

# Trident Tech's Complex for Economic Development: It's big, all right...and it's spectacular!

On Nov. 3, hundreds of business, industry and legislative guests received the grand tour of the newest additions to Trident Technical College's Complex for Economic Development, located on the school's main campus.



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The event was a celebration of the completion of the Culinary Institute of Charleston and the Information Technology Center. At 228,000 square feet, the complex is huge, and with the unveiling of these two newest additions, the word spectacular also fits. The design, construction and finish of the facilities are superb.

Congratulations are due to the architects at LS3P and to Mashburn Construction for their work on the project. These facilities will serve as a lasting symbol of our region's commitment to continuing education and a source of pride for all of us.

The reception preceding the tour was held in the College Center, a classy 15,000-square-foot meeting and training space that seats 1,200 people theatre-style and 600 with banquet seating. The space is available to the community for training and education-related events, and it is particularly fitting that The Education Foundation is holding its 10th Annual Business Education Summit this Thursday at the College Center. The event starts at 2 p.m. and will include a celebration of the 10th anniversary of The Education Foundation from 5-6 p.m.

As a long-time fan of TTC and a current member of the college's foundation board, I've been following the step-by-step conversion of industrial warehouse space into a cutting-edge educational facility.

The first of several phases started back in 1997 with the opening of the Advanced Manufacturing Center, the Continuing Education Center and the Center for

Accelerated Technology Training.

Recently, 5,000 square feet of the CATT space was dedicated for aircraft assembly training to support Boeing's Dreamliner project (Vought Aircraft Industries Inc. and Global Aeronautica, a joint venture between Vought and Italy-based Alenia Aeronautica, are the local contractors for Boeing).

## The wow factor

At the reception on Nov. 3, guests had the chance to see and hear TTC President Mary Thornley participate in a closed-circuit TV tour of the school's culinary and information technology facilities. The images on the three huge projection screens showcased the marriage of technology, education and careful planning that has become the school's hallmark.

After completing my tour of the facilities, my first comment was that "if you're not impressed by what you've seen, you're brain dead!"

My second comment was that the school should work out the logistics of conducting regular tours for people from throughout our community.

K-12 public school students will get an eye-opening look at the career opportunities available to them if they stay in school and pursue further education.

Members of the business community will draw inspiration and encouragement from seeing the quality and range of resources offered at the complex.

Political leaders and the general population will be reassured about how well their tax dollars are being spent to give our young people the chance to compete in the global economy.

Let me repeat this for emphasis: You can't imagine how superb these facilities are without seeing them in person. Neither TV images, nor photos, nor words can do justice to the effort and quality that went into these facilities.

## Buh bye, Johnson & Wales!

Charlotte may have bought the Johnson & Wales culinary school out from under us, but their gain will not be our loss, judging

from the resources offered to students at The Culinary Institute of Charleston. From the state-of-the-art amphitheatre kitchen to the student operated dining facility (which by appearance could easily pass as one of the historic district's upscale restaurants), the facilities are outstanding.

We have another secret weapon that Charlotte doesn't have: The Culinary Institute's Chefs Council—Donald Barickman, James Burns, Robert Carter, Frank Lee, Brett McKee, Frank McMahan, Ken Vedrinski and Bob Waggoner. This group of prominent local chefs helped guide the design of the facility and will continue to provide insight and vision to ensure the Culinary Institute's success.

## High tech complements high touch

From the high touch of the Culinary Institute, it's only a few steps to high tech at the adjacent Information Technology Center, which annually serves more than 1,000 students enrolled in IT courses.

Speaking as a small business owner, all I can say is "bring 'em on!" In our business, we're finding it's a huge challenge to make sure that our information technology systems work reliably and our IT capabilities grow along with our needs.

These days almost any business needs a solid base of information technology resources to succeed. If you don't use it, your competition will, and you never can be sure whether your competition will come from across the street or around the world.

TTC's Information Technology Center is a much-needed resource. The school has also "walked the talk" by completing a full upgrade of the school's own computer network, throughout all buildings on all three campuses, in only 18 months.

The continued growth of TTC's resources and capabilities is a lynchpin for securing the region's future economic growth. TTC's leaders, faculty and staff deserve our congratulations and support for their efforts.

As impressive as the new facilities are, it's the people in them that really make the difference. ■