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## GrowDelta targets entrepreneurs

By **Andy Ross**  
 Staff Writer

Friday, July 3, 2009 4:04 PM CDT

Clarksdale may be a tough environment for anyone attempting to open a business, yet there are still quite a few success stories which have taken place here over the years.

Whether it's restaurants, music clubs, blues memorabilia and record stores, or an inn created from re-furnished shotgun shacks, it has been shown that it can be done.

With these examples in mind, and a vision to see an increased wave of success stories, a new project called the GrowDelta Initiative is about to get underway next weekend.

During a day-long course July 11 at the Cutrer Mansion, a variety of professionals will offer advice on what it takes to bring entrepreneurial ideas to fruition. The speakers already scheduled include everyone from accountants and attorneys to credit experts, professors and business owners.

The GrowDelta Initiative is the brainchild of recent Clarksdale transplant Emily Broad and Charles Noble, the Director of the MBA programs at Ole Miss.

Broad, who works as a joint fellow between Harvard Law School and Mississippi State University, says she and Noble are taking a multi-faceted approach to the program.

The goal is for next Saturday's course to be the first of many follow-up events. Besides providing education and guidance, Broad says they want to receive as much feedback as possible.

"We wanted to bring some people together who are interested in starting businesses and find out from them what are the real barriers they often face," Broad said. "We don't actually know all we need to about what they need. With this, we can offer something to help them get started, but also use it as an opportunity to learn what follow up projects we can do to be able to assist more fledgling entrepreneurs."

Noble says he has long been interested in starting such a program in the Delta and the chance to collaborate with Broad was the perfect opportunity. Noble sees The GrowDelta Initiative as unique. It plans to take a more comprehensive approach than other programs which have sometimes tended to focus exclusively on issues such as securing initial loans.

"That's all good," says Noble, "but one of the ways we have tried to differentiate what we are doing is to really focus on the business ideas. It is one thing to give somebody a bucket of money, but if they are going to wind up going broke in a few months they are not going to be ahead of the game. We are concerned with things like the business thinking, the marketing skills and the legal issues they will face."

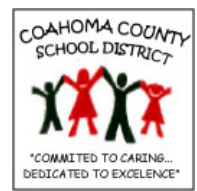
Business ideas based around blues tourism are one clear example of entrepreneurial possibilities, says Noble.

The college professor is quick to point out, however, that the tourism angle is just one aspect. He says he hopes the program can help jumpstart a wide variety of ideas and encourage everyone from tradesmen to those with dot.com plans.

Next Saturday's workshop runs from 9:00 a.m. to 4:45 p.m. Registration is \$10 and includes lunch from Ground Zero.

Forms can be picked up at Hambone Art Gallery at 111 E. 2nd Street and should be received

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