

MICHIGAN BRAINPOWER

No other region on the planet concentrates as much automotive technological prowess as Michigan. That isn't likely to change as the U.S. auto industry's focus expands beyond cars to a more broadly integrated approach to personal transport.



Kevin Kerrigan

But the state's dominance isn't guaranteed, notes Kevin Kerrigan, senior vice president of the Automotive Office within the Michigan Economic Development Corp. That's why Michigan is underscoring its role as a center for high-tech jobs—and helping to attract new talent—for the emerging personal mobility industry through its "Pure Michigan: We Run on

Brainpower" campaign. The multifaceted initiative, which launched in August 2015, is now in full swing. Kerrigan describes the program's objectives and evolution.

How is Michigan a focal point for automotive technology?

The statistics make it clear. Michigan is home to 330 automotive R&D companies. More than 75% of the research dollars being spent by the U.S. auto industry occurs here. There are more industrial designers in the state than in any other. Michigan is home to one-third more connected vehicle projects than any other state, including California, and that lead is growing.

We're also developing key hard assets to develop, test and validate these technologies through facilities such as the 32-acre Mcity autonomous vehicle research center in Ann Arbor and the 335-plus-acre American Center for Mobility (ACM) outside Ypsilanti, where developers will be able to evaluate and validate autonomous driving technologies at highway speeds of 70 mph or more. Once opened, the ACM will be the world's largest mobility test facility of its kind.

So why the need to promote the state's capabilities even more?

There is a new tsunami of technology coming to the world of personal mobility. Virtually everything on the vehicle is changing. With this comes an exploding demand for technologists. Cyber security is a good example. This is not a new subject area for the auto industry, but the need for experts in this field is growing exponentially. A whole new industry is emerging out of the necessity to secure data generated by vehicle connectivity, and that demand is being driven right here in Michigan.

What is the overall goal of the state's Brainpower campaign?

Too many people persist in thinking of carmaking as nothing more than metal bending. In fact, the auto industry is easily the world's most technologically complex endeavor. It's becoming even more so as vehicles connect with their environment

and each other, and as they become increasingly capable of driving themselves. At the same time, there has never been greater pressure to increase vehicle efficiency, and this means enormous research and engineering input for such areas as powertrain and materials.

The expansion in the way we look at personal transportation is unprecedented in the history of the auto industry. Everything is in flux, which makes it an especially exciting moment to be a part of something that affects society in so many ways. Executing the industry's transition is well underway. But turning advanced mobility concepts into viable products requires a knowledge of electronics, human dynamics, software, telecommunications, product design, aerodynamics, materials and, yes, a deep understanding of how to make things.

The state of Michigan has a broader base of expertise in all these capabilities than anywhere else in the world. But it's important that we retain our intellectual assets and continue to attract new talent. That means presenting the true nature of the auto industry and Michigan's role in its future. This is the mission of We Run on Brainpower. The campaign also supports the broader Pure Michigan initiative, which highlights the state's attractive physical and lifestyle attributes.

What has been the auto industry's response?

We're seeing a great deal of activity on the part of car companies and the automotive supply base. They're not just sitting back and waiting for colleges and universities to develop the talent. Companies in the automotive sector are getting directly involved with students and faculty. Suppliers and carmakers also are asking us how they can help sponsor the state Brainpower campaign to attract the talent they need.



How does the Brainpower campaign deliver its message?

We're doing a lot with social media and programs aimed at companies, academic groups, colleges, universities, students and parents. Michigan's business attraction teams are describing the state's automotive technology base overseas, especially in China and Europe.

Perhaps the best place to learn more about the state's capabilities is our website at www.werunonbrainpower.org. This is where we present hundreds of reports on news and events, showcase technology companies and offer videos in which young technologists describe what they do.

Click [HERE](#) to visit the We Run on Brainpower website or go to <http://www.werunonbrainpower.org>.