**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

*Dominican University New York, M&T Bank, and BRIDGES Announce Unprecedented Collaboration to Drive Entrepreneurship and Economic Growth in the Lower Hudson Valley*

(BLAUVELT, NY) – July 11th, 2023 -- Dominican University New York, M&T Bank, and BRIDGES, all leading advocates for economic development and entrepreneurship, have announced a comprehensive three-part initiative aimed at unlocking the entrepreneurial potential in the Lower Hudson Valley. This initiative seeks to empower aspiring entrepreneurs and provide them with the necessary tools and resources to thrive in today's competitive business landscape.

Part One: "Unlocking Small Business Potential" Seminar

Kicking off the initiative is a dynamic and informative half-day seminar titled "Unlocking Small Business Potential." This seminar will be held at Dominican University New York’s Rockland County campus on Friday morning, September 8th. The seminar is designed to equip individuals with the essential knowledge, skills, and strategies required to launch and grow a successful small business. Participants will learn from industry experts, successful entrepreneurs, and experienced business mentors who will share invaluable insights, practical advice, and real-world examples. Topics will include business planning, marketing strategies, financial management, and navigating regulatory challenges. Individuals who have a disability, as well as minority, veteran, and formerly-incarcerated business owners, and those interested in starting a business are strongly encouraged to register for this informative, 4-hour (8:30AM – 12:30PM) session.

Part Two: Small Business Incubator and Case Competition

Building on the knowledge gained from the “Small Business Potential” seminar, participants will have the opportunity to enroll in a six-week accelerated incubator and competition. This intensive program will provide hands-on guidance and mentorship, enabling entrepreneurs to refine their business concepts, develop robust business plans, and gain a deeper understanding of market dynamics. Throughout the incubator, participants will engage in a case competition, showcasing their innovative solutions to a panel of judges consisting of industry experts and community-based investors. The competition will not only provide invaluable feedback but also offer participants the opportunity to secure seed funding and other essential resources to launch their ventures. The six-week course will be held on Wednesday evenings (6:30 – 8:30PM) on Dominican University’s campus. Enrollment will begin in August and is limited to 40 participants, all of whom will earn credit toward an undergraduate or graduate degree depending upon their current academic status and the associated assignment pathway they chose. Further details are available from DUNY faculty member Matt Schiering, at matt.schiering@duny.edu.

Part Three: Enrollment in Dominican University's AACSB Accredited MBA or MSOLC Program

Recognizing the importance of continuous education and professional development, the initiative offers participants the chance to enroll in Dominican University's prestigious AACSB accredited Master of Business Administration (MBA) or M.S. in Organizational Leadership Communication (MSOLC) program. These programs, known for their rigorous curriculum and esteemed faculty, equip students with the advanced business knowledge, leadership skills, and global perspectives required to excel in today's complex business environment. Through this partnership, aspiring entrepreneurs can benefit from a comprehensive academic foundation while accessing valuable networking opportunities and mentorship from industry leaders.

“We believe that investing in the next generation of business leaders right here in our community is a smart business decision; one that supports our mantra of ‘Doing Business Right,” said Ivan Rudolph-Shabinsky, Director of Dominican University's Division of Business.

M&T Bank, DUNY, and BRIDGES are committed to supporting and fostering a vibrant entrepreneurial ecosystem in the Lower Hudson Valley. By providing access to educational resources, practical training, and real-world opportunities, they aim to empower individuals and create a robust network of successful entrepreneurs, driving economic growth and innovation across the region.

“M&T is committed to investing in the growth and development of emerging leaders in our community and we are proud to be able to support this program,” said Tyre Robinson, M&T Bank’s Tarrytown Regional President.

Carlos Martinez, CEO of BRIDGES, Rockland County’s advocacy agency which provides resources for people with a variety of disabilities and works to overcome barriers, stigma, indifference, and the quiet prejudice of low expectations shared, "We are thrilled to partner with M&T and Dominican University to bring a strong small business development curriculum to a broad group of aspiring entrepreneurs, and specifically to those representing populations that would benefit most from mentorship and compassionate counsel.”

Registration for the "Unlocking Small Business Potential" seminar is open and will be capped at 100 participants. Interested individuals can visit [www.BridgesRC.org](http://www.BridgesRC.org) to secure a spot. Registration is $98.00, with special dispensation for those with economic hardships and/or disabilities handled upon request. For more information about enrolling in Dominican University's MBA program, please visit <https://www.duny.edu/mba/>.

For media inquiries, please contact:

Susan Cerra
Director of Communications
(845) 848-7404
susan.cerra@duny.edu

Matt Schiering

DUNY
(845)848-4028

Matt.Schiering@duny.edu

About Dominican University New York

Dominican University, a recognized Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI), is one of a select group of colleges to be consistently named a College of Distinction, based on its excellence in: engaged students, great teaching, vibrant campus communities and successful outcomes. Dominican University has also been named Military Friendly for exhibiting best practices in support of military students. In addition, U.S. News & World Report ranked Dominican University New York a Top Performer on Social Mobility on its 2022-2023 Best Colleges list. This recognition is a testament to the University's commitment to providing opportunities for students from all backgrounds to achieve academic and professional success.

About M&T Bank

M&T is a financial holding company headquartered in Buffalo, New York. M&T's principal banking subsidiary, M&T Bank, provides banking products and services in 12 states across the eastern U.S. from Maine to Virginia and Washington, D.C. Trust-related services are provided in select markets in the U.S. and abroad by M&T's Wilmington Trust-affiliated companies and by M&T Bank.

About BRIDGES

BRIDGES was founded in 1987 under the name Rockland Independent Living Center (RILC). They are a community-based, peer-driven, cross-disability, not-for-profit organization dedicated to advocacy and leadership on behalf of people with disabilities. BRIDGES is one of 41 Independent Living Centers (ILC) operating in New York State under the auspices of New York State Education Department (NYSED). Each ILC adheres to a national philosophy of Independent Living (IL) that seeks to empower individuals with disabilities to make autonomous decisions regarding all aspects of living and advocating to ensure equal access to opportunities desired.

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