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College faculty member garners Kauffman Professor Award.

For the first time, a college faculty member has received a prestigious Kauffman Professor Award. **Irma Becerra-Fernández**, (PhD '94), associate professor, Department of Decision Sciences and Information Systems, was one of nine faculty at Florida International University—representing law, business, education, engineering, and arts and sciences—to capture the awards from a field of 39 applicants. Recipients receive up to \$15,000 to support their project.



Irma Becerra-Fernández

“Our goal in the Master of Science in Management Information Systems (MSMIS) program is to prepare the next generation of CIOs for South Florida and, toward that end, I was developing a new required course called *Management of the IS Function*,” she said. “I was thinking about the course in terms of leadership, and when I saw the grant application, I realized that the skills that a person would need to be an IS leader are the same skills he or she would need as an entrepreneur. I also realized that even if people do not start their own businesses, they still can be entrepreneurial within a firm, helping transform the IT department from a cost center to a revenue-generating source for the organization.”

In addition to developing the course with a new entrepreneurial spin, Becerra-Fernández, who organized a “CIO Lunch and Learn,” held March 24, 2007, focused on IT entrepreneurship, will prepare a case study.

“Several technology companies in Miami have expressed a willingness to be profiled, and I’ll create a case study designed to help students understand that you can be successful in IT in South Florida—either as an entrepreneur launching a new firm or as an ‘*intra-preneur*’ within an existing firm—even though we may not have as strong of an IT sector as, for example, Silicon Valley does,” she said.

Grant spurs creative thinking.

As a further step in integrating the MSMIS program and entrepreneurship,

she will encourage students to take the innovative projects they develop during their graduate coursework one step further by preparing a business plan and entering the [New Venture Challenge](#), an annual business plan competition sponsored by the college's Pino Center. She also recognizes that, as her grant work unfolds, even more ideas are likely to present themselves.

“I’ve always had an interest in entrepreneurial ventures, and this opportunity will help me develop that interest and help increase our students’ awareness of such possibilities as they plan their careers,” she said.

“The caliber of applicants in 2007 was very strong, and the range of departments from which our winners came validates our strongly held conviction that entrepreneurship crosses all disciplines.” said **Alan L. Carsrud**, director of the Pino Center and clinical professor of management.

“We will have a Kauffman Professors’ dinner and a presentation session for them to report on their projects,” said **Colleen Post**, (MBA ’03, BFA ’00), associate director, Pino Center, and adjunct professor in entrepreneurship, management, and international business.

The awards were announced on February 15, 2007.