Preparing Global Entrepreneurs
A new program teaches students from Bulgaria to create “born-global” ventures

Creating Rural Prosperity
Nick Didow mobilizes statewide effort to close N.C.’s Digital Divide

Visioning Future Trends
Kenan Institute goes One-on-One with aerotropolis expert and institute director Jack Kasarda

Story on Page 2
Story on Page 3
Story on Page 4
A new program teaches students from Bulgaria to create “born-global” ventures

Thirty of Bulgaria’s best and brightest university students spent an intense two-week immersion in the world of entrepreneurship this summer in a program planners hope will prove transformational for the students and their country.

They were the first to participate in the Kenan Institute’s new Born-Global Entrepreneurship Program, which combines instruction, practical application, and interaction with successful entrepreneurs to inspire and prepare students to become global entrepreneurs.

“We know that entrepreneurs can have a tremendous impact on their communities,” said institute executive director Raymond Farrow III, who developed the program. “We also know that today’s globally connected economy offers opportunities to propel new ventures in ways we are only beginning to tap. Our goal is to use what we know about both to help students learn to create global ventures that can change the trajectory of their lives and their country.”

Best hope for an emerging economy

Born Global was one of three components of the Summer Entrepreneurship Program (SEP), part of the Bulgarian Young Leaders Program (BYLP) directed by the Institute of International Education and sponsored by the America for Bulgaria Foundation.

BYLP seeks to develop a generation of young Bulgarians capable of thinking and acting on a global level and committed to building their country’s economy and civil society.

Students spent five weeks in the United States learning the fundamentals of entrepreneurship from business leaders and experts in Boston, Chapel Hill, and New York, then developed plans for how they would apply what they learned when they returned home.

“The goal of the Summer Entrepreneurship Program is to develop entrepreneurs who can revitalize and bring new dynamism to Bulgaria’s economy and create jobs.”

Emil Levy, Program Manager
Bulgarian Young Leaders Program

“Bulgaria has been going through a painful process of transitioning from Communism to a free-market economy for the past 20 years,” said BYLP program manager Emil Levy. “The goal of the Summer Entrepreneurship Program is to develop entrepreneurs who can revitalize and bring new dynamism to Bulgaria’s economy and create jobs.”

Opportunities for impact

UNC’s role was to teach the students how to turn their ideas for new ventures into business plans and develop networking and presentation skills. Farrow saw the opportunity to do more—to not only teach venture-creation basics in a two-week format but to change the way students viewed themselves and the contributions they could make. The “born-global” focus offered the opportunity to promote a concept ripe with opportunity.

“There are lots of programs that promote and teach entrepreneurship,” Farrow said. “But teaching how to launch new ventures with a global component right out the gate is an area that deserves more attention.”

UNC instructors first took students through the steps of venture creation. Students then applied what they learned through an innovative business-planning workshop model designed and led by UNC Center for Entrepreneurial Studies director Ted Zoller. Farrow overlaid those components with opportunities for students to interact with entrepreneurs who have achieved success and used it to benefit others.

UNC alumnus Amit Singh described his experience launching a born-global technology consulting firm, Spectraforce Technologies, one of Inc. magazine’s 500 fastest-growing companies for 2009. Social entrepreneurship expert James H. Johnson, Jr., director of the Kenan Institute’s Urban Investment Strategies Center, described his work creating a model school for at-risk youth that is transforming a depressed inner-city community.

Students visited Asheville, N.C., to learn how that community sparked a cultural and economic renaissance by supporting entrepreneurs in the arts, music, and tourism. They heard from founders and executives of enterprises launched by UNC students while still in school, such as Carolina for Kibera, a UNC nonprofit fighting poverty and violence in a Kenyan slum, and e-mail marketing firm iContact, whose founder is giving back by launching a socially responsible investment fund.

The UNC program speaks clearly to the goals of the program’s sponsor, Levy said.

“We hope that when the students return to Bulgaria with all of this knowledge and training, they will start a transformation, a revolution.”

SEP student Vladimir Grachki said the program opened his eyes to how much he and others can accomplish.

“I think the most important thing I learned is that I can do so much more than I think,” he said. “Now I have a purpose that I want to fulfill.”

FOR MORE INFORMATION
Raymond B. Farrow III
Executive Director, Frank Hawkins Kenan Institute of Private Enterprise
Campus Box 3440, Kenan Center
Chapel Hill, NC 27599-3440
919/843-7553
raymond_farrow@unc.edu
www.kenaninstitute.unc.edu
Nick Didow mobilizes statewide effort to close North Carolina’s Digital Divide

A decade ago, North Carolina leaders identified high-speed Internet access as the No. 1 priority for connecting rural areas of the state to the 21st-century economy.

This fall, North Carolina takes a giant leap toward accomplishing that goal with the launch of a $146-million project to extend high-speed connectivity to 82 of the state’s 100 counties, including 67 rural counties that have had little or no access to broadband service until now.

The historic initiative is due in large part to the vision and tenacity of Nick Didow, UNC Kenan-Flagler marketing professor and Kenan Institute Faculty Fellow. Didow saw the critical need to extend broadband access to rural homes and businesses and mobilized a statewide effort to provide it.

“Programs like this don’t happen without visionary leaders,” said Joe Freddoso, president and CEO of MCNC, the nonprofit technology partner that is leading the broadband initiative. “Nick realized that the state’s rural areas needed this service to participate in today’s economy and brought together partners across the state to make it happen.”

Perfect storm of opportunities collide

Didow’s awakening to the plight of disconnected rural communities came two years ago, when the town of Edenton in northeastern North Carolina asked the Kenan Institute to study what it would take to create a wireless network to serve the community.

“We realized very quickly that it was virtually impossible to do,” Didow said. “The existing service providers simply did not have the capacity to create a community wifi network.”

