From the Director...
Marc V. Levine, Director

We are pleased to present this inaugural edition of the UWM Consortium for Economic Opportunity (CEO) newsletter: the “CEO Report.” An initiative of “the Milwaukee Idea,” the Consortium was established to work with community partners “to extend the benefits of economic growth to all parts of metropolitan Milwaukee.” The CEO Report will be one of the ways we will stay in touch about our progress.

The past decade has been a prosperous one for metropolitan Milwaukee. Unemployment is down, incomes are up, and wealth has been created at unprecedented levels. Housing prices have soared in the suburbs, and a wave of redevelopment projects has revitalized downtown. All Milwaukeeans, however, have not shared in the general prosperity. Almost 40 percent of the region’s African American children grow up in poverty and, despite the 1990s boom, black unemployment in metropolitan Milwaukee is almost five times higher than the white rate -the largest racial disparity in unemployment in the country. Minority business development continues to lag in the region.

Our mission at the CEO is to mobilize UWM resources, and work with community partners to promote economic development and expand economic opportunity in Greater Milwaukee. In the months since the CEO was created, we have begun to meet the challenge in many ways.

As you will read in this issue of the CEO Report, we have opened new offices in the Ameritech King Commerce Center, where we’re helping small businesses grow and working with community organizations to spur economic development. We have worked with a coalition of community partners on developing strategies to combat central city poverty. And we’ve established programs of faculty fellowships and mini-grants to support work on expanding economic opportunity.

The months ahead will see a host of exciting initiatives at the Consortium. With the support of the Helen Bader Foundation, we are developing a new program for returning Peace Corps volunteers to come to Milwaukee and work with community organizations on economic development. In partnership with the Urban League and Wisconsin Women’s Business Initiative, we are working on new ways to assist small business start-ups. And, of special interest to economic policymakers, we’ll be releasing a report on economic trends in our community: The Economic State of Milwaukee, 2001. We look forward to reporting on these and other initiatives in the coming months.

Consortium Announces First Annual Faculty Fellowships and Mini-Grant Recipients

The Consortium received great response to its first annual Faculty Fellowship and Mini-grant funding opportunities. The objective of the awards is to support teaching, research, and outreach activities that are relevant to the goals of the Consortium. Awardees in both categories will focus on research and initiatives that add to our understanding of community economic development, and encourage the growth of UWM/community partnerships.

continued on page 2
Consortium Announces… continued from page 1

Year 2000 Recipients include:

Patricia Torres-Garrett, Center for Urban Initiatives and Research, will conduct a marketing study of a near southside Milwaukee community (NSP 15) facing economic development challenges along a blighted commercial strip.

Jean Verber, Women and Poverty Public Education Initiative, held a forum on the availability of job openings for W-2 participants.

Aura Mollick Hirschman, “U-Work” Program, Student Accessibility Center, will establish a “business advisory council” that will help link UWM students with disabilities to employment and internship opportunities.

Professor Phyllis King, Occupational Therapy Program, School of Allied Health Professions, will hold a one-day conference on office ergonomics and design. The focus will include the impact of ergonomics on employee productivity, health, and safety.

Professor Margo Anderson, Department of History, will begin work on a study entitled “The Economic History of Great Lakes Cities and Regions.”

Consortium Spotlight: Focus on Small Business Success

Kairo Communications and the Small Business Development Center

In July 2000, the mother and son team of Deborah and Geraud Blanks approached Consortium staff Russ Roberts at the Small Business Development Center (SBDC) searching for information on starting and operating a small business. They were particularly interested in developing a business plan, and securing financing for their new enterprise.

The Blanks had an ambitious venture planned. The vision for “Kairo Communications” is to offer book publishing, media production, management, and event/promotion services to writers, musicians, artists and poets. Both Deborah and Geraud have years of professional experience relevant to Kairo’s key business activities.

From “Vision” to Reality

After attending the SBDC’s “First Steps Small Business Roundtable,” Geraud and Deborah met with Business Counselor, Russ Roberts to discuss Kairo’s start-up plans including incorporation, tax issues, accounting systems, and of course, business plan development. Since Geraud had already begun initial work on Kairo’s business plan, staff provided resource material on writing and organizing the plan, presenting financial statements, and checking a personal credit history. Russ also provided the Blanks with examples of successfully-funded business plans.

Plan Leads to Funding

In August, the Blanks’ final business plan was completed and submitted to Wells Fargo for potential funding. The loan officer remarked that their business plan was impressive and provided funding in the form of a $20,000 line of credit.

Staff continue to work with the Blanks on developing and executing their marketing and product development plans as well as addressing the inevitable new issues and concerns that may surface as the business develops. With a solid business plan and initial financial support, the future for Kairo Communications looks promising. The Small Business Development Center staff were happy to have played a role in this success story.

The Small Business Development Center is a part of University Outreach located in the Grand Avenue Mall, Plankinton Building.

Entrepreneurial Certification Program Launched

The UW-Milwaukee Small Business Development Center (SBDC) recently completed its first ever Entrepreneurial Certificate Program (ECP) on November 9, 2000, graduating 17 new entrepreneurs anxious to launch or expand their small businesses. The entrepreneurs represented a range of ventures including daycare centers, construction companies, retail shops, and service companies to name a few.

