Students take part in leadership retreat

WITC students work on a team-building exercise at the recent two-day leadership retreat at the Heartwood Conference Center in Trego, Wis. Fifty students from WITC’s four campuses took part in the event.

There were hula-hoops, an ice cream sundae and plenty of laughter as 50 students from Wisconsin Indianhead Technical College’s four campuses recently took part in a two-day leadership retreat at Hartwood Conference Center in Trego, Wis.

The specially designed retreat provides students involved in Student Senate and other co-curricular clubs at WITC the skills needed to succeed and become better leaders both while in school and on the job.

“I’m going to be an administrative assistant,” says Jessica Ramel, who is enrolled in the Finance, Administrative Assistant and Legal Office programs at WITC’s Superior campus. “I hope to one day to supervise, so hopefully I’ll be able to turn that into better group meetings and better communicate to my employees what needs to be done.”

While discussion on leadership and topics like Robert’s Rules of Order may not sound exciting, Michael Miller led the talk.

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Team Rootberry juggler Bill Berry teaches WITC-Rice Lake student Hunter Dushinske the art of spinning during September’s Welcome Back Bash.

Mimi Crandall addresses students during WITC-Ashland’s orientation.

Above, WITC-New Richmond student Michelle Joslin takes part in a student government leadership training day at UW-Stout. Right, WITC-New Richmond students take part in a team-building exercise.

At left, WITC-New Richmond student take part in an open forum with president Bob Meyer.
At a time when the need for skilled machinists is high, one Wakefield company has stepped in to help train potential employees to enter the workforce prepared. Extreme Tool & Engineering, Inc. has donated a Charmilles D20 Electrical Discharge Machine (EDM) to the Machine Tool Operation (MTO) program at Wisconsin Indianhead Technical College’s Ashland Campus.

“Having an EDM in our Machine Tool Lab will provide an opportunity for all of our students to learn new skills and gain additional experience,” says Mary Stenberg, former campus administrator and vice president of student affairs.

Machine Tool Operation Instructor Paul Kalin is excited about the donation as well. “Our goal is to train students a variety of machines so they are prepared for diverse industries. The EDM will help WITC better prepare our graduates for employment with Extreme Tool & Engineering and similar companies,” he said.

Meeting the needs of regional companies is important to Kalin as he designs the curriculum for the machine tool program, and the advisory committee plays a large role. Mike Zacharias, president of Extreme Tool, serves on the board and saw a way he could help. In addition to providing input, Zacharias provided a piece of equipment that was not currently part of the MTO lab at WITC-Ashland.

“The EDM is one of the technologies that we use at Extreme Tool that WITC didn’t have,” Zacharias says. “When we recently updated a machine with more automated technology, we felt that the students from WITC could benefit.”

Extreme Tool and other mold-making industries will benefit from the donation as well. “EDM is pretty specific to mold-making industry,” Zacharias says. “Part of our hope is that by exposing the students to this equipment, they will develop an interest in the industry.”

Although Extreme Tool has no open positions – they recently filled open positions with WITC graduates – many opportunities in the regional manufacturing industry still exist.

“There’s a real need for skilled machinists,” Kalin says. “We’re talking about good-paying jobs in the $30,000-plus range. Our graduates often have job offers before they even graduate.”
Dr. Diane Vertin chosen to attend prestigious ELI institute

Dr. Diane Vertin Ed. D., Vice President, Academic Affairs and Campus Administrator Wisconsin Indianhead Technical College has been selected as one of only 35 community college leaders to attend the prestigious Executive Leadership Institute (ELI) sponsored by the League for Innovation in the Community College. A national panel selected the group of 32 participants from a pool of applicants holding senior-level positions of leadership in community colleges throughout North America.

“I am delighted about being selected as participant in ELI,” Vertin says. “I believe this will be an awesome learning opportunity, and I am thrilled to be able to network with outstanding leaders from all across the country.”

The institute, to be held in Tempe, Ariz., December 7 -12, provides an opportunity for potential community college presidents or those in transition to review their abilities and interests, to refine their skills, and to participate in discussions on leadership with an outstanding array of faculty drawn from among nationally and internationally recognized community college leaders.

“The review panel was extremely impressed with the quality of applicants, which speaks well for the future vitality of the community college,” said Gerardo E. de los Santos, president and CEO of the League for Innovation. ELI has been preparing senior-level community college administrators to successfully fill the presidential role for 21 years.

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Back for his third year, Miller’s enthusiastic and bold approach to the subject of leadership was a welcomed learning style.

“He was amazing,” says Knudt Lien, a student in the Business Management program at WITC’s Rice Lake campus. “They said he was a very good speaker, but he was way above my expectations of what a leadership speaker would be like. I thought it would be pretty boring and just more knowledge passed on, but he definitely made it fun.”

Through open discussion, students were able to voice some of the difficulty they’ve experienced in leadership roles. Miller was careful to address each concern, while addressing topics such as delegation and retention, motivation, parliamentary procedures, and values clarification.

Yet, the retreat also serves to help introduce students to each other.

“I came here just to better myself in leadership, and also get to know some of my fellow classmates,” Lien says. “Since I’m new here, I don’t really know anyone, so I thought it would be a good benefit to better myself with business management leadership and get to know people I might be working with.”

After two days, the results of Miller’s lively discussion and the interaction WITC students had with each other is clear.

“It’s opened me up to new experiences,” Lien says. “I’m able to open up to people better, I have better ideas and new ways of meeting people; how to get closer together. I’ve learned different values – more values of my own that I guess I’d never really sat down and thought about.”
UW system approves Early Childhood completion program

In August, the University of Wisconsin System Board of Regents and the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction approved a new UW-River Falls degree completion program in early childhood that allows students with an associate's degree to complete their bachelor's degree via online and interactive television courses and face-to-face workshops.

