

UMBC News

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UMBC's ACTiVATE Program Receives Prestigious Award

Recognition Affirms Program's Status as a Leading Innovator in Educating Entrepreneurs

ACTiVATE, a program of the University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC) that trains mid-career women to start and manage technology ventures, was honored by a leading national entrepreneurship organization last Saturday. The program received the U.S. Association for Small Business and Entrepreneurship's (USASBE) award for Best Specialty Entrepreneurship Education Program. Presented at the organization's annual conference in San Antonio, Texas, the award was based on each program's innovativeness, uniqueness, quality, effectiveness, comprehensiveness, sustainability and transferability.

Stephen Auvil, director of UMBC's Office of Technology Development, Vivian Armor, director of UMBC's Alex. Brown Center for Entrepreneurship, and Julie Lenzer Kirk, ACTiVATE lead instructor, represented ACTiVATE at the conference.

"The winner is the one program that demonstrates a fresh approach to adding new meaning to entrepreneurial education," said judging panel member Stan Mandel, an executive professor at the Babcock Graduate School of Management at Wake Forest University and director of the school's Angell Center for Entrepreneurship. "This was clearly demonstrated by UMBC in the ACTiVATE program—a great concept, implemented well, with outstanding participants."

"ACTiVATE has become a model of innovation for teaching and mentoring entrepreneurs, and we are thrilled to be recognized by a leading organization in the field of entrepreneurship," said Ms. Armor.

ACTiVATE is a year-long program that utilizes technologies developed by Maryland's universities and research institutions and trains women with significant technical or business experience to start companies based on those technologies. In the first three years of the program, ACTiVATE has trained 72 women. To date, 15 companies have been founded by ACTiVATE graduates.

Said David Fink, director of entrepreneurial services at bwtech@UMBC and the ACTiVATE program director: "We felt there was a need for a new way to teach entrepreneurship and increase the commercialization of technologies. In just three years, ACTiVATE has already had a tremendous impact on the local business community."

An acronym for Achieving the Commercialization of Technology in Ventures Through Applied Training for Entrepreneurs, ACTiVATE is a joint program among Alex. Brown Center for Entrepreneurship, bwtech@UMBC Research and Technology Park, Office of Technology Development and the Center for Women in Technology (CWIT). Sponsors include the National Science Foundation, Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation, Maryland Technology Development Corporation, Whiteford, Taylor and Preston, Constellation Energy, Wachovia Bank, Lion Brothers and Corporate Office Properties Trust (COPT).

"The ACTiVATE program is just one part of UMBC's commitment to entrepreneurship, technology transfer and workforce development," noted Mr. Auvil, who is also one of the program's architects. "It encourages the development of new technology companies and supports women who are interested in pursuing an entrepreneurial career."

Classes are held on Monday evenings, from January through December, and one Saturday per month at the bwtech@UMBC Incubator near UMBC's main campus in Catonsville. Six of the companies founded by ACTiVATE graduates have entered bwtech@UMBC's incubator program.

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UMBC is a medium-sized public research university of 12,000 undergraduate and graduate students who collaborate with faculty to address real-world challenges. Located just south of Baltimore near I-95 and the BWI airport, UMBC's residential campus houses state-of-the-art facilities in the sciences, engineering, arts, social sciences and humanities. UMBC combines the energy of a research university with the close community feel and attention to individual students found in liberal arts colleges.