

Entrepreneurship Center Makes Significant Impact on Minority, Small Businesses and Defense Contracting

SINCE ITS OCTOBER 2004 inception, the Morehouse College Entrepreneurship Center (MCEC) has grown from an innovative business start-up into what is now widely regarded as a progressive and award-winning national model for the development of minority entrepreneurship through training, scholarly research and consultant services. To date, more than 10 projects with 22 partnering companies have been undertaken—resulting in valuable alliances that generate recruitment initiatives for student participants, internships, scholarships and new ways to bring practical business experiences into the classroom.

According to John E. Williams, dean of the Division of Business Administration and Economics, “it’s important to emphasize that although the program is administered by the Business Administration and Economics Division, the entrepreneurship focus is intended to be a collegewide initiative, and, therefore, Morehouse is making a contribution toward the general economic multiplier by expanding entrepreneurship through import substitution and/or export economies.”

The initial goals outlined for the MCEC were clear and concise: to assist minority small business growth through training, workshops, seminars and procurement; provide research and advisory services; and provide support for graduates in their pursuit of advanced degrees in entrepreneurship. The primary focus of the MCEC to date has been with the United States Department of Defense’s Mentor Protégé Program (MPP), which assists small businesses (the protégés) in successfully competing for prime contract and subcontract awards by partnering with larger companies (the mentors) under individual, project-based agreements.

“The response to our offerings are proof positive that the Center’s programming—and the skill-set presented by the faculty, Morehouse students, staff and consultants who



Presenting a certificate of completion to Mori&Associates President Shahnaz Deldjoubar (Center) are Tiffany Bussey, program director and Deborah Jackson-Hamilton, program manager, EDS Mentor Protege Program.

facilitate our projects—is right on target,” said MCEC program director Tiffany R. Bussey. “In just two years, we’ve been able to make sizeable inroads into some of the nation’s leading defense contractors, forging valuable partnerships with qualified, but smaller minority contractors, and building a firm foundation for expanded growth.”

Most recent mentor-protégé agreements have focused on companies offering corrosion engineering, information assurance, circuit board and metal component manufacturing. The Department of Defense hopes that future agreements will focus on new technology areas like robotics, radio frequency identification devices and enhanced security assurance. More than 80 percent of the MCEC’s most recent work has been with the Defense Information Systems Agency (DISA) program, and assignments from the Navy, Army and Air Force Protégé Programs round out the workload.

The Center also has generated positive corporate recognition for its efforts – namely in the form of a recent award from the Air Force with mentor participant Lockheed Martin, and another high-achievement nod from the Army with mentor participant Lear Siegler Services, Inc.

MCEC’s largest customer under the Mentor Protégé program, EDS, also gives high praise for the business alliance. In a

recent customer satisfaction survey, EDS program manager Deborah Hamilton-Jackson made special note of “the phenomenal support provided by MCEC, which exceeded my expectations.” That’s in addition to her across the board “excellent” rankings in survey categories, which included adherence to schedule, effective communications, responsiveness to staff, technical competency and quality of deliverables. And, in keeping with the Center’s growth plans, Hamilton-Jackson made clear her intention to continue to support the MCEC.

Other large corporate partners with MCEC include well-known names like AT&T, Northrop Grumman, L3-Titan and Booz-Allen Hamilton. From the protégé or small minority business side of the program’s equation comes lesser known corporations, such as HCI Integrated Solutions (which the MCEC assisted in obtaining ISO 9000 quality management system), MORI & Associates (for which MCEC led the implementation and appraisal of CMMI maturity level 2 process improvement), Dev Technologies, NuCore Vision, TechGuard Securities and GAITS.

With more than 15 years experience in business management for corporate, small business, educational and non-profit organizations, MCEC program director Bussey has become an expert on the topic of HBCU participation in federal contracting.

“Interestingly enough, the launch of the Entrepreneurship Center with a focus such as the MCEC at one of the nation’s leading HBCUs is historic in itself,” she said. “This successful business model is unlike any other offering at sister HBCUs, and is most likely unique when compared to major educational institutions outside of that grouping.” ■