The program will be useful to teachers seeking to meet the requirements of Head Start reauthorization and preschool teachers who want to teach in 4-year-old kindergarten through third grade classrooms. The courses are also suitable for practicing teachers who desire professional development.

““I am very excited to be involved with this program,” says student Karen Pesik, of River Falls. “I am very grateful for Professor Ward of UWRF and Mary Williams-Greene of WITC for their tireless hours spent on planning and implementing this degree for students who have taken a technical college degree and want to transfer into a university. I have high hopes to graduate from the program this school year.”

Through the program, the students will take classes online and using interactive television and will attend face-to-face workshops at UWRF on some Saturdays. The courses will emphasize connecting children to nature and active exploration. Students who hold an associate degree in early childhood education can apply in the fall to enroll in winter or spring courses. Under a new federal grant, students may be eligible to receive scholarships from TEACH Early Childhood Wisconsin.

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““We are very excited to have the early childhood transition to degree program up and running,” says Gay Ward, a professor of teacher education at UWRF. “It is a dream that has been satisfied after years of work and planning with Wisconsin Indianhead Technical College representing the Wisconsin Technical College System.”

“I would strongly recommend this program above any other for students to transfer into,” says Pesik. “The instructors, deans and students are wonderful, helpful and most importantly they treat you as a person and not just a number on the campus.”
Doyle announces effort to grow Northwest Wisconsin

Governor Jim Doyle recently announced three state awards to boost the economy of Northwestern Wisconsin and grow local jobs. Gov. Doyle presented workforce training grants to Wisconsin Indianhead Technical College, and tax credits to support growth at Great Northern Corporation and Air Motion Systems. Gov. Doyle was joined by new Commerce Secretary Dick Leinenkugel for the announcements.

“To ensure Wisconsin succeeds in the future, we must continue to invest in the skills of our workers and our world-class manufacturers in all corners of the state,” Gov. Doyle said. “I am pleased the state is partnering with Wisconsin Indianhead Technical College, Great Northern Corporation, and Air Motion Systems to create jobs, boost workforce training, and grow the economy of Northwestern Wisconsin.”

Gov. Doyle awarded three Workforce Advancement Training Grants to WITC to work with manufacturers in Northeast Wisconsin. These grants, totaling nearly $212,000, will allow WITC to build Northeast Wisconsin’s local manufacturing workforce by providing critical training to update worker skills, improve quality and productivity, boost communication and performance skills, and provide resources for career advancement.

As a result of these grants, more than 400 workers will receive thousands of hours of training to learn project management techniques, and bridge skill gaps vital to success in challenging markets. Companies benefiting from the grants include OEW Fabricators, Federal Foam, Northwire and four Northwestern Wisconsin plastic industry companies. Since Gov. Doyle established the WAT program in the 2005-07 budget, more than 28,000 incumbent workers have been trained, resulting in improved employee skills, cost savings to businesses, and lower turnover rates.

WITC earns award from NCMPR

Thanks to a very photogenic Bambi Pattermann, the dean of Continuing Education at WITC-Ashland, WITC has won an award from the National Council for Marketing and Public Relations, an organization that represents marketing professionals and community and technical colleges. Shawnda Schelinder, the marketing and public relations associate at WITC-Ashland, accepted the Bronze Medallion for a feature photo at NCMPR’s district conference in Champaign, Ill. The photo was taken by Jeff Frey, with art direction from Schelinder.
Tech colleges ‘bright spot’ in workforce report

The newly released State of Working Wisconsin 2008 report documents economic growth in Wisconsin as “soft” resulting from job losses, higher unemployment and declining median incomes, but credits Wisconsin’s Technical Colleges for impacting the state’s workforce.

The Center on Wisconsin Strategy report indicates, “Wisconsin’s associate degrees, especially our occupational associate degrees, offer a very strong pay-off for the workers who hold them.”

According to the report, Wisconsin’s residents who hold occupational associate degrees from Wisconsin’s Technical Colleges have stronger earnings than their national counterparts, with a median income of $18.18 per hour. This is $1 higher than the national median and $2 more than it was two years prior.

“The economic and social contributions the technical colleges make to our state are immense. You can’t overstate the impact the colleges have on both personal earnings and the state’s economy. This is a critical point when considering where to invest our state’s limited dollars to get the best return,” says Brent Smith, president of the Wisconsin Technical College System Board.

The report also states that 10 percent of Wisconsin’s workforce holds an occupational associate degree, which is twice the national average and third nationally.

“Wisconsin’s reputation continues as having one of the premiere technical college systems in the country,” says Dan Clancy, president of the Wisconsin Technical College System. “Wisconsin’s transition into a high-tech economy extends the demand for occupational associate degrees.”

The report cites a skilled worker shortage for many industries with a high number of individuals on the economic sidelines, neither engaged in education nor adequately skilled to fill these high-wage jobs. Earning potential can be dramatic in these industries, as occupational associate degree holders in Wisconsin earn 23 percent more than workers who ended their education with high school.

Upcoming Events

October

Oct. 24 ......................... No Classes (Staff Inservice), All Campuses
Oct. 28 ......................... Career Day, New Richmond
Oct. 29 ......................... Open House, WITC-Ladysmith branch campus

November

Nov. 5 ......................... Preview Day, Rice Lake
Nov. 5 ......................... Career Day, Ashland
Nov. 5 ......................... Career Day, Superior
Nov. 11 ......................... Campus Exploration Day, New Richmond
Nov. 20 ......................... Open House, WITC-Hayward branch campus
Nov. 24-28 ..................... No Classes (Fall Recess), All Campuses

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