

Hurst: From USF Grad Student to Small Business Counselor to Director

Excerpts from Tampa Bay Business Journal, article by Stacey Snow-Clarke



When Irene Hurst came to America at the age of 25, she only intended to stay for graduate school. Now, nearly 20 years later, Hurst is glad she made Tampa her permanent home.

Of Chinese decent, Hurst grew up in Jakarta, Indonesia. Although she ranked among the top 5 percent in her class, tuition costs kept her from going to college abroad like many of her classmates did. Instead, she waited to come to the US for graduate school. A contact in Jakarta who had gone to USF told her about Tampa and the university. Hurst opted for the two-year MBA program because her parents only had money to cover two years of school expenses. Plus, the biggest management consulting firm in Indonesia guaranteed her a job after she graduated. While going through school, Hurst worked at the university's Small Business Development Center as a graduate assistant. After graduation, Hurst quickly learned that jobs in Jakarta paid a fraction of what she could earn doing the same jobs here. For a position that paid \$36,000 in Miami, Hurst received an offer of \$6,000 in Jakarta. "That's how I ended up back here," she said. At the time, the director of the SBDC offered Hurst a job as a counselor. She took over as director at the end of 1997, the same year she became a US citizen. Hurst manages a \$1.5-million budget and 22 employees at the SBDC. Aside from the Center, Hurst serves on the executive board of the Minority Enterprise Development Corp. of Tampa Bay and is involved with the Asian American Coalition of Florida. She sits on three different committees for the Greater Tampa Chamber of Commerce.



The Florida Small Business Development Center Network is one of eight original SBDC pilot programs funded in 1976 by the U.S. Small Business Administration to successfully link the state's education system to community outreach, utilizing both faculty and students to aid in the development and education of the state's entrepreneurs and small business community. Today, the FSBDC is a statewide network of 31 centers involving seven universities, seven community colleges, two Chambers of Commerce and one county Economic Development Council.

Engaging Students in Real-World Experiences A UWF SBDC and College of Business Partnership



Candy Zuleger, Trinity DNA Solutions



Buddy's Bagels



Tim Donovan, Avery Group

University of West Florida (UWF) students are benefitting from an innovative approach to small business consulting and business education, and UWF SBDC clients are receiving valuable services to grow their businesses. A new program is providing the opportunity for students to practice their new skills in a real world environment, encountering the challenges and rewards associated with digital marketing and small business consulting. At the end of their 'contract' with a SBDC client, they will have developed real-world marketing solutions, which they can proudly incorporate into a resume/portfolio to show potential employers.

This Program came about when the UWF Small Business Development Center and the UWF College of Business, Department of Marketing and Economics teamed up to offer senior level students in the Information Technology Program Digital Enterprise track an experiential learning opportunity. This is part of the course requirements associated with UWF's Course IT WEB DEVELOPMENT TECHNOLOGIES/DIGITAL ENTERPRISE SENIOR CAPSTONE. Along with in-class assignments, students are teamed up with SBDC clients requesting IT assistance, such as database development and web-site design. Twelve web sites and two database development projects have been completed since inception in the fall 2003. UWF Professor Dr. David Eppright and SBDC Manager Dan Cavanaugh co-teach this class. Three of the SBDC companies that teamed with the students are highlighted above.

The program has been very successful, with clients and students mutually benefitting from the experience. Beginning with a careful selection and screening process aimed at matching the client requirements with the student's interests and capabilities, to the formal wrap-up and presentation of effort the program offers a disciplined, but flexible real-world experience for students, and a valued end product for SBDC clients.

Brevard Community College Students to Participate in County's Founders' Forum

Brevard County's Founders' Forum is inviting college students to attend dinner meetings at discount prices. Brevard Community College SBDC Director Victoria Peake serves as the chair of the Brevard County group. The March program was A VIEW FROM BEHIND THE DESK and featured three Brevard CEO's discussing challenges and opportunities they encountered in growing their businesses.



