

News Release

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ACT's College and Career Readiness awards honor four Wisconsin recipients

MADISON — The third annual ACT College and Career Readiness Campaign celebrates the achievements of four Wisconsin nominees demonstrating success in preparing for education, careers, and beyond.

They are: **OEM Fabricators Inc.** in Woodville; **Wisconsin Indianhead Technical College**, headquartered in Shell Lake; **Madison Memorial High School**; and **Jason R. Donald** of Washington Park High School in Racine. Initiated by ACT to celebrate achievement and create awareness of the goal of college and career readiness, the campaign recognizes efforts by an employer, community college, high school, and high school student.

“Wisconsin’s nominees are great examples of the collaborative efforts to transition students from high school and equip them for success in further education and the workforce,” said State Superintendent Tony Evers. “These initiatives demonstrate a focus on the importance of college and career readiness to ensure the future is bright for Wisconsin communities and industries.”

Wisconsin is among 30 states participating in the third year of ACT’s College and Career Readiness Campaign. Together, ACT and Wisconsin identified award nominees in four categories: an employer to recognize “Workplace Success,” a community college to recognize “Career Preparedness,” a high school to recognize “College and Career Transition,” and a student to recognize “Student Readiness.”

“We are excited to welcome so many new states to our campaign this year,” said Scott Montgomery, ACT vice president for policy, advocacy, and government relations. “Highlighting each state’s consistent and successful effort will provide motivation and inspiration to other students, along with education and workplace leaders, to follow in their footsteps in making college and career success a reality for more individuals in their state.”

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Madison Memorial High School is among four semifinalists for the national College and Career Transition award. A selection committee of national education and workforce development leaders will select one award winner in each of the four categories to be honored at ACT's National Gala for College and Career Readiness on June 9 in Washington, D.C.

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NOTES: A description of each of Wisconsin's ACT College and Career Readiness nominees follows. A recognition event will take place on May 14 in Madison. More information about this event will follow. This news release is available electronically at http://dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/news-release/dpinr2015_43.pdf.

ACT College and Career Readiness Campaign

Wisconsin Nominees – 2015

Workplace Success Award

OEM Fabricators Inc. is a privately held contract manufacturer providing advanced steel fabrication services for Original Equipment Manufacturers. OEM was founded in 1986 and employs 489 Team Members in its four Wisconsin facilities in Woodville, Neillsville, Baldwin, and Phillips. The company serves a broad customer base in domestic and global markets including oil and gas, transportation, mining, and construction.

To attract highly skilled and qualified candidates, OEM offers internships and recruits from Wisconsin universities and technical colleges. For all employees, OEM offers many avenues for career advancement and is committed to mentoring and training programs designed to help them acquire new skills. Additionally, OEM offers a tuition reimbursement program established to encourage continuing education and professional development for its employees.

OEM works closely with Chippewa Valley Technical College, Wisconsin Indianhead Technical College, and Northwestern Wisconsin Manufacturing Outreach Center to implement targeted training programs for employees. Partnerships are also in place with area high schools. OEM supports the Baldwin-Woodville High School technical education program by providing internship opportunities, four annual scholarships, and donated welding supplies. OEM also donates welding supplies and contracts projects with Cardinal Manufacturing, the Eleva-Strum High School student-run machine shop. Currently, OEM is collaborating with Wisconsin Indianhead Technical College and seven school districts to create the Dual Enrollment Welding Academy, which will offer 16 high school seniors the opportunity to earn dual high school and college credit.

Committed to community support, OEM encourages and celebrates employee involvement. Employees are allowed time during the work day to participate in community-based organizations. OEM makes charitable donations guided by a policy that focuses on projects and programs that help children and families achieve success. One of OEM's longstanding beneficiaries is the Family Resource Center St. Croix Valley, whose mission is to strengthen children, families, and communities by offering education, resources, and support. OEM provides monthly financial support, and many employees have served on its board. OEM also gives back to the community through charitable donations to the United Way's Success By 6 early childhood initiative and local food pantries.

