

TAKING BUSINESS TO SCHOOL:

GATEWAY TECHNICAL COLLEGE AND SC JOHNSON



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Partnership Catalyst

Gateway Technical College and SC Johnson are two institutions that have called Racine, Wisconsin, home for more than 100 years. Both institutions have a deep commitment to supporting and strengthening their community – Gateway through providing education and training opportunities to residents of Racine and its surrounding counties, and SC Johnson through its corporate values that include a focus on building strong communities in the locations where it operates around the globe, including its global headquarters in Racine.

In 2005, Gateway's President and CEO, Bryan Albrecht, met with business leaders to understand their employment needs and training requirements. The region is home to a strong advanced manufacturing sector; employers needed to hire a large number of CNC machinists, yet they faced the challenge of a shrinking talent pipeline for advanced manufacturing workers. Employers needed to hire trained workers more quickly than they could be prepared by a traditional academic program. Employers expressed an interest in a shorter-term training program that could train workers with the basic skills and competencies they would need to work in CNC machining, getting them on the job much more quickly. In response to this feedback, Gateway began developing its boot camp training model, which compressed the critical education and training into a 15-week intensive program.

Following the Great Recession, Gateway recognized that the boot camp model could be an effective way to help the Racine community address its high rate of unemployment. Unemployed and underemployed individuals living in the Racine community could participate in the boot camp program and train for a new career in a high-demand occupation that pays family-sustaining wages. However, Gateway also knew that unemployed and underemployed individuals faced a number of challenges that could make it harder for them to successfully complete a training program, so Gateway incorporated financial assistance and other supportive services into the boot camp model. While these supports would increase students' ability to complete the program and successfully enter the workforce, the services also increased the total cost of offering the program.



Gateway President Albrecht approached SC Johnson about supporting the boot camp model, knowing it was well-aligned with the company's commitment to strengthening the community of Racine. SC Johnson committed to funding the boot camp model, including covering tuition, fees and books for students, as well as the cost of the additional supportive services that were critical to ensuring students' success. SC Johnson funded the model because it strengthened the Racine community in several ways: Gateway was preparing workers for an in-demand occupation in the region; employers were able to hire workers more quickly because of the compressed timeline; and unemployed and underemployed individuals were able to quickly retrain, reenter the workforce, and earn wages that could support their families. "The SC Johnson boot camp is so much more than a training program; it represents

Creating Strong Business Partnerships

For more information on creating strong business partnerships, see the "Business and Community Partnerships" element of ACTE's *Quality CTE Program of Study Framework* at <https://www.acteonline.org/professional-development/high-quality-cte-tools/>.



a commitment to accelerating the dreams of everyday citizens to earn family sustaining jobs that build our community," said Albrecht.

The boot camp in CNC machining was a great success, and Gateway expanded the model to other locally in-demand industries including healthcare, telecommunications, welding, IT, and more. More than 750 individuals completed boot camps; CNC boot camp graduates had a 93% job placement rate, and graduates of boot camps in other fields had an 80% job placement rate following program completion. SC Johnson provided funding for the boot camp model from 2010-2017, and Gateway continues to offer the boot camp model today in response to local employment needs.

Over time, the relationship between Gateway and SC Johnson expanded and the two institutions partnered to develop additional programs to address other challenges in the Racine community. SC Johnson supported development of a new, state-of-the-art advanced manufacturing training facility at Gateway; training programs for incumbent workers; and retraining programs for individuals whose jobs were impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Most recently, SC Johnson recognized that women, students of color and low-income students were not entering STEM fields at nearly the rate of their counterparts. The company worked with Gateway to develop the STEM Scholars Pathway program to help them complete their education and enter STEM careers; the program will support 180 students over the next 10 years. All these programs highlight the shared commitment of Gateway Technical College and SC Johnson to supporting long-term positive impact for the community of Racine and its residents. "Removing barriers to economic mobility for underserved people is core to our mission at SC Johnson," said Alan VanderMolen, Chief Communications Officer at SC Johnson. "We are pleased to be able to support Gateway's efforts to close the skills gap and create long-term career opportunities in high-demand fields."

Program Overview

Gateway designed its boot camp model as an intensive training program that prepares individuals with the critical knowledge and skills they need to enter high-demand occupations in the Racine area. In order to cover the necessary content within the compressed timeline, the program requires students to participate in classes for 40 hours each week, plus additional time studying outside the classroom. The first few weeks of each boot camp program focus on classroom-based training; once students learn foundational academic content, they move into hands-on training

VOICES FROM THE FIELD

Gateway Technical College President Bryan Albrecht has played a central role in sustaining and deepening the partnership with SC Johnson during his tenure, as well as with other leading employers in the Racine community. Albrecht has spent 19 years at Gateway, including serving as its President and CEO for the last 16 years, and building and strengthening business-education partnerships has always been part of his job.

Albrecht offers three pieces of advice to CTE leaders interested in strengthening business-education partnerships. First, identify local or regional businesses that have a strong commitment to strengthening the community and recognize the importance of education in achieving this goal. These businesses make excellent partners for education and training initiatives – whether they are major global corporations like SC Johnson, or small local companies.

