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Chancellor column: UWSP an economic development asset

You probably already think of the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point as a partner in education. Think of us also as your partner in economic development.

If that connection is not readily apparent, consider the message General Electric's CEO shared with the UW Board of Regents earlier this month: Jeffrey Immelt noted that GE has hired hundreds of UW System graduates in engineering and business. "You are in the product-development business, and we love the product," he said.

UWSP produces graduates with broad-based education to succeed in many careers. This is an asset to business and industry, teaching innovation, sharing knowledge, conducting research and improving the quality of life for the entire community.

Here are a few ways UWSP is an economic development asset:

- The Wisconsin Institute for Sustainable Technology works with educators and businesses to develop sustainable products and processes in such areas as biofuels and composting.
- Paper Science and Engineering staff train paper industry engineers using our on-site paper machine.
- Our Small Business Development Center provides entrepreneurial assistance and works with small businesses. It is one of numerous Continuing Education programs offered to enhance professional skills.
- The Central Wisconsin Economic Research Bureau is a resource throughout the area.
- The recent international aquaponics conference and partnership with Nelson and Pade Aquaponics provides knowledge that supports economic development.

Because economic growth is so important to the community and the stability of the university, we've named David Eckmann as special assistant to the chancellor for economic development. He will help UWSP further connect university talent with regional business and industry to foster innovation, entrepreneurship and economic expansion statewide.

UWSP is one of the first comprehensive universities in the state to have a staff member focused entirely on creating and strengthening economic development partnerships between the business community and the university.

Dave joined us July 1 after six years as economic development director for the Marathon County Development Corporation. He already has relationships with regional businesses, education institutions and economic development agencies. Look for Dave to affirm those relationships and build on a solid foundation for future collaboration.

To thrive in the 21st century, a community needs a creative culture, well-educated, vigorous society, robust economic growth and a healthy, productive, sustainable natural environment. UWSP's strategic plan, A Partnership for Thriving Communities, provides a framework for us to become more engaged with area stakeholders, more responsive to local needs and more relevant to solving regional problems.

To succeed we need to listen and learn what is important to key stakeholders in their UWSP partnership. A series of listening sessions is being planned to identify regional opportunities and

challenges and how they align with our Partnership for Thriving Communities.

It will be the basis for developing an action plan and setting priorities supporting economic development at the regional and state level. We welcome your input on this key area; email

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