

Orthopedic Capital Innovation Center (OCIC)

Building a Collaborative Innovation Ecosystem

Kosciusko Leadership Academy
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Introduction: What Is an Innovation Center?

An innovation center is a **specialized environment, or ecosystem, designed to cultivate creativity and accelerate the development of new ideas, products, and services.** These centers function as hubs where diverse stakeholders such as researchers, entrepreneurs, students, educators, and industry professionals collaborate to address complex challenges and test real-world solutions. Through access to advanced technology, expert mentorship, shared data, and sustainable funding models, innovation centers provide a structured pathway that moves ideas efficiently from experimentation to implementation. More than research facilities, **innovation centers are engines of applied learning, workforce development, and economic resilience.**

Across the United States, innovation centers have emerged as essential infrastructure for regions adapting to rapid technological change, automation, and artificial intelligence. By integrating education with industry, these centers ensure that workforce pipelines remain aligned with evolving labor demands while fostering entrepreneurship and long-term economic sustainability. ***This whitepaper advances the creation of an Orthopedic Capital Innovation Center (OCIC) in Warsaw, Indiana, as a strategic opportunity to enhance the region's economic strengths, talent development, and future workforce.*** Drawing on best practices and community stakeholder input, ***the OCIC is positioned to serve as a collaborative ecosystem that strengthens Kosciusko County's global leadership in medical technology and advanced manufacturing.***

Economic Landscape of the Warsaw–Kosciusko Region

Kosciusko County, and the city of Warsaw in particular, is globally recognized as the “Orthopedic Capital of the World®,” housing nearly one-third of the world’s orthopedic manufacturing industry. This sector supports thousands of high-wage jobs in medical device manufacturing, precision machining, quality engineering, and advanced materials science. Industry leaders such as **Zimmer Biomet, Depuy Synthes, Paragon Medical, Medtronic, TECOMET, OrthoPediatrics and others** have built an economic ecosystem that extends beyond healthcare, influencing regional supply chains, logistics, and technology development.

Recent economic growth indicates continued expansion and diversification. Companies such as **Autocam Medical** and **Slate Auto** have announced investments that will bring hundreds of high-skill jobs to the region. Simultaneously, demand for skilled trades such as welding, HVAC, industrial maintenance, and electrical systems continues to rise.

Educational institutions across the region are actively responding to these growth opportunities. **Warsaw Community and other local K-12 schools, Grace College, and Ivy Tech Community College** have created targeted programs to support workforce development. However, rapidly evolving technology and industry requirements demand greater agility and integrated curriculum particularly in the areas of automation, data analytics, robotics, and artificial intelligence. Without a centralized mechanism to align education, industry, and innovation, the region risks talent gaps that could undermine its long-term competitiveness.

Strategic Rationale for a Collaborative Innovation Center

To secure sustained economic vitality, Warsaw must move beyond isolated training efforts toward a coordinated innovation ecosystem. The strategic rationale for establishing a collaborative innovation center rests on four core objectives.

First, the OCIC would help bridge the region's talent gap. Medical device manufacturers and advanced manufacturers require adaptable workers equipped with both technical expertise and problem-solving skills. An innovation center provides early exposure to industry-relevant tools through skills development, project-based learning, and experiential training.

Second, collaborative applied learning is central to the OCIC's mission. For Grace College, the OCIC supports strategic growth of its engineering program while embedding applied research into the curriculum. Ivy Tech has the opportunity to provide expanded technical training aligned with local employer needs. Warsaw Community and other local K-12 schools would benefit from expanded access to industry-grade equipment and career pathways exposure for students. Together, these collaborative partnerships would reduce duplication and increase efficiency across Kosciusko's educational institutions.

Third, the OCIC promotes industry and community sustainability. Organizations such as OrthoWorx were formed specifically to preserve Kosciusko County's global competitiveness in orthopedics. By integrating STEM education with applied research and industry partnerships, the center creates a collaborative ecosystem to foster innovation, drive talent development, and sustain workforce training to keep up with rapidly evolving technologies and skills.

Finally, the OCIC enables strategic resource optimization. By pooling funding from public, private, and philanthropic sources, along with state and federal programs, the OCIC can build a diversified financial base. Memberships, sponsorships, and space rentals will further support long-term sustainability while reducing dependence on any single revenue stream.

