

# Business to colleges - Break training mold

BY TIM RICHARD  
STAFF WRITER

Quit being snobbish about the university degree.

Stop thinking so much in terms of two-year and four-year degrees, and think more of "education on demand."

Thirty Oakland County business leaders gave parents and community college leaders consistent advice about how to prepare young people - and middle-aged employees - for high-paying jobs of the future.

"There's pressure on kids to go to college - a stereotype," said Greg Sander, vice president of Ring Screw Works, said Monday at a business forum held by Oakland Community College trustees on the Orchard Ridge Campus in Farmington Hills.

"There are lots of jobs where a 19-year-old can make \$30,000 a year and by the age of 30 make \$60,000 to \$70,000 a year," said Sander, urging attention to "the basic hands-on guy who generates the product that generates the revenue."

**Opponents vocal**

At Pope, Chrysler's government training resource executive, said business thinking is opposed by a tiny group in Oakland County. "They're very vocal. They go to all the hearings. Their criticism is that you (business)

ness) use kids and throw 'em away. They say, 'Our kids are not business robots.' They're very vocal," said Pope.

With OCC Chancellor Richard Thompson chairing, the business leaders urged college attention to such needs as multiply-skilled health care providers and retail managers who sell goods and services to 4.4 million people in the metropolitan area.

Firefighters' work is changing, said Richard Marinucci, chief of the Farmington Hills department. "Now, 65 to 70 percent of the activity is EMS (emergency medical service) because we're seeing a decline in fires." But the "humungous" new houses in northern and western suburbs present a special challenge to firefighters requiring training, he added.

Michael Slubowski, chief executive officer of Providence Hospital, said basic literacy is a stumbling block to developing staff that can handle groups of jobs in the business office and patient care.

"We want an environment with active learners," said Kmart training manager Paul Petruyika. "We focus on management's interpersonal skills." Many at the table nodded when Petruyika said people lose their ability to communicate as they acquire more technical skills.

## Teamwork needed

Sander of Ring Screw said American workers need to "operate in a cross-functional team. The American population is individually centered on achievement. The Japanese reward team work. We are trying to break down the me-me-me attitude. Sometimes we have to drag individuals along kicking and screaming."

Sam Yano, owner of the International Hotel and Convention Center and a former OCC trustee, said the metro area "is a melting pot" of ethnic groups. "But there is a lack of knowledge of other ethnicities. It would be very helpful if OCC would take the lead" in multi-cultural training.

"People are coming here from around the world," agreed Pat Lambert, president and CEO of Pontiac Osteopathic Hospital, calling for sensitivity and diversity training.

Also agreeing was Radwan Khouri, of the Arab-American Chaldean Council. He said many professionals with degrees from foreign universities face problems finding work here.

OCC Trustee Anne Scott, who operates a personnel business, touched a nerve when she observed "there's no one from construction or skilled trades here, or electricians. We're going to have to put on programs for

skilled trades, or we're not going to have houses."

## Tradesmen few

"There's a serious problem in the skilled trades with a lack of minorities, women and African Americans," agreed Irving Bluestone, former United Auto Workers union vice president and now a professor at Wayne State University. He told of a UAW program years ago in which white retirees visited kids in inner city neighborhoods to tutor them in preparation for passing exams to enter the skilled trades.

"I don't know how feasible that is today, but it's worth exploring," said Bluestone.

"It can't be sporadic," said state Rep. Hubert Price, D-Pontiac, saying kids in Pontiac need to be taught an appreciation for career paths in technical areas. "It doesn't exist in Pontiac Central or Pontiac Northern (high schools). I think OCC can do a better job."

OCC got generally high marks from the business leaders, coupled with a little criticism of shortages in technical areas.

"We get 24 to 29 percent of our students from OCC," said Dr. David Spencer, president of Walsh College, a business school in Troy, "and OCC produces 40 percent of our graduates with honors. We're very happy with the quality."

Important to workers today, said Spencer, are "critical thinking, analysis, written and pro-

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