

# Helping Businesses Grow & Succeed

## News Release



Florida SBDC at the University of Central Florida

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **Kissimmee Granite and Marble Regains its Market Leadership With Assistance from the FSBDC at UCF – Kissimmee Office**

*Economic Development Incentives from City of Kissimmee and Osceola County Cement Success*

**Orlando, FL –** Reviving a failing business and then leading it to new peaks of success are challenges that are not meant to be taken on alone and without assistance from multiple sources. Balouch “Aleem” Muhammad and Tariq Iqbal wisely recognized these important facts when, in 2012, they purchased Kissimmee Granite & Marble, Inc., a ten year old company that was temporarily shut-down and, shortly after taking it over, reopened with predecessors financing and mentor support. Their goal was simple: to establish Kissimmee Granite & Marble, Inc. as a premiere manufacturer of custom granite countertops for both residential & commercial markets in all of Central Florida.

Despite a successful retail and import/export background, the task was daunting. “*At first, we faced many challenges like overcoming the learning curve of understanding a new line of business, working with a limited amount of working capital to run operations, and hiring adequate personnel with the right skill set that would complement our strong work ethic,*” commented Aleem.

From the start, Aleem and Tariq took action to get as much assistance as they could find and, in an effort to be proactive business owner(s), they decided to stop by the Kissimmee / Osceola Chamber of Commerce looking for strategies to help with growth and expansion of their countertop business. Upon arrival, they were quickly plugged-in to the Florida SBDC at UCF Kissimmee office. There they took advantage of the business training, “no-cost” consulting sessions, and business data and information resources available from the FSBDC.

Almost immediately, the FSBDC consultant Rafael Martinez-Pratt started to work with Aleem and Tariq to expand the operations of the business from a 2,000 square feet facility to over a 13,000 square feet facility near Kissimmee Gateway Airport. In particular, the FSBDC at UCF Kissimmee office helped Kissimmee Granite & Marble access several economic development incentives from both the City of Kissimmee and Osceola County. As a result, not only did Kissimmee Utility Authority (KUA) provide and install a much needed high voltage transformer, but also Osceola County Economic Development provided additional machine and equipment incentives for capital equipment improvements.

“*The FSBDC at UCF partnered with us and helped us in so many ways, including visiting our facilities on different occasions and providing us with insights into a variety of pressing issues throughout the year. The list is endless: a cost/benefit analysis of the new facility, industry market research, human resources support, aid in securing an additional capital equipment loan, managing space and showroom challenges, and guiding a new product expansion into kitchen and bathroom cabinets,*” Aleem stated.

### **About the FSBDC at UCF**

With its main office in the National Entrepreneur Center located at the Fashion Square Mall in Orlando, the Florida SBDC at the University of Central Florida (FSBDC at UCF) is part of the UCF Office of Research & Commercialization and the Florida SBDC Network (FSBDC Network). THE FSBDC at UCF provides business seminars and no-cost, one-on-one business consultation to emerging and established businesses. The FSBDC at UCF serves an eight-county area that includes Brevard, Flagler, Lake, Orange, Osceola, Seminole, Sumter, and Volusia counties and maintains 10 service centers across Central Florida.

In 2013, the FSBDC at UCF served more than 7,200 entrepreneurs and small business owners through consulting and training, resulting in 7,507 Central Florida jobs created, retained or saved; \$1.0 billion in sales growth; \$51.5 million in capital formation; \$87.7 million in government contract awards; and 129 new businesses started.

### **About the FSBDC Network**

The FSBDC at UCF is a member of the Florida SBDC Network, a statewide service network funded in part through cooperative agreements with the U.S. Small Business Administration, Defense Logistics Agency, State of Florida and other private and public partners. The Florida SBDC Network is hosted by the University of West Florida and is nationally accredited by the Association of SBDCs. All opinions, conclusions or recommendations expressed are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the SBA.

For over 35 years, the FSBDC Network has nourished a statewide partnership between higher education and economic development organizations, dedicated to providing emerging and established business owners with management and technical assistance, enabling overall growth and increased profitability for the businesses and economic prosperity for the state. The FSBDC Network is a statewide service system of 41 centers with 60 outreach locations, including the FSBDC at UCF.

In 2013, the Florida SBDCs served over 34,000 entrepreneurs and small business owners through consulting and training, resulting in 39,536 jobs created, retained and saved; \$5.5 billion in sales growth; \$197.3 million in capital accessed; \$602.2 million in government contract awards; and 685 new businesses started. And, for every \$1 of Florida public and private sector investment in FSBDC programming, \$35 was returned to the state in tax revenue

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State Designated as Florida's Principal Provider of Business Assistance [§ 288.001, Fla. Stat.]