



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

For media inquiries, contact:
admin@herawisconsin.org

Regional Education Leaders Form Alliance to Address College Completion, Workforce Development in Southeastern Wisconsin

MILWAUKEE (October 23, 2019) – Southeastern Wisconsin higher education, business and community leaders came together last week at We Energies to formally launch an unprecedented collaborative called the [Higher Education Regional Alliance](#) (HERA). Through the collective force of 18 southeastern Wisconsin public and private, two- and four-year colleges and universities and a network of partner organizations, HERA is dedicated to educating students today to become an innovative and nimble workforce that meets the needs of the region’s industries tomorrow.

The region is at a crossroads. The number of individuals with employer ready degrees and certificates must increase to meet current and future talent needs. Consequently, Wisconsin is facing a very real skills and talent gap that is not going away.

“We realized that our region’s colleges and universities were already having numerous and coinciding conversations about how to address this challenge. So, rather than individually creating new policies and procedures, we developed HERA to implement best practices at scale and serve as a unified, collaborative voice connecting businesses to talent,” said Dr. Mark Mone, chair of HERA and chancellor of UW-Milwaukee.

Together, HERA’s higher education institutions and partner organizations are committed to leveraging their collective strengths and resources. This work focuses on three pillars: addressing college completion, especially in STEM specific fields; aligning, evolving and innovating educational programming; and serving as an essential conduit between regional businesses and talent. Work on these goals is already underway, including:

- **College completion** – Recently, [HERA and the M7 region were selected](#) as one of three (out of 45 nominees) recipients of a \$500,000 grant from Complete College America, a national nonprofit that aims to increase the graduation number and rate of college students. As part of the grant, Complete College America will work with HERA to scale a core set of evidence-based strategies proven to close equity gaps and generate significant gains in college completion rates.
- **Align, evolve and innovate** – To better meet the needs of a rapidly changing economy, one driven by innovation and in which current supply and demand for talent are mismatched, HERA has made it a priority to align and evolve its educational programs. Efforts to graduate more students are often hampered by not knowing if previous credits will apply toward a program of study at a different institution. For an early win, all HERA institutions now have access to a new technology platform, called “Transferology” that provides information to prospective students on how previously completed courses will transfer to a different institution. Transferology will allow the nearly 629,000 Wisconsin adults aged 25 or older, who have completed some college but have no graduate credential, to determine the best

route to a degree where job demand is high. It will also assist those who wish to advance their educational attainment or those seeking career changes to find a pathway to degree completion that is more transparent and efficient. Other strategies in development are increasing the number of stackable credentials (credits for shorter-term courses that lead to an associate or bachelor's degree) available in high need industries.

- **Expand talent bridges** – HERA is working to connect businesses with talent and promote the value of living and working in southeastern Wisconsin. Unfortunately, only 22% of students in the region are participating in networking and professional development programming. Impacting factors can be location of these opportunities, time required to participate and a lack of resources that limits participation. To help expand talent bridges, HERA recently connected and is promoting two new resources for employers and students – *Handshake* and *Purple Briefcase*. These tools, now accessible for employers on the [HERA website](#), will quickly match students with internships, career fairs and job opportunities based on their majors and interests.

“HERA represents more than 150,000 students in southeastern Wisconsin. These students, along with those who have some college but never completed, and those who need retooling, are the key to driving our economy,” said Todd McLees, HERA steering committee member and founder of Pendio Group. “HERA’s strength lies in its understanding of needing to reimagine the higher education ecosystem, and work hand-in-hand with non-profits and businesses to prepare graduates to fill the most difficult-to-fill job openings in the state. While much more work lies ahead, these accomplishments to date are paramount to addressing these critical issues for our region’s future.”

HERA institutions include: Alverno College, Bryant & Stratton College, Cardinal Stritch University, Carroll University, Carthage College, Concordia University, Gateway Technical College, Herzing University, Marquette University, Milwaukee Area Technical College, Milwaukee Institute of Art & Design, Milwaukee School of Engineering, Mount Mary University, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, University of Wisconsin-Parkside, University of Wisconsin-Whitewater, Waukesha County Technical College and Wisconsin Lutheran College. The alliance’s partner organizations and employer consortiums also include: ElevAsian, Employ Milwaukee, Greater Milwaukee Committee, Higher Expectations of Racine, Hispanic Collaborative Network, Hispanic Professionals of Greater Milwaukee, Milwaukee 7 Regional Economic Development Partnership, Milwaukee Succeeds, Milwaukee Urban League, Pendio Group and the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation.

Employers can learn more about recruiting initiatives [here](#). For more information about HERA in general, or to learn how to get involved, please visit <https://www.herawisconsin.org/>.

About HERA

The Higher Education Regional Alliance (HERA) is a talent producing collaboration with 18 southeastern Wisconsin public and private, two- and four-year colleges and universities and a network of partner organizations. We are dedicated to closing achievement gaps and educating students today to become an innovative and nimble workforce that meets the needs of the region’s industries tomorrow. This challenge is too large for any one university or college to solve alone, so we are working together. We know that education impacts more than individual lives; it can change the trajectory of our entire region. For more information, please visit <https://www.herawisconsin.org/>.

###