

COMMUNITY COLLEGE

ENTREPRENEURSHIP

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◀ **SUCCESS!** ▶

FIRST-YEAR STUDENT SUCCESS COURSE:

A Home for Entrepreneurial Mindset Education



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The United States has fallen to 16th in the world in college credential completion, yet by 2018, two-thirds of the jobs in this country will require post-secondary education.¹ Employers are increasingly demanding an entrepreneurial workforce, seeking individuals with critical thinking, effective problem solving, communication and other entrepreneurial skills.

Community colleges encompass half of the country's undergraduates across the nation.² The Center for Community College Student Engagement (CCSSE) reports that of full-time entering students who report that their goal is to earn an associate degree, only 45 percent will actually earn an associate degree within six years.³ The American Association of Community College's leading priority is to facilitate the 21st Century Initiative. The first recommendation of the initiative is to increase completion rates by 50 percent by 2020.⁴ Notably, higher education funding models are also following the same pathway, moving from a focus on access to a focus on completion.

INCREASING STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

To increase student engagement and success - and favorably impact completion rates - students need to be equipped with the perseverance and determination of an entrepreneurial mindset. If community colleges equip students with an entrepreneurial mindset at the onset of their academic journey, students will be more engaged and take ownership



of their own success, academically and beyond. Hence, the best home for an entrepreneurial mindset education is within a first-year student success course where there is significant evidence of a large-scale impact on student persistence, credential completion or transfer.

In CCSSE's *Promising Practices for Community College Student Success*, CCSSE reports "students who complete these courses are more likely to complete other courses, earn better grades, and have higher overall GPAs, and obtain degrees."⁵ In a sample survey of community colleges, 238 institutional respondents indicated that they have a student success course, and 15 percent indicated that all first-time students are required to take the student success course.⁶

After conducting a survey on whether student success courses actually help students succeed, the Community College Research Center reported that there is evidence that community colleges should consider requiring students to complete student success courses.⁷ In the report, CCRC concluded that students who enroll in student success courses have an increased chance of persistence, credential completion or transfer.⁸ In addition, students who take a student success course "combined with enrollment in remediation are associated with a higher probability of completion than enrollment in remedial courses alone."⁹ CCSSE also reports that experiential learning beyond the classroom is another promising practice that "encourages students to make connections and forge relationships that can support them throughout college and beyond."¹⁰ In surveying 438,716 community college students, 77 percent of students indicated that they never participated in a community-based project as part of a course.¹¹

CASE STUDY: PPCC FIRST-YEAR STUDENT SUCCESS COURSE

In August 2014, Pikes Peak Community College (PPCC), the second largest community college in Colorado with 22,000 students, became the first community college in the nation to roll out the Ice House Entrepreneurship Program as a required first-year student success course with interdisciplinary students who were simultaneously enrolled in remedial courses. PPCC aligned student success course outcomes to Ice House outcomes, and students experienced a highly interactive, student-centered, real-world application curriculum with lessons focused on the power of choice, recognizing opportunity, solving problems, moving from ideas to action and building community. General education outcomes focused on building critical thinking, communication, team building, and problem solving as well as goal setting and attainment skills, which were met by delivering the Ice House curriculum through the student success course.

Students engaged in experiential learning learn by sharing and evolving ideas in the community, hearing from guest entrepreneurs who share their stories of persistence, and forming relationships and building networks that can support them through college and beyond. Students were encouraged to embrace an entrepreneurial mindset, applying it to their education and their lives. Consistent with CCRC's study, PPCC's early data results show that students who completed the student success course with their remedial education are more successful than students who do not.

A SCALABLE SOLUTION

PPCC truly embraced the Ice House philosophy that entrepreneurship is a mindset; a framework for thinking and acting that can empower anyone to succeed regardless of their chosen path. Notably, Ice House offered a scalable solution to entrepreneurial mindset education by training 25 PPCC faculty members to be facilitators of the Ice House life lessons, rather than requiring faculty with expertise in entrepreneurship. In addition to PPCC's rollout, the Ice House philosophy was simultaneously embraced community-wide with the curriculum being offered at the Small Business Development Center, Pikes Peak Workforce Center, and PPCC's Workforce Development Division's Community Education classes.

