Message from the Executive Director

The 2010-2011 academic year was a momentous one for the David F. Miller Center for Retailing Education and Research!

Our new space will be a boon to the Miller Center’s visibility, accessibility and campus presence, and a major asset in attracting students to and preparing them for successful retailing careers—our core mission. Interesting classes, stimulating speakers, intensive career counseling, social activities, networking, research opportunities, study tours and other hands-on experiences are what differentiate the Miller Center and make it a leader in this field.

The Miller Center has been the No. 1 source for management candidates for a number of the nation’s largest retailers, companies that recognize the quality of University of Florida students and their sound retail preparation. We plan to expand this preparation with expanded retail courses, and added opportunities such as the study tours.

We are also extending our international retailing programming, repeating the China class and tour in 2012, developing relationships with retail trade organizations in South America and India, hosting international executive groups who want to study U.S. retailing, sponsoring a distinguished visiting professor from Brazil, and further refining the curriculum materials and research begun in recent years.

All of our activities are designed to enhance student interest in and knowledge of the latest developments in the retail industry and to prepare them for career success. The student-centered activities noted earlier, extensive support for sponsor company recruiting and placement, scholarships, innovative research and multiple opportunities for classes, study tours and other learning are the “how” of the Miller Center’s approach to doing its job.

The possibilities are extraordinary.

Steven Kirn
Executive Director
Miller Center
Workshops, Programs Support Professional Development

It’s not magic – or luck – that makes UF students such desirable candidates for retail employers. And it’s no accident that students know a great deal about Retail Center sponsor companies and the industry in general. Retail Center staff conduct extensive, year-round programs and activities designed to build understanding of retailing, and bring students together with top retail companies. The Center provides many opportunities to showcase sponsor companies and build sustained brand awareness among students.

Workshops
More than 500 UF students participate annually in personal and skill development workshops offered by the Retail Center, including:

- Careers in retailing
- Conquering the behavioral interview
- Work-life balance in retail
- The difference between a manager and a leader
- Women in retail careers
- Personal to Professional – making the transition

Presentations, Social Events, Company Receptions

- More than 30 presentations to classes and campus organizations
- Nine Sponsor Company “Meet ‘n’ Greet” sessions
- Retail receptions and ice cream socials for networking
- Faculty “Lunch and Learn” programs

Thanks to room/space sponsors and other contributors, the Miller Center has moved into a beautifully-renovated, 2,750-square-foot space in Stuzin Hall. It offers great visibility to students and visitors in its high-traffic, first-floor location, and communicates the high energy and contemporary style that is retailing.

The Center is equipped with state-of-the-art audiovisual displays that feature custom feeds of retail and general news, sponsor company profiles and videos, announcements, and other exciting content! The Center’s conference room sports SmartBoard technology and videoconferencing capability, and the welcome area and student lounge spaces offer opportunities for students to meet, read the latest business and retailing journals, and gather for special events.

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Other Renovation Supporters
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Internships

220 interns placed in 47 companies, spanning 13 states – and one in Israel

- Interns were majors in a wide range of subject areas, from Marketing, Management, Finance and Business to Psychology, English, IT, Anthropology and Statistics [6% Warrington College of Business Administration (WCBA) students]

- Internship positions included management, buying/planning, marketing, real estate, human resources and many others

197 interns placed in entry level retail management and professional careers – more than any other industry area for WCBA graduates

- Many placed in Florida, but others began careers all over the U.S. from Washington to Illinois to New York and many other locations

- Positions included management, merchandising, sales, IT, analyst, finance, buying/sourcing and logistics

- 75% accepted management positions, 12% in merchandising

2010-2011 academic year marked another record year for placing students in retail internships and retail management/professional career positions!

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This past June marked the 20th annual “Retail Smarter” conference, held this year at the Caribe Royale Hotel and Conference Center in Orlando. Nearly 300 retailers, students and other guests learned about the latest trends in retailing, and participated in a number of interactive workshop/discussion sessions dealing with current and emerging retail issues. Presentations ranged from a look at the future of retail stores and malls, to the use of technology to integrate retail channels, to an inspiring talk by a former Olympic medalist.

Sears Holdings Retail Seminar Series

Thanks to a grant from Sears Holdings, approximately 200 students participate in weekly presentations by senior retail executives. The class is a key component in the Retail Center’s work to bring a fuller understanding of career opportunities in the retail industry.

Retail Society Offers Networking & Education

UF students benefit from participation in the Retail Society, a student-led organization that links students interested in retailing, helping them exchange ideas, learn about internships and develop important retail industry contacts.

Retail Society Events ’10 - ’11

- Workshop – Careers in Supply Chain Management
- Sponsored and Conducted “Gainesville Fashion Week”
- Toured Shands Medical Center gift shops
- Hosted “internship” panel
Study Tours Add Practical Dimension to Learning

Classroom studies are indispensable in developing understanding of important retailing issues, but there is no substitute for seeing retail strategies unfold in person. That’s the philosophy behind the retail study tours conducted regularly by the Miller Center. The study tours combine classroom instruction, case analysis and background research on retailers students will visit. During these company tours, company executives explain their business strategy, discuss the competition and demonstrate how they go about executing their business plan.

