

SOUTH METRO DENVER BUSINESS

Quarterly magazine of the South Metro Denver Chamber of Commerce - Fall 2007

STEM Education Coalition

Working toward
quality technical
talent for the
future.

Greater Littleton Youth Initiative

Making a difference in the
lives of Littleton's youth

Paul Hartmann, Photographer

There is a real person
behind the lens



Priority Management

Streamlining the
information superhighway

South Metro Denver
BUSINESS Expo

Pages 24 & 25
Exhibitor Map and Listing

Improve Supply of Hi-Skilled Talent



In his address to a South Metro Chamber of Commerce gathering on July 18, Governor Bill Ritter referred to the so-called **Colorado Paradox**: we are in the top two states nationally in terms of college graduates per capita, and yet Colorado ranks in the bottom quartile for high school and college completion rates. The Paradox has consequences for key growth sectors of the State's economy, especially those that demand highly skilled scientific and technical workers.

"Colorado competes with several renowned universities from other states to place engineering and science graduates," explains Gary Barbosa, Human Resources Director at Lockheed Martin Space Systems Company. "But our concern goes beyond the current college

graduation statistics. To address projected future workforce attrition, it is today's child in elementary school that must become the engineering or science graduate 12 to 15 years downstream. The paradox is a systemic issue. We have to look at the entire education pipeline, beginning with pre-school."

Lockheed is not alone. CH2M Hill. Avaya. QWEST. How long will these and other South Metro corporations see Colorado as a place to grow their businesses if they can't source the right talent locally, especially in science, technology and engineering?

Difficulty in finding home-grown talent may impact small businesses even more. As Barrett Blank, owner of web solutions provider BB2e.com puts it, "I don't have an HR Department. I have ten contract employees. I can't afford to take a year to train under-skilled new hires. And I can't relocate someone from Singapore like the big companies can either."

In recognition of how important this issue has become to the economic vitality of our region and the state, the SMCC has formed the **Science, Technology, Engineering and Math Education Coalition**, known as **STEM-EC**.

(continued on page 8)



Caption, caption, caption. Photo by Paul Hartmann.

STEM-EC

(continued from page 5)

The Coalition is co-chaired by Bud Ahearn, a CH2M Hill Senior Vice President, and Mary Ann Littler, Avaya's VP of Global Services (and former SMDCC Chair). They lead a group that after only one year boasts over 300 diverse members, representing big and small business, school districts, universities, government, etc.

Says Ms. Littler: "We are an incredibly diverse group of volunteers. What has brought us together is a shared belief in a simple idea: that if we can figure out how to produce more STEM talent in Denver, this economy is sure to boom. And if we fail... we face potential relocations and economic stagnation in the not-so-distant future."

According to the recent Metro Denver Wired Initiative Workforce Study, the disconnect between business and education in the region is a major part of the problem. STEM-EC was formed to connect these constituencies, and all stakeholders. Says Ahearn: "I want to ensure that participation and collaboration on STEM issues becomes the norm for business instead of the exception."



STEM-EC's organizational structure reflects its emphasis on collaboration. In addition to a Steering Committee, the Coalition has five sub-committees, or "Work Streams." The work streams collaborate to strive towards a vision of connecting business, education, and government to create a robust STEM business community and labor supply in South Metro Denver.

If you are interested in joining STEM-EC, the SMDCC encourages you to contact John Brackney at 303 795-0412 or via email at jbrackney@bestchamber.com for more information.

Peter Dinneen is the Center Dean for Keller Graduate School of DeVry University.

Doug Gilbert is the Campus College Chair for Graduate Business at the University of Phoenix, Colorado Campus. Both are on the STEM-EC Steering Committee.



Caption, caption, caption. Photo by Paul Hartmann.

A Colorado Education Conversation

Governor Bill Ritter and Speaker of the House Andrew Romanoff joined the South Metro Chamber of Commerce and 200 guests on July 18 at CH2M Hill. The Governor acknowledged the importance of producing more STEM talent in Colorado, especially given his focus on building national prominence in the Aerospace, Bio-Science, and Renewable Energy industries. Speaker Romanoff emphasized the need for everyone to be willing to think differently about our education system. He hopes the legislature will be innovative in passing legislation next year to address three urgent priorities: ensuring every child gets a "smart start", restructuring teacher compensation, and fixing a decaying K-12 school infrastructure.

STEM-EC mission

The group has defined its mission as follows:

- *Actively promoting and facilitating collaboration and cooperation in STEM areas among industry, education, and government*
- *Building student interest and excitement for STEM career paths*
- *Influencing public policy and legislation towards active government solutions favoring a robust STEM talent pool*

vision

STEM-EC's vision is as follows:

- *The vision of the South Metro Denver Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics Educational Coalition ("STEM-EC") is to create an environment of collaboration and cooperation that ensures a robust supply of STEM talent to the labor market in South Metro Denver.*



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