



Monthly UpDate

Industries of the Future-West Virginia

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Lifetime Learning for Leaders and their Organizations

By David C. Hardesty Jr., President, West Virginia University

During my first year of college, the distinguished president of our university, Paul Miller, admonished those of us in the first-year class: "Continue learning across your entire lifetimes." I heard the words, but at the time I did not fully internalize them.

Today, with three degrees and three careers behind me, I understand what he meant. President Miller's admonition is one of the most important lessons of my lifetime of study and work. I see clearly now the importance of developing the skills of lifetime learning and honing the resultant intellectual curiosity. The value of lifetime learning is both ageless and timeless.

Among the most important lifetime learning skills are the ability to comprehend and analyze information and the closely related intellectual confidence to read or hear original works and develop one's own interpretation of their meaning. Lifetime learning involves the confidence to attempt to apply what one knows in the workplace. It also includes the ability to exchange ideas with others through written and oral communication and the courage to risk making mistakes, and learning from them.

The benefits of lifelong learning are not confined to individuals. I believe that an organization can become a perpetual learner if its members constantly seek to absorb and apply new information. The commitment to build a learning organization starts at the highest levels of leadership.

At WVU, we have worked to build a culture of learning. Many of the steps we have taken can also benefit other organizations. They include:

- Engaging in regular retreats as a part of the strategic planning process.
- Seeking feedback from customers, clients, and others you serve.
- Listening to people external to the organization who have genuine concern for its future and expertise pertinent to its effective operation.
- Keeping everyone in the organization in the information loop.
- Aggressively seeking to learn industry best practices.
- Bringing in expert guest speakers to share their expertise with employees.
- Celebrating the results of lifelong learning and achievement.

For West Virginia's traditional industries, IOF-WV is a vital catalyst for lifelong learning. Through the program, manufacturers are working in partnership with university researchers and national

laboratory experts to discover new ways to improve competitiveness through improved energy efficiency and implementation of new technologies.

We all know that industry in West Virginia faces many challenges, including global competition and increased costs of doing business. These challenges may be beyond an organization's control. But an organization can confront these challenges most effectively if its leaders and employees constantly seek new approaches to doing business. IOF-WV is helping many state manufacturers do just that.

The future of West Virginia's economy is entrusted to present generations. There is no crystal ball in which we can discern an optimum path to a vibrant economic future for the state; however, I have come to believe the ability to judge risks and evaluate options is a learned skill, not an inherited trait. Judgment and perspective gained from a lifetime of learning – learning from one's mistakes, learning from the wisdom of others, and learning by teaching others – are indispensable skills for leaders as they make decisions today that will determine the future state of our State.

The National Council on Competitiveness, which is composed of leading business, government, and education executives, believes that America's future strength will be in its ability to foster innovation faster than other economies. Innovation is fostered by learning and discovery. Organizations and leaders who continue to learn are therefore critical to West Virginia's and the nation's future.

Lifetime learning, I have tried to suggest, is a worthy value for both leaders and the organizations they lead. The skills required are not easy to obtain – the process requires a lifetime of hard work and change. But once acquired, these skills bestow many benefits, including wisdom and perspective, better decisions, better health, and joy in our lives – dividends well worth the investment.

David C. Hardesty, Jr., 21st President of West Virginia University, serves on the National Council on Competitiveness. An expanded version of this article appeared in the July 16, 2004 issue of The State Journal.

EVENTS

Authorized Safety General Industry Companies sponsored by the WV Small Business Development Center will be held on January 26-27, 2005 at CTC Shepherd, 400 W Stephen St Martinsburg, WV. For further information visit www.sbdcwv.org.

2005 WV Manufacturers Association Day at the Capitol will be held Thursday, February 10, 2005 at the State Capitol in Charleston, WV. For further information contact the WVMA at (304)342-2123 or wvma@wvma.com.

A.B. Brooks Forestry Symposium will be held March 3-4, 2005 at the Charleston House Holiday Inn, Charleston, WV. For further information visit wvfa.org or contact the WV Forestry Association at (304) 372-1955 or wvfa@wvadventures.net.

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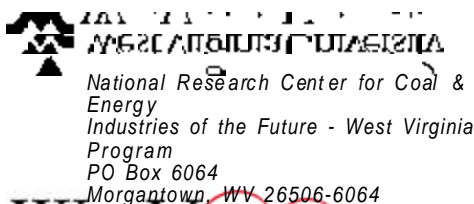
Volume 6.01

Co-Funding Opportunities for IOF-WV Research Teams

Announcement	Due Dates	Funding
Dept. of Homeland Security SBIR www.hsarapasbir.com	Currently Open January 21, 2005 (Proposals due)	Phase I: \$100,000 Phase II: \$100,000-\$750,000
USDA Higher Education Challenge Grants Program www.csrees.usda.gov	Currently Open (Requests for Proposals) February 3, 2005 (Proposals due)	Total Funding \$5,500,000
USDA FY 2005 National Research Initiative Competitive Grants Program www.csrees.usda.gov	Currently Open Due Dates vary - See Solicitation	\$150,000,000 in total funding
DOE/Industrial Technologies Program Glass Industry of the Future http://e-center.doe.gov	January 5, 2005 (Requests for Proposals) TBD (Proposals due)	TBD
DOE/Industrial Technologies Program Forest Products Industry of the Future http://e-center.doe.gov	January 14, 2005 (Requests for Proposals) TBD (Proposals due)	TBD
DOE/Industrial Technologies Program Chemical Industry of the Future http://e-center.doe.gov	January 14, 2005 (Requests for Proposals) TBD (Proposals due)	\$3,000,000
DOE/Industrial Technologies Program Steelmaking Research and Development http://e-center.doe.gov	January 14, 2005 (Requests for Proposals) TBD (Proposals due)	TBD
DOE/Industrial Technologies Program Plant-Wide Assessments http://e-center.doe.gov	February 14, 2005 (Requests for Proposals) TBD (Proposals due)	TBD
DOE/Industrial Technologies Program Ultra-High Efficiency Industrial Steam Generation http://e-center.doe.gov	January 31, 2005 (Requests for Proposals) TBD (Proposals due)	TBD

Looking forward to seeing you at the 2005 IOF-WV
Day at the Capitol on February 22!

Visit www.iofwv.nrcce.wvu.edu for more details



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