



## **CI's Small Business Institute helps local businesses**

Camarillo, Calif., Dec. 14, 2010 - The Small Business Institute (SBI) at CSU Channel Islands (CI), under the leadership of Professor Rudolph Estrada, has proven to be a real asset to small for profit businesses in Ventura County.

Each year since 2003, SBI accepts applications from area qualifying small businesses that would like the Institute to do an analysis of their operation. Some of the applicants are involved in a start up business while others have been doing business but would like to get an opinion on how well and successful they are operating or if they are ready to expand. From this pool of applicants a limited number of case studies are selected.

Professor Estrada who is the Executive Director of the SBI also specializes in entrepreneurship at the MBA level and business ethics. Estrada mentioned that since 2003 he has observed significant changes in the applicants wishing to participate in the case study program. "At the beginning of the program most of our applicants were men. Then we began to see an increase in requests from women in business. This semester the SBI will service seven cases; five women, one man, and a husband and wife business." He went on to say that more and more women were starting small businesses and that the economic times had probably caused many of them to rethink their ability to meet their economic needs on a salary. "Perhaps this was the impetus for them to consider starting their own businesses," he said. Estrada noted that women are also often successful because of their ability to network, a key factor in building a business.

The case study program is available to senior level students and MBA student candidates.

The group breaks into workout teams of three to six students and each group receives a case study. The groups compete to produce the best case study of the year, which is recognized with a cash award.

Student Charles Law, a participant in one of the groups, explained that he had been a successful real estate appraiser for 20 years, but by August 2008, "I saw the writing on the wall. Real estate was dead and I needed to re-invent myself, so I decided to go back to school and get a degree." His team worked with Tina Lebar and Kelly Briglio who had opened the Paradise Pantry in 2007, an artisan wine and cheese market in Ventura. They offer gourmet foods, wine tastings, catering and special events planning. Law said it was an amazing opportunity to work with a real business, studying their profit and loss statement and existing business plan as they looked for opportunities for the owners to expand their successful business, to help them tweak their business plan and see what potential problems or opportunities existed for the business.

Estrada stated that, "This is a cutting edge program, allowing students to get real world experience in a competitive business environment and making them more marketable in the job market upon graduation."

# # #

*CSU Channel Islands is accredited by the Accrediting Commission for Senior Colleges and Universities of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges.*

*CI Mission Statement*

*Placing students at the center of the educational experience, California State University Channel Islands provides undergraduate and graduate education that facilitates learning within and across disciplines through integrative approaches, emphasizes experiential and service learning, and graduates students with multicultural and international perspectives.*