

## **THE HISTORY OF ICSB**

**By Bob Brockhaus**

### **The Early Years: 1956 – 1975**

Before the International Council for Small Business adopted its present name, it was known as the National Council for Small Business Management Development. And its beginnings started before that name was adopted. The National Council for Small Business Management Development (NCSBMD) grew from a conference on small business management development held in June, 1956, at the University of Colorado. This conference was sponsored by the University and the U.S. Small Business Administration, and was financed by a grant from the Ford Foundation. At that time the Small Business Administration had completed the second year of a program of cosponsoring administrative management courses for small business. They were organized and conducted by educational institutions with assistance and co-sponsorship of the Small Business Administration. The Ford Foundation financed a meeting of 40 of the coordinators of such courses from all parts of the country. The subject of the Conference was “The Problems of Training Small Business Executives.” Its purpose was to pool the experience of small business management course coordinators so that training programs planned by them in the future would be strengthened and improved.

The first conference was deemed so worthwhile by the participants that they voted to have another one the following year. It was held, with the University of Colorado again acting as host. At the second meeting, in June, 1957, the Council was formally organized. Officers and an advisory board were elected and a program of activities developed. Bylaws were drafted during the following year and presented, thrashed out, rewritten, and adopted at the third annual conference in June, 1958, at the University of Pittsburgh. In 1962, the first Outstanding Small Businessman Award was given. The U.S. Small Business Administration joined in the selection process by the late 1960's and in 1965 the United States President presented the award.

### **The ICSB Years: 1975 to the Present**

In the mid 1970's a proposal to legally incorporate was considered but stopped because of the proposal to change the name of the National Council for Small Business Management Development to the International Council for Small Business. In June 1977 the name change was made. The following two years were spent developing a general plan of reorganization that was adopted at the June 1979 meeting. However, the actual approval of the new constitution and by-laws was done at the June 1980 meeting.

During the two years following the name change to ICSB, efforts were made to establish procedures for forming affiliates and holding conferences outside of the United States. The first “international” ICSB conference was held in Quebec City, Canada in 1979. In 1980 the new constitution and by-laws were adopted. At that time the Canadian

division became the first affiliate of ICSB. In October 1981, the United States became the second affiliate of ICSB. Today there are eleven affiliates located throughout the world.

The first conference outside of the North America was in 1991 in Vienna, Austria. The Board of Directors was concerned that the attendance might be small given the cost of traveling from North America where most of the members resided. However, the opportunity to visit such a beautiful and historic city prevailed in the final decision. It also was an opportunity for the newly formed European affiliate to attract new members. The attendance was outstanding by both the North Americans and by the Europeans. The 1995 conference held in Sidney, Australia was the first in the Pacific Rim. This conference was the first where a head of state spoke to the attendees. The heads of state from Taiwan and South Africa have participated in later conferences. In the last 15 years, we have had important ministers of government, as well as the world's leading entrepreneurship researchers, as keynote speakers. The latter is primary due to the Swedish Foundation for Small Business Research which sponsors an annual recognition for the researchers who have made significant contributions to the entrepreneurial field. As part of the requirements for receiving this coveted prize, the honorees must present at the ICSB World Conference.

An analysis of the ICSB financial statements from the early years shows that there was very little revenue but expenses were minimal as well. Due to limited resources, the majority of the functions were reallocated to the officers and the official address of ICSB was moved to St. Louis, Missouri in 1982 where Saint Louis University volunteered to provide the basic office functions without charging a fee. By 1987, the officers and Board decided to have a paid International Office. After soliciting proposals, Saint Louis University was selected. Bob Brockhaus who had been the president of ICSB in 1983-84 was named Executive Director, an unpaid position and was an *ex officio* member of the BOD. In 2003, the International Office was moved to George Washington University in Washington, D.C. with Susan Duffy serving as the Executive Director. A combination of subsidized expenses, development of new sources of funds and the careful management of funds by the officers and Board of Directors over the last two decades have resulted in a financially stable organization today.

The ICSB has a long history of publications. *The Journal of Small Business Management (JSBM)* was first published in February 1963 making it the first academic journal dedicated to small business and entrepreneurship. The journal is currently being published by Blackwell Publishing and is being edited by Dr. Chandra Mishra of Florida Atlantic University and Dr. Daniel McConaughy of California State University, Northridge.

ICSB recognizes and honors their leaders and others who have contributed to the advancement of small business and entrepreneurship worldwide by bestowing the title of Wilford L. White Fellow on them. Wilford White was one of the founders of the National Council for Small Business Management Development when he was Director, Office of Management and Research Assistance of the US Small Business Administration. In

1969-70, he served as president of NCSBMD. The Wilford White Fellows program was established in 1977 when the honor was first bestowed. He was one of the first recipients.

To have lasted for 50 years is testimony to the quality of the individuals who have provided leadership to ICSB. Over the 50 years, tens of thousands have been members of ICSB. Of these thousands, only 43 have served as the president. All of these men and women spent years in service to ICSB prior to becoming president. Many have continued to provide guidance and support in different ways following their term as president. With their leadership, along with their executive team, ICSB has grown and prospered.

### **Author's Notes**

Bob Brockhaus, a past ICSB president who served as the volunteer Executive Director of the International Council for Small Business for 23 years from 1981 to 2003, has prepared the summary of the history of ICSB.

Much of the material is adapted from a series of articles on the history of ICSB. The first was July 1967 *Journal of Small Business Management* article that was written by Wendell O. Metcalf who was one of the founders and a past president. In the July 1975 issue, Robert O. Bauer, another past president who also served as the Executive Secretary for seven years, wrote of the ten years that followed. Wendell started the third decade but it was finished by Justin Longenecker, another past president who is the co-author of one of the first textbooks on small business management. The most recent 15 years are chronicled by Harold Welsch, a past president and long time active leader.