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Metro Orlando's Business Story with your Bag of Pretzels

Next time you're flying Orlando-based AirTran Airways, take a peek in that seat pocket ahead of you. The April/May issue of AirTran's in-flight publication, *Go*, calls this region a "business utopia" in a cover story titled "A Magic Kingdom for Entrepreneurs." With approximately 1.5 million readers every issue, this represents quite a bit of positive press for our region.

Speaking of good news stories, *Florida Trend* magazine has also done a bit of Metro Orlando profiling in its April issue. This includes updates on each of the region's four counties, highlights of some of our most exciting expansion/relocation projects, and background data including population totals and per capita income. You can access both of these stories through the EDC's online news room by clicking [here](#).



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Hydrogen Fuels New Industry Growth in Metro Orlando

Groundbreaking advancements in alternative energy research are the catalyst for a recent groundbreaking here in Metro Orlando. In February, Florida Governor Jeb Bush joined company leaders from Ford, ChevronTexaco and Progress Energy in announcing plans for Florida's first hydrogen fueling station, which is being built on land owned by Progress Energy near Orlando International Airport.

Slated for completion in 2006, the facility will focus on finding new uses for hydrogen energy, the power source used by the Space Shuttle. Orlando's hydrogen fueling station will be one of few national "demonstration projects" established to heighten public awareness of hydrogen as an alternate energy source. Eventually, the energy station will fuel Ford shuttle buses transporting visitors at the airport.

The evolving energy and alternative fuels industry has been identified as one of the EDC's targeted industry sectors. Establishment of this prestigious facility is a major coup and an important step in building a significant new economic driver for the region. Success in landing this project is due in large part to our proximity to NASA and renowned existing research facilities, most notably UCF's Florida Solar Energy Center.

Commercializing alternative fuel and energy sources is a field with far reaching ramifications for transportation, manufacturing, pollution control, and many other global priorities. Metro Orlando is now positioned to become a leader in addressing those priorities. The future is bright for this important, emerging technology cluster in Central Florida.

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Electronic Arts Supports Florida Interactive Entertainment Academy

A recent expansion by Electronic Arts (EA) in Metro Orlando sparked the creation of a new academy, known as the Florida Interactive Entertainment Academy (FIEA). EA officials worked with the EDC and UCF administrators to convince the state of Florida to provide a \$3.2 million grant last year to start the academy and \$1 million annually in operating funds. EA employees in Orlando helped design FIEA's curriculum.

"EA applauds the creation of FIEA," said Steve Seabolt, the company's vice president of University and Marketing Education. "EA has been involved with helping to shape the academy since its inception. EA personnel helped shape the creation of the academy's curriculum and culture. We have confidence in FIEA's faculty, and believe that students who excel in the program will be well-poised for careers building video games."

The Florida Interactive Entertainment Academy will open in the fall at the renovated Expo Centre in downtown Orlando. As many as 50 students will enroll in the graduate certificate program and will learn about the design, testing and programming of video games. Classes in the intensive, 16-month program will deal with topics such as business and entrepreneurial skills, project management and the critical study of games.

"EA fully supports FIEA's mission to educate the next generation of interactive entertainment innovators," said Steven Chiang, vice president and studio general manager of EA – Tiburon. "As a company whose success depends on the talents and creativity of individuals, we are excited to play a role in helping FIEA advance the academic development of the video game industry."

EA Tiburon staff members will work as adjunct professors at FIEA, and the company is donating capital equipment for the new facility in the Expo Centre.

"The University of Central Florida is pleased to have EA's support, and we look forward to a long-term relationship with the company," Provost Terry Hickey said. "We greatly appreciate EA's cooperative spirit and tangible support in carrying out joint research projects for mutual benefit and helping the university provide quality graduates and specially trained personnel. EA's continuing support for our new entertainment academy, FIEA, provides a unique benefit for UCF, EA and related industries in our community."

