Craig Taylor Thanks the U of M

By D. Craig Taylor, Executive Director

So it ends as it began… on a “high note”. This October would have marked 16 years for me at the University. To be honest I did not think I would be here this long, but the culture, the amazing people and the vibrant surroundings have made this an extraordinary place to work. The University has afforded me the opportunity to be visionary, entrepreneurial and innovative in my role as the Executive Director of the Office for Business & Community Economic Development. This role has provided me with unparalleled growth opportunities as a professional and as a person. For this experience, I am profoundly grateful to the University of Minnesota. I want to personally thank the people who have supported BCED (and me) over the past 16 years: I have had the unique opportunity to work with so many incredible individuals. I have also had the good fortune to hire a dedicated and talented team at BCED. They have supported and believed in my vision and it is because of their hard work, commitment and dedication that the Office for Business & Community Economic Development has become one of the most recognized, innovative and successful departments of its kind at a major university. I am truly grateful to them for their patience and support over the years.

I am extremely proud of the University of Minnesota, for the work it continues to do in our community and the progress it has made to become a leader as an urban university. I am also proud to say that the University embraced BCED’s work as a social enterprise, allowing it the freedom to explore and engage in cutting edge work, work that has successfully served thousands of stakeholders in this community over the past 16 years.

I am confident that under the leadership of Vice President Katrice Albert that BCED will continue to grow and flourish and its work will become recognized as a national model. I would be less than honest if I said that my entire career at the University has been without adversity or setbacks (failures). The truth is, adversity and professional setbacks have been my greatest teachers. In my role as executive director, adversity goes with the territory. However, over time I have learned to appreciate adversity because it has increased my capacity to persevere under adverse circumstances using strength and purpose as my internal beacon. Now, adversity is nothing more than the sport I use to train my mind and my spirit to be fearless, to lead with confidence, and to be bold when standing up for what I believe in, or for those who are depending on me to help them unlock the door of opportunity to create a better life for themselves and their families.

My setbacks, however, when put in perspective were really nothing more than opportunities to invoke my creativity and problem solving skills to do it “better”. In fact, those setbacks have taught me how to find my “grit”—the ability to be resilient—to dig deep, get back up and get back in the game with renewed focus and determination and to do it without compromising my integrity or my desire for excellence. Thank you, University of Minnesota, you have prepared me well.

Finally, I thank the University for providing me with the opportunity to serve this community for it has been an honor and a privilege. I have been fortunate and blessed to do work that I am extremely passionate about. For me, there is nothing more satisfying than the opportunity to help others and to know that the work you do has helped to make a difference in their lives, by moving them closer to realizing their dreams and aspirations… it just doesn’t get any better than that. Well maybe just a little bit better… because in my new role working for the Mayor of Minneapolis as the Executive Director of Community Planning & Economic Development, I get to do this (serve this great community) all over again, only this time in an expanded role.
PROGRAM UPDATE

Community Technology Initiative

The Community Technology Initiative creates innovative partnerships that bring technology to underserved populations by focusing on closing the digital gap and providing access to broadband, computer technology and software training. We aim to reduce the growing inequality of access to information technologies among low-income and disadvantaged groups. For the 2014 fiscal year, we offered 174 classes with a total of 1,504 students, and distributed 532 computers to community residents and 18 computers to nonprofits.

Individuals and organizations may donate computers to help support our refurbishing program. BCED takes the donated computers that aren't being utilized to supply the demand for refurbished computers. As a Microsoft Authorized Refurbisher (MAR), we will properly decommission the computers by following the government data-wiping standards of the Department of Defense and we will also issue a Certificate of Destruction if requested. Instead of ending up in a landfill, the refurbished computers will be disbursed to disadvantaged communities that need access to the benefits of technology that they find unaffordable. For acceptable donations, please visit: http://diversity.umn.edu/bced/donate-computers.

New Open Lab sessions are being offered that allow students to receive more practice on typing, Word, Excel, or PowerPoint exercises, work on their resumes, complete their proficiency certificates, and more. Instructor(s) will be available to answer questions. For a complete class schedule, visit: http://diversity.umn.edu/bced/class-calendar.

