

# Entrepreneurship Education at St. Petersburg College:

## Marrying Curriculum, Activities and Support

### Summary

After nearly a year of analysis and conversation, SPC launched (in the fall term, 2010) a dual-focused initiative to extend entrepreneurship education and support potential entrepreneurs through programs/courses and services. Building on the work underway in Corporate Training's (non-credit) Practical Entrepreneurship Academy and the entrepreneurship sub-plan within the Bachelor of Applied Science in Management and Organizational Leadership, the College created a new practical associate-degree-level curricula and related services (activities, events, mentoring, connection-making and virtual incubator support, etc.).

### Background

In December of 2006, an entrepreneur in Seminole, FL approached the Campus and Greater Area Seminole Chamber of Commerce about the need to offer a practical, mentor-based program for new local businesses and potential businesses to get the assistance they need to succeed. With a gift of \$25,000 (that was matched by the State) the College launched the *Practical Entrepreneurship Academy* – a 16 week non-credit course, which was designed to be credit or non-credit in future programs.

A study of “best practices” in entrepreneurship in Pinellas County identified the need for entrepreneurship education and support for “Stage 1”/potential entrepreneurs who have the idea and the passion, but need to test concept viability and get the basics down on whether or not the idea “has legs.” Work in this area is focused on “young” entrepreneurs, defined by age or a life-stage change that is taking them in a brand new direction. The pivotal role the College plays at the associate degree level is to provide an integrated package of education, mentoring, and related support and activities. SPC was also regarded as the natural organization to coordinate and consolidate educational opportunities and related services in the County.

### SPC's Response

#### The Curriculum

In response to the study and numerous follow-up conversations, the College decided to include a background in entrepreneurship in the requirements for the Business Chair vacancy on the Seminole Campus. Professor Nicolle Panuthos, who joined the staff in January, 2010 earned her MBA with a concentration in Marketing and Entrepreneurship, and has the experience of starting and running her own consulting and financial services company. SPC held a half day Collaborative Lab session that included all the stakeholders from SPC, community leaders, local successful business leaders/owners, and educators from the elementary through the University system who had a stake in local economic development and education. Using the best practices gleaned from this experience, SPC was able to polish their new two-year degree and certificate options to better mirror the needs of the community identified in this lab experience.

The result was a twelve-credit, four-course targeted associate degree level certificate in entrepreneurship which includes: “Introduction to Entrepreneurship” (to focus the idea and cover and examine the various components of starting and running a business), “Entrepreneurial Marketing and Sales” (to address topics ranging from advertising options to new social media), “Entrepreneurial Management (to address topics such as taxes, bookkeeping, legal issues, etc.), and “Planning the

Entrepreneurial Venture” (culminating in a complete business plan). All of these courses are focused on practical skills and engagement with experts in their respective fields, using simulations, group work and other media-based and electronic tools to appeal to the “entrepreneurial personality.” The fourth course (Entrepreneurial Venture) utilizes the critically-acclaimed online curriculum developed by the Kauffman Foundation.

The certificate is part of a larger entrepreneurship sub-plan in the Associate of Science Business Administration program, which will in turn articulate with the College’s bachelor’s degree offerings. The intent is also to “reach back” to the non-credit side to articulate credits from Corporate Training and other entities providing related curricula. Contacts with Pinellas County Schools have lead us to believe there will be opportunities for articulation, especially with local high schools, on curriculum events, e.g., through their Centers of Excellence, dual enrollment and early college programs.

In addition to being part of the business associate degree, the courses, individually or as part of a certificate, are valuable additions to the other A.S. degree programs, thereby providing students in programs such as photography, digital arts, hospitality, drafting and the new MIRA (Music in the Recording Arts) program with the skills to start their own business in the field.

This first semester (fall 2010) we began by offering two sections of Introduction to Entrepreneurship, one fully online and one blended (online/face to face). This course was so popular that we opened a second fully online introduction class which promptly filled in a matter a days. The Entrepreneurial Management class, another blended section due to start in October, will be full by the October 18<sup>th</sup> start date. Clearly we are seeing the needs of the community and meeting those needs through the curriculum, activities and support for student startups.

### The Career and Entrepreneurship Center

Providing courses in practical entrepreneurship alone is vitally important, and its value increases when paired with an integrated series of services and activities. SPC is adopting the model successfully developed at the University of Miami, where extended entrepreneurship services are housed in and coupled with the work of the Career Center, creating a new entity: the Career and Entrepreneurship Center (or CEC).

Ms. Lynne Wolf joined the CEC team on January, 2010 to tackle the existing responsibilities of the Career Services Specialist (half time) and a new set of tasks as Entrepreneurship Center Specialist or ECS (with the other half). In her role as the ECS, she complements and supplements the academic program by working with students in the entrepreneurship courses/program in identifying mentors, making referrals to community resources, promoting activities and events (e.g., Extreme Entrepreneurship Tour; Road trip Nation bus tour; career workshops: resume writing, interview skills, dress for success, a business plan competition and an entrepreneur recognition dinner for starters), and providing virtual incubator services. These services will be supported virtually and face to face by cadre of business partners who have come along side of the program (some from the beginning and some as we grow) to bring their expertise and support to our growing student body. We also foresee multiple opportunities for grant and private fund-raising, including a Coleman Foundation proposal for an *eMentorBank*; and an extended network of experts to assist our students.

The Campus Provost, Professor Panuthos and Ms. Wolf meet weekly to explore opportunities for growth and new partnerships for both the academic program and complementary services, as well as synergies with the other College departments.