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# UNCG emphasizing minority and women-led business participation in campus projects

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GREENSBORO, N.C. -- When Tony Phillips took over as the coordinator for UNC-Greensboro's Historically Underutilized Business program, his mission was for UNCG to become the university others looked at as an example of how to develop minority participation. Today, they're realizing that goal.

"When you're looking at minority participation, and minority contractors, they just want to be at the table," Phillips said.

Currently, UNCG undergoes anywhere between 60 to 75 projects a year. This year, one of the largest is the new, \$105-million Nursing and Instructional Building. One large piece of that project, including a chiller plant, is valued at \$76.6 million.

The HUB program is directed at bring minority and women-led businesses to the table when contracting out for projects such as these. Currently, the nursing building has surpassed 32 percent minority company utilization and the chiller plant sits at more than 36 percent.

"If you're a woman or minority, and your father wasn't in the business, or your brother, or your uncle, or whomever, you're starting from scratch," said Antonio Wallace, CEO and owner of GP Supply Company.

Wallace, who attended Harvard Business School and worked as a corporate banker, took over the company in 2014.

“It’s very difficult to compete with the multi-billion dollar companies that play in this industry,” he said.

Through programs like HUB, Wallace says he’s been able to make connections as he builds a track record.

“There are some relationships in place that have been in place for 20 years,” he said.

Today, Wallace says he has millions of dollars’ worth of projects set for years to come.

“I’m getting telephone calls now, just out of the blue, going, ‘Wow, we just got invited to another project,’” he said.

As a result, he’s able to map out both his future and the futures of his 35 employees.

“It’s exciting not only for me, but my employees as well,” Wallace added.

Lisa Gilgeours created her company, Gilgeours Construction, about four years ago.

“I say, ‘Well I’m a general contractor, I do block and brick,’” Gilgeours said, of frequent conversation. “It’s like, ‘I would have never guessed.’”

Having just finished two electrical buildings for the City of Greensboro, Gilgeours says Phillips always makes sure she has an opportunity to bid on jobs on campus.

“It actually feels pretty darn good to be there and know that you’ve certainly earned the right,” she said.

Phillips says while the nursing building is over 30 percent minority participation, most other projects on campus are around 15 to 20 percent. However, the HUB program allows participation on informal projects under \$300,000 to routinely exceed 40 percent overall yearly minority participation.

While building and improving campus, which Phillips refers to as a “city within the city,” he says he submits a database of minority and women-led businesses to contractors, allowing them to meet HUB goals.

“My office is there to help them. I’m there to make sure that if you can’t find them, I’ll find them for you,” he said.

Every project on campus has a baseline goal of 10 percent minority or women-led business participation. Phillips says they’ve met that goal on every project for two years and intends to improve on those figures in the future.

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