As part of the Distinguished Speaker Series, the College of Business and Technology invites prominent leaders to our campus to discuss current topics and issues related to their expertise. The guest speaker has an opportunity to interact with students, faculty and other interested participants during a public address, roundtable discussion and luncheon.

We are pleased to have the Richmond Chamber of Commerce and Richmond Rotary Club join with us in providing this enrichment opportunity.

We are honored to have Ms. Toni Hacker, an Eastern alumnus, as this year’s Distinguished Speaker. Ms. Hacker is a highly successful entrepreneur. She and her partner Ben Harnett have created Hayden-Harnett in Brooklyn and New York City - designer and retailer of fine leather handbags, accessories, and fresh new apparel. Internet marketing is a linchpin of the company’s success along with consumer care and priceless word-of-mouth. Creating "beautiful objects of use" at an affordable price has built a very successful business on a philosophy of integrity and community.

We welcome Ms. Hacker to campus and cordially invite all interested persons to attend the public address.

Dr. Robert B. Rogow, Dean
College of Business and Technology
Eastern Kentucky University

Toni Hacker
Co-founder
Hayden-Harnett
Brooklyn and New York City

October 8, 2009
Co-sponsored by
Richmond Rotary Club
Richmond Chamber of Commerce
Richmond, Kentucky
Ms. Toni Hacker  
Distinguished Speaker  
EKU College of Business and Technology

EKU alumnus Toni Hacker is co-founder of Hayden-Harnett in Brooklyn and New York City. She and her partner Ben Harnett have become highly successful entrepreneurs with their company that designs and retails fine leather handbags, accessories, and fresh new apparel.

A native of Manchester, Kentucky, Ms. Hacker’s business philosophy, while hard-working, is equally staff healthy and planet friendly. Internet marketing is a linchpin of the company’s success along with consumer care and priceless word-of-mouth. Creating ‘beautiful objects of use’ at an affordable price has built a very successful business on a philosophy of integrity and community.

After leaving EKU in 1997 with her BA in Art, Ms. Hacker applied her skills to industrial design on a range of products. She worked on interior fixtures and kiosks for Express, Limited, Honda and Pizza Hut; ATMs for Chase Manhattan and Bank of America. But big-company commercial design work was a bit dreary.

In 1999, she went to work for Innovo, Inc., a private label accessories company in Knoxville, Tennessee. As their new design director, she took their product in a new direction, creating their own branded lines of bags, backpacks and coolers for the mass market. Tremendous growth propelled her move to Hong Kong in 2002 to work more directly with the manufacturers and vendors. Later that year, Innovo moved her to their new showroom in New York City to work directly with clients.

After leaving Innovo, Ms. Hacker worked briefly for Nesi Apparel where she launched an accessory division from the ground up. But her love was fashion handbags. She signed on with Liz Claiborne as a senior handbag designer in 2004 where her team developed a successful line of leather handbags.

Still feeling a market need for handbags that were stylish, wearable, functional, high quality, and reasonably priced, the concept for Hayden-Harnett was born. HH began on April Fool’s day 2005 while she was still working full-time freelance and developing the HH launch collection at night. Hacker was the designer and creative director and Ben Harnett built the website to support internet marketing.

With the collection launched and delivered by November of that year, website orders started coming in, word of mouth spread and stores started calling to order. Always trying new ideas, HH now has an apparel line and opened their first retail store in 2007. HH is a ‘snapshot of a lifestyle’ with a world that revolves around independent design, creativity and style without sacrificing function. Style plus function both have to be in equal balance in all their designs.

Schedule of Events  
Thursday, October 8, 2009

8:00 a.m. - 9:00 a.m.  
BREAKFAST ROUND TABLE DISCUSSION with  
Ms. Hacker for Faculty and Staff  
Faculty Lounge, Keen Johnson Building  
EKU Campus, Richmond, Kentucky

9:30 a.m. - 10:45 a.m.  
PUBLIC ADDRESS by Ms. Hacker  
Co-founder of Hayden-Harnett in Brooklyn and New York City  
Business & Technology Center Auditorium  
EKU Campus, Richmond, Kentucky

11:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.  
LUNCHEON with Ms. Hacker for Business Community and University Administration  
Arlington House  
Richmond, Kentucky