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APPROACHES TO HELPING EDUCATORS AND STUDENTS LEARN ABOUT ENTREPRENEURSHIP

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Approaches to Helping Educators and Students Learn About Entrepreneurship

Synopsis:

This workshop is designed for educators to exchange information, share experiences, and learn innovative strategies in teaching entrepreneurship across disciplines.

A Workshop: Approaches to Helping Educators and Students Learn About Entrepreneurship

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Abstract

This workshop is designed to create a dynamic discussion about entrepreneurial educators, entrepreneurship education, and effective curricula in teaching entrepreneurship. This 90-minute session will lead participants to actually transfer theories to reality through experiential learning and collaborative learning exercises. Participants will generate supportive and successful practices that will advance knowledge and skills for us to teach entrepreneurship across disciplines and to assess the impacts of learning.

Introduction

The Small Business Institute (SBI) Model has been around for many years and is well accepted. In recent years, many SBI Directors, small business instructors, and other educators have been asked to expand the more traditional small business programs to include entrepreneurship at the undergraduate and graduate levels and across colleges. This growing interest in entrepreneurship education has required educators to learn new knowledge and skills required to develop entrepreneurship curriculum, courses and appropriate teaching approaches to accommodate diverse students and learning environments.

Purpose of the Workshop

The purposes of this workshop include: (1) to introduce two effective entrepreneurship curricula that have been implemented in two universities; (2) to offer workshop participants an opportunity to actually be a part of one of the curricula in 90 minutes to gain first hand experiences about the contents, challenges, and interactions of learning entrepreneurship; and (3) to allow the participants to interactively share their own experiences, opportunities and challenges in becoming an entrepreneurship professor, developing a curriculum, courses and developing appropriate teaching methods. There are three focuses in our workshop and they are described below.

Focus 1 - Developing Entrepreneurship Professors

We hope to utilize this workshop to stimulate discussions and reflections on several questions that have not been thoroughly explored with respect to development of entrepreneurial educators: How did you learn entrepreneurship? What was your educational background? Were you an entrepreneur? Did you take courses? What experience did you have in teaching before entrepreneurship?

Focus 2 - Developing the Curriculum

How was the decision made to position the curriculum in the University? What decision was made? How was the decision made to position the curriculum in a college? What college houses the curriculum?

Each participant is asked to bring or present their curriculum and their experiences developing the curriculum. Workshop facilitators, one in the College of Agriculture and Life

Sciences and the other in the College of Business with combined experience of 50+ years teaching entrepreneurship and small business, will share their experiences with participants.

Focus 3 - Developing Entrepreneurship Courses

How was/were the course(s) developed? Who decided what courses? What courses were developed? Why? What is the content of each course? What is your approach to helping students learn entrepreneurship?

Hands-on Learning for Workshop Participants about Implementing an Effective Entrepreneurship Curriculum

In this part of the workshop one coordinator will present a unique course and approach to helping students learn entrepreneurship. The course, Introduction to Community Entrepreneurship, is open to any student at the university. Dollar Enterprise is a unique, innovative and collaborative approach to help students learn entrepreneurship. A text written by the professor, Dollar Enterprise: From Theory to Practice is used in the class.

The introductory part of the course involves a series of exercises designed to help the students get to know one another and “get in the mood” for the approach. Mini lectures are intermingled with the exercises to introduce definitional and descriptive information about entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship.

In phase two, students are asked to think about and identify opportunities for an on campus venture and submit it to TAs. The TAs then combine the ideas into categories. These summary categories are presented to the class and students join teams based on the categories.

The teams then begin to work collaboratively to develop specific products that they will produce and sell in their on campus venture. The teams also identify a local charity that will receive their profits after the project is completed.

Mini lectures are used on an as needed basis to provide students information they need throughout the course. “Just-in-time” information if you will.

Students are provided \$1 each by the instructor for their project and must find and acquire the resources needed to implement their venture. The ventures are run for a period of four weeks during which students must acquire resources to assure continuance, produce products, sell products and maintain good records. Of course, conflicts, miscommunication and mistakes occur within and between teams. Mini lectures and interactive classroom discussions about leadership, team work, communication, ethics, conflict resolution and so on are presented by the instructor or guest experts.

Students are then required to develop a report, with reflections, about their experiences during Dollar Enterprise. A business plan is then developed by each team based on their experiences.

Assessment is continuous during the class and students actively participate in the process. The instructor has a unique tool, network analysis, to help assess the teamwork results before and after the on campus venture to demonstrate how and the extent of interpersonal and intrapersonal learning occurs. The collaborative learning outcomes are analyzed based on students’ demographics, class, interests in entrepreneurship, characteristics, and earnings. This tool will be presented and demonstrated during the workshop using the workshop participants’ data as examples.

Workshop Participants Take Aways

The workshop facilitators will provide copies of their curriculum and course descriptions to participants. Participants are encouraged to bring hard copies and/ or present/share their programs and courses. Copious notes will be taken of the discussions and later shared with participants. This workshop will provide a rich, sharing experience for those of us who teach entrepreneurship and help us improve ourselves, our curriculum and our courses to improve the learning experiences of our students. Workshop participants are encouraged to bring and/or present their unique approaches to helping students learn entrepreneurship.