

College leaders support education groups

BY CORRINNE HESS
chess@bizjournals.com

The number of students entering southeastern Wisconsin colleges who need remedial classes has increased dramatically over the last decade, prompting Milwaukee-area higher education leaders to throw their support behind several ambitious education initiatives launched over the last year.

"The success of this region depends on these initiatives and how well we address them," said Michael Lovell, chancellor of the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. "I think this is the single most important problem we can all agree on."

Lovell is on the board of the Milwaukee Partnership Academy, a group started to enhance the quality of teaching and learning in Milwaukee Public Schools, and was recently named co-chair of Milwaukee Succeeds, an initiative recently launched by the Greater Milwaukee Foundation.

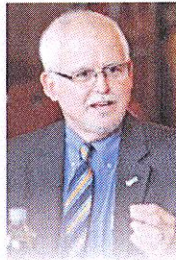
He has seen the need for education reform on his own campus, where the number of incoming freshmen needing remedial classes at UWM has gone from 33 percent to 49 percent over the last 10 years.

The five-year graduation rate for those students is only 14 percent, Lovell said.

"We have to do a better job on our own campus, I'll admit that, but we have to make sure when they come through our doors, they are prepared to be there," Lovell said. "The business community has recognized this is the biggest challenge facing our region."

Milwaukee Succeeds is a "cradle to career" program with several ambitious goals: All chil-

dren are prepared to enter school; all children succeed academically and graduate prepared for meaningful work and/or college; all children and young people are healthy, supported socially and emotionally and contribute responsibly to the success of the Milwaukee community.



'Manufacturing is DEAD LAST in desirability of people.'

Michael Burke
Milwaukee Area
Technical College

The Metropolitan Milwaukee Association of Commerce has said it plans to work in tandem with Milwaukee Succeeds and also has thrown its support behind Schools That Can Milwaukee, a group started in July 2010 to generate 20,000 seats in "excellent" schools serving primarily low-income families by 2020.

Schools That Can currently is trying to lure a small group of charter schools — called Rocketship Education — from California to Milwaukee.

Eileen Schwalbach, president of Mount Mary College, Milwaukee, hopes the new education initiatives started by the business community and school leaders provides a sense of accountability

so stakeholders have a way of understanding whether the efforts are successful or not.

Schwalbach co-chairs another reform effort, the Talent Dividend Initiative.

Launched in July 2010, the Talent Dividend Initiative is a three-year national effort to grow economic development through an increase in college graduates. The goal is to raise the number of college graduates 1 percentage point by 2012, or by 13,146 students.

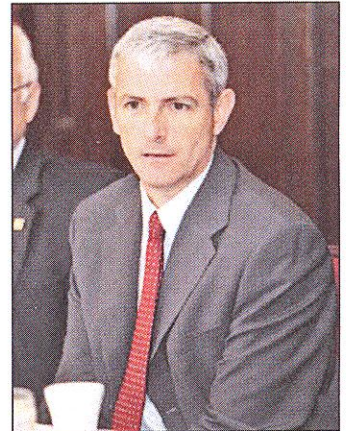
"There is a real energy, not only in the higher education community, but also the business and nonprofit community," Schwalbach said. "The time really is now for us to do something. We really are at a tipping point and if we don't, the consequences are going to be dire."

Meanwhile, higher education leaders are looking at their own programming to ensure they are offering students opportunities to gain the training they need to get jobs immediately after graduation.

Waukesha County Technical College is considering looking at more "career pathway models" or short-term training to get people into jobs faster, said Denine Rood, vice president of WCTC.

"An associate degree or technical diploma might be too long of a program to meet the needs of industry at the time," Rood said. "Of course, we need to get industry on board and figure out how we can partner to move these people through to build a skilled work force."

Michael Burke, president of Milwaukee Area Technical College, said a recent skills summit held with the MMAC showed there are the same number of jobs available as the number of people collecting unemployment benefits. The problem is, those unemployed people don't have the skills



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to fill those jobs, Burke said.

One of the reasons is the image of manufacturing as "dirty, dumb and dangerous," Burke said.

"Manufacturing is dead last in desirability of people," Burke said, adding that MATC has waiting lists for degree programs in health care, culinary and baking arts, cosmetology and automotive.

"I think generally we're training everyone who wants to be a welder or a manufacturer, but there just isn't the same demand of people who want to be in health care," he said.

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