

Wit and Risk

by Janan Talafer • jvt916@tampabay.rr.com

* From Improv Night to an entrepreneurial degree, two colleges push the education envelope.

ROBERT FORSYTHE WANTS STUDENTS to think on their feet.

With a microphone, under a spotlight. On stage.

Kind of like open mike night at the local comedy club.

This student "Improv Night" comes courtesy of Forsythe, dean of the University of South Florida College of Business in Tampa. It's being developed in affiliation with the Tampa Bay Performing Arts Center.

"If you can do good improv, you can think on your feet and that sharpens communication skills," says Forsythe. "That translates directly into the corporate world."

Improv Night will be part of Forsythe's Bulls Business Community, a new "living and learning" residence set up for incoming business majors. An entire floor in USF's four-year-old Maple Hall dorm is set aside for students to eat, live, play and study together.

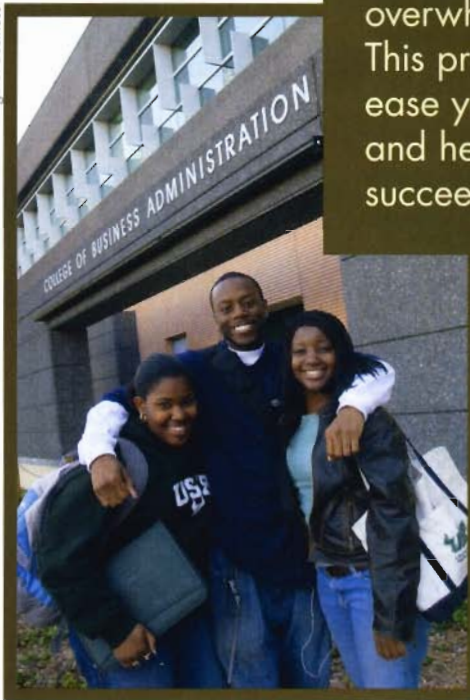
"I hadn't heard of anything like this before," says Ashley Parkerson, a graduate of Riverview High School in Sarasota who was accepted into the new program. "It's a good opportunity. I'll have other people close by to study with."

Forsythe says the "community" is an attempt to make a large university like USF seem small and comfortable. And, to keep tabs on students who may be struggling. "We had one student," he says, "who had a stellar high school career but only passed one course her first semester here. I'd like to think that if she were in the Bulls Business Community, we would have been there to help."

Students will also benefit from on-site tutoring and mentoring, academic advisors from the College of Business and group study opportunities. Plus, they'll get advice from "Resident Assistants," students who survived their first year in the College of Business.

"It would have been wonderful to have had this when I was a freshman," says Steven Giovanniello, a new resident assistant. "College is a new world, a new environment, and it can be overwhelming. This program can ease your mind and help you succeed."

USF College of Business



“College is a new world, a new environment, and it can be overwhelming. This program can ease your mind and help you succeed.”

Next up for the students may be seminars from business leaders on everything from dressing for success to proper business etiquette. "There's real value in bringing business people in to talk to students," says Ralph Ghioto III, president of Century Automotive and chairperson of the dean's executive advisory committee in the College of Business. "I'd love to talk about some of the pitfalls and things you need to have in your tool-

box once you get out into the real world, even how to write a proper thank you note. You'd be surprised."

Acceptance into the Bulls Business Community was open to incoming freshmen who were first accepted into the Bulls Business Network, an academic and social organization that supports business majors. "The bulk of students are admitted to the business college in their junior year, but through the Bulls Network we've begun accepting high-performing freshmen who meet certain criteria," says Forsythe. Students must have a weighted grade point average of 3.5 or above and SAT scores of at least 1100

(minimum math SAT score of 550) to join the business network. Only students in the business network were invited to join the new residential community. For the fall term, 16 women and 12 men are participating.

Academy of Entrepreneurs

The thinkers at St. Petersburg College hope one of their newest programs will create more entrepreneurs for the business community. The college is launching a four-year degree program in entrepreneurship early next year.

"We want successful businesses to grow, prosper and create wealth for Tampa Bay," says Kurt Long, founder and CEO of