

Craig School of Business & CALED Celebrating 10-Years of Training Economic Developers



The “Intro to Economic Development” course, provided by the partnership between University Business Center at the Craig School of Business, Fresno State & CALED is in its 10th anniversary and has been sold out every year! A total of about 500 economic developers throughout the state of California and beyond have successfully completed this course and contributed toward the economic growth of California.

Following is an excerpt from an interview with Dr. Sal Rana, Director of University Business Center, on how this program advances the Craig School’s mission, and how it has impacted economic development in California over the years.

Everybody has a unique story for getting into this field. Why did you get involved in economic development?

Our department, University Business Center at the Craig School of Business, Fresno

State serves as the school's outreach arm to the community. Our school's mission statement is "To educate and inspire a diverse student body and support economic development in central California and beyond". Acting as a liaison for the school to the community, we directly work toward fulfilling the mission of "supporting economic development" in central California and beyond.



In your economic development work experience, can you think of a specific economic development project or program that you worked on that stood out as making an impact? Can you tell me a little bit about it and when it started?

We began our collaboration with CALED in 2010 to offer the "Intro to Economic Development course" (also known as "Keys" course) that has been sold out for all of the past ten years! Put it another way, a total of about 500 economic developers throughout the state of California and beyond have successfully completed this course and contributed toward the economic growth of California.

The demand has been so strong for this program that we started offering an "Advanced Institute" beginning 2019 for those students who have completed the Keys course. The completion of Advanced Institute will allow participants to sit for examination and qualify for ACE (Accredited California Economic Developer) certification.

I would say the impact has been tremendous, as participants provide us feedback year after year how relevant this curriculum is. Another highlight is the quality of Instructors; these are highly-qualified, experienced practitioners who have a wealth of knowledge to share.

A lot of projects/programs have ups and downs. Were there challenges you had to overcome to be successful and rewards working on this project/program?

Fortunately, it has been a steady ride. The collaboration with CALED's team and ours (Fresno State, Craig School team) has been strong. Demand has been persistent. Curriculum and instructor base is robust. So, we have a good recipe for success overall, and we look forward to continued success.

Can you share any impacts the project/program has had or will have on employment, expansion of local tax base & diversification of the area's economy?

The real output of our training is networking and motivation among participants, and the drive to advance their local economies effectively with the newly acquired skills from our program. The economic developers go back and use the skills learned during training to help retain businesses, attract new profitable and sustainable investments in their regions with good financial incentives, and implement an overall, effective strategic plan. These all have a profound positive impact on employment, expansion of taxes and toward creating a diverse economy in the area.

What advice would you give to other economic development professionals when working on a similar project/program?

Have a good, resourceful network and collaborators. Good customer service really pays off. Working hard and working smart, together create success. Have a cohesive and productive team.

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