THE LEAGUE FOR ENTREPRENEURIAL WOMEN: THE GESTATION OF AN ORGANIZATION: A CASE STUDY

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ACADEMIC ABSTRACT

This case addresses the startup and growth of a university based organization focused on women entrepreneurs, the League for Entrepreneurial Women. The League is collaboration among three schools within a large urban university and has grown tremendously from its startup through the first seven years of its life. Over the years there have been challenges as well as opportunities for the organization. The case addresses the challenges common to many startup organizations including direction, branding, funding, and organizational structure. The case begins with the startup of the organization and covers the seven year life of the organization.
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

It has been noted that for an idea to succeed there must be a plan for executing that idea and a means to fund it. But not all ideas require a formal plan and significant funding at their inception to be successful. Such is the case of the League for Entrepreneurial Women, a cross collaborative initiative of a large intra university organization where students, alumni, faculty and staff of the university, entrepreneurs and business professionals from the region address entrepreneurship and specifically women owned businesses. What makes this university based organization unique? First, it is inclusive: the organization operates under the auspices of three schools at the university; it has no walls, welcoming individuals from all disciplines as well as various sectors, internal and external. Second, there are no fees to join or to attend the annual conference and other events. Third, the organization serves as a sort of virtual incubator for women who own or are thinking about owning their own business. The methodology of the research is based personal experience of the co founders who have produced seven years of conferences and networking events. While observation tells us that women seek out opportunities to learn, listen and share when it comes to their own business ventures, this is not enough to sustain the League for Entrepreneurial Women through the next decade. The League will need to become self sustaining. It will need a structure and leadership to continue to serve its organizational mission and goals. The idea for the League developed into a fledgling organization which became an established organization. The next step is to make the organization sustainable by design an organizational structure that will fit within a university and to create a dedicated funding source among other things. The case addresses the challenges common to many startup organizations including direction, branding, leadership, and organizational structure. The case begins with the startup of the organization and covers the seven year life of the organization.
Case Overview

As the team sits down to review the success of their annual conference, they remember the start of their collaboration seven years prior when they met to discuss their shared interest in entrepreneurship. One is a senior faculty member from the School of Communications and Theater and the other is a junior from the Business School. Their approach to entrepreneurship differs a bit. Entrepreneurship in the areas of communication and theater rests on creativity, technology and marketing and entrepreneurship in business and management draws from the areas of strategy, finance, and marketing. Nonetheless, they share an interest in the creation of new businesses. As they share about the entrepreneurship classes they teach, the material that they address in class, and the opportunities for an entrepreneurship program, they identify the need for extra curricular activities to stimulate entrepreneurship at their university. They share many ideas and then they identify one that each feels has great potential: a conference for women entrepreneurs.

First Annual Women’s Entrepreneurship Conference

With little direction, no funding and two people to work with us, we get to work. We agree that we will reach students, alumni, faculty and staff of our university, entrepreneurs and business professionals from the region. The first priority is to create an inexpensive conference that showcases local entrepreneurs including an alumna or two. We talk, we brainstorm. We invite a local entrepreneur and business owner to help us select the panel for the first conference. We dream big, really big. We decide that power is in the shared voices of other women so we agree to invite successful women entrepreneurs to talk about being an entrepreneur. We focus on providing role models and opportunities. Who would plan a first year conference and invite key players known not only locally and regionally but nationally?

We work very hard to prepare for the conference. Without a formal structure and dedicated staff, we rely on resources within our schools to plan for and implement the conference. We open the doors of the conference hall on the day of the event not knowing what to expect. Our first conference debuts in November 2000 to an audience of approximately 125. The feedback is outstanding. One administrator asks: what were you thinking? How can you possibly top that if you produce a conference next year?” We are pensive. Several weeks pass and we decide, we will pull this off but we are going to have to modify our approach. And so, with the first conference barely behind us we set out to plan the next year’s conference. We realize that we are the only conference of its kind in the city though there are other venues at other universities that certainly command the presence of women business owners. We change the format from a panel presentation moderated by a woman who is herself an entrepreneur to that of a professional moderator, keynote speaker and break out sessions. We’re in a big city so we think a big name moderator. We select a news anchor from the local PBS station who happens to be alumna. We design break out sessions that have sexy titles: Taking Your First Steps: from Ideas to Business Plans; Dollars and Sense: Understanding Start-up Financing; and Who’s Who in your Address Book: Connecting with Vital Resources. With a grant from the national foundation and funding from a regional bank, we promote the conference widely. We need an audience that is much broader than our own students. And we need an organization to support this growing organization. Neither of us had ever developed an organization but we like the concept.

