

DEPAUL UNIVERSITY



January 30, 2009

Office of the Dean
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Rev. Mark Prānaitis, C.M.
Associate Provost
DePaul University

Dear Mark:

Thank you for the opportunity to endorse the National Resiliency Center project proposed by Dr. Harold Welsch, Coleman Foundation Chair in Entrepreneurship. Dr. Welsch has been working on the feasibility portion of this study for several months seeking funding to develop resiliency/reconstitution plans for firms encountering disaster disruptions. This project fits in well with our Entrepreneurship Program where we specialize in developing business plans. This project is especially relevant because of its technology base of decision support systems and its ability to create new jobs during a period of economic downturn, areas for which President Obama has indicated support.

Dr. Welsch has teamed up with the Security Board, headed by Richard Arns, the father of one of our students. In addition, a significant amount of work has already been done by six teams of Commerce students who have investigated various aspects of this initiative in their ICS 394 classes. The work includes the design of a decision support portal, and a reservation system, and development of layout and design and marketing strategies. The National Resiliency Center, the first of its kind in the nation, is anticipated to be located at our Naperville campus, which is experiencing significant vacancy at this time. The productive use of our real estate assets would be a boon to the university and enhance our prestige in this industrial corridor as well.

No one particular group has taken a serious look at the supply chain disruption that can occur should there be a man-made or natural catastrophe. Hence, there has been a spike in interest among interdependent industries across the country, seeking to reassure their clients and investors that if such an event should occur, that they would be equipped to deal with it.

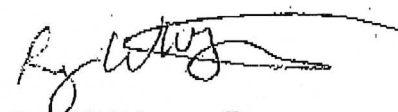
Colleges and universities are especially adept at rebuilding business system because they are equipped with intellectual resources, manpower and technological capability. It is precisely these capabilities that are called for during disrupted periods. Dozens of corporations have shown interest in the resiliency model platform at Hamburger University and at the Naperville facility. British Petroleum has requested assistance in recreating an energy futures trading floor should theirs be compromised. Such a laboratory could be simultaneously used by DePaul students during non-disruptive times to acquire state-of-the-art training. Additional academic programs could be created based on the evolving needs of industry, white papers could be written by researchers investigating new phenomena, and mentorship programs could be developed enhancing students career opportunities.

I have read an early draft of Dr. Welsch's proposal and am intrigued with the potential benefits accruing to DePaul University. I believe the contemporary focus will strengthen and update our academic programs. It will enable us to interact more closely with our corporate partners. It would allow the productive use of an underutilized facility. It would provide the opportunity for experiential learning and meaningful training of our students with an eye toward eventual employment. It would generate funding through grants and subscription services. It would generate significant media exposure and public relations opportunities thus gaining stature in the community. Also, it allows for more cooperation and integration between College of Commerce and College of Computing and Digital Media.

It is without hesitation that I endorse the National Resiliency Center Project proposed by Dr. Welsch. I trust Dr. Welsch's judgment. He established our nationally recognized Entrepreneurship Program and founded the Coleman Entrepreneurship Center, which is successfully functioning. He was also one of the driving forces in a successful project of establishing Small Business Development Centers in Eastern Europe funded by USAID.

I plan to follow this project throughout the offices of the University and shepherd it along whenever possible. Please contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Ray Whittington", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Ray Whittington, Dean
College of Commerce