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The Gazette

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Finding social connections is key, say those who stay

By Adam Belz
The Gazette

Dion Stallings traveled to Columbus, Ohio, last week with a simple mission: to persuade other black engineers to live and work in Cedar Rapids.

The 25-year-old Rockwell Collins engineer and more than 20 others from the company went to the National Society of Black Engineers' annual convention, where some 10,000 engineering students from around the country and the world were gathered.

Stallings worked in a booth and networked at the job fair and the company's hospitality suite. He



Dion Stallings
Rockwell Collins engineer

spoke with and interviewed students.

"We were all recruiting for the company," Stallings said. "If you're wanting to diversify your company, why not go?"

You'd think it would have been an easy sell.

Rockwell offers good jobs and was ranked 24th on Business Week's 50 Best Performers Class of 2007. Company leaders have said they plan to hire 7,000

employees companywide between 2005 and 2010. And it's no secret that the company pushes for diversity.

But even when companies work for it, it's a struggle to get young, out-of-town talent — particularly minorities — to come to Cedar Rapids and stay.

The same problem exists in Iowa City but to a lesser degree.

Marcella David, the associate provost for diversity at the University of Iowa, said Iowa City isn't big enough for some job candidates, regardless of their

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costs exceed average Iowa family income

By Cindy Radlich
The Gazette

A year in an Iowa nursing home costs more than what the average family in the state earns annually, according to a survey released Tuesday.

The 2007 Cost of Care Survey, by Genworth Financial, found a private room in an Iowa nursing home averages \$30,618 annually, or about \$139 a day. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the average household income in Iowa is \$43,609 a year.

A separate national poll found that 75 percent of Americans have made no long-term care plans.

That poll, also released Tuesday, was conducted by Public Opinion Strategies for Genworth, with input from the Alzheimer's Association.

Nearly half of respondents — 44 percent — incorrectly believe that Medicare or their private health insurance will pay for their long-term care needs. In reality, health insurance and the federal Medicare program typically do not cover long-term care.

"It's a juggle," Beth Ludden, senior vice president of Genworth's long-term care product development, said of how people handle long-term care.

Some sell their homes, dip

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Other findings

■ The average annual national cost of a private room in a nursing home is \$74,806, or \$204 per day. That reflects a 14.5 percent increase since 2004. The remains the most costly care option.

■ A private one-bedroom unit in an assisted living facility has an average annual cost of \$32,573 nationally, a 13 percent increase since 2004. A room in Iowa averages \$26,714.

■ The average national hourly rate for certified and licensed home health aides is \$25.47 an hour. That's \$52,977 a year if hiring a home health aide 40 hours per week. The hourly rate averages \$22.98 in Iowa.

Source: Genworth Financial

Hard to gain, retain

In the war for talent, recruiting minority workers is only half the battle. How do we keep them here?



Lela Navidi/The Gazette

Andrew Agyemang (left) of Cedar Rapids, an engineer at Alliant Energy, helps teach a Sunday school class for 2- and 3-year-olds at New Covenant Bible Church in Cedar Rapids. At first, he and his wife didn't like it here, but they became more comfortable once they got involved at the church. Now, they feel settled here.

Finding social connections is key, say those who stay

By Adam Belz

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UNIVERSITY OF IOWA

Final tab: First UI hunt cost \$217,362

Canceled presidential interviews in Chicago not charged to school

By Diane Heidt

IOWA CITY — The University of Iowa was not charged for presidential candidate interviews in Chicago it canceled in November, allowing officials to close the books on the first search at a cost of \$217,362.

The UI must pay expenses from a second presidential search, now under way, but no bills have come in yet, Regents Executive Director Gary Steinke said Tuesday.

The Chicago interviews, planned at a hotel, were moved to Des Moines after reporters asked about the Chicago plans.

The UI would have shelled out about \$13,500 had it been forced to pay the entire bill for rooms, food and travel for the Chicago interviews.

"We never received a bill for that," Steinke said. "The last I ever heard about it was back in December."

The last bill the regents office received from search firm Heidrick & Struggles for the first search arrived probably around mid-January, Steinke said. Bills go to the regents office but are paid by the UI.

"I'd be surprised if we got anything more," Steinke said. "As far as I'm concerned, the books are closed."

Costs for the second search should be much less: likely travel expenses for Heidrick & Struggles staff and costs associated with candidate interviews, Steinke said.