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Game Industry Veteran Ben Noel to Lead FIEA

The Florida Interactive Entertainment Academy (FIEA) at the University of Central Florida has named experienced game industry executive Ben Noel to head the graduate-level academy. Noel, vice president & studio chief operating officer at Electronic Arts – Tiburon, was tapped to lead the academy through an executive-in-residence arrangement with EA. Along with a wealth of industry contacts and knowledge of current game studio operations, the new executive director in residence brings a professional history rich with achievements to FIEA. Prior to EA – Tiburon, Noel was a member of EA's management team at its Austin, Texas studio.

"As a leader in the video game industry, Ben Noel brings an extraordinary amount of experience to FIEA," said Kathryn Seidel, dean of UCF's College of Arts and Sciences. "Our great hope is that this will become a long-term fit for Ben and FIEA."

"Having him lead the academy will be a great benefit to our students, because he knows how to excel in the real environment in which video games are made. His practical experience will set FIEA apart from other interactive entertainment schools because its graduates will be well prepared for a career in video game development."

Prior to joining EA, Noel was the vice president of finance and director of operations at Esco Technologies, an electromagnetic compatibility company. Noel has also held finance and operations positions with PepsiCo and Emerson. Noel received a bachelor's degree in accounting from the University of Florida and an MBA from Rollins College.

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Local Successes

Orlando-Based Cytterra to Assist in Homeland Security

Orlando-based Cytterra, a company focused on the development and production of technology solutions to combat terrorism, announced that it has been awarded \$3 million in four new contracts. The contracts include the development of systems that will help detect explosives and weapons at the nation's airports, seaports and border crossings.

For additional information, visit www.cyterracorp.com.

UCF: Doing Double Time!

Many have said that the University of Central Florida is a great asset and an economic engine for our community. However, UCF's Vice President of Research & Technology Transfer, M.J. Soileau, may have put it best when he said...

"In the fall of 2004 we enrolled more than 43,000 students. But how old is UCF really? Physicists talk in terms of "half-life" of changing systems. Marketing folks say that such terminology is too negative. Doubling time better describes our growth than half-life. So, here is a snapshot of change at UCF:

- DOUBLED enrollment in 12 years.
- DOUBLED graduates in 10 years.
- DOUBLED doctoral graduates in five years.
- DOUBLED research funding in three years.
- DOUBLED technology licensed for commercial production in two years.

"We produced our first NFL quarterback in 1999, our first Rhodes Scholar in 2003, and our first Miss America in 2004."

UCF Partners with Florida Institute for Human and Machine Cognition

University of Central Florida (UCF) President John Hitt signed an agreement with Kenneth Ford, CEO of the Florida Institute for Human and Machine Cognition (IHMC), to further establish joint research projects, faculty appointments and other combined efforts, particularly in the areas of computer science and simulation and training.

Although IHMC and UCF's Institute for Simulation and Training have already teamed up on a number of research projects in the past, this agreement will help foster a wider range of collaborative research in human and machine recognition.

For additional information, visit www.news.ucf.edu.

Valencia Building Opens New Opportunities for High Tech Students

With the opening of the new technical science, information technology and workforce development building at its Osceola Campus, Valencia Community College will now be able to better serve the community by training workers for high tech and healthcare occupations.

The 60,000-square-foot, three-story building features a learning center for studying and tutoring stocked with cutting edge computer equipment. The center offers workforce programs in computer engineering, Cisco and Microsoft certification, computer information technology, IT support, computer programming and analysis, database technology, and Oracle and office systems technology.

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What's New

OrlandoEDC.com Named Among Best Economic Development Websites in Nation

It used to be that economic development organizations knew when a company began considering their community as a possible relocation or expansion site. Not anymore! With the advent of the Internet, communities often don't know they've even been considered until the list is whittled down to four or five viable options.



