



THE GIFT OF FINANCIAL LITERACY

By Steven J. Smith | Photo by Nancy Guth

DAVID KOTOK BELIEVES KNOWLEDGE IS POWER, WHICH IS WHY HE AND HIS FIRM, CUMBERLAND ADVISORS, HAVE MADE A UNIQUE AND VALUABLE GIFT THAT WILL RESIDE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH FLORIDA'S SARASOTA-MANATEE CAMPUS.



That \$60,000 gift, 12 Bloomberg Terminals, will act as the centerpiece of a finance lab on campus that will enable student access not only at USFSM, but also at New College of Florida, Ringling College of Art & Design, the State College of Florida and Eckerd College — otherwise known as the Consortium of Colleges on the Creative Coast, or C4, which serves about 20,000 students across the region.

“It will benefit students who take financial and economics courses,” Kotok said. “The arrangement is for it to be inclusive so that the C4 schools will all be able to participate and the courses will include those that are in the exchange among the C4 schools. The agreement also includes usages that have to be worked out for adult education and community use.”

A Bloomberg Terminal is a computer system that enables finance professionals to monitor and analyze real-time market data. It provides messaging, security data, analytics and news to hundreds of thousands of professional market participants around the world.

“The Bloomberg Terminal allows the user to obtain nearly everything they could desire on financial markets, economics, pric-

ing, data and descriptions,” Kotok said. “It’s comprehensive and deep. Anything you need to know about any stock, any bond, any mutual fund, any economic data like the Gross Domestic Product or the inflation rate or employment statistics. We have four of them in our firm and they’re in use constantly.”

Kotok added students might make use of the Bloomberg Terminal for such projects as papers, research projects and theses, to name a few.

“How it’s used will be determined by guidance from the faculty,” he said.

Kotok is chairman and chief investment officer of Cumberland Advisors, a registered investment advisory firm of 35 employees located at 2 N. Tamiami Trail in Sarasota. Founded in 1973, the firm moved its headquarters from Vineland, N.J. to Sarasota six years ago. It serves clients in 49 states, the District of Columbia and several foreign countries, he said. The company manages several billion dollars’ worth of fixed income and equity accounts and its clients range from individuals to institutions, retirement plans and government entities.

Kotok said another aspect of the gift and C4’s agreement to use it includes the eventual creation of an annual financial literacy day, opened to broad public participation in the Sarasota area.

“We’ve agreed to help organize the first of those,” he said. “I’ve done these kinds of things in the past, all over the world. Financial literacy education is not just for a 20-year-old taking a course on finance. It can be very helpful to lots of people and organizations all over the greater Sarasota community — widows, widowers, charitable endeavors, foundations, endowments, trustees and members of investment committees, for example — who may not have financial literacy. This is a way for them to obtain more independent, impartial information in a neutral setting, which can elevate their competency and professionalism in making informed financial and economic decisions.”

Dr. James Curran, dean of USF Sarasota-Manatee’s College of Business, said the gift from Kotok and his company will make a significant impact on his school as well as the other C4 colleges.

“The Bloomberg Terminal is considered the gold standard of financial information networks,” Curran said. “We can incorporate it into the courses we’re teaching and prepare people who are interested in going into financial services as a career. If they’re trained and certified on the Bloomberg equipment, that’ll make them more attractive to employers in that particular industry.”

Kotok maintained his firm’s gift is an offshoot of the wonderful transition he and the company have made to Sarasota from New Jersey and his desire to give back to his community.

“What I found in Sarasota, in this salubrious setting, is wonderful people,” he said. “We enjoy life here — the lifestyle, the arts and the culture. But I’ve encountered in some areas — particularly in the public areas — a deficiency in financial literacy. There are many folks who seek it and the community has had its share of suffering from scoundrels who have taken advantage of investors. We’re looking to have the development of programs with the university so that the public, as well as the students, will have access to terrific information.”