



## 2004 Alumni Honor Roll | Reasons to Believe



Role models who give us *Reasons to Believe* in the power of education

**Gary L. Cowger**

**Wyandotte High School, 1965**

As president of General Motors North America, Gary Cowger is responsible for all GM operations in the United States, Canada, and Mexico. In addition, he functions as the global process leader for manufacturing. However, he says he might not be where he is today if it had not been for his high school adviser.



A 1965 graduate of Wyandotte High School, Cowger loved sports and wanted to play baseball at Kansas State University after graduating. But his adviser, who also was his mechanical drawing instructor, saw engineering potential in Cowger and recommended that he test for admission to the General Motors Institute (GMI — now known as Kettering University). After making it through the rigorous testing and interview process, he was accepted, thus beginning his long and prosperous career with the automotive giant.

As a GMI student, Cowger started out working on the assembly line at the GM Assembly Division plant in Kansas City, Kansas. He earned his bachelor's degree in industrial engineering from GMI in 1970, and attended the Massachusetts Institute of Technology as a GM Sloan Fellow, earning his master's of science in management. He was named superintendent of the Kansas City plant in 1978, and subsequently held positions of increasing responsibility as he continued to climb the corporate ladder. His responsibilities have included multiple assignments within the United States, as well as assignments in Mexico and Europe.

He believes that a good education is critical for success in life, and that you must apply yourself to make sure you are "maximizing your potential."

He feels that his education from the Kansas City, Kansas Public Schools gave him a solid foundation from which to build his future. This foundation, mixed with the positive reinforcement and support received from his parents and teachers, gave him reason to believe in himself.