

TESTIMONIAL: SHEILA MCCORKLE, CHRISTIANS SALON & DAY SPA



Sheila received her Associate's Degree in Business Administration from Delgado in 1989. She took evening classes while a mother with a full-time job (Tenet executive secretary, a position she held for 18 years). She started with only 3-6 credit hours of class, studied over 3 years, and by her final semester had a full class schedule. During her 18th year with Tenet, Sheila made the decision to leave, branch out and start her own business. Sheila's father was a construction entrepreneur, so she always had the goal of becoming a small business owner herself, though she didn't know initially what type of business that would be.

Sheila formed a sole proprietorship and, with a fellow cosmetology school student, opened Christians Salon & Day Spa on the West Bank of New Orleans 15 years ago. Initially, she ran the business part-time, on nights and weekends. As she grew her clientele, largely by word-of-mouth referral, she made the expansion to operating full time. Today, Christians Salon & Day Spa serves a regular clientele of more than 200 per month, a number that has remained strong even in the "scathing" wake of hurricane Katrina as East Bank residents have moved to Algiers and sought the salon's services. Sheila reopened the salon in October 2005 and has since re-grown her employee base to 4. She's looking to hire 2 more to bring her back to her pre-Katrina total of 6.

Sheila says that her Delgado educational experience was invaluable to the pursuit of her entrepreneurial dreams. She recalls in particular that her public speaking class, marketing classes and finance classes really helped. "At the time, I remember thinking, 'How will this work into my business?'" she says. "But I can't tell you how important all that knowledge has turned out to be. Even if you have accountants and partners and vendors, you need to understand it all yourself. Delgado gave me information and skills that were critical in the real business world."

Sheila says her "most successful class" was her business plan course. She used the format of the business plan she wrote at Delgado to develop the plan for Christians Salon & Day Spa that secured her initial financing.

Through the years, Sheila has maintained her relationship with Delgado. She considers Dr. Donna Alley to be a friend and mentor and works closely with her and Delgado's West Bank campus. Sheila has served as 2007-2008 secretary on the Board of the AEDF (Algiers Economic Development Foundation), which is also working with Delgado to promote the revitalization of the General Meyer corridor, which represents a concentration of small businesses on the West Bank. Sheila is also excited about pursuing continuing education/non-credit classes in business and marketing at Delgado.