

MCC chief bolsters ties to business

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Monroe Community College's growing role in economic development locally was the focus of an event Thursday sponsored by the Rochester branch of Financial Executives International.

Anne Kress, MCC president, spoke on the importance of the college's partnerships with the business community in developing academic programs and ensuring a pipeline of students graduating with industry-ready skills.

The event, Scholar's Night: Opening the Door to Higher Education and Economic Development for our Community, also served as a chapter meeting for FEI and a ceremony for students receiving awards through the organization.

Kress has a record of creating partnerships between businesses and the academic institutions she helped lead. During her tenure as provost and vice president of academic affairs at Santa Fe College in Gainesville, Fla., Kress established a Center for Innovation & Economic Development, which included a small-business incubator.

After her departure for MCC last year, the partnership between Santa Fe and its local work force board was recognized by the U.S. secretary of commerce as an economic benefit to its community.

Kress also secured funding for a strategic economic impact study and to establish the college's first assistant president for economic development.

She is seeking to add a similar position at MCC.

"That would really capitalize on our growing partnerships with Greater Rochester Enterprise and the **Rochester Business Alliance**, supporting existing businesses and helping to bring new industries to the region by guaranteeing a pipeline of students," Kress said in an interview this week.

She has worked on several initiatives at MCC to strengthen partnerships with the business community. In the fall a counselor from RochesterWorks Inc. was placed on campus to help displaced workers apply for federal funding available for higher education. The counselor also helped the prospective students identify industries with growing needs so they would have a better chance for a job after graduating.

At the meeting, FEI awarded four \$1,000 scholarships and nine \$100 scholarships to students, based on their character, academic record and potential for leadership. Award winners also were given one-year subscriptions for online access to the work of the Financial Executives Research Foundation.

FEI is intended to connect senior financial executives to help define the profession, educate members and exchange ideas and best practices, said John Falco, vice president of finance and chief financial officer at Monroe Litho Inc. and an FEI officer.

Falco said Kress was chosen as a speaker because FEI has a tradition of reaching out to local leaders of educational institutions. Her dedication to forming partnerships with community institutions and local businesses fits well with FEI's emphasis on educating financial officers about trends that cross the boundary between business and academic worlds.

"FEI strives to be the eyes and ears of the finance officer facing the day-to-day challenge of enhancing his or her shareholder's investment," Falco said in remarks prepared for the event.

For Kress, the event also was an opportunity to keep the college's ties to the business community strong. She pointed to the success of the nursing program, which years ago was able to expand its enrollment by 30 percent with the help of the RBA and local hospitals.

"Sometimes we assume that everyone knows everything MCC does, but that's not the case," she said. "People respect MCC and what we bring to the community but may not know what it is. This is a wonderful opportunity MCC has for partnerships."