IBM may bring 500 jobs in coming three years

COLUMBUS, Ohio - IBM Corp. officials encouraged businesses to bring them their toughest problems, as they announced plans Thursday to open an advanced analytics center in Ohio focused on data crunching and consulting services.

The new center in suburban Columbus is expected to bring 500 jobs over the next three years.

Among other duties, workers at the center will build computer applications and models to allow businesses to better draw conclusions from vast amounts of data. For instance, the center's employees could take chunks of information from an insurance company to analyze why customers might be choosing to jump to a competitor.

Mike Rhodin, an IBM senior vice president, said the center was spawned through an idea from area clients including Nationwide Insurance, Huntington Bank, Cardinal Health and Limited Brands Inc.

"The amount of data that's being generated by the world around us is exploding, it's exponential, it's greater than exponential," Rhodin said. "And as that occurs, the language of business in the future is going to be analytics."

The new center's impact will extend into education: IBM also is partnering with nearby Ohio State University to more easily attract and train workers who are skilled in analytics.

The company is working with the university on new business and technology curricula for undergraduates and helping to beef up its current coursework for business graduate students. IBM has already uploaded software for faculty to use in the classroom.

The collaboration helps IBM create a pipeline of prospective employees. And the company envisions having internships for students and offering courses and seminars taught by IBM leaders.

Ohio Gov. John Kasich touted the partnership between the university and IBM as a model. He said the state is focused on trying to link the needs of businesses to academia.

"It is a huge challenge for us," Kasich said. "Frankly, it needs to start all the way in the first grade."

Kasich said he expects to use IBM's expansion to lure other companies to the state and get them to see there's more to Ohio than manufacturing. And the first-term Republican used his chance at the podium to send a blunt message to business leaders.

"If you have a company, if you want to strike it rich -- come to Ohio," he said. "We're open for business, and you're going to have an exciting time."

IBM worked with JobsOhio, the state's private job-creation entity, on incentives to expand in the Columbus area. Kasich told reporters the deal included a tax credit but said the state would see a positive return in the first year.