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Posted: 03/25/2004 07:38 AM  
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## **Pickus Steps Down at Emerging Issues Institute, Returns to Duke Faculty**

By *Allan Maurer*, LocalTechWire

**Editor's note: RTP Beat is a regular feature on Thursdays.**

DURHAM - Noah Pickus, first director of the Institute for Emerging Issues(IEI)at North Carolina State University, has left that post to return to Duke University, where he joins the Kenan Institute for Ethics.

Pickus says leaving the Institute now, before a replacement is named, was a matter of timing. He was offered the Duke position after the last Emerging Issues Forum and had to make a decision. The Institute is advertising for a new director.

"Now that the IEI is founded and launched, this position (at Duke) goes back to the issues in leaderships and ethics that I do in my scholarly work," says Pickus.

Max Wallace, IEI Senior fellow in innovation and leadership, serial entrepreneur and president of The Arbor Group, tells Local Tech Wire, "This is a great opportunity for him. It's his root history."

### **Joining Arbor Group**

Wallace says Pickus will join the Arbor Group as a senior policy advisor. "His primary job is at Duke. He'll work with us on projects of interest. We just want access to his mind," he says.

Of Pickus' work at the IEI, Wallace points out, "He helped make people focus on issues they had not focused on in an organized way."

Former Gov. Jim Hunt formed the IEI early in the new century and Pickus guided development of its first highly influential forum, which focused on options for biotech economic development in NC in 2002. Pickus was a member of the faculty at the Sanford Institute for Public Policy at Duke. He has a Ph.D in Politics from Princeton University.

Pickus says that during his tenure as Institute director, "We accomplished proof of concept. We demonstrated that when we have both a new economy and new political administration in the state, there is a pressing need for an organization that raises big picture issues and gets leaders in business and the universities to address long term as well as immediate issues."

When he first took the position at IEI, Pickus told Local Tech Wire he saw the need for ways to bring all segments of the NC community together in public debate of economic development issues.

### **Biotech forum Succeeds**

The first Emerging Issues Forum held under his direction did just that for biotech, gathering government, academic and business leaders together for an intense two-day look at ways to capitalize on the state's already strong biotech industry in 2002.

"You see what we did in our work in biotech and innovation in the creative economy," says Pickus. "I think it's fair to say we shaped public debate and that's what we need in this state, the opportunity to have robust debate over different alternatives."

Steven Burke, senior vice president of corporate affairs at the NC Biotech Center tells Local Tech Wire, "Biotech requires new policy attention. Noah Pickus is unusually able to shape in practical ways the complicated policy requirements of a complicated, life-changing technology. Policy is often an abstract term around which we gather our hopes. Moving from those hopes to reality is difficult and often not done. Noah is very good at making that leap."

Actually accessing the work of the IEI is avoiding the trap of looking at its impact on the next bill passed or what happens in three months after a forum.

But Pickus says he's pleased with "the impact we were able to have in two years. You see more attention being paid to science and public policy, and if you look across the state, you see a lot of communities exploring and experimenting with new and different approaches to economic development. We were not the cause, but we helped catalyze some of it and key moments helped give it some shape."

The recent biotech report sent to Gov. Mike Easley outlining a \$600 million plan to promote further growth of the biotech industry in NC owed much to the discussions started at the Emerging Issues Biotech forum. Leslie Alexandre, head of the Biotech Center, acknowledged that when the report was released.

Although Pickus sees more of the types of open debate of public issues going on, he says, "they're a fragile set of conversations. Leadership in the state is going from the older generation, the Jim Hunts and Bill Fridays and it's not clear who the next generation of leaders will be. Who the thought leaders are is a crucial question."

Pickus says some new thought leaders are emerging, such as NC State Treasurer Richard Moore, who has numerous innovative ideas for using state funds to stimulate economic development, and Lt. Gov. Beverly Perdue.

Moore, for instance, "is a leading example of someone not afraid to say it's not all about whether you recruit a company or not. Here are ten other ideas. They may not all be good ideas. What he needs are people to push back, to access and evaluate those ideas."

We need new ideas, Pickus says, because so much time is now spent on tax policy and initiatives or incentives that "it takes up all the air in the room. We need more ideas, some big, some small, that are not the same old debates."

### **Throwing bombs**

But he says the state still needs a system for getting some sort of independent analysis and opinion on the complex set of options it faces. "We don't yet have a system where people who don't yet have a dog in the fight can provide truly independent assessments of complicated economic commitments.

"That's what's needed more than anything else, a system so those thought leaders can get genuine independent analysis of different options."

Pickus says groups like the conservative Raleigh-based John Locke Foundation "has done well expressing an alternative viewpoint. But there has to be a debate they can be part of," Pickus notes. "We

should welcome them and others with alternative views into the debate. Right now they feel like they're on the outside throwing bombs inside, while those inside feel they're having bombs thrown at them rather than constructive ideas."

### **Rocket Day**

Brand Fuel, which sells business promotional items, celebrates its second annual Rocket Day event in Morrisville on Thursday. The company brings several hundred local clients, prospects and friends of the company out for food, live music, a vendor showcase, and tours of its showroom.

The company says its revenues grew 38 percent in 2003 over 2002 during a year relatively flat for many other distributors in its industry.

Brand Fuel expects 18 vendors, including Hanes, Ping, Leed's, Fossil, Zippo and Champion, showing their latest wares at the invitation-only event.

Last year's Rocket Day won Brand Fuel a national Spirit Award from Advertising Specialty Industry (ASI), its national industry umbrella organization.

The award required the company to list a set of objectives and results obtained from the event, which ranged from leads generated to samples distributed and customer relationship results.

Brand Fuel is a specialty advertising, promotional products, and web services company with a large showroom and in-house graphic design, marketing, and web services departments.

The company partners with its clients to promote product launches, fundraising events, incentive, reward, and loyalty programs, and merchandising through online company stores.

Brand Fuel has about 1,500 active clients, including Blue Cross Blue Shield of North Carolina, Cisco Systems, Carolina Hurricanes, Aramark, Kellogg's, Safety-Kleen Corp., and KPMG. The company has 17 full-time employees and celebrates its sixth anniversary this spring.

### **Centennial Campus job**

NC State is looking for a director of its Centennial Campus development office.

The position's job description includes partnership development, partner/tenant services, marketing and communications, master plan development, financial planning, design and construction, and property management, among others.

Centennial Campus is NC State's innovative and highly regarded meeting point of government, academia and business in a major research setting.

**Emerging Issues Institute:** [www.ncsu.edu/iei/index.html](http://www.ncsu.edu/iei/index.html)

**Brand Fuel:** [www.brandfuel.com](http://www.brandfuel.com)