Business and Community Services

We are committed to improving the economic vitality of our home, Iowa.

UNI University of Northern Iowa
ROCK VALLEY: THE SUCCESS OF VIRTUAL COMMUNITY PLANNING

Rock Valley is a small yet thriving community in Northwest Iowa. The Institute of Decision Making (IDM) collaborated with the City of Rock Valley, Rock Valley Economic Development, and the Rock Valley Chamber of Commerce to help them plan for the community’s future economic growth and sustainability. IDM is a community and economic development outreach program associated with the Business and Community Services department at the University of Northern Iowa. Since 1987, IDM has assisted more than 800 communities and organizations in Iowa with services such as technical assistance, applied research, training, and innovative planning. While working with Rock Valley, IDM designed a planning process to help the community set a unified path moving forward. The planning process spanned several months and involved gathering broad community input as well as several planning sessions with a community Planning Team. However, COVID-19 caused the planning process to come to a screeching halt, specifically the first in-person planning session scheduled for March 17th. IDM and the planning team came to the decision that they would be unable to wait out the COVID-19 pandemic. In response, IDM and the Planning Team reimagined the planning process and moved to a virtual process. With help and guidance from IDM, the Planning Team was able to develop the Rock Valley Community-Wide Economic Development Strategic Plan. Implementation of the plan is well under way.

IOWA WASTE REDUCTION CENTER COLLABORATES WITH CENTRAL COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

UNI’s Iowa Waste Reduction Center (IWRC) is an organization focused on providing environmental consulting and assistance to small businesses and organizations across the state of Iowa. The IWRC has recently helped high school students at Central Community Schools in Elkader. These students, who were members of the school’s green team, reached out to the IWRC for assistance with their compost site. The center provided the students with insight and guidance to help them succeed. Students moved the site’s location and permit-by-rule composting facility, which has helped effectively compost all of the school’s organic waste. A local farmer donated a manure spreader, which allowed the students to mix the compost to create a fantastic finished product. This group of hard-working, determined students won the Iowa Governor’s Award for Environmental Excellence. In addition to helping these students succeed, the IWRC has also collected data to help educate K-12 students on food waste and how to fight it.

ADDITIVE MANUFACTURING CENTER

UNI’s Additive Manufacturing Center (AMC) provides education, demonstration, and consultation services in the field of additive manufacturing. The AMC has assisted many small and medium companies in Iowa adopt additive manufacturing into their operations. Iowa has the highest concentration of 3D sand printer ownership in the nation. In addition, they have helped many Iowa businesses and all branches of the Department of Defense adopt this state of the art technology.

One example of the small businesses assisted by the AMC is Clow Valve in Oskaloosa. Clow Valve is in the process of converting their original tooling designs for their high pressure hydrant applications. This included several different series, resulting in replacement or modification of a significant amount of costly hard tooling for sand casting. Clow wanted an engineering approach to prototype the designs prior to investing in the production tooling updates. With the appropriate design approach, the prototype castings proved out the tooling design and the process before investing in any tooling changes. The AMC has supported Clow Valve and their sister company, Kennedy Valve, with the prototyping of multiple series over the past 18 months.
ADVANCE IOWA HELPS THE NEXT GENERATION: HUBER SUPPLY

Advance Iowa is the consulting program for Iowa’s small and mid-sized enterprises, aiming to help businesses in Iowa grow and seek out new opportunities. Whether a business is going through a transition or just wants to take their marketing to the next level, Advance Iowa takes the ‘business’ needs into account.

Huber Supply is a small family-owned firm based in Mason City. They distribute welding supplies and gas. They’re currently in the process of transitioning from third generation to fourth generation leadership. Advance Iowa assisted Huber Supply with transition planning and helped the firm plan ahead for what’s next. To prepare the fourth generation for the big step of taking on a leadership role, they decided to take part in the Next Generation Leadership Group.

This leadership group aims to help families learn how to overcome obstacles and seek opportunities during and after ownership transition. Succession planning, another one of Advance Iowa’s many services, also makes ownership transition run smoothly. Advance Iowa aims to also understand the challenges that family businesses face. When it comes to what Advance Iowa has to offer, Rodney Huber, a fourth generation member, stated, “This gives us another unique set of people to bounce ideas off and to hear our challenges. I believe this is going to put everybody in our family at ease with where the business is going.”

Mid-sized businesses like Huber Supply make up a large portion of Iowa’s economy. Advance Iowa is dedicated toward helping these businesses and the economy thrive.

STRATEGIC MARKETING SERVICES

Strategic Marketing Services (SMS) helps businesses across the state make smart decisions by identifying risks through marketplace intelligence. SMS aims to strengthen organizations across Iowa with their innovative services and research.

ICE Technologies in Pella is a provider of managed IT solutions. They were interested in exploring new market segments in hopes of expanding their business and services. SMS provided ICE Technologies with key pieces of information in order to help the owners make informed growth decisions. SMS uses Marketing Intelligence to gather data and important insights. Marketing Intelligence involves using and gathering information from an array of strategic resources to help individuals make sound decisions. By integrating all four components of Marketing Intelligence (Competitor, Strategic, Customer, and Product Intelligence), SMS is able to present quality data and insights to their clients.

UNI JPEC EARLY FOUNDERS PROGRAM

The UNI John Pappajohn Entrepreneurial Center (JPEC) helps students with a passion for entrepreneurship achieve their goals and build their businesses. The JPEC works with student entrepreneurs at all stages, from students with just an idea to those who are successfully generating revenue. The JPEC provides student entrepreneurs with office space to operate their business. There are about 20 students with an incubator space and the JPEC also assists an additional 40-50 student ventures each year.

In the Summer of 2019, the Early Founders Program was launched. This 8-week intensive program pushed student entrepreneurs to solidify their business model. As the JPEC began preparing for the Summer 2020 program, COVID-19 hit. Although this was a time of struggle and uncertainty, the team decided to hold the program virtually to help the students gain stability. A total of 14 students participated in the Summer 2020 program and 12 continued working on their businesses when they returned to campus that fall. During the recent winter break, 11 students participated in the program. Despite the challenges that COVID-19 posed, the Early Founders Program has been a huge benefit in helping student entrepreneurs.

View our video and learn more at bcs.uni.edu/impact
Impact

Highlight of Business and Community Services FY 2020 Impact throughout Iowa.

- Provided service in all 99 counties to 3,206 unique clients
- Assisted more than 305,000 Iowans through BCS programs
- Engaged 239 students in the delivery of services
- Reached 4,252 students through BCS programs

- 19,000 Iowa businesses and organizations responded to an impact surveys created to assess the statewide impact of COVID-19
- Produced primary market research and competitive intelligence to 18 Iowa companies
- Served 48 Iowa foundries with custom 3D sand-cast core and mold printing services
- Conducted 950 residential energy efficiency projects and 400 environmental outreach programs across Iowa

- Saved military clients over $500K this year through the STAR4D painter training program
- Assisted all branches of the military with applied research for the manufacturing of 3D cast parts
- Delivered planning, research and technical assistance to 76 Iowa economic development related organizations
- Reached 75,494 unique visitors to IASourceLink.com and 825 served by the Business Concierge