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## NKU cited as leader among entrepreneurs

### Started in just 1999, institute earns national recognition

BY HOWARD MCEWEN | ENQUIRER CONTRIBUTOR

**HIGHLAND HEIGHTS** - Entrepreneur Magazine and the Princeton Review have named Northern Kentucky University's Fifth Third Bank Entrepreneurship Institute one of the top entrepreneurial colleges for 2006. NKU ranked 23rd in the survey.

"The ranking illustrates how quickly we have come in such a short time," said Dr. Rebecca J. White, associate professor of entrepreneurship and director of the institute.

"I offered the first class in 1996 and by 1998 we had developed a proposal for an academic and outreach center. We received our first grant from the Coleman Foundation in 1999 and in that same year, Fifth Third Bank agreed to provide an endowment to fund the Fifth Third Bank Entrepreneurship Institute at Northern Kentucky University."

Entrepreneur Magazine said that the survey "included questions covering everything from mentoring, experiential learning and specific course offerings to alumni successes and career prospects of current students. Schools that ranked high demonstrated a commitment to entrepreneurship both inside and outside the classroom and had faculty, students and alumni actively involved and successful in entrepreneurial endeavors."

NKU offers nine undergraduate courses in entrepreneurship and four graduate-level courses.

White said the program at NKU is one of the first to offer entrepreneurship education to students other than business majors.

"We decided that entrepreneurs come from all backgrounds and disciplines and that it made sense to focus on entrepreneurially inclined students - regardless of their major area of study," said White. "So we have students in music, art, biology, geography, et cetera."

Michael Blair, 25, of West Chester Township, enrolled in the program after earning a bachelor's degree in industrial design from the Art Institute of Pittsburgh.

"I believe that all design students would benefit from additional education in entrepreneurship," said Blair. "In the case of an industrial designer, the creation of an innovative product goes hand-in-hand with the ability to implement the product into the market."

Blair's goal is to start what he calls a "smart furniture company" that is "aimed at solving deficiencies in various domestic furnishings."

"My professors have been laying a strong, well-rounded foundation for my business education," said Blair. "The institute utilizes numerous speakers, organizations and local business leaders who help shape the entrepreneurial mind set of the students."

Entrepreneur Magazine's listing may already be benefiting NKU.

"It has already been included in our promotion materials and word is already out," said White. "We are getting calls daily from interested students. We offer a high school competition each spring and we are getting even more calls from schools interested in sending students competitors."

Programs at Xavier and Miami universities ranked 11th and 19th, respectively.

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