



## **Workforce: Getting Schooled**

**April 23, 2019**

**Fusion 54**

Sheridan Hadley welcomed everyone on behalf of the League of Women Voters of Montgomery County, to the final session of the Community Insights series. The League, a nonpartisan organization, encourages informed and active participation in government through education and advocacy. To that end, the goals of Community Insights are to educate the public and to hear from community members possible action items to address the problems. She noted that summaries from the first two sessions are available at the table and on the MCCF website, [The Big Picture](#) and [Human \[resources\] Perspective](#). She reiterated the importance of participation and assured everyone that we do not want the results of this series to set on a shelf. She thanked LWV members Nancy Bennett and Virginia Servies for serving as discussion leaders at all meetings and thanked the MCCF staff for their leadership and vision in planning the series.

Kelly Taylor welcomed everyone on behalf of the Montgomery County Community Foundation and explained that MCCF is a nonprofit organization with a mission to build bridges to support the future of Montgomery County. With grant opportunities from Lilly Endowment's GIFT (Giving Indiana Funds for Tomorrow) VII, Lilly is asking community foundations to move to that next level of community leadership. They have challenged us to identify key issues in our community and are offering a planning grant to do that. Once an issue is identified, we may apply for an implementation grant to address the need early in 2020. Therefore, your participation is very important to us. We are here to be educated, but also to hear from the community. Panelists were introduced:

- Dr. Shawn Greiner, Superintendent of South Montgomery Schools
- Dr. Scott Bowling, Superintendent of Crawfordsville Community Schools
- Patty Plantega, Site Manager and Advisor, Ivy Tech Community College – Lafayette Campus
- Sara Nicodemus, Career and Technical Education Coordinator
- Samantha Cotten, College and Career Readiness Coach

**Question 1: (Directed to Greiner, Bowling and Plantega) How do you see your school responding to the workforce needs? For example, what has changed over the last few years? (facilities, personnel, curriculum, etc.)**

**Greiner:** Concerning facilities, in recent renovations (which all three school corporations have gone through recently), all have focused on creating collaborative spaces and making sure that seating is flexible to allow for both individual and group work. We've all heard the need to develop soft skills, a part of which is collaborative work. Southmont schools sought community feedback with their recent renovations and heard clearly from the public that they should not forget to include local industry and workforce needs. They have focused on their Advanced Manufacturing, which includes robotics, welding, Law Enforcement & Fire Safety (classrooms with bays where the vehicles can be stored and worked on) as well as at North & South, modernizing their agricultural areas and equipment. Industrial technology is a focus in all three school districts. Personnel: hired two Career Coaches, focusing on CTE and connecting students with local industry leaders as well as helping counselors work with students. Not every student needs to go to a four-year college and we need to open that

dialog. We want our local industry leaders to understand we really want to connect with them and that if students connect with them, and understand the opportunities, they are likely to become good employees. Regarding curriculum, K-12 we are talking about the opportunities without a four-year degree depending talents and passions. We are always working on soft skills by having students work together with teachers, working on communications and responsibility.

**Bowling:** At CHS, we have the CTE cooperative built for students to gain practical skills. This includes all four high schools. HVAC is housed at CHS. Three things we are seeing. 1. Employers are not as fired up about hiring 18 year olds as they used to be. With multi-million dollar equipment, they are looking for more seasoned workers to operate it. So now there is a gap between ages 18 and 22-24 year olds. Creating programs where students can experience the work while in school is something they are working on. 2. They meet with every senior three times per year (through college and career counselors funded by a Lilly grant) to ask students about their goals after graduation and work with them on how to reach them. Of 163 seniors this year, only five indicated an interest in working in manufacturing. They would like to work with local industry to improve the perception of manufacturing. 3. Employers need *skilled* workers. We would like to work with employers to create programs to create skilled workers and to get a commitment from them to hire our kids.

