

7-30-2009

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Recommended Citation

Marquez, Melanie, "Press release : 2009 : 07 : 30 : MBA Students Find Entrepreneurial Spirit in COB Class" (2009). *USFSP News and Press Releases*. 764.

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MBA Students Find Entrepreneurial Spirit in COB Class



Filed under [Press Releases](#), [eNews Newsletter](#), [College of Business](#), [Homepage Articles](#) on Thursday, July 30, 2009 by Author: Melanie Marquez.

(St. Petersburg, Fla.) July 30, 2009 - With inspiration from working as classmates in their Business Enterprise course, five MBA students with professional backgrounds varying from journalism to molecular biology formed their own small-business consulting group.

Alex Assouad, Lance Orr, Jason Ramage, Jason Scofield and John Stang took William T. Jackson's course in Spring 2009, and before the semester ended in April Sasgro Consulting Group, or SCG, was formed. Assouad noticed an opportunity to form the company and proposed the idea. Group members jumped at the chance to run their own business.

"I have broad experience in general consulting and starting businesses, so Sasgro seemed like a good option," Assouad said. "I think 15 years of entrepreneur experience coupled with an MBA and great partners is a good formula."

Assouad holds a BA in Economics from the American University in Cairo and is the founder of Road 5, a marketing and logistics consulting firm. The only group member to live outside the St. Petersburg area, he lives in Nashville. He came to USF St. Petersburg for an MBA because he wanted to fine tune his business experience.

SCG will initially focus on start-up companies from any industry. Services include business plan design and consultation, business plan pitching and investor-client matchmaking. Plans include expanded consulting services to not only new entrepreneurial firms, but also to established companies that wish to outsource key business planning functions. Members, such as John Stang, will also provide market research.

"I worked for a market research company for six years before being a part of SCG," Stang said. "Knowledge of your market is the first step in starting a business. The company I worked for was also a small business, I know how they operate – what works and what doesn't."

Stang holds a BS in Finance from USF and lives in St. Petersburg. He often thought about starting his own business, but the risks of doing it alone were too big. In the MBA program he learned all aspects of business from marketing to accounting and found Jackson's Business Enterprise class to be especially helpful in preparing him for professional independence.

"This class taught us how to build business plans that would grab the attention of investors as well as plans that would serve as a practical guide for running a business," Stang said.

Ramage also contemplated business ownership in the past, but was not sure how to do it. Originally from Toronto, Ontario, his career in molecular biology led him to a job with a small research firm in Largo. Seeking to advance his career and stay in the St. Petersburg area, he enrolled in the MBA program at USFSP. His niche will provide SCG's science-related clients a business consultant with years of science and grant-writing experience.

Orr's background as a reporter for a business magazine allowed him to witness the challenges and triumphs that accompany a successful business career. The work motivated him to earn an MBA and SCG will benefit from his writing skills. Orr lives in Clearwater and holds both a BA and MA in Journalism from the University of Alabama.

"I have years of experience writing copy, be it business-, science- or PR-related," Orr said. "Alex's idea, to form a business consulting firm, created an avenue that allowed me to utilize the skills acquired in the MBA program with the talents I already possessed."

Scofield's experience with various small businesses makes him passionate about helping them succeed. He holds a BS degree in Political Science and Philosophy from USF Tampa and found SCG to be a perfect way to utilize his MBA education.

"What began as a business concept has developed into a profitable use of our education," Scofield said. "My decision to be a part of Sasgro grew from my MBA experience, work experience and current economic conditions. I am pleased with the opportunity to use my education to work for myself. Without my MBA from USFSP I would never be able to

start my own business."

The company's Web site, <http://sasgro-consulting.com>, is under construction, but includes contact information.

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