



CULVERHOUSE
COLLEGE OF COMMERCE

2013 ANNUAL REPORT

ALABAMA ENTREPRENEURIAL RESEARCH NETWORK



THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA®
THE CAPSTONE OF HIGHER EDUCATION

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AERN provides entrepreneurial tools and training to 19 rural Alabama counties, working in partnership with local agencies to provide entrepreneurs with research and business planning resources. Each partner agency is provided a toolkit of resources to encourage and assist potential and existing local entrepreneurs.

The package of resources includes business reference materials, business planning software and computer technology. On-site training for agency partners, local economic specialists, and entrepreneurs are integral to the program.

AERN's UA partners include the Office of the Provost, Culverhouse College of Commerce's Center for Business and Economic Research, the Center for Community-Based Partnerships, and the Bruno Library.

Financial support for AERN has been provided by: Alabama State Legislature, The University of Alabama's Provost Office and Culverhouse College of Commerce, Delta Regional Authority, Appalachian Regional Commission, as well as in-kind contributions from our local partners.

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AERN's Annual Meeting Held At The Edge



Group attendees at AERN's Annual Meeting at the Edge.

The annual meeting of AERN's nineteen partners was held at The Edge on August 9, 2013. Mary Patterson, Director of AERN, welcomed the partners and other special guests to Tuscaloosa, and Gina Simpson (Director of The Edge) and Ron Davis (Executive Director of the Alabama Entrepreneurship Institute) explained the partnership between The University of Alabama's Culverhouse College of Commerce and the Chamber of Commerce of West Alabama to create The Edge, a resource center that offers strategic business alliances and networks to help entrepreneurs succeed in business start-ups and expansions.

After a tour of The Edge, Jackie Smith, owner of The Coffee Shoppe in Selma, told the audience of her success in achieving the dream of owning her own business with the help of AERN resources in the Selma-Dallas County Chamber of Commerce. She complimented Ms. Smedley (Director of Chamber in Selma) and Ms. Patterson on providing instruction and support that resulted in the opening of her business, which created 5 new jobs in Selma.

Annual meeting attendees received instruction from Bruno Business Librarians Paul Brothers and Mark Siciliano on how to access research and use this valuable tool to write a business plan and grow a business. These research professionals had also provided information during the year to our partners in the planning stages of business incubators in Marengo and Sumter Counties. During a catered working lunch, Lisa Riley of ACCION, a microlender, presented information on accessing capital to start a business and improving a credit score. Participants engaged in a round table discussion of barriers that small businesses in their areas faced when trying to obtain funding for opening or expanding a business.

Ken DeWitt of DeWitt, LLC explained how to get a grip on your business using the book, *Traction*, by Gino



Bruno Business Librarian Mark Siciliano explains the basics of researching a business idea to AERN partners.



Business owner Jackie Smith of The Coffee Shoppe explains how AERN assisted her with starting her business that resulted in the creation of five jobs in Selma.

Wickman, and talked about the Six Key Components of great organizations. He showed the audience how to use the Vision/Traction Organizer to develop, articulate and achieve a vision as well as use the People Analyzer to place the right people in the right jobs to keep team members inspired and focused on company goals.

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Ron Davis, President of the Alabama Automotive Manufacturers Association, was the next speaker, and provided AERN partners with information on entrepreneurial opportunities in the auto supply chains in Alabama. He discussed resources in the state that support the auto manufacturing industry

and gaps in the supply chains in the areas of fabrication, machine shop services, logistics services and engineering services. Ms. Patterson concluded the meeting with an emphasis on engaging AERN to achieve results and create jobs in rural Alabama.

Danielle Noland

Ribbon Cutting Brings Economic Optimism to Fayette

AERN attended the grand opening and ribbon cutting for Fayette Fabrication on January 27, 2014 at the manufacturing site in Fayette, bringing new economic opportunities in the area for the automotive industry, according to the officials who attended.

“We congratulate our partners — C3 of Northwest Alabama Economic Development Alliance, the Fayette Chamber of Commerce and Mayor Ray Nelson — on their hard work and persistence that resulted in Fayette Fabrication locating here,” said AERN Director Mary Patterson. “The Edge provided a ‘soft landing’ location for this business start-up in 2013, while David Thornell and Mayor Nelson utilized AERN resources to illustrate how Fayette is centrally located to four major automobile manufacturers and their suppliers and to show that the area has an available workforce that is already trained for this type of manufacturing.”

Gov. Robert Bentley, along with several other local officials, welcomed Mark McClanahan, president and CEO of Fayette Fabrication and his new home-grown, Alabama-owned company to the area. Bentley commended McClanahan for bringing the manufacturing and refurbishing company to the Fayette community.

