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SVC business division chairman uses real-world model

By PATRICK McARDLE STAFF WRITER - Published: September 1, 2009

BENNINGTON — Professor Eric Drouart, whose first semester as chairman of Southern Vermont College's McCormick Division of Business starts soon, is determined to give students the skills they need to survive in a difficult economy.

Drouart said the college would help students develop abilities such as communication, critical thinking, innovation and creativity, which would be enhanced by internships and experiential learning so students would graduate knowing the landscape of the business world.

"I think what is key, and I think this is what we are trying to do here at SVC, students have to be able to contribute immediately to a new employer. So that means they have to be exposed to the real world. They cannot wait until graduation," Drouart said.

Drouart is a native of France with experience working in business, especially international business, and teaching at the college level.

A graduate of the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, Mass., with a bachelor's degree and a master of science degree in business administration, Drouart spent 15 years with Bristol-Myers Squibb, including five years in Japan.

Before coming to the independent college in Bennington, Drouart taught classes in management, marketing, advertising, international business, market research and strategic management at Rivier College in Nashua, N.H., where he served as chairman of the business administration department from 2002 to 2005.

"Really, what attracted me to Southern Vermont is the ability to make a difference and to share this corporate, international experience with my students," he said.

In addition to his duties as chairman of the college's business department, Drouart will be teaching classes in international business, marketing and introduction to management during the fall semester.

Drouart has already made efforts to reach out to the local business community, including representatives of the Bennington-Area Chamber of Commerce, Bennington County Industrial Corp. and the Better Bennington Corp., because he would like to see the college become more a resource for the business community.

He also sees opportunities for the kind of "real world" experiences he wants students to have. For instance, the marketing class will work with the golf club at the Equinox Hotel in Manchester on a marketing plan and the introduction to management class will work with the college's own on-campus store.

"I think it's a win-win situation for both the organization, the business, and the students. It's not just a theoretical case but it (provides) practical experience," he said.

Drouart said he was also excited about Southern Vermont College's "Build the Enterprise" program that provides some capital and guidance to allow a student to create an actual ongoing business.

In the future, Drouart said he would be interested in developing a new major in marketing for Southern Vermont College.

Drouart said he believes he has joined the faculty at an exciting time.

"I was also interested in (Southern Vermont College) because I think there is a dynamic environment with Karen Gross as the president, a new provost (Albert DeCiccio)..., a huge increase in enrollment. There is momentum," he said.

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