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## SUCCESS

### Director Dorsey

LOCAL LEADER IS STANDING AT THE GATEWAY OF REGIONAL BUSINESS SUCCESS » *By Barrett Baker*

**A**lthough Clair Dorsey has been in Hampton Roads since 1994, you can still catch a hint of her deep Southern accent when she talks about all of the exciting things that are going on in her life. And as the director of professional development for ODU's Business Gateway, she's got a lot to be excited about.

A graduate of the University of Georgia with a degree in chemistry, Dorsey is one of the few non-military transplants to Hampton Roads, relocating here with her husband when he took a job with a local pharmaceutical company. Having nothing lined up herself before the move, she responded to an ad in the newspaper and started her new employment life as a technical associate for the Technology Applications Center at Old Dominion University. Within six months, she was director of the center.

**Hampton Roads Magazine:** You have an unusual claim to fame on your resume.

**Clair Dorsey:** Yes, I worked at the largest zipper manufacturer in the world while I was in Georgia. I started off as a chemist and ended up working my way up to a quality manager before my husband and I left to come here.

**HRM:** That must have translated well to the job you're doing now.

**CD:** I got this job because of my technical background. However, I eventually realized that even though I knew the technical part of it and the business side of running it—because we're a self-supporting entity, we don't get any money from the state so it's like running a non-profit—I still lacked the educational side of it as far as how to teach adults. So I'm currently working on my masters degree in business and industry training.

**HRM:** Tell us about the Business Gateway at ODU.

**CD:** Two years ago, as a major initiative with the business community, President Broderick established the ODU Business Gateway as the "go to" place of the university for companies and organizations of all sizes to access the intellectual capital, innovative technologies and world class infrastructure of the university to solve business problems, create new offerings and unlock operational efficiencies that save time and money. In layman's

terms we are the "gateway" to accessing things like continuing education and training, the university's facilities and faculty experience for, in the absence of a better phrase, consulting on local business projects. In other words, if your business is working on a short-term project and you don't want to hire a full-time engineer, accountant or instructional designer, you can come to the Business Gateway to access the university's experience and resources.

**HRM:** You also organize and manage the annual Engineering Unplugged conference that is one of the region's premier "green" building, facility management and manufacturing events. How does that fit into the mix?

**CD:** Conferences are one of the things we do under the sub-center of continuing education and professional development. Engineering Unplugged was really the beginning of our conference business when we started that three years ago. Engineering Unplugged is a conference we put on ourselves, but we also can provide the expertise, facilities and logistical support to any conferences that want to come to the area.

**HRM:** Any regrets about leaving Georgia?

**CD:** I love it here! It's my second choice because Georgia is my home, but before coming here I never knew anything about this area. There is so much potential for marketing this area and so many positive things about being here that people outside of Virginia just don't know about. I just wish all of the communities that make up Hampton Roads could come together to help get that word out to the rest of the world. **HRM**



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