

netFRONT

BIT majors
'business ready' >**Executive Summary:**

From Virginia Tech students comes an online guidebook for setting up your business with the Web.

By Janeson Keeley

When the stock market took a nosedive in October of 2008, nine seniors majoring in business information technology at the Virginia Tech Pamplin School of Business made a decision. Rather than panicking about their job prospects after graduation, they chose to actively support American small businesses. From this intention, and funded by their own contributions, the not-for-profit 501(c)3 educational charity The Online Business Guidebook Inc., was born.

According to spring, 2010 guidebook editor-in-chief Andrea Lovett and executive director Damon Silva, the original goal of the foundation was to provide a comprehensive guide "to current and aspiring business owners who wanted to go, and grow, online."

First published in the spring of 2009 with the assistance of a gift from Virginia Tech and numerous corporate sponsors, The Online Business Guidebook (available at www.businessguidebook.org) is a comprehensive tutorial for setting up an online business, detailing everything from setting up a business entity through performance tracking. It has garnered national attention from Small Business Development Centers nationwide, where, according to Alan Abrahams, assistant professor in business information technology, it has reached over 80,000 readers.

Updated twice annually, the development of this guidebook has become an integral part of the business information technology program. Abrahams notes that, "A conference paper

**Janeson Keeley**

Dan Smith

on this pioneering teaching and learning approach was winner of the Best Paper Award at the 27th annual Information Systems Educators Conference in Nashville in October, 2010."

In addition to the assistance that the guidebook provides to small businesses nationwide, BIT seniors help local small businesses by evaluating their current online strategies and making recommendations. "This past year, our BIT senior students have provided personalized advice and recommendations to 40 local small retail businesses," reports Abrahams.

Tasked with helping to develop the company's retail division, five seniors participated in an internship at W.S. Connelly & Co. Inc., in Roanoke during the fall, 2010 semester. According to the Pamplin School of Business web site, 80 percent of the 2008-2009 graduates of its business information technology (BIT) program were employed or had job offers at the time of graduation, with a median starting salary of \$57,500. This is the second highest employment rate and the eighth highest median salary among all of Virginia Tech's majors.

Wally Newton, NewVA Corridor Technology Council treasurer and adjunct instructor at Pamplin, says, "These graduates are business ready." 