To
begin, we need a name and a purpose. We define our mission to be that of addressing the challenges and opportunities facing entrepreneurs throughout the region.

As business leaders learn about our conference, they seek to join our efforts. And so we engage them by creating an advisory board. The members include women business owners, leaders, and professionals from our region, as well as seventeen academics. Together, the advisory board reaches out to the community to generate a buzz about the conference. We succeed. In our second year, 2001, attendance reaches 200. We realize that in the two years since we began our initiative we improved conference attendance by 75%. Our budget remains the same, and our structure continues to be a loose collaboration between two schools. But how will we sustain the programming without a formal structure and without a dedicated funding source?

Organizational Structure

We have a mission, we have objectives, we have an audience and we have an advisory board. What we need is a five and ten year approach so that we are not recreating events; recycling material from previous years. With an advisory board in place, we focus on putting structure to our idea. And so during the third year we meet regularly and create a brand identity. We select a name for the growing organization: “The League for Entrepreneurial Women.”

We enlist the support of our entrepreneurship institute creating a loose affiliation with the institute. They support our efforts and join our intra university collaboration. With the addition of the institute the organizational structure becomes more structured but remains relatively decentralized: two faculty members from two different schools leading an organization supported by an institute, and an advisory board of business leaders and faculty members. We realize that now as a budding organization we need not only an identity but a tagline. We settle on “Women’s Entrepreneurship: It’s not just an idea. It’s a reality.” This sets the stage for our annual event. Our keynote speaker, a leader in the pharmaceutical industries talked about “What I Learned from Motherhood: The Birth of a Women’s Healthcare Pharmaceutical Company.” We also realize that to draw a mixed audience we must diversify our presenters as we did the first year. We invite a young entrepreneur who started a pizza franchise in Boston: Peace of Pizza, to address the conference. At six foot five, he captivates the audience as he tells his story. We also invite a social entrepreneur to draw the audience in and help them find their “business soul.” Attendance tops 300 and we secure five sponsors for the event from the business community. We add an essay contest with prizes to entice students to write about entrepreneurship. And, to fortify the bridge we built between two schools in our university, we apply for and receive support from the U.S. Association of Small Business and Entrepreneurship (USASBE) to establish an interdisciplinary program for students interested in entrepreneurship. We name our new program C.R.E.A.T.E: commerce, recreation, entertainment arts and technology entrepreneurship.

As our growing organization develops, we recognize the need for influence and support from outside sources and so we debut networking sessions and mentoring opportunities where we invite seasoned entrepreneurs to share their experiences with students. We engage an administrator from another school within the university, the School of Tourism and Hospitality
Management, to join our team. With her addition, we add yet another perspective to our collaboration and build our network to include her contacts.

As we enter our fourth year of life we experience a clash between the business and academic cultures in planning for the conference. We struggle to engage the business people assisting us and serving on our advisory board as we operate at an academic pace with academic resources. The challenges of the decentralized structure and management of the interaction of faculty, administrators, and business leaders escalate.

We decide to continue with our tagline: Women’s Entrepreneurship: It’s not just an idea. It’s a reality.” Our keynote speaker addresses entrepreneurship from the perspective of a mother. She is the founder and president of Mothers Work, the world’s largest designer and retailer of maternity apparel. Other panelists include representatives from tourism and sports management as well as those from professions central to the startup and growth of entrepreneurial ventures: accounting, law and banking.

**Programs**

Our success in promoting entrepreneurial leadership through our annual conference opens doors for research and increased networking activities. We focus the League’s activities on three areas: the conference, research and networking. We engage in research projects addressing women in business, innovation, and entrepreneurship. Leading organizations in the region partner with us to research relevant issues, and we present our research at conferences. The research benefits not only our academic careers but builds networks with women business owners and business leaders in the region. In promoting our conference, we build our own networks of entrepreneurs, business professionals, and community leaders. We use those contacts to assist our students in building their own network. We organize networking events including networking dinners, a cooking class, as well as informational sessions. But without a formal organization, the work falls largely on the founders of this growing organization.

