

University of Toledo business college's friends get involved

Execs commit cash, time as part of circle

By Meghan Gilbert

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Business leaders have joined together to guide the University of Toledo's business college and, in doing so, improve the city's economy.

The Dean's Gold Leadership Circle, under the direction of Tom Gutteridge, dean of the UT college of business administration, will assist the college as it builds a complex to integrate students and companies.

The Savage & Associates Complex for Business Learning and Engagement, which is scheduled to be complete by fall, 2009, is a \$15.4 million investment for enhanced education with new classrooms, action-learning labs, a 40-seat board room, and state-of-the-art technology.

"What's exciting is not that we're building a building. It's that we're changing the university and giving the students a better education with the modern facility," said Bob Savage, president and chief operating officer of Savage & Associates.

The company and Mr. Savage and his wife, Susan, personally have combined to contribute \$1.4 million to the complex.

Mr. Savage, who helped create the leadership circle with Mr. Gutteridge, said if Toledo is to break its economic decline, UT is the best "economic horse" in town to bet on.

"If it is going to get picked up and turned around, it will be us who have done well who step up and give back," he said.

To be a member of the circle, an individual has to commit at least \$100,000 over five years to the college.

In the circle's early stages, the more than two dozen members have committed more than \$6 million, Mr. Gutteridge said.

But, more than the monetary commitment, the business leaders plan to be engaged in student learning at the college, he said.



Bob Savage

"Sometimes people give nice gifts, but are not involved in an ongoing basis," Mr. Gutteridge said. "We are getting human involvement on a continued basis."

Mr. Savage said members of the leadership circle plan to offer to find business executives to lecture in classes or organize workshops at the complex - whatever the professors think will help their students.

The relationships created out of this partnership will help businesses find young talent to help them succeed, and students will have access to good job opportunities upon graduation so they can stay in the area, both Mr. Savage and Mr. Gutteridge said.

The leadership circle had its first meeting earlier this month. Mr. Savage described it as a fireside chat with UT President Dr. Lloyd Jacobs. The circle plans to meet formally twice a year and attend activities the college plans during the academic year.

Dr. Jacobs said it was an honor for him to talk with community leaders excited about working with the university to better the local economy. They discussed his message of Toledo identifying itself as a university city and how the relationships between the university and business community can be strengthened.

"Our community, I think, is being galvanized around the concept of an engaged university, a university town," he said. "With that kind of support, we can't not be successful."