

Eastern Illinois University

**Lumpkin College of Business
and Applied Sciences**

School of Business



Michele Hoskins

**Founder & Owner
Michele Foods**

**“Creating Your Own Destiny”
October 20, 2005
7 p.m. Roberson Auditorium
Lumpkin Hall**

Biography

Twenty years ago, a divorced ex-school teacher had children to support, a family secret, and a dream. Michele Hoskins' determination to “leave my daughters a business instead of just a recipe” was the inspiration for Michele Foods.

Today, she laughs when she recalls her early struggles and mistakes. “There was no mentor for me as an African American woman entrepreneur. Had I not been naïve as a was, I might not have done this. All I had going for me was my goal.” Twenty years ago it was unknown for an African American woman to be the CEO of a manufacturing facility. “That’s why the first thing I tell people is to invest in yourself,” she adds, “if you don’t believe in yourself, no one else will.”

“I invested the capital I made from selling virtually everything I had. I never had any banks loans or investors, only one small line of credit when I started in October 1984. I learned how to live off of receivables early on.” She adds, “The banking part is still the most difficult aspect for minority entrepreneurs,” which is why she hopes programs to help minorities build businesses continue.

The foundation of Michele Foods is a secret syrup recipe handed down to daughters from a great-great-grandmother. But Hoskins had a vision that went beyond the family recipe. The company’s products can currently be found in over 10,000 food stores nationwide, and Michele Foods has branched out into related products such as providing condiments for Church’s Chicken.

She has achieved much success through her 20 years in the business. She has been awarded the 2002 “Entrepreneur of the Year” by the Woman’s Foodservices Forum, and she was the “keynote speaker” at Johnson & Wales University Graduation Commencement, at which time she received an Honorary Doctorate Degree. She has been featured three times on the Oprah Winfrey Show and on all major news channels, i.e., WGN, NBC5, Channel 7, Fox News, and Black Entertainment Television (BET). She was awarded the “Phenomenal Women Award 2000,” and Dollars and Sense Magazine voted her as one of the Top 100 Professional Women. Her other credits include Black Enterprise Magazine’s “The Emerging Company of The Year Award 1996,” “The Entrepreneurial Women Award 1998,” and the “Madam Walker Entrepreneurial Award 1999.”