GVSU TEEN ENTREPRENEURSHIP ACADEMY 2007
- WITH $10,000 WHAT IS A BUSINESS YOU CAN CREATE THAT WILL MAKE YOUR CITY A BETTER PLACE?

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ACADEMIC ABSTRACT

In the late spring of 2006, staff from the Center for Entrepreneurship at Grand Valley State University initiated discussions with representatives from area high schools to determine any interest in having their students attend a summer entrepreneurship workshop. Within two months, a program was developed and successfully launched.

This workshop will provide a template for developing and implementing a high school program that can be easily duplicated with modest resources. Included in the workshop will be all the materials and ample time for discussion.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Opportunities of collaborative entrepreneurship programs between high schools and universities include recruiting high school students, assisting secondary school faculty with improving their entrepreneurship curriculum and creating positive relationships within the various school districts.

In the late spring of 2007, staff from the Center for Entrepreneurship at Grand Valley State University initiated discussions with representatives from area schools to determine their interest in having their students attend a summer entrepreneurship workshop. Within two months, a program was developed and successfully launched.

For any entrepreneurship program that has considered developing an outreach program with local high schools, this workshop will provide a template that can be implemented with modest resources. Besides not having to “reinvent the wheel”, the objective of this workshop is to provide a catalyst for other schools to “get going”. Included in the workshop will be all the materials used, and ample time for discussion.

BACKGROUND

Grand Valley State University is a primarily undergraduate university, located in Grand Rapids, MI, the second largest metropolitan region in the state. There are over 23,000 students enrolled at GVSU, with the vast majority from Michigan. The area high schools are part of the Kent Intermediate School District (KISD). It is a mix of urban, suburban and rural schools. The Grand Rapids Public Schools is the largest of the districts in
KISD, and it faces the same challenges of many urban school districts trying to cope with a less affluent constituency and pressures from charter schools and school of choice programs. At the area high schools, entrepreneurship is generally taught as part of business courses. Supplemental programs like Junior Achievement are also popular.

Although more research needs to be done, we feel collaborative programs between a university’s entrepreneurship center and local high schools can be important building blocks when trying to create a culture of entrepreneurship on campus. For these programs to work, faculty, staff and students are involved in organizing the event. College students have the added opportunity to leverage this experience through involvement the Collegiate Entrepreneur Organization (CEO), which is a national student organization based in Chicago, IL. (http://www.c-e-o.org). For example, at the National CEO Conference, several student-moderated breakout sessions are focused on bringing entrepreneurship to high schools.

This workshop will present a step-by-step process for development and implementation of a secondary school outreach program. It is based on our two-day entrepreneurship workshop for high school students within the local intermediate school district. It was developed and implemented in 10 weeks and cost less than $8,000.

The concept of the program was for student teams to create, research, define and present a business idea based on the question: With $10,000, what is a business that you can create which will make your city a better place? These students were nominated by a teacher from their school and had to complete a short essay outlining their interest. For our first year we would accept up to 20 students for participation. Initially, there would be no fee to participate. To generate interest and excitement, the final presentations would be judged and $700 in cash prizes would be awarded for the top teams.

After introductions, students were led through a mini-workshop on brainstorming and idea screening which narrowed down their list of potential businesses to one. At that point, teams were formed and the program was broken down into a series of five modules, each facilitated by university faculty with an assigned a CEO student-coach. The table below outlines the process at that point:
### TABLE 1
Process Outline

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Module 1: Product Concept – Thursday PM Dr. Paul Lane</th>
<th>Specific Activities (group work)</th>
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| **Product Concept (1.5 hours)**<br>This section begins on clearly defining the idea and the opportunity. | 1. Students focus on identifying and defining their primary business idea.  
   a. Create a concept statement  
   b. Identify the key opportunity(s)  
   c. Identify the competitive advantage and/or innovation. |

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<th>Module 2 Research– Thursday PM Dr. Paul Lane</th>
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| **Research (1.5 hours)**<br>The next step is identifying their competition and target market. Basic research will be discussed and teams will have access to a computer lab to research their idea. | 1. After an introduction to the subject, students work in computer labs:  
   d. to identify the competition  
   e. define their target market in demographic terms and try to determine how large this market is. |