Case Study: The UIC Innovation Center

The University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) Innovation Center offers a compelling model for successful industry-academic collaboration. Established over fifteen years ago, the center has become nearly self-sustaining through long-term corporate partnerships. **Its mission focuses on student success through interdisciplinary, real-world problem solving that produces implementable outcomes.**

The UIC center houses specialized labs, including the **Caterpillar digital analysis lab** and **advanced medical prototyping facilities** equipped with assets such as a \$150,000 CNC mill. A recent expansion increased the facility from 10,000 to 30,000 square feet, underscoring sustained demand for collaborative innovation space. By breaking down academic silos, the center brings together students and faculty from **engineering, design, computer science, medicine, liberal arts, and business**. Programs such as the E-Lab focus on understanding user behavior to inform product and systems design, reinforcing the idea that innovation occurs at the intersection of people and technology.

UIC's Innovation Process and Collaborative Models

While each project differs in scope and outcome, the UIC Innovation Center follows a structured, four-phase methodology: **discover, define, develop, and deliver**. This process moves teams from uncertainty to clarity, ensuring that proposed solutions are validated through research, prototyping, and stakeholder feedback.

Students collaborate with industry partners through multiple engagement formats. Multi-year innovation labs offer continuous employment and mentorship, often sponsored jointly by corporate partners and the university. Corporate-sponsored projects provide shorter-term, interdisciplinary experiences funded at approximately \$75,000 annually. Curricular models include innovation-driven courses, pre-internship “Tech in Residence” programs, and interdisciplinary workshops embedded into graduate curricula.

The center emphasizes real-world business outcomes and professional standards. Students are selected through competitive interviews, sign non-disclosure agreements, and receive either academic credit or compensation, but not both. This structure mirrors corporate expectations while reinforcing accountability and project ownership.

Strategic corporate partnerships underpin the center's success. Long-term agreements, often spanning multiple years, allow corporate partners to integrate UIC projects directly into their innovation pipelines. Notably, Caterpillar has embedded the center into its digital project planning processes, and AbbVie's partnerships have achieved high internship conversion rates.

Case Study: Purdue University SMART Manufacturing Center

A visit to Purdue University's SMART Manufacturing Center provided additional lessons particularly relevant to orthopedic manufacturing. **Purdue's program emphasizes a “cyber-physical” learning environment that integrates automation, data science, IoT devices, and digital twins.** Serving approximately 1,600 students, the program models modern manufacturing as both a technical and analytical discipline.

Purdue's adoption of mastery-based learning, modeled after German workforce development systems, prioritizes hands-on experience, critical thinking, and measurable competency. Industry sponsorships support expensive equipment, ensuring that laboratories remain cutting-edge while reducing institutional financial strain. Small class sizes reinforce mentorship, while digital twin technology allows students to simulate manufacturing systems before physical implementation.

The Purdue center also addresses a cultural challenge: rebranding manufacturing as a high-tech, innovation-driven career. Through outreach and early exposure, it reframes manufacturing as a dynamic field that blends automation and robotics, AI, systems and process engineering.

Innovation Centers: Benchmarking Insights

The UIC Innovation Center and the Purdue SMART Manufacturing Center serve as vital bridges between academic learning and industrial application, emphasizing a real-world and hands-on approach to prepare students for the modern workforce. While the facilities and operating structures differ, both centers leverage strategic industry partnerships and interdisciplinary collaboration to drive innovation.

Key Themes & Best Practices

- **Experiential "Real-World" Learning:** The centers focus on immersive experiences and hands-on learning. UIC utilizes a "learning through doing" model where students engage in paid projects for corporate partners, using high-fidelity prototyping to move concepts toward production. Purdue follows a model that blends theory with practical critical thinking, utilizing advanced technologies like digital twins and industrial testbeds to solve real-world problems.
 - **Strategic Industry Partnerships:** A core best practice is the cultivation of long-term engagements over one-off projects. UIC utilizes Master Service Agreements (MSAs) that allow industry partners to retain intellectual property, while Purdue aligns its curriculum directly with industry needs to ensure relevance. Both centers share a decade-long strategic relationship with Caterpillar (CAT), which sponsors specialized manufacturing simulations and digital project planning.
 - **Interdisciplinary Collaboration:** Both centers intentionally break down academic silos. UIC integrates students from Design, Engineering, Medicine, Business, and Liberal Arts—specifically utilizing Anthropology for human behavior studies. Purdue focuses on the "cyber-physical" intersection, integrating manufacturing technology with data science, AI, and robotics.
 - **Workforce Readiness and Talent Pipelines:** A primary goal is the creation of a steady pipeline of highly skilled talent. UIC offers "Tech in Residence" pre-internship classes to help companies like AbbVie identify talent early, leading to high retention. Purdue offers professional SOCA certifications and micro-credentials, partnering with its career center to connect students to real-world career instances.
 - **Specialized Infrastructure:** Both centers have invested in high-tech facilities that mimic industrial environments and facilitate multi-disciplinary collaboration and hands-on learning. Examples include industry-focused innovation labs at the UIC Innovation Center and access to cutting-edge equipment and technology at the Purdue SMART Manufacturing Center.
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Community and Industry Stakeholder Perspectives