Second, take a long-term approach to partnerships. Albrecht says it can take years of developing a relationship with a business partner before funding a major, long-term project. Albrecht began developing Gateway's relationship with SC Johnson and other partners by understanding their mission and values as well as employment needs; the first project in partnership with a business often helps the employer address a skill gap or hiring need. After building that foundational relationship, Albrecht can then work with business partners to develop projects that allow the educational institution and business to work together to address broader community needs.

Finally, collaborate with business partners to develop projects. Albrecht and his key contacts at SC Johnson are in regular communication about potential programs and initiatives; sometimes Albrecht initiates an idea, while other times an idea comes from SC Johnson. No matter where a concept begins, Albrecht and SC Johnson work together to design a program that addresses both institutions' priorities. "Our partnerships rarely happen from one meeting to making a [funding] request," says Albrecht. "It's all about establishing a sustaining focus on making sure that whatever we do together has the outcomes that we're looking for."

and technical skill development. Boot camp graduates earn industry-recognized certifications that demonstrate the knowledge and skills they have gained.

The boot camp structure is rigorous with high expectations for students; they are required to earn a C or higher in all their classes, and if they miss more than three classes or are late to class more than three times, they are dismissed from the program. These high expectations ensure students are learning all the required academic, technical and employability skills they need to be successful in the workplace. Joseph Ruhle completed a CNC boot camp at Gateway; he found the instruction rigorous but rewarding, and he shared that boot camp prepared him well for his future career. "I want to go to the top – this is a career I can spend the rest of my life in," he said.

Learn more about ACTE's
*Coalition for Workforce
Development Through CTE,*
which is addressing the skills gap challenge,
at <https://www.acteonline.org/partners/wfd-cte/>.



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Gateway and SC Johnson created the boot camp model in response to employer needs for shorter-term training programs, and the model continues to engage local employers in many different ways. Employers provide input on program curriculum to ensure that boot camp classes help students develop the knowledge and skills they need to enter and be successful on the job. In addition, employer partners participate in mock interview sessions that are held at the end of each boot camp program. Employers interview all the boot camp students and share candid feedback to help students improve their interviewing skills. Many employers also hire boot camp graduates immediately after they complete the program, recognizing that the boot camp program serves as a strong source of talent to meet their hiring needs.

The STEM Scholars Pathway program is the newest program launched by Gateway and SC Johnson along with several other partners; the program supports students to complete an associate degree in a STEM field at Gateway, then transfer to a partner four-year institution to complete a bachelor's degree. The first cohort of STEM Scholars began classes at Gateway in fall 2021. The program focuses on female students, students of color, and students from low-income families, recognizing that these groups of students often face greater challenges entering and completing STEM education programs. SC Johnson had previously supported STEM education initiatives in secondary schools but recognized the lifelong economic impact of a bachelor's degree in STEM fields, so the company was eager to partner with Gateway to design a partnership that would allow students underrepresented in STEM fields to pursue a high-value STEM education.

The program is a partnership between Gateway Technical College, Racine Unified School District, Milwaukee School of Engineering, Carthage College, and Concordia University Wisconsin. The program is initially open to high school students in the Racine Unified School District in their senior year. They complete an associate degree at Gateway in a STEM pathway with strong job opportunities in the Racine community; current eligible pathways include architectural-structural engineering technician, electrical engineering technology, and five IT pathways (cybersecurity, data analytics, network specialist, software developer, and web software developer). Students then transfer to a partner four-year institution to complete an eligible bachelor's degree program. Credits transfer seamlessly from Gateway to the four-year partner and students enter the bachelor's degree program as a junior.

In addition to providing full financial support for four years of tuition, fees and books, the STEM Scholars Pathway program also includes case management, mentoring and other supportive services to help students complete their education. When students enroll at Gateway, they are paired with a STEM Scholars Coordinator who provides case management and helps students navigate their college experience; that support continues after the student transfers to complete their bachelor's degree. STEM Scholars also participate in a summer bridge program



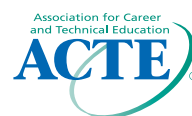
that orients them to Gateway and the STEM Scholars program, along with regular academic and career planning workshops and cohort-building activities.

Elements of Program Success

- **Develop Programs Informed by Employer and Community**
Needs: Consider the needs of your community broadly and identify challenges facing employers and residents. Partner with employers and other community institutions to design programs that will make a long-term positive impact on your community.
- **Engage Industry in Preparing Students for Future Workforce**
Demand and Skills: Ask business partners to identify the knowledge and skills they will need in the future and incorporate these into CTE programs. This could include industry-recognized credentials, strong employability skills, or a pathway to a bachelor's degree.
- **Identify Multiple Ways for Businesses to Make Tangible Contributions:** Industry can support CTE programs in many different ways, including reviewing program curriculum, participating in mock interviews with students, and contributing funds to support tuition and supportive services. Work with your business partners to identify the types of involvement that work best for them.

Learn More

- Gateway Technical College: <https://www.gtc.edu/>
- Gateway STEM Scholars: <https://www.gtc.edu/admissions/sc-johnson-stem-scholars-pathway>
- SC Johnson: <https://www.scjohnson.com/en>



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