



Eastern-in-the-News



EASTERN'S ENTREPRENEURIAL INCUBATOR SEEKS TO JUMP-START JOB CREATION

Moorefield — July 10, 2012 — Job creation perches high on the list of anyone who thinks seriously about the future of the economy. But recent data suggests that most new net job creation comes from new, start-up businesses. So in this political season, as one central debate focuses on job creation, one small community college is taking a pro-active approach.

With the aid of a \$40-thousand grant from the Dominion Foundation, Eastern WV Community and Technical College has established an Entrepreneurship Incubator that provides critical assistance to individuals or groups looking to launch new businesses and add jobs to the marketplace.

“Eastern is calling on the communities we serve to look within themselves for a return to economic opportunity and prosperity,” said Seyed Mirkhani, the college’s Academic Program Director for Business Technologies.

Just west of the Eastern Panhandle, in the Potomac Highlands of West Virginia, Eastern covers a six-county service district that ranges 32-hundred square miles. The prolonged recession has struck the region’s manufacturing and tourist industries squarely in the pocketbook, and brought about an uncomfortable number of cutbacks and layoffs.

“The people in our service district can’t look to the traditional employers with any great expectation of lots of job openings,” pointed out Erin Wyer, Eastern’s Entrepreneurship Program Facilitator. So the college is ready to offer the resources and training for them to develop entrepreneurial skills, she said.

State-of-the-Art

The Entrepreneurship Incubator includes Wyer’s services as advisor and facilitator, as well as two dedicated computers — one desktop and one laptop — and a dedicated printer/copier/scanner. The computers come pre-loaded with useful web resources that offer additional guidance to increase entrepreneurial knowledge, expand entrepreneurial capabilities and support entrepreneurial activities for any student or community member interested in exploring a start-up business.

These resources include state-of-the-art software for accounting, business plan writing and marketing. Both computers also offer installed direct access to a large public library system’s eBook collection, as well as to its eBook reader. And the Entrepreneurship Resource Bank at the Incubator makes additional textbooks and book and article references available, including copies of “The Online Business GuideBook” that provides, in a very readable and accessible format, step-by step training on how to start and grow an online business.

“A recent report from the Kauffman Foundation concluded that start-up businesses create 3 million new jobs in the U.S. every year,” said Eastern’s Mirkhani. “And that without start-ups, the nation’s economy would have zero net job growth.”

Supporting that viewpoint, Virginia’s Senator Mark Warner told CNN in early June that “in the last 20 years, 80-percent of new jobs in America came from start-up companies.”

Bold Goals

Just as Vision Shared — a nonprofit, public-private partnership devoted to economic and community development — is set to launch a statewide initiative to jump-start an “entrepreneurial revolution” in West Virginia, Eastern has positioned itself to take a leading role in that movement in the Potomac Highlands.

“The goal is bold: that West Virginia will be ranked first in the nation in the percentage of residents who start a new business,” Thomas McChesney told the *State Journal* last May. Marketing director at Huddleston Bolen LLP, and co-chairman of the Vision Shared Entrepreneur Committee, McChesney outlined the need for “a cultural change” that would empower individuals with sound ideas for a new product or service to start-up a business and create new jobs.

“The success of this effort stands to change the economic and social fabric of our state, and propel us into a prosperous new century,” he emphasized. The proposed revolution will increase public awareness of the value of entrepreneurs, assist entrepreneurs in networking and “create a community of support” — in addition to making start-up financing more readily available.

“We’ve already made a good start on three of those goals,” said Eastern’s Wyer, noting that the college also offers formal courses in Entrepreneurship to students and the community at large through both their credit and non-credit divisions.

“In addition, we offer start-ups and microenterprises a COMEETS service (College Outreach to Micro-Enterprise: Evaluating Technical Solutions) that allows supervised students to visit places of business to assist in evaluating what kinds of computerized technologies might assist the owners and operators in terms of improving efficiency and bottom-line profitability,” she said.

For more information about Eastern’s Entrepreneurial Incubator, visit <http://www.easternwv.edu/v.php?pg=321>, or call Erin Wyer toll-free at 877-982-2322.