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UNCW program offers MBA-level courses

By Sarah Bon

By day, Lyn Keating is the director of continuing education for Coastal AHEC. For two nights a week, she is a student at the University of North Carolina Wilmington in the Cameron School of Business Executive Certificate Program.

Keating, 52, who has a master's in health education, moved into the administration and management role more than 30 years ago. A professed life-long learner, she saw an opportunity to enhance her education and experience.

"The terminology has changed, the focus has changed," she said about her decision to enroll in the new program. "I wanted to be able to use the skills but also to speak the language. I consider myself fortunate to get in on the first round."

She joins 18 other students in the inaugural class of the Executive Certificate Program, which held its first class last month. The program is specifically designed for professionals looking to further develop, complement and advance their current business knowledge and skills.

The 11-week curriculum covers advanced business topics taught by top UNCW business faculty and executives. Pat Voli, a marketing professor, jumped at the chance to be a part of the program.

"I did a lot of my education part time while I was working full time," she said. "It's helpful as you're working to be exposed to this material."

Kim Corbett, who works in the clinical operations department at PPD, received her undergraduate degree in information systems at UNCW. She is exploring the possibility of pursuing an MBA.

"[The Executive Certificate Program] is not a two-year commitment," said the 29 year old. "This will be my judge to see if I can handle the two years."



Photograph by Sarah Bon

UNCW's new Executive Certificate Program will graduate its inaugural class of 19 students in November.

All of the students in the program are in the workforce. While the school does offer an evening two-year MBA program, the Executive Certificate Program provides a service once missing.

"For people not interested in pursuing an MBA, this is to fill that gap," said Jonathan Rowe, program director for the UNCW Center for Business and Economic Services. "In terms of the material, it's about at the MBA level."

It also is a much lower investment, both in cost and time. The total cost of obtaining the certificate is \$965.

"People in this area spend a little less on professional education than other parts of the country," Rowe said. "We were very conscious of that as far as pricing. But we want to maintain quality."

The program will be offered in the fall and spring and will include 23 courses, which means each class

costs approximately \$42.

For Thomas Rooks, 32, the program is about getting back in the classroom and meeting other professionals.

"This is a refresher for business," said Rooks, who owns Reeves Heating and Air Conditioning Inc. "As a small business owner, you don't get to interact with a lot of people. It's an opportunity to learn new concepts and work with others who handle different parts of business."

Areas of focus include management and leadership, marketing and sales, strategic decision-making, accounting and finance, business and contract law, human resources management, project and operations management, technology and information systems and entrepreneurship and innovation.

"It's not a textbook program – it's very practical based," Rowe said. "You're not going to go in and fall asleep over a textbook. It's a lot of what's happening now in the business world. The program is laid out in a very conscious way. The last module is a business simulation, where each group runs a company. They take everything they've learned and put it to use."

There is no homework or exams. There are optional reading assignments. One of the only requirements is attendance.

"It's not about grades," Rowe emphasized. "We give attendees all the tools to get as much as they can out of it to make learning fun. We don't want you to pay \$900 for just a piece of paper."

The Executive Certificate Program is laying the foundation for the Cameron School of Business to grow its short business executive courses that are a lot more detailed and specific.

"This is just the beginning," Rowe said.