

# Chamber, W&M Team Up to Offer Micro MBA

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They've been attending the school of hard knocks for the past year. Now, local business owners will have a chance to attend a real business school.

The Greater Williamsburg Chamber and Tourism Alliance has contracted the College of William and Mary's Technology and Business Center to run a "micro" MBA program for some of its members next year.

"This is a phenomenal opportunity," says Chamber president Dick Schreiber. "What better time to tap into the expertise that's right here at the Mason School?"

The program grew out of a series of seminars William and Mary instructors have given to startup businesses the past few years. The past three years, the instructional series has been paid for by a series of grants.

But Bill Bean, director of the Technology and Business Center, said the College has been running frequent one-day seminars for the Chamber the past few years, 19 in all. It was a natural step to extend the micro MBA to Chamber members.

"We and the Chamber thought this series of seminars, rather than one-on-one meetings, would be a real benefit to Chamber members," Bean says.

The program is basically a miniature version of what the Mason instructors teach at the College, with lectures on finance, sales and marketing, and operations and processes.

However, Bean says the lessons are rooted in the real world experiences these entrepreneurs share.

"These are not theoretical classes. It's not our intent to do scholarly discourses," Bean says. "We want them to think, after attending the classes, 'these are practical tools I can use.'"

Bean says about 15 business owners would be the perfect number for the micro MBA program, to facilitate information sharing, but to still allow students to get answers to particular problems vexing their businesses.

The program will have eight monthly, half-day classes, starting in late January or early February. Bean says the students will need time to digest the information they receive in the classes. "And they are running businesses at the same time."

Schreiber says his members stand to benefit tremendously by making the time to attend.

"These courses are all the things you need to know as a businessman, and it's especially important in this economy, right now."