



Business-Ivy Tech Partnerships Benefit Employees

Tuition deferral, ease of enrollment, and close connections to staff at Ivy Tech Community College Bloomington make the Achieve Your Degree program beneficial in the eyes of Singota Solutions employee Travis Hudson. The fact that Ivy Tech and area businesses have partnered to offer the Achieve Your Degree program means even more to him. “I know that not only Ivy Tech, but my company, is investing in my future,” says Hudson, 40, a process engineer and project manager. “The faith they have that I will finish my degree already has opened some opportunities for advancement.”

Hudson has worked at Singota for 10 years and has been taking Ivy Tech classes for five. Now, through Ivy Tech’s Achieve Your Degree program, he is able to continue his education with no upfront cost. He looks forward to the day he will complete his associate degree in business administration. “It will give me an additional skill set and make me well-rounded in my job,” he says.

Hudson is among 237 Bloomington-area employees taking advantage of Achieve Your Degree, a statewide Ivy Tech program. In contrast to tuition reimbursement programs that many

employers already offer, Achieve Your Degree is a tuition deferral program that allows working adults to earn college credentials with no upfront cost.

Ivy Tech assists students with the college and financial aid application process and defers billing until the end of the semester, ensuring students can get all of the financial aid for which they qualify. Employers pay tuition costs, after other financial aid is obtained, and sometimes pay for books and other fees. Ivy Tech will come to employers’ sites to explain the program, and hosts workshops to advise students and help them enroll.



Melanie Lewis and Travis Hudson.

In addition to Singota, local employers Cook Group, Old National Bank, and German American have partnered with Ivy Tech Bloomington to offer Achieve Your Degree. Statewide, Ivy Tech is partnered with 140 companies, and Ivy Tech Bloomington hopes to increase the number of local partnerships.

Employers customize Achieve Your Degree by selecting degree programs related to their company's needs, allowing employees to earn degrees that will help them advance into specific roles within the company or gain skills needed in their current job.



Stephanie Sparks.
Photos by Martin Boling

At Singota, employees welcomed the opportunity, says Melanie Lewis, human resources manager. Singota employees can take Ivy Tech classes in areas including information technology, engineering technology, business, accounting, supply chain management, and biotechnology.

"It's an opportunity for employees to continue their education and further their careers," Lewis says. "We encourage all employees to advance in their careers, whether it is at Ivy Tech or somewhere else."

Singota (formerly BioConvergence), a contract development and manufacturing organization providing services to the pharmaceutical industry, has had a policy of reimbursing employees half the tuition for college classes. Lewis says Ivy Tech's Achieve Your Degree program is even more helpful because students don't have to pay anything up front and they get support with admissions and financial aid.

Hudson, who takes courses online, appreciates the delayed half-cost tuition and personalized help from Ivy Tech. "The program gives me more of a feeling there is a team and I have an individual I can reach out to at any time via phone calls and email," he says. "Having that contact and person available is a huge benefit."

Stephanie Sparks, talent development manager for Cook Pharmica, says the company also sees major benefits for its employees. Cook Group, including Cook Pharmica, began the Achieve Your Degree

partnership with Ivy Tech in the fall of 2016 and offers employees options to enroll in 10 degree programs. Building on a long-standing partnership with Ivy Tech, the program has 45 employees enrolled. They are particularly attracted to biotechnology, business administration, and supply chain management and logistics degrees, and certificate programs, Sparks says.

"The biotechnology program is specific to what we're doing in the industry," she adds. "It's really giving our biotechnology employees a broader knowledge of what goes on in the pharma world."

Employees taking classes are sometimes focused on expanding knowledge of current roles in the company, but, most often, they seek career growth, Sparks explains. She says it's also beneficial that employees can earn certificates before finishing associate degrees, and that they can use associate degrees as stepping stones to bachelor's degrees at other institutions.

"We're promoting an environment of growth and development of our employees," Sparks says. "Ivy Tech is a local opportunity for them continue their education in order to build their knowledge and skills."

For more information, visit ivytech.edu/achieveyourdegree. • *Barb Berggoetz*

Employers:

To partner with Ivy Tech to offer the Achieve Your Degree tuition deferral program to your employees, email Jessica Duncan at jduncan71@ivytech.edu, or call (812) 330-6349.



(812) 330-6349
ivytech.edu/achieveyourdegree