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CIBRE Conversations mobilize industry leaders, academia and government

By Dawn Pauli

SBA's innovative **CIBRE Conversations** are energizing participants and building momentum about what can be accomplished when academia, government and business join together.

"We have been successful in getting people to come together to share their stories and explore opportunities," says SBA Dean Mohan Tanniru. "I always thought there was a need for forums that cater to the needs of displaced white collar workers and small business entrepreneurs to interact with each other and collaborate."

Created by the SBA's **Center for Integrated Business Research and Education** (CIBRE) as an opportunity to support a variety of industries in an unbiased, agenda-free dialog, the meetings are gaining momentum and generating ongoing discussions.

Participants in the health care CIBRE Conversations created an affiliate group and are writing proposals for grant funding, while the energy management group is developing a tool for energy audits for residential and commercial facilities.

However, Tanniru is especially pleased by the progress made by members of the tool and die group, who are working to impact the future of the industry in Michigan, as well as addressing important legislative issues.

Tool and Die Authority columnist Joe Brown writes, "The discussions provided solid footing for what will be new business relationships for most. I witnessed renewed optimism and a structured approach utilizing university-level resources. There's no doubt that this was not the first group to ever meet with the greater good of the tooling industry on the agenda—nor will it be the last. However, it's rare that a business school as renowned as that at Oakland University would make certain resources, relationships and assets available."

Michigan State Representative Kim Meltzer is an active participant in the tool and die CIBRE Conversation meetings and is taking part in ongoing discussions about how legislation can be enacted to assist the smaller automotive suppliers.

"We followed up with an important meeting between tool-die industry folks and their customers, OEMs and a tier 1 suppliers, so we can better understand how to improve supplier relationships," she says. "Dean Tanniru has his eye on the mark on what is necessary to fight for manufacturing. R&D is good, but we don't want to abandon the manufacturing sector. We have to continue to educate people about how important manufacturing is to Michigan's economy."

Bringing government leaders into the mix is an important element of success, explains Tanniru.

"The goal is to involve state representatives who can influence policies that can address the needs of those who live in Michigan and want to help Michigan hear what we are trying to do," says Tanniru.

CIBRE Conversations will be held once a month, on Saturdays, through April 2010. For dates and details, see the CIBRE Web site at www.sba.oakland.edu/cibre.

SUMMARY

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