

Florida Venture Forum planning early stage capital conference

July 26, 2007

TAMPA, FL—The Florida Venture Forum, the only statewide not-for-profit organization designed to bring emerging growth companies together with sources of capital, will present a new conference focusing on earlier stage companies based throughout Florida.

The inaugural Florida Early Stage Venture Capital Conference is expected to be held in late May 2008 in the Orlando area, according to Conference Co-Chairs Alan Taetle, general partner of Noro-Moseley Partners, an Atlanta-based venture capital group, and Jonathan Cole, partner with Edwards, Angell, Palmer & Dodge, LLP, a national law firm with offices in South Florida. Both Taetle and Cole serve on the Board of the Florida Venture Forum, the Conference's presenter.

"Since our inception in 1984, our mission has been to help foster investment in emerging companies based within Florida. Our highly successful annual venture conference has developed a later stage growth and expansion stage funding orientation, which is consistent with the primary interests today of the institutional investment market," said John Hill, managing director of Hyde Park Capital Partners, a Tampa-based boutique investment banking firm and current chairman of the Florida Venture Forum.

"As Florida has grown and expanded in the variety and complexity of entrepreneurial endeavors, and as more and more venture capital funds focus on later stage investment opportunities, we see a need for a specialized Conference, structured much like our annual Florida Venture Capital Conference, but highlighting earlier stage companies."

Building on success

"We plan to build on the success of the Florida Venture Capital Conference, which takes place each year in January, to present a smaller scale one day Early Stage Conference for early stage emerging growth companies to present their company's story to a group of early stage focused venture funds, Angel investment groups and qualified high-net worth individuals," Taetle explained.

"Companies that would be targeted in this space would include start-up life and bio-based groups, as well as emerging technologies from across a full spectrum of industries."

"Early stage companies have difficulty gaining mindshare in an institutional VC world increasingly looking for later stage investments, while the number and size of the formal and informal early stage and angel investment community in Florida and the Southeast has been growing.

"We believe that the Florida Venture Forum – as a statewide umbrella organization that bridges early and later stage investing, mezzanine and private equity funding – is the perfect organization to bring this network together by presenting such an early stage statewide forum," said Cole.

Modeled on larger conference

Cole is also a board member and investor member of New World Angels, Inc., a South Florida-based organized Angel investment group. Taetle's firm, Noro-Moseley Partners, has recently launched a venture fund with a specific focus on earlier stage companies throughout the Southeast, particularly in Florida.

The Florida Venture Capital Conference will remain the Florida Venture Forum's flagship Conference according to Robin Kovaleski, executive director. "This specialized Early Stage Conference will be a stand alone event and will be supported by statewide groups including Enterprise Florida and the Florida Angel Investment Alliance, both of which serve on the board of the Florida Venture Forum.

"We believe that we can model this one day forum along the same path as our much larger Florida Venture Capital Conference to create a platform for many exciting young companies to tell their story directly to the Florida-focused investors interested in partnering in their growth and success," she added.

"More details regarding the Early Stage Conference will be forthcoming," Kovaleski explained. "We expect to hold the one-day forum in the Orlando area in late May 2008 after our annual Florida Venture Capital Conference. The format will be similar to the existing later stage Conference, featuring 8 – 12 earlier stage private companies before an estimated 250 attendees, many of whom will be early stage private and institutional investors."

She explained that interested companies will have an opportunity to apply to present on the organization's web site. Those companies will be reviewed and vetted by a Committee of venture and Angel investors before being invited to present at the Conference. There will be no charge for companies to apply.

<http://www.fvforum.com/earlystage>