

FIND YOUR FUTURE HERE

CAREER CENTERS THAT ARE LENDING AN EDGE FOR COLLEGE & THE WORKPLACE

*Story by Val Beerbower
Photos by Michael Hickey*

Vocational training introduces students to environments beyond the high school classroom, giving them real-world experience and access to skills they'll find valuable regardless of their future profession — or whether they choose to pursue college or enter the workforce immediately upon graduating.

Indiana's Career and Technical Education Pathways program has served as one of five pillars of the governor's educational agenda to "develop a 21st century and ready workforce," says Dr. Jennifer McCormick, state superintendent of public instruction.

More than 52 percent of CTE students across the state earn dual credits (high school credit that also counts for college credit), and more than 54 percent graduated with some kind of industry certification, she says.

East Central Indiana has five career centers helping to fill the talent pipeline. Here's what happening at each of them.



Marion Regional Career Center



MARION REGIONAL CAREER CENTER

This center boasts one of the highest college career readiness rankings in the region, with more than 89 percent of its students earning early college credit, passing an advanced placement exam, or earning a workplace certification. MCC Director Michael Ripperger says about 42 percent of students enter the workforce or go on to college after graduating.

“Students who complete the two-year academy will have the opportunity to complete a work-based learning experience,” Ripperger says. “Most academies have internships, but all have job shadowing experiences.”

MRCC’s most popular programs include nursing, construction, and computer science.

NEW CASTLE CAREER CENTER

NCCC services eight local school corporations, offering 18 career programs. The student experience at New Castle Career Center includes hands-on learning, real world projects, customer interaction, industry certification, licensure, dual college credits, and career preparation. Several programs offer public amenities, such as salon services from the cosmetology program, and preschool through the education program.



PHOTO: STEPHANIE J. ORR

SERVES JUNIORS
& SENIORS FROM
11 SCHOOLS

13 CAREER
& TECHNICAL
PROGRAMS OFFERED

MUNCIE AREA CAREER CENTER

High school juniors and seniors from 11 schools in three counties can choose from MACC's 13 career and technical education programs. Students are required to participate in at least one job shadowing experience each year. Some students in specific program areas also participate in clinical or internship experiences with a local

business, company, or agency.

"The job shadowing and internship experiences are a great opportunity for students to learn what specific career fields are really like so that they can make decisions about selecting a college based on a career choice," says Chris Smith, MACC interim director.

WHITEWATER CAREER CENTER

The most popular of WCC's 13 programs include automotive technology, welding, precision machining, and cosmetology.

"Popular fields tend to be reflective of in-demand jobs," says Director Steve Dungan. "We partner with area businesses, provide students work-based learning and put them through the rigors of a career before they graduate."

Outside of internships and apprenticeships, students also partner with local businesses to plan and execute special projects.



PHOTO: STEPHANIE J. ORR

RICHMOND AREA CAREER CENTER

Director Rusty Hensley says RACC's automotive and biomedical programs are usually the most popular of the school's 15 programs, although the school's newest programs — fire and rescue, and emergency medical technician — are quickly closing the gap. Hensley says RACC

focuses on providing students with educational and career foundations.

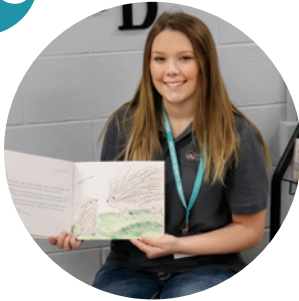
"We take everyone who has not figured out what they want to do (after graduation) and interview with local businesses to help place remaining students," he says.

CURRENTLY SERVES

700

SOPHOMORE, JUNIOR
& SENIOR STUDENTS

AS THE STUDENTS TELL IT...



**MACKENZIE
KIRKMAN**

**Whitewater Career Center,
Education Careers, Grade 12**

“Before I spend money on college, I wanted an opportunity to explore my potential major. My time at WCC has confirmed that I definitely want to be a teacher! I want to study elementary education and teach kindergarten through second grade. I have been speaking with a student teacher from Indiana University East, and after comparing our lesson plans, I realized I am a high school student able to complete the same tasks as a college student. I’m happy to say I have been accepted at Ball State.

I would recommend students attend WCC, because they would have the opportunity to meet students from other schools, and you spend so much time with your teachers. They really care about you and want the best for you in school and in life. WCC gives you a better opportunity to explore what you want to do after high school and gives you the nudge to take the next step and not be in the dark when you go to college.”



**KNUTE
RIPPERGER**

**Marion Regional Career
Center, IT Academy, Grade 12**

“I chose the IT academy because I love to work with computers. I enjoy getting to learn not just the physical parts of the computer, but also the web-based components, as well.

After graduation, I will go to college to further my study on computers. I think that my experience at the

Marion Regional Career Center gives me the advantage not only of already learning about the computers, but also how to work along with others in the community. I have an internship two days a week at Afena Credit Union in Marion. Marion Career Center is a great place to learn and practice your skill.”



ETHAN FOWLER

**Whitewater Career Center,
Precision Machine Technology
Grade 12**

“My brother previously was in the electricity program, liked coming to WCC, and got a job right after high school. I knew I would be able to do the same thing, and that is what sparked my interest. I enjoy doing the work out in the shop and the process of taking something from a piece of paper and transforming it into something you can use.

After being in the program, I have been offered a job at Nixon Tool in Richmond where I will be enrolled

in their apprenticeship program that will pay for my associate degree in machine tool technology through Ivy Tech. Eventually, I would like to get my bachelor’s degree in mechanical engineering, maybe at Purdue Polytechnic in Richmond. My experience at WCC has prepared me by giving me direct, hands-on experience. There are some concepts that you cannot learn in a classroom setting. I would recommend WCC to any student because it truly is where opportunities flow.”



DYLAN SHELBY

Past Student of Richmond Career Center

Project Lead the Way, Biomedical Science

"I chose the biomedical program due to my interest in the medical field. Ever since I can remember, I have always wanted to help people and work towards the betterment of humanity as a whole. I was able to develop leadership experiences through our local HOSA chapter (national career and technical student organization), eventually providing me with the opportunity to become the President-Elect.

I have since shifted my focus in life to something a little different: law. I can still accomplish my dream of helping people, and follow my interest in health and science by becoming an attorney specializing

in health law. As a biomedical science student, my coursework covered both biology and medical science, but it also focused on critical thinking, collaboration, and helped me better understand what I wanted in a career.

Life at the Richmond Career Center is fantastic, to say the least. There are so many opportunities for those who wish to develop real-life skills that will help you after graduation! Whether you are interested in biomedical science, engineering, automotive, or learning how to cook, Richmond High School's career center is perfect."

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PROGRAMS AT NEW CASTLE CAREER CENTER

89%

OF MARION REGIONAL CAREER CENTER STUDENTS EARN COLLEGE CREDIT, PASS AN AP EXAM OR GET A CERTIFICATION

52%

OF CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION PATHWAYS STUDENTS STATEWIDE EARN DUAL CREDITS OR A CERTIFICATION

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