

Local, national businesses profit from OCC

By Pat Murphy
staff writer

Oakland Community College has about 27,000 students, officially.

But Carol F. Stencel, a Bloomfield Hills resident, is concerned about the 6,000 or so other students at OCC who make up the unofficial enrollment.

She's academic dean of OCC's Business and Professional Institute (BPI), a program designed for workers concerned about their job skills than a degree.

The school scrupulously separates those BPI students when tabulating enrollment, says OCC spokesman George Carsons, in accord with rules set down by the North Central Association, an accrediting agency for 19 states.

But BPI students are becoming an increasingly important part of OCC, according to Stencel and those who analyze the link between business and occupational trends and the education system.

Like others, Stencel is very much aware of the dire warnings contained in reports like "America's Choice," the study by the National Center on Education and the Economy that came out last June.

Among its conclusions is that the future of the United States as a world leader is seriously jeopardized by deficiencies in its workforce.

THE REPORT SAYS U.S. workers don't have the know-how to produce top-notch products, making it nearly impossible for their companies to compete in a world market.

As head of BPI, Stencel oversees more than 90 separate programs tailored to companies seeking to upgrade their workforces in the face of ever-tougher competition.

"Their competition isn't just local," said Bill Rose, OCC dean of academic services, speaking about companies with BPI programs. "Their competition is national, international or both."

Stencel, Rose, Barbara Einhardt, OCC's associate dean of instructional services, and Royce West of the Dana Corp. talked about BPI last week during the convention of the American Association of Community & Junior Colleges.

They told other educators and administrators how community colleges

— an unglamorous and usually underfunded part of the educational system — can develop crucial programs.

"WE CAN TAILOR a program for almost any company, any need," said Stencel, who has a doctorate from Michigan State University and has been at OCC since it was founded in 1965.

They talked about the Dana program as the focal point of their two-hour presentation. "But we talked about our diversity and our flexibility," said Stencel.

Some programs, like Dana's, lead to associate degrees. Others simply focus on the skills needed to create a competitive edge. For example:

- A BPI program at the Ford Plant in Wixom includes instructions that might well lead to it being called "ding and dent," said Stencel. "It's customized to automotive needs, including how to repair metal blemishes," she said.

- Another BPI program at the Ford headquarters in Dearborn introduces workers to the basics, and subtleties, of Japanese culture.

- One program provided advanced training for 100 supervisors from the Allnet Communications Services, Inc., in Birmingham.

- One of the newest BPI programs is designed for the CDI Transportation Group in Madison Heights, focuses on manufacturing technology, with emphasis on design.

STENCHEL IS PROUD OF BPI. But she's also quick to point out its success is in large part attributable to seven companies that provide equipment, expertise and support that would otherwise not be available — at least not at affordable prices.

Those two-way streets are called BPI partnerships. Foremost among those partnership companies is the IBM Corp., which has provided more than \$3 million worth of computer equipment, software and services.

The Rexroth Corp., whose Detroit office is located in Rochester Hills, equipped OCC's hydraulics laboratory. Part of the European based Manemann Group, Rexroth also provides the needed expertise to keep the facility on the cutting-edge, according to David C. Mehrer, the company's fluid power instructor.



Under the watchful eye of OCC instructor Steve Atma of Birmingham, Jim Reading, a Dana Corp. process engineer from

Hudson, Ind., inspects a robot used for CIM, computer integrated manufacturing.

Ohio firm utilizes OCC programs

By Pat Murphy
staff writer

Why would a Fortune 500 company with its own university and based in another state spend more than \$150,000 to send its middle-management people to Oakland Community College?

OCC got a rare opportunity to tout its own horn when administrators answered that question Tuesday in Kansas City.

The occasion was the annual convention of the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges (AAC&JC) — when administrators get together and, if warranted, do a little academic bragging.

OCC has plenty to brag about, according to Royce West, an educational spokesman for the Dana Corp., a

Toledo-based company (ranked 101st on this year's Fortune 500 list) with 27,000 employees in North America and nearly 40,000 worldwide.

Dana has five plants or offices in Michigan, including a plant in Auburn Hills and a commercial credit office in Bloomfield Hills, with about 1,100 employees.

BUT FOR SIX weeks of the year, Dana transplants about 30 middle-management people to OCC, for intense training in high tech areas like CIM (computer integrated manufacturing) and CNC (computer numerical control).

"The program really works for us," said West, one of four panelists at the AAC&JC convention in Kansas City. It's a customized program that enables our employees to work

toward a degree, while they learn about the technology they need on the job.

West is in a position to know. He's the manager of education at Dana University, a business and technological institute the company operates near its corporate offices in Toledo.

Partially on his recommendation, Dana bypassed its own school — as well as six other universities and community colleges — to send its employees to OCC.

Some have already been to college and may have a degree. Others may have barely finished high school. But they attend three-week sessions in the spring and again in the fall at a cost of about \$3,000 per employee per session in addition to regular wages.

"We looked at many options before deciding to send our people to OCC," West said. Two of the biggest considerations are the equipment and the faculty.

AT SOME OF the schools Dana evaluated, classrooms were equipped with outdated equipment.

West said. "Most (apparently) had been donated by industry and much of it was obsolete. "That's not the case at OCC. Its equipment is state-of-the-art." Equally important, West said, is that faculty members have worked in the manufacturing plants, "they take a hands-on approach to problem solving. At other schools, faculty members were heavy on advanced degrees. But they just hadn't been there, they didn't have the manufacturing experience."

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