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## SCACE conference sheds light on future of education in SC

By Russell L. Martin

GREENWOOD--Linking students to success after college can be a daunting task.

At the recent South Carolina Association of Colleges and Employers (SCACE) Fall Drive-In miniconference, hosted by Lander University's Department of Career Services, Upper Savannah Regional Education Center coordinator Cynthia Pitts outlined new initiatives undertaken by the state to start preparing young people to make good career choices before they ever reach college.

Born out of South Carolina's Education and Economic Development Act (EEDA), the Upper Savannah Regional Education Center is one of 12 such centers opening across the state and the fourth to come online.

Based in Greenwood, the Upper Savannah office covers Greenwood, Laurens, Edgefield, Abbeville, McCormick, Newberry and Saluda counties. With the slogan of "Personal Pathways to Success," the organization aims to work together with area schools and businesses to develop career-centered curricula and experiential learning opportunities for all students in the specified counties.

"High school students pursuing technical areas of study already receive guidance in the area of career development," said Pitts. "With Personal Pathways to Success we plan to help schools and businesses implement a model of career development for all stu-



**Cynthia Pitts**

dents, even those taking College Preparatory courses."

According to Pitts, the ultimate goal of Personal Pathways to Success, as well as that of the EEDA, is to help the citizens of South Carolina become viable players in today's global economy.

With an expected full

implementation date of 2011, the plan set out by Personal Pathways to Success will start as early as kindergarten.

At an early point in their education South Carolina students will begin to develop an awareness of the kinds of careers available. Students will then begin to explore careers they might be interested in. By the time students reach the ninth grade they will be ready to pick a career path and stick with it throughout their time in high school and college. Finally, the student will move into the arena of employment with a solid foundation and interest in continued development.

Lander University is also taking steps to assist with this statewide initiative, a few of which were highlighted at the SCACE conference.

Through faculty and staff collaboration, Lander has recently started the "Experience Your Education" program, or EYE, which will help students find internships with area businesses that will directly relate to their programs of study. According to Leah Hughes, director of Lander's office of Career Services and SCACE vice president, "each degree program at

Lander will have at least one unique internship opportunity available.”

In addition, Lander will be working to create more dual enrollment opportunities that will allow local high school students to take college classes in addition to the required curriculum. Taking these classes will allow students to start college with some of their general education requirements already out of the way.

According to Pitts, many high school students satisfy the required credit hours for graduation before their senior year, often allowing the privilege of early dismissal since their class schedule doesn't fill the entire school day.

As an alternative, Pitts suggested that area institutions of higher education could provide those early dismissal students with the opportunity to take classes on a college campus - a more productive use of their time. This sentiment is one that Pitts shares and has discussed with Lander president Dr. Daniel Ball, who is on the board for the Upper Savannah Regional Education Center.

Lander University's dual enrollment program will not, however, require that students attend classes on Lander's campus.

In fact, as part of a pilot program, Lander professor of



**Members of the South Carolina Association of Colleges and Employers recently converged on Lander University's campus for the SCACE Drive-In miniconference. The event, hosted by Lander's Department of career services, allowed representatives from South Carolina universities and colleges to make and solidify connections with state businesses. Attendees from left are: Jennifer Pierce-Turman, Lander; Leah Hughes, Lander; Laura Foster, Winthrop University; Rebecca Cody, USC; Krystal Stoudemire, Milliken & Co.; Deb Herman, Clemson University; Anna Burkhart, Blackbaud; Susan Gasque, Greenville Technical College; John Barker, Furman University; Patsy Hammett, Milliken & Co.; Cathy Towne, Verizon; Colleen Patton, Blackbaud; Kevin Owens, Verizon; Kristine Hooker, Blue Cross Blue Shield; Sandy Tomes, USC; Andrea Long, Presbyterian College; Sherry McAdams, USC-Upstate; John Montemayor, USC-Upstate.**

management Dr. Michael Shurden is teaching a course this semester titled "Early Introduction to Business," which is being offered to juniors and seniors at Greenwood Christian School during the regular school day and on their campus.

Held for the first time at Lander, the SCACE Fall Drive-In miniconference was attended by business and college representatives from across the state. Among the businesses represented were Enterprise Rent-A-Car, Blue Cross Blue Shield, Blackbaud, Verizon Wireless and Milliken. Universi-

ties and colleges with representation at the conference were: Lander University, University of South Carolina, Winthrop University, Furman University, Presbyterian College, USC-Upstate, Greenville Tech and Clemson University.

"The Fall Drive-In conference is a great opportunity for college career services professionals to network with South Carolina businesses," said Hughes. "We are very pleased to have representatives from businesses and other universities and colleges on our campus." ■