Nicholas Perkins: Extraordinary Entrepreneur and Alum

Nicholas Perkins, a 2003 graduate of the Fayetteville State University (FSU) School of Business and Economics (SBE), epitomizes entrepreneurship. Learning from his business courses and his experience as a food services manager on campus while still an undergraduate student, Perkins created a food service management business two years after he graduated. Building on his unique background and customer insights, he decided to specialize in managing cafeterias for HBCU's, governmental institutions, and business enterprises, where he saw opportunities to meet client needs more effectively than the competition. By 2011, six years after he started the business, Perkins management Services had over $10 million in revenue and over 200 employees. The company manages cafeterias at seven universities, including Johnson C. Smith, Benedict, and Morehouse. Other clients include three U.S. Coast Guard cafeterias and healthcare/senior living institutions.

As a true entrepreneur, Perkins is always on the lookout for opportunities to leverage his service management expertise to expand into new business areas. In addition to food services, Perkins Management Services now owns a dry cleaning operation (Perkins Dry Cleaners on Murchison Road, near FSU), two Charlotte area restaurants, and several fast food franchises. In total, the business has grown to over 400 employees in 10 different states.
Mr. Perkins has received multiple honors and awards recognizing his entrepreneurial business success, including:

- U.S. Coast Guard Small Business of the Year, 2011
- One of the Fayetteville News and Observer "Top 40 under 40", 2011
- Fayetteville Business and Professional League Entrepreneur of the Year, 2009

Just this year, he has been appointed to two very prestigious policy advisory boards: the North Carolina Governor's Advisory Council for Small and Historically Underutilized Businesses and the Federal Reserve Business Advisory Council. It is particularly noteworthy that this young entrepreneur is not just focused on making money for himself and his company—he has a desire to help others succeed as well. In 2012 Mr. Perkins gave $100,000 to FSU to be used to help train young entrepreneurs in the SBE. In June of this year he announced another gift to FSU—amounting to $1 million. He states that it is a reflection of his "personal commitment to support the education of underserved students that are seeking to advance in society". In addition, Mr. Perkins has agreed to serve on the SBE Dean's Advisory Board, where he will be able to contribute his insights and leadership to help the SBE continue to enhance its service to its students and its community.

As Dr. Assad Tavakoli, Dean of the FSU SBE, noted "Mr. Nicholas Perkins is an excellent example of what is possible for students with an entrepreneurial mindset and a willingness to work hard to pursue their dreams. We are very grateful for his faith and confidence in FSU's ability to give other students the tools they need to succeed as well. We look forward to the next generation of young entrepreneurs and businesspeople."