



PRESS RELEASE

Higher Education Consortium Announces Economic Development Initiatives

October 5, 2005

Daytona Beach-- The Volusia-Flagler Higher Education Consortium today announced the introduction of its latest economic development initiatives referred to as the Virtual Entrepreneur Center (VeC). The VeC is an Internet based tool designed to improve access to business development resources in support of entrepreneurship and economic development throughout the region. The project was made possible by a grant from the Florida High Tech Corridor Council. The Volusia-Flagler Higher Education Consortium is a partnership of the five Volusia County colleges and universities which include: Bethune-Cookman College, Daytona Beach Community College, Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University, Stetson University and the University of Central Florida.

The VeC is a Web site where entrepreneurs can easily find business development and networking resources. The site is not intended to originate business development information, but instead to conveniently organize and make more accessible Web content that already exists. It is targeted to assist individuals starting a business, expanding a business, or relocating a business to Volusia or Flagler county. The VeC's innovative design is database driven to minimize ongoing operating cost, and to enable anyone in the community to add their own links to the site. The site's unique objective is to organize relevant business development resources in a fashion that is logical and intuitive to even the novice entrepreneur. The VeC displays links so that the first resources listed are local Volusia and Flagler county resources including the extensive resources of the consortium colleges and universities. State-wide, national and global resource links are also listed.

Dr. Trudie Kibbe Reed, chairperson of the Volusia-Flagler Higher Education Consortium, is pleased with the launch of this latest consortium initiative. "Few people in our community realize the substantial economic impact the consortium partners deliver. The Consortium just recently released a video titled Partners for Economic Prosperity which gives a good overview of our value. This VeC announcement is just one more very tangible example of the strategic role we play in the region's economic growth and vitality."

The college and university resources indexed to specific business development topics include credit and non-credit courses and degree programs, as well as research faculty and students available for business development and market research. Other college and university resources include links to business development centers, sponsored research and grant writing resources, and customized curriculum development expertise for existing worker skill upgrade programs.

The VeC also provides links to:

- Regional Economic Development Entities
- Regional Workforce Development Entities
- Regional Chambers of Commerce
- Regional Resources such as the National Entrepreneur Center in Orlando
- State Programs for Business, Economic Development and Entrepreneurship
- Federal Programs for Business, Economic Development and Entrepreneurship
- Resources such as books, periodicals and conferences relevant to business development and entrepreneurship
- Local government entities involved in business critical activities such as land use permitting and utilities infrastructure
- National and global business development resources

Finally, businesses and consultants that provide goods and services to other companies can also list their capabilities and contact information on the site. These include all aspects of business such as:

- Legal
- Finance
- Marketing
- Information Technology
- Manufacturing
- Human Resources
- Many more...

The Volusia-Flagler Higher Education Consortium has been formed to promote and strengthen the established bonds among member institutions while fostering new interaction and initiatives. Further, the consortium provides a forum for the higher education community to address the challenges facing education today. The consortium also enables higher education to play its appropriate role, sometimes leading and always supporting efforts to add value to the community in ways that promote economic prosperity.

The VeC site may be accessed at the following Web address:

<http://www.vfvec.org>



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