“I am honored to open another supplier for Alabama’s automotive manufacturing facilities, Fayette Fabrications,” Bentley said. “Automotive manufacturing is one of the targeted sectors for growth in Alabama, and today’s grand opening is proof that the industry is continuing to grow. These jobs will provide a good opportunity for the people of Fayette County, and I appreciate Fayette Fabrication’s commitment to the people in Fayette.”

Fayette Fabrication plans to invest around \$1.5 million in equipment and inventory and create 50 jobs



Pictured are Mark McClanahan (President, CEO of Fayette Fabrication), Governor Robert Bentley, and Daniel Boman (Alabama State Representative, 16th District) at ribbon cutting for Fayette Fabrication.

within the next two to three years. Unused space in the building will be used as an incubator to contain and grow other start-up firms. Patterson said six jobs have already been created in rural Fayette from the collaborative efforts of education, business and governmental leaders, with the potential to grow to 50 jobs within three years.

Mayor Nelson said, “The City of Fayette is very excited to have Fayette Fabrication and these much-needed jobs to locate in Fayette County.” He extended his thanks to all individuals and organizations involved.

Danielle Noland

AERN Is Welcomed In Greenville



AERN attends the ribbon cutting of the High Horse Gallery in Greenville on October 29.

Mary Patterson presented a seminar on using AERN resources to the Greenville Area Chamber of Commerce at a luncheon meeting on September 18. Francine Wasden, Chamber Director, introduced Ms. Patterson to the group and commented “We are proud to have an AERN Center in our Chamber of Commerce. It provides a wealth of information to those interested in starting a new business.” Ms. Patterson explained that AERN provides seminars, workshops and personal consultation to aspiring entrepreneurs as well as industry and economic profiles and research necessary to evaluate a business opportunity. After fielding questions from the group, Ms. Patterson had a working lunch with entrepreneur Vesta Taylor, who is expanding her interior

design business to include a signature furniture line. Later in the day, Ms. Patterson met with Nancy Faulkenberry of Nancy’s Heirloom Shoppe to discuss ways to improve her website to reach her specialty customers. She also met with Mary McKinley of High Horse Gallery, who was in the process of opening an art gallery, to help with new marketing ideas for her business. Ms. McKinley was appreciative of Culverhouse’s assistance, and Patterson returned to Greenville on October 29th for the grand opening and ribbon cutting of the High Horse Gallery.

Danielle Noland

Photo Highlights from 2013



Governor Bentley speaks to participants in the Alabama Automotive Manufacturers Association meeting in Mobile on February 1, 2013.



AERN Director Mary Patterson talks with Tina Jones at the Southern Automotive Women's Forum meet and greet in March.



AERN participates in a mentoring session for student-owned businesses at the Edge.



Bibb County Chamber Director Tracey Mitchell shows off the new chamber website that she created using AERN instruction.



Alexander City Chamber President Ann Rye and AERN Director Mary Patterson discuss AERN resources at Business Summit.



Choctaw County Chamber of Commerce's Board Chairman Ron Mason and Executive Director Virginia Loftis answer questions at the "State of the County Address."



Vesta Taylor of Vesta's Interiors shows Patterson a signature piece of her new furniture line.

Annual Meeting, August 2013



Group attendees at AERN's Annual Meeting at the Edge.



Gina Simpson, director of The Edge, discusses the partnership between UA and the West Alabama Chamber of Commerce.



Bruno Business Librarian Mark Siciliano explains the basics of researching a business idea to AERN partners.



Attendees at annual meeting at the Edge.



ACCION Finance officer, LIsa Riley discusses access to business financing and the fundamentals of improving a credit score.

AERN Co-hosts Workshops in Hamilton, Centreville and Fayette



Business owners attending the Hamilton Website Design workshop share ideas for pictures and content that should be included on a business website.



AERN Director Mary Patterson explains the importance of having a business website to entrepreneurs attending the Hamilton workshop.

AERN joined with its partners in April and September to co-host workshops on Website Design and Marketing for area businesses. AERN joined with C3 of Northwest Alabama Economic Development Alliance, its partner in Marion County, to present a workshop on Website Design and Marketing on April 25 in Hamilton. AERN Director Mary Patterson opened the workshop with information on AERN business resources, discussed the basics of building a website and gave tips on choosing a domain name. Amy Strickland, owner of an online shoe store and a consultant for website design, instructed the audience on building a website using Weebly, showing them how to publish content and download pictures to the pages they had created. The audience of small business owners also received instruction on secure payment methods, cost-effective shipping methods and tips for securing returning customers.

