The ever-evolving face of education in the 21st century has shown a renewed focus on preparing young learners to compete in a workforce that is global in scope and universal in technological demands.

As the Dayton region has transitioned away from an economy fueled by manufacturing jobs, local business, community and education leaders saw the importance of preparing current generations of students to work in emerging industries, such as biotechnology, health care, engineering and information technology. Of critical importance was that these leaders of tomorrow also be afforded an opportunity to earn college credit for their efforts, leading to a jump start on an advanced degree before high school graduation.

Thanks to the joint efforts of Dayton Public Schools and Sinclair Community College, the David H. Ponitz Career Technology Center is the culmination of that vision. This unprecedented collaboration between secondary and post-secondary institutions has led to the creation of a school that houses four small learning communities: arts and communication, business and information technology, engineering and industrial systems, and health sciences and education. Within those pathways, DPS will offer 16 career technology programs. Students in each community will complete a course of study, earning credits toward an associate’s degree in addition to a high school diploma.

Sinclair faculty will work closely with Ponitz students through courses offered at the center. College educators also collaborate with career center instructors on professional and technical content.

The college, under the direction of President Steven Lee Johnson, continues to work hand-in-hand with the Ponitz Center. An education at the school ensures a seamless transition to Sinclair; graduating seniors who meet pre-established criteria are offered a scholarship toward future tuition at the college.

A host of leaders from the business, civic and education communities helped guide the planning and development of the Ponitz Career Technology Center, and will remain in place for an interim period, to assist with the school’s initial startup. In addition, many local businesses work in partnership with the school, offering job shadowing and internship opportunities for students. These opportunities are often cultivated as a result of the business/community advisory board that assists each learning community.

When discussing the relationship of business and education communities coming together to shape Dayton’s workforce of the new millennium, the school’s namesake is front and center as a longtime committed supporter of both. Sinclair President Emeritus David H. Ponitz spearheaded the initiative for new Dayton Public Schools buildings. As chair of the Issue 4 campaign, Dr. Ponitz garnered unprecedented community-wide support for passage of a historic bond levy that will result in more than 25 new buildings by 2012. Previously, as Sinclair president, he guided three successful levy campaigns for the college, as well as the Montgomery County Human Services Levy in 1995. He was named one of Dayton’s top 25 most influential people by the Dayton Business Journal, and has lent his expertise to a long roster of educational, civic and business organizations. Dr. Ponitz and his wife, Doris, continue to lend their time and expertise as community advocates and champions of education.