Community stakeholders across Kosciusko County consistently identified gaps in education-to-career pathways driven by rapid industry change and limited access to hands-on learning. **Dr. David Hoffert, Superintendent of Warsaw Community Schools**, emphasized that artificial intelligence and emerging technologies are reshaping both existing and future jobs, requiring students to develop adaptable, transferable skills rather than prepare for a single career outcome. **Tina Schmucker, Director of the Wawasee Area Career and Technical Cooperative**, highlighted the disconnect between classroom-based technical instruction and real-world application, noting that social economic challenges like transportation and limited personal networks often prevent capable students from accessing work-based learning. These challenges are compounded, according to **Ben Barkey, Principal of the Warsaw Area Career Center**, by a low counselor-to-student ratio that leaves many students without sufficient guidance as they navigate increasingly complex career pathways.

Education leaders broadly agree that a Warsaw-based Innovation Center could address these barriers by aligning education with future workforce demands and expanding access to real-world, applied learning. Dr. Hoffert stressed the importance of industry mentors and modern equipment while Barkey underscored the importance of applied learning opportunities that count toward academic credit and industry credentials. Both expressed openness to co-hosting events and sharing expertise, provided the Innovation Center integrates smoothly into school schedules and remains financially sustainable.

From a local business perspective, **Rob Parker, President and CEO of the Kosciusko Chamber of Commerce**, considers the center as a potential catalyst for entrepreneurship, talent development, and economic diversification, noting that many students and residents are unaware of the county's diverse industries beyond orthopedics. As a community leader in bringing new businesses to the county, **Peggy Simmons, CEO of the Kosciusko Economic Development Corporation (KEDCO)**, emphasizes that "Communities that win in the next decade won't be the ones with the biggest incentives – they'll be the ones with the strongest ecosystems," and underscores that "Innovation centers aren't optional anymore – they're critical infrastructure that turns local talent into lasting economic growth."

Industry leaders reinforced the urgency of building new training pipelines such as automation and digital operations as impending retirements reshape the workforce. **Ryan Zimmerman, Vice President of Human Resources at Polywood** and **Tina Streit, Vice President and General Manager of Chore-Time Brock Group** both pointed to growing demand for robotics technicians, process engineers, software-literate manufacturing employees, skilled trades professionals, and workers who can blend hands-on skills with technological fluency. **Amy Roe, Community Coordinator for Kosciusko County**, emphasized the parallel need for soft skills, AI literacy, and workplaces with a leadership culture that empowers young professionals. Collectively, stakeholders envision the Innovation Center as a unifying hub serving K-12 students, college learners, jobseekers, and career changers, to ensure access to hands-on learning, avoid duplication of programs, and create pathways from education to employment.

Ryan Christner, CEO of OrthoWorx, summarized this way: "With strong relationships across higher education, industry, and partners statewide, our community is uniquely positioned to grow the OCIC into an innovation and incubation hub recognized across Indiana and the global orthopedic ecosystem. This is how we invest in the future and ensure that innovation, excellence, and opportunity continue to thrive right here in the Orthopedic Capital of the World®."

Facility Development: The Warsaw Chemical Building

The former Warsaw Chemical Building has been identified as the future home of the OCIC. Located on a ten-acre campus along Argonne Road, the 90,000-square-foot industrial facility offers high ceilings and open space well-suited for labs, classrooms, and collaborative space. Planned renovations include dedicated space for the **Grace College engineering and computer science programs, startup incubation, advanced manufacturing equipment and collaborative spaces with community partners such as the Warsaw Area Career Center, Ivy Tech Community College and local orthopedic companies.**

Beyond functional upgrades, the redevelopment aims to transform a visually outdated site into an inviting gateway for Warsaw-Winona Lake and surrounding developments. Infrastructure enhancements will improve safety, connectivity, and community integration.

