



MONROE COUNTY  
COMMUNITY COLLEGE

enriching lives

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**Press Release**

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**PANEL EXPLORES CONCEPTS TO SPUR MORE  
ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN MONROE COUNTY**

*Countywide Entrepreneurship Competition to be Launched this Year*

MONROE, Mich. – Monroe County Community College hosted a roundtable discussion with banking and other corporate executives, entrepreneurs, economic development professionals, and college faculty and administrators Wednesday night in the La-Z-Boy Center to strategize how the community can work together to nurture a more entrepreneurial and creative culture.

MCCC President Dr. Kojo Quartey convened the panel and led the discussion.

“I believe MCCC shouldn’t only be training people to go to work – we must also give people the tools to create opportunities for themselves and others,” said Quartey.

“I want our students to leave here with a credential of economic value – one that challenges and enables them to be innovative and think creatively. Whether they’re starting a business or initiating a new idea within an existing business, both require creativity and an entrepreneurial spirit.”

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The panel discussed a number of topics at length, including the importance of mentorships, availability and assistance with start-up capital, college-level curriculum concepts that could form the foundation of academic courses or programs at MCCC, and the possibility of establishing a business incubator in Monroe County.

Panel participants included **Jeff Beamsley**, director, partner programs, Covisint Inc.; **Jeff Banker**, managing director, Catalyst CEO Group, and CEO-in-residence, Spartan Innovations; **Doug Chaffin**, president and CEO, Monroe Bank & Trust; **Dr. Sanjib Chowdhury**, director, Eastern Michigan University Center for Entrepreneurship; **John Joy**, dean, Division of Corporate and Community Services, MCCC; **Paul Knollman**, dean, Business Division, MCCC; **Tim Lake**, president and CEO, Monroe County Business Development Corporation; **Dr. Stephen Reed**, Board Certified Ophthalmologist, ProMedica Physicians Eye Care (formerly Reed Vision); **David Reiman**, professor of business, MCCC; **Todd Ritzler**, vice president, treasury management market manager, Huntington National Bank and chairman, Bedford Economic Development Corporation; **Bob Savage**, president, Rocket Ventures; **Mark Scharboneau**, business consultant, Michigan Small Business and Technology Development Center; **Dirk VanHeyst**, Monroe County executive for Fifth Third Bank (Northwest Ohio); **U.S. Rep. Tim Walberg**, and **Wendy Wysocki**, professor of business and economics, MCCC.

The panel agreed that due to Monroe County's proven history of producing successful entrepreneurs, the relatively flush position of capital markets and sideline investors, and the area's capacity to retain talent, the community is ripe for greater entrepreneurial development.

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One of the first initiatives of the panel will be the creation of a countywide entrepreneurship competition in the upcoming year. The concept being considered would challenge participants to make an elevator pitch of their business idea, similar to what is done on the TV show “Shark Tank.” Another option would be an entrepreneurial business plan development competition.

The roundtable was the first in a series of discussions hosted by MCCC with this panel to guide the college and participants in cohesive strategy to spur entrepreneurial development. Entrepreneurs and the public are encouraged to attend future meetings to provide valuable input.

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