**Growing Our Organization**

In our fifth year, another new initiative is unveiled: The Women’s Hall of Fame. This initiative recognizes successful entrepreneurial women leaders who are university alumnae. Our first class of leaders is inducted at a luncheon for approximately 75 people. Growing pains force us to think about our advisory board and under some pressure from administrators we disband the board and begin planning internally for the fifth annual conference. Just when we think we are running out of steam, we create a conference that wows us all. Our keynote, the executive director of the region’s Film Office and an alumna, shares her story of launching the office and nurturing it to become one of the top film offices in the country generating millions of dollars for the city. We turn to a new moderator, a consumer affairs reporter from a local television station, and we boldly take the conference down a new path. Our panel themes reflect the age of our organization: Growing Pains-stories from young businesses and Coming of Age: Etiquette and Networking for success. As the conference and the organization continue to grow and become more prominent in the region, there are pressures for the event to become a university led event. We carefully manage to retain the organization’s
independence and our leadership role in the organization by stressing the collaboration among our three schools.

The year 2005 sees more change. With each year the organization grows and develops. We make a bold move: we schedule our event to occur in October to coincide with the National Breast Cancer Awareness month. This move is driven by the participation of some of our leadership team in the 60 mile Breast Cancer 3Day walk. We feature the pink and white colors associated with Breast Cancer awareness rather than the university colors we traditionally used. We review our focus and note that as we talk business we must also emphasize professionalism and personal health. Our keynote speaker, a motivational speaker brings life to the room. Her energy and enthusiasm are infectious. We break to allow for networking, and she works the room. She commands the room, and the pulse of the audience is racing. We’ve grown nearly 200 percent in attendance, from 125 our first year to over 400 in our fifth year; our funding is flat, but we are reaching out to build new relationships. We add networking dinners and we serve as a sponsoring organization for the Governor’s Conference for Women. We also ponder our next move, unsure of how to sustain the conference, the funding, the energy and the enthusiasm while keeping the administrators supporting the organization satisfied that the organization and its activities not only serve a purpose but also promote the schools and the university.

In 2006, we limit the involvement of our advisory board. We continue to refine our conference and organization. We continue with our conference tagline: “Women’s Entrepreneurship…It’s not just an idea. It’s a reality.” Our keynote speaker is the first woman vice president and area general manager of a Ritz-Carlton Hotel. She chronicles her career and the nine moves it took for her to attain her position. The audience is captivated by her moving speech. A panel discussion that features successful entrepreneurs from the profit and non-profit sectors rounds out the morning.

After seven years, the League’s reach has grown dramatically from one hundred students to thousands: students, faculty, entrepreneurs and business professionals in the region. While the future of the organization is bright, it faces a number of challenges and opportunities. The organizational structure remains decentralized. Despite its success it does not have a dedicated funding source. In order to sustain our organization in the academic culture in which it resides, we will need to work hard to set parameters, define roles and most importantly sustain ourselves. Without a formal structure and dedicated staff much of the work falls on us. We have to insure the lifeline of this organization not only in our lifetime but for future leaders. Now is the time for action, not just conversation.
These teaching notes have been prepared to support the business case: The League for Entrepreneurial Women: the Gestation of an Organization. The authors are grateful to Dr. Herb Sherman, Long Island University, for his workshop on Case Studies at USASBE 2007 and Jeff Lowenthal for sharing his own case with us.
CASE OVERVIEW

Case Description

The League for Entrepreneurial Women has been operational for seven years, growing from the brainstorming between two entrepreneurial female faculty members from two distinctly different schools at a large urban university: 1) Communications and Theater and 2) Business and Management. Each studied and taught entrepreneurship and saw the need to promote entrepreneurship throughout the university especially among female students. The perspective from which they taught and studied entrepreneurship, while having many commonalities, was based on their education and experience and so differed. This difference provided some breadth of perspective. Entrepreneurship in the areas of communication and theater rests on creativity, technology and marketing and entrepreneurship in business and management draws from the areas of strategy, finance, and marketing. They felt that together they could have a strong voice and create a community for students, faculty, alumni and business professionals in a major metropolitan region to come together to talk and share ideas, challenges and solutions. Their dream became a reality with the first conference in 2000. From the conference they built an organization to host the conference and related activities. Each year the conference grew, but the sustainability of the conference was a constant concern. The case begins with the creation of the idea for a conference, chronicles the success of the conference over seven years, and concludes with identification of the crossroad at which the organization rests.

After seven years, the League’s reach has grown dramatically from one hundred students to thousands: students, faculty, entrepreneurs and business professionals in the region. While the future of the organization is bright, it faces a number of challenges and opportunities. The organizational structure is very decentralized. It is a loose organization of parties interested in supporting women owned businesses. Despite its success it does not have a dedicated funding source. In order to sustain the organization in the academic culture in which it resides, it will need to work hard to set parameters, define roles and most importantly sustain the co-chairs.

