

News

Rose-Hulman, city talk enterprise Panelists share university's outlook on modern manufacturing

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Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology sponsored a panel discussion locally Thursday, focusing on what it would take to keep young, educated people living in Shelbyville and interested in manufacturing.

The forum, titled Leading Entrepreneurial Innovation: The Rebirth of Small Town Manufacturing Through Innovation, comes as the Shelbyville Common Council decides whether to accept an agreement between Terre Haute-based Rose-Hulman and Shelbyville for a series of programs for students and entrepreneurs.

The message of the panel discussion was that modern manufacturing facilities are not "dirty," and that factories are really evolving into technology-intensive careers. Small cities and manufacturing facilities in these cities like Shelbyville need to change their attitudes and culture to grow. One panelist, Stu Kaplan, pointed to his factory, Makuda Technics, which has a small, highly educated staff. Most of the work of producing parts comes from robots.

"I see the exodus of young people from communities like this," said moderator Tom Mason, emeritus professor of engineering management and economics at Rose-Hulman.

David Terrell, executive director of the Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs, said cities and towns often spend a lot of time trying to make themselves attractive to business, but they don't make themselves attractive to young, educated people.

He said things such as entertainment and diversity help, but it's not something he was able to give a step-by-step guide.

"The community needs to answer that for themselves," he said.

City officials and council members are deciding whether to fund a new initiative between Rose-Hulman and the city. The cost is expected to be just less than \$100,000 for the first year.

The programs are supposed to do much of what the panel had talked about, including getting students from Shelbyville higher education and then enticing them to come back to the area.

One program will take top high school students and let them take Rose-Hulman classes, another would give internships to regional companies to Rose-Hulman students from this area.

"The idea, the theme is to support the whole lifestyle of innovation," Shelbyville Director of Redevelopment Amy Haacker said.

The panelists were Sue Ellspermann, an expert in manufacturing and state representative from Ferdinand; David Terrell, executive director of the Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs; Stu Kaplan, president and owner of Makuta Technics in Intelliplex certified technology park; Lisa Laughner, director of manufacturing support group Conexus Indiana; Beth Kozman, of Biostorage Technologies in Indianapolis; and Chris King, vice president at Runnebohm Construction.

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Members of a panel discussion, sponsored by the Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology, talk Thursday night about how to keep young, educated people in Shelbyville and interested in manufacturing. Nick Cusack photo