



PRESIDENT'S PERSPECTIVE

BY STAN LIBERTY

President, Kettering University

In my last President's "Perspective" column, I mentioned that "interest in science and engineering among our nation's youth has been declining for some time now." Data contained in the annual ACT Reports over the past few years support this observation. The ACT test is taken by more than 1 million college bound high school seniors in the United States each year and the test results are used extensively by Midwest institutions, including Kettering, as one of the factors in admission decisions. When high school seniors take the ACT test they are also asked to indicate their interests in various career fields. The following tables contain figures on the number of national and Michigan ACT test takers who indicated interests in engineering and/or science from 2000 through 2005.

National ACT Test Takers – Indication of Interest in Engineering and/or Science*					
Year	No. of National ACT Test Takers	No. of Students Indicating Engineering	% Indicating Engineering	No. of Students Indicating Science	% of Students Indicating Science
2005	1,186,251	45,049	3.80	48,051	4.05
2004	1,171,460	48,438	4.13	47,806	4.08
2003	1,175,059	51,445	4.38	46,489	3.96
2002	1,116,082	52,194	4.68	44,242	3.96
2001	1,069,772	54,175	5.06	46,041	4.30
2000	1,065,138	61,648	5.79	48,897	4.59

Michigan ACT Test Takers – Indication of Interest in Engineering and/or Science*					
Year	No. of National ACT Test Takers	No. of Students Indicating Engineering	% Indicating Engineering	No. of Students Indicating Science	% of Students Indicating Science
2005	74,307	3,735	5.03	2,711	3.65
2004	73,434	4,019	5.47	2,742	3.73
2003	75,127	4,400	5.86	2,804	3.73
2002	71,882	4,617	6.42	2,778	3.86
2001	72,450	4,952	6.84	2,881	3.98
2000	73,918	5,991	8.10	3,201	4.33

*Sources: 2000 – 2005 High School Graduating Class National Reports from ACT

Note that the number of ACT test takers indicating interest in engineering has monotonically declined both in Michigan and the nation, despite the increase in the number of test takers in both. Although the trend in interest in science is much flatter, with some fluctuation, the number of ACT test takers indicating interest in science is still lower in 2005 than it was in 2000 both in Michigan and the Nation.

If interest in science and engineering has not been developed by the time a young person has entered high school, there is little chance it will surface later. Consequently, there are a number of efforts across the nation to provide young students with structured experiences that can facilitate the development of these interests. Hopefully, these programs will make a difference in the long run and several institutions of

higher education, including Kettering, are making contributions to these efforts. Although the trends in the above figures may support pessimistic attitudes about this nation's ability to compete in the global marketplace, optimistic folks see tremendous opportunity for those who choose to prepare for and enter engineering and scientific fields. All of us, who are optimistic that this nation will remain competitive in the new global economy, have to do a better job of presenting this positive perspective to young people, their parents, their teachers and their counselors. Effective articulation of this perspective will go a long way toward ensuring that our nation has an adequate supply of innovators to compete in the current economic era called the "knowledge economy." In this regard, the message regarding competitiveness in President Bush's recent State of The Union address was most welcome.

Here in Genesee County, there is a growing focus on building a new economy for the region. The new economic development organization leading this effort is the



Genesee Regional Chamber of Commerce (GRCC) and Kettering is a member of the GRCC along with its local partner institutions of higher education. The chief executive officers of the four major institutions of higher education in Flint are committing our institutions to this effort. We recently held a press conference at Kettering in which we unveiled a new billboard message, located on I-75 in Flint, demonstrating our commitment to this new economy and to collaborate in the effort whenever and wherever possible.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "S. R. Liberty".