The FSBDC Network is partially funded by the US SBA and administered by UWF

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Developing Partnerships that Promote Economic Development

UCF SBDC Partners to Provide "Next-Level" Business Advisory Services

Through surveys and discussions with existing business owners, the UCF SBDC determined that "next-level" business advisory services could have the potential of improving revenue and profit growth as well as job retention and creation. These more mature companies, that also tend to offer the most opportunity for economic development, suggested that the SBDC make this expert advice available as part of their no-cost business assistance services. To accomplish this, the UCF SBDC established the "Advisory Board Council" to expand the resources offered to established business owners so that they could maximize the potential for company growth.

The Council was funded by Orange County Government, along with promotional sponsorships through the Orlando Business Journal newspaper, to serve as an economic development program operating within the UCF SBDC. The goal of the program is to serve 50 mid-market companies in the first year, and the program expects to meet its goal. Program metrics include recording a company's starting revenue, operating and profit margins, cash flow and number of employees. Company progress is evaluated quarterly by assessing revenue, profitability or margin growth, and job retention and creation. Also tracked quarterly is the number of "in-kind" hours contributed by the program volunteers and the estimated market value of that time.

The program so far has the support of over 250 volunteers with commitments of 8-12 hours per quarter for one-year assignments. In the first six months of operation, more than 1,000 hours valued at \$138,000 were provided to 31 companies.

Upon entry, the average Council client has been in business 5.8 years with annual revenue of almost \$2.25M and 20 full-time employees. Total projected revenue of the 31 companies for 2004 is over \$113M with more than 750 employees, up from \$69M and 629 employees in 2003.

Examples of achievements to-date include:

- A fitness-related business started with one location has grown to four in less than six months, adding over 60 jobs and taxable revenue of over \$3M.
- A struggling engineering firm retained five positions while adding two new employees by the fourth month.
- A \$1.2M marine product manufacturer worked with its board to secure an additional \$1.5M funding through private investments.
- With support and encouragement from the marketing expert on their board, a small catering company gained 44 new clients in one quarter – 38 of which were in the client's newly identified target customer-profile.

More information about the Advisory Board Council, and success stories on clients, can be found at <http://www.advisoryboardcouncil.org/>.

UCF SBDC Partners to Provide Strategic Planning Series



The UCF SBDC has just completed its Third Annual "Strategic Planning: Which Way From Here?" seminar series. This series is sponsored by the Orange County Board of County Commissioners and is taught by Dr. Bruce Barringer, Assoc. Professor with the UCF College of Business Administration.

Designed to promote economic growth in Orange County, this seminar series has assisted 116 companies in planning for the next level and growing their business.

Securing Support to Expand Community Outreach

UNF SBDC Receives Federal Grant to House School Management Center

The University of North Florida is home to the new Florida Center for Independent School Management. Funded by a \$368,000 federal grant through the Florida Department of Education, the Center will assist prospective and existing charter school operators with start-up, management and financial issues.

Housed in the UNF Small Business Development Center, part of the Coggin College of Business, the new School Management Center will expand the SBDC's successful services, available to for-profit small businesses for more than 25 years, to the charter school community. Cathy Hagan is the Center's interim director.

The Center is currently focused on developing a needs assessment, building infrastructure, identifying and deploying effective management tools, and customizing and deploying practical management training.

Assistance available to potential and operating charter schools will include a start-up guide, interactive training sessions, a virtual incubator, software tools, roundtable "best practice" sessions, and on-site consulting/management audits. Areas of focus will include financial management, accounting/record keeping, business planning, human resources, fund-raising, general school management, and marketing.

The Florida Center for Independent School Management will serve the more than 200 charter schools operating statewide and the hundreds of applicants seeking approval for new schools each year.

The Center will utilize the extensive Florida SBDC network of certified business analysts located in eight regional centers serving every Florida county and an experienced network of consultants with expertise in charter school management to deliver the assistance and training programs.

Providing Programs that Inspire Creative Learning

SBDCs Kick Off Second Round of FastTrac NewVenture Programs Targeting Veterans



UCF Orlando FastTrac Graduating Class

Starting in January 2004, nine SBDCs throughout the state, including FAU Key West, UNF Ocala, UWF Ft. Walton Beach, UCF Orlando, GCCC Panama City, UNF Jacksonville, USF Tampa, FAU Homestead and FAU IRCC Ft. Pierce offices, kicked off a second round of FastTrac NewVenture programs. Approximately 70 veteran participants graduated during the first quarter, with another 15 plus still to graduate during the month of May.

