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City Welcomes Student Entrepreneurs at New Fordham Road Business Center Updated October 19, 2012 4:07pm

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FORDHAM — Seven stories above the hustle and bustle of Fordham Road, the next batch of local business owners and entrepreneurs will soon be getting to work.

The city opened the new Bronx location for its [Workforce1 Career Center](#) and NYC Business Solutions services this week, a 30,000-square-foot space in an office building on Fordham Road near Webster Avenue. Part of the facility will serve as a business incubator to assist students from nearby Fordham University who are looking to start their own ventures — the first such partnership between the Department of Small Business Services and an academic institution.

Dubbed the [Fordham Foundry](#), the site will offer students access to the services provided by Business Solutions — help with loans and finances, training courses, legal assistance and more — in addition to office space, equipment and a business mentorship program.

"We're trying to alleviate all the scary parts of launching a new business," said Dr. Christine Janssen-Selvadurai, Director of the Entrepreneurship Program in the Gabelli School of Business at Fordham University. Students, alumni and staff can apply to the program. If accepted, access to the office space and other resources will cost \$300, with scholarships available for current students. Fordham University staff is also developing a business curriculum to teach participating local business owners and entrepreneurs.

Janssen-Selvadurai said she and other faculty were inspired to start the Foundry after seeing how many of their students were bursting with ideas for potential start-ups. One of her recent graduates launched his own line of custom skis; another an athletic clothing company. Current students have approached her with ideas for on-campus book buyback enterprises, trendy food trucks and even a proposal for Fordham University-branded coffee.

The Foundry will help them turn those ideas, which often seem unreachable to students, into practical realities.

"It's not always about going out and taking a job. Instead of taking a job, why not create a job?" Janssen-Selvadurai said, adding that many of her students are disillusioned with traditional corporate career paths, or discouraged by the dismal job market.

"Start something yourself," she said. "Be creative, be innovative, rather than waiting around for somebody else to hire you."

Officials said the new business hub will help boost the local economy and create jobs. The Bronx's unemployment rate was just over 13 percent in August, according to labor statistics — the highest in the state.

The city's [Business Solution Centers](#), located in each of the five boroughs, are meant to help new ventures survive in a competitive market and comply with complicated government requirements.

"A lot of [who] we see are start-ups. They want to know what the rules and regulations are," said Paul Smith, director of the Bronx center, which was located formerly in the south Bronx, near the 149th Street Hub shopping district.

On Monday, the city also announced the opening of two other new Workforce 1 Career Centers in the borough — one at Hostos Community College and another at the Francis Martin Library, in University Heights.

The centers help match job seekers with available employment opportunities and with job preparation, providing resume help, interview tips and other services.

Parkchester resident Linda Mercedes, 27, was at the new Workforce 1 center on Thursday hoping they could help her find a new job.

"I was in banking before, until I got laid off," Mercedes said. She's been on the job hunt since August, she said, after losing her job as a bank teller at a company she'd worked with for three years. She described the search as frustrating.

"It's been hard," she said.