Infusing Entrepreneurship into Campus Culture through Faculty Development Workshops

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Abstract

Georgia State University introduced an Entrepreneurship Major in 2018, after successfully launching an Entrepreneurship Minor across campus, a few years earlier. In an effort to spur entrepreneurial thinking – both in the classroom and for research – the Provost recently offered week-long faculty development workshops, in three tracks: 1- Translating discovery into products and enterprises for scientists; 2- Learning, and learning to teach, problem-based learning and design thinking methods; and 3- Main Street Entrepreneurs – the business side of innovation. One author fully designed, developed, and presented the Main Street Entrepreneurs track, while the other was a workshop participant and presenter on common legal issues for entrepreneurs. This track drew faculty from business and social sciences, as well as other academic disciplines. Participants had ideas for products and enterprises, but lacked basic knowledge of accounting, business regulations, fundraising and intellectual property rights. Topics included concept development, branding, venture financing and pitching project ideas. This paper details the successes of the workshop experience, as well as the potential impact that such workshops have on a campus culture.

Keywords: *Entrepreneurship, Innovation, Law, Intellectual Property, Faculty Workshops.*

1. Introduction

In May 2018, the Provost at the authors' university offered professors a one week, 20-hour course in innovation and entrepreneurship, stating:

> Whether you are a bench scientist interested in taking your discoveries to market, a faculty member with a keen interest in starting a business, or a faculty member wanting to enrich his or her own research and teaching with an innovative and entrepreneurial mindset, there is a track for you! This opportunity is open to all full-time faculty across all disciplines of research and scholarship at the university. [1]

One author (Entrepreneurship professor) fully designed, developed, and presented the "Main Street Entrepreneurs" track. The other author (Legal Studies professor) was a workshop participant and presenter on common legal issues for entrepreneurs. This paper details the successes of that workshop experience, as well as the potential impact that such workshops have on a campus culture.

2. Designing and Presenting the Main Street Entrepreneurs Program

The three tracks in the university faculty workshops [2] were:

1. <u>Translating discovery into products and enterprises for scientists</u>: This track is aimed at faculty from STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) disciplines whose research is ready, or moving towards being ready, to translate into patents and commercialization. Participants will learn more about the art of brainstorming and improvisation and design thinking, and the track will also include a panel on faculty commercialization.

2. <u>Learning, and learning to teach, problem-based learning and design thinking methods</u>: All students at Georgia State, regardless of major, should learn how to frame their studies and careers in terms of innovative problem solving. Participants in this track will learn how to bring a fresh outlook to their own research and how to impart an entrepreneurial mindset upon students. Faculty will learn from professors of practice who are experienced in social entrepreneurship and who have also developed instructional materials that challenge students to solve problems in new and creative ways.

3. <u>Main street entrepreneurs – the business side of innovation</u>: This track is expected to draw faculty from business and social sciences, as well as other academic disciplines. Participants might have

ideas for products and enterprises, but lack basic knowledge of accounting, business regulations, fundraising and intellectual property rights. (This is the program developed by one of the authors.)

The primary objective of the Main Street Entrepreneurs program was to achieve the university's goal of "infusing" entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial thinking across the university, with specific focus on starting and commercializing entrepreneurial ventures. A secondary goal of the segment was to provide participants with the fundamental knowledge, insights, concepts, and tools that would enable them to assist students from all academic majors in capitalizing on the empowering and transformative potential of innovation and entrepreneurship. To accomplish these objectives, four themes and corresponding subject areas were identified and presented over the program's five days. These are highlighted below in table 1:

Table 1: Main Street Entrepreneurs Program - Themes and Topics

	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5
Themes	*Entrepreneurship & Innovation Fundamentals*	*Establishing a Sound Market Presence*	*Relevant Models & Plans*	*Funding & Selling Your Idea in a Responsible Manner*	*Entrepreneurship & the Innovative University*
Session 1	Opportunity Identification & Value Assessment	Entrepreneurial Marketing to Gain Traction	The Business Model: Margin, Burn and Volume	Venture Financing	Entrepreneurship & the Entrepreneurial University
Session 2	Concept Development	Branding	Pricing, Revenues, Costs	Ethical Issues in Entrepreneurship & Innovation	*Pitching Project Ideas*
Session 3	Innovation Management	Advertising & Promotion Strategies	The Business Plan	Fundamentals of Social Entrepreneurship	*Pitching Project Ideas*
Session 4	Legal Foundation & Protection	Channel Management	The Business Plan	Developing Vibrant, Captivating and winning Pitches	*Pitching Project Ideas (uVenture)*

2.1 Perspective of Workshop Presenter/Participant

One author conducted a session on *Law Essentials for Entrepreneurs*. This discussion focused on common law mistakes committed by entrepreneurs, and the importance of protecting the intellectual property of a business. Specifically, the workshop highlighted:
- Choosing an appropriate business entity;
- Conducting a thorough trademark search before incorporating;
- Securing a corporate name does not equal trademark protection;
- Writing a Shareholder Agreement prior to conducting business; and
- Using Work for Hire agreements when hiring independent contractors.