In a moment of serendipity, the Pikes Peak Library District also selected "*Who Owns the Ice House? Eight Life Lessons From An Unlikely Entrepreneur*" as its "All Pikes Peak Read," reaching more than 100,000 community members. The evolution of Ice House throughout the Pikes Peak Region led to a common language in the community that has redefined entrepreneurship as a mindset that anyone can embrace. Significantly, the community's enthusiastic endorsement of this philosophy created a bridge between the classroom and community as guest entrepreneurs appeared in classrooms or helped students progress their ideas.

In April 2015, PPCC brought the Ice House community to campus, celebrating Ice House entrepreneurs, faculty and students. "If you look at our numbers as community colleges and how we serve the students who come to us with their dreams, you cannot possibly defend the status quo as being good enough," said PPCC President Lance Bolton. "We've got to make a bigger difference. So, if we're going to make a bigger difference, knowing the things that we've already tried and have been a part of community college efforts around this issue for decades, we've got to break away from that and really look to bold, new solutions. I see this as a bold, new solution."

ENTREPRENEURIAL MINDSET EDUCATION = STUDENT SUCCESS

Entrepreneurship reaches far beyond the concept of traditional enterprise creation and small business planning. Entrepreneurship is a mindset: a framework for thinking and acting that can empower anyone to succeed. An entrepreneurial mindset empowers students with the power of choice and the ability to recognize opportunity and take ideas to action while giving them problem solving, communication and critical thinking skills. It also emphasizes the importance of persistence as a critical element of success.

Student success courses that teach students how to write notes, take tests and manage their time improve student success. Promoting these skills within the context of an entrepreneurial mindset offers students a broader perspective of their overall life goals as well as their own untapped potential, thereby driving both the importance and urgency of their own education. It will put their education in the context of something that they value and want in order to improve their own lives. It will help build the perseverance they need as well as an incentive to complete and go on, whether successfully entering the workforce, transferring to a four-year university or beyond. In effect, it shifts the locus of control to the individual student, thus empowering individual agency and enabling them to make their own choices.

FOSTER ENTREPRENEURIAL MINDSETS IN FIRST-YEAR STUDENTS

True to the Ice House mission and the words of Thom Ruhe, CEO of the Entrepreneurial Learning Initiative (ELI), the creators of the Ice House Entrepreneurship Program, "Entrepreneurial Mindset Education is vital to expanding human potential."

ENTREPRENEURSHIP REACHES FAR BEYOND THE CONCEPT OF TRADITIONAL ENTERPRISE CREATION AND SMALL BUSINESS PLANNING.

How can community colleges engage students and improve student persistence to goal completion in a large-scale, impactful way?

Offer students an entrepreneurial mindset from the onset of their academic journey via a first-year student success course, preferably required, utilizing entrepreneurial mindset education. Not only will it empower students with the perseverance they need to succeed academically and in life, it will help them reach the potential they have inside themselves.

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- 1 **AACC'S EMPOWERING COMMUNITY COLLEGES TO BUILD THE NATION'S FUTURE: AN IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE**, www.aacc21stcenturycenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/EmpoweringCommunityColleges_final.pdf
- 2 **CHANGING COURSE: A GUIDE TO INCREASING STUDENT COMPLETION IN COMMUNITY COLLEGES**, [www.wsac.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2014.ptw.\(13\).pdf](http://www.wsac.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2014.ptw.(13).pdf)
- 3 **CCSSE'S A MATTER OF DEGREES: PROMISING PRACTICES FOR COMMUNITY COLLEGE STUDENT SUCCESS**, www.ccsse.org/docs/matter_of_degree.pdf
- 4 See **AACC'S EMPOWERING COMMUNITY COLLEGES TO BUILD THE NATION'S FUTURE: AN IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE**
- 5 & 6 See **CCSSE'S A MATTER OF DEGREES: PROMISING PRACTICES FOR COMMUNITY COLLEGE STUDENT SUCCESS**
- 7 & 8 **CCRC'S DO STUDENT SUCCESS COURSES HELP STUDENTS SUCCEED?** ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/media/k2/attachments/success-courses-help-students-succeed-brief.pdf
- 9 See **CCRC'S DO STUDENT SUCCESS COURSES HELP STUDENTS SUCCEED?**
- 10 & 11 See **CCSSE'S A MATTER OF DEGREES: PROMISING PRACTICES FOR COMMUNITY COLLEGE STUDENT SUCCESS**

