Viewpoints

Providing leadership and leaders

In his 2010 State of the State speech, Governor Herbert spoke of the efforts of one university to stimulate the economic development of Utah. The university recognized by the governor was Weber State University.

Herbert said: "Utah's aerospace and defense-related industries generate billions of dollars in revenue annually and employ tens of thousands of Utahns across the state in high-paying jobs. This is good — but we can do even better. Private and public leaders have teamed up with Weber State University to increase the size of the aerospace industry in Utah. By focusing on workforce needs in this area, we will develop the talent and innovation necessary to become the premier player in the aerospace industry."

While such recognition is always welcome, many people in Northern Utah may be unaware of the specific efforts alluded to by Governor Herbert. In fact, even some people on the WSU campus may be largely unfamiliar with the university's work with the aerospace sector.

Utah's aerospace and defense industry employs more than 42,000 workers statewide and has combined revenues of $5.2 billion. The Aerospace Cluster Project is a partnership between leading aerospace firms, the Governor's Office of Economic Development, the Utah Department of Work Force Services, Grow Utah Ventures and Weber State University.

WSU led the project and acted as the primary facilitator. The focus of the initiative was to develop specific strategies to increase the economic impact of Utah's aerospace sector with special attention directed toward the contribution higher education can make through education and research.

WSU's Utah Center for Aeronautical Innovation and Design serves the aerospace sector by conducting applied scientific and engineering research for aviation industry partners and their clients. Current research includes the use of lasers to strengthen metal, improving aviation headsets and assessing the causes of failure for critical aircraft components.

Top of Utah Voices

Michael Vaughan

■

Commentary

Michael Vaughan is Weber State University's provost. He accepts e-mail from readers at **MVAUGHAN@Weber.edu**

While WSU's research efforts are significant, the university's chief contribution to economic development is through the education of students who contribute to business and industry. Recent promotions of two of our alumni serve as prime examples.

In December, Craig Trewet was appointed director of Boeing's Salt Lake site. Prior to his new assignment, Trewet held a variety of positions with Boeing in Seattle. Trewet earned his Bachelor of Science degree in mechanical engineering technology from WSU in 1990.

Just this month, Mark DeYoung was named as the new president and CEO of Alliant Techsystems (ATK). DeYoung has been with ATK for 25 years. DeYoung received his bachelor's degree in business from Weber State University in 1983.

While not every WSU graduate will become a CEO or plant manager for a Fortune 500 company, Trewet and DeYoung represent a hallmark of a WSU education. WSU's College of Applied Science & Technology and John B. Goddard School of Business & Economics graduate more than 800 students each year. These graduates are well educated, critical thinking citizens who are familiar with local business and industry needs and prepared to take on meaningful professional roles in supporting industrial partners.

Having access to a well-educated workforce is critical for Utah's future. The Utah Technology Council estimates there are at least 1,000 current engineering and computer science job openings in Utah and that there will be well over an additional 1,000 job openings in 2010. WSU is striving to help fill this need.

The aerospace industry is just one example of how WSU partners with local business and industry to meet workforce needs. WSU graduates are found in leadership positions in the arts, science, health care, education and community-based, non-profit organizations. DeYoung and Trewet are two shining examples out of thousands.