



Dear President,

NACCE has compiled vignettes of community college Presidents who have embraced entrepreneurship as part of the solution to the challenging times we are facing-both for the leadership team and the communities they serve. Below is the first in our series, a brief story of Don Schoening, President, Arizona Western College, AZ. Enjoy!

**A NACCE Entrepreneurial President Profile: Don Schoening, Arizona Western College**



When Don Schoening steps down as president of Arizona Western College in late June, part of the legacy he will leave behind from his 12½ years of service is the AWC Entrepreneurial Center. The center houses the AWC Small Business Development Center and the AWC Entrepreneurial Institute, which offers a certificate program in Entrepreneurship.

Arizona Western serves over 12,000 students in 13 sites spread over a 10,000-square-mile area around Yuma. The nation's largest agri-business region, the area suffers from chronically high unemployment. Dr. Schoening began to put his vision for bringing entrepreneurship education to his community after hearing NACCE Founder Tommy Goodrow speak before the Mountain States Presidents Group in 2004. "I wanted to have a center where local entrepreneurs could get help and assistance in marketing themselves," he says. "The Hispanic population in particular is very entrepreneurial in their thinking but just didn't have the tools to be successful."

Like any good entrepreneur, Dr. Schoening began by building a business case for his idea. He first made an in-service presentation to faculty and staff with facts and figures on the importance of small businesses to local economies. "Then the whole thing really took off when we took a large group to the NACCE conference in Las Vegas," he recalls. "We took about 11 people, which was a big commitment. People came back prepared to move into the program,

so by the following fall, we had done the curriculum development and had our certificate program in place.

"I recommend to anyone who wants to start a program to do what we did - take a group of people to the NACCE conference. The number one thing you need to do is to build a vision for your program and then get people enthused. The NACCE conference is the best possible way to do that because you're there among people with like interests. Sure, investing the money is a risk, but that's what entrepreneurs do - they take risks."

Dr. Schoening undertook another entrepreneurial venture when his staff encouraged him to publish a book he had written about a decision-making model he uses. Entitled "Running a Juice Stand: The 6 E's of Wise Management," the book is a metaphor for successful business management practices. Now in its second printing, the book has been read by everyone from the CEOs of large companies to elementary school students throughout Yuma. "Everyone said, 'Look, the president has done something entrepreneurial!'" says Dr. Schoening. "That pretty much cemented my reputation as an entrepreneur!"

#### **Corner Office Advice**

Here's advice from Dr. Schoening on building support for entrepreneurial education:

- Get institutional buy-in or acceptance. Create the right environment before making any moves toward actually developing a program.
- Assemble a group of champions for your idea; disseminate information through them and have them get feedback to you on how the idea is being accepted.
- When you're comfortable that you have enough institutional support, build the idea into the vision of the college. "At Arizona Western," says Schoening, "we have a five-year vision, so everyone knows where we're headed down the road."
- Create an institutional objective. Arizona State's objective said they would develop a model for an entrepreneurial program. "When we had the model we have not made a commitment to do anything yet," notes Schoening. "Next we needed an implementation plan that was going to require making an investment in effort and resources. That's an entrepreneurial model - you develop a model first and then develop a plan for how to implement the model. So we used an entrepreneurial approach to creating our center."

**Meet Don Schoening and other entrepreneurial community college presidents  
at the [7th NACCE Conference](#) in Chicago, October 11-14 2009.**

**National Association for Community College Entrepreneurship (NACCE)**

Heather Van Sickle, Executive Director

1 Federal St. Bldg. 101-R

Springfield MA 01105