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## Region's growth tied to education, Twin Cities economy, speakers say

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MENOMONIE — The economic ties between the Twin Cities and west-central Wisconsin are strong, Gov. Jim Doyle said Wednesday.

n UW-Stout defines the Synergy 2003 effort as a process to position west-central Wisconsin, its communities, businesses and residents for sustainable economic growth through the collaborative efforts of key stakeholders.

"The Twin Cities is an international center of finance and industry," Doyle said. "We in Wisconsin benefit from that. We have to understand how closely our economies are tied."

As the metro areas grow, more people are moving into western Wisconsin, and the educational system can help industry grow and benefit the area's economy, he said.

But those ties are nothing new for UW-River Falls Chancellor Ann Lydecker.

The university, which statistically is part of the metropolitan area, strives to recognize the impact the Twin Cities has on housing and wages in River Falls, she said.

"There is no doubt we benefit from the Twin Cities," Lydecker said. "The governor is absolutely on the right track."

Doyle spoke at the Synergy 2003

conference Wednesday at UW-Stout. The conference, which ended this morning, examined the interrelationship of community, economic, workforce and educational development factors and their impact on growth.

Doyle touted his "Grow Wisconsin" economic development plan while addressing nearly 150 people at the conference.

The plan focuses on attracting high-tech, high-paying jobs to nudge up the state's wages.

"We must prepare our workers for tomorrow's economy by investing in training and education," Doyle said.

Manufacturing, agriculture and tourism are the building blocks to increased economic health, Doyle said.

Doyle urged continuing regional partnerships to move the economy forward.

He also pledged \$10 million for training funds and \$300 million over the next decade to help start-up companies.

UW-Stout Chancellor Charles Sorensen said the governor was on target about the role higher education will play in growing the economy.

"This is a very historic kind of issue," Sorensen said.

Founding father Thomas Jefferson noted the need for higher education to further the economy, Sorensen said.

UW-Eau Claire Chancellor Donald Mash said he liked the fact that Doyle has a plan to grow the economy, yet the governor acknowledged his plan is only

part of the solution.

Mash said he believes the state needs to fund a larger capacity to serve more students in public higher education at the UW System schools and technical colleges.

Serving part-time students' needs should be a priority to help students who may be returning to finish a degree or are returning to school while working to advance their careers. They tend to stay in Wisconsin and keep their skills here, Mash said.

"Investing in human resources in today's and tomorrow's economy will be and is the key resource," Mash said.

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