

Donation gives entrepreneur center boost

SCSU program
seeks to stimulate
self-employment
alternatives in area

By John Molene

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Like many start-up businesses, the Harold Anderson Entrepreneurial Center at St. Cloud State University is starting small.

Interim director William C. Rodgers answers the entrepreneurial center phone from his office in the basement of Centennial Hall, the campus library building.

The center is composed of a few offices, a modest meeting room, some part-time student help and Rodgers. But since March 14, it also has \$1 million, thanks to Harold Anderson, president of Anderson Trucking Service of St. Cloud.

Anderson gave the new entrepreneurial center a jump start with his \$1 million gift — the largest one-time private contribution in the history of the university. That money will be used in a variety of center projects,

Growth

Rodgers said.

Anderson's combination of successful business sense and ethical behavior will serve as a model for the center, Rodgers said.

"It's sort of what we stand for," Rodgers added. "Doing things right and fairly. We want to stimulate entrepreneurship. We want to encourage people to see new enterprise formations as options in their lives."

The goal of the center is serving St. Cloud State students as well as current and future community entrepreneurs. The center has been in the formation stage since December 1996, when a group met to explore a way to combine St. Cloud State and community resources.

The center will promote entrepreneurship among St. Cloud State students and alumni, as well as to businesses, organizations and individuals. The center will offer consulting services, courses and seminars in entrepreneurship, Rodgers said.

Please see **CENTER, 5A** ▶

Center

The center's specific objectives include:

- Introducing St. Cloud State students to the entrepreneurial process and opportunities through classroom instruction and experiences with entrepreneurs, as well as ventures involving business projects, internships, business consulting and mentor relationships.

- Encouraging, supporting and facilitating entrepreneurial classroom experiences in courses throughout the university.

- Offering current and future entrepreneurs training, education, advisory services, recognition programs, networking opportunities with investors and business support services, as well as information dissemination programs.

"We will try to provide unique courses, seminars for people starting a business," Rodgers said. "We're looking at some programs that will help match people with ideas, business plans with investors."

- Introduce entrepreneurship and the opportunities provided by self-employment to elementary and secondary students.

The center will work closely with

programs and units throughout the St. Cloud State community, Rodgers said. It will encourage students studying science and technology-related programs, as well as those in arts, humanities, social sciences, education and other programs, to explore entrepreneurial opportunities in their fields.

Academic programs and services will include a new introduction to the entrepreneurship general education course, and an emphasis in entrepreneurship available to students seeking a College of Business major or minor. Several new courses focusing on management,

marketing and finance-related entrepreneurial issues will be introduced.

Outreach efforts include instructional programs for existing and potential entrepreneurs, as well as special topic seminars. Officials are seeking entrepreneurs who have an interest in sharing experiences with students and faculty.

During spring, the center is sponsoring a series of PBS-produced tapes on TCI of Central Minnesota's public access cable channel 10 in St. Cloud. Innovative combinations of instructional-based programming will be pursued

using satellite TV and the Internet.

One day, the center may provide business plan evaluation services, topical annual programs, roundtable meetings, discussion sessions and sponsorship of applied research.

The entrepreneurial center operates as a not-for-profit corporation, governed by a 15-member board of directors. The center also is guided by a campus advisory committee, with members from each of the six St. Cloud State colleges.

The formal kickoff for the center will take place in May with the first meeting of its board of directors. One of the

first tasks for the new board will be to hire permanent staff for the center, including co-directors, a program director and an economic development director.

The center will be run as a business, Rodgers said.

"We want this to be a center that will not cost St. Cloud State University to run and operate," Rodgers said. "We intend to support ourselves financially."

Basic start-up costs have been assumed by the university, as well as some individual donors.

"The center will look for opportunities to create profit-making ventures through technology transfers," Rodgers said.

One such program might be a series of instructional packages offered on CD-ROM that would be marketed to schools and businesses.

"Our dream is to have a lot of these ventures going in the future, some of them substantial," Rodgers said.

The center also will pursue supporting grants from foundations and organizations.