Recognizing this shift, the EDC has placed growing importance on the development and maintenance of our www.OrlandoEDC.com website. Now others are starting to notice that our site is one of the best in the country. This month, nationally acclaimed economic development consulting firm, AngelouEconomics, ranked the EDC's site among the nation's top three. Even more impressive – this is in comparison to local, regional and STATE sites.

The ranking was based on a point system that examined the site's content, structure, interactivity and graphic appearance. Out of a possible 100 points, the EDC scored an 88. The only sites that were ranked higher were the State of Michigan (93) and Charleston, SC (89).

As the folks at Angelou put it, "These sites received the highest scores because they are not only highly informative and easy to navigate, but many also contain research tailored to their specific audiences."

This is great recognition for the EDC, but more importantly it indicates that we are providing the best resource for our clients and our community.

EDC Rolls Out “2005 Metro Orlando Profile”

It’s a typical day at the EDC and one of our project managers gets a call from a site selection consultant that came down for the Bay Hill Invitational. They have a client that is considering Metro Orlando for a possible corporate expansion, and they need comprehensive background on everything from transportation to quality of life to available workforce. And ... they need it in an hour. No sweat! The EDC’s project manager quickly types out an e-mail and attaches the brand new *2005 Metro Orlando Profile*, a 36-page document that contains background on practically every topic of interest to business leaders. You can download a copy of this document by clicking [here](#).



EDC Film Commission Sweeps Industry Awards

The annual Association of Film Commissioners International (AFCI) Global Locations Tradeshow attracts film commissions from around the world. In addition to showcasing their regions’ advantages to film producers, this provides an occasion to honor the best-of-the-best among their peers. This year, the Metro Orlando EDC’s Film Commission walked away the big winner. In AFCI’s competition for best marketing materials, our film division picked up the following awards:



First overall in Production Guide category.



First overall in Full Page B/W Ad category.



First overall in Premiums category.



Second overall in Direct Mail category.



FilmOrlando.com - second overall in Website category.

Did You Know?

UCF Joins Top Universities in Princeton Review’s Best Colleges Guide

The University of Central Florida (UCF) will be included for the first time in The Princeton Review’s annual guide to the best institutions for undergraduate education in the United States.

“*The Best 361 Colleges: 2006 Edition*,” which will be available in bookstores in late August, selects schools based on their academic programs, the opinions of students, parents and educators, and other data. The book is the “flagship guide to the ‘crème of the crop’ institutions for undergraduates,” said Robert Franek, The Princeton Review’s vice president of publishing.

The Princeton Review’s recognition comes as the academic quality of UCF students continues to rise. Freshmen admitted in 2004 posted average SAT scores of 1186 and average high school GPAs of 3.84.

Florida High Tech Corridor Annual Report Online

The most recent Florida High Tech Corridor Council (FHTCC) Annual Report is online and located at www.floridahightech.com. This year’s report boasts the \$19 million dedicated to research projects in 2003-2004 alone -

helping to bring the total research dollars to an impressive \$120 million since the Corridor's inception in 1996. It also details more than 20,000 hours devoted to FHTCC marketing, workforce and industry projects by volunteers from Corridor companies, universities, colleges, economic development organizations, governments and other organizations in efforts to attract, retain and grow high tech industry throughout the Corridor.

Connect With International Business Through New Database

The Central Florida International Business Database and Resource Connection (CFIBDRC) is now available at www.ibdatabase.ucf.edu or through www.OrlandoEDC.com. The database, produced by the University of Central Florida and sponsored by the Canaveral Port Authority and the EDC, is designed to assist Central Florida businesses and public institutions explore available international business data and broaden international business skills. Importers and exporters worldwide will be able to access the database when searching for companies that meet their needs.

How Can We Help You?

Our goal is to make this *Orlando Business Brief* publication informative and useful to you. Please let us know if there are specific topics, programs and issues that you would like to learn more about. Your suggestions are welcome. E-mail: Gloria.Wong@OrlandoEDC.com, or call 407.422.7159 x235.

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