**Plantega:** A self-described Ivy Tech cheerleader, Patty says that by 2015 there will be one million jobs to fill in Indiana. High wage, high demand jobs of which about half will require Post-Secondary education. Ivy tech will help fill those jobs. They have three types of college credentials: Associates Degree (generally 2-year programs), Technical Certificates (approximately three semesters) and Certificates (typically six courses or many as many as two semesters). Trying to get more certificates out there to help build the workforce. Often the Industrial Tech students are not staying for the full two years because employers are plucking them out before completion. At the Crawfordsville site, there are three Business credentials offered, all three in Business Administration. One at each of the three levels named above. Several of them have embedded into them other Certifications. For instance, there is Microsoft embedded certification in their Microsoft Excel course. Dual credit courses are evolving from the just liberal arts courses to include CTE courses too. This helps “skill up” the workforce. Academic Advisors, like herself, are being cross-trained. In addition to academic counseling, they now work with Cindy Randolph, the Workforce Alignment Consultant. Besides being familiar with the certificates offered, they have to be familiar with noncredit training courses they can offer employers for their employees. They stay on top of work and learn and embedded internship opportunities. Employers want employees to have soft skills so Ivy Tech has a Work Excellence program, which is available to all students, even those taking dual credit courses. They are allowing employers to create customizable certificates to meet their specific needs. Site manager and all directors (Geoff Knowles here at Crawfordsville) are partnering with the community because Ivy Tech does want to think outside the box and be there for local communities.

Kelly interjected that Dr. Colleen Moran, who regretted she was unable to attend, assured us that Dr. Greiner and Dr. Bowling would represent well, what North Montgomery is doing too.

**Question 2: (Directed to Samantha Cotten and Sara Nicodemus) Tell us what your job involves.**

**Cotten:** Explained that she is College and Career Readiness Coach for Crawfordsville High School and for Southmont High School. Her co-worker Clayton Randolph serves in the same position for North Montgomery and Western Boone High Schools. Their charge is to help kids. They work with local industry and businesses to explore ways to expose students to their business. They do this through events, internships, and work-based learning to build career readiness. Most students have little idea what is going on in the various plants. On an individual basis, they help students complete the FAFSA, assist them with scholarships, resumes, etc.

**Nicodemus:** She started the position in August and has a background in CTE. Helps students figure out where their passion lies and how to get there. She works with Randolph and Cotten in building industry partnerships. This helps connect students with the right programs to introduce possible careers. Work based learning is giving students a chance to work with a local industry partner. There has been success already, with students retained for employment.

**Question 2: How are you working with local employers to help prepare students to enter the workforce?**

**Greiner:** Emphasized that all three school corporations work together very well in all areas, whether workforce or legislative. All attend the Mayor's Workforce Roundtable to focus on the challenges of workforce needs. They partner with Ivy Tech and have been working on a welding program at Southmont. They will open this area, Advanced Manufacturing work area, to local industries to use to train their own employees. They are currently working closely with Ivy Tech and Pace on this. As well, high school students unable to take the course during the school day may attend the evening classes. Mr. Clifton, CTE (all three schools) piloted a program with Pace to work on soft skills. Once a week students went to Pace where they toured and learned about these areas: Operations, Safety, Quality, Reliability, Maintenance, and Financial. The incentive for Pace is to recruit ideally for themselves, but if not themselves, for manufacturing in general, right here in Montgomery County.

**Bowling:** He sites three examples. 1. A job fair was held recently during the school day, coordinated by Samantha. It was required for all seniors and classroom work in advance helped them prepare for it. They asked employers to approach for multiple angles, fulltime work, part-time work to accommodate students attending Ivy Tech, and summer jobs for traditional college-bound students. He believes it opened employers eyes to the number of students seeking two and four year degrees; a group of highly motivated students who had been overlooked before. 2. The AIM program blends high school course, dual credit courses of a community college, along with work with pay. Subaru has done this for some time and now Nucor is offering it. It is a two-year program and upon successful completion, full time employment is very likely. The schools are open to do more of these. 3. Senior Placement Initiative – there are two people who meet with every student to ask him or her their plans after graduation. Some have never been asked that question. They work them through that and help them develop a plan.

