Ivy Tech supports Ball State's role with Muncie schools

We applaud Ball State University's willingness to help guide the Muncie community forward, as together we seek to reposition the Muncie Community Schools as a leading school corporation for the benefit of our students, families, and employers.

At his inauguration, President Mearns professed that we are “better together.” Muncie, Delaware County, and East Central Indiana will be stronger with a high-performing and financially-solid Muncie Community Schools. Our partnership, along with countless employers, non-profits, and community organizations will work to grow the Muncie Community Schools.

Ivy Tech Community College supports this move and will be an active partner, as we have been, with the Muncie Community Schools and Ball State. There are several reasons why, from the Ivy Tech perspective, this community partnership with Ball State in the lead makes sense. Ball State is committed to preparing teachers, administrators, and staff. They have the expertise to guide the Muncie Community Schools.

As with Ball State, Ivy Tech has been committed to engaging the community to ensure that individuals have opportunities for the brighter future that comes from education and training beyond high school. We are now presented with the chance to enhance a pipeline of students and graduates, from pre-K through graduate school, prepared to serve the community in a broad array of fields. The community benefits, and students benefit.

Beyond a healthy, economically-growing, and vibrant community, there is a need to develop a systematic approach to meeting the workforce needs of Muncie and Delaware County employers. We hear it daily – existing businesses cannot expand without additional employees. And, new businesses are less likely to consider Muncie and Delaware County without adequate numbers of potential employees. Together we have high-demand, high-wage programs that could serve more students. Some of these programs are in areas such as information technology (IT), advanced manufacturing, healthcare, and additional technology areas. And, there are other programs – high-value programs like education – for which the needs outpace the number of students entering and graduating.

We look at the number of open job postings to help us determine which programs that
these programs are short-term, others require associate degrees, bachelor’s degrees, and beyond. The Muncie Community Schools, Ball State, and Ivy Tech can work together to create an intentional pipeline that prepares students for life and great career opportunities.

For students to be successful in college, it is important for students to be prepared for the rigor and demands of college. One of the ways that students prepare for college is to start their college experience while still in high school. More than 375 Muncie Central students get their start through dual credit/dual enrollment, and Early College programs through Ivy Tech and Ball State. Completion of the associate degree or Transfer General Education Core prepares students to transfer seamlessly to Ball State (or other colleges/universities) saving families thousands of dollars each year. The exciting news is that in May, 44 students will graduate from Muncie Central High School with an Associate degree and be well on their way to bachelor’s degrees.

In addition, our strong partnerships with the Muncie Area Career Center leads to students earning Career Certificates, Technical Certificates, and/or associate degrees by the time they graduate from high school, equipping them to go directly into the workplace in many high-demand, high-wage careers, again, saving families thousands of dollars.

According to the Indiana Commission for Higher Education’s most recent College Readiness Report, as many as 42 percent of the Muncie Central High School graduates are not pursuing training or education at a college or university in their first year after leaving high school. Enhancing the partnership between Ball State, Muncie Central High School, and Ivy Tech will focus attention on these recent graduates who don’t have plans for education or training after high school. This focus will help us meet the needs of area employers, increase the number of families earning wages above the statewide median income, and help to create a thriving, vibrant Muncie.

We stand with the community, Mayor Dennis Tyler, the city council, Ball State, employers, and non-profit organizations, to support and grow the Muncie Community Schools. The General Assembly is creating an avenue for us to come together for the benefit of the Muncie community. Together we can create pathways for student success and a stronger Muncie Indiana.

*Sue Ellsperrmann is president of Ivy Tech; Jeff Scott is chancellor, Muncie campus and Andy Bowne is senior vice president and COO of Ivy Tech.*