Career Preparedness Award

Wisconsin Indianhead Technical College (WITC) uses a multi-faceted approach to transition students from college into careers. WITC provides a number of career assessments and career preparation programs, including an online career assessment, career seminars with a career specialist, and career counseling. Students in nearby districts have the opportunity to gain awareness of program opportunities at WITC through career presentations and career fairs offered at middle schools and high schools.

WITC is part of the Northwest Wisconsin Career Prep and School to Work Consortium consisting of members from local business and industry, school districts, and the three local Cooperative Educational Service Agencies. Activities implemented by this consortium include occupational exploration and hands-on activities for high school students and development of articulation agreements with high schools. Activities and programs that provide career exploration opportunities for specific occupations include the Manufacturing Revealed event featuring more than 40 participating manufacturers and the Diva Tech event focusing on non-traditional occupations for women.

In 2014, WITC partnered with 139 companies to serve 5,787 students through contracted instruction. Contracted instruction allows the college to provide hands-on technical and professional training both at WITC and at company sites to increase existing workers' knowledge and skill levels. Coursework is customized, so employers are able to develop the training around their specific needs. Employers also influence WITC's curriculum through their participation on more than 70 advisory committees, which help ensure that curriculum is aligned with the skills needed in the workforce.

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The college has earned numerous awards and recognitions. WITC was named the seventh (2007), sixth (2010), and fourth (2013) best two-year college in the nation by *Washington Monthly* magazine. Other accolades include being named one of the top 100 online colleges for the 2014 academic year by BestColleges.com and one of the top 25 two-year public colleges by Bankrate.com.

College and Career Transition Award

James Madison Memorial High School is being recognized as one of four semifinalists for the national College and Career Transition Award. The school works to ensure the career and college readiness of every student through use of a multi-tiered system of supports. This includes an array of tutoring and mentoring programs, such as an after-school study center where teachers stay to assist students with homework. It also has an action team focused on increasing access to and participation in advanced, honors and Advanced Placement (AP) coursework for students in underrepresented groups and a growing Advancement via Individual Determination (AVID) program across grades nine through 12.

As a large urban high school, Memorial serves a diverse racial and socioeconomic student population including 48 percent students of color and 35 percent students of low-income families. In the 2013-14 school year, the AVID program, focusing on the college and career readiness of underrepresented groups, achieved a 0.46 increase in GPA and a 32 percent increase in participation in AP and honors course enrollment for African American AVID students, relative to a comparison group not in the program.

Memorial High School offers an extensive array of student leadership activities, including more than 23 Wisconsin Interscholastic Athletic Association sanctioned sports and 75 student clubs, the largest being Spartan Youth Service organization made up of more than 200 students focused on giving back to the school community. There is a large, diverse and active student government and a team of upperclassmen Link Crew leaders charged with helping all incoming freshmen successfully transition into their high school experience. Additionally, there is a diverse Student Voice group that meets weekly with the school's head principal to problem solve issues of school culture and climate, seeking to make sure every student has a valuable experience.

Memorial offers 19 AP courses and last year had 403 different students take 758 exams, with 86 percent of students earning a score of three or higher. One senior was recognized as an AP Scholar for the state of Wisconsin taking 18 exams and receiving a score of either four or five on each. This year, the school has 16 National Merit Finalists, one National Achievement Finalist, four Presidential Scholar candidates and one Presidential Scholar Semifinalist, and a student chosen to represent Wisconsin in the U.S. Senate Youth Program in Washington, D.C.

Student Readiness Award

For Jason R. Donald, academic achievement and college preparation have been balanced with his strong commitment to giving back to the community and being a leader and role model for younger students. He is involved in numerous extracurricular activities and community-service organizations. Some of his experiences include mentoring freshmen through the school's Link Crew Program, teaching character lessons to elementary students through Positive Impact, and working for a nonprofit agency that provides services to individuals with disabilities. He has earned more than 180 service hours through his volunteer role as an after-school supervisor for a local elementary school.

Donald has taken academically rigorous courses throughout high school, including AP courses in preparation to attend college. He is accepted into Carroll University's 3+2 Program in Waukesha, where he will pursue a degree in software engineering and earn his bachelor's and master's degrees in five years. He is the oldest of eight children and will be the first member of his family to attend college.