Case Synopsis

This case focuses on the evolution of an organization at a university. In preparing women to launch a business, it became apparent that the university community would be well served by an entity that addressed entrepreneurship from a woman’s perspective. The university setting provides an incubator for ideas and entrepreneurial thinking. In this case we explore a university collaboration to address the challenges and opportunities facing women entrepreneurs in a major metropolitan region. The League for Entrepreneurial Women, now in its eighth year of existence, has touched the lives of thousands of students, women entrepreneurs, and business professionals throughout its region. Beginning with a vision to encourage students, especially female students, to pursue their entrepreneurial aspirations, the organization focuses on networking, research, and mentoring provides women entrepreneurs with tools, skills, and insight to launch and grow a business.

Moreover, the collaborative approach of the League for Entrepreneurial Women brings together faculty from several schools and colleges to reach female students and alumni who are
entrepreneurs as well as to the community at large. This global approach in a large metro region enables the League to build bridges to minority women entrepreneurs and engage them in conversation at the university with students, faculty, alumni and other members of the community as well as leaders in the business and professional worlds.

The primary challenges facing the organizations are the organizational structure, management of the organization, and funding, as well as growth within and beyond the university. Organizational structure and management of the organization are key issues facing the organization as it transitions from a new venture to a growing, established one. Developing a more centralized structure out of the loose, informal one is vital to the further growth of the organization. Issues such as accountability and responsibility are central to addressing an organization operating within a university matrix structure. Also of concern is the funding of the organization especially the conference.

The time required to complete the case is approximately four hours. This includes review of the case, discussion/activity (developing an organizational chart for this type of entity) and creating a strategy to fund the organization. This case is best suited for undergraduates who have had an introductory course in entrepreneurship.

**Research Methodology**

The information to write this case was based on the personal experience over the past eight years of the two co-founders.

**Intended Audience and Instructional Placement**

**Intended Audience**

Undergraduate. This case can be used in both introductory and advanced courses; the primary audience should be second year or later courses. Students in such courses typically have some exposure to organizational structure, leadership, management, and funding.

Graduate. This case can be used in an introductory graduate entrepreneurship course.

**Primary and Secondary Use**

Primary course titles in which the case could be used include
- Entrepreneurship
- Introduction to Management

Secondary course titles in which the case could be used include
- Strategic Management
- Communication
Instructional Goal and Learning Objectives

The instructional goal is to describe the challenges of creating and growing a new venture addressing issues of organizational structure, management, funding, and growth, as well as formulate a strategy in addressing the issues.

The learning objectives are as follows:
1. Recognize the benefits of cross collaborative partnerships and how to create an effective organizational structure to fit the partnership.
2. Understand strategic partnerships and how to capitalize on these relationships for the greater good of the organization, institution and community.
3. Identify how to meet the resource and management needs of the women entrepreneurs.
4. Identify the challenges of creating and growing a new venture.

Teaching Strategies

Due to the relative length of the case, we recommend that the case be assigned as homework and then discussed in class. Breaking the class into small groups to address the case and then reconvening the class to discuss the case may be beneficial. Questions such as those listed below centering on the startup and growth of the organization, especially the organizational structure, management, and funding of the organization require students to apply entrepreneurship and management theory in addressing these issues. The case can also be used in formulating strategy with the assignment being to formulate a strategy for the League.

Case Questions and Responses

Questions

1. What is the situation facing the League for Entrepreneurial Women?
2. Describe the structure and management of the organization.
3. What are the growth challenges that the organization has faced and may face in the future?
4. What recommendations would you make to the leadership team of the organization in growing the organization?

Questions and Answers

What is the situation facing the League for Entrepreneurial Women?

The League is a growing and relatively young organization. Like many young organizations it struggles with growth. The primary challenges facing the organization are the organizational structure, management of the organization, and funding, as well as growth within and beyond the university. Organizational structure and management of the organization is a key issue as the organization transitions from a new venture to a growing, established one. Developing a more formal structure out of the loose and informal one is vital to the further growth of the organization. Issues such as accountability and responsibility are central in addressing an
organization operating within a university matrix structure. Also of concern is funding of the organization and the addition of additional programs.

**Describe the structure and management of the organization.**

The organization was created by two faculty members from diverse backgrounds. The co-chairs especially the co-founders bear the brunt of the work. The organization exists within a university that is organized as a matrix structure. While the cross collaboration is quite beneficial it brings with it difficulties of working with the university silos. The management is a flexible one with no staff and no budget to hire staff. University resources such as university PR are used but many of these resources are understaffed creating a backlog in the workflow.