**Plantega:** Ivy Tech serves not only high school students and new graduates, but nontraditional students too. She emphasized that the welding program at Southmont for instance, is open to nontraditional students in the evening. These might be adults seeking new skills, employers sending current employees for additional training, etc. Work and Learn opportunities such as internships, apprenticeships are available with placement assistance available. All Associate Degrees have an embedded capstone class where they make sure students have achieved all the learning outcomes required. Many certificates can be funded through the States' Next Level Jobs program. These are six course certificates such as Supply Chain Logistics. Ivy Tech recently held a Career Fair with 90 employers.

**Nicodemus:** They work with prospective employers in various ways: 1. Work based learning helps cultivate good employees. 2. In CTE, each program has an Advisory Board, which include industry leaders. They are required to meet at least monthly. It provides a good way to let them know what students are doing.

**Cotten:** She and Clayton work with local employers to create events for students. They have done Career Days where guest speakers are brought in to talk about opportunities and the Job Fair at CHS. Last fall they bussed 600 freshmen students to 45 employers throughout Montgomery and Boone counties for tours and talks about career possibilities. They also visited the CT Expo to learn about courses they can take later in their high school careers. There held a Networking Lunch in January at the Country Club. Students were those who may

or may not attend a four-year school. They seated two employers at tables of six students. Roger Azar was the guest speaker. They did speed networking allowing for one-minute introductions between students and employers. Students gained experience and confidence in introducing themselves and employers met young people who they would like to keep in the community.

**Question 3: What other collaborations are taking place in our community? (schools, government, employers, nonprofits, etc.)**

**Plantega:** We work with employers to “skill up” their employees. They work with their work alignment consultant (Cindy Randolph) to assess their needs. Once that is determined, they can offer classes to meet those needs and they can be offered at the place of employment. Some are credit classes and others are not. They are always taking Ivy Tech “on the road” to work with schools, employers, and community events such as this one. The new Precision Ag program was recently approved and Bane Welker has been a partner with this. They are grateful for all partners and scholarship providers. They are a partner with Camp MoCoRoBo. Ivy Tech offers special opportunities for students completing the Governor’s Work Ethic certificate in high school.

**Cotten:** Recognized and is grateful to the groups that host their students in various ways, such as the Mayor’s Youth Council, 4H curriculum, Rotary, etc. AHW John Deere has been a poster child for work-based learning. They provide students a chance pick up some skills, develop mutual trust, and some get the opportunity to go the John Deere Academy for further education.

**Nicodemus:** Elaborated on AHW John Deere’s work- based learning program. They identify students with strong work ethic, give them a chance to “skill up “and the chance to build trust in one another, thus molding the type of employee they want. This summer they are sending three students to the John Deere Academy. Upon successful completion, there is a strong possibility of employment at AHW John Deere. In Health Careers, they have a partnership with Wellbrooke. Currently three students are working there half days while working on their CNA (Certified Nursing Assistant). Health Careers 1 students (freshmen – juniors) are working in local medical offices. While not manufacturing, it does help fill job openings.

**Bowling:** JAG Program – Jobs for America’s Graduates, developed in conjunction with Archer Daniels Midland, AT&T and General Electric. This dedicated class teaches soft skills and is a collaboration of national programs and National businesses. He reiterated that the schools (Montgomery County and Western Boone) superintendents are collaborating better than ever to try to provide the best education possible for all students in Montgomery County. They collaborated on the Lilly Grant, which funded the College and Career Coach positions that Samantha and Clayton hold. The schools collaborate more with Ivy Tech and Vincennes University on dual credit courses. Traditionally, the courses were held at the high schools, but now some are taking place at Ivy Tech, for instance Business courses. It is a win-win situation; the college gains enrollment, the high school does not have to hire the teacher, the student earns both high school and college credit.

**Greiner:** Collaboration takes cooperation. He stressed again the united front that the three corporations have for their students today. Just today, they spent four hours discussing their cooperatives, both CTE and Special Education. The Mayor recognizes this and works alongside us to develop the future, for example the Youth Council. Elementary students are also involved and learn the importance of local politics and advocating for new ideas. This allows the students the chance to work together on community projects, most recently planning events for Pike Place. Students regularly go to Rotary to experience collaboration with business leaders. Rotary has requested to start a pilot Interact Club in the schools to get them involved in service leaning projects. Each school has two student representatives on the Character Counts board. Students participate in Montgomery County Leadership Academy’s Ascent program, a two-year leadership

development experience for high school students. It helps them to see the value of becoming leaders right here in Montgomery County.

