

**For Immediate Release:
July 10, 2008**

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Workforce Skills From Bishop State Jumpstarts Shipbuilding Business

Shipbuilding dates back as early as 3000 B.C., when vessels were made of wood strapped together and sealed with reeds and grass. Now, naval architects can electronically generate detailed designs to form more cost efficient and dependable ships.

In 1986, Eddie Adler, a Bishop State Community College alumnus, established a production engineering company, Direct Numerical Control (DNC) of Mobile, Inc. The company digitally constructs realistic three-dimensional models of vessels and their components ranging from personal fishing and speed boats to casino cruise ships, barges and oil rigs.



“You might think of us as the ones who put it all together first,” Adler said.

The process generally begins after the preliminary design work is complete, and the client has a general idea of the desired product. The purpose of the detailed models is to find discrepancies and clashes between the concept and the practicality of the vessel. The company works with the builder, the designer and regulatory bodies, like the U.S. Coast Guard or the American Bureau of Shipping, to solve these problems.

The blueprints ensure high quality and allow the marine structure to be assembled quickly, thus reducing the clients’ building costs.

Growing up in Hollinger’s Island, Adler was exposed to the shipping industry at a young age. “My mom said that my first word was ‘boat’,” he said. “I guess it stuck.”

After graduating from B.C. Rain High School in 1980, he decided to pursue a technical degree in Drafting and Design Technology from Southwest State, now known as the Southwest Campus of Bishop State.

“Bishop State is in a very unique situation, they are poised and ready to provide skilled workers for these industries,” Adler said. “Most of the industry today is not aware of the opportunities and new programs Bishop State has to offer.”

Marshall Runderson, chairman of the college’s engineering and construction technology division, was a major influence in his career. “If you made it through the program he taught, you were already ahead of the game,” Adler said about his Drafting and Design teacher. “He taught us just what we needed in order to be ready for the real world.”

Adler said Bishop State’s flexible class schedule allowed Adler to participate in a co-op program with Bender Shipbuilding while he was going to school. “It gave me technical experience that allowed me to enter the workforce quickly and prepared,” he said.

While working at Bender Shipbuilding, Adler worked on many large ocean going ships and oil rigs and also trained the workers how to use the latest CAD/CAM programs at various shipyards. “All of this was done using the knowledge I gained at Bishop State,” he said.

Adler worked for Bender and the Alabama State Docks until he recognized a demand for production engineering. “I felt like I could become a vender to these companies and could provide that niche for what they needed.”

He said it was difficult at first making the transition from technical worker to business owner, but his work definitely paid off. Some of their current projects include an oil tanker for Shell and a jack-up rig named Tarzan 4.

Since its development, DNC has worked with more than 72 customers on more than 400 jobs.

“The skills I developed at Bishop State have absolutely applied in my career,” the Bishop State alumnus said. “I was able to go out into the workforce ready and still use most of it today,” he said.

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