



This copy is for your personal, noncommercial use only. You can order presentation-ready copies for distribution to your colleagues, clients or customers [here](#) or use the "Reprints" tool that appears above any article. [Order a reprint of this article now.](#)

Printed on page A1

MONDAY PROFILE | JEAN-PIERRE EMOND

USF Poly Tech Dean Boasts Impressive Resume

By [Kyle Kennedy](#)
THE LEDGER

Published: Sunday, June 27, 2010 at 8:02 p.m.

LAKELAND | Jean-Pierre Emond has traveled the Canadian Arctic, befriended the Inuit and evaded a polar bear.

He speaks three languages, has a doctoral degree and once owned an herb farm. When he's not helping to steer the growth of the University of South Florida Polytechnic, Emond runs a high-tech company specializing in pharmaceutical shipping.

It sounds like the resume of an impossibly accomplished professor from an adventure tale, but Emond is no Indiana Jones. He's a new face at USF Poly and a proven entrepreneur with a history in Polk County and Central Florida.

"I'm not new to this area. I'd say that I almost have 20 years of understanding the region very well," said Emond, 46, who in February became dean of USF Poly's College of Technology and Innovation. "When I was in Canada, when I was in Gainesville, most of my hands-on research was in this area. I think this region has great potential and we're only scratching the surface right now."

Hired by USF late last year, Emond previously served as co-founder/director of the Center for Food Distribution and Retailing at the University of Florida, where he also taught classes. The Quebec native has spent nearly two decades researching and developing new technologies and methods for food packaging and transportation.

That work led Emond to create Blueeye LLC about four years ago in Gainesville. The

Scott Wheeler / The Ledger

Jean-Pierre Emond, dean of the College of Technology and Innovation at USF Polytechnic, is shown in the Lakeland Technology Building at the USF/PSC campus recently.

firm, now based in Lakeland, develops high-security, temperature-regulated shipping containers used to transport vaccines (including H1N1) and other valuable pharmaceuticals.

But his biggest venture yet might be USF Poly, where Emond is tasked with helping to recruit faculty and design courses for the state's only polytechnic university. The challenge of leading a fledgling university is what attracted Emond to the job last year.

"The idea to do something that doesn't exist in the state of Florida, that was very appealing to me," he said. "I have been doing a lot of applied research with private industry ... so the idea that the polytechnic is oriented more toward real life, the real world and the way we have been conducting research, it's a perfect fit."

Marshall Goodman, USF Poly's chief executive, says Emond was a key hire.

"He adds an enormous amount. Not only does he have his faculty expertise in research, which is exactly in our wheelhouse, he brings administrative experience," Goodman said. "He's exactly the kind of person who can help us recruit the faculty we need to build our programs, because he gets it. He understands the 21st century university has to be engaged in applied research."

INEVITABLE CAREER

Born June 5, 1964, in Montreal, Emond says it was inevitable that he would pursue a career in education.

His mother taught elementary classes and later ran an art school. His father, a McGill University professor, directed agricultural research for the Quebec government.

During summers Emond would accompany his father on visits to field research stations, where he first began taking an interest in agriculture. But he knew he wasn't cut out to be a farmer.

"It's funny because I'm a city boy, I had never been to a farm. I thought it was pretty interesting but I decided that the tractor and everything was not exactly where I would be the best," Pierre-Emond said.

He went the academic route instead, earning a bachelor's degree in agricultural engineering from Quebec's Universite Laval in 1987, and a master's degree in food science two years later.

He moved to Florida in 1990 and took a job as a teaching assistant at UF, where he would earn a doctorate in agricultural engineering in 1992.

In the ensuing years Emond became a noted professor at both Laval and UF, while conducting research in food packaging, air cargo transportation, radio-frequency identification (RFID) and other areas. His collaborations with private industry have included working with strawberry farmers in Plant City and Publix Super Markets.

"He pushes the envelope of innovation in his thinking," said Jeff Wells, president and chief executive of Franwell. "Beyond that, his integrity and everything else has been impeccable. He's been a loyal friend."

As for Emond's own business, Blueeye appears to have found a niche in handling sensitive cargo for the pharmaceutical industry. He won't discuss sales figures or clients, but after years of reinvesting in the company, Emond says Blueeye is on track to clear a healthy profit in 2010, though USF Poly remains his primary focus.

He also says he isn't deterred by recent budget setbacks at USF Poly - in May, Gov. Charlie Crist vetoed \$46 million allocated toward the university's new campus.

"You know what, I've been building so many things in my life, in Canada and at UF, that if you don't expect these kind of things, you shouldn't go into this (field)," Emond said. "If it was easy to build a new concept and bring something new, everyone would do it. So we expect these kind of glitches, but it's not this that ever stops you."

UNASSUMING MAN

Few people know him as Jean-Pierre - it's simply J.P., a nickname that fits Emond's unassuming demeanor and sense of humor.

He laughs recalling his short stint in Canada years ago as owner and operator of a fresh herb farm, saying his shortcomings behind the wheel of a tractor made him appreciate the difficulty of farming.

In his office at USF, Emond keeps a collection of soapstone carvings of fish gifted to him by the Inuit people. The keepsakes are from the 16 years he spent working with a Canadian government program that safely transports nutritious, perishable food to Inuit communities in the Arctic.

Emond's memories of that time include building an igloo in minus-50-degree January weather.

"The Inuit saw something, and I realized it was a polar bear crawling toward us," he said. "This is when we started to run."

The married father of three lives in a trilingual household, the result of Emond's Portugese wife, UF professor Cecilia Nunes, and his own French-Canadian background.

Emond says he struggles internally with his thick French-Canadian accent.

It makes him self-conscious and he worries that people don't understand him - a nagging concern for someone who has been eager to fit in wherever he goes.

But Emond says his previous work in the Lakeland area makes him feel comfortable here, where he envisions a promising future for himself and USF Poly.

"I'm overwhelmed by the welcome I've had from the Lakeland people. I'm a French Canadian with a strong accent and I have so much that they've given me and that I can do here," he said. "I think it's a great opportunity for me. I really appreciate that. Nobody in Lakeland ever has made me feel like I'm a stranger."

[Kyle Kennedy can be reached at kyle.kennedy@theledger.com or 863-802-7584.]

This story appeared in print on page A1

Copyright © 2010 TheLedger.com — All rights reserved. Restricted use only.