

NEWS from Mercer County Community College

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CONTACT:

Candace Zafirellis, Public Relations

zafirelc@mccc.edu, 609-570-3519

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MCCC's Center for Simulated Business Services Celebrates 15th Anniversary with Network-Wide Conference

West Windsor, N.J. -- The Center for Simulated Business Services (CSBS) at Mercer County Community College (MCCC) recently commemorated its 15th anniversary with a network-wide conference in November at the MCCC Conference Center. Thirty student firms participated in the conference, including 14 via video conferencing from places around the globe such as Belgium and Lithuania.

CSBS, formerly the International Business Practice Firm, was founded in 1998 by MCCC Professor Emeritus Carol Weber as a way to bring the experience of running a business to life. Students are assigned to departments such as purchasing, accounting, personnel and marketing, and given job descriptions and responsibilities. They then transact business with other practice firms throughout the world. This program was the forerunner in this type of hands-on approach to teaching.

The CSBS network has grown to more than 70 practice firms at 32 high schools and 13 colleges across seven states: New Jersey, California, Florida, Maryland, Pennsylvania, Texas and Wisconsin. MCCC runs two simulated companies: B-Gone Travel and Celestial Beauty. Students will often take the three-credit CSBS course more than once to gain expertise in multiple disciplines.

In the fall Mercer's CSBS began integrating iPads and Google apps in its practice firm courses. Students research apps that will enhance their firm's productivity, and then demo the apps to each other. Students have found a range of uses for the iPad, from order-taking to marketing services.

"The initial impact seems to be an increase in the creative energy of students," said Kristen Callahan, associate professor of PC Applications at Mercer, who took over as the new director of CSBS this fall. "We are learning that teaching and learning becomes more interesting and flexible with new technology."

Beginning in the fall of 2013, MCCC will run its practice firm both on campus and virtually, using iPad technology, Google apps, social networking, and other cloud applications. The goal is to create a flexible, technology-driven environment that encourages collaborative learning.

"We are excited about this implementation and eager to see what effects it will have on outcomes," said Callahan, adding that the new technology more readily prepares students for business practices in the real world.



Photo caption:

The Center for Simulated Business Services (CSBS) at Mercer County Community College recently held a network-wide conference to commemorate the program's 15th anniversary at the college. Students in MCCC's B-Gone Travel simulated business gave a presentation as part of the conference. Pictured back, from left, are Unur Davaadolgor, Kurt Kamrad, Brandon Li, MCCC Professor Joan Jones, Krista Ruggero, Liliana Vasquez, Lynn Hoff, Brian Chin, CSBS Director Kristen Callahan, and Carol Weber, MCCC professor emeritus and CSBS founder. Front, from left, are Brielle Penkola, Ester Lazo-Gonzalez, and Jyoti Singh.