The June Investor Meeting was held at Wichita Public Schools and WSU Tech's Future Ready Center.

By Emily Younger

The workforce and the future of work are evolving. Talent is redefining expectations, emphasizing work-life balance, embracing technology and promoting diversity and inclusion. To successfully build Wichita for generations to come it's imperative, we as a collective, cultivate a community ready to work.

The Partnership's June Investor Meeting highlighted the region's career readiness and how employers and educators can work together to build the workforce of the future.

Wichita State University President Dr. Rick Muma, along with keynote speaker, USD 259 Executive Director of College and Career Readiness and Incoming Superintendent Kelly Bielefeld, spoke in depth about student development, digital transformation and applied learning.

Wichita State University President Dr. Rick Muma and Partnership President Jeff Fluhr discuss the Wichita Biomedical Campus.

Dr. Muma shared WSU has invested in more new programs in the last 10 years than it has in the last 50 years, signaling a major shift in education in the digital world.

During a Q&A session with Partnership President Jeff Fluhr, Dr. Muma encouraged those in attendance to plan and dream big. He said the university's aspiration coupled with strategic planning is helping to make the Wichita Biomedical Campus, the largest capital investment in downtown Wichita's history, a reality.

"I am so proud of what we are doing as a community to move this project forward," said Dr. Muma. "I see the biomedical campus as an extension of what we are already doing on the Innovation Campus at WSU."

USD 259 Executive Director of College and Career Readiness and Incoming Superintendent Kelly Bielefeld

Similarly, Wichita Public Schools and WSU Tech recently graduated their first class from the Future Ready Center. The cutting-edge facility, the first of three, serves as a catalyst for nurturing the future manufacturing workforce of Wichita. It equips students with hands-on learning opportunities that directly translate into high-demand jobs. The next two Future Ready Centers, slated to open soon, will focus on healthcare and information technology.

Highlighting the partnership between the business community and education, Bielefeld emphasized the crucial role they play in preparing and inspiring the next generation of the workforce.

"It's a long game. We must invest at every age level, so kids see where they fit in our community and in our economy," Bielefeld told the audience.

He provided the following six examples of how industry can actively engage with students to help build a career-ready community.

- Classroom speakers
- Company Tours
- Job Shadowing
- Advisory Meetings
- Internships: School and Summer
- Youth Employment

Before the meeting, Spirit AeroSystems' interns learned how to build their own toolboxes at the Future Ready Center.