

U.S. Education Secretary praises Miami Valley Career Technology Center

U.S. Education Secretary Arne Duncan pays visit to Miami Valley CTC.

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CLAYTON — At a town hall meeting held Wednesday at the Miami Valley Career Technology Center, U.S. Education Secretary Arne Duncan praised the school for helping close the “skills gap” between what employers need from workers and what workers can do.

Speaking to a crowd of students, business leaders and educators, Duncan said there are about 2 million high-skilled, high-paying jobs that cannot be filled every year in the United States because employers cannot find candidates with the skills necessary to perform the work.

But Duncan said the center is shining example of how cooperation between members of the business community and career and technical schools can facilitate producing graduates who are prepared for the demands of jobs in their areas.

“I am in schools two to three times a week all over the country, and I haven’t seen too many places like this,” he said. “We need that kind of innovation and creativity.”

The lightening speed at which technology changes means that employers and educators must work together to ensure students are learning skills that are relevant to the jobs they want to hold, said Jason Murphy, the human resources manager with Caterpillar Logistics Services and another member of the panel at the town hall.

Miami Valley Career Technology Center has a strong relationship with Caterpillar Logistics, which has hired about 250 employees and looks to hire another 250 this year at its new distribution center in Clayton.

Murphy said the career center and job-services organizations in the region keep in close contact with his company and others to remain updated about their workforce needs.

“They are coming to an employer like Caterpillar and saying, ‘What do you want? What are you looking for? And what kinds of programs do we need to create that will meet your needs?’” he said. “So when you are taking classes, they are relevant and they are going to help you be job-ready for jobs in your community.”

Abby Hood, a senior at the career center in the Allied Health Technologies Tech prep program, told Duncan during the town hall that she is graduating with 30 college credits and certification as a State Tested Nurse Aide.

Hood said the school gave her skills that will translate into good wages, and help with scholarship money for college.

Hood said she wanted Duncan to hear her story because she wanted him to return to Washington, D.C., with the idea of helping create more centers across the country.

“This is a great school and I get so many opportunities, but I would love to see it evolve,” she said. “I would love to see a career technology center everywhere, and maybe not in the Miami Valley but everywhere else, not just Ohio, but all over.”

There are about 49 career technical centers in Ohio.

Duncan said the success of the Miami Valley career center shows more are needed nationwide.

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