

TechJournal South – November 2007



25 of the Most Influential People in Southeast Tech

TechJournal South selected 25 of most influential people in the Southeast technology and entrepreneurial space from nominations by venture capitalists, serial entrepreneurs, and tech related organizations in its Nov. print edition.

Among those featured is Randy Berridge, a member of the myregion.org Board of Directors and CEO of the Florida High Tech Corridor Council. Randy has served as Co-Chair of the myregion.org Economic Leadership Committee and was one of several myregion.org Board Members who served on the sub-committee that developed the Central Florida Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy.

Randy Berridge logs thousands of miles a year for the Florida High Tech Corridor Council

The world of high tech isn't full of retired folks, but then again Randy Berridge started young – and many joke that he looks and works like the youngest retiree they know. The former AT&T executive heads the Florida High Tech Corridor Council and logs thousands of miles each year traveling the triangle that connects the 23-county region to its three partners – the University of Central Florida in Orlando, University of South Florida in Tampa and University of Florida in Gainesville.

His mission: attract, retain and grow high tech industry to the region and develop the workforce to support it.

His strategy: create a partnership that includes more than 20 local economic development organizations, 14 community colleges, 13 workforce boards and a host of companies whose executives serve on the Council to give advice and direction.

His philosophy: get everyone to leave their logos and egos at the door and pull together for the region's common good.

The Council has a secret weapon in its Matching Grants Research Program ... a unique concept that attracts companies to conduct research on the university campuses with faculty and graduate students working side-by-side with company technologists. Companies and the Council match their investment dollar-for-dollar and to date more than 250 companies have partnered with the Council on 800 projects for \$150 million in sponsored research.

An initial study indicates that the total impact of that program on the region has been \$500 million when the downstream value of those research projects is counted. And Berridge points to numerous companies employing the very graduate students who worked on their research projects. "That's workforce development," he says, "when you can keep bright graduates in the market.

"And there are many of those same students going on to create their own ventures, like UCF Alumnus Dan Rini whose Rini Technologies has created exciting thermal and laser cooling technologies."

He says there are few regions in the country with three great universities willing to work together side-by-side this way, but his phone rings regularly from people wanting to know how they can replicate the Corridor Council model. "I tell them it requires unselfish leaders at the universities, at least the beginnings of industry clusters with executives willing to share, communities that recognize they all win when one wins, and a state legislature willing to invest in research as Florida's has done."

On the Web: www.floridahightech.com/

The complete list can be found on the TechJournal South web site at <http://www.techjournalssouth.com/index.html>.