Karen West, For a mid-term project due 10/30/14, in “Beyond Silicon Valley: Growing Entrepreneurship in Transitioning Economies”, from Coursera online courses and Case Western University in Cleveland, Ohio:

***\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*THIS DOCUMENT HAS THE SAME QUESTIONS AS THE LONGER VERSION, but it DOES NOT include extra information based on class lecture for the Cleveland experience in regard to the question asked, and also, some information I obtained from doing a web search for the Boston area to obtain the same information in the Boston ecosystem. For that extra information, please see the longer version of this entrepreneur question document. \*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\****

**ENTREPRENEUR INTERVIEW QUESTIONS:**

--If possible, please answer anything marked: \*\*\*\*\***MY QUESTION FOR YOU:**\*\*\*\*\*

The rest is background information.

**From the class:**

Ask them questions that will engage them in a conversation about the kinds of resources and support systems that they have had access to or lacked as they started and grew their businesses. You are encouraged to interview more than one entrepreneur if you choose.

**Consider the following when developing your interview questions.** Include as many as you can in your interview/write-up:

DESCRIPTIVE COMPONENTS:

\*\*\*\*\*MY QUESTION FOR YOU:\*\*\*\*\* Please answer the questions below regarding the description of yourself as an entrepreneur:

Describe the Entrepreneur:

-- Our company, Spiral Design Studio is located in Albany, New York

-- Our company was founded in 1989

-- Mission & Background : Spiral Design Studio is a progressive, graphic communications firm whose basic mission is: To develop original and creative design solutions on behalf of its clients. To excel in high-end traditional print and web-based interactive media.

Spiral Design Studio is a full-service graphic design and marketing firm serving national and regional clients since 1989. The Spiral Design team expertly balances creativity and innovation with marketing strategy, logic and analysis. It's this center-brained approach that helps our clients to reach their corporate objectives through marketing that's engaging and effective, tactical and targeted, meaningful and memorable.

-- Our services are: Graphic Design, Website Development & Corporate Branding

1. Describe their Ecosystem: How this entrepreneur accessed and utilized the resources in their ecosystem to grow their company. Could include an examination of the presence or absence of any or all of the following components:

 -- **Government:**

* \*\*\*\*\***MY QUESTION FOR YOU:**\*\*\*\*\* What was the role of the government in your start up, if any? Did you have any requirements based on their contribution, if they contributed? I saw on the Mass. Challenge web site that there were government organizations that contribute to the Mass. Challenge, where start ups compete for funding, such as the MA government, and also, from a federal level, funding agencies such as the National Science Foundation.

ANS: The New York State Small Business Development Center at the University of Albany helped us initially in advising us how to do our accounting and how to structure our business. We did not have any requirements based upon their contribution. Their assistance service is free.

 -- **Philanthropy:**

* \*\*\*\*\***MY QUESTION FOR YOU:**\*\*\*\*\* What role did philanthropy play in contributions to your start up? Did philanthropic donation foundations, such as the “The Boston Foundation” (which recently merged with “The Philanthropic Initiative”) contribute to your start up?

ANS: No

 -- **Anchor institutions: (often places like universities and hospitals in ecosystems)**

* \*\*\*\*\***MY QUESTION FOR YOU:**\*\*\*\*\*Were there any “anchor institutions that helped form your start up company?

ANS: The New York State Small Business Development Center at the University of Albany

 -- **Intermediary institutions:**

* \*\*\*\*\*MY QUESTION FOR YOU:\*\*\*\*\*Were there any intermediary institutions that contributed to your Boston area start up? When I did a web search, I found a list of “MTTC (Mass. Tech. Transfer Center)” places for “intermediary institutions for entrepreneurs in the Boston area”.

ANS: No

-- **Other forms of support:**

\*\*\*\*\***MY QUESTION FOR YOU:**\*\*\*\*\* Did your start up have any other forms of support?

ANS: We had support from family members who helped with our initial financing for the purchase of equipment.

ASSESSMENT COMPONENTS:

\*\*\*\*\*MY QUESTIONS FOR YOU (CHALLENGES, OPPORTUNITIES, MEASURES OF SUCCESS):\*\*\*\*\*

1. Challenges: The challenges that this entrepreneur faced. Could include:
-- The accessibility of funding for scale (rather than a market analysis of the products or companies themselves)
-- Assessment of the key strategic challenges and tradeoffs that the entrepreneur faced.

ANS: One of the challenges we faced was there were many long-term established design and marketing firms in our marketplace.

1. Opportunities: The unique opportunities that this entrepreneur experienced. Could include:
-- Elements that enabled company growth
-- Supports that were available to help them succeed

ANS: When we started our company, digitally-based graphic design was in it’s infancy. We were able to take advantage of this technology to rapidly grow our business. This gave us a great advantage over other designs firms who were still creating commercial art the traditional way. Not only were we able to produce camera-ready art for one-tenth of the cost, but we were able to produce it rapidly.

1. Measures of Success: What success looks like to these entrepreneurs. Could include:
-- How they measure success
-- Who are the beneficiaries of success.

ANS: We measure success by competing against ourselves to always improve what we’re doing. Obviously, success can be monetarily measured, but more so for us, it’s important to have client satisfaction for the return on their investment. We’ve largely built our business upon word-of-mouth referrals and currently have clients such as: Citi Group, Activision, Sears, Zales, Sunoco, Best Buy, Home Depot, Disney, among others.