Further, professors learned about the level of legal protection available for a startup, with a simulated $10,000 budget. Then, recognizing that most of their students cannot afford $10,000, participants assessed the level of protection afforded with a mere $500. In doing so, attendees were able to respectively envision the protection needed for their own research, as well as guide students to resources on what to do with a limited budget. The session concluded with an understanding that handling legal issues on the front end can deter disputes and litigation down the road.

As a workshop participant, the author augmented his own business skills and worked with a team of three other faculty members to envision, formulate, enhance, and market a business idea. The feedback from this experience is detailed in Section 3. Table 3 below provides a breakdown of all attendees by faculty rank.

3. Potential Impact of Workshops on Campus Culture

According to Provost Office records, the number of workshop registrants (51) and applicants (70) included: [3]

Table 2: Demand and Acceptance Rate

Tracks	Number of Applicants	Accepted	Acceptance Rate
Problem-Based Learning	27	21	78%
Mainstreet Entrepreneurship	27	17	63%
Translating Discovery	16	13	81%

Table 3: Participants' Academic Rank

Academic Rank	Number of Participants
Associate Professor	15
Assistant Professor	10
Full Professor	10
Lecturer	4
Clinical Assistant Professor	3
Research Assistant Professor	2
Associate Director	1
Associate Dean, faculty rank not listed	1
Clinical Associate Professor	1
Clinical Instructor	1
Senior Lecturer	1
Undisclosed	2
Total	**51**

To gauge the impact of the workshop, one author gathered qualitative evidence of learning, by asking questions from participants, particularly from his "pitch partners." Professors worked together to apply what they learned on how to refine, market, and turn a profit on a professor's actual business initiative – and then pitch it to simulated investors. (See Table 1, Day 5) These questions included:

1- Briefly describe your overall experience in the workshop.
2- What was your most important takeaway/s.
3- Have you taken any steps (big or small) to starting a business (please explain).

Pitch Partner 1
1- I found the workshop to be incredibly informative and stimulating. It helped to get me oriented to the basics of entrepreneurship and provided a number of useful resources for me to continue learning. It was well organized, and Leonard and the other speakers were wonderful.
2- I realized that starting a business is complicated yet still an attainable goal.
3- Yes, I am moving forward in starting my business. I came up with a name, worked with a graphic designer to design a logo, and in the next few weeks I will be meeting with business lawyers to get started on forming my LLC and handling other aspects of getting the business started. I'm working on a business plan so that I can approach investors in the coming year.

Pitch Partner 2
1. Overall, my experience with the workshop was very positive. I learned a great deal about entrepreneurship, and became much more sensitive to opportunities for business ventures.
2. The most important takeaway was that I can be one of "those people." I always envied "those people" who could see the market value of an idea and then took the steps themselves to make it a reality. I know people who are good at that, and they have different personality profiles than mine. But the workshop showed me that good opportunities and entrepreneurship don't depend on being outgoing or being a good salesperson. Each of us can see opportunities and take steps toward filling those.

3. I have talked with potential partners on the R&D side, and we are working on a much smaller and less expensive platform as the basis of the product. I have also continued to talk about entrepreneurship-thinking with my students and my colleagues.

Pitch Partner 3
1- One of the highlights of the workshop was the opportunity to interact with colleagues from across campus with whom I wouldn't ordinarily cross paths. Although I liked our instructor, I didn't feel the workshop was tailored to an advanced faculty audience, and that was frustrating.
2- A few important and practical nuggets with regards to (1) order of operations (i.e., what to do first, second, etc. when launching a business enterprise); (2) SBA registration and DUNS number; (3) a bit of business accounting (although we really glossed over this).
3- Despite item (1) from the previous questions, I've gotten a bit out of order. I had an opportunity to submit a contract proposal to a large [ ] NGO for which I am currently in negotiations. If I land this contract, it is going to fast-track some of the other stuff I haven't done yet (e.g., setting up bank account, etc.)

This Main Street Entrepreneurs experience appeared to instill confidence in team members to move forward with their individual business ideas, by providing practical advice and facilitating a unique cross-campus collaborative environment for colleagues.

4. Conclusion

The university workshops paired faculty members from all colleges and disciplines for one week. This unique experience fostered lasting bonds among professors, insight into real world ways to promote potential businesses, and opportunities to enhance course curricula with entreprenership concepts. Ultimately, the workshops "planted seeds" university-wide, by engaging 51 faculty ambassadors to infuse entreprenership into the campus culture.

References
[1] GSU Provost, https://faculty.gsu.edu/2018/02/28/entrepreneurshipinnovationapplicationworkshopapplication/.
[2] *Id.* See also GSU Provost, https://provost.gsu.edu/entrepreneurship-innovation-workshops/2018-faculty-entrepreneurship-and-innovation-workshops-photos/
[3] Email from Provost Office Communications Director, (Nov. 28, 2018). A few people alternated among the workshops, "so some individuals did not stay in the same room all day." *Id.*