

News

Mail Services Closed Friday Afternoon

Mail Services will close at 11:55 a.m. today, April 6, for the Good Friday recess.

The deadline to drop off packages for UPS and US Postal Service pickup is 11:15 a.m.

The deadline to leave packages for FedEx pickup is 10 a.m.

Taking Stock: Tech Students Win National Investment Competition

Michigan Tech's Applied Portfolio Management Program Gold Team has taken first place in its class at the seventh annual RISE conference.

The Redefining Investment Strategy Education conference, held March 29-31 at the University of Dayton, is the largest student investment event of its kind in North America.

This is the second year that Michigan Tech has won top honors in the undergraduate division's value category, reporting an impressive 20.96 percent annual return on their portfolio of stocks and bonds. By comparison, the all-stock S&P 500 yielded 15.78 percent.

"Value is a bird-in-the-hand style of investing," explained their advisor, Dean Johnson, an associate professor of business and economics. "The students focused on assets with a low price-to-earnings ratio, which are cheap relative to their current performance."

Other investment categories at the competition were growth, fixed income and alternative.

The team's highest-flying investment was a Federal Mogul bond, issued by a Southfield, Mich., auto parts company that is now in Chapter 11 bankruptcy. The bond was donated by financier Stan Phelps, who bought at 15 cents on the dollar. "The students sold at 62 cents on the dollar," Johnson said. "Phelps sold out earlier, but the team held on, and we made even more than he did."

On the stock side of their portfolio, the team's other winning investments were Bio-Reference Laboratories (BRLI), Sciele Pharma Inc. (SCRX) and Vulcan Materials Company (VMC).

The Applied Portfolio Management Program, a course within Michigan Tech's School of Business and Economics, manages over \$1 million in the equity and fixed income markets. The fund is supported by donations from alumni and friends, and investment revenues support student travel and scholarships. For more information on the Applied Portfolio Management Program, visit <http://www.sbea.mtu.edu/apmp/>.

Members of the Michigan Tech team were Kelly Guzzardo-Plewa, Adam Michaud, Josh Vehring, Devin Magnuson, Mark Malekoff, Lorn Randell, Molly Bush, Lee Warlin, Tyler Skworchinski, Shawn Granlund, Ted Simonson and Cody Meier.

Modeled after the World Economic Forum, RISE connects investment students and faculty with Wall Street. More than 1,700 participants from 218 colleges and universities attended this year's symposium.

Some of the biggest names on Wall Street and business addressed the participants, including Ralph Alvarez, president and COO of McDonald's; Paul Atkins, commissioner of the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission; Peter Coors, chairman, Molson Coors Brewing Company; Jan Hatzius, chief U.S. economist for

Goldman Sachs; Knight Kiplinger, editor in chief of Kiplinger's Personal Finance; and Guillermo Ortiz, governor of the Bank of Mexico.

The conference also included portfolio management workshops, career strategy sessions and networking opportunities.

The New York Stock Exchange, the Wall Street Journal, CNBC, TIAA-CREF, the United Nations and Deutsche Asset Management sponsored the event.

Summer Youth Program Scholarships Available to Western U.P. Residents

The Western U.P. Michigan Works office, <http://www.westupmwa.org>, is offering need-based scholarships for western U.P. residents to attend the Michigan Tech Summer Youth Program, <http://www.youthprograms.mtu.edu>. The program is celebrating its 35th year of providing quality, week-long, summer academic enrichment programs. It provides precollege students the opportunity to explore careers through hands-on, discovery-based learning while experiencing a mini-version of college life.

For more information, contact Karla Korpela, director of K-12 outreach, at 487-2219 or kokorpel@mtu.edu, or Jim Saari, Western U.P. Michigan Works director, at 932-4059 or westupmwa@chartermi.net.

Regular Features

New Staff

Mary Beth Larson has joined the Housing and Residential Life staff as an office aide 3. She was previously a paraprofessional at Houghton Middle School and has an associate degree in business from Gogebic Community College. She is married to Art Larson and has two children: Chad, a junior at Houghton High School, and Brady, a sophomore at Chassell High. Larson is an avid four-wheeler and kayaking fan.

Teaching at Tech: Bill Gates on Reengineering High Schools

by William Kennedy, director of the Center for Teaching, Learning and Faculty Development

Microsoft Chairperson Bill Gates recently testified before the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions. His testimony included a stinging critique of U.S. public high schools and what he sees as their absolute inability to prepare students for university study, particularly in the areas of science, technology, engineering and math (STEM).

Gates says that American high schools continue to pursue a model crafted over 50 years ago as though their mission was still to prepare students to participate in an economy based on manufacturing and agriculture, rather than preparing students to participate in the knowledge and technology economy that actually exists today.

Gates says that although most of our kids have successfully adapted to the digital world, most U.S. educators remain caught up in an industrial age learning model that no longer comes close to sufficing. Consequently, he says too many American kids find their high school studies hideously boring, unchallenging and irrelevant to their interests or their dreams for the future. Many of them adopt the strategy of doing just enough to get by, while others just give up and drop out. In fact, a Gates-funded research study found that the number one reason students give for quitting high school before graduation is plain boredom.

The numbers are sobering. Three out of 10 American students will not graduate from high school on time.

That means the U.S. has the lowest high school graduation rate in the industrialized world. Of those who do eventually graduate and go on to college, over a quarter will have to enroll in remedial college courses to master fundamental material that they were supposed to have already learned in high school.

Part of the problem, Gates says, stems from low expectations and standards. Only half of U.S. states, Gates reported, require students to take three or four years of math in order to graduate. Eight U.S. states have no specific math requirement at all for high school graduation. In many states, any math course counts the same toward graduation, making consumer math as valuable as calculus when it comes graduation time. Routing students into courses that fail to prepare them for college studies shifts the burden to colleges and increases the percentage of students who drop out of college prior to graduation.

Making sure that every student has the best possible chance to develop their individual gifts is everybody's job, according to Gates. Impacting the massive public school system will require a sustained, substantial, imaginative and consistent effort from all sectors.

The U.S. Labor Department predicts two million job openings in careers requiring advanced education in math and science by the year 2014. In 2004, only 11 percent of college degrees were in STEM disciplines--a decline of one-third since 1960. Declines in computer science are particularly disturbing to Gates, with the number of students in related degree programs dropping 70 percent from 2000 to 2005.

There is some hope on the horizon. Model high schools across the country appear to be producing larger numbers of interested and able graduates focused on STEM studies and careers. Gates cites the School of Science and Technology in Denver, Aviation High School in Seattle and University High School in Hartford as proof that high schools can be reengineered to work in the 21st century. Gates says, "these schools have augmented traditional teaching methods with new technologies and a rigorous project-centered curriculum." Another hopeful sign, given U.S. demographics, is that these model schools are attracting, retaining and graduating a much higher percentage of African American and Hispanic students.

Gates says that colleges and universities must also reinvent themselves if we are to meet the demand for degreed scientists and engineers. Currently, as the demand for graduates in STEM disciplines increases, the production is falling. In the U.S., the number of undergraduate engineering degrees fell 17 percent between 1985 and 2004. Meanwhile, foreign universities are producing record numbers of SMET graduates. China will produce 700,000 science and math graduates this year, while India will produce 400,000. That means, that taken together, India and China will produce more than 10 times the number of graduates as all the U.S. universities combined.

And after more than 10 years of study and experimentation by the Gates Foundation, Gates has issued a call to Congress to remove the immigration caps on foreign nationals who have STEM degrees so that they can come to the U.S. and fill those jobs that Americans seem unable or unwilling to fill.