Didow soon discovered that lack of broadband capacity and access plagued rural communities across North Carolina. As the N.C. Rural Prosperity Task Force had pointed out in its 2000 report, without broadband access, businesses and consumers cannot participate in the global economy. Rural areas cannot compete for new business investment and jobs. Something had to be done.

Didow’s research into the issue led him to MCNC. The nonprofit organization already operated a private technology network for educators, called N.C. Research and Education Network (NCREN). In the past five years, MCNC had expanded its network to serve nearly all K-20 educational institutions across the state and add public health providers. Its efforts to continue expanding to meet the needs of its network’s users met the same capacity issue, Didow found in Edenton.

As MCNC looked for a solution, Congress passed the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, which made $4.7 billion available to extend broadband infrastructure to rural areas. MCNC jumped on the opportunity and, in January 2010, won a $28.2 million federal award that, matched with $11.7 million MCNC raised privately, would allow it to extend NCREN to 37 counties in North Carolina.

Meanwhile, Didow and MCNC’s broadband team, led by Freddoso, explored ways to extend broadband further, to the dozens of counties that remained unserved. Working together, with help from the UNC School of Government and business students at UNC Kenan-Flagler, they prepared the mammoth application for the Golden LEAF Rural Broadband Initiative to extend rural broadband access statewide, rallying support from local governments, service providers, technology partners, and private funders.

The result: MCNC in August received $75.75 million more in federal broadband funding and raised $29.25 million privately to expand the NCREN network statewide.

Middle Mile building begins, Digital Divide narrows

MCNC is awarding construction contracts this fall to build 1,300 miles of “Middle Mile” fiber optic cable that will wind through 67 rural counties and connect them to the NCREN backbone by spring 2013. MCNC is encouraging local communities and telecommunications providers to be ready to extend service the “last mile”—that is, from the NCREN backbone to rural businesses and consumers—as soon as service is available.

The initiative is a “game changer” for North Carolina, said University of North Carolina President Erskine Bowles, who chaired the Rural Prosperity Task Force: “The funding of the Golden LEAF Rural Broadband Initiative is the most significant event toward meeting this goal since [the task force report] was crafted over a decade ago.”

N.C. Gov. Beverly Perdue said the investment “levels the playing field in attracting high-paying jobs to rural North Carolina.”

Said Didow: “This will be a significant step toward eliminating the Digital Divide in North Carolina forever.”

For more information

Nicholas M. Didow, Jr., Ph.D.
Faculty Fellow, Frank Hawkins Kenan Institute of Private Enterprise
Associate Professor of Marketing,
UNC Kenan-Flagler Business School
Campus Box 3490, McColl Building
Chapel Hill, NC 27599-3490
919/962-3189
nick_didow@unc.edu
One-on-One with John D. “Jack” Kasarda, director, Frank Hawkins Kenan Institute of Private Enterprise

Not so long ago, airports were built near cities and roads connected one to the other. This pattern—city in the center, airport on the periphery—shaped life in the 20th century.

Today, jet travel, round-the-clock workdays, overnight shipping, and global business networks have turned the pattern inside out. A new urban form, the “aerotropolis,” has emerged, placing airports in the center with cities growing around them, connecting workers, suppliers, executives, and goods to the global marketplace.

Kenan Institute Director John D. Kasarda defined the term “aerotropolis” and works with regions and countries worldwide to leverage airports and their surrounding areas for economic growth.

Kasarda chronicles the rise of this emerging urban form and examines both the challenges and opportunities they present in a forthcoming book, “Aerotropolis: The Way We’ll Live Next,” co-authored with business writer Greg Lindsay.

Kenan Institute: What is an aerotropolis?
Kasarda: An aerotropolis is a city built around an airport. We sometimes call it an airport-integrated economic region where various types of functions that depend on the airport locate in the immediate airport area.

Kenan Institute: How will this new urban form affect our lives?
Kasarda: The aerotropolis will have an immense impact on the way people live and the way people work. First of all, we’ll be a much more connected world physically. We have the regular Internet, which connects information, but people and products are going to move around the world, too, faster and more efficiently.

Those places that can be key nodes for what we call the new “physical Internet” will thrive. It will affect not only living arrangements but also work arrangements. People will be working 24/7. They will be in companies that are totally connected and, perhaps, living in what we call “instant cities” that develop around the nodes of connectivity, which today are the major international airports.

Kenan Institute: What are the challenges to developing aerotropolis?
Kasarda: The real issue is planning to get aerotropolis development right because, if there is not appropriate planning, the development will be spontaneous, haphazard, economically inefficient, and ultimately unsustainable. The aerotropolis model brings together airport planning, urban regional planning, and business site planning to get economic efficiency, aesthetics—that is, good appearance—and sustainability.

Kenan Institute: How does your book address our changing world?
Kasarda: The book, which is co-authored with business writer Greg Lindsay, looks at the evolution of aerotropolis around the world and the challenges they face as well as what is being accomplished; examining how three factors—speed, agility, and connectivity—are changing the way in which we’ll live and work.

The main theme of the book is that, whether we like it or not, major cities are developing around airports. Some of these are developing in a way that is not positive. Others are being planned very carefully, generating remarkable benefits for the people who live in them and work in them, as well as for the metropolitan areas of which they’re a part.

The book looks at the evolution of airport-centered economic development and the way it is shaping the lives of the people and the businesses that are located in these airport economic regions.

For More Information
John D. Kasarda, Ph.D.
Director, Frank Hawkins Kenan Institute of Private Enterprise
Campus Box 3440, Kenan Center
Chapel Hill, NC 27599-3440
919/962-8201
john_kasarda@unc.edu
www.kenainstitute.unc.edu