

Tech Industry in Michigan 'Only Going to Get Bigger'

by Jim Stickford

Ken Rogers, executive director of Automation Alley, said the results of the group's 2012 Industry Report showed something interesting - Metro Detroit is number three in the total number of science, technology, education and mathematics (STEM) degrees in the country.

"The fact that we are third in the total number of STEM degrees was surprising to me," Rogers said. "We were surprised when we learned that fact, but I don't think that the business community is aware of the kinds of results coming from our educational institutions."

"We know that the importance placed on STEM knowledge is critical for people in the 21st century. It was pleasant to learn that we're creating a workforce with the skills and education needed for a knowledge-based society."

The report stated that the region is first in the number of people working in architectural and engineering occupations, first in the total number of advanced automotive industry establishments, third in the total number of all STEM degrees completed at area institutions, trailing only Chicago and Boston, fourth in the percentage of total employment (12.9 percent) that is within the technology industry and fifth in the total number of jobs (210,984) in technology centers.

Rogers said that the Detroit region produced 7,748 STEM degrees in 2009. The study also showed it is also fifth in the total number of technology industry establishments, with 7,119, behind Chicago, Dallas-Ft. Worth, Atlanta and Boston.

"This is good news for the re-

gion because more and more people who get these degrees here are staying here," Rogers said. "Our economy has improved and that is the opposite of what happened in the past during the recent slowdown. It used to be that people who got STEM degrees here had to leave to get good jobs."

Rogers said that issuing this report helps get the word out that the Detroit region has a culture of innovation and that this area can attract STEM graduates from other parts of the country.

"Also, our cost of living here is much lower than in a place like Silicon Valley," Rogers said. "It's just cheaper to live here. I saw a house that someone in Silicon Valley paid \$2.2 million. I'm talking about a house that is only 1,200 square feet."

By helping show the world and area businesses that Detroit is a smart place to do business, Rogers said he believes that it encourages people to build on the infrastructure that is here. It encourages people from here to stay here.

"If you want a job in a variety of technical areas, we're showing that we have them here in Southeast Michigan," Rogers said. "You can unpack your car, get a nice house that's affordable in an area that's a nice place to raise your family and have a great quality of life while working in an area that promotes innovation."

Automation Alley initiated the report because the group wants to promote the strength of Southeast Michigan as a center for excellence, Rogers said. Since the report was issued in early February, he's heard from major media, including *Crain's* and *The Huffington Report*.

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