Success |sək'ses| noun: The Accomplishment of a Goal or Purpose



By Thom Ruhe, CEO, The Entrepreneurial Learning Initiative, Mentor, Ohio

I went to college in the mid 1980s. I was an unremarkable college student earning average grades in pursuit of a degree in management information systems. To be honest, I did not have some great passion for technology and I doubted if the effort was worth it.

But I did have the good fortune to be the son of immigrants who understood the value of a college education. Going to college would not be optional for me. Fortunately, in the 1980s, tuition at a decent state school was still affordable for the son of a factory worker.

To make the point that college graduates would likely have better career options, I held a variety of summer jobs during my college years ranging from construction (primarily mixing concrete and stacking cinder block), to patching and sealing asphalt. To this day my arm bears the scars left from boiling tar. It is a reminder that whereas a day's pay is reward for a day's work, I would probably not want to be spreading asphalt for the remainder of my days. So off to college I went.

DIFFERENT TIMES

Now if there were members of the faculty or administrators at my university obsessed with my retention and graduation, it wasn't obvious to me - nor would I have cared. As I previously stated, I was satisfied to be academically ensconced in the middle of the herd, simply going through the motions until such time that my eventual alma mater would confer unto me a degree. That degree would be my ticket into adulthood.

Those were different times.

For one thing, the promise of a better life, using lifetime earnings as a proxy for quality of life, was more

demonstrable. For example, I attended one career fair my senior year and it rendered three job offers. The one I accepted came with a starting salary of \$36,000, not bad for 1988. I now wonder how many recent graduates would be willing to accept a job today with a \$36,000 salary, some 27 years later. Sadly, I think many would.

But as I said, these are different times. The tuition for my freshman daughter's college at the state school she now attends is (adjusted for inflation) 225 percent higher than it was for my freshman year. Couple that with data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics that shows 48 percent of employed U.S. college grads are in jobs that require less than a four-year degree, and we can see that something is amiss and in need of change.

UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES

I recognize the economic reality driving a slavish commitment to retention and completion as the measure of student success. But these overbearing constraints, combined with a host of other insidious externalities, are creating a perfect storm of unintended consequences.

For one thing, we are graduating students ill prepared for the jobs of the 21st century. As my colleague Bree Langemo has noted in her article for this issue of *Community College Entrepreneurship*, employers are increasingly demanding an entrepreneurial workforce, seeking individuals with critical thinking, effective problem solving, communication and other interpersonal skills.

Having built companies that employed many people over the years, I can attest to this skills deficit first hand. And I wish I could say that my enlightenment was a product of my collegiate experience, but it wasn't. My real education started the day I went to work for an entrepreneur who, by his own admission, barely graduated from high school.

Within 12 months of graduation and working in the real world as a programmer, I realized I was not cut out for such a career. Miserable in my role, I resigned and went to work for a man operating a small entrepreneurial endeavor in a nondescript industrial parkway. With a salary of one thousand dollars a month (plus commission), I started learning the value of an entrepreneurial mindset. Twenty-four months later, I was earning six figures for the first time in my life.

SEEING PROBLEMS AS OPPORTUNITIES

The owner of the company demonstrated certain behaviors and a framework for critical thinking and problem solving. What he did remarkably well was apply critical thinking (challenging assumptions) and demonstrated to those of us paying attention that problems were opportunities, and opportunities could be lucrative.