Operations and Sustainability

Effective innovation centers balance experimentation with process and governance. **The OCIC will integrate applied learning, research, incubation, workforce training, and corporate innovation programs into a flexible yet accountable operating model.** Sustainability depends on diversified revenue streams, effective financial oversight, skilled staffing, and continuous program evaluation to ensure adaptability as technology and workforce needs evolve.

Committed funding for the OCIC includes \$7 million from the Lilly Endowment through the **Grace College Catalyst Corridor initiative**, \$5 million from OrthoWorx through the **Orthopedic Industry Retention Initiative**, and local development funding. Additional funding opportunities for the OCIC include public sources such as **federal research grants** obtained through R1 institution collaborations, as well as **federal and state grants for workforce development and technology training**. Private support will be sought from corporate sponsorships, industry partnerships for research projects and innovation labs, and philanthropic organizations such as the **Lilly Endowment** and the **Don Wood Foundation**. The OCIC will also leverage corporate sponsorships, and space rentals to ensure a secure financial base.

Conclusion

The proposed Orthopedic Capital Innovation Center represents more than a new building or research facility: it embodies a ***strategic vision for the future of workforce development, economic sustainability, and regional leadership of Kosciusko County.*** By learning from proven models such as the UIC Innovation Center and Purdue's SMART Manufacturing Center, and by responding directly to the needs articulated by local educators, employers, and community leaders, **Kosciusko County is uniquely positioned to create a collaborative innovation ecosystem with regional impact.**

The OCIC will serve as a bridge between education and industry, transforming how talent is developed, how technology is adopted, and how innovation is sustained. As automation, artificial intelligence, and advanced manufacturing continue to reshape the global economy, regions that invest in integrated, human-centered innovation will lead. ***Through the OCIC, Warsaw can not only maintain its identity as the Orthopedic Capital of the World® but also redefine it for future generations of innovators, problem-solvers, and community leaders.***

References

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3. Site Visit to Purdue University SMART Manufacturing Center, Dudley Hall, 401 N. Grant Street, West Lafayette, Indiana. Hosted by Dr. Ragu Athinarayanan, Director and Professor of School of Engineering and Technology (SOET); Dr. Milton Aguirre, SOET Assistant Professor of Mechanical Engineering Technology; Dr. Brittany Newell, SOET Assistant Professor; Dustin Schultz, SOET Director of Operations; Riley Gibb, SOET Industry Engagement; Lisa Arafune, SOET Government Affairs. March 19, 2026.
4. Site Visit to Warsaw Chemical Building, 390 Argonne Road, Warsaw, Indiana. Hosted by Matt Wilkinson, Director of Operations for Warsaw Chemical, and Jeremy Skinner, Director of Community and Economic Development for City of Warsaw.
5. Barkey, Ben. Director of the Warsaw Area Career Center. *Personal interview*. 2026.
6. Christner, Ryan. President and CEO, OrthoWorx, Inc. *Personal interview*. 2026.

7. Haddad, Richard. President and CEO, K21 Health Foundation. *Personal interview.* 2026.
8. Hoffert, Ph.D. David. Superintendent of Warsaw Community Schools. *Personal interview.* 2026.
9. Parker, Rob. President and CEO, Kosciusko Chamber of Commerce. *Personal interview.* 2026.
10. Roe, Amy. Kosciusko County Community Coordinator. *Personal interview.* 2026.
11. Schmucker, Tina. CTE Director at Pathways, Wawasee Schools. *Personal Interview.* 2026.
12. Streit, Tina. Vice President and General Manager, Chore-Time Group. *Personal interview.* 2026.
13. Simmons, Peggy. CEO, Kosciusko Economic Development Corporation. *Personal interview.* 2026.
14. Zimmerman, Ryan, PHR, SHRMCP, Vice President of Human Resources at POLYWOOD® *Personal interview.* 2026.

