



## Community Economic Development Competitive Grants Program Finalists Announced

In support of Carolina's ongoing efforts to pursue engaged scholarship and service, the UNC-Chapel Hill Office of Economic and Business Development and the Carolina Center for Public Service have awarded five grants through the Community Economic Development Competitive Grants Program. The grant program provides both seed funding and research/action project funding for projects with the potential to improve the economic competitiveness of businesses and communities in North Carolina. Award amounts ranged from \$6,000 to \$25,000.

### FACULTY RESEARCH/ACTION PROJECTS

#### Building for the Future: Immigrant Skills Acquisition in North Carolina's Urban Labor Markets

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*Nichola Lowe*  
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*Department of City and Regional Planning*

*Jacqueline Hagan*  
*Associate Professor*  
*Department of Sociology*

**Abstract**—The proposed research investigates how immigrant workers acquire skills in today's fluid labor markets and if and how these skill sets are implemented in innovative ways by industry employers. In today's labor markets, worker protection and opportunities for upskilling have arguably become one in the same. Yet, immigrant workers often face unique obstacles that make it significantly more difficult, if not impossible, for them to acquire the skills necessary to move through the labor market and transition from job to job in a manner that facilitates social mobility. This situation has far reaching ramifications that not only affect immigrants, their native worker counterparts and employing firms, but also the larger urban economies in which all participate.

Through a study of urban construction sites in North Carolina, we will examine the processes of skill building that occur outside formal education settings, as well as the channels through which employers come to recognize, value and reward the skill sets of less-educated, immigrant workers. This project will enable us to explore local and national policy options for facilitating the skills development process of immigrant workers and in turn, policy options for enhancing the economic wellbeing of both foreign and native-born workers in the United States. Policy recommendations will be designed to encourage national industrial upgrading that builds on complementary skill sets of foreign and native-born workers alike and thus enhances the competitive standing of U.S. industries.

## **Using Collaborative Evaluation Techniques to Develop a Technical Assistance Delivery Model for North Carolina Small-Scale Enterprises: Meeting the Marketing Evaluation Needs of an Eastern North Carolina Nonprofit Local Seafood Promotion Organization**

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*Rita O'Sullivan*  
*Associate Professor*  
*School of Education*

**Abstract**—This project seeks to use collaborative evaluation techniques (O'Sullivan, 2004) to develop a model for delivering technical assistance to small-scale enterprises in North Carolina. Collaborative evaluation engages key stakeholders at all stages of the evaluation process to enhance their capacity to make data driven decisions. It has been successfully applied to a variety of programs; spanning education, social services, government, and agriculture. This project proposes to apply this approach to meet the marketing evaluation needs of an emerging Eastern North Carolina Nonprofit Local Seafood Promotion Organization with a mind to developing a model that can serve as the basis for a curriculum to promote economic development for other small-scale enterprises in the state. While a direct extension of Dr. O'Sullivan's primary area of scholarship, this proposal also reflects active collaboration with community partners, associated with Carteret Community College (including its Small Business Center), The Carteret County Economic Development Council, North Carolina State University (Seafood Laboratory and NC Sea Grant), Cooperative Extension at North Carolina A & T State University, North Carolina Department of Travel and Tourism, NOAA Fisheries Service, Cape Lookout National Seashore, Core Sound Waterfowl Museum, as well as local restaurants, seafood retailers, and fishermen. The development of this technical assistance model is seen as a necessary preliminary step toward creating new partnerships and enhancing existing collaboration between UNC-CH and community, business, and non-profit partners. The project activities are expected to directly contribute to the sustainability of the new nonprofit local seafood promotion association; it is anticipated that the model developed and the curriculum that emerges from the project will be sustainable well beyond the life of the project.

## **Pathways to Prosperity: Connecting Financial Services to Low-Wage Workers in the Workplace**

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*Roberto Quercia*  
*Professor*  
*Department of City and Regional Planning*

**Abstract**— A critical element of any pathway to economic stability is a household's ability to gain access to the necessary financial services and products that help build wealth. While jobs and income are basic to financial security, they're only one step on the road to economic independence and wealth creation. The North Carolina Commissioner of Banks the Center for Community Capitalism at the University of North Carolina, the Center for Responsible Lending and First Charter Bank based in Charlotte, North Carolina are collaborating partners in an effort to explore both the consumer and bank side of short-term credit for low-income/low-asset borrowers. Workers in all income brackets experience the need to manage cash flows using short-term credit. For those with higher incomes and good credit scores, managing household

cash flow is a matter of juggling readily available and moderately priced, consumer credit: credit cards, checking overdraft loans and lines of credit. For those consumers with less income and/or credit blemishes, the product options are high-cost and often result in bad loans that set families back financially for years to come. The *Pathways to Prosperity* Pilot seeks to demonstrate that a bundle of financial education and counseling services coupled with appropriately priced financial supports will strengthen worker's capacity as consumers and financial managers.

## **JUNIOR FACULTY SEED GRANTS**

### **The N.C. Small Business Tax Credit: Will it Make a Difference for Small Employer Provision of Health Insurance?**

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*Daniel Gitterman*  
*Assistant Professor*  
*Department of Public Policy*

**Abstract**— Rising healthcare costs have forced many small employers to reduce or eliminate the health insurance coverage they offer their workers. Only 33 percent of North Carolina's smallest employers (less than ten employees) offer health insurance coverage. In the 2005-2006 session, the North Carolina General Assembly passed a new tax credit designed to reduce the financial barriers for small employers to offer health insurance to their employees. This research will examine implementation of the Small Employer Health Insurance Tax Credit, and evaluate its potential to improve the probability of small employer provision of health coverage.

### **Understanding Start-up and Spinoff Generation in Research Triangle Park**

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*Ted Zoller*  
*Director*  
*Center for Entrepreneurial Studies*

**Abstract**—This study will reconstruct and deconstruct the entrepreneurial firm formation and evolution of Research Triangle Park. Beginning with the founding of Research Triangle Park in 1958, this study will attempt to outline the start-up and spinoff history of the region, looking at both entrepreneurial firms generated from the Triangle's universities, as well as its wealth of research and branchplant firm incumbents that have located and developed in the Park. This will be accomplished through the development of network charting techniques, reconstructing historical secondary data. As a second phase of the project, the study will involve a survey of entrepreneurial firms developed in the RTP metropolitan statistical area identified in the network analysis to determine the relative contribution of each of the factors - knowledge, resources, support infrastructure, and capital - to the successful founding of the entrepreneurial start-up and spinoff firms. This study seeks to draw conclusions on how innovative ideas are paired with management capacity and are capitalized, and ascertain the degree to which regional economic development support organizations, such as the Council for Entrepreneurial Development, the Small Business Technology Development Center and the North Carolina Biotechnology Center, have served as a catalyst for firm founding, development and growth.