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Alternative Energy, Technology Incubators Highlight Small Business Conference at Chicago State University

CHICAGO (NOVEMBER 20) — Alternative energy, jobs, technology incubators and government funding were some of the topics of a lively exchange of ideas at a conference focused on small businesses and government agencies at Chicago State University on Tuesday, November 18. Led by State Sen. Donne E. Trotter, the South Region Business and Community Conference brought together entrepreneurs and small business owners to talk frankly with public officials and share information about what services are available from government agencies to meet the needs of area businesses.

Joining Trotter in the opening panel discussion were State Rep. Marlow Colvin, State Rep. Constance Howard, Chicago Alderman Michelle Harris, Joseph McKeown from the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, and Isabelle Conda, director of the Illinois Small Business Development Center at Chicago State University. The Center is part of CSU’s College of Business which is lead by its Dean, Dr. Farhad Simyar.

One conference attendee, Ali Manesh, president of American Science and Technology, said the event helped his business by opening lines of communication between the public and private sectors. “It’s a very important source for information for businesses,” said Manesh. “Funding is not the only answer. Bringing attention to businesses to help them grow is also important.”

Carl Bibbs, chairman of the board of the Somercor 504, thought the conference – and the presence of Illinois’ DCEO – was important because it continued efforts he helped spearhead in the 1970s with the founding of the Department of Community Affairs. Somercor originates Small Business Administration 504 loans in Illinois.

Dr. David Kanis, chairman of CSU’s Chemistry and Physics Department, informed attendees of the existence of CSU’s science and technology incubator on 9551 S. Cottage Grove. “We are looking to partner with technology start-up companies who would be interested in using the incubator space to work on projects of mutual interest to the businesses and the University. We are particularly interested in companies with a focus on alternative energy or the environment.” said Kanis.

The conference, the incubator and the Illinois Small Business Development Center are examples of how Chicago State University is a leader in reaching out to the Chicago area by providing resources to meet local and regional needs.