Appendix A. Benchmarking & Stakeholder Biographies



Peter Pfanner

Executive Director, UIC Innovation Center
Medical Device Development Director, UIC College of Medicine
Research Professor, Industrial Design
Department Affiliate, Urology

Peter Pfanner is the Associate Vice Chancellor for Innovation and the Executive Director of the Innovation Center. In this role, he provides strategic vision, fosters corporate and academic partnerships, and ensures the successful integration of research, design, and real-world innovation. An industrial, interaction, and experience designer, innovator, and educator, Peter holds a bachelor's degree in applied science in industrial design from the University of Canberra in Australia and a Master's in Design Methods from Illinois Institute of Technology Chicago.

Over the past three decades, Peter has served as design and creative director of numerous international projects for consultancies and corporations like IDEO and Motorola. His experience spans mobile communications, transport, consumer electronics, medical, office products, furniture, architecture, and materials science. Peter holds 23 patents and is a 1st Dan Black Belt in Tae Kwon-do.



Don Bergh

Senior Associate Director, UIC Innovation Center
Affiliate Faculty, School of Design

Don Bergh serves as the Senior Associate Director of the Innovation Center. He oversees the User Experience Labs, develops new educational offerings, and works with the executive director on partner development, college collaborations, and other strategy-related initiatives. Don has a BA in Design from the Minneapolis College of Art and Design, attended the Yale program in Brissago, Switzerland, and was a Graham Foundation Design Fellow.

He has taught as an adjunct assistant professor in CADA since 2001 and joined the Innovation Center in 2013. Previously, Don has worked in a wide range of related fields: Communications Director, E-Lab (a pioneer in ethnographic research); Design and Publications Director, Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; Vice President Marketing, Sapient; Design Director, McKinsey Publishing, McKinsey & Company; Founding member, Iota Partners.



Ragu Athinarayanan, Ph.D.

Director and Professor of School of Engineering and Technology, Purdue School of Engineering Technology (SOET)

Dr. Ragu Athinarayanan joined the School of Engineering Technology (SOET) in July 2017. He holds BS and MS in Electrical Engineering, and PhD in Engineering Science from Southern Illinois University. Prior to joining SOET, Dr. Athinarayanan served in various leadership roles for 17 years as Department Head and Associate Dean. He has provided leadership in the development of research and academic programs that are consistent with state and national priorities. Under his leadership he has led the development of more than 20 academic programs at the graduate and undergraduate levels.

Dr. Athinarayanan has over 55 refereed publications in the areas of modeling and control of under-actuated robotic manipulators, signal processing, and machine vision. His research work has been published in journals such as IEEE Transactions, Intelligent Material Systems & Structures, and Intelligent Manufacturing. He has secured more than forty grants valued at more than \$8M to his credit to support research projects and for development of academic programs to enhance regional and statewide economic development efforts. He has experience with forging strong partnerships between academia, business, industry, and state/federal agencies responding to strategic regional, state, and national workforce/economic development priorities. He also has extensive experience with ABET and ATMAE accreditations, experience with establishing program articulations and collaborations with domestic and overseas institutions, and experience with statewide STEM Education initiatives. For his work, he received the Excellence in Education Award by the Governor of Missouri in 2009.



Milton Aguirre, Ph.D.

Assistant Professor of Mechanical Engineering Technology, Purdue School of Engineering Technology (SOET)

Combining expertise in mechanical engineering with 10+ years of market-oriented product design, Milton Aguirre builds interactive synergies between academic research and entrepreneurship. His research in creative mechanism design has supported technology valorization within international communities. As a post-doctorate at Delft University of Technology in the Netherlands, he led the development of several ‘concept-to-market’ initiatives to secure intellectual properties and investments for commercialization. While in graduate school at Penn State and later at Delft, he taught courses in the fields of product development and creative mechanism design. Continuing

with his passion for teaching, collaborating, and fostering creativity, Milton is excited to share these combined skills with Purdue Polytechnic.



Brittany Newell, Ph.D.

Assistant Professor, Purdue School of Engineering Technology (SOET)

Dr. Brittany Newell is an associate professor at Purdue University in the Purdue Polytechnic Institute School of Engineering Technology. Brittany received her B.S. in Biomedical Engineering from Purdue University and her M.S. and Ph.D. in Agricultural and Biological Engineering from Purdue University. She then worked in industry from 2013-2015 before joining the Purdue faculty.



Dustin Schultz

Director of Operations, Purdue School of Engineering Technology (SOET)



Riley Gibb

Director of Industry Engagement, Purdue School of Engineering Technology (SOET)

Riley Gibb joined Purdue Polytechnic in February 2026 as the Director of the Office of Industry Engagement, bringing a background in higher education, venture capital, and startup incubation to the college's mission of connecting students and researchers with industry.



