

Industry and Postsecondary Education

Because we believe that the quality of education in K-12 depends on the training of teachers in our colleges and universities, we also know that corporate collaboration in search of K-12 excellence must extend to community colleges and our four-year institutions.

Florida is nationally recognized as a state moving to the forefront in developing a means to induct people into the profession: i.e., new certification practices, the beginning teacher program, etc. Business is participating in joint ventures all across the state to help apply the problem-solving techniques to education which have proved so effective in industry. At the same time, we recognize that our attractiveness as a career option has contributed to education's problems in the sense that the attraction of well-trained graduates to the corporate world has increased the shortage of teachers, especially in critical areas like science, mathematics and computer science.

In the past being a teacher meant being looked up to in the community as a leader. Although wages for teachers were not always on a par with other occupations, the prestige of the position counted for a lot. Today, the differential between salaries for teaching and certain other types of work is significant. In addition we have experienced great change in the social role of women, who have been historically the backbone of our teaching force. Today, the job opportunities for women are virtually limitless, and fewer and fewer graduates of either sex are choosing to become teachers. Business must help get the word out that education deserves to be a viable career choice for all young people.

Business has been visible and vocal in its recognition of outstanding teachers through such programs as "Apple Awards" and grants for instructional materials, equipment and computer software. Industry recognition of the need for improved skills in math, science and computer education is reflected in our participation in training and upgrading teachers in those fields, appointing industry personnel as part-time or special faculty and supporting of the Department of Education's five Regional Centers of Excellence.

Industry is active in collaborative programs in other postsecondary areas as well as teacher training. Many of these will be described later in this monograph. One special example is industry's contribution to engineering education in Florida. Through cooperative efforts with the State University System, the Legislature has appropriated funds to increase the number of undergraduates in a joint program between Florida State and Florida A and M Universities and to upgrade our present engineers through sponsorship of continuing education and master's degree programs statewide with on-the-job-site videotaped instruction.

Another major collaboration is to be found in the State Board of Education's plan to involve business and industry, government and postsecondary education in the identification of industry needs and the translation

of those needs into educational program content. Changes in the world of work have created a massive need for a different kind of worker and a better understanding of how to develop each worker's potential. In the midst of these adjustments, we also face the need to retrain existing workers to handle the variety of complex new tasks global competition demands.

Education and Economic Development

Florida business and education are also benefitting from mutual sharing of technical expertise and information. Through formal and informal linkages, needs, resources and concerns are being shared which help each sector to understand the other better. Traditional barriers between specialized business interests and the wide diversity of programs, services and research on postsecondary campuses are being penetrated. When business and industry are asked what changes they would like to see in education, they are able to articulate their desires, and educators are being responsive.

As industry evaluates the capacity of its human resource specialists to meet adult education and worker re-education challenges, it is also developing communication linkages for sharing those methods, program designs and training techniques with educators to reinforce the symbiotic nature of these two vital institutions. To formalize these arrangements, the Florida Legislature approved a Master Plan for Postsecondary Education which included the establishment of a clearinghouse for information related to economic development. Florida has been particularly effective in making improvements in its occupationally oriented programs and has strengthened vocational-technical education by tying success in placement of graduates to the measurement of program quality for continued funding.

While the United States as a whole feels the pressure of erosion of our position of leadership in the world economy, Florida continues to push forward as a bellwether state. As our population and importance as a national leader increase, we find ourselves busily engaged in attracting new industry. We are especially interested in the clean industries — high technology, electronics and communication — which also have the fastest obsolescence factors. We are concerned about our continuing ability to attract top management and executive talent to our existing and newly recruited businesses. We know that a major concern of potential residents is the quality of education that will be available to their own children but also to themselves and their employees as lifelong learners.

What Business Expects From Education

For too long we in business have used the quarterly report as our yardstick for success. We now recognize the need for a longer term view as well. Our public schools and universities understand that they too must adopt a longer term view if they are to continue to grow and thrive.