Student demand sparks business school growth

BY STACIE OROZCO

A business continued to boom and the economy strengthened, so too did South Florida's business colleges. New buildings were constructed on many of the campuses to accommodate the growing number of students and online courses were added in the Internet era.

Nova Southeastern went from being a school of public administration to business administration by the early 1980s, implementing several master's and doctorate degrees, including a weekend master's in business administration.

By the early 1990s, it turned its focus to entrepreneurship and included that in the naming of the school.

"We are the only school to have that in our name," said Randolph Pohlman, dean of the school of business. "Our whole thrust is in entrepreneurial spirit. We want to teach our students to think outside the box."

Classes – once held in a few trailers – were moved into the old law school building where they began to occupy all of the floors, forcing out the computer science classes held on the fifth floor.

"We just don't have enough room," Pohlman said.

Enrollment has climbed from 700 students to more than 2,500. The school is expected to break ground on its 250,000-square-foot Wayne Huizenga Graduate School of Business and Entrepreneurship Carl A. DeSantis building next January.

Two decades of growth

Twenty years ago the University of Miami's College of Business moved into its 7,500-square-foot building. That building was recently renovated and expanded to 60,000 square feet.

"It's virtually a new school," said Paul K. Sugrue, dean of the business school. "The staff is now required to have a doctorate, which was not the case 20 years ago.

The school has gone from one small computer lab with Apple computers to more than 500 computers in various office labs, all with connection to the school's network and Internet.

"We are not ahead of the technology, just barely keeping up," Sugrue said.

Growing up together

Florida International University's College of Business Administration has grown along with the surrounding communities during the 25 years since it was founded.

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NGU's business classrooms roll in, far left, but students' future home will be the Wayne Huizenga Graduate School of Business and Entrepreneurship on the Davie campus. Terry Avitable-Prezzemolo was the first Keiser student, middle, and is shown, above, 20 years later with Evelyn Keiser, co-founder of the college.

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“As the university has grown, our programs have grown to reflect what the business community really wants from us,” said Dean Joyce J. Elam.

The business school began with a small undergraduate program and some evening programs, and has now grown at the graduate level with specialized programs like its International MBA, its evening programs and master's in information systems careers.

What's going on at the school mirror's the economic development that is going on around it, said Elam. “As we grew into the gateway of the Americas, you'll see our programs grew with it.”

Ten years ago the school implemented its doctorate program in response to the business community's demand.

Its business school moved into a new building five years ago and Elam said it is in the planning stages to build a new facility because its 4,000 undergraduate and 1,000 graduate students have outgrown the current facility. It should have a new School of International Business within two years and possibly a new graduate school of business within seven years, Elam predicted.

Certificate of retail and logistics programs were added in response to requests from the business community, Elam said.

From 1 to 4,000

Keiser College has grown from one student when it first opened its doors in 1977 to 4,000 students attending schools on 10 different campuses. Space has grown from 2,400 square feet to a half million square feet.

In 1977, Arthur Keiser was a teaching assistant at the University of Florida and his mother, Evelyn, was teaching Latin American history in Broward County.

“We wanted to build a better mouse trap,” Keiser said.

So the mother-and-son duo opened the first campus on Oakland Park Boulevard. It offered certifications in medical and dental assistance. In 1981, it became a two-year
accredited college.
The school has gone from there to offering 23 different majors and offers online programs 21 hours a day, seven days a week to more than 3,000 students. Staff has grown from five to 520.

"In the early days we were just making payroll," said Keiser. "We didn't make money for the first three years."

Keiser has also entered into a joint venture with Shanghai and Beijing. Students can attend a four year program at the Fort Lauderdale campus. It also recently began a culinary program at its Tallahassee campus. It will apply for accreditation in the fall.

'We wanted to build a better mousetrap. In the early days, we were just making payroll. We didn't make money for the first three years.'

Arthur Keiser
Keiser College

But the school is most popular for its computer science program and produces more associate degrees in this field than any other institution in Florida, Keiser said.

Largest of nine

Florida Atlantic University's College of Business opened its doors in 1964 as one of the university's original colleges. Today it is the largest of nine colleges with more than 5,000 students enrolled.

The college is nationally known for its School of Accounting. It most recently launched the Internet Institute and its Adams Center for Information Technology Product Management and Entrepreneurship, a program aimed at spurring the growth of South Florida's Web-based industries. The center was named after FAU alumnus and Internet technology pioneer Scott Adams for his $2 million donation.

The college also recently created a Jews' philanthropy management program, which deals with various aspects of the administration and management of Jewish philanthropic organizations.