

We need more tech, science grads

Educators all over the United States are very worried about the declining number of students going into majors in engineering, science and mathematics. That holds true here in Washington County, too.

Looking at the recent graduates from the Washington County area, as they run through this newspaper, it is noteworthy that about a third of the graduates are in some form of marketing. From a business perspective, that's far more marketing graduates than we need.

At the same time, the low number of local graduates in sciences and technology is downright scary.

It is well known that Ireland has transformed its economy to among the most prosperous in Europe by concentrating on university education, especially the sciences and engineering. It is also well known that India and China are rivaling us in turning out engineers and scientists. China has built 1,300 new universities and colleges in the last decade.

Competition to the American economy is going to come from all over the world, and it's going to come on the technology side. It isn't just about low wages in foreign countries anymore. It's also that they are

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going to compete on the innovation front.

Prudence Pick Hway, president of COLUMNS, the West Bend High Schools scholarship organization, said that some of the scholarships in technology and the sciences have gone begging in recent years at the two- and four-year degree levels. Even with increased marketing of those available scholarships, they often go unfilled.

Meanwhile, nearby in Milwaukee, Dr. Hermann Viets, President of the Milwaukee School of Engineering, and Dr. William Hendee, head of the R&D foundation of the Medical College of Wisconsin, have sounded the alarm about the paucity of high school students in the technology areas. They have offered the resources of their respective institutions to help high schools find a way to stimulate more students into the demanding



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majors of science, engineering and mathematics.

Gov. Doyle has recently called for a third year of high school math and science.

The biggest thing going for the Milwaukee area economy right now is the explosion of biomedical technologies, particularly in the medical devices area. GE Health Care is building an \$80 million facility just down the road in Wauwatosa, and the Medical College is teaming up with Children's Hospital to produce a new \$80 million R&D facility, also in Wauwatosa.

These kinds of enterprises require a lot of sharp graduates in the scientific disciplines. Accordingly, educators in Washington County are starting to look at ways for engaging the new world economy in this arena. Some good ideas are already surfacing.

The University of Wisconsin Washington County has started three four-year majors over the last 10 years, including one in nursing that qualifies as a scientific discipline. A proposed four-year degree in engineering delivered on the local campus would be a boon for the local economy. To serve local industry, it could be in software or manufacturing engineering.

There are also good possibilities of linking Moraine Park Technical College and its two-year technical degrees to some kind of a four-year degree at UWVC. One obvious candidate is some kind of a program in the biomedical sciences, leading to careers in medical devices.

These are the kinds of initiatives that would serve not only the U.S. and local economies well, but also our young people, who are going to be looking for careers with job security and good wages.

Isn't that the primary job of adults in a society? To build a takeoff runway for our young people?

(John Torinus is CEO of Serigraph, Inc. in West Bend and a past publisher of the Daily News.)