**What are the growth challenges that the organization has faced and may face in the future?**

Like most new ventures in the growth phase, the organization needs to adjust its structure and transition from an entrepreneurial approach to a more managerial one. Transitioning from creativity and the startup mode to implementing and sustaining the organization is needed. A key challenge will be to secure a steady source of funding to enable the organization to hire staff and formalize the loose affiliation of stakeholders.

**What recommendations would you make to the leadership team of the organization in growing the organization?**

After the issues with the organizational structure and management of the League are resolved and a dedicated funding source is identified, the team can address growing the existing programs, adopting new programs and opportunities for the League. The League could reposition itself as a university based center rather than collaboration among several schools. Growth beyond the university is another consideration. The co-chairs have the opportunity to spin off the organization and make it independent or loosely affiliated with the university. The League co-chairs could license the conference model to other universities. Another option is to collaborate with universities in its region to expand the reach of the conference and other activities. It could expand its research and become a research center or expand its networking offerings to become a networking organization.

**Appendix A-Background information on women entrepreneurs**

According to the Small Business Administration, there are 10.6 million women-owned businesses in the US. Women-owned businesses generate $3.6 trillion dollars in US sales and account for 55% of all new US businesses. Over 19 million people are employed nationwide by women-owned businesses, and one in seven people are employed by women-owned businesses. The SBA defines a woman-owned business as one in which 50% or more of the equity is owned by a woman or women.

The 10.6 million women- and equally-owned firms employ 19.1 million people and generate $2.46 trillion in sales. Between 1997 and 2002, an average of 424 new women-owned firms was started every day, translating into nearly 775,000 start-ups per year and accounting for fully
55 percent of new firm start-ups.iii The number of women-owned businesses continues to grow at twice the rate of all U.S. firms, representing an increasing share of the overall small business contribution to US economic growth. One in eighteen women in the U.S. is a business owner. Fifty one percent of Women owned businesses (WOBs) are in the service industry, and another 15% are in the retail sector.iv Women entrepreneurs face many challenges in launching a business. Building a network, funding, strategy, and legitimacy are among a few of the problems

The Creation of the League: Cross Collaborative Models

One of the strengths of the League is the cross collaborative model. The League was formed from a collaborative effort of two faculty members within a large urban university – one from the School of Communications and Theater and one from the School of Business and Management. Research has shown the many benefits of heterogeneity on organizational performance. Functional and educational background has been shown to be positively related to organization performance.v Heterogeneity provides breadth of perspective, a wider network, and greater access to resources. The cross collaboration of the League provides breadth of perspective in addressing needs of entrepreneurs, a broad network of contacts, as well as engagement of students across campus that might not otherwise learn about entrepreneurship and the opportunities it provides. Entrepreneurship involves management and creativity.vi A university cross collaborative entrepreneurship program facilitates the development of both the creation of ideas often based in an academic discipline (e.g. engineering) as well as management of the business to test the feasibility of the idea, as well as launch and growth the idea.

Uniqueness of the League

The League is unique in many ways. In addition to the unique cross collaboration upon which the League is built, its uniqueness includes its reach across the university and the metropolitan region in which the university is located, supporting a wide variety of constituents. In implementing its mission to address the challenges and opportunities facing entrepreneurs throughout the region, the League reaches students, alumni, faculty, and staff of Temple University as well as students, entrepreneurs, and business professionals from its region. A concerted effort has been made to include high school students from the region especially city high schools, and colleges and universities in the region. The metro region is home to many institutions of higher education, only a few of which have formal entrepreneurship programs. Entrepreneurs participate in the League’s activities to refine their business, expand their network, and to give back/support nascent entrepreneurs. Similarly, business professionals participate in the League’s activities to expand their network, for business development purposes, and to give back to their community.

Although the League is focused primarily on women entrepreneurs and aspiring entrepreneurs, programs and activities are open to and inclusive of men. Research indicates that while some differences do exist between men and women entrepreneurs, there are many more similarities than differences.vii The process of launching a business is the same for men and women: creating an idea, testing its feasibility, implementing the launch, and growing the business. It is clear that men and women students alike need strong role models; this is especially so for entrepreneurs. The annual conference is a women’s entrepreneurship conference not because of the issues
addressed but because the conference features a woman keynote speaker. For many years the growth of women owned businesses was limited, and the number of high profile successful women entrepreneurs is somewhat limited. Therefore, we find it important to feature successful women entrepreneurs.

