

Week of September 20, 2010



[Website](#) | [Biography](#) | [Newsroom](#)

Education Collaboration Key to Future

This week we celebrated the beginning of a historic collaborative effort between Metropolitan Community College, the University of Central Missouri and Cass County, called the Cass County Partnership for Advanced Training and Education. This unique partnership will provide greater higher education and workforce training opportunities for local residents and businesses, which will ultimately benefit the economy of the 31st District and the state as a whole.

We are all in agreement that we need creative solutions in higher education, and we need to set ambitious goals regarding the number of Missourians who continue their education past high school. As chair of the Senate Education Committee, we are looking at ways to be more efficient, and this type of partnership is right on target. The governor indicated that he wants to increase the percentage of Missourians with college degrees from 37 percent to 60 percent, and to do that, he believes, as I do, that cooperation is the key. The Cass County effort could be a model that higher education institutions can adapt to their local communities across the state to increase accessibility.

Additionally, this partnership will help prepare Missourians for in-demand careers in science, health care, technology and technical services. The Cass County Partnership for Advanced Training and Education was the first recipient of Training for Tomorrow funds, an initiative designed to educate Missourians for careers in growing industries and help community colleges create or expand training programs to serve additional students. Between now and 2018, Cass County is projected to add more than 200 new jobs in scientific and technical services, which reflects trends in communities across the state. We also anticipate increasing the number of small businesses in these communities. To prepare

for this future growth, we must equip our working adults now.

During the 2010 legislative session, we were confronted with a historic budget shortfall that limited the resources available for state programs and services, including higher education. We know that we will likely face a shortfall for the upcoming fiscal year as well. Despite these challenges, we've committed to fostering innovative ideas that will help Missouri prosper in the next decade and beyond, and we understand that job training and higher education will be a fundamental part of our state's economic recovery.

Truly, higher education and training go hand-in-hand, and Cass County, through advancing workforce development, will lead the way for businesses and employees to thrive. With a more educated and highly skilled workforce, incomes will be higher, which will result in more money being pumped back into the local community and state as a whole. This added revenue could be reinvested in our schools, infrastructure, and essential programs and services. An educated workforce is also the key to growing our current industries as well as attracting new businesses to our communities. And good schools and greater business opportunities will attract people who want to live in a growing, prosperous community.

I firmly believe this collaboration between UCM, MCC and Cass County will be the cornerstone of inventive, forward-thinking solutions to develop our workforce, increase accessibility to higher education, and ultimately, strengthen our state's economy. This alliance will set the standard for educational partnerships between government and institutions of higher learning in the Show-Me State, and I look forward to seeing its impact first-hand in the months and years to come.

As always, please do not hesitate to contact my office with your questions or concerns at any time. We look forward to hearing your comments and suggestions and trying to answer any questions you may have. You can reach us by phone at 866-277-0882 (toll-free) or 573-751-2272, or by fax at 573-526-7381.

Senator David Pearce serves Bates, Cass, Johnson and Vernon counties in the 31st State Senatorial District.

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