Walsh College to Design Courses for Insurance Broker Burns & Wilcox

A longstanding relationship between Walsh College and North America's largest insurance managing general agent and wholesale insurance broker has evolved into a partnership that promotes employee training and skill-building.

Farmington Hills-based Burns & Wilcox contracted with the Walsh College Division of Online Learning to develop a new course online insurance curriculum to prepare Burns & Wilcox employees to sit for professional certification examinations.

"The partnership illustrates how business, education, and technology can combine to bring out the best in working professionals," Walsh College president and CEO Stephanie Bergeron said. "The late Walsh College President Jeffery W. Barry would be pleased to know that this partnership grew from a board membership and then friendship with Alan Kaufman."

Kaufman is chairman, president, and CEO of Burns & Wilcox and its parent company, the H.W. Kaufman Financial Services Group Inc. An attorney, he is also founding senior partner of Kaufman, Payton & Chapa.

When former Walsh President Barry joined the Kaufman Financial Group board of directors in 1988, he and Kaufman became friends. Kaufman admired his skills as a facilitator and relationship-builder and held him in high regard as a mentor and confidant.

Through this influence, Kaufman gained respect for Walsh College. He gave the college's 2002 commencement address and was elected to its board of trustees later that year. A longtime financial supporter of the College, Kaufman is also a member of the Walsh College Foundation Board of Directors.

The goal of the Burns & Wilcox and Walsh College partnership is to build a Web-based, e-learning insurance studies program within The Kaufman Institute, the Burns & Wilcox corporate university for insurance studies. The Institute consists of general business courses for insurance professionals and comprehensive sales and marketing courses with an insurance-specific focus.

"The Kaufman Institute is unique in the insurance industry sector," Kaufman said. "It is dedicated to helping us live our brand promise that Burns & Wilcox is smart. We are confident that the partnership programs offered through the Kaufman Institute will give us the edge to outperform our competitors in the marketplace."

"Learning in online courses is the manner in which many employees will be able to remain current in their area of expertise in today's world," said Karen Rhoda, dean of the Walsh College Division of Online Learning. "Insurance employees are able to access the course materials at their convenience and connecting to our Web site for weekly assignments, practice activities and asynchronous discussion sessions with the instructor."

The instructor and individual students do not need to be online at the same time. Students are able to access the course at their convenience during the ten week session and get instructor feedback at times convenient for them.

"That way, they can continue to work and schedule 'school' around their work requirements," Rhoda added.

Currently, 25 Burns & Wilcox employees are taking the "Principles of Insurance" pilot class online. The course filled to capacity within 30 minutes opening for enrollment and has a waiting list.

Those who successfully complete the pilot course will be eligible to sit for the American Institute of Certified Property Casualty Underwriter certification exam.

The curriculum also includes INS 22, INS 23, and Certificate of Life Insurance courses ASLI 163 and ASLI 164. A certificate of completion will be issued to those who pass all the courses.