

Written by Emily Younger

This is an evolution. Economic development in Wichita is changing. We are bringing more high-level and large-scale projects to the region than ever before. The decisions we are making now will impact Wichita for generations to come.

The unprecedented opportunities ahead of us and the strategic work to diversify Wichita's economy took center stage at the Partnership's April Investor Meeting. More than 100 CEOs, business, government and community leaders came together to discuss the billion-dollar investment deals in front of us such as Integra Technologies and how we can capitalize on the region's forward momentum.

"The number of people and companies looking to Wichita compared to even a year ago is remarkable," said Partnership Emeritus Director Scott Schwindaman. "We have so much opportunity."

One of those opportunities is the expansion of Integra. The semiconductor manufacturing company recently announced

plans to invest $2 billion in the Wichita region and hire more than 2,500 people.



Integra Technologies's President and CEO Brett Robinson explains how their products are made and tested.

Integra's President and CEO Brett Robinson joined Partnership Executive Vice President of Economic Development Andrew Nave, WSU Tech President Dr. Sheree Utash and Workforce Alliance of South Central Kansas, Inc. President Keith Lawing for a panel discussion about how the Partnership helped secure funding for the deal and how the proposed expansion will impact the economy and tight-talent pool.

Robinson admitted four other states were in the running for the Integra expansion, however, he chose the Wichita region because of the Partnership, Workforce Alliance, political leadership, Wichita State University and WSU Tech – praising each sector's nimbleness to meet Integra's workforce and training needs through grant applications, unique recruitment methods and specialized training.

"The entire reason we have APEX is because Andrew Nave," added Robinson.

Dr. Sheree Utash said WSU Tech, which has created customized training courses for Integra's future workforce, is prepared to do the same for other businesses and industries.

"We are going to be just as responsive to all of you as we build this pipeline for Integra," promised Dr. Utash.

"What we do for Integra benefits all industries," added Lawing whose team has helped with Integra's recruitment efforts. "We build our workforce in our key sectors. Integra is a great compliment to that."

"Driving depth within industry sectors such as advanced manufacturing is an evolution of our economy," said Nave. "It's evolving into that next thing that is going to create jobs the next 30 to 40 years from now."

Recruiting and retaining talent for the next 30 to 40 years is critical. Panelists pointed to the Partnership's Talent Roadmap as an invaluable guide to growing the region's future workforce, adding with Industry 4.0 we are building training programs for jobs other cities around the nation don't know will exist in the coming years.

"We are a global city, a global economy. We are building the ecosystem to support our current and evolving industries. We

have a front-row seat to this future-driven opportunity to position the Wichita region for success," said Partnership President Jeff Fluhr. "We ALL build Wichita."



WSU Tech President Dr. Sheree Utash discusses the importance of Wichita's future workforce.

