Established in February 2005, the University of Toledo (UT) Executive Center for Global Competitiveness (ECGC) is currently involved with 42 different organizations on diverse partnership projects. Businesses such as The Andersons, SSOE, and Owens Illinois (O-I) have worked with the Center.

Carrie Herr, director of the Center explained, “We don’t have a prescribed curriculum or program. We develop relationships with businesses and organizations in the community and beyond northwest Ohio. We want to connect those organizations with the resources and services of the College of Business Administration and/or The University of Toledo, however relevant or necessary, depending on the organization’s unique competitive challenges and operating issues. My job is to develop those relationships by understanding their business strategies and creating opportunities for appropriate partnerships.”

Herr added, “If an organization has a competitive issue or initiative that requires attention, be it attaining or educating their talent through executive and leadership education, a research project, an analysis that must be done, or the need for a customized on-site MBA program, the Center strives to provide that service through the College of Business. We want our relationship with these organizations to be ongoing, lifetime partnerships, versus working together on a one-time project. For example, executive leadership education can be provided, but in addition to providing that or another service, we want to touch base with the organization three to four times over each year to understand their strategic objectives and goals as well as how current challenges may impede their performance and success.”

The ECGC contact person within a
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company covers a spectrum of possibilities. “Sometimes we are called by a CEO, the director of operations or human resources, a contact from the quality area or someone who deals with lean manufacturing,” Herr stated. “If we cannot provide the help or solution needed, we strive to serve as the connection between the organization and the source that can provide what is needed. We want to be a participant in raising the bar on how business is conducted in northwest Ohio. It is our obligation and responsibility to be a good community business partner in that process so we can be an integral part of positive change in the economic conditions of northwest Ohio.”

Herr cited examples of projects involving the Center, including: executive leadership and development education; research projects; seating of corporate assistantships or internships within organizations; and customized MBA curriculums provided on-site. “At Northstar Steel we have customized our MBA program to meet their specific organizational needs,” she explained. “At Campbell’s Soup in Napoleon, we’ve provided training in Six Sigma Green Belt Certifications and Lean Manufacturing for a couple of years. We’re moving into phase two at Campbell’s because they have seen a positive impact on their productivity. At SSOE, we continue to lead a number of executive leadership and development projects. A very effective leadership session includes presentations based on the book, Getting Results [by Drs. Clint Longenecker and Jack Simonetti, College of Business Faculty Members].”

This leadership training is based on five “absolutes” within the book, which are benchmark / best practices common among 200-300 highly successful managers throughout the country. The absolutes, pulled from that spectrum of expertise, help show program attendees how to get better results as leaders in their organization.

“Initially, we train at the top tier level of the organization,” Herr stated. “At the next level, participants identify five of the most pressing business problems, and over the course of several months they solve those problems with a little coaching – maybe once or twice a month. Participants then give presentations based on what they have learned.” Ultimately, she added, the bottom line is, “How can these types of business partnership projects, or any other type of intervention from the College of Business, help to positively impact an organization’s bottom line, educate their leadership, retain or improve their talent, or improve productivity and performance?”

She added, “It is also our responsibility to hold various forums. Not just working with individual businesses but bringing a group of industry clusters together that may be able to advise each other with distinct but similar problems. As a community, they work together and solve these problems.”

According to Herr, the Center also has a resource in the College’s Edward H. Schmidt School of Professional Sales. It continues to grow as more people become aware of what the program offers – degrees in sales and a professional sales curriculum that can be offered to businesses and organizations. While the focus of ECGC is to be one-on-one with business in the community, it also offers a couple of public programs that focus on business areas and are market-driven in nature. One program is the project management series, which is certified with the Project Management Institute.

“The model for how we do business has changed dramatically,” Herr stated. “The speed and the breadth of what we are now dealing with, in terms of how our global market can change, is a big challenge for businesses. At the same time, academia has changed in many ways too, but we have become community partners in dealing with these challenges, allowing us to learn from each other. Our dean, Dr. Thomas Gutteridge, has a passionate mission. That is to become the business school of choice. The way to do that is to form relationships throughout the business community and learn how to best meet the needs of that community.”

