimed at helping these companies learn about everything from identifying customers to long-term strategic planning.

"We know it's not just large businesses that make up a city," said Jo Eckert, assistant executive director of the West Des Moines Business Incubator. "Our large employers are fantastic, but we need small businesses to help run the community."

The city of West Des Moines partnered with Historic Valley Junction, an economic development organization, and Advance Iowa, a comprehensive consulting program at the University of Northern Iowa that assists midsize companies, to create the WDM Boost series. The four-part program series began on Aug. 9 and includes sessions on improving business performance, strategic planning, marketing and customer discovery.

Historic Valley Junction Executive Director Jim Miller said the series was in part born out of feedback from area businesses that said they were interested in training.

"We had been having conversations about it internally, and when we asked businesses, 'Truly, does anyone want this?' we had a great response," Miller said.

Hosting the sessions locally makes them easy for busy business owners to attend, Miller and Eckert said.

"In these locally owned businesses, oftentimes the owner is most focused on the day-to-day operations, as they should be," Miller said. "But they don't always have time to figure out the trainings they want or need or how they're going to find them. It makes it a lot easier if we're right here, offering it to you."

The series is geared toward so-called Stage 2 businesses, with 10 to 100 employees, and is open to all companies, not just those in West Des Moines.

Program Director Dan Beenken said Advance Iowa wants to focus on helping businesses throughout the state identify new opportunities and potential for growth.

"Partnerships like these help us reach out to midsize companies that are so vital to our economy but can often be overlooked," Beenken said.

WDM BOOST SERIES

This four-part series is designed to focus on key business development themes. There's still time for interested business leaders to participate in three of the four sessions.

Thinking like a Futurist: Strategic Planning | Sept. 13

Marketing GPS | Oct. 11

The Power of Customer Discovery | Nov. 8



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Jason Andringa, president and CEO, alongside Mary Andringa, board chair, at Vermeer Corporation, a global manufacturer of agricultural and industrial equipment.



Partners in Education: Working together to address Iowa's workforce challenge.

Iowa's business community and educational institutions have created new relationships and partnerships to ensure students and workers have the training and skills necessary to fill high-demand jobs in the state.

The relationships have been mutually beneficial. Educators have received feedback on their training programs and are developing programs to meet specific job needs, while businesses receive employees who are prepared and well trained for jobs and get the help they need filling high-demand positions.

Rob Denson, president of Des Moines Area Community College, said a partnership with Accumold in Ankeny helped boost the college's tool and die-making program and give the company the employees it needed.

"Our program has been essentially full since then," Denson said.

Awareness is the biggest key to filling some of these high-demand positions, especially within manufacturing.

Vermeer Corp. in Pella does this through school fieldtrips and job shadowing, said Mary Andringa, the company's board

of directors' chair. Vermeer manufactures construction, mining, forestry and agricultural equipment.

The company hosts Manufacturing Day for all sixth-graders and interested high schoolers. Students tour the plant and learn about manufacturing careers through hands-on activities that involve computer-aided design, robotics and more. About 700 students from 10 schools attended last year.

"This really does open up a lot of eyes for young people," Andringa said.

So much so, that at the beginning of the day, 34 percent were interested in a career in manufacturing. By the end, 69 percent were interested.

"That's a pretty good change in perception once we got them to see what are all of the things involved with manufacturing," Andringa said.

For the past decade, teachers from a 70-mile radius have come to Vermeer for a three-week paid internship to learn about manufacturing and what the company does.

"That really helps our teachers understand what are the skills needed in today's advanced manufacturing," she said. "There are good jobs in manufacturing, and it's not leaving the United States. Often these are the teachers who bring their students to Manufacturing Day, or they'll invite people from Vermeer to come to the classes."

Advanced manufacturing is being promoted statewide through the Elevate Advanced Manufacturing marketing campaign, which is designed to bring awareness to the careers and educational opportunities in the industry. This includes creating a positive perception of these careers and addressing misconceptions about the work environment, safety and wages.