Last year, the FSBDC Network received a grant from Workforce Florida, Inc. to conduct FastTrac™ programs to Veterans across the State at reduced rates. The programs were also open to the public at full price. The programs are provided in partnership with the local SBDCs, Veterans' Business Outreach Center (VBOC) and The Veterans' Corporation, Inc. FastTrac™ is a nationally recognized entrepreneurial training program developed through the Kauffman Foundation in Kansas City, Missouri that uses a specially developed curriculum, certified facilitators and materials to provide entrepreneurial training.

During the FastTrac program, students research and develop a thorough feasibility study of their business idea. A panel of experts made up of entrepreneurs, university and community college faculty, small business owners and bankers participate in the program, presenting valuable information and insights. Students also gain hands-on business planning experience through classroom exercises which help them envision their new ventures.

Here's what some of the participants had to say about the program:

One graduate said, "Even though I have been in business 30 years, I looked forward to each class and learned something new each week. I especially enjoyed the guest speakers that our instructor, Lauren Small [FAU SBDC Key West], obtained for us."



Tom Weyant, Owner of Earth and Sea Landscaping and Guest Speaker for Key West FastTrac



USF SBDC Director Irene Hurst Presents Certificate to FastTrac Graduate

"In my estimation, this course has so many relevant topics that were not presented in theoretical form, but were based on real world experience and knowledge. To me this is light years ahead of a class just discussing theory and then trying to apply that theory, without a clue on outcome."

"Great class, great instructors, great people, wonderful ideas and most of all the amount of information available through other classes as well as the free counseling with the instructors at the SBDC."

Increasing Opportunities for Diversity

FGCU SBDC & Hispanic Chamber Offer Small Business Seminar

On January 29, the Florida Gulf Coast University SBDC and the SW Florida Hispanic Chamber partnered to offer a Small Business Seminar. Julio Estremera, FGCU SBDC Certified Business Analyst presented the class and the participants included:

- Manuel Porven, Design Works, Fort Myers
- Rodolfo Garcia, Entrepreneur, Lehigh Acres
- Edward Robledo, Univision TV, Miami
- Laurel McDonald, Entrepreneur, Fort Myers
- Katherine Robledo, Interpreter, Miami
- Veronica Montoya, Hispanic Yellow Pages, Naples
- Gloria Vega, Matteo International and Graphics, Cape Coral



Brevard Community College Regional SBDC Hosts 3rd Annual Women's Conference: Women Mean Business 2004

The Brevard Community College's Regional SBDC is hosting its 3rd Annual Women's Conference: Women Mean Business 2004, a conference to educate, entertain, inspire and enhance women. The Conference will be held May 20 from 8:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. at the King Center for Performing Arts, BCC's Melbourne Campus.

The Conference will highlight the talents of four local women who will lead breakout sessions, including: Dr. Wanda Bethea, a Brevard psychologist and consultant, Social Responsibility and Business; Linda Cobb, Eliminate Chaos, Clutter, and Confusion ...And Simplify Your Life; Dr. Carolyn Fausnaugh, Growing Your Business; and Kathleen Rich-New, Secrets of Successful Women.

Lynda Weatherman, CEO of the Economic Development Commission of Florida's Space Coast; Kathy Schillo, CEO of the Cocoa Beach Area Chamber of Commerce; and Marge Bartok, owner of Spherion Staffing and a NASA contractor award winner, will speak to participants at the Conference and discuss the economic climate for small business in Brevard.

The SBDC is offering an additional and creative experiential learning event for participants at the Women's Conference. Nancy Holder, certified protocol specialist by the Protocol School of Washington, will lead Coffee, Confections and Connections: A Business Etiquette Brief. The Brief will be held from Noon until 2:00 p.m. in the King Center Crown Room.

The Brevard Community College Regional SBDC encourages you to come help celebrate women, their endeavors, dreams, and accomplishments. The registration fee is \$30 and includes the breakfast, workshops and materials.

For more information please contact:
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