Every leadership team I know wants to acquire, develop, and retain the best people, the best talent they can. In this CWERB issue, our presenter clarified how important this is for our region, “The primary long-term challenge facing Wisconsin’s economic future remains workforce quantity. Many businesses report the lack of available workers has hindered expansion and, in some cases, even curtailed their ability to meet current product orders.” Below I outline five quick and concrete ways that organizations can address this economic challenge.

Acquire Talent.
A. Internships. Internships are a valuable workforce acquisition and retention strategy. Internships provide employers with an opportunity to get to know candidates before having to make a hiring decision. Employers who make an impression are more likely to gain the attention and commitment of prospective employees. According to the State of Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development (DWD), college students who intern for a Wisconsin company are more likely to stay in the state after graduation. To improve your internship recruiting strategy:
   1. Audit your internship program. Set aside 60 to 90 minutes to review the DWD’s guide to “Starting and Maintaining a Quality Internship Program in Wisconsin.” Use the guide to outline 3-5 things you can do in the next month to improve your program. See internshipwisconsin.com/employers/resources.
   2. Recruit interns on Handshake. Handshake is an early talent recruiting platform. You establish a free account and post your internship job descriptions at uwsp.joinhandshake.com.
   3. Contact UW-Stevens Point experts. We have several experts on campus who can help you shape your internships and recruit qualified students. For more information, please contact Sue Kissinger in the Academic and Career Advising Center at skissing@uwsp.edu or 715-346-4557 or Professor Ricardo Boeing, internship director for the School of Business and Economics, at rboeing@uwsp.edu or 715-346-2736.

Develop Talent.
B. Onboarding. Onboarding helps people understand your organization and build new relationships more quickly. Effective onboarding can reduce turnover by increasing employee satisfaction and connection with your culture.
   4. Audit your onboarding program. Set aside 2-3 hours to review SHRM’s guide to “Maximizing Success when Onboarding New Employees.” Use the 13 questions listed on page 5 to review your onboarding successes and opportunities to improve. See shrm.org/foundation/ourwork/initiatives/resources-from-past-initiatives/Documents/Onboarding%20New%20Employees.pdf
   5. Use evidence-based best practices. SHRM’s review of several research studies suggest that there are a number of best practices that improve employee onboarding. As simply and quickly as possible implement at least one of the practices listed below:
      • Make the first day on the job special.
      • Develop a written onboarding plan.
      • Be sure your program is consistently implemented.
      • Use technology to facilitate the process.
      • Use milestones, such as 30, 60, 90 and 120 days on the job—and up to one year post-organizational entry—to check in on employee progress.

Experimenting with these five approaches to acquiring and retaining talent can help you win and retain high performing employees. If you want to explore these practices further, our faculty can help you design and implement internship and onboarding programs. For more information contact Jennifer Hess, program manager, Customized Training and Professional Development at jhess@uwsp.edu or 715-346-4782.