Bloomsburg University alumni returned to campus to share their experiences and knowledge with business students as part of the first annual Zeigler Institute for Professional Development (ZIPD) business conference on Thursday and Friday, Oct. 6 and Oct. 7. ZIPD was financed by a gift to the Bloomsburg University Foundation from Terry ’76 and JoAnn Schultz Zeigler ’77 to enable the College of Business to help business majors develop the personal and professional polish necessary for life long success.

The ZIPD conference presenters are C-level execs, presidents, vice presidents, CPAs and other business leaders. According to Mike Tidwell, dean of the College of Business, “the conference was themed ‘From the Classroom to the Boardroom’ because it is critical for students to understand that they can be as successful as any alum speaking at the conference. ZIPD is bringing a renewed focus to our faculty to consider how we prepare students to make the jump from the classroom to the boardroom and events like this expose our students to alums that have successfully made the transition. This conference is just the tip of the iceberg.”

Among the 43 alumni presenters was John Gross, a partner at PricewaterhouseCoopers. John spoke about the passion he believes is necessary to be successful. “Everyone at Bloomsburg University has tremendous opportunities,” he said. “You have to find the balance between your personal and professional life in order to harness that and become successful. But, regardless of your career plans, make sure family, friends and health always come first.”

Gross closed his segment by commenting on what it was like to be back on campus. “I love coming back because these are my roots,” he said. “What I do is not who I am. I am a northeastern Pennsylvanian. To follow my dreams and my goals I had to leave, but this will always be my home.”

Noble “Bud” Quandel, president and CEO of The Quandel Group, also touched upon the importance of passion in one’s career. A high GPA is nice, he said, however many employers, including himself, look more closely at an applicant’s personality.

Leadership and Executive Education Program Launched

Bloomsburg University’s College of Business launched the Leader and Executive Education Program (LEEP) this fall to offer businesses a way to enrich their employees’ management skills. LEEP, an innovative combination of outdoor challenge-based leadership activities coupled with MBA-inspired workshops, allows execs and managers on the ‘fast track’ to “engage a creative leadership curriculum, return to work, and be more effective in their careers,” says Darrin Kass, professor of management and Director of LEEP.

Four years ago, Kass says, “the MBA program released a documentary entitled, ‘Leadership on the Edge,’ which showed MBA students climbing the Knife Edge Ridge of Mount Katahdin (Maine) to develop leadership skills and teamwork. As business leaders viewed the video, many
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“Developing Your Personal Brand” because she believes every student should embrace corporate humanitarianism and life-long learning. “There’s no doubt that, no matter where I go in life, I’ll be learning something,” she said. “It’s absolutely vital to always be learning all the time.”

Gloria Gerrity, vice president of operations at Geisinger Health System, outlined the qualities of being a good and effective leader. “Leadership isn’t a big secret,” she said. “It’s simply learning who you are and excelling at that.”

In addition to the conference plenary sessions, the conference included a keynote panel discussion and luncheon sponsored by PricewaterhouseCoopers, special events for alumni sponsored by Travelers Insurance and the Alumni Office, and a networking event.

Tidwell notes that “some alumni and guests traveled from great distances to be part of this special event.” For example, David Williams, CEO of Make-a-Wish Foundation, came in from Phoenix. Los Angeles alums included Jim and Deb Ferraro, CEO and CFO (respectively) of Executive Facilities Services and Doug Taylor, President of Taylor Wealth Management. San Francisco area alums and guests included John Gross, Partner at PWC, Maria Cannon, VP at Cisco Systems, and Peg Barron. The College of Business appreciates the efforts of all alumni and speakers.

Leadership Program continued...

questioned how they could take part in the climb. The response was overwhelmingly positive.”

“I honestly didn’t expect people to be this excited about LEEP,” says Kass. “Most problems companies have are people-problems—communication, working together, morale issues. We’re working with different companies but they all tend to have the same issues.”

Kass developed LEEP with the University’s Quest program, a leadership development institute serving Pennsylvania and other residents throughout the Mid-Atlantic region. Quest coordinates outdoor adventure programs and activities, including guided excursions, like hiking, mountain climbing and kayaking trips. Kass says the partnership with Quest provides unlimited opportunities for creative leadership development.

ING, General Dynamics, and Geisinger Health System are the first companies to participate in LEEP. The core program contains four modules, each delivered at a cost of $5,000 (not including special trip fees like transportation, equipment, and Quest guides). Firms can decide to take part in all modules or they can pick and choose based on their needs.

With ever-increasing demands on employees to improve skills and remain relevant in today’s business world, many companies want key staff to take MBA courses but lack the available time and resources. LEEP offers MBA-inspired modules to help employers achieve this goal.

If you want to know more about LEEP contact: dkass@bloomu.edu