For more information on CTI, contact Nam Nguyen at nguye186@umn.edu or 612-624-8891.

PROGRAM UPDATE

Business Accelerator Program

The first Business Accelerator Program cohort of 2014 completed its six month program on July 17. There were a total of 10 teams, comprised of local business owners, mentors and graduate students. We were fortunate to have the leadership and the vision of mentors from the following Twin Cities businesses: Trissential, CO2 Partners, FranChoice, Inc., WR Wolff & Associates, Corporate Finance Associates, The Leader’s Toolbox, Inner Circle Midwest, and Navigate Your Encore Career. We sincerely appreciate their time, wisdom, and passion shown throughout the program.

The Business Accelerator Program is a unique program where the Office for Business & Community Economic Development leverages and aligns the University, community and private sector resources to help support local, small businesses poised for growth. BAP is aimed to build a small business’ capacity and improve performance and efficiency. This is done through consulting, mentoring, hands-on workshops and numerous networking opportunities.

The workshops have topics spanning from HR, leadership, and finance to social media and software training. The organizations’ interests and challenges dictate who we bring in for speakers. Active participation, questions and feedback are welcomed and are what make this program successful. Takeaways have included improved company morale, systematic metric tracking, increased revenue, increased website presence, fresh marketing, expansions, smooth management transitions, attainable goals, cost savings, greater traffic and more!

Visit us at diversity.umn.edu/bced/businessacceleratorprogram.

PROGRAM UPDATE

Community Health Initiative 2014 Reception

The Office for Business & Community Economic Development hosted its annual Community Health Initiative (CHI) Recognition Reception on Tuesday, May 13, 2014. It was held at the Weisman Art Museum in the Dolly Fiterman Riverview Gallery with a wonderful turnout.

The event recognized University of Minnesota graduate students, faculty, staff and community-based nonprofit organizations that have been an integral part in the success of the CHI program. Representatives from the Community Health Initiative’s founding partner, Medica, were also on hand to meet the students and organizations and to learn more about the work they are doing in the community through the CHI program.

CHI is a unique effort that focuses directly on communities that face public health disparities and other challenging socioeconomic issues. CHI provides resources to help community-based nonprofit organizations and businesses that impact public health, social services, medicine or medical technology. CHI also supports University of Minnesota graduate students through scholarships, community internships and student consulting projects. You can view highlights from the reception at https://diversity.umn.edu/bced.

For questions or for more information about the CHI program, contact Nedy Windham at windh003@umn.edu or 612-625-2503.
**PROGRAM UPDATE**

**jEM Summer Camp 2014**

The Junior Entrepreneurs of Minnesota (jEM) Summer Camp is a dynamic and unique program offered by the Business & Economic Development Office, in conjunction with the Carlson School of Management. The program runs for five weeks during the summer for Twin Cities metro area high school students. BCED takes pride in introducing young minds to an entrepreneurial curriculum, expert speakers, and creating a business plan in order to develop, nurture, and motivate youth towards creating opportunities for the community and becoming independent from limited employment opportunities. This year, 20 students from 16 different Twin Cities metro area public and private high schools completed the program. These eleven young men and nine young women created an ideal environment for diverse perspectives and ideas.

The summer camp exposed participants to three different program components: entrepreneurial ideation, community service, and high performance teams. First, participants received in-class lessons from experienced Carlson School of Management instructors at the University of Minnesota campus. These lessons are supplemented by presentations from a variety of guest speakers from local, top-rated companies, who share personal and professional insights on leadership, entrepreneurship, and managing successful enterprises. Second, jEM participants engaged in a service learning project in collaboration with a local community organization. This year, students partnered with Oak Park Center on a landscaping/grounds beautification project, designed outdoor mosaics, created jewelry for retail sale, and served lunch to the community. Finally, students worked diligently in teams to prepare for a business pitch of their business plans. The ideas for the products and services were derived by the teams and then refined with the aid of the course curriculum, presentations and offsite visits.