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<th>Module 3 [Marketing] Friday AM John Rumery</th>
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<td><strong>Marketing (2 hours)</strong>&lt;br&gt;Basic marketing principles are also discussed using the 5 F’s.</td>
<td>1. Focusing in on your target market, what is your message?</td>
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<th>Module 4 Next Steps Friday AM Dr. Jaideep Motwani</th>
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| **Team’s Credibility (2 hours)**<br>An introduction to the importance of creating a team, and leadership. | 1. Outline the steps to launch and human resources needs.  
   2. Develop a simple vision of where their business will be in 10 years. |

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<th>Module 5 Development and Practice Friday AM/PM</th>
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<td><strong>Overall Presentation (1 hour)</strong>&lt;br&gt;Teams are given their product presentation board, and all needed materials to make their board (construction paper, markers, scissors, glue, access to computers w/printers) Basic review on making good presentations.</td>
<td>1. Students work on their product presentation board and practice their presentation. It is also their chance to refine all their ideas for the presentation.</td>
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LEARNING OBJECTIVES

High School Students

The primary learning objectives for the high school students were:
- To understand the difference between an idea and an opportunity.
- To locate, evaluate and use information effectively.
- To engage in articulate expression through effective speaking.

The ultimate measure for these objectives were during their team’s final presentation of the idea. A panel of judges rated their presentation based on the business opportunity, quality of research and final presentation.

College Students

This was a “voluntary opportunity” for the CEO members and learning objectives were never articulated, but expectations were for the students to serve as role models and demonstrate leadership, responsibility and a passion for entrepreneurship. Happily, all expectations were surpassed.

SUCCESS FACTORS

CEO Involvement.

Our student leaders took active roles during the academy. First as “student ambassadors” they hosted the high school students throughout the program. They also served as “assistant coaches” for each team during the development modules.

Kent Intermediate School District Staff (Kent ISD).

The Kent ISD provided us an introduction to area high school staff and assisted us in follow up communications. It was through these contacts that the students from various high schools were identified. Two high school educators also joined us for the program, serving as facilitators. A small honorarium was paid to these teachers.

Faculty:

University faculty played a key role in the program. As the “guest” lecturers, the faculty introduced basic marketing and management concepts for the students to use in developing their ideas. These faculty members also served as “roving consultants” throughout the program and judges for the final presentations. All faculty members (including the high school instructors) received an honorarium for participating. University faculty also received service credit for their annual activity reports.
CFE Funding:

The budget for the program was approximately $8,000. Our CFE was able to fund this in entirety without requiring any outside sources, which allowed for total control over the program.

Guest Speakers:

We utilized two GVSU students who currently run their own businesses and a recent alumnus who is involved in a high tech startup, as guest speakers. Only a few years older than the high school students, these entrepreneurs brought a unique perspective to the program and really connected with the participants. A common theme for all the speakers was that “age”, “experience”, and “background” should not be barriers to pursue one’s dream and ambition.

SO WHAT?

A dynamic high school outreach program offers four “big” opportunities for universities:

Student Recruitment.

Successful collegiate athletic programs understand the recruitment process for exceptional athletes begins in the secondary schools. The best recruiters are the ones that have positive relationships with the coaches and other school staff. Universities aspiring for world-class entrepreneurship programs should be no different. The recruitment for “exceptional” entrepreneurs should also begin in secondary schools by establishing proactive relationships with the high school faculty involved with these students.

Improving Secondary Entrepreneurship Curriculum.

By collaborating with secondary school entrepreneurship educators, not only can “best practices” be shared but also a long-term relationship can be established. Within the context of this relationship, trust is earned and an honest assessment of existing curriculum is much easier achieved.

Student Learning Opportunities.

For high school students interested in entrepreneurship, NOTHING is as compelling as hearing the excitement from individuals in their peer group about their experiences. For the collegiate, high school programs provide an opportunity to develop leadership, networking and mentoring skills.

Enhanced Alumni Relationships.
Similar to student entrepreneurs, recent graduates who are now running their own businesses or involved in start-up operations are excellent ambassadors and inspiring speakers for high school students. Asking these individuals to participate in this type of program also provides positive reinforcement for maintaining long-term relationships.

CONCLUSION

We strongly believe a collaborative entrepreneurship program with local secondary schools can only enhance the other entrepreneurial initiatives on a college campus. It engages and challenges students, faculty and alumni. Programs like a summer camp also play a key role in building a school’s entrepreneurial “brand”. It generates publicity in the community and a positive, word-of-mouth. The GVSU Teen Entrepreneurship Academy 2007, was a “quick to the market” initiative that we feel will pay tremendous dividends in the future. Our hope is to continue this program and capture data so that we can document its success and sustain its growth for years to come.