

# MSOE: To open 10,000-square-foot STEM education center this fall

Posted on Tuesday, Jun 16, 2020

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Milwaukee School of Engineering, along with three corporate partners: We Energies, Rockwell Automation and American Family Insurance, will open the **We Energies STEM Center at MSOE** this fall. The new center will be the premier STEM destination in Milwaukee for students of all ages and home to all of MSOE's STEM outreach efforts. These programs are designed to introduce students to science, technology, engineering and mathematics by providing access to resources, mentoring, and hands-on, experience-based learning—a hallmark of an MSOE education.

“In 2017, MSOE made a strategic investment in STEM outreach by establishing a dedicated department to grow, sustain and develop a comprehensive STEM pipeline for all students in Milwaukee and beyond. Since then, the number of students who have participated in our programs has quadrupled. We have reached more than 10,000 students from 150 K-12 schools,” said Dr. John Walz, MSOE president. “The We Energies STEM Center at MSOE is a game changer and we are grateful to have the support of We Energies, Rockwell Automation and American Family, among others.”

MSOE and its three industry partners are committed to building on this success and reaching even more students from a variety of backgrounds. The center will enable MSOE to continue to grow its in-house programming while providing unique opportunities to collaborate on programs with K-12 schools, local companies, community groups and organizations. The We Energies STEM Center at MSOE will be built in existing campus space at ground-level on the northern side of Pamela and Hermann Viets Field, 1305 N. Broadway.

We Energies, Rockwell Automation and American Family each bring a unique contribution to the STEM center project, all to support the shared goal of providing opportunities to bring together schools, local companies, community groups and organizations to create impactful, inclusive programming. The purpose is to provide an accessible, dedicated space for all K-12 students to explore, create and define their future in STEM.

We Energies is creating an opportunity that enables students from any school—public, private, charter and homeschool—to have access to hands-on, one-of-a-kind STEM experiences.

“Education is the critical catalyst for the communities we serve and STEM feeds and fuels everything we do as a company. This facility will provide critical hands-on learning opportunities and open avenues for students to participate in programs they may not otherwise have access to,” said Kevin Fletcher – president and CEO of We Energies parent corporation WEC Energy Group, and MSOE Regent. “We’re excited to partner with MSOE to engage and grow future leaders who will shape not only the energy industry, but also our world.”

Rockwell Automation is making it possible for MSOE to continue to support and expand the opportunities for all students to participate in STEM programs. MSOE students, alumni and partners who mentor and support For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology (*FIRST*) teams will have a dedicated place to enable all students to “go pro” in STEM through *FIRST*. Local teams will have access to dedicated storage space, tools and work equipment. The Rockwell Automation-sponsored *FIRST* Robotics development zone will include space for a 1,500-square-foot playing field area where teams will have plenty of space to test their designs and practice for competitions. The center is an opportunity to decrease barriers, and give students access to resources they need to be successful in their STEM-related extracurricular activities.

“At Rockwell Automation we believe in expanding human possibility. In our communities, we make investments in students; our makers, builders, innovators,” said Patricia Contreras, Rockwell Automation director of community relations. “Our commitment to address the opportunity and the belief gap for underrepresented students starts with our financial investments amplified by employee mentorship in our global headquarters, here in Milwaukee. Through the STEM center, the power of innovation + technology + mentorship will inspire young minds. We know this partnership with MSOE will empower and inspire students to make the impossible

possible.”

Employment in STEM-related jobs is expected to grow at 16% in the United States, far outpacing all other employment fields. In addition, jobs in STEM fields earn on average 10% more than jobs with similar education requirements. At the same time, there is a critical need for a more diverse workforce. Diversity and inclusion are an intentional and integrated part of the strategy for the STEM Center to truly empower and support all students in their exploration of STEM futures.

To support this, American Family is actively building a pipeline where all students have an equal opportunity to explore, engage and succeed in STEM fields, specifically in tech fields. American Family will bring expertise, guidance and support to programs ranging from artificial intelligence to coding for students of all ages.

“American Family is committed to Milwaukee, and as a partner and future neighbor, we’re proud to support MSOE and its passion to expand STEM education,” said Jim Buchheim, American Family community and social impact officer. “This center will provide a tremendous opportunity for a diverse group of students to participate in high-quality tech learning and prepare for successful STEM careers.”

The university is targeting a fall opening for the We Energies STEM Center at MSOE and looks forward to a strong future of STEM education. Staff, faculty, K-12 educators, community and corporate partners are committed to operating the center following health guidelines. The center will be the headquarters for all of MSOE’s K-12 community STEM programming. That programming can take place in a number of ways, including virtual, should the pandemic situation require so.

Construction begins June 15 on the We Energies STEM Center at MSOE. Uilhelin/Wilson – Ramlow/Stein Architects are the project developers and Catalyst Construction is the construction manager. Additionally, Milwaukee Tool has agreed to gift tools to help outfit the new STEM Center. MSOE Corporation member Scott Haag and his wife Linda have also made a gift in support of this project.