



**ARTICULATE, BRIGHT AND  
INSIGHTFUL, STUDENT  
RESEARCHERS HAVE FULL TEAM  
MEMBER STATUS AT THE UTSA  
INSTITUTE FOR ECONOMIC  
DEVELOPMENT (IED).**

# NEW PARADIGMS --- FOR --- STUDENT RESEARCHERS

BY JENNIFER SISANE

**W**HILE SOME THINK of interns and student workers as assistants who take care of rote tasks, IED student researchers are changing that paradigm and have fuller roles steeped in experiential learning. Instead of seeing an IED student researcher hovering over a copy machine or running errands around campus, you might see him or her briefing an international delegation, developing a foreign investment business plan, accessing a specialized database to develop a marketing plan for a national client, conducting data collection, or presenting research findings to a CEO.

**"STUDENT RESEARCHERS ARE A CRITICAL COMPONENT OF OUR CLIENTS' SUCCESS," SAID UTSA SENIOR ASSOCIATE VICE PRESIDENT FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ROBERT MCKINLEY, "THEIR RESEARCH PROVIDES ENTREPRENEURS WITH VALUABLE INFORMATION AND SOLUTIONS, MEANWHILE STUDENTS GAIN PRACTICAL BUSINESS EXPERIENCE."**

# UTSA Institute for Economic Development



In 2015, the IED generated \$2.6 billion in economic impact, supporting entrepreneurs through 76,137 consulting hours with small businesses and 8,958 research hours.

**ALBERTO RODRIGUEZ-BAEZ** serves as a senior international business advisor with the International Trade Center at the IED and provides consulting services. He also mentors student researchers through a customized training program and reviews all their work before it is shared with clients.

Rodriguez-Baez is quick to point out that the student researchers are more than just interns—they are the market research team. “By giving them titles such as ‘international market research specialists’, our clients know that they are very important to us. It also sets a tone for the students to work and deliver at that professional level,” said Rodriguez-Baez. Amanda Midence, a senior in the College of Business, agrees that the title matters to build credibility for the team. This is particularly important when they join Rodriguez-Baez in presenting research findings to a CEO client.

The Texas International Business Accelerator (TIBA) is a specialty program within the International Trade Center at the IED. **JAIME MARTINEZ**, Senior Project Manager, leads the program and a team of foreign investment specialists, aka

student researchers. Students “get real world experience and have customer contact beyond the textbook,” said Martinez. They have the opportunity to take their “finance, marketing and customer service skills to a whole other level and participate in activities in the real business world that they’re not getting in other types other internships,” Martinez continued.

Since TIBA’s inception in fiscal year 2011, it has been responsible for over 1,800 new direct jobs created and over \$136 million in foreign investment to Texas.

Each year the IED welcomes 20-30 delegations to learn about IED activities, the U.S. Small Business Development Center model and how the International Trade Center assists countries adapt the model for their local market context. When delegations tour the IED, a favorite stop is the research area to talk with student researchers. **DR. BARBARA SCHNEEMAN**, U.S. Higher Education Coordinator with the U.S. Agency for International Development, met with researchers from the

International Trade Center. Schneeman said, “I’m glad I had this opportunity” to meet with the researchers from the International Trade Center “and I was very impressed by the student[s]”.

The IED International Trade Center has assisted more than 20 countries via a five-phase adaptation process to transfer the SBDC methodology under the Small Business Network of the Americas initiative. This Public-Private-Academic (PPA) partnership was announced at the 2012 Summit of the Americas by President Obama with the goal of creating a hemisphere-wide network of SBDC programs that will assist many thousands of small businesses in starting and growing their operations. “The UTSA International Trade Center has been working with countries on building SBDC networks since 2003. The first international SBDCs opened their doors in Mexico and there are now more than 82 SBDCs throughout Latin America with another 210 to be launched in 2016,” said **CLIFF PAREDES**, director of the UTSA International Trade Center.

In a recent visit to the UTSA IED for a briefing, the U.S. State Department’s Deputy Assistant Secretary **SUE SAARNIO** said, “It is clear that your work on the Small Business Network





of the Americas has an enormous impact.” Saarnio also had an opportunity to talk in-depth with the student researchers about their latest activities for clients.

Students regularly meet with delegates who include senior officials from Washington, DC, such as Dr. Schneeman and DAS Saarnio, foreign ministries, and local and state government. **JORGE SANCHEZ**, a recent University of Texas graduate and current researcher, said we have been “trained very well to present findings in a formal fashion.” His colleague, **RANGEL ROSADO**, a junior in the College of Business, said we are “used to presenting in front of our peers and professors.” This research opportunity gives us “practice in presenting in a professional setting.”

In 2016, the UTSA student researchers will have the chance to lead for the first time an international online training on how to create a student research unit within an International Trade Center. This training will be designed and delivered by the research team in collaboration with their mentor Rodriguez-Baez as part of the SBDCGlobal Trade Consultant Certification Series. In the training, “we anticipate participation from Small Business Network of America countries, as well as national SBDC directors,” said Rodriguez-Baez.

The IED offers additional paid opportunities for students to participate in research. The IED Center for Community and Business Research (CCBR), lead by **DR. THOMAS TUNSTALL**, employs a range of undergraduate and graduate researchers. Since “research draws upon specialized skills from a variety of disciplines CCBR welcomes student researchers from all UTSA Colleges,” said research economist and mentor **DR. SHERYLLENN ROBERTS**.

In addition, the Small Business Development Center Network known as SBDCNet is the official National Information Clearinghouse of the U.S. Small Business Administration housed at the IED. SBDCNet provides small business research services to the entire 1,000+ member SBDC Network of Small Business Development Centers located in all 50 states, Guam and Puerto Rico. Student researchers are able to contribute to a broad range of financial, market and demographic research reports customized to client industry and geographic location.

Assisting businesses reach their full potential and grow goes hand-in-hand with assisting UTSA student reach their full potential through service-learning roles with the IED.

For professors and students interested in student-researcher placements, please contact:

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**STUDENT RESEARCHERS ARE ABLE TO CONTRIBUTE TO A BROAD RANGE OF FINANCIAL, MARKET AND DEMOGRAPHIC RESEARCH REPORTS CUSTOMIZED TO CLIENT INDUSTRY AND GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION.**

