

## **For Immediate Release**

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## **Tolbert Receives Inaugural SCC Dixon Entrepreneurship Award**

*Pinehurst, NC* – The Sandhills Center for Entrepreneurial Leadership announced today that Katina Tolbert, an accounting and business administration student at Sandhills Community College, has received the inaugural Mary Lea Dixon Entrepreneurship Award and \$1,000 to use toward fulfilling her dream of becoming a small business owner.

The award was established by the College's Sandhills Center for Entrepreneurial Leadership (SCEL) Advisory Board to honor Mary Lea Dixon as founder of the SCEL and as a visionary in entrepreneurial education and resource development.

The purpose of the annual \$1,000 Mary Lea Dixon Entrepreneurship Award is to recognize a Sandhills Community College student or recent graduate having exemplary character and demonstrating the dream, eagerness to learn, perseverance and accomplishments that hallmark entrepreneurial success. Dixon was on the selection committee that chose Tolbert based on her academic accomplishments and entrepreneurial spirit.

Tolbert will graduate this spring with A.A.S degrees in accounting and business administration and will have completed the required credits for the Entrepreneurship Certificate program. She currently has a GPA of 3.64 and is employed at Sandhills Community College as a Student Assistant for the Career Center and as a Peer Tutor for the Project Promise Strategies Lab. She also volunteers to tutor several of her classmates.

"I had the pleasure of taking classes under Mary Dixon and she was my advisor", Tolbert said. "I am overwhelmingly honored to be the recipient of this award and hope to represent it in a positive manner."

"Thanks to the Sandhills Center for Entrepreneurial Leadership and the Mary Lea Dixon Entrepreneurship Award, my career goals are within my reach", Tolbert added. Her goal is to become a Certified Public Accountant and eventually own her own firm.

Dixon retired in July 2009 after more than 20 years at the College, the last 5 of which were as Chair of the Management and Business Technologies Department. During that time, she recognized the growing role of entrepreneurship as an economic catalyst and felt that supporting local entrepreneurship was a direct and long-term investment in Moore County's economic wellbeing.

Dixon believed that Sandhills Community College was in a natural position to enhance local educational opportunities and coordinate support resources for entrepreneurs in Moore County. To that end, she spearheaded the creation of the College's Sandhills Center for Entrepreneurial Leadership and the Entrepreneurship Certificate Program in

2005 to provide students with the skills, experience and networks to become successful business owners and entrepreneurial leaders.

The Program follows the National Standards for Entrepreneurship Education which advocates not only learning about entrepreneurship but also experiencing it as part of the instructional process. Among other requirements, students are required to attend various training seminars at the College's Small Business Center, as well as participate in a mentoring program.

“Mary has been the driving force behind SCC's efforts to create not only a meaningful entrepreneurial curriculum but also a network of support and accessible resources for student entrepreneurs and the community”, said Marilyn Neely, SCEL Advisory Board Chair and Director of the College's Small Business Center. “She united key regional partners and helped collaborate their efforts to promote entrepreneurship and its role in achieving positive economic development.”

Such regional partners include Sandhills Community College's Management and Business Technologies Department, the College's Small Business Center, UNC-Pembroke's School of Business, the Moore County Chamber of Commerce, and Moore County Partners in Progress. Under Dixon's leadership, these SCEL Advisory Board members organized the first annual Sandhills Regional Entrepreneurship Summit in 2007. This year, the 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Summit is scheduled for April 13<sup>th</sup> at Sandhills Community College and will focus on financing opportunities for entrepreneurs and small businesses.

“Through Mary's vision, Sandhills can continue to build the educational foundation for our entrepreneurial students like Katina that will help them be successful at whatever professional endeavor they may decide to pursue”, Neely said.

“Entrepreneurs are a very important part of our local economy with the tremendous potential to create jobs”, added Ray Ogden, SCEL Advisory Board member and Executive Director of Moore County Partners in Progress. “We are glad that the Sandhills Center for Entrepreneurial Leadership is in place to advance entrepreneurial education at the College and that the Dixon Award may help cultivate some of the emerging entrepreneurs in Moore County. We wish Katina much success.”

For more information about the Entrepreneurship program through the Sandhills Center for Entrepreneurial Leadership at Sandhills Community College, contact Marilyn Neely at 910-695-3938 or Sarah Bumgarner at 910-695-3751. Information is also online at [www.sandhills.edu](http://www.sandhills.edu).

The 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Sandhills Regional Entrepreneurial Summit will be held on Tuesday, April 13<sup>th</sup> in Rooms 102 & 103 in Van Dusen Hall at the College's main campus. The program is from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. and is open to the public.

***(Picture following)***



Katina Tolbert, recipient of the 2009 Mary Lea Dixon Entrepreneurship Award at Sandhills Community College.