

THE MACKLIN BUSINESS INSTITUTE AND CENTER FOR ENTREPRENEURSHIP AT MONTGOMERY COLLEGE



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'It Has Been About the Students'

Three Years Since Launch of Institute, Director Reflects on Accomplishments

This marks the three-year anniversary of the announcement of a \$1.25 million gift from Gordon and Marilyn Macklin to fund the creation of a business institute at Montgomery College. Jeffrey Schwartz, director of the Macklin Business Institute, recently was asked to reflect on the past three years. What follows are excerpts from that discussion.

Q. Can you reflect on the past three years and lay out some of the key accomplishments and milestones achieved?

A. The first thing I say is it becomes obvious that it has been about the students. And as we look back at the milestones these three years offer us, we immediately wind up looking to this spring when our first class of Macklin students -- which was our pilot class -- will begin to receive their bachelor's degrees. We could go over the individual success stories, but my point is that three years ago we had the concept of a business institute that included a business honors program for sophomores, and three years later we are watching that first class begin preparations to graduate from a four-year school.

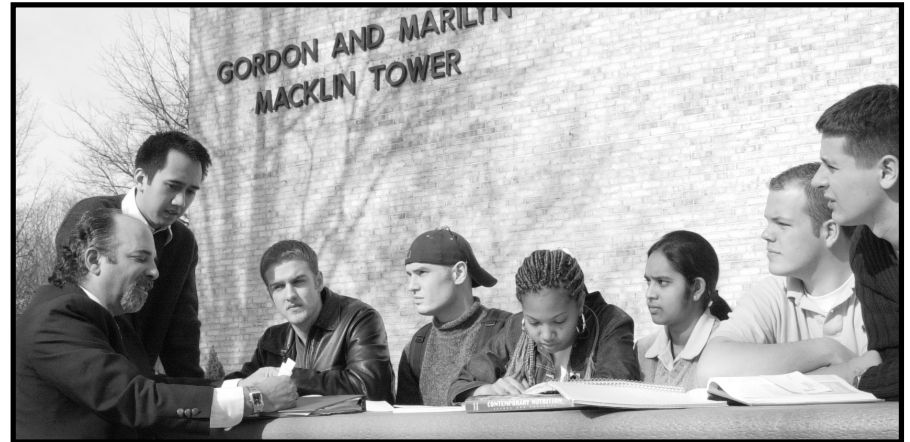
Q. Can you interpret what that result means or reflects?

A. Well, I am not trying to say these students would not have graduated without us. That is not the issue. These were students who would likely have stayed with school anyway. What we have done for these

students, and they for us, is to have carved a path, where they achieved, and were recognized for, their academic excellence. Of the first class -- eight members of whom now attend the prestigious Smith School of Business at the University of Maryland -- three were inducted into the business honors society for carrying a 4.0 GPA. They have done good things... They have achieved well at the university level.

Q. What are some of the factors involved in them doing so well that you could say had something to do with going through the Macklin Institute?

A. Well, certainly when you put people in small scholarly groups -- and we have both the Macklin Institute students, as well as those in the Montgomery Scholars program to look at here at Montgomery College -- you see the kind of success you can have. So you look at those models, and you say what is different about them? Well, the students spend an inordinate amount of time together, compared to typical community college students. They get this focus of attention that says, okay, it's you 12 or you 14 students. You are going to be in mostly the same classes. You're going to sit down in a weekly seminar with a faculty member. You are going to have unique projects that have common goals and help to build a team. You are going to have a lot of goals and you are going to have each other to lean on. That is different for community college students, and in some ways, different across the board.



Macklin Business Institute Director Jeffrey Schwartz (far left) with students from the honors business program.

Q. What results from this small group focus?

A. The one thing I have heard is that when the students get to Maryland they don't just feel adequately prepared, they feel better prepared. When they get into their upper level courses, they are ready to speak their minds, and they are ready to take positions, and they are ready to interact.

Q. The Macklin Institute has not only been about academics...

A. No, students also have internships with us and they have had special experiences in the business world. They got in touch with the world of business at a fairly high level, and they were inspired by that. The (Macklin) experience is also about the access and the networking and the interchange. We had business people of the stature of Gordon Macklin, who was formerly the president of NASDAQ, sit down in rooms with these students, and they got to see business up close and personal. We open the back door, so to speak, and they look in

and really see how business is functioning. It is a cool thing.

Q. The difference Macklin seems to be offering these students relates to the focus of the experience offered.

A. The intensification of the common goal, the reliance on each other, the team building effect, being challenged that way, wouldn't come about unless you put a program together. And in the public arena, that doesn't often come about without help -- private funding, that says: you guys do a good job, take this donation, do something special.

Q. What about the possibility of another long-term milestone, not yet realized, of one of these students becoming very successful and remembering where they came from?

A. One of these students is likely to be successful in a big way, make their fortune, come back and donate another million dollars to Montgomery College. It happens. Our alumni tend to look back with great appreciation.

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