Lori Schaefer-Weaton, president of Agri-Industrial Plastics in Fairfield, said Elevate also has helped bring attention to the students who are not interested in a four-year educational degree. She said some of these students may find an interest in computers or robotics or other areas of manufacturing.

Awareness also is key in the insurance realm, said Barb Baker, the director of advertising and community relations for Grinnell Mutual Reinsurance. Many students don't realize the wide range of jobs available, she said, that include the legal department, information technology, sales, marketing and advertising, underwriting, claims, investigations, loss control, and building and grounds.

"We really want to expose Grinnell Mutual as a very viable place to work, and we want to support students who may have an interest or may want to explore what options are available in insurance," Baker said. "We know insurance is one of the biggest employers in the state of Iowa, but students and even their parents don't always know what types of opportunities are available at an insurance agency."

State leaders look to the future, set goals for trained workforce

Iowa Gov. Terry Branstad and Lt. Gov. Kim Reynolds last October set a goal for 70 percent of Iowa's workforce to have education or training beyond high school.

Their goal was based on feedback from state travels in which the two have heard from Iowa businesspeople there are not enough workers to fill jobs, and from the findings of a report from the Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce that projected Iowa would add 612,000 jobs through 2025 and that 68 percent of those jobs would require



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— Linda Fandel, the governor’s special assistant for education

postsecondary education and training beyond high school. Iowa ranked 18th among states in the country for postsecondary training and education at the time the report was released.

According to the Lumina Foundation, an independent and private foundation that works to increase the number of Americans with higher education training and skills, only 47 percent of Iowans currently have a postsecondary degree or training beyond high school. Future Ready Iowa was launched to address this gap.

“We are doing this to make sure students and workers have the career opportunities they deserve, and business and industry can hire enough of the skilled workers they need to innovation and grow,” said Linda Fandel, the governor’s special assistant for education.

Elected, business and educational leaders have met across the state since the formation of Future Ready Iowa to address the skills gap. More than 800 Iowans came together for an April summit. State officials will work the next year to create a plan of action based on the summit results, Fandel said.

State leaders also want to build upon STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) BEST (Business Engaging Students and Teachers) to create more collaborations between schools and business and industry to further the opportunities Iowa’s students have to learn about these types of jobs and receive the skills to perform them.

This includes opportunities like those at Rock Valley High School, which operates Rocket Manufacturing. Students there operate all aspects of the business from marketing to bookkeeping, and work as a subcontractor to local businesses by supplying machine parts and tools.

The Future Ready Iowa Portal will launch in 2017. It will be an online site that shows Iowans the high demand jobs in the state and the career pathways – the training, degrees and skills needed – to attain those jobs. It also will include information about financial aid and where to seek training.

“We know a higher share of jobs are going to require postsecondary skills, and we want to help more Iowans get those credentials to get those jobs,” Fandel said.

These high-demand jobs include those in information technology, actuaries, personal financial advisers, information security analysts, diagnostic medical sonographers and nursing instructors/teachers, according to Iowa Workforce Development.

Many Iowa companies have cited IT-related positions as their biggest need.

“It has the greatest demand right now. We’ve created an IT partnership working with all of the major companies in central Iowa,” Denson with DMACC said.

Businesses start reaching out to youth early in their educational career

The business community has discovered the importance of reaching students as early as middle school to shape their perceptions early on.

Agri-Industrial Plastics has worked with the Fairfield school district on Project Lead the Way which provides students with more access to engineering and STEM classes.

Schaefer-Weaton, president of the company, knew it was important to bring this program to Fairfield to address the need of engineers for the area’s manufacturing companies. Students within the school district also are introduced to engineering at the middle school level.

Students at the high school level can receive college credit through a career academy in which they learn about finance, industrial maintenance or health occupations. Some students have received certificates in industrial maintenance that have allowed them to go straight into a job after high school graduation, she said.

“We’ve had amazing stories come out of there,” Schaefer-Weaton said.

At Grinnell Mutual, the company developed an internship for high school students in which they receive dual college and high school credit. Students are able to select an area of interest within the company but also are assigned areas to explore.

