Encouraging Entrepreneurs

For marketing major and Senior Janessa DeBoer, Crookston, Minn., the experience her internship provides will help build a resume and give her important background for a career in business.

Last fall, the U.S. Department of Education awarded a $550,000 congressionally-directed grant to the University of Minnesota, Crookston to establish the Center for Rural Entrepreneurial Studies (CRES). The Center will expand connectivity to the region’s educational institutions, economic development organizations and financial institutions, as well as to state and federal small business support agencies and aspiring entrepreneurs in Northwest Minnesota.

DeBoer, along with Senior Lindsey Fouts, Park Rapids, Minn., serves in CRES as an intern, working closely with Kevin Cooper, director, and Rachel Lundbohm, assistant director. Both Cooper and Lundbohm are instructors in the Business Department and were part of the grant writing team who brought the CRES to the Crookston campus.

While Fouts focuses on the accounting and database side of the work, DeBoer focuses on developing a brochure and content for the Web site, crafting the creative statement, choosing colors, helping design both the logo and slogan for CRES, and creating a one-year marketing plan for the Center. The work she has done and is doing in her internship gives her a sense of accomplishment and the realization that she is involved in the real business world.

"I have been working with a client on a marketing plan, and it has given me a chance to use what I learned in the classroom in a real-life situation," DeBoer explains. "It is exciting to see how valuable what we learn in the classroom is to helping shape a business."

The mission of the CRES is to encourage entrepreneurship through educational leadership, applied research, and insightful consulting. The CRES will engage the students, faculty, and research facilities of the University of Minnesota in Crookston in order to stimulate the entrepreneurial culture and strengthen the economic vitality of northwest Minnesota. DeBoer is excited to be a part of the CRES and spends about 15-20 hours a week in the office in 117 Dowell Hall. Both Fouts and DeBoer work around their class schedules to staff the office.
While business seems the perfect fit for DeBoer, she changed majors a few times before discovering her niche. She attended the University of Minnesota, Duluth for two years before transferring back to the Crookston campus. “I like the smaller campus,” she explains. “I was unsure when I had grown up here if I wanted to go to school here, but I am so glad I came back. It has been a great experience to be learning on this campus.”

Her favorite class has been Lundbohm’s integrated marketing communication where she and two of her classmates developed a marketing plan for an area car dealership. “We recommended marketing strategies they have used to increase awareness,” DeBoer says. “It is exciting to realize elements of the plan we developed were useful. For me, the class was really beneficial and rewarding.”

She hopes to work as an event coordinator and planner at some point, but for now, she is focused on employment to help her grow in the field. Her job search has already begun, but like many seniors, she is looking forward to commencement in May. It marks the end as well as a new beginning and DeBoer is already equipped with some professional experience to help her on the road ahead.

If you are interested in learning more about CRES:
The Center for Rural Entrepreneurial Studies
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117 Dowell Hall
Crookston MN 56716
Phone: 218-281-8595
Web site www.umccres.org

At Right: Janessa DeBoer is the daughter of Alumna Karen (Mireault) Biermaier ’83.

At Left: Housed in the Business Department, CRES is physically located in 117 Dowell Hall. In the photo (l to r): Janessa DeBoer, Kevin Cooper, Lindsey Fouts, and Rachel Lundbohm.