Lisa Arafune

Industry Engagement and Government Affairs, Purdue School of Engineering Technology (SOET)

A STEM sector career with over 20 years of leadership experience in the academic, manufacturing, and government sectors, Lisa established and led Purdue's Washington DC operations, creating relationships for Purdue on Capitol Hill, DC-based industry partners, non-profit organizations, as well as NSF, NIH, DOE, DOD. She served as Chief of Staff to the Dean of the College of Engineering and consulted for the Rosen Center for Advanced

Computing.



David Hoffert, Ph.D.

Superintendent, Warsaw Community Schools

Dr. David Hoffert serves as the Superintendent (2014-current) in the Warsaw Community Schools. Prior to his current position, he served as the Assistant Superintendent/Chief Academic Officer in the Warsaw Community Schools (2011-2014), principal of Northfield Jr./Sr. High (2009-2011) in Wabash, IN, and as a history teacher and boys track coach at Warsaw Community High School

(2002-2009).

David graduated from Warsaw Community High School, received his undergraduate degree in education from Anderson University, Master Degree from Olivet Nazarene University, Principal Licensure from Indiana Wesleyan University, Education Specialist, and Ph.D. degree from Indiana State University.



Ben Barkey

Director of Warsaw Area Career Center, Warsaw Community Schools

Career highlights include:

Educational Leadership: Directed programs to guide high school seniors through critical transitions at Warsaw Area Career Center.

Curriculum Innovation: Collaborated with instructors and Vincennes University to revamp our welding and machining

programs, bringing an increase in enrollment, staffing, and state-of-the-art equipment.

Strategic Partnerships: Established the RAMP partnership with OrthoWorx, giving students hands-on experience and internships with industry partners.

STEM Focus: Transformed Washington Elementary and Madison Elementary into IDOE Certified STEM schools, enhancing STEM education through curriculum development and industry collaboration.



Tina Schmucker

CTE Director at Pathways, Wawasee Community Schools

My areas of expertise include launching programs and building relationships. I enjoy partnering with students to explore their interests and strengths. I also enjoy working with businesses to explore opportunities for young people. I am always looking for new ways to expand my knowledge and enhance my abilities. I believe that continuous learning is essential to staying current and effective in any field.



Peggy Simmons

CEO, Kosciusko Economic Development Corporation (KEDCO)

KEDCO is the driving force behind economic momentum in Kosciusko County. As the county's lead economic development organization, we don't simply respond to growth — we shape it. We align business, government, education, and community leaders around a shared vision for a thriving, competitive region. From supporting the expansion of legacy manufacturers to recruiting new industry, advancing workforce initiatives, championing housing and site development, workforce, and strengthening entrepreneurship, KEDCO works at the intersection of strategy and action.

Peggy brings over 21 years of experience in industrial and economic development. Awarded Distinguished Budget Award from GFOA on first submission and each subsequent for City of Rochelle. She also served as Associate Director in Northern Illinois for U.S. Senator Peter G. Fitzgerald.



Amy Roe

Kosciusko County Community Coordinator, KEDCO

As Community Coordinator, Amy supports implementation of the Hoosier Enduring Legacy Program (HELP) and is based at the offices of the Kosciusko Economic Development Corporation (KEDCO).

Kosciusko County is one of three communities selected by the Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs (OCRA) to participate in the first cohort of the HELP program. The program encourages communities to develop Strategic Investment Plans focused on four pathways: advancing e-connectivity, enhancing quality of life, promoting community wellness, and strengthening local economies.



Rob Parker

President & CEO, Kosciusko Chamber of Commerce

Rob joined the Kosciusko Chamber of Commerce in 2016 as the President and CEO. In his current position, Rob's main initiatives are lead from the mission statement, "To be the voice of our members to stimulate healthy and diverse business growth in our community." He ensures that the Chamber is focused on providing the best service possible, driving value and benefits to the membership.

Rob is a Warsaw Community High School and an Indiana Tech graduate. In 2009, he received the Outstanding Graduate award from Indiana Tech while obtaining a dual degree, Bachelors of Science in Management and Marketing. Additionally, Rob is a graduate of the Kosciusko Leadership Academy and attends Warsaw Community Church.



