

Alum of the Year

International businesswoman Margo Murray was selected as the CSUS School of Business Administration's 1998 Alumna of the Year. Margo is president and COO of MMHA, The Managers' Mentors, a consulting firm founded in 1974, which operates in 24 countries.



The Oakland-based company consults to managers and trainers in industrial, government, transportation, academic and financial organizations. Areas of specialization include audit of human performance subsystems, facilitating strategic planning, changing organization culture, total quality performance system design and implementation, development of management teams, training and management of trainers, and custom adaptation of the MMHA Facilitated Mentoring Model and Process.

Margo credits the diversity of the students and faculty at CSUS for sparking her interest in international business. "The exposure to people of different cultures excited me to learn more about those cultures firsthand," she recalls.

Business was a natural choice for Margo, who grew up helping her father and older brother operate their auto repair garage and gas station. When an early marriage ended in divorce, Margo found herself with a young child to support, so she went to work at McClellan Air Force Base. "I knew I wasn't going to go far unless I got more education," she says. She entered night school at American River College, then transferred to CSUS, where she obtained a Bachelor of Science degree in business, with honors, in 1963. Upon graduation, Margo was immediately recruited by Pacific Telephone and moved to the Bay Area, where she obtained a MBA at John F. Kennedy University.

"I worked eight and a half years for Uncle Sam and 11 years for Mother Bell. Then I decided that if I was going to work for a relative, it might as well be me," Margo says, recalling her decision to open MMHA. She has made several innovations in her field, including application of a criterion-referenced approach to management skill development. Her best selling book, *Beyond the Myths and Magic of Mentoring: How to Facilitate an Effective Mentoring Program*, incorporates 20 years of research and client experience. Margo's custom designed programs and published articles have won numerous awards, and a White House Recognition for Excellence. Her books and articles have been translated into Swedish, Spanish, French and Arabic.

Raised in what she describes as "the backwoods of Missouri," Margo vowed to see the world, and

structured a business that allows her to do so. "In other countries, human needs have been recognized longer than they have here," notes Margo.

Professional organizations have strengthened Margo's ties to the international business community. She was the first woman elected to chair the board of directors of the International Federation of Training and Development Organizations, a network of training, development, and educational organizations that spans 44 countries with more than 140 member organizations representing 400,000 professionals.

"I am fascinated by the International Federation," says Margo. "The umbrella organization fills the need for transfer of human performance technology and the exchange of ideas and strategies across international lines." Margo was appointed to co-chair the Federation's first International Forum on Human Capacities Development, scheduled for 2001. She also has served as president of the International Society for Performance Improvement and as vice president of International Training in Communication.

International business has changed over the years Margo has been earning frequent flier miles. "Twenty years ago, a company might be multi-national, with operations in other countries," she says. "But in the last few years, companies are recruiting and developing national managers in those countries and bringing them to other parts of the world. A multi-skilled and flexible work force is emerging worldwide. Business people are opening up to truly international business."

When it comes to languages, Margo claims to speak "almost one" fluently. "Speaking one language is a significant deficit," Margo says. "I strongly encourage people to learn another language." She relies on interpreters to conduct business and has seen a huge change in their capabilities. "It's amazing how skillful the translators are in simultaneous translation," she says. Margo makes sure translators understand the context and content of her business presentations, usually meeting with them to review materials and key concepts before meeting with her clients.

The movement toward cultural diversity is one that Margo embraces. She remembers that her grandparents came from rich cultural backgrounds — both Irish and Native American — but were reluctant to talk about their heritage. "In America, we've tried to cause people to melt into the pot," she says. "Today, we're more like a salad bowl, with cultures maintaining their distinctness and individuality, yet coming together to create a stronger, more appealing national culture."