ENTREPRENEURSHIP

STUDENTS GAIN FROM BUILDING
the Entrepreneurship Mindset

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Move over, "sage on the stage." Make way for the "guide on the side." At community colleges across the country, the academic tradition of relying on lectures to dispense knowledge is being displaced by engaging students in activities designed to help them discover knowledge through real-life experiences. Nowhere is this shift in the education approach more evident than at NACCE member colleges, where faculty are using exciting new ways to bring the entrepreneurial mindset to their students, to fellow faculty members across the college, and to the community at large.

"We work very hard to incorporate real life experiences into our courses," said Gary Muller, Business Programs department head at Catawba Valley Community College (CVCC), in Hickory, North Carolina. "We want students thinking about what they would do if they had a business or product idea and have them follow through by participating in activities in individual and team settings."

Four years ago, CVCC launched an annual Shark Tank competition, which has become a mainstay in the college's efforts to encourage students to think entrepreneurially. The event has quickly grown beyond its first target audiences of Business students and clients of the Small Business Center. "I'm very proud that our Shark Tank program had 50 ideas this spring, and they came from all across the campus," Muller said.

INTEGRATING INTO THE ECOSYSTEM

At Gulf Coast State College (GCSC) in Panama City, Florida, events like Start-up Weekend, participation in Enactus (formerly called SIFE), and the commercialization initiatives of

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> – STEPHEN DUNNIVANT

the college's Advanced Technology Center are engaging students in entrepreneurship as never before. "Our goal is to integrate the student experience into the local entrepreneurial ecosystem," said Stephen Dunnivant, dean of the Advanced Technology Center.

GCSC's Enactus team fared well at its first national competition in Cincinnati this spring, winning Rookie of the Year honors for its league and advancing to the competition's quarter-finals. The Visual and Performing Arts departments worked with the team to polish their presentation skills; this collaboration helped spread the word about entrepreneurship across the campus. Also, the Enactus team participated in Start-up Weekend and worked with the college's entrepreneur in residence, Mike Ross, a serial Silicon Valley entrepreneur, giving them more exposure to the entrepreneurial process and to how entrepreneurs think.

TESTING NEW APPROACHES

At Pikes Peak Community College (PPCC) in Colorado Springs, Colorado, they are taking a fast-track entrepreneurial approach to how they are launching the Ice House curriculum, well known to NACCE members. According to Bree Langemo, dean of Business, Public Service, and Social Science, after several pilot programs last spring and after 25 faculty members have been certified in the program, the college

will use the Ice House curriculum in an exciting new way this fall for half of the first-year Developmental students.

"Half of the 1,500 Developmental students will take our existing first-year student success course, and the other half will take the Ice House course," said Langemo. "We'll run a qualitative and quantitative study to see which course impacts student persistence more. What we're anticipating is that the Ice House course will be more inspiring and motivating and will create a success mindset for students at the start of their college careers. The real message is trying to redefine entrepreneurship as not being small business management; it's a different way of thinking of entrepreneurship. It's a way of thinking and solving problems, and it's about being a success."

Faculty members who were certified in the spring have been meeting to discuss the lessons in the Ice House curriculum. "It was very interesting to see as they're being trained to teach students about an entrepreneurial mindset, they themselves gained an entrepreneurial mindset," said Langemo. "As we go through a full-blown Ice House course in 2015, we'll have to train more faculty, so it has the potential to shift the mindset of the faculty as a whole."

CHALLENGES YOU FACE

PPCC is moving quickly to integrate the Ice House curriculum, bumping it up against some of the challenges that an academic institution faces in trying to be entrepreneurial. "An entrepreneurial mindset involves thinking big, acting fast, and starting small," said Langemo. "We did all of those except we started big!

"It's challenging to act fast in an academic setting," she acknowledged. "We have a president who came from industry and who tends to be more

of a risk taker and to move things along quickly. There are challenges in academia of moving too quickly without getting all the buy-ins we need. We've had bumps along the way with some unanticipated learning about getting all the stakeholders involved early on. For example, we didn't include academic advisors in the original discussion, but they turned out to be very important because they're talking with students at the frontend. But we've been able to overcome these challenges."

Departmental silos are another challenge to getting faculty to think and act entrepreneurially, said Stephen Dunnivant. "To achieve an entrepreneurial culture across campus, you have to do it in stages," he said. "You start with a core group; we did that through our Enactus team. That engages other divisions and other students who may not be in the Entrepreneurship program. The challenge is that you really have to bridge departmental silos. In typical curricular structures you have those verticals that we call majors; the challenge is getting those majors to engage each other at the student and faculty levels. How do you get them in collaborative processes that include interdisciplinary experiences? The very word 'division' is divisive! So your first challenge is bridging those department gaps."

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FACULTY ENGAGEMENT OFF CAMPUS

At CCVC, Gary Muller participates in a leadership program for faculty and staff that is bringing a more entrepreneurial mindset to the key activities of student recruitment and retention. "We'll be working through the summer to hit the ground running to involve all faculty across the campus in recruiting and retention in the fall. Instead of saying it would be nice if you would do it, there is a strong push to get everybody actively engaged in outreach activities. It is something that faculty will be wary of at first, but I think they will enjoy it once they get involved.

When asking faculty to help build an entrepreneurial mindset within the college and outside in the community, it's critical to rethink their overall role. "The role of the faculty has to be central to creating that entrepreneurial ecosystem," said Dunnivant. "If you just look at them as people who are just there to deliver and assess you're missing out. If instead we see them as mentors who enable students to apply what they've learned, that dictates the need to re-examine how you're giving faculty the time and resources they need to fulfill that role. We moved to 12- month contracts; we made budgetary changes so that the faculty don't just teach fall to spring; they remain engaged with students throughout the year.

If you just load new roles onto their existing work, you're going to get the usual 20 percent who are interested. We have to rethink their role and not make it just a pile-on. It's a process and it's different for everyone."

Gary Muller agrees on the need to make it worth their while for faculty outside of the Entrepreneurship program to get involved with spreading the entrepreneurial mindset. "That is the internal marketing we're working on," he said. "The first step has been to get people to think about this by going to each individual department across campus, sharing success stories in individual departments. We're saying, 'We've done this in this other department and now we'd like to do this with you.' We're trying to get them to understand that it's important for people to have business skills as well as the technical skills. We have to make it worth their while. Slowly but surely this is coming across.

CVCC's Cosmetology school is a good example of faculty taking a more entrepreneurial approach. "Over the last three years they have started to promote the services they do on live clients," said Muller. "Revenues have doubled because they've taken the entrepreneurial mindset to say, 'Yes we're a school, but when it comes to serving your clients, we're a business.' Students are learning not only cosmetology but also what it takes to run a business. Other parts of the college are examining whether they can provide services to the community; that's when you start engaging students in seeing how the technical skill they're studying can become a business for them."

Each person we talked to for this article emphasized the importance of having strong support from the college president for their efforts to build the entrepreneurial mindset within faculty and students. The role of the leader will be the topic of our next article in this series.

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7