Northeast Iowa Community College has partnerships at the high school level with career academies in areas such as welding, health careers, computer science, diesel/auto, construction and advanced manufacturing. The idea is to direct students toward careers in the trades or industrial-type jobs, said Wendy Mihm-Herold, vice president of business and community solutions at NICC.

More than 150 students have completed the career academy. The programs, including the Computer Numerical Control (CNC) pathway, allow students to receive the skills they need to go straight on to work after high school.

Educators find ways to create new opportunities for students

Business instructor Dale Zevenbergen has taken the idea of expanding Dordt College’s internship program on the road. The college has had a strong internship program for decades, but Zevenbergen and others at Dordt are trying to show students there’s a range of job opportunities available to them in areas they might not have considered such as manufacturing.

“A lot want to be in banking and finance, but they don’t know about opportunities in manufacturing,” said Zevenbergen, who oversees the business and accounting internship program.

Zevenbergen has visited nine cities where the college’s alumni live and work in order to create new relationships that could expand the internship program.

The visits serve two purposes: first, to create a connection between the college and business as a way to find new summer internship opportunities for students, as well as placement for graduates; second, to ensure Dordt instructors are providing students with the skills and knowledge they need to be prepared for the workforce.

Zevenbergen said one-third to one-half of students who take an internship turn it into a full-time job.

“Companies see it as a great training process rather than a half-day interview,” he said of the internship program. “It’s great to have the whole summer or the whole semester.”

Hagie Manufacturing Co., a farm equipment supplier in Clarion, uses its internship program to determine whether a student will be a good fit for the company. About 50 percent are retained and hired for positions after graduation, said Dave Maxheimer, the company's human resources director.

The company provides job shadowing opportunities for middle and high school students, as well, and allows them to see the equipment and the modeling used to produce the final product.

"We're one of the few companies that will talk to pre-college students and let them come in," Maxheimer said. "You can job shadow any position in the company. If you want to see if you can weld, we'll let them suit up and weld. These (kids) are the future, and so many people are afraid to let them have a chance."

Community colleges bring their auto body, tooling, maintenance and welding classes to the facility to learn, as well, he said.

The University of Iowa's Tippie College of Business has taken a different approach in its relationship with business.

The college has formatted its offerings to cover a variety of business skills employees need to know such as accounting, finance and business management. Recently, the college created a course specific to Van Meter Inc., an industrial and electrical supply company, to help employees learn to become project leaders through a management skills program. The college also offers other leadership courses in areas of human resources, conflict resolution, decision making and more.

"The goal is so these people who only have an AA degree or may not even have a college degree can enroll in these custom programs to get better skills," said Alex Taylor, associate director of the executive master of business administration programs at Tippie.

Colleges, universities launch programs specifically designed to fill high-demand jobs

Dordt also will launch a professional and technical program in fall 2017, called Pro-Tech, that will give students an opportunity to earn a two-year associate of science degree in manufacturing technology and farm operations and management.

Dordt will partner with more than a dozen Iowa businesses through the program. Students will receive a paid internship beginning with the first semester. The program is designed so that students will find a pathway to a high-demand job after they graduate.

DMACC has created more than 160 programs that are focused on the jobs opportunities that are available in central Iowa, Denson said. For example, the college worked with Vermeer to establish its welding program. Another company needed painters and worked with DMACC to create a liquid paint program.

"No. 1, we want to make sure companies in Iowa have the skilled workforce they need, and number two, anybody who wants a job, we want them to have the skills to take those good jobs," he said.

Vermeer's relationship with DMACC and Indian Hills Community College has helped it fill positions in welding, machining and painting certifications.

"It really helps us mitigate some of the issues manufacturing has with not being able to find the right people with the right skills to hire," Andringa said.



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In business it is important to maximize productivity, whether it be with equipment or human assets. We all know how important preventive maintenance is for machines and equipment, but often this same philosophy is not taken with a company's most important asset, its people. I think we would all agree that a company's most important assets are qualified, healthy employees, who are maximizing their potential every day. To perform optimally takes a sound mind and body. Stresses from inside and outside work lead to a slow breakdown of the body and mind. There are a few simple ideas and strategies, which are very inexpensive to implement, that can be followed to maintain health and maximize daily performance.