**Question 4: What are the greatest challenges you are facing as you educate students and prepare them for the workforce?**

**Cotten:** There are many, but one is a commitment from employers is a challenge. Some are Gold Star, who can always be counted on. However, others talk the talk but fail to follow through. For instance, nine dropped out of the last job fair. Another challenge is marketing millennials. She explained her background is not in education, rather in marketing. Students are not being *targeted* when it comes to marketing the positions available. There is a large focus on manufacturing, but many students are not interested, as Dr. Bowling stated earlier. Finally, students are extremely busy and it is hard to get their time for events.

**Nicodemus:** It is a big challenge to get employers to take a chance on the students. Most of us had someone in our early years who took a chance on us. Employers have to continue the efforts the schools have started. Everyone is busy, but taking time to come speak to the students could reap great benefits.

**Plantega:** New technology, the new economy and declined labor force are all challenges we face. Emphasis in the workforce is on the middle skill job that requires more than a high school diploma but less than a four-year degree. So, with our certificates, we would seem to be the logical solution. Unfortunately, since employers are hiring, there are fewer adults enrolling in Ivy Tech. There is high demand for their students, but the supply is lower than in the past. When the economy wasn't so great, they enrolled in our classes. Those working don't have time to take classes because they are working overtime due of the low supply of workers. Workforce needs people in manufacturing, but students aren't interested in manufacturing. How can we change that? Perhaps we need to get to their parents. Ivy Tech is always happy to come to community events.

**Bowling:** 1. It is a challenge to connect student's interests and aptitude with realities. We still have students, who say they want to be a doctor or create video games for instance, but have a low GPA and have not taken a single AP science course, etc. Part of that is on us as the school to walk that tight rope in helping students determine what is realistic without being discouraging. 2. We are challenged to convince students to consider an option other than a four-year degree. "It has become socially unacceptable" to say you are going directly into the workforce. We are on board with that, now we have to convince everyone else. 3. Getting employers to realize the playing field has changed. No longer is it ok for that highly motivated "great kid" to go directly RR Donnelley (now LSC). They will at least try college now, whether two years or four.

**Greiner:** Students say face-to-face communication and dialog with others is their biggest challenge. He then shared that he and the curriculum director interviewed recent graduates and asked them to be brutally honest with them about their experience at Southmont High School. He shared that a recent graduate (Kale Schreiner) when asked what SHS did well, described his experience in Mr. Clifton's CTE class. He said he was more than a teacher; he was a coach, he encouraged him. Schreiner was able to make it through Nucor's rigorous hiring process and landed a job there right out of high school. He is eagerly accepting all overtime and wants to learn all the departments. He is excited that Nucor will pay him to take classes so that he can continue his education while working and is looking to buy a home and settle in Montgomery County.

Kelly thanked the presenters and commended them for the work they are each doing. The group broke out into small discussion groups.

## **Small Group Reports:**

### Question 1: What did you learn?

- Graduating seniors are not interested in manufacturing
- There are lots of opportunities
- Great collaboration between the schools
- There is a stigma about entering the workforce directly out of high school.
  - Parents?
  - Students?
- Support jobs are under valued
- There are opportunities to earn certificates while in high school
- How do kids get to these opportunities? (transportation)
- Education needed for parents and students to look past a four-year degree
- Schools have a strong commitment to students
- Employers canceling job fair, yet still need employees
- The term “future ready” is new

### Opportunities for ACTION

- Involve retirees in mentoring students in face to face dialog
- Continue interviews with recent graduates like Dr. Greiner did at Southmont
- Important to engage parents
- Unions – collaborate with Ivy Tech
- Military opportunities
- Family activities – companies revive social activities and plant tours like those that they used to do. This generates interest in the children and pride.
- Plant tours – most don’t know what is going on inside
- Social media as a way to communicate with students