The Miller Center has hosted a number of these programs, as well as single-stop, focused tours of distribution centers and other retail sites. The Center sponsored three major study tours, including visits to New York City and China, as well as hosting a combined classroom and tour class for retail supermarket executives from Brazil. The programs are described on the current and following page.

New York City Study Tour

Retail Center staff led 15 students on a five-day study tour of retailing in New York. This year’s tour introduced students to about a dozen retail and vendor locations focusing on buying, planning and merchandising, and provided an opportunity to meet UF alums who are in executive positions with these firms. Formal tours included:

- Ralph Lauren
- Theory
- Macy’s Herald Square
- FAO Schwarz
- Brown Shoe Company
- JCPenney

China Study Tour

Thanks to support from a two-year U.S. Department of Education grant, Retail Center staff led 23 undergraduate and graduate students on a three-week tour of six cities in China during May 2011. The extensive tour included large urban areas such as Beijing, Shanghai and Hong Kong, the manufacturing center of Shenzhen, mid-sized Chengdu in the southwest of the country and emerging port city Yingkou in China’s northeast. Destinations were selected to cover a range of cities varying in size, stage of economic development, history of “Western retailing” influence and geographic region.

The tour and class meetings comprised a four-credit course, and included research projects, reports, presentations on companies visited and other student assignments.

The study tour itinerary included many briefings, meetings, guided tours and informal discussions with:

- Municipal, regional and national-level government agency leaders
- Executives of regional development agencies
- Western-owned manufacturing and sourcing executives
- Chinese and foreign-owned retailers
- Traditional and contemporary retailing venues, open markets, etc.

In addition to retail and development-oriented visits, students toured traditional historic and cultural sites, including The Forbidden City, The Great Wall, Tiananmen Square, Panda Research Center and Hong Kong harbor to experience a taste of Asian culture.

The Retail Center plans to conduct a similar study tour in May 2012.

Study Tours for Brazil Supermraket Executives

January 2011 marked the second consecutive year that the Miller Center hosted a study tour for a group of 25 supermarket executives from ABRAS (Associação Brasileira De Supermercados), the national supermarket trade association in Brazil.

Participants heard presentations on a variety of retail trends and changes in consumer shopping behavior, including the impact of the financial recession. They also participated in a custom, day-long session with staff of the Disney Institute, co-designed with Miller Center staff. This session focused on how Disney develops brand consistency and customer loyalty, from recruiting and selection to merchandising, communication and operations design.

Store tours included a mix of Miller Center sponsor companies and other retailers, including:

- Winn-Dixie
- Wal-Mart Supercenter
- Sam’s Club
- Publix
- Whole Foods
- The Fresh Market
- Aldi
- Save-A-Lot
Each year, Miller Center Research Director Dr. Hyunjoo Oh, teaches a research-based course that focuses on current retail issues. Working with one of the Retail Center’s sponsor companies – Winn-Dixie -- a group of students investigated how consumers perceive freshness at supermarkets and how their perceptions influence shopping satisfaction by conducting four rounds of focus group interviews and an online survey of 400 customers.

Another group investigated the potential use of social media and mobile devices as tools for internal communications among employees by collecting responses from 1,000 employees. Following the data collection and analysis, recommendations for strategic action plans were presented to Winn-Dixie.

Global engagement has become a critical feature of retailing, even for those companies whose operations are focused on domestic markets. Understanding the increasingly integrated global retail marketplace has become essential. Whether for merchandise sourcing, potential expansion into growing markets, or simply facing competition from global competitors, retailers find themselves “going global.” During the 2010-2011 academic year, the Miller Center focused on globalization of retailing, with particular attention to China.

Curriculum modules available at this site cover the following eight topic areas:

- **Background** (e.g., China’s commercial history, regional differences, tier system, retail industry structure and format, government regulations)
- **Chinese Culture and Shopping Behaviors**
- **Retail Market Entry Strategy**
- **Retail Marketing Management**
- **Locations**
- **Retail Supply Chain Management**
- **Ethical Issues**
- **Retail Human Resource Management**

The China study tour was just one component of the Miller Center’s IRET project. Funded by the U.S. Department of Education—Business and International Education (BIE) Program— the Center’s work included curriculum development to provide instructors and students with access to cases, interviews with executives and consumers, videos and photographs of store environments and multimedia learning modules based on global retailing operations in China. Free registration is available at: sites.warrington.ufl.edu/iret.

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- National Retail Federation
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- Verizon Wireless
- Walgreens
- Wal-Mart
- Wells Fargo Retail Finance

ENDOWMENTS
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