



Northern Illinois
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News Release

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NIU EIGERlab Re-establishing SCORE in the Rockford Region

Rockford, Ill. — Community leaders gathered at NIU-Rockford Wednesday, June 7 to kick off an effort to re-establish a Rockford area SCORE chapter. The audience included elected officials economic development representatives, bankers, local business owners, and manufacturers. Known as "*Counselors to America's Small Business*," SCORE is a nationwide organization bringing together seasoned business professionals with aspiring entrepreneurs for mentorship and counseling.

NIU EIGERlab is being supported in this effort by Fox Valley SCORE, SCORE Regional (Northern Illinois, Wisconsin, and Michigan) and SCORE National.

Rockford Mayor Tom McNamara, Winnebago County Board Chairman Frank Haney, Rockford Area Economic Development Council President Nathan Bryant, and Illinois Department of Commerce Northern Stateline Regional Manager Carrie Zethmayr welcomed the addition of SCORE to the growing list of small business and entrepreneur support services available in the area. They lauded the leadership of NIU and NIU EIGERlab's in enhancing the innovation ecosystem.

The primary goal of the kick-off event was to identify individuals in the community with an interest in being a SCORE counselor or helping to recruit counselors. SCORE has an impressive total of 11,000 volunteers in 320 locations in all 50 states. SCORE volunteers include 65% retired business owners and executives, 30% individuals still in the workforce, and 5% below age 30, who provide special assistance with technology issues.

SCORE Regional Vice President Bob Kasprzak says the best SCORE counselors combine a robust resume with an empathetic approach – taking the time to understand clients' values and aspirations as well as their business development needs.

"We understand that entrepreneurs are putting everything on the line, Kasprzak said. "They are leveraging their assets and future. This is important work and counselors have the ability to really make a difference in people's lives, but they have to put themselves in the clients' shoes to do so."

SCORE offers traditional one-on-one counseling, virtual counseling for those in remote areas, and online "virtual conferences" to assist with a variety of small business owners' needs including marketing, sales, financing, hiring, choosing a business location and more. Being a SCORE volunteer is a way to give back to your community, connect with business owners and pass on your knowledge to the next generation of entrepreneurs in your community.

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In 2016, SCORE mentors helped clients start 54,072 businesses. There is a selection of customer successes profiled at www.score.org along with volunteers' videos which convey their rationale for assisting small businesses to achieve new levels of success in their existing businesses.

The Rockford SCORE office will be supported and housed at NIU EIGERlab, 8500 E. State St. There is a need for 10 to 15 counselors and all counselors will be trained. Anyone with an interest in being a SCORE counselor is encouraged to call 815.965.3522.

For more information about NIU EIGERlab services, visit www.eigerlab.org or call Sherry Pritz, 815.753.2192.

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