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WINNER OF FIU’S BUSINESS PLAN COMPETITION LAUNCHES PRODUCT
UniversityPlacementServices.com Provides Needed U.S. University Admissions Information to Latin American Students

MIAMI, Fla. – (Oct. 20, 2004) – Six years ago, Jose Ignacio Alvarez arrived in the U.S. with plans to pursue a Master’s degree. During the application process, it became clear to him that university admissions systems often are challenging for international students. Due to language barriers and other constraints, it can be difficult to complete the process effectively and in a timely manner.

According to Alvarez, his own experience is what prompted him to launch last month UniversityPlacementServices.com, a web site offering complete and detailed information in Spanish concerning all aspects of university admissions processes in the United States.

“When I went through this, it was so complicated,” Alvarez said. “I decided I had to do something about it.”

Alvarez has been developing and refining his concept since he had a need for such a service. Earlier this year, Alvarez, who earned his Master’s of Science in Engineering Management at FIU in 2000, walked away as the first place graduate winner in FIU’s Howard J. Leonhardt New Venture Challenge: An International Business Plan Competition, and received $15,000 in cash and $4,000 in in-kind contributions for the UniversityPlacementServices.com business plan.

“Through his participation in the New Venture Challenge we’re able to help Jose and other participants of the competition expand their network of contacts,” said Alan Carsrud director of the Global Entrepreneurship Center, which runs the New Venture Challenge. “Additionally, we provide the teams guidance on an ongoing basis to help them launch their ventures.”

The recognition and quality advice Alvarez and his team received from local business leaders helped them officially launch the site, which has been receiving initial praise.

“It’s very rewarding to be able to serve as a catalyst to help students put their ideas to work and to develop their own companies,” said CBA Executive Dean Joyce J. Elam. “At the
CBA, our goal is to continue helping our students become successful entrepreneurs and we’re proud of the work Jose and his team are doing and are excited to watch the site grow.”

Currently, the site offers international student admission details for Florida International University, University of Miami, Florida State University, University of Florida and University of South Florida. Within the next year, Alvarez anticipates a rapid period of growth for the online service within the region and beyond. The site will soon include information from universities in other states of preference for international students like New York (Columbia University and New York University), New Jersey (Rutgers and New Jersey Institute of Technology), and California (University of California, Los Angeles).

“We have no doubt there is a need for this service and the reaction we’re already receiving supports that. We’re confident this is going to be a success,” said Alvarez, who has been traveling to various Latin American countries to generate awareness and excitement about the site. “Our goal is to have at least 50 participating universities within a year. Additionally, we plan to include information in Portuguese, which will serve the Brazilian market.”

UniversityPlacementServices.com offers a no-hassle system for students throughout Latin America to secure detailed information, in their native language, about all aspects of seeking admission to universities in the United States. The online service converts the complex application process for each institution into a series of simple steps that allow users to solicit information on institutions through the service. This way, it saves time and money by offering users access to all the information needed on several schools directly from one source. Additionally, the service translates education records that are required for admission to U.S. schools.

Florida International University’s College of Business Administration, South Florida’s leading business school with unique expertise in international business, entrepreneurship, and information technology (IT) strategy, is the largest of the University’s professional schools. Among the College’s more than 30,000 alumni are some of South Florida’s most successful business leaders and entrepreneurs. Approximately 8,000 students are enrolled in its undergraduate business courses and more than 800 graduate students study in its Chapman Graduate School of Business every year. Another 1,000 participate annually in one or more of its professional and executive education programs.

The College is one of only 480 business schools in the world—about 25% of all business schools—accredited by the AACSB International—The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business. It ranks in the top 10 among these schools in the number of students it graduates each year, and its Chapman School offers the 6th largest part-time MBA program among them. U.S. News & World Report (2005) ranked the College’s undergraduate international business programs the 9th best in the nation and its graduate international business programs among the top 25 in the U.S. (Best Graduate Schools 2005)—the only Florida business school to make both lists. Business Week (October 21, 2002)
also ranked the College among the best in the U.S., placing it in the group with American, Fordham, George Washington, South Carolina, Syracuse, Rutgers, Tulane, and others. For the past three years, America Economia, a premier pan-regional business journal, has rated it among the top 50 MBA schools for Latin American students. For the last five years, Hispanic Business has ranked the College among the top 25 business schools for Hispanics. Hispanic Trends (Summer 2003) ranked the College in its list of the Top 25 MBA programs for Latinos—the only Florida business school to make the cut. Additionally, in March 2004, HispanicMagazine.com ranked the school in its Top 25 colleges for Latinos. The College also is one of only 30 business schools to have received a U.S. Department of Education grant to establish and support a Center for International Business Education and Research.

For additional information about the CBA and its Chapman School, please call Assistant Dean Sally Gallion at (305) 348-6631, e-mail gallions@fiu.edu or visit the College’s website at http://cba.fiu.edu