UNDERSTANDING THE VALUE PROPOSITION OF INTERDISCIPLINARY UNDERGRADUATE ENTREPRENEURSHIP (INTERACTIVE PAPER)

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UNDERSTANDING THE VALUE PROPOSITION OF INTERDISCIPLINARY UNDERGRADUATE ENTREPRENEURSHIP

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Principal Topic

This research examines a youth entrepreneurship partnership project “Starting Lean and Venturing Forward”, designed to promote entrepreneurial spirit in a campus community, and to encourage graduates to consider self-employment opportunities in a region hard hit by the economic downturn. We enhanced the entrepreneurial learning experiences of 400 undergraduate business and engineering students and create opportunities for them to be exposed to, explore, and experience entrepreneurship.

This project was a collaborative effort between the local university and regional centres of research innovation and small business development. Beginning with a large pool of 2nd year students taking business and engineering courses, we encouraged youth to identify entrepreneurial ideas, and utilized the campus community to provide business training and mentoring. We focus upon a “youth mentoring youth” approach that involved 25 student team leaders who supervised fifty 2nd year multidisciplinary student teams in business and engineering (285 students). These teams developed entrepreneurial ideas. This activity was complemented by an on-campus Blue Sky Idea competition. The focus of the research was to understand and evaluate the process and outcomes of a specific experiential learning program related to on-campus student ideation.

Methodology

The results of our field study incorporate findings from observation, interviews and surveys. We have collected information that will help us to understand the interpersonal dynamics and individual attitudes of multi-disciplinary undergraduate team-based product ideation.

Results and Implications

This experiential learning program is one of the first in North America to combine multi-disciplinary entrepreneurial teams at the undergraduate level in a large on-campus class. There is very little information about how to develop experiential learning related to undergraduate student innovation and invention on campus, however, there is potentially a life changing impact on the students’ personal views of their career opportunities, and economic outlook for the host community. The benefits are clear for the student participants as they experience it themselves and as we seek to improve the program for future classes. We discuss results and implications at our BCERC 2014 interactive session.

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