

Case Study: Gateway Technical College

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Many strong partnerships have emerged across the country. Gateway Technical College, headquartered in Kenosha, Wisconsin, is well ahead of most comparable colleges in its strategic partnerships. Its journey can provide a roadmap for others.

Like many community and technical colleges in America, Gateway serves a population that for many years has enjoyed strong industrial employment opportunities but is now facing the challenges of a changing economic base. Located in southeast Wisconsin midway between Milwaukee and Chicago, Gateway had opportunities to build partnerships with local industry, yet for years had not established a process for leveraging those partnerships to gain an economic and educational advantage for both the community and the college. In 2006 newly appointed President Bryan Albrecht set out to change what business and education partnerships meant to the college and in turn could mean for the nation.

For over 100 years Kenosha had been grounded by the automotive manufacturing industry. Most recently the area was one of Chrysler's engine production plant locations, and prior to Chrysler it was the home of American Motors. Kenosha's deep roots in the automotive industry historically provided the technology, training, and innovation needed to support a regional economy. Gateway also has an extensive history in training related to the automotive industry, with two separate programs located on two campuses. Often, however, the college programs competed with one another for funding and students, which in turn diminished the output of qualified technicians. Faced with increasing demand upon college resources, Gateway closed both automotive programs and established a new vision for automotive training and community investment.

In an initial meeting between executives of Snap-on Tools Corporation, headquartered in Kenosha, and President Albrecht it was clear that this new vision was shaped by the shared interests of Gateway and Snap-on. Snap-on had partnered with schools for decades. As the world's most recognized brand of automotive tools and equipment, Snap-on also saw the future changing for its customers. But even though hand tools will always be essential to technicians, it was also becoming increasingly clear that diagnostic technology was the next generation of skills needed by technicians.

Snap-on had already established itself as the world leader in the sale of diagnostic equipment but had not found a systematic way to deploy the training needed by incumbent technicians whose companies were purchasing the new equipment. The transition to computer-driven solutions to service and repair was creating a gap between existing and needed skills. These issues were discussed at the meeting, at which Dr. Albrecht stated, "To solve this gap we must build a bridge connecting Gateway with Snap-on. We each have a need and the solution is not resting on either side but in the middle."

That initial meeting has led Gateway to national training activities for Snap-on and was the foundation for a national consortium of colleges called the National Coalition of Certification Centers, or NC3. The need for diagnostics training helped to identify the differentiating skill set that Gateway was looking for to increase investment in faculty development and heighten student interest in automotive training. It defined a roadmap that led to the development of Gateway's Horizon Center for Transportation Technology, a new advanced technology center devoted to the industry.

The concept was powerful because each of the leading entities, along with an additional 150 community partners, embraced the vision and found ways to leverage the partnership to benefit their particular needs. Local automotive dealers received more highly skilled technicians, local banks found young entrepreneurs to invest in, and local municipalities found a place to demonstrate new technologies such as hybrid vehicles. The change had built momentum that carries on today throughout multiple programs and partnerships at Gateway.

Developing the platform for solving the basic problem of diagnostics technology training is still the defining challenge in moving forward. From the beginning the curriculum and certification programs related to the technologies were jointly developed by Gateway faculty and Snap-on industry experts. This shared responsibility secured everyone's involvement and commitment to success. Teaching the latest technology and having access to the designers and creators of that technology add immeasurable value to the quality of the instruction and performance of the students. In an industry that is fast paced and changes with every new model, it is imperative that Gateway instructors work hand-in-hand with the industry professionals who are developing this technology.

The Horizon Center concept was established to solve a problem that Gateway had with competing automotive programming and to serve as a means for Snap-on to begin building capacity for the introduction of an emerging technology in the automotive industry. The Horizon Center was the first Snap-on branded diagnostic training center in the country, and now there are over 60 colleges with Snap-on diagnostic partnerships, including one in Morocco that Gateway assisted in establishing. While they are not all called Horizon Centers, they all share the common elements of the partnership through curriculum and training certifications. Gateway uses the name "Horizon" to represent three industries in which training is delivered in a single building— automotive, diesel, and aviation. Hence the idea of the horizon, where sky and land meet. As a result of the unique perspective of a shared training center, the vision for certification across industries was created. Through NC3, certifications now exist in automotive, diesel, torque, electronics, and aviation. NC3 creates common core knowledge and skills that enhance the qualifications of students and technicians while strengthening the bridge between all partnering colleges and supporting industries. Snap-on and Gateway have led the way, but many colleges are now leveraging the vision and accessing certification and training resources through partners such as Snap-on, Trane Corporation, and the Federal Aviation Administration.

Strategies for sustaining the Gateway/Snap-on partnership were designed into the model from the beginning. Benchmarks, progress reports, and a governance model established through a 501(c)3 independent organization have allowed for colleges to help shape the future direction of the partnership. For Gateway it has meant increased student enrollment, enhanced community visibility,

integrated training opportunities for faculty and students, and opportunities for other programs and disciplines to replicate the model.

Gateway has replicated the model by (among other means) securing anchor industry partners in

- Horticulture with Bacho Tools,
- Cosmetology with Andis Tools,
- Industrial maintenance with Insinkerator,
- Energy systems with Ingersoll Rand and Trane,
- Computer numerical control with HAAS,
- Information technology with IBM,
- Surgical technology with Bradshaw Medical,
- Career boot camps in manufacturing with SC Johnson Company, and
- Fire service with Pierce Manufacturing.

The concept of sharing solutions and the responsibility for sustaining those solutions has transformed the way Gateway establishes and improves programs. According to Dr. Albrecht, “Our future will be built upon anchor partnerships that drive curriculum and change in our culture at Gateway.” Further, according to Nick Pinchuk, CEO of Snap-on, Inc. Technical education is a key differentiator in keeping the United States competitive in the world economy. Snap-on is proud to partner with Gateway and our nation’s community and technical colleges to enhance the skills for America’s workforce.

Success can be measured in several ways and is reported through metrics established by the partners. Enrollment, student success and completion, and student and employer satisfaction surveys are the traditional metrics by which Gateway measures progress. Added to that are the number of certifications earned, return on investment back to the colleges for products sold by industry partners, replicated models within Gateway, community outreach through engagement activities held at the center, increased training and credentials for faculty, leveraged business sponsorships, and increased grant resources through college-to-college collaboration. One element that should be highlighted but cannot be measured is local branding of the program and college through the leveraging of the world brand of Snap-on. Snap-on has co-branded the colleges in the NC3 network and features them in its international marketing strategies.

In recognizing Gateway’s work with the awarding of a U.S. Department of Labor High Growth grant, the former assistant secretary of the department’s Employment and Training Administration stated, Leadership must come from all corners for a region to be successful, and you’re fortunate that Gateway Technical College has risen to the occasion. Their High Growth grant was a little less than a million dollars and they could have been satisfied with simply producing the curriculum and training program that had been outlined. But they were able to leverage an additional \$2 million from the private sector to build a state-of-the-art center.