Another critical value he lived by was a tenacious focus on execution. Once a way forward was agreed upon, it was all hands on deck, unwavering effort through completion. Today, we attribute these aspirations with words like persistence and perseverance. Call it what you will, it was about getting the job done.

That dusty warehouse and cramped office space created wealth for the founder and great paying jobs for a dozen people. A couple of us even went on to repeat that cycle creating new firms and jobs for even more engaged citizens contributing to the vibrancy of their communities and the economy.

By pretty much any measure, if we could help students progress similarly, whether as founders or entrepreneurially minded employees, we would have succeeded at something. To be certain, you do not need to start a new venture to benefit from an entrepreneurial mindset. It is a life skill that everyone needs to survive and thrive.

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NACCE Member News

BREE LANGEMO, former dean of Business, Public Service & Social Sciences at **PIKES PEAK COMMUNITY COLLEGE**, has been named vice president of Strategic Partnerships for the Entrepreneurial Learning Initiative (www.elimindset.com), a global advocate for expanding human potential through entrepreneurship mindset education programs. Langemo will lead ELI's national strategy for partnership development. With more than a decade of experience in higher education, her work has focused on improving student persistence to goal completion, strengthening instructional training and support, and building community partnerships to better align curriculum to meet current and future workforce needs.

MONTGOMERY COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE has been awarded \$2 million from the Montgomery County Economic Development Corporation (MCEDC). It is the largest private gift ever given to the college. The award will establish an endowment within the college's foundation, and annual interest from the endowment will fund workforce development program scholarships for students pursuing high-demand industries that support the county's continued prosperity. The award will also provide seed money for new programs and student scholarships in critical health sciences and entrepreneurship.

John and Mary Pappajohn gave a \$50,000 gift to **NORTH IOWA AREA COMMUNITY COLLEGE** in honor of NIACC's **JAMIE ZANIOS** upon his retirement last year as vice president of Institutional Advancement and the Pappajohn Entrepreneurial Center. The endowment will be used to form the Jamie T. Zanos Entrepreneurship Scholarship and will assist students studying entrepreneurship or business. Starting this fall, two scholarships will be made available for students who are interested in owning their own businesses through a career program or those who are pursuing a two-year associate's degree.

AMY SCHULZ has been named NACCE'S new vice president of Membership. One of NACCE'S original Member Ambassadors since 2013, she was most recently the director of Career Technical Education & Economic Workforce Development at **FEATHER RIVER COMMUNITY COLLEGE**. She also oversaw the "New World of Work Initiative" and an eight-college regional consortium that facilitated leadership to serve the career technical education needs of the region. In her new role, she will focus on membership renewal and recruitment, an expanded NACCE presence on the West Coast, expanded NACCE special events within regional conferences, and customized training offerings. Contact her at schulz@nacce.com.

We love to hear from our members! Do you have updates to share? A new program, event or award? To submit your news, contact editor@nacce.com.

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REDEFINING SUCCESS

For that reason, the Entrepreneurial Learning Initiative, in collaboration with NACCE, academic institutions, philanthropic organizations, and policy thought leaders, is launching an ambitious effort to empower one million students with an entrepreneurial mindset - a way of thinking that can empower ordinary people to accomplish extraordinary things.

The 1Million Mindsets initiative uses innovative curriculum that leverages problem-based experiential learning and community engagement. Through the movement, students are exposed to the underlying attitudes that cultivate entrepreneurial behavior - be it as an employee, entrepreneur, or an otherwise engaged member of society.

Students will learn from the firsthand experience of others, benefit from peer-to-peer learning, and engage with a com-

munity that will eventually support them as promising entrepreneurs or welcome them as wonderfully qualified employees strengthening the companies eager to hire them.

For more information on how you can help redefine student success and participate in the movement, please go to www.1millionmindsets.com.

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