

STRATEGIC

Winter 2009

Business, Education and Regional

Minnesota State University Mankato

PARTNERSHIPS

Phone: 507.389.5567 Fax: 507.389.5588

partnerships@mnsu.edu

“Connecting knowledge and
the real world.”



Looking to the Future...

The Division of Strategic Business, Education and Regional Partnerships is focused on connecting significant value (expertise, knowledge & research) that resides within the University to entities of the external community.

Minnesota State University, Mankato has many nationally and internationally recognized programs. Alternative fuels, renewable energy, and water resources are just a few areas where Minnesota State Mankato is leading the way.

With the developing partnerships, we are providing students, faculty and staff the unique opportunity to work side-by-side with professionals in their fields. Our students gain "cutting edge" experience while also realizing significant exposure for potential employment opportunities.

As we see today, the future will require more collaboration between the public and private sectors in order that research, knowledge, and expertise generated by the University can be quickly transferred to the marketplace. We are building a model to make this happen at Minnesota State Mankato.

In this Issue

The Future

Interviews:

Tim Penny
John Rivisto
Brenda Flannery

Meet Our Staff

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Our Partners

BROWN

- ◆ Est 1949 Waseca, MN
- ◆ Approx \$400 million in annual sales
- ◆ MSU Campus Cooperative



- ◆ Replacing offshore vendors
- ◆ MSU 2007 Excellence Award
- ◆ 2008 Thomson Reuters's corporate-level Award of Excellence



- ◆ MSU Campus Cooperative
- ◆ Engages Students and Faculty
- ◆ Opening New Albany Facility

Interviews



Tim Penny,

Advisory Team Member,
President/CEO Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation

I'm very excited that the leadership at the University is taking these steps.

What does the term “Strategic Partnerships” mean to you?

In a word, collaboration – joint efforts that produce mutual benefit.

Who benefits from the partnerships, and how?

Both the University and the partner benefit. I view these strategic partnerships as aligning the common interest of the University with the external partners.

For the University, it's

- Increasing the number of internships
- Bringing businesses and business leaders into the classroom
- Research partnerships
- Conferencing, events, and networking
- Developing new coursework

For the external partners, it's

- Businesses that need well-trained workers.
- Regional high schools and other educational institutions that need a closer relationship and alignment with the University's courses.
- Chambers of Commerce or regional development agencies that need the University's assistance in advancing common goals.

These partnerships are, by definition, mutually beneficial, and I'm excited that Minnesota State Mankato has taken such an active interest in nurturing these relationships. The partnerships will deliver valuable results for both sides.

Where do you hope this Division will go in the future?

I want to be able to measure several new business partnerships that reflect enhanced internship opportunities, cooperative learning opportunities, research opportunities, and other meaningful workforce relationships every year. I believe that is an achievable and measurable outcome.

I'm very excited that the leadership at the University is taking these steps to reconnect with regional businesses, reenergize those relationships, and reaffirm Minnesota State University, Mankato's commitment to the workforce and economic needs of this region.

John Rivisto,



Business Partner,
President/CEO Wells Concrete Products

Students make a direct impact and apply what they're learning. We give them a real-world laboratory 35 miles down the road.

Who benefits from the partnerships, and how?

From Wells Concrete's perspective, I have a talent pool here with a lot of young people with fresh ideas, who are energetic, and who want to learn and contribute. Often students are only allowed to learn, they're not allowed to contribute, and when they come to a company like ours, they contribute in a very positive and meaningful way.

I'm a big, big believer in this partnership.

Where do you see this going in the future?

As for the University's side of the partnership, we provide them a great opportunity to let students make a direct impact and apply what they're learning. We give them a real-world laboratory 35 miles down the road. We tell the students, "If you've got an idea, go for it! You're not going to break anything at our place, and you're not going to hurt anybody's feelings." It's an opportunity for students to apply what they're learning – they look at things outside the textbook, with real-world applications. There's a real need, they see that real need, and then they watch us implement their suggestions, and that's a win-win. I can see it becoming an integral part of the actual curriculum, not just as an occasional opportunity that comes up. As an engineer by education, I know that the value of having this real-world laboratory, with so few restrictions, is invaluable.

Our customers benefit, as we can better meet their needs by improving our efficiency and our quality with the projects the students are working on.

Dr. Brenda Flannery,



Advisory Team Member,
Assistant Vice President of Undergraduate
Students and International Education and Associate
Professor of Management

This division plays a different role – it is proactively creating these partnerships, it's not reactive.

Who benefits from the partnerships, and how?

At the University, it is the students who benefit most--directly and indirectly-- from the partnerships. Through the partnerships, students will have more experiential learning opportunities. More internship, cooperative, field, volunteer, and service-learning opportunities open up because of the connections that are uncovered and facilitated. As both researchers and scholars, faculty also benefit from partnerships. These partnerships can provide new "laboratories" for research, study, and even curricular development. For the region, partnerships with the University provide access to new talent, new ideas, new technologies, and new opportunities. Ultimately, the partnerships give all participating parties access to conversations, networks, and resources that may have remained untapped.

What is the partnership doing for you, specifically?

As an advisory council member, I have had the great pleasure to learn from some of the best leaders in southern Minnesota. It is understood that we all have unique perspectives, knowledge, and resources to share to ultimately support the development of talent and opportunities in southern Minnesota. Beyond the advisory council, the partnership initiative provides me with a way to build relationships for enhanced student learning and research opportunities.

Meet Our Staff



Dr. Bob Hoffman,

Vice President, Strategic Business, Education and Regional Partnerships

My role is that of a catalyst. I locate a need in the private or public sector, match that need with the skills and abilities of our people, be they students, faculty, or both, and put the two together. The result can be anything from internships to cooperatives to applied research to projects. Our first year has been successful and gratifying.

Cindy Hanson,

Executive Assistant

My work involves connecting our resources here at the University with our external partners. I maintain contact and assure smooth transactions between the two entities. Every week produces new opportunities to advance the University's work and benefit our partners.



Dr. John Frey,

Director of Business and Industry Partnerships

My specialty will be in the renewable energy area and the biosciences. My involvement is to meet with companies to understand what their need is, and bring it back to the University and find faculty and students who can engage in it, and then move forward. We establish a plan and a budget, then go back to the company and explain what we have to offer.

In our next issue...

- Interviews with student participants & faculty
- Introduction to the Cooperative (Co-op) concept
- Spotlight on Advisory Team members:
 - Colleen Landkamer
 - Bill Otis

Strategic Business, Education, and Regional Partnerships
329 Wigley Administration Center · Mankato, MN 56001