Each year, participants show substantial growth through their business projects and readiness in becoming entrepreneurs. This year, students developed and presented four business pitches for designing an e-closet mobile app, a social networking app, a thrift store, and a youth program. Parents, guardians and staff who attended the final presentations were pleased and proud to see how the initial ideas were transformed into detailed financial and marketing plans, viable business operations, and potential employment opportunities through the program’s process. In the students’ self-evaluations, their overall results showed an average increase of 18% in gaining knowledge, skills and wisdom in being a successful entrepreneur. We are proud of our 2014 jEM Program graduates!

**SUPPLIER DIVERSITY**

**Extended Exposure—WBENC Certified**

Since 1999, Extended Exposure has provided high quality memory products and exceptional service to thousands of clients nationwide. Its mission is to enhance its customers' market presence and build name recognition. This is achieved by offering innovative, customized products to be sold or given as souvenirs while also providing long-term visibility of clients' businesses or geographic areas.

Think of Extended Exposure as a marketplace for marketing and promotions. From simple giveaway mementos to corporate gifts, the company can produce custom designs or even imprint your existing logo on a unique item. This group of creative people with a strong work ethic is ready to jump into action whenever needed.

The company’s commitment to you is ensuring that your name and location gain exposure and are remembered forever. They have built the business on your 100% satisfaction. When working with Extended Exposure, you can be assured of:

1. Dedicated sales reps to manage your project and keep you on budget.
2. Unique products and designs to fit your business needs.
3. High quality, guaranteed products with a proven sales record.
4. Affordable prices - unmatched value in the industry on similar products.
5. Timely service and delivery you can count on!

Extended Exposure is WBENC Certified. The Women’s Business Enterprise National Council (WBENC), founded in 1997, is the largest third-party certifier of businesses owned, controlled, and operated by women in the United States.

Andre Mack

Andre Mack has a compelling entrepreneurship story in how he became the first African American to receive the title Best Young Sommelier in America (2003), and the runner-up Best Sommelier in North America in 2004. Mack first fell in love with wine while working as a waiter at Red Lobster. He became infatuated with studying wines, their history, their regions, and how they were made. Studying from 10 pm to 4 am each night, Mack memorized wineries by writing them down on a dry erase board. He constantly asked questions and was known to visit respected restaurants and sample their wine lists to broaden his palate. His knowledge led him to be the head sommelier at French Laundry in Yountville, California, known at the time as the best restaurant in the world. After realizing “if he wanted to walk on water, he had to get off the boat,” he quit the prestigious role and went into business for himself. His mom told him “don’t tell me, show me” and that is exactly what Mack did by starting Mouton Noir Wines (Black Sheep Wines).

Breaking into the wine industry came with many trials. One of the biggest obstacles Mack faced was the distribution of his wines. At one point he started a distribution center in New York for 18 months before he cashed out. Today, he has built a strong distribution network selling in 46 states and 10 countries. Mouton Noir Wines are created in a cooperative space in Oregon. Mack contracts out equipment in a cooperative facility that has 13 different vineyards, on which Mack owns 200 acres. The facility allows Mack to be on the road 180 days, living between New York and Oregon 8 and 4 months out of the year, respectively.

What distinguishes Andre Mack from the competitors is his ability to stay open minded and talk to anyone about wine. “I want to look people in the eye and have them like my story. If they like the wine, then great!” He has embraced his differences and each day has become more confident knowing he is in the right business. The lessons Andre Mack has learned throughout his journey are:

1. Be willing to put in the time and work.
2. Do your research.
3. Be involved in the industry you want to be in.
4. Discipline is essential.
5. Include your family in your work.

Andre Mack produces a pinot noir, rose, red wine blend and chardonnay. They can be purchased at http://moutonnoirwines.com/wines.

The Office of Business & Community Economic Development (BCED) at the University of Minnesota is an equal opportunity educator and employer. The mission of BCED is to contribute to the economic growth and development of Minnesota communities. The University’s mission, carried out on multiple campuses and throughout the state, is threefold: research and discovery, teaching and learning, and outreach and public service. The mission of the University of Minnesota’s Office for Business & Community Economic Development is to provide resources and support to help students, faculty, and staff work together to achieve the University’s mission and make a positive impact on the local, state, and global communities.