Richard Haddad

President & CEO, K21 Health Foundation

Rich oversees all aspects of K21's operations and reports to the K21 board of directors. He is responsible for all financial reporting to the board, and with a background in investment and financial planning, he also oversees all investment relationships regarding prudent management of the foundation's funds. He interacts with local community leaders and organizations to find the best opportunities to see K21's mission succeed through grantmaking and community participation. Rich is a graduate of Grace College with a degree in business and accounting. He also holds a Master of Science in Non-Profit Management.



Tina Streit

Vice President and General Manager, Chore-Time Group

Tina Streit is Vice President and General Manager for Chore-Time. She joined the company in 2005. Streit is responsible for overall global management of the Chore-Time business unit, including operations, engineering, sales and service. She leads the management team in developing and driving key strategic initiatives. She also partners with Chore-Time's distribution network to best serve global customers.

Streit originally joined CTB as Controller, serving the Value-Added Processing Manufacturing Group, Ironwood Plastics, PigTek and finally the Chore-Time business unit. She also held the position of Interim Regional Sales Manager for Latin America Sales for Chore-Time.

A graduate from Manchester College in North Manchester, Indiana, Streit has a Master of Accountancy degree. She worked for a top 10 public accounting firm for eight years prior to joining CTB.



Ryan Zimmerman, PHR, SHRMCP

Vice President of Human Resources at POLYWOOD®

Solid management experience in all levels of HR as Generalist, HR Manager, and Director Roles with combined 15+ years of experience. Focused on Partnering with Business Leaders to ensure they are able to meet their business objectives through Human Resource programs and services. A member of Society of Human Resource Management (SHRM) as well as local human resource networks.



Jeremy Skinner

Community & Economic Development Director, City of Warsaw



Matt Wilkinson

Director of Operations, Warsaw Chemical

Appendix B. Slide Presentation

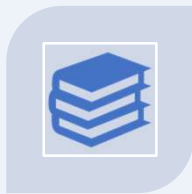
**Warsaw – Kosciusko
Economic Landscape**

Orthopedic Capital of the World®

- Nearly one-third of global orthopedic manufacturing
- Rising demand for skilled trades
- Rapid growth in advanced manufacturing across diverse industries



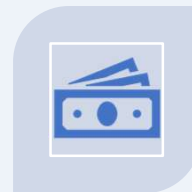
**Why Create a Collaborative
Innovation Center?**



**ALIGN EDUCATION
WITH INDUSTRY
NEEDS TO BRIDGE
TALENT GAP**



**COLLABORATE WITH
INDUSTRY TO DRIVE
INNOVATION AND
TALENT PIPELINE**



**OPTIMIZE RESOURCES
TO SUPPORT ECONOMIC
SUSTAINABILITY**



UIC Innovation Center

15+ years of academic-industry collaboration

- Interdisciplinary, real-world problem solving
- Structured innovation process
- Deep corporate partnerships




Peter Pfanner, Ph.D.
Executive Director



Donald Bergh
Sr. Associate Director



UIC Collaboration Models

- Multi-Year Innovation Labs
- Corporate-sponsored projects
- Pre-internship and project-based courses
- Professional standards and NDAs






Purdue SMART Manufacturing

- Mastery-based, hands-on learning
- Automation, AI, Advanced Manufacturing
- Industry-sponsored equipment and projects
- Small class sizes, high-touch learning environments

Innovation Center Best Practices



Community Stakeholder Input: Education

- Expanded access to hands-on learning
- Equity and awareness of local careers
- Strong industry buy-in and partnership
- Increased opportunity for Kosciusko County growth



Community Stakeholder Input: Industry

- Need for adaptable, tech-literate workforce
- Strong education alignment and partnership
- Increased opportunity for Kosciusko County growth



**OCIC Facility:
Warsaw
Chemical
Building**

- 90,000 sq. ft. Adaptive Reuse Facility
- Engineering Labs and Manufacturing Equipment
- Startup Incubator and Collaboration Space
- Site and Area Aesthetic Revitalization



**Operations
and
Sustainability**



Flexible and accountable governance



Long-term ecosystem alignment



Diversified revenue streams



Integrated research, incubation, and training

Conclusion



OCIC as a Regional Innovation Engine:

- Prepare talent for future industry needs
- Strengthen workforce and economic resilience
- Position Kosciusko County for global leadership into the next generation