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C O L L E G E O F B U S I N E S S A D M I N I S T R A T I O N

Forecasting center passes 20-year mark

Georgia State's Don Ratajczak, has seen a lot of change in his 20 years at the helm of the Economic Forecasting Center.

His operation has grown from a secretary and a student to a staff of four assisted by a dozen students, churning out the nation's best inflation forecasts and some of the most accurate predictions of other leading indicators.

Since his arrival in July 1973, Ratajczak has watched GSU grow from newly granted university status to a comprehensive research university with 24,000 students.

He's also witnessed vast changes in what makes the economy tick, in his students and in Atlanta, the adopted hometown he loves.

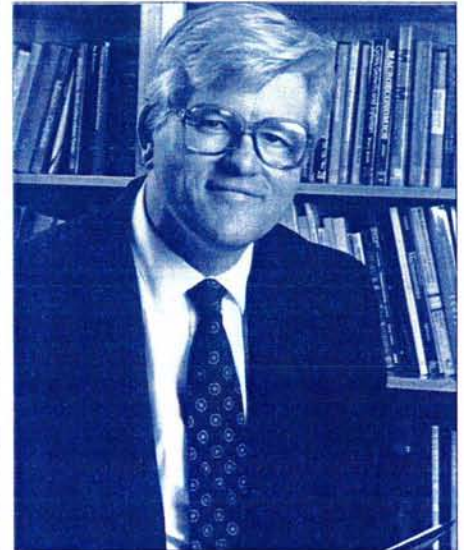
Donald Ratajczak recently celebrated his 20th anniversary at Georgia State, an anniversary that coincides with that of the Economic

Forecasting Center he came to Atlanta to found.

Recruiting Ratajczak

In the early 1970s, University System Chancellor George Simpson had told the business school's new dean, Kenneth Black Jr., that the Southeast needed an economic forecasting presence. With economics chair James Crawford, Black said, "we identified a young man out on the West Coast, Don Ratajczak, the No. 2 man" at the University of California, Los Angeles' forecasting center.

The dean and a Trust Company of Georgia vice president arranged a recruiting luncheon with bank executives and forecasters to show Ratajczak the business community's support for the project. Many of the men at that table became the Economic Forecasting Project's first



*Economic Forecasting Director
Donald Ratajczak*

sponsors, committing to three years of funding to ensure a start-up period.

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**GSU's 1994
Business Hall of
Fame Dinner
honoring
B. Franklin Skinner
April 27, 1994**

For more information,
call 404/651-2605.

GSU establishes Executive MBA Program in Europe

Expanding its international focus, Georgia State's Executive MBA Program will be taught in Freiburg, Germany, beginning in January 1995. The College of Business Administration and the International Graduate School of Freiburg recently signed a 10-year agreement formalizing these plans.

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The prime reason for success is service

Alfred Lee Dingler (BBA 1984) and Karl Thomason (BBA 1986) have a message: Forget that image of insurance agents as greedy, seedy salesmen with tacky ties and sweaty palms. These two GSU Risk Management and Insurance alumni are waging war on the insurance industry's poor public perception.

If the success of their agency — Prime Insurance Agency Inc. of Jonesboro, Ga. — is any indication, Dingler and Thomason are triumphing over their foes. Dingler founded Prime in 1985, six months after his graduation, with \$200 in his pocket and 200 square feet of office space. This year Prime's staff of 11 people will write some \$4 million in premiums out of a 2,500-square-foot office.

Prime's fame has followed its fortune. Early on — in 1986 and '87 — Dingler, a certified licensed underwriter, was named Aetna's Agent of the Year for Georgia. This year readers of *Rough Notes*, an insurance industry trade magazine, voted the company Insurance Agency of the Year. And in January, Dingler, the company president, was named Small Business Person of the Year by the Clayton County Chamber of Commerce.

Building Relationships

The key to Prime's success, Dingler says, is in "building close, long-term relationships" — with its



Karl Thomason, left, and Alfred Lee Dingler, right, know that Prime Insurance is successful because they care about their clients and their community.

customers and with the community.

"We get to know our clients," echoes Thomason, who joined the company as vice president in 1988. "We empathize with them, and we try to educate them about what their premium pays for."

For that reason, Dingler says, "we meet with all of our customers before giving them a price quote." And the agency takes this policy further with 16-year-olds. "We give young drivers test drives before we insure them," he says. "The parents love it, and with the kids, we form a relationship that we hope will last a lifetime."

This personal touch extends to the insurance industry. "We have a

quality award, and every month we pick an insurance company representative who does a good job for us and our clients," Dingler says. "These are billing clerks, receptionists, the people behind the scenes who never get the recognition they deserve."

Prime Insurance also reaches out to the public at large by providing a community room for free. Some 8,000 people are expected to use the facility this year, for anything from weddings to aerobics — as well as the public-service seminars that Prime sponsors on such topics as drug abuse and tax laws.

GSU: A Big Stepping Stone

Dingler's GSU education — paid for by an academic scholarship — was "a big stepping stone for my career," he says. Georgia State's RMI professors provided a broad understanding of the insurance industry that has greatly helped Dingler in his dealings with multiple insurance companies.

Thomason expresses similar sentiments. "I'm proud of taking classes from some of the finest insurance teachers in the country. They taught me how to think, and gave me the preparation I needed to enter the insurance industry. I try to maintain that degree of professionalism in the everyday aspects of running a small business." □

Executive MBA students explore Asian markets

In an ongoing effort to respond to the global market, Georgia State's two-year Executive MBA Program has expanded the itinerary of a required 10-day study tour to include Singapore as well as the already established Tokyo trip.

EMBA candidates visit Singapore and Japan as part of their second year's curriculum. Students prepare a functional analysis of select companies such as Canon, Coca-Cola Japan, Fuji and UPS and send it to respective executives for

review a month before the trip. During the tour, students have an opportunity to present and discuss the reports with executives of each company.

"The study tour allows students to gain insights into global operations and develop a sensitivity to conducting business in an international arena," EMBA Director Maury C. Kalnitz said.

Each country offers students a different cultural and business experience. In addition to the interna-

tional business exchange, students have an opportunity to socialize at corporate receptions, one-night homestays and independent site-seeing tours.

"Our EMBA Program is constantly evolving to keep curriculum and business experience current," Kalnitz said. "While Japan offers students a perspective of exceptional economic growth over the past four decades, Singapore represents a broader, truer picture of the economy of Asia." □