

Entrepreneurship Director Still Receives High Marks

"Whatever they do in life, I want them to be innovative and challenge the unknown. I want them to face risks. We all tend to get very limited. I want my students to see they aren't limited." —Dr. Donald F. Kuratko



By BRIAN SAPARNIS
The Star Press

When he was a Ball State University student, Greg Hochstedler didn't fully appreciate what he was learning. It wasn't until after he graduated and had started his own business that he treasured all he had learned under Dr. Donald F. Kuratko, the founding director of the entrepreneurship program.

Hochstedler, one of the university's first entrepreneurship program students, was at Ball State from the fall of 1984 to 1988.

As his final project in the now legendary spine-sweating "New Venture Creation" class, Hochstedler developed a plan to open American Clean & Seal. He started the Greenfield company a week after graduation with himself as the only employee. Now, 18 employees work at the business that does pressure washing, sandblasting and painting for residential, industrial and commercial clients.

"It was harder than anything I've done in business in the 12 years since I left," Hochstedler said. "That class prepares you for everything."

Stories like that give Kuratko a sense of pride and make him believe his hard work and motivational skills are worth the effort. He built the entrepreneurship program at Ball State from the ground up in 1983, when only a handful of schools offered programs in entrepreneurship, and hasn't slowed down since.

He asked his early students to trust him. He said if they followed him and worked hard, it would pay off and that they would build something truly special.

"The students believed," Kuratko said. "I really have a lot of pride in my early students. I have so much respect for them, because they carried us. It's been an 18-year effort. We have accomplished something that is phenomenal."

The blue-collar work ethic of the early and current students helped carry Ball State's entrepreneurship program to high rankings by several publications. The business community holds the program in the highest esteem.

Later this month, Kuratko will accept the Thomas W. Binford Memorial Award for outstanding contribution for development at the World of Difference award ceremonies in Indianapolis.

DR. DONALD F. KURATKO

- has published 150 articles and eight books, including the leading entrepreneurship book in the country, which is used by 390 business schools.
- is the only professor at Ball State to achieve all four of the university's major lifetime awards:
 - Outstanding Young Faculty (1987),
 - Outstanding Teaching Award (1990),
 - Outstanding Faculty Award (1996), and
 - Outstanding Researcher Award (1999).
- was honored as Entrepreneur of the Year for Indiana (1990).
- is executive director of the Midwest Entrepreneurial Education Center.
- is the first professor to be named a distinguished professor for the College of Business at Ball State University.

According to former and current students, Kuratko has, in fact, made a world of difference in the lives and careers of countless students.

His dynamic approach has made a lasting impact.

Just ask Muncie resident Lon Fox, who went back to school at the age of 36 in 1994 to enter the entrepreneurship program. Two years later, he owned his own business—Mail Boxes Etc.

"If you're around him much, you're going to catch his enthusiasm and drive; it's contagious," Fox said. "If you dare to dream, he'll be there to help you."

The Entrepreneurial Perspective is one of the gifts Kuratko's students treasure the most.

Every plan has to be thorough and thought out. Though risks can't be completely eliminated, they can be minimized.

"Whatever they do in life, I want them to be innovative and challenge the unknown," said Kuratko, who got his first taste of running a small business as a child when his family owned a funeral home in Illinois. "I want them to face risks. We all tend to get very limited. I want my students to see they aren't limited."

Different is not always better, he preaches, but better is always different.

Kuratko preaches energy, drive and determination to his students. The students swear Kuratko practices what he teaches.

"He does get you energized," said Nikki Sparks, a senior from Greenfield. "He's a very motivational speaker."

NATIONAL RECOGNITION

The entrepreneurship program at Ball State University has received the following national rankings:

- No. 1 state university for entrepreneurship—*from U.S. News & World Report*
- top five business school for entrepreneurship—*U.S. News & World Report*
- top 10 business school for entrepreneurship research—*Journal of Management*
- top 25 business school for entrepreneurship—*Success magazine*
- top 20 entrepreneurship programs in the United States—*Journal of Business Venturing*
- top 20 U.S. MBA programs in entrepreneurship—*Business Week*
- top 10 entrepreneurship programs in North America—*Entrepreneur magazine*