

## College consultants receive high praise

By **EMILY ZIMMER**  
Staff Writer

**NORTHFIELD** — At the halfway point of its inaugural year, the College Board of Business Consultants (CBBC) is receiving high praise.

The Northfield Enterprise Center (NEC) oversees the program which places selected students from Carleton and St. Olaf colleges with area businesses. Students work with the businesses on finite projects such as business plans, marketing research and Web design.

So far, the program has flourished.

"It has gone really well and everybody seems to be really pleased with the work they are doing," said Lynda Grady, the NEC's executive director.

Grady said 12 college seniors and juniors were selected through an interview process last spring. Students involved in the program are not getting paid or receiving school credit; however, what they are getting is real-life experience in the business world.

"It is a great resume builder," Grady said.

There are two volunteer advisors students report too, Sian Muir, a St. Olaf professor and Bob Will, a retired Carleton professor.

"We are very fortunate to have them," Grady said.

Since the program is in its first year, there are some bugs to work out, but Grady said she believes there is a need in the community for this type of program.

"This is great for the community and we are open to see how it evolves," Grady said.

Although the NEC oversees the CBBC, Grady said the idea was first developed by First National Bank Vice President Rick Estenson. Estenson envisioned the program to give students the chance to put real life application to what they are learning in school.

"I envisioned a program that would pair the students' talents with local businesses," Estenson said.

He also wanted to give college students the chance to become involved in the community in which they live.

"A great by-product of their experience is the contacts they will make," Estenson said.

Already, there are more students and businesses interested in getting involved with the program.

"I get two or three phone calls a week about this program," Grady said.

Some of the students currently involved in the program will graduate in the spring leaving spaces open. Grady said they will take resumes in the spring.

The program started as a partnership between the First National Bank, the NEC, the Northfield Downtown Development Corporation (NDDC) and the two colleges. However, it now has expanded to include Wells Fargo Bank and Community National Bank.

"This is just a great collaborative effort," Grady said.

NDDC executive director

Ross Currier applauded the partnership.

The NDDC has three students doing market research for it and Currier said he is very pleased with the work the students have done.

The students are gathering basic information about downtown businesses to aid in future downtown growth.

Currier said the students bring a lot of positive energy to the research.

Carleton junior Isil Cinar is working with the NDDC. She said she has enjoyed the experience and has met a lot of new people.

"This has really changed my whole college experience," Cinar said.

St. Olaf senior Claudia Klug, who also is working with the NDDC, also said the program has been a valuable experience.

"It has been great getting to know people in the community and it is always nice to get experience," Klug said.

Carleton senior Doug Lind, is working with Mike and Kay Peterson, owners of Peterson Equipment, to develop a marketing plan.

"It is amazing to see the process; I really learned what types of decisions small businesses are faced with," Lind said. "Hopefully we can help Northfield grow and get experience in the meantime."

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