On September 24th, AERN Director Mary Patterson traveled to Centreville to assist the Bibb County Chamber of Commerce and its Director, Tracey Mitchell, in bringing website consultant Strickland to speak to Bibb County business owners on website creation. Ms. Mitchell welcomed the audience and thanked the Bibb County Board of Education for providing the venue. The same workshop was provided to entrepreneurs in Fayette on September 25 at Beville State Community College's campus with C3 of Northwest Alabama Economic Development Alliance hosting in collaboration with the Fayette Chamber

of Commerce. Both of these organizations are partners with AERN and assist with economic development in Fayette and Marion Counties. David Thornell, President of C3, and Anne Hamner, Director of the Fayette Chamber, introduced April Bushhorn to the group and explained that she would be taking Ms. Hamner's position upon her retirement in October. Amy Strickland, a graduate of The University of Alabama, provided hands-on guidance, and entrepreneurs worked on laptops as they learned the basics of how to create pages, add text, images and videos, add forms, conduct e-commerce and publish their websites. Ms. Strickland answered questions on using Paypal for ecommerce and explained the use of mobile credit card processors such as PayPal Here and Square.

With lunch provided, these day long seminars enabled participants to have a functional website ready to publish by the end of the day if they chose to bring business pictures and content relevant to their business. Some of the businesses represented at these workshops included a real estate/land management company, an HVAC business, a computer parts company, a newspaper, an insurance company, a funeral home, an art studio, an antique shop and a nutritional supplement company.

Danielle Noland

CCBP Students Help AERN and Others Spread the Word



This group photo contains a few of the many CCBP students who have been a part of the news team that has publicized the activities of the Division of Community Affairs over the past eight years. You will also recognize some of the permanent staff, who have served as the mentors of these budding media professionals.

Mary Patterson understands the value of getting out the word about the Alabama Entrepreneurial Research Network. As director of AERN, Patterson must spread the word about the resources available to entrepreneurs seeking to start or expand a business within the 19 counties served:

“Many times just sharing the success stories of all the businesses that we report on is an inspiration to other entrepreneurs,” Patterson said. “That is of the utmost importance for us to be able to communicate these stories via the written word.”

If it were not for the UA students who assist her in the development of the newsletter, news releases, photos, and AERN’s news making annual report she would be unable to get her important message out to the audience that depends on these media.

Both graduate and undergraduate students alike provide the writing, editing, photography and design for the media under the direction of Dr. Edward Mullins, former dean of UA’s College of Communication and Information Sciences and now the director of Communication and Research for the Center for Community-Based Partnerships, an initiative of the Division of Community Affairs, headed by Dr. Samory T. Pruitt, vice president.

Mullins, who provides editorial leadership for these students, said, “We have worked with the Alabama Entrepreneurial Research Network to connect UA

information and expertise with rural communities seeking to improve economic and social condition,” Mullins said. “We recruit students with beginning and intermediate experience in journalism and help them develop to full-fledged journalists capable of finding jobs in a competitive environment.”

Patterson said that the students too learn about becoming entrepreneurs through their unique connection to the program, while honing skills that could put them into business for themselves or take positions as media professionals.

“Students working at CCBP get the opportunity to do real-world journalism that makes a difference, not just to the communities they are reporting about, but also for themselves, as they improve skills they will use after graduation,” said Mullins, who since retiring uses his position to continue to share his craft with young people.

Andrea Mabry worked for CCBP for five years, beginning as an undergraduate and continuing as a grad student. She started as an undergraduate student majoring in visual journalism and continued while pursuing a master’s in American Studies.

Today, she is a professional photographer, shooting weddings and photos for magazines on her own.

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"I think working at CCBP was really good for me in a lot of ways," Mabry said. "I am really interested in community projects. Working at CCBP for so long helped me to gain a better understanding of community problems and economic development."

As she works to produce sustainable projects within the New Orleans area, she believes her experience working at CCBP and on the AERN Newsletter helped her to become more confident as she earned her degrees.

Patterson said she believes the partnership between CCBP and the Culverhouse College of Commerce is the strong foundation which has allowed AERN to grow.

"We do not have the resources to create the newsletter without help from CCBP," Patterson said. "My background is business and not journalism."

She said the professional-grade reporting and presentation stands out in the product. "We put this information on our website and publish it in a newsletter and annual report," Patterson said. "We would not have the quality that we have without Dr. Mullins' students."

Throughout the years, in addition to Mabry, the following students have worked on the newsletter: Nathan Wu, Marian Walding, Danielle Noland, Sirui Shao, Antwon Key, Christie Cowan, Elliott Knight, and Antonio Rogers.

Besides providing help with the production of its newsletters, AERN continually works with CCBP through participation in the Engagement Scholarship Conference. AERN presented at the international engagement scholarship conference in October 2012 when UA hosted the event at the Bryant Conference Center. At the time Patterson, in partnership with Francine Wasden, director of the Greenville Area Chamber of Commerce, prepared a community partnership presentation on "Inspiring Social and Economic Change through Engaged Community Partners."

