

Since we began exploring a name change to coincide with our Facilities Master Plan and centennial anniversary, I have been seeking input from a broad constituency of the college community. The conversation began casually over four years ago. The idea, which certainly was not a new topic to people who have worked here for a long time, became fueled by market research conducted as part of the Wisconsin Technical College System branding campaign. While the focus of this process was to refresh the identity of technical colleges in Wisconsin, we gained valuable insight into the thought process that many parents and their college-bound children go through when selecting a college. Name and image have way more to do with that decision than they should, but we can't ignore that truth.

To gather input within the college I have captured thoughts and ideas through a variety of forums.

- ✓ I have brought up the issue of name change at Convocation speeches since 2005.
- ✓ I have spoken with students using face-to-face discussions, and an article in *The Clarion* requesting student input.
- ✓ I have brought ideas to our College Council asking for that group's input and suggestions.
- ✓ Through articles in *MATC Matters* earlier in the calendar year and more recently, I have garnered input from faculty and staff—many of whom provided valuable suggestions and thoughtful responses.
- ✓ At my campus listening sessions last spring I took the opportunity to discuss a potential name change with people throughout the district.
- ✓ I have discussed this topic with the Wisconsin Technical College System president and with our district board of trustees.
- ✓ Our district board of trustees has heard about this issue for more than two years.

The entire process has been enlightening. It has also been kind of fun seeing all of the creative suggestions from faculty, staff and students. Here are a few of the names that have been submitted so far.

Anything with Madison in the name; Badger Area Colleges; Badger Area (or just Badger) Technical (or Community) College; Capital Area Community (or Technical, and Technical) College; Capital City College; Capital College; Capital Region College; Capital Region Polytechnic; Central Wisconsin Community College; City College (City College-Madison, City College-Fort Atkinson...); Drumlin Area Community (or Technical) College; Forward College (add "schools" Forward College School of Technology, Forward College School of Liberal Arts); Forward Community College; Glacier Lakes Community and Technical College; and Glacial Lakes College.

As a college that provides instruction and training in areas such as marketing, architecture, graphic design, and interior design we certainly know that this is about more than picking a name. As this is not a simple task we are incorporating not only the expertise of our own faculty and staff but also that of professionals outside of the college.

Through this collective expertise we have developed criteria that we can use as we collect names. We can ask ourselves if the name: reflects our brand and desired image; connects the campus with all of our communities, not just Madison; conveys our comprehensive offerings; is memorable and distinctive in the marketplace; is short, simple, and has no potential for an acronym; and can be

captured in an image that is easily thumb-printable. Ultimately it is our district board, with approval of the WTCS board, which will make the final decision on our name.

I will keep you updated throughout this process. Thank you to all who have taken the time to invest your thoughts and ideas into this important project.

## **WHY A NAME CHANGE?**

As you know, MATC has a rich history as a cornerstone of the south-central Wisconsin district we serve. We were founded in 1912 as the School of Industrial Education and went through a quick name change a few years later becoming the School of Vocational Education. By 1937 our student demographic had changed enough to warrant a name change to School of Vocational and Adult Education, and by 1961 we felt the need to closely identify ourselves with the technical education for which we were so well known so became Madison Vocational, Technical and Adult Schools. In 1967 we began to look toward expansion into a broader area of the district so became Area Vocational Technical and Adult Education District No. 4 (VTAE #4), and then in 1993 we began referring to ourselves as Madison Area Technical College.

Here we are in 2009 and we have evolved into a nationally recognized community college that is, without a doubt, a driving force in our district's economy. We educate about 42,000 students annually, graduate more than 3,000 students each year in degree-granting or certificate programs and send 1,200 students to four-year colleges. We teach prerequisite courses to students preparing to enter UW-Madison's college of Engineering, and UW-Madison graduates enroll at our college to get the training they need to gain employment. Our students and faculty are awarded with honors at the local, state and national level on a regular basis and we have truly earned our reputation for high quality, practical and affordable education. Yes, we are still THE district's technical college—but we are so much more.

Times changed significantly between our beginnings in 1912 and where we were in 1993 when we started referring to ourselves as Madison Area Technical College. And times have changed again! We are at the dawn of a new century of service to our community and we clearly know our value—we are an extremely smart investment for our community's future. And in this time in our history we are able to benefit from advancements in marketing research that can help us truly capture the essence of our contributions to education, to our economy and to the quality of life for people throughout our 12-county district.

Cohen and Brawer, in their popular textbook, *The American Community College*, report that community colleges, since 1936, have been defined as two year colleges which include academic transfer preparation, vocational technical education, continuing education, developmental education, and community service. Indeed we have been a community college since at least 1967 and, thus, simply calling ourselves a technical college does not encompass all of the community needs that we meet.

While it is not the deciding factor by any means, there also exists a daily confusion between our MATC and “the other” MATC—in Milwaukee. The identical moniker can be puzzling. Imagine how

confusing it must be for prospective students when they are trying to find out about our institution through the internet.

Our flagship campus is located in Madison, but we have an equally strong presence in Watertown, Portage, Reedsburg, and Fort Atkinson. Our name, therefore, should be as encompassing as possible and reflect the needs and diversity of our entire district.

There is a lot to think about when considering a name change, so please continue to offer your suggestions. This information is being collected by the marketing and enrollment department. Send suggestions or comments to [Erin Thornley](#).