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PRESS RELEASE

Contact: Kelly McLeod, Marketing Specialist, kmcleod@uwf.edu

For Immediate Release

Florida Small Business Development Center Network Honored for Export Achievement

Pensacola, Florida, October 25, 2002: Exports are big business for small and medium-sized Florida companies. That was the message from Commerce Department's Deputy Director General Carlos Poza, who presented the Florida Small Business Development Center Network with the U.S. Commercial Service's *Export Achievement Certificate*. The award recognizes the SBDCs for helping local businesses make their first or a significant new-to-market export sale. This recognition was awarded to the following centers: Florida SBDC Network's Office of International Programs, Pensacola; University of West Florida SBDC, Pensacola; University of Central Florida SBDC, Orlando; Seminole Community College SBDC, Sanford; University of South Florida SBDC, Tampa; Florida Gulf Coast University SBDC, Ft. Myers; Brevard Community College SBDC, Melbourne; and the Florida Atlantic University SBDCs located in Boca Raton and Miami.

"Most jobs in America are created by small companies. Small and mid-size companies comprise almost 97-percent of U.S. exporters," said Poza. According to the latest data available, Florida sold more than \$24.2 billion worth of exports to more than 200 foreign markets last year. More than 93-percent of Florida's 22,295 companies that export are small and medium-sized businesses.

The FSBDC Network works with Florida small businesses helping them prepare to enter overseas markets by offering business counseling, market research, export financing workshops, and seminars, such as the new "Export Florida -- Small Business Export Certification Program."

"The Florida SBDC Network is a valued partner in growing the number of Florida companies that export," said John McCartney, Director of the Commerce Department's U.S. Export Assistance Center in Ft. Lauderdale. "The SBDC's role in developing and sponsoring a variety of trade education programs, along with the Export Florida Certificate Program, has been a valuable addition to our Trade Florida Network. Working together through all the network partners, we are making a positive impact on the level of success in global trade for Florida small businesses."

The Florida Small Business Development Center Network has 32 locations and works closely with the U.S. Export Assistance Center in Ft. Lauderdale, part of the U.S. Commercial Service's worldwide network of 108 Centers throughout the United States and more than 150 international offices. For information about the services of the Florida Small Business Development Center Network visit www.floridasbdc.com.

The FSBDC Network is the First Source For Business Assistance, with over 25 years of experience helping entrepreneurs start and grow successful businesses in Florida. Through the Network and its professionally trained Certified Business Analysts, existing small business owners and prospective entrepreneurs in all industries and every phase of development have access to free and confidential, one-on-one counseling in virtually any area of business management, as well as entrepreneurial training events and information resources.

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State Director's Office • 19 West Garden Street • Suite 300 • Pensacola, Florida 32501
(850) 595-6060 / (800) 644-SBDC • fax (850) 595-6070 • fsbdc@uwf.edu • www.floridasbdc.com

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