



Michael Nolan (Staff photo: Bill Klotz)

## Progress MN: Michael Nolan

By: Nancy Crotti April 11, 2014 12:26 am 0

**Title:** Director, South Central Small Business Development Center at Minnesota State University, Mankato

**Education:** B.S., business administration and communications, University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point, 1987; MBA, University of Melbourne, 2009.

**Key turning point in career:** Sold his second big company, AutoConX Software, in 2006, and enrolled in an MBA

international partnership program of Northwestern University's Kellogg School of Management, studying in Chicago, Germany, Slovakia, Shanghai and Melbourne.

**What's next:** Continued passion for entrepreneurship, teaching and leading organizations.

**Family:** Wife, Julene; sons, Jack and Charlie; and daughter, Anna Katie

**Website:** [www.myminnesotabusiness.com](http://www.myminnesotabusiness.com)

Michael Nolan has been around the entrepreneurial block a few times. He has owned a radio station and a software company, opened a sandwich shop and helped start a cheese company. He invested in a social media company and owns commercial real estate.

Nolan also teaches entrepreneurship at Minnesota State University, Mankato, where he has advised hundreds of business owners as director of the South Central Small Business Development Center.

Nolan unwittingly stepped in to save that center three years ago. His first day on the job, everyone else at the center was let go, to his surprise. Nine months later, the center ran out of money. Nolan had to re-enlist community support to revive it.

"We buckled down and put together a great core team and a talented set of independent business advisers," he said. "We built a collaboration of about 41 different funding partners, so everyone had skin in the game."

The U.S. Small Business Administration, which sponsors SBDCs with state governments nationwide, last March described the South Central SBDC and its staff as "a team that overcame funding and operational challenges."

The SBA cited results that included regaining the trust and respect of its banking community and partners, adding "exceptional" professionals to the center staff and consulting team, smoothly integrating with a new host institution, securing significant grant funding, executing "innovative" initiatives, and consistently exceeding the center's established goals.

The center, its students and business consultants helped create or retain 631 jobs in 2011 and 621 jobs in 2012. Companies served by the center increased revenue by \$12.2 million in 2011 and nearly \$19 million in 2012. Figures for 2013 were not available.

Each year, the center works with more than 450 business owners, helping start more than 40 companies. Last year, it assisted in attracting more than \$17 million in bank financing to help existing businesses grow.

Nolan said he has loved running the SBDC from that scary first day on the job. It helped convince him that entrepreneurs needn't toil alone.

"I loved the challenge," he said. "Part of what I was trying to prove to myself was that I could play nice with other people."



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