

# WEEKEND WAVE

10-21-16



## Friday Economic Roundup

### WMU promises benefit to local business community

By ANNE EASKER Staff Writer Charlotte Sun

Faculty from Western Michigan University's supply chain management program met with local business leaders Monday to discuss the classes they plan to bring to the area, pending regional accreditation.

The research university received approval from the state of Florida to operate in the state last May and will begin offering its first classes in fall 2017, beginning with its aviation program at the Punta Gorda Airport. In addition to aviation and supply chain management, the university plans to bring additional behavioral and environmental science

programs. The full details of the degree programs offered will be released once accreditation is received from the Higher Learning Commission.

Robert Reck, director of the Center for Integrated Supply Chain Management, gave an overview of the plans for the Florida branch of the program, which university officials hope to tailor to meet community needs. WMU's program is currently ranked fifth nationally.

Classes will be geared toward two types of students - those entering or already working in supply chain management who hope to improve skills in a particular area and those hoping to become managers and leaders in the field. With those two groups in mind, the university will offer classes individually for students to pick and choose from, with no cohort system or prerequisites. Students completing five of these individual courses can earn a certificate in supply chain management. After the certificate, anyone wanting to become a manager or leader can take six additional courses for a Masters of Science degree in supply chain management.

Reck said the program will be flexible in both delivery and curriculum, to work with the schedules and commitments of working adults. Some coursework may be online, while some will be face-to-face at Florida SouthWestern State College's Charlotte Campus. Students working for an organization or business will do projects gathering data and solving real problems within their organization. Reck said students in Michigan have presented those projects to their employers and saved the company \$5,000 to \$10,000.

Reck was joined by two other faculty, Professors Marcel Zondag and Kuanchin Chen. Zondag's research focuses on the marketing and supply aspects of shopper marketing, globalization of the consumer goods industry, and in-store execution issues, described as the "last 50 yards" of the supply chain. Chen is a professor of Computer Information Systems. He studies big data, as well as behavior as a reaction triggered by a series of conceptual perceptions.

All three professors said the business concepts they teach and research can be applied across many industries, from food and packaged goods to health care and the industrial supply chain. Increasing the efficiency of businesses in the area will decrease costs and increase quality of life. The university is currently trying to move toward the specifics of the types of classes required to meet area needs.

Local business leaders are excited about the new opportunities the university will bring. Tim Lucas, a business professor at Florida SouthWestern State University, hopes to partner with WMU to share best practices and increase the quality of both school's programs.

Heather Rideout, a real estate consultant for KW Commercial, said she consults with businesses hoping to move or expand into the area, collecting data on whether the area's demographics will support the business. She believes the addition of WMU will attract many new businesses to the area.

"This is going to change our whole community," Rideout said.

This afternoon, representatives of WMU and FSW will celebrate their alliance at the Charlotte County campus, with the presidents of both universities speaking on the benefits for the two schools. Additional speakers include Denis Wright, FSW regional vice president for economic development and Bill Truex, chairman of the Charlotte County Commission.

"It is important for Charlotte County to have a partner willing to help create access to higher education programs," Truex said. "By FSW and WMU coming together, we now have an engine in place to keep talent here in the region while at the same time being able to customize educational programs needed right here in Florida's West Coast."

## Universities celebrate Florida-Michigan alliance

By ANNE EASKER Staff Writer Charlotte Sun

Western Michigan University unveiled a new sign across from Florida SouthWestern State College's sign on Airport Road in Punta Gorda as the two schools announced their alliance at a celebration Tuesday.

The presidents of both universities and other leaders spoke on the benefits of the union to the students, local businesses and community.

"This is a day of celebration that shows how three organizations can join together, and the community is the ultimate winner," said Denis Wright, FSW regional vice president for economic development, as he introduced representatives of FSW, WMU and Charlotte County government.

WMU President John M. Dunn said that while Florida and Michigan are some 1,400 miles apart, there's an affinity between them that is hard not to notice. They are the two major

peninsulas of the United States, both surrounded by important water resources.

Florida feels like home," Dunn said.

Through WMU's partnership with FSW, students of both schools will have more research opportunities. WMU has established the nation's first freshwater science and sustainability program, and researchers in its geoscience program study the algal blooms that have had huge effects on Florida in recent years.

As the county with the second-oldest average population in the United States, Charlotte County provides many opportunities for wellness and positive aging programs, such as vision therapy for macular degeneration, music therapy and geriatric behavior research.

Of course, aviation is what helped spur the relationship: WMU will begin next fall with about 50 students flying out of the Punta Gorda Airport. Dunn said Florida offers the one thing aviation students need for maximum efficiency - good weather.

"We expect students here to boost their flight hours, and we expect to see incredible success," he said.

FSW president Jeff Albritten said the college is looking into adding avionics to its business and technology program, and said WMU's presence will only increase FSW's exposure, bringing new educational opportunities and economic development to the area.

Charlotte County Commissioner Bill Truex also spoke on his hopes for the partnership, saying the county commissioners frequently talk about how Charlotte County, although small, has huge potential, seen in recent projects such as Babcock Ranch, the Florida Power & Light solar farm, and now this alliance.

What is currently lacking is workforce. Truex said many businesses seriously consider Charlotte County, but when they dig into the available workforce, they don't find what they need. Together, FSW and WMU can help train up and retain the skilled workforce needed for the area's economic development, he added.

"Construction management, supply chain management, and health and wellness programs will elevate our community," Truex said. "We are committed to partnering and becoming the community we aspire to be together."

WMU's aviation program hopes to recruit about 50 students for fall 2017. A class of physician assistants will likely begin in January, with additional health and environmental science programs following. A supply chain management program will offer standalone classes, as well as a certificate and master's degree.

Florida's Commission for Independent Education approved two provisional licenses for Western Michigan University to offer academic programs in Florida earlier this year. Regional accreditation from the Higher Learning Commission is still pending. Once the final approval is obtained, WMU and FSW will be able to release more details regarding the degree programs that will be offered.

## Halfacre Constructing Dental Care Alliance Building

Halfacre Construction Company is constructing the latest corporate building for Dental Care Alliance in Lakewood Ranch. The 12,000-square-foot, two-story building will house offices for corporate employees of the dental support organization, which has more than 245 dental practices in 13 states. Construction on the new corporate building began in mid-October with completion scheduled for June 2017. The building marks the first time Halfacre Construction and Dental Care Alliance have partnered on a construction project.

## FLORIDA ECONOMIC NEWS

- Minimum wage up 5 cents in Florida ([WPLG](#))
- Small business optimism growing in Florida ([Orlando Sentinel](#))
- IKEA to break ground for fifth Florida store in Jacksonville ([Action News Jax](#))

- Florida adds 23,000 jobs in September while unemployment rate is unchanged ([AP](#))
- Greater Fort Lauderdale Alliance touts 20 company relocations ([South Florida Business Journal](#))

## **ENTREPRENEUR NEWS**

- Mentors and advisors are invaluable business heroes ([Ron Stein](#))
- EpiPen demonstrates what is wrong with big business ([Jerry Osteryoung](#))

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