Prior to joining the UT College of Business, Gutteridge was the dean and a professor at the University of Connecticut where he oversaw a center similar to the ECGC. At the time Gutteridge came to UT, Herr was director of the Division of Continuing Education. She was frequently working one-on-one with area businesses in that role. According to Herr, Gutteridge appreciated the dynamic and wanted to expand the program to what it has become in the form of the Center. (continued on page 13)
BGSU mechatronics program prepares industrial specialists

A new degree program in Bowling Green State University’s (BGSU) College of Technology is addressing the country’s shortage of skilled labor in the manufacturing, processing, and construction industries, according to the university. As a recent Los Angeles Times article stated, “Manufacturing, long known for plant closings and layoffs, is now clamoring for workers to fill high-paying, skilled jobs.”

Electro-mechanical Systems Technology (EMST), or mechatronics, provides BGSU students with mathematics, computer, and mechanical abilities to deal with production control, electrical and mechanical power systems, and manufacturing processes.

Broader-based than robotics, the new program is designed to develop graduates able to meet the demands of modern, integrated electro-mechanical systems, according to the university. These demands frequently require dealing with complex systems, often beyond any single technological discipline, stated program director, Dr. St. Kolla, a professor of electronics and computer technology, and Dr. Sudeshan Jetley, an associate professor of manufacturing technology.

“Over the last 10 to 15 years, industry has become much more integrated in all areas,” Jetley stated. “US industry increasingly uses the Japanese concept of teaming. Engineers are required to interact with workers in other areas of the company. People with this training will be needed in virtually all aspects of manufacturing. This has become even more important with globalization, when the design office is here and production is 3,000 miles away. You need people who can communicate and understand all facets of the process.”

In addition to gaining a strong foundation in physics, math, and communication, students get work experience through co-op requirements and obtain an understanding of electro-mechanical systems used in the manufacturing and processing industry. The academic program is modeled to meet National Association of Industrial Technology accreditation requirements.

Graduates will work in installing, maintaining, and troubleshooting production systems involving mechanical, electronic, and electrical controls and machinery. They will work mainly on the shop floor, beside mechanical, manufacturing, and electrical engineers.

At Findlay-based Marathon Petroleum LLC, where BGSU has a number of College of Technology co-op students each semester, gasoline is loaded into trucks at large terminals through an automated process. Douglas Herrmann, manager of electronics services, said it would be advantageous in his field to have the skills provided by the EMST degree.

“We need people with a broad mix of skills,” he stated. “They have to be able to do disassembly to make electronics repairs and to work with the minicomputer microprocessors and pass data over the network. And there will be more and more of a need for those skills in the future, since industry is becoming more automated and robotized.”

EMST majors also are prepared to become supervisors and managers within a couple years of beginning work. “All our technology graduates have a fair amount of management training,” Jetley stated. “They know the technical side and they also have the management knowledge. They have a much greater opportunity to rise in the organization.”

That is, in part, what drew Anthony Bragalone, a sophomore from Oak Harbor, to enroll in the program. An electronic technician with Modine Manufacturing in Perrysville, he is working in the engineering area and explained that the company requires its employees to have a bachelor’s degree to advance in the organization. Additionally, “learning more about the mechanical area is rounding out my skills and makes me more marketable,” he stated. “For a company, if you can utilize one person in all three areas instead of someone for electrical, another for mechanical, and so on, it is much more efficient.”

According to the Los Angeles Times article, “While millions of manufacturing jobs have been outsourced or automated out of existence during the past decade, many of the remaining jobs require higher skills and pay well — $50,000 to $80,000 a year for workers with the necessary math, computer, and mechanical skills.”

“A number of schools, including BGSU Firelands, offer a two-year degree, but few have four-year programs such as Bowling Green’s,” Jetley added. “The two-year programs lack the basic sciences and higher math of the four-year degree, as well as the liberal arts component.”

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Herr spent approximately 10 years in manufacturing at Owens-Illinois. “Coming from a business and industry background was very helpful to me in understanding the types of goals many of these companies have,” she stated. “Bringing industry and education camps together in a mutually beneficial situation is a very natural, wise course of action for both entities to pursue. My contacts in manufacturing from my years in that environment are now spread over many levels, and that is very helpful insight.”

The College of Business faculty, staff and adjunct faculty also bring expertise to the Center’s resources, Herr stated. “Dean Gutteridge and I had similar philosophies in how the College of Business and other Colleges within UT as appropriate, could work with and provide assistance to the local business community. It is a huge outreach and engagement endeavor, but hopefully, one that will stand the test of time and positively influence economic conditions in northwest Ohio.”

Dean Thomas Gutteridge and Instructor Clint Longenecker meeting session participants at SSOE, Inc.