The first, regents-led search yielded no hire. The head of second committee, College of Dentistry Dean David Johnson, hopes the regents select a president by July 1.

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age, race or gender. "For a lot of folks, you're talking about coming from a more urban environment," she said, adding some people want more urban choices in food, entertainment and religion.

The UI can sell itself to prospective employees as a first-rate university with an excellent reputation. This is compelling, said David, who is from New York City and has worked at the UI for 12 years.

Why they leave

Still, people, who would help make the Corridor more diverse by their presence, often leave. They give various reasons: brutal winters, humdrum topography, no fancy retail shopping and downtowns that aren't full of clubs, restaurants, art galleries and coffee shops.

Often, they leave simply because they can't find enough other people like themselves.

"The old way of attracting and retaining talent is clearly not going to work for (our) organization," said Karen Brown, the director of diversity for Rockwell Collins. "Given that we have this growth plan, we need to look at where we are going to get the people that we need in order to get the work done."

Global war

Increasingly, she said, those workers are going to come from places other than the Midwest. The work force of the future — especially in technical fields — is going to be all different colors and ages with varied religions, and more of it will be female.

"Demographically, we're shifting in terms of the makeup of society," Brown said. "We're all playing in the same pool. And the war for talent is not a Rockwell Collins' war for talent, it is a global war for talent."

She said the company is cultivating ties with professional organizations like the Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers, the Society of Women Engineers

seek aide

...said in a letter released Tuesday. ... Whitehouse ... Gonzalez plans ... special counsel or ... other "appropri ... so that a non- ... person with appro- ... and authori- ... Goodling's

... Bush, who is ... to recover from a ... flap that has ... into a full-blown ... his administra- ... Tuesday that he ... the uproar over

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rogating prisons

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and the National Society of Black Engineers.

Also, it's building relationships with historically black colleges and universities like North Carolina Agricultural and Technical, which is Stallings' alma mater.

Why they stayed

Andrew Agyemang, a 36-year-old engineer, lives in northeast Cedar Rapids with his wife and two children. He was born in Ghana. He studied engineering at Texas Tech and moved to Cedar Rapids to work for Alliant Energy seven years ago.

Since he first arrived at Alliant, he said, three black employees have come and gone from his floor.

At first, he said he and his wife, Doris, didn't like it here either. They couldn't stand the cold. They talked about leaving but soldiered through. They became involved in New Covenant Bible Church and started to get more comfortable.

Now they're settled. Agyemang thinks Cedar Rapids is family-oriented and its people approachable. He doesn't feel like a foreigner here the way he did in Texas. When he muses aloud about moving back there, his wife gets quiet.

"I don't think she wants to go back," he said. "We kind of realize we're in a better place."

Feeling of community

For many, whether they're satisfied here hinges on whether they've found someone to settle down with. Area companies and networking organizations — like Diversity Focus and the Professional and Technical Diversity Network for the Corridor — hold mixers and open houses to try to connect newcomers to the community.

"This is a great place to raise a family. Schools are great, people are friendly," said Russ Novotny, a board member of the Diversity Network group. "But young people come in, and they don't have a family and that's not as important to them.

choices desired



Lola Nash/The Gazette

...engineer at Rockwell Collins, hangs out in her Marion home with daughter Kara. Melinda Applebee believes companies need to work to stay.

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...Network group. "The people come in, and they don't have a family and that's not as important to them."

...Even if you can't find exactly what you're looking for, if you meet people who are going through the same thing," it helps build a feeling of community, he said.

...Another Collins engineer who's stayed, Melinda Applebee, 28, of Marion, started working here in 2002 after growing up in Rapid City, S.D. She met her husband, Corey, at Rockwell.

...Companies must do more

...Another Collins engineer who's stayed, Melinda Applebee, 28, of Marion, started working here in 2002 after growing up in Rapid City, S.D. She met her husband, Corey, at Rockwell, and they married in 2006. They now have a daughter.

...Applebee prefers Iowa City for shopping or going out but loves her job, so she's not going anywhere.

...Like Stallings, she's watched other minority employees come and go. She thinks all companies in the area have to work together to get people to stay. She and Stallings said singles like to be able to meet other singles from different companies.

...The 'team' now becomes all the companies," she said. "They all have to do their part."

...Stallings agreed, adding that finding a fulfilling social network is crucial.

...The people who are leaving are the single people who can't find that social scene," he said.

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