"Through the CCBP and Dr. Samory Prewitt's leadership, the AERN platform of engaged scholarship has been presented to national and international audiences and connected to other outreach centers around campus to work together for more student involvement and collaborative community service," Patterson said. "We also work with Tommie Syx of CCBP's AlabamaReal program to connect high school entrepreneurship with AERN partners and small businesses in rural counties."

Additionally, a scholarly article was written by former AERN Co-Directors Annette Watters and Paavo Hanninen, along with Dean J. Michael Hardin and published in the Journal of Community Engagement and Scholarship on "Developing a Community-Based Research Network for Interdisciplinary Science: The Alabama Entrepreneurial Research Network" in 2012.

Kirsten Barnes

Student Intern Updates AERN Website

In the spring of 2013, the AERN website received some much-needed updating. A key player in the process was Steve Zary, a student intern from the School of Library and Information Studies at The University of Alabama.

As part of his internship assignment in the Angelo Bruno Business Library, Zary went through the AERN website page by page and noted places where the information and links needed updating. He provided revised material for the site, including creating two videos of sample database searches now located in the Databases section.

He was supervised in his work by Karen Chapman, AERN webmaster, who noted, "Steve has been a big help in getting the AERN website refreshed. This has also been a great opportunity for him to learn about the

information needs of small business owners in Alabama." Zary graduated from The University of Alabama in May, 2013 with a Master's in Library and Information Studies.

"I am forever grateful for the valuable contributions that our talented students make to the AERN program. By engaging students in experiential learning, both the students and the rural communities we serve benefit," commented Mary Patterson, Director of AERN.



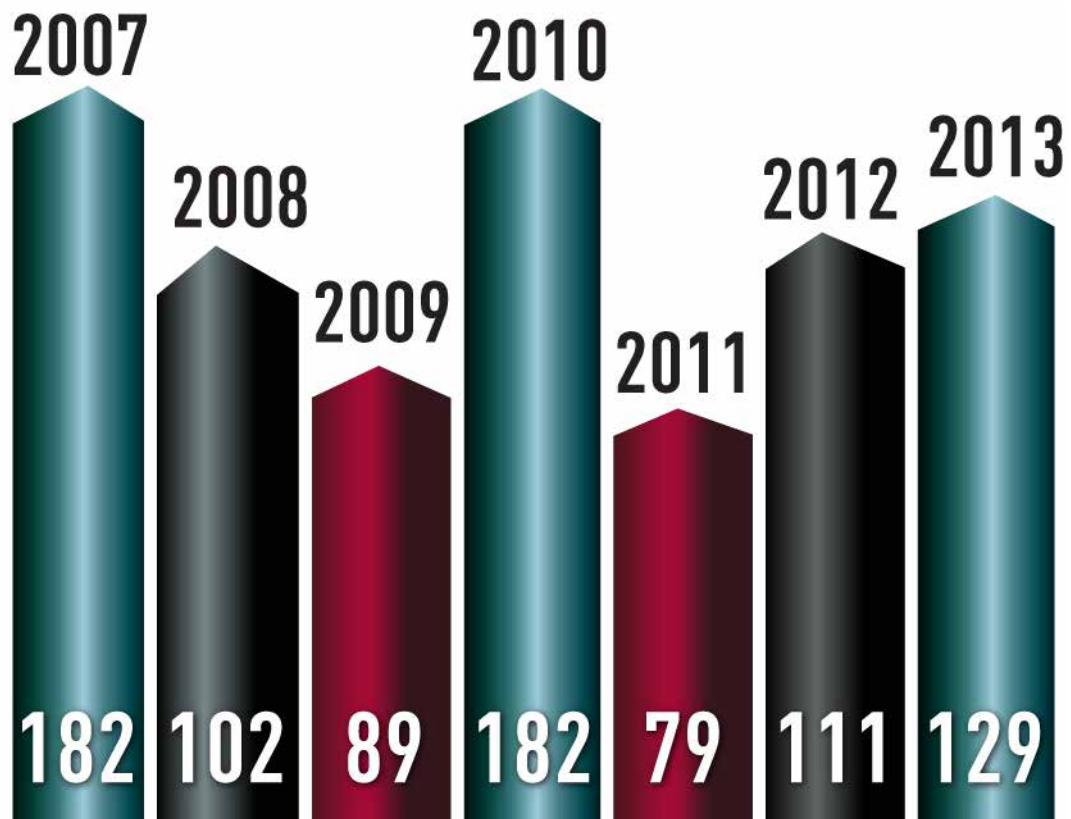
Steve Zary, updating the AERN website.



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