Increase physical activity/movement (especially in sedentary jobs):

The body is meant to move, and this in turn increases blood flow throughout the body, which improves mental performance and actually reduces physical fatigue.

- Take regular breaks and increase different movements during the day.
- Consider having 30-minute slow walking meetings during the day if possible. Research is showing that this increases mental alertness and productivity and helps to break up the day.

Avoid extended awkward or static positions (sitting):

Awkward or static positions increase stress on the body, resulting in reduced performance and increased risk of injury. Sitting is a static position that causes a significant amount of stress to the body. Extended sitting is a significant factor in tension headaches. There is a reduction in blood flow to the body and especially the brain.

- Don't sit for hours at a time without breaks. Getting up for one to two minutes every one to two hours and for longer periods of time

every three to four hours is the best way to increase mental and physical sharpness with seated occupations.

- Active workspace: Break up positions with standing desks. Changing positions from seated to standing throughout the day is ideal.

Encourage adequate sleep:

Sleep debt or deficit causes fatigue, judgment errors and decreased productivity. Severe sleep deficit can produce mental judgments similar to moderate alcohol consumption.

- Encourage employees to get at least six to eight hours of sleep per night.

Proper Hydration:

Hydration increases alertness and improves overall health.

- Drink eight to 10 glasses of water per day, especially if the work environment is hot or if physical activity is high. Providing easy access to water at work is important.

The return on investment for educating and advocating for employees to follow the four simple ideas above can be enormous.

Need help? Consider on-site hours where employees can check in or visit with a qualified occupational health provider. This can be done weekly or monthly but gives your employees a chance to ask questions about health issues, get screened for musculoskeletal aches and pains, or get heart rate or blood pressure checks. These sessions demonstrate to employees that their employer cares for them and improves overall employee health and productivity. **That's Preventative Maintenance!**



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EDUCATORS BECOME THE EDUCATED IN LOCAL WORKPLACES

Claire Eide, Iowa Association of Business and Industry

Elevate Advanced Manufacturing partnered with Iowa community colleges to offer educators from across Iowa a four-day program this summer focused on changing the perception of advanced manufacturing and preparing students of all age levels with the skills they need to succeed in the workplace of tomorrow.

The Educators in the Workplace program brings businesses and core student mentors together to showcase the needs of a skilled workforce. These businesses emphasized the importance of building overall 21st-century skills, like critical thinking, math and problem solving in addition to so-called soft skills such as dependability, communication and teamwork. It was a natural partnership for Elevate, a statewide campaign to promote careers and education in advanced manufacturing.

Alexandra Monaghan, Elevate program coordinator, said the real goal is to create a community where students, educators and mentors have access to the kinds of skills and information they need to enter, or help others enter, into the workforce and options for different educational paths for future careers.

“The programs we have are arming students with the information they need for the future,” Monaghan said. “We want to be a resource for them and let people know that the manufacturing industry has changed.”

Kelly Mitchell, the DMACC Business Solutions Coordinator, noted that both middle school and high school teachers participated in this immersive program by visiting Pella Corp., Vermeer, Lely, Pella Regional Hospital and Weiler Manufacturing as well as attending guest speaker presentations with representatives from 3M, Health Enterprises, Musco Lighting and Pella Cooperative Electric.

Karen Swanson, director of high school programs at Indian Hills Community College, said the educators were exposed to the large variety of local employment opportunities and the need for a skilled workforce, especially students who are interested in a career involving advanced manufacturing.

“We collaborated with the economic development group Opportunity Squared and business and industry to make this a great professional development opportunity for educators,” Swanson said. The workshop schedules boasted themes like employment opportunities, workplace readiness and continuous improvement.

Educators remarked that the program provided useful and relevant information to bring back to their classrooms and skills to identify and incorporate students’ passions into the “real world.”



Join Elevate Advanced Manufacturing to honor industry legends

What: Legends in Manufacturing Dinner

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Where: The Meadows Events & Conference Center, Altoona

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