SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP: EDUCATING, INTEGRATING, & EXPERIENCING

Heidi Neck, Babson College
Arthur M. Blank Center for Entrepreneurship
Babson Park, MA 02457
781-239-5577; hneck@babson.edu

Candida Brush, Babson College
Patricia Greene, Babson College

Steve Schiffman, Babson College & Olin College of Engineering
Denis Ceru, Babson College

ACADEMIC ABSTRACT

Social Entrepreneurship cannot be isolated to a particular course or set of courses. Social entrepreneurship is a broad and applied area of study that integrates entrepreneurship fundamentals with cross disciplinary perspectives. By establishing various connecting points throughout the curriculum and campus, students can learn and experience social entrepreneurship, its meaning, and potential impact. This workshop describes Babson’s approach to social entrepreneurship and encourages spirited debate among participants about the process and content sides of teaching social entrepreneurship. Specifically we focus on issues pertaining to definition, curriculum building, and best practice.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

We organize this workshop into four parts. First, we begin with a macro view of social entrepreneurship and its role in the business school. Second, we focus on issues pertaining to curriculum development and fit with university and student culture. Third, we briefly discuss examples from the Babson experiments of different approaches to social entrepreneurship. Finally, we invite participants to engage in a lively discussion on the current and future directions of social entrepreneurship as part of entrepreneurship curricula.

Babson defines social entrepreneurship as innovative approaches to address social problems or create social change by leveraging market opportunities and resource combinations to yield direct, measurable, social and economic benefits. But various definitions of social entrepreneurship exist, so what definition should business schools adopt and why? Given the excitement and passion around social entrepreneurship and its ever increasing impact on world events where does profit fit? How does social entrepreneurship differ from social responsibility or social justice? Should social entrepreneurship be defined as non-profit endeavors only? Is there potential to lose the “entrepreneurship” part of social entrepreneurship?

Part 2: Social Entrepreneurship & Curriculum Development
How much time and effort should business schools devote to building a social entrepreneurship program and co-curricular activities? What are the various activities that should be included in such programs and activities? This part of the workshop will explore different levels of
engagement and how each level impacts the time, commitment, and resources needed to build a social entrepreneurship program.

**Part 3: The Social Entrepreneurship Process: Course Examples**

Five courses addressing social entrepreneurship concepts will be highlighted. Examples from multi-disciplinary courses (Engineering & Entrepreneurship), required integrated courses (MODS & FME), required entrepreneurship and electives will be discussed. Each course approaches social entrepreneurship from various disciplinary perspectives as well as emphasizing different aspects of the entrepreneurship process from ideation to creation.

1. Foundations of Management & Entrepreneurship (social learning)
2. Social Entrepreneurship by Design (creativity and opportunity identification)
3. Opportunity Analysis & Assessment Applied to the Social Context (opportunity evaluation)
4. Women’s Leadership and Entrepreneurship
5. The Sociology of Entrepreneurship
6. The SO WHAT Factor

The final part of the workshop will be reserved for a large group discussion on the challenges and opportunities related to building social entrepreneurship programs.

**The SO WHAT Factor**

Some would say that we are in the “Age of Social Entrepreneurship” – a period of time analogous to the Women’s Liberation Movement or the Civil Rights Movement. Dramatic changes in cultural, economic, political and natural environments draw attention to social concerns worldwide. Communities, industries and governments are searching for novel effective approaches to solve the most pressing problems confronting current and future generations. Academic institutions, specifically entrepreneurship programs, are at the forefront of research and practice pioneering social change through new venture creation. At the same time, our students are demanding courses addressing these issues, Net Impact and other club participation is on the rise, school break travel is increasingly designed to assist third world entrepreneurs, and students are starting new social entrepreneurship organizations.

The momentum of social entrepreneurship (courses, programs, and research) is growing at an unprecedented rate. What we teach and how we teach social entrepreneurship has the potential to make significant impact by developing the entrepreneurial competency of our students. These skills enhance the likelihood that our students will identify and capture the right opportunity at the right time for the right reason.