

Enjoying a greater presence on campus

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Count the XEDC (St. F.X. Enterprise Development Centre) amongst those enjoying new space at the Schwartz School of Business.

Their office, located in the front lobby of the new building, will enhance their already well established connection with business students, Mark van de Wiel, director with XEDC, said.

"We have lots of programming for students so it's much nicer to have a face up there - a presence. In the past we were all here (office at 54 St. Mary's St.) and relatively invisible to the student body. When we held something on campus for students, we would go up and do that and that

worked fairly well. But, on a day-to-day basis, the interaction and exposure to us by students was relatively little."

That has now changed and van de Wiel said that puts XEDC entrepreneurship co-ordinator Melissa McMaster on the front line for student inquiries.

"Last year when I did a presentation I would get two or three e-mails afterwards," McMaster said. "But I noticed this year, as soon as the class ended, I had four or five students coming down and inquiring about more information regarding the services we offer."

"When she is in the office, she has students knocking on her door all the time, which is what we want," van de Wiel said. "There is a lot of interaction."

That interaction included a competition which wrapped up



XEDC entrepreneurship co-ordinator Melissa McMaster sits at her desk in the XEDC office at the Schwartz School of Business.

a couple of weeks ago that called for students to write a two-page concept letter for a unique business idea.

"In preparation for that two-page paper, they dropped by Melissa's office all the time for suggestions or questions," he said. "Where as before, that would have been done by e-mail or phone. The face-to-face is certainly more valuable."

With the concept letter competition over, the next competition being orchestrated by XEDC for students is the more involved business plan.

"With this one, we ask students to take their unique business idea and flush it out in a business plan, so we're looking for a whole lot more information," van de Wiel said. "There is a lot of work

to a business plan and it's all extra-curricular, so the students have to put a lot of work into it on their own time. But the prizes for business plan competition are significant."

And the winner might have the opportunity to compete nationally, van de Wiel explained.

"So it's a great competition from an exposure point of view, if they make it to the national round," he said, adding that winning locally does not guarantee them a spot nationally. "But gives them a pretty good shot at it."

He said it's also important to note the competition is open to all students at St. F.X., not just those in business programs.

Having the office on campus can also help XEDC continue

to connect the university to the community, another goal of the centre Van de Wiel said.

"We're just one of many agencies or departments at St. F.X. that tried to do that," he said. "Service learning is a good example, continuing education is another, lots of organizations on campus that act as a conduit between the university and the community and we're one."

"An example of how we do it is by trying to leverage faculty expertise, from time to time, to help solve business problems or use their expertise in a training environment for the betterment of the business community. Our relationship with the business faculty is definitely getting stronger because I'm right here on campus," McMaster added.