

Toyota Donates Engineering Laboratory Building to Create STEAM-Focused Education Center

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Erlanger, Ky. (March 17, 2017) – Creating an enduring gift to fuel the economic engine of the Tri-State, Toyota announced today that it is donating its Quality and Production Engineering Laboratory on its campus in Erlanger to develop a STEAM-focused education center to serve the Northern Kentucky/Greater Cincinnati region. The vision, a collaborative endeavor involving state and local leaders, is world-class STEAM education that inspires the next generation to be creative and engaged, highly skilled, tech-savvy and work-ready problem solvers.

To help bring the vision to reality, Kentucky Governor Matt Bevin announced a \$6.8 million Work Ready Skills initiative grant to Boone County Schools to adapt Toyota's office and engineering lab into a school. The new school, scheduled to be ready for students in fall 2019 for the 2019-2020 school year, will be called the Ignite Institute at Roebbling Innovation Center.

"Since announcing the transition from Erlanger, we collaborated with civic, business and education leaders on how we could best serve the region," said Mike Goss, general manager, Toyota Social Innovation. "We hope to create a lasting positive impact through this school, helping prepare students for the next generation of jobs. We invite other companies and businesses, and the region's civic leaders to help make the school a success."

The goal of Ignite Institute is threefold: to open a world of possibilities for students through science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics; to fill the workforce pipeline with creative and educated workers for the future; and to help make the Tri-State a magnet for high-value industries, enabling it to compete globally and elevating opportunity for all in the region.

The center has been endorsed by Kentucky Governor Matt Bevin, Kentucky Secretary for Education and Workforce Development Hal Heiner, and Education Commissioner Stephen L. Pruitt, among others.

"It is exciting to see dynamic regional partnerships coalescing around the new Work Ready Skills Initiative, as we seek to transform workforce training in the Commonwealth," said Gov. Bevin. "I applaud this innovative collaboration between Toyota and local education, business and community partners. This project serves as additional proof that Kentucky is on track to become the nation's unparalleled hub of engineering and manufacturing excellence."

Commissioner Pruitt said: "The 21st century demands workers who can think creatively, solve problems and adapt quickly to change. The Ignite Institute at Roebbling Innovation Center will give students an incredible opportunity to learn and hone these critical skills, which will ensure their future success and provide our business community with highly sought-after employees who will fuel our Commonwealth's economy."

The region's business leaders are enthusiastic about the opportunity.

"It's a great thing that Toyota has done," said Trey Grayson, President and CEO, Northern Kentucky Chamber of Commerce. "It will be transformative not only for students and educators, but for business and industry and will have a tremendous impact on the workforce pipeline in our region."

"I think the catalytic impact of this will be profound. It will be long term, and it will be a lasting legacy for Toyota like nothing else that they could have done," said Dr. James Votruba, President Emeritus, Northern Kentucky University, and board chair of St. Elizabeth Healthcare.

Boone County Schools, a distinguished and nationally accredited public school district, will manage the Ignite Institute at Roebbling Innovation Center. Ignite Institute will operate as a Boone County District of Innovation School of Choice. The district will own and operate the building, the grounds and all facilities. The goal is also to assemble a board of advisors of business and other leaders and to create a foundation to support the center.

"This school will include the best aspects of innovative schools around the country," said Dr. Randy Poe, Superintendent, Boone County Schools. "The entire school will be based on a project-based learning, real industry-case methodology. We want students to be empowered, so that when they graduate they have the opportunities of a lifetime."

The school will open initially for grades 9 through 12, with a capacity to serve 1,000 students. It will be public, free and inclusive. Organizers envision it serving students throughout Northern Kentucky and, with additional private support and funding, the expectation is it will serve students from urban to rural areas throughout the Tri-State. The school will be funded with both public school dollars and, it is hoped, private support in order to serve students from a diverse range of socioeconomic, demographic and geographic areas. Admission will be based on a student's desire to learn in an environment where the unique skill sets required for 21st century employment opportunities are the focus.

The Roebling Innovation Center facility will support other activities and is envisioned to be a collaborative space for educators, a center for business engagement, a potential national hub for STEAM teacher training, and an early childhood education center. The center's name is inspired by John A. Roebling (1806-1869), who designed one of the region's most distinctive landmarks, the suspension bridge spanning the Ohio River. Not only was he an internationally known engineer, Roebling was a student of philosophy, a civic and moral leader, and a successful businessman and manufacturer.

Toyota's Quality and Engineering Laboratory facility is a 183,000-square-foot, two-story building located at 37 Atlantic Avenue, Erlanger, Ky. It has expansive lab and engineering workspaces, high bay equipment areas, office spaces, high ceilings to accommodate robotics/automation, several mezzanines, and multiple elevators. The gift also includes approximately 22 acres and adjacent parking lots.

Toyota still occupies the Erlanger campus but has been transitioning from it as the company consolidates its North American headquarters in Texas. Its final team member groups are scheduled to move from the lab building by the end of 2017. With its plant in Georgetown employing 8,000 and producing more than 500,000 vehicles a year, Toyota's presence in Kentucky remains strong.

Learn more about the Ignite Institute at Roebling Innovation Center and watch a video involving regional leaders at www.boone.k12.ky.us/igniteinstitute. Follow its progress on twitter @IgniteAtRIC. When sharing this news, please use these hashtags: #igniteatRIC, #STEAMeducation, #NKY, and #Cincinnati.