MRC works with manufacturing companies by leveraging its own Partnership (MEP) which is comprised of 51 nationwide centers. Founded in 1988 as a wholly owned subsidiary of Lehigh University, MRC is one of seven statewide Industrial Resource Centers (IRCs) serving a 21-county region, the Center is part of a four-member, state-funded economic development program that is an initiative of the PA Department of Community and Economic Development and is funded by The Ben Franklin Technology Partners of Northeastern Pennsylvania. MRC frequently utilizes the faculty, students, and resources of Lehigh to accomplish its tasks.

BFTP/NEP fosters innovation to stimulate economic growth. By providing financial investments, expertise, and links to proven resources, Ben Franklin facilitates the creation of new products, sophisticated technologies, and novel processes among entrepreneurs and established companies to help them prosper. The result: the creation and retention of highly paid, sustainable regional jobs; the development of a strong, diversified, and resilient regional ecosystem, and the development and commercialization of goods and services that improve the human condition.

The goals of BFTP/NEP include helping early-stage technology-oriented firms to form and grow, helping established manufacturers to improve productivity through the application of new technologies and practices, and promoting an innovative community-wide infrastructure that fosters a favorable business environment for high-growth companies. Founded in 1983, the Ben Franklin Technology Partners of Northeastern Pennsylvania has:

- Created and retained 76,956 jobs.
- Established 535 new companies.
- Commercialized and developed 2,456 new products and processes.

The Ben Franklin program is structured to help companies achieve sustainable competitive advantage. Statewide, new tax revenue generated because of Ben Franklin represents a 3.9-to-1 payback to the Commonwealth.

Assistance includes expertise, largely contributed in the northeast by the center’s association with Lehigh and other leading research universities, and funding, with investments ranging from $30,000 to $150,000 per year for up to three years. Faculty and students involved with Ben Franklin gain experience in solving real issues for working companies. Technical and business assistance services are provided on a year-round basis.

BFTP/NEP owns and operates Ben Franklin TechVentures, an award-winning business incubator and post-incubator facility. Sixty-nine successful companies have graduated from the BFTP/NEP incubator, grossing more than $1.2 billion in annual revenue last year and creating more than 6,900 jobs. Ben Franklin TechVentures is LEED Gold certified.

For more information, contact the Ben Franklin Technology Partners of Northeastern Pennsylvania, Ben Franklin TechVentures®, 116 Research Drive, Bethlehem; 610-758-5200; www.benfranklin.org

For further information or assistance, please contact MRC at 7200A Windsor Drive, Allentown, PA 18106. Richard C. Hobbs is President & CEO and can be reached at (610) 628-4575 or email him at rich.hobbs@mrcpa.org. Please visit our website at www.mrcpa.org (http://www.mrcpa.org).

PHILIP RAUCH CENTER FOR BUSINESS COMMUNICATIONS (THE)

Matthew Gilchrist, PhD, director

The Rauch Center for Business Communication has three strategic goals.

1. Support business students as they develop the rhetorical awareness and skills necessary for successful business communication, including written, oral, and visual communication in varied contexts.

- Collaborates to ensure student success in the Business Communication sequence required for undergraduate majors
- Provides tutoring support for all business students through the Communication Consultants program
• Supports students’ communication needs in extra-curricular activities, e.g. the Data Analytics Competition Team

2. Partner with College of Business faculty to design methods that use the transformative power of communication to prepare students for professional success.
• Assists in developing assignments, syllabi, and activities that can enhance students’ exposure to and practice with business communication including writing, presentations, and digital modes
• Promotes curricular innovations by providing strategic planning and logistical support for sustainable, high impact communication activities in and beyond the classroom

3. Combine research in emerging practices with insights from business and community leaders to provide opportunities for innovation and leadership in business communication.
• Develops collaborations outside the University to ensure that practice informs academic approaches to teaching and learning business communication
• Participates in scholarship and professional organizations dedicated to business communication

For more information, write to Elizabeth Gross, Coordinator, The Philip Rauch Center for Business Communication, Lehigh University, 621 Taylor Street, Bethlehem, PA 18015-3117, or email EAG415@lehigh.edu or phone 610-758-4863.

SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CENTER

Brett Smith, BA, MBA, Director; Mary Syslo, BS, MHRM, Associate Director; Robert Mineo, BS, MBA, Program Director, Financing Assistance Program; Jasmita Saini, BA, MBA, Program Director; Andrea Hampton, BA, MBA, Program Director; DJ Kormanik, BS, Consultant; Darryl Wentz, BS, Consultant, Mary Kelly Cohick, Consultant. (https://sbdc.lehigh.edu/)

Established in 1978, the SBDC provides general management assistance to over 1,000 entrepreneurs and small businesses per year in the Lehigh Valley and surrounding areas. Primary funding for this program comes from major grants from the U.S. Small Business Administration and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

Specialized Programs
The Management Assistance Program delivers general management consulting to existing small firms and startup ventures. Services are offered to retail, service, wholesale, construction and manufacturing firms. Research is offered through electronic data base research. Seminars are offered on many topics of interest to start-up and growing firms.

International Trade Development Program (ITDP)
The International Trade Development Program (ITDP) is a specialized outreach effort of the Small Business Development Center. The ITDP helps companies with exportable products to develop export marketing plans and establish direct contacts with international markets. Seminars, trade missions and research projects support the efforts of this program.

Financing Assistance Program
The Financing Assistance Program provides assistance in loan packaging and financial planning and helps clients identify appropriate financing sources. The program administers the Lehigh Valley Small Business Loan Pool and the Lehigh Valley Chapter of the Northeastern Pennsylvania Angel Network, a partnership program with the Ben Franklin Technology Partners of Northeastern PA. Contracts with the Lehigh/Northampton Revolving Loan Fund, the Lehigh Valley Economic Development Corporation and other funding agencies provide resources for this assistance.

Lehigh Valley Export Network (LEXNET)
The Lehigh Valley Export Network (LEXNET) is the regional office of the Team Pennsylvania Export Network. Throughout the year LEXNET brings PA foreign office representatives to the Lehigh Valley to meet with SBDC clients and discuss in country export assistance needs. LEXNET also assists with export finance programs such as Market Access Grants allowing small and midsized manufacturing or service companies to participate in international trade events. Specialized training events and seminars are also held throughout the year.

Business Education and Training Program (BETP)
The Business Education and Training Program of the Small Business Development Center provides specialized workshops, seminars and customized training for the small business community.

For more information, write to Brett Smith, Director, Small Business Development Center, 416 E 5th Street, Bethlehem, PA 18015.