



MEMBERS OF MINNESOTA STATE

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Economic Development and Social Mobility—The Power of a Two-Year Degree

Workforce development is a critical issue in Minnesota and in our region. According to the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development, Minnesota had over 82,000 job vacancies in the second quarter of 2018; that is 8,200 more than were reported this time last year. At Inver Hills Community College (Inver Hills) and Dakota County Technical College (DCTC), I see the critical role of two-year colleges in promoting economic development through close partnerships with employers and other community agencies.

According to a study released earlier this month by Minnesota State Colleges and Universities, its 30 colleges and seven universities contributed more than \$8 billion to the state's economy in 2017. The study also showed that DCTC and Inver Hills had a combined economic impact of \$334.6 million and generated \$19.7 million in state and local revenue. Our institutions also supported and sustained 2,881 Minnesota jobs, served more than 7,000 students, and graduated more than 1,500 students who entered the workforce or pursued additional education.

I also see the work of economic development play out in the lives of our individual students, as they gain the knowledge and skills to access high-wage jobs. With a two-year degree, graduates increase their earning potential by \$6,250 per year, according to data from the U.S. Department of Commerce Bureau of Economic Analysis. Access to stable, high-wage employment is critical in building social capital and creating more opportunities for individuals and their families.

Working together, we can meet workforce needs and improve the lives of Minnesotans, and we can do it more effectively.

DCTC recently hosted its annual Transportation Showcase, bringing together employers like Luther Automotive Group, Walser Automotive Group, Superior Auto Services, RDO, and Ziegler to meet with current students and local high school students. This is a great example how we work with local employers to help them find the right students to fit their workforce needs, and how we work with students to help them discover programs that spark their interest. Our goal is to connect the right



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students with the right companies through programs of study that incorporate industry training, company visits, internships, and summer employment.

On November 19, DCTC hosted a forum for state legislators and leaders in business, education, and workforce development. Our focus was on partnerships to address workforce shortages. It was encouraging to see how companies could meet their workforce needs by working closely with K12 and higher education, rather than building out their own training.

Two-year colleges such as Inver Hills and DCTC provide learners not only with professional training, but develop them into employees who can think critically, work well with customers or clients, and communicate effectively. We are proud to serve a critical role in our region by helping local employers hire workers who are ready to make an impact on day one of the job.

We also play a critical role in helping learners discover their career path through career interest inventories, career counseling, career exploration classes, experiential learning opportunities, and academic planning. Once students identify a program of study, we help them determine if they need a four-year degree and which universities offer the best programs for them. In 2017, Inver Hills helped learners plan their transfer to 57 colleges and universities, 34 of which were in Minnesota.

At DCTC and Inver Hills, we help students find their passion and start a program of study that can lead to greater social mobility for them and their families. We also help employers find the talent they need. In partnership, we can meet workforce needs and improve the lives of Minnesotans.

Michael Berndt, Interim President of Dakota County Technical College & Inver Hills Community College

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