The ECP is a comprehensive ten-week course designed to help entrepreneurs and current small business owners gain business skills and attract financing. The program is offered in partnership with the Wisconsin Department of Commerce (DOC) and the UW-Milwaukee Minority Entrepreneurship Program (MIP) with technical, one-on-one assistance provided through the SBDC. The goal of the program is to give entrepreneurs the opportunity to complete their business plans by the last session.

The Entrepreneurial Certificate Program is offered on a regular basis with the next session starting March 5, 2001. Grants to attend the ECP are available to qualified applicants through the DOC. For more information about the ECP, contact the SBDC at (414) 227-3240.

The ECP’s first graduating class

“The ECP’s first graduating class”
Women and Poverty Public Education Initiative Holds Forum on Employment and W-2
By Jean Verber

With funding through the UWM Consortium for Economic Opportunity Mini-Grant Program, the Milwaukee Women and Poverty Public Education Initiative (WPPEI) hosted a community forum entitled “Labor Shortage or Job Shortage?”

The focus of the forum, held at the Consortium’s Ameritech King Center location, was a discussion of WPPEI’s recent report on the job market in Milwaukee’s central city. The study revealed that a substantial job gap exists, which may provide a plausible explanation for declining family economic well-being, particularly among those who are moving from welfare to the labor market.

The forum involved a diverse group of community leaders, representing a range of perspectives on labor market issues. Participants included: the city of Milwaukee; Alderman Don Richards; Milwaukee County Supervisor Willie Johnson; labor representative Leon Burzynski; community residents; Pamela Fendt and Lisa Heuler-Williams, UWM Center for Economic Development; Rich Oulahan from Esperanza Unida; Kathleen Cady Schilling, UWM Consortium for Economic Opportunity; and Cheryl Rogers and Elsa Rodriguez, two women who work directly with W-2 participants searching for employment.

Among the many important outcomes of the forum, Senator Gary George’s agreed to participate on a newly-established committee examining labor and unemployment issues in the State of Wisconsin. In addition, twenty forum participants volunteered to serve on a task force to discuss job creation and training initiatives.

The planning committee for the Forum looks forward to keeping the momentum alive that was sparked by the event. WPPEI is grateful for the support of the UWM Consortium for Economic Opportunity for making this significant first step possible. We trust that there will be additional opportunities to explore these issues at the University of Wisconsin System’s “Wisconsin Economic Summit.”

Jean Verber is the Milwaukee Coordinator of the Women and Poverty Public Education Initiatives. For additional information, please contact her at 265-3925.

Meet the Consortium’s New Staff Members
Since its official launch in June, the Consortium has added five new staff members.

Kathleen Cady Schilling is the Consortium’s Economic Opportunity Specialist. Kathleen came to the Consortium after spending four years in Brookfield, Wisconsin as the city’s Economic Development Coordinator. She also worked in Monroe, Michigan for a year serving as a Community Planner. Kathleen has a Bachelors in American Public Affairs-Metropolitan Studies from Michigan State University and a Masters in Urban Planning with a focus in Economic Development from the University of Michigan. Kathleen is an APA-certified planner with expertise in local development practices.

Tim Harrison joined the UWM Small Business Development Center/Consortium Staff as a Business Counselor earlier this year. He attended MATC concentrating on accounting and real estate coursework. He received his undergraduate degree in Economics from UWM. Tim has also pursued graduate coursework in business education at UW-Whitewater. Tim has a diverse background with experience working as a consultant in CPA firms; an MPS teacher; and as an adjunct instructor in business, accounting, and economics at Bryant and Stratton College. Tim has extensive experience in accounting, bookkeeping, and tax preparation.

continued on back page
Meet the Consortium’s New Staff Members

continued from page 3

Russ Roberts joined the Small Business Development Center/Consortium in July 2000 as a Business Counselor. Prior to joining the SBDC, Russ spent ten years operating his own highly successful financial consulting business. His varied career also includes ten years as a Naval Flight Officer/Mission Commander in the Naval Reserves. Russ holds a Bachelor’s degree in Business Management from Miami University (Ohio) and is currently pursuing an MBA from Marquette University.

Ryan Ranker was recently hired as a research technician for the Consortium. He is working on a number of research reports including the upcoming Economic State of the City, 2001. Ryan is currently a graduate student in the Urban Studies Master’s Program. He has a special interest in the economic impact of baseball stadiums. Ryan received his B.A. in Sociology from UW-Parkside.

Lisa Heuler-Williams will serve as the coordinator of the Consortium’s Peace Corps Fellows Program anticipated to begin in Fall, 2001. She currently serves as a policy analyst at the Center for Economic Development. She received her B.A. from UW-Madison and an M.A. in International Development from the American University. Her work at the Center focuses on sectoral targeting, transportation and the labor market. She has a special interest in working with community-based economic development organizations.

To provide feedback or to receive any additional information on the Consortium, please contact, Lauren McHargue: mac@uwm.edu, 414-229-5881 or by mail: University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, PO Box 413, Milwaukee, WI 53201

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