

Secretary of the State, Susan Bysiewicz, Sets the Stage for Aspiring Entrepreneurs

Storrs, CT (4/15/2008) - Secretary of the State, Susan Bysiewicz along with her colleague, **Harland Henry, manager of the Small and Minority Business Services Unit**, spoke at an event hosted by UConn's Student Entrepreneurial Organization (SEO) on April 7th.

The role of Secretary of the State is vital – overseeing an array of public records and documents including, but not limited to information on businesses, commercial lenders, elections, legislation, regulations and other areas. The Secretary of the State also bears responsibility for business law administration, such as the approval of all certificates of incorporation, organization and dissolution.

As the state's Commissioner of Elections, the Secretary administers, interprets and implements election laws to ensure fair and impartial elections.

"Is everyone here registered to vote?" asked Secretary Bysiewicz as she walked into the School of Business Board Room waving voter registration forms. She hoped to get those who were not registered to do so. "It's always a good day when I can get at least one person to register to vote," she said with a big smile.

Although unsuccessful at signing up any new voters (it appeared that everybody in attendance was already registered), Secretary Bysiewicz was then introduced by School of Business **Associate Dean, Linda Klein**.

"As the state's chief business registrar, she has made enhancing Connecticut's small business community a top priority and is a leading proponent of providing support and assistance to small and minority-owned businesses," said Klein. "Her efforts are particularly important to the School of Business and our students in several ways. As evidenced by the strong student support of the student run SEO, many of our students are interested in pursuing entrepreneurial activities."

The Secretary began by stating that there are many parallels between business and politics.

"It is very entrepreneurial to run for public office," noted Bysiewicz, reflecting on how she took a grassroots approach, like many entrepreneurs, for her campaign by literally knocking on the door of every voting household. "Don't be afraid to ask for help and support."

Secretary Bysiewicz then went on to describe what she considers the qualities that all successful people possess. "You need a very specific goal and a plan to get there... Next – have a mentor and be a mentor. It's important to give back; you are where you are because your teachers, your coaches helped you along the way."

"People who are very successful often have their own foundations" noted Bysiewicz. "You should pick a cause or an organization and get involved. Give time, give money, give both."

Courage was also cited as one of her keys to success. "Courage to me is the ability to have a big idea and try to execute it – to put your self out there, and not be afraid to ask for help."

Finally, and most importantly, she said successful people have integrity. "Integrity is what you do when no body else is looking." She emphasized that it is important to always do the right thing, "even when it's hard."

Bysiewicz is a real advocate of small businesses. "Big companies get too much attention," she said. "I'd rather help the person with the idea to open a restaurant or a retail store." She mentioned that in past decade 96% of new jobs in Connecticut were created in businesses with fewer than 50 employees.



Bysiewicz has started several programs in order to help the Connecticut small business community. One of her biggest accomplishments is the creation of small business showcases. Set up similarly to trade shows, they are a "one stop shop" for anything small business owners need.

Additionally, she has organized classes to teach small businesses owners how to get government contracts, increased set-asides for women, minority owned and "green" businesses, and established programs to help small businesses find trading partners over seas.

After Bysiewicz fielded some questions from students and faculty, Henry spoke about steps that students can take in order to pursue their own business aspirations. His best advice, "Free is the best. Don't spend any money until you expend your free resources."