League’s Programs Reaching Beyond Temple University

From it’s inception, the league’s mission has been to serve as an advocacy initiative addressing the growing challenges and interests of entrepreneurs in the Greater Philadelphia region, enriching the knowledge base of Temple’s and the community’s aspiring entrepreneurs. The keynote speakers have been leaders in their fields irrespective of their academic affiliation. The invitation to such leaders as the vice president and general manager of the Philadelphia Ritz-Carlton, the CEO of Bancorp.com, the President and founder of Harmelin Media and the President and COO of Mother’s Work, Inc. to serve as keynotes has shaped the level of the events. These speakers and the subject matter range from self proclaimed entrepreneurship to entrepreneurial thinking in tourism and hospitality management and entertainment arenas have served to increase the external attendance.

The addition of the Hall of Fame enabled the organization to honor alumnae and provide opportunities for networking with those who might not be based in the region. This has also enabled us to look at other ideas for funding a portion of the conference.

The League has also been invited to partner with local women’s business organizations, raising the profile of the organization and the university and adding to the diversity of attendees at events. Recently, League leaders joined with other leaders of local women’s business organizations to form a super-organization the mission of which is to increase women’s leadership in the metropolitan region through education programs that “help women become more effective leaders at work, in the community and at home” (Women’s MBA Network Bylaws).

Funding of the League

Initially, funding for most of the League’s events was from the two founding schools. Additional schools and colleges have supported the League’s activities especially the Women’s Hall of Fame and the conference. Additional funding came through grants from foundations, support from local banks, friends, businesses and women owned businesses. The co-chairs raise the funds for the event which requires a significant time commitment in addition to the time committed to planning the other aspects of the League especially the conference.

Implications for the League’s Future

After eight years, the League’s reach has grown dramatically from one hundred students, to thousands: students, faculty, entrepreneurs, and business professionals in its region. While the future of the League is bright, it faces a number a challenges and opportunities: challenges and opportunities that are not uncommon to a young, growing organization. In addition, to continuous improvement of the ongoing programs, the challenges and opportunities include the
organizational structure and management of the League, securing a steady funding stream for the organization, strengthening the network, expanding the reach, and developing new programs.

While the League has been quite successful, it must continue to improve the programs it offers. Many modifications to the annual conference have been made over the eight years, some of which have been successful while others were not. For example, we successfully moved the date of the conference from November to October to support Breast Cancer Awareness Month and instituted a pink theme. Efforts to hold breakout sessions following the keynote speaker, however, were less than ideal as attendees saw the breakout session as an opportunity to leave the conference. Improvements in the publicity surrounding the conference are necessary; however, efforts to promote the conference are challenging due to relying on an under-staffed university public relations offices. Formalizing the mentoring efforts, re-instituting an advisory board, and promoting and expanding the content on the website are refinements that appear beneficial to League.

Another challenge of the League is its structure. The collaboration among four schools and colleges is a loose one. Oversight of the League is by the three co-chairs, one from each of the three early participating schools. Two of the three co-chairs are co-founders of the organization. Implementation of the program is done by the entrepreneurship institute housed in the business school. While the entrepreneurship institute is responsible for the implementation, it does not have the authority to direct the League. The co-chairs with authority over the League are not held responsible for the League. The matrix structure that is found throughout much of the university is at play. Many of the duties are fluid in their assignment especially for the conference. Assignments are typically given based on tradition and interest. Nonetheless, the conference execution is typically smooth. Consolidating the authority over and responsibility for the conference would be advantages as would formal responsibilities within the League.

The funding for the organization is challenging. Each year the co-chairs solicit funding from related parties to cover the conference costs. The schools and colleges cover the costs of the Hall of Fame. Additional activities are covered by the specific activity: networking dinners by event fees, mentoring efforts by schools and colleges, networking by the co-chairs from the conference budget, and research by the schools and colleges participating in the project. Securing a steady funding stream for the organization is desirable to allow for expansion of the conference and other projects, hiring a staff person, and increased PR for the League. Potential funding sources include an endowment, grants, gifts, corporate sponsorship, as well as charging for the conference.

While the network of the League is extensive strengthening the existing ties would provide many benefits including expanded reach of the League, further research opportunities, funding sources, increased opportunities for joint programs, endorsement by larger and more established organizations, and greater visibility for the League.

The reach of the League continues to grow through the annual conference, research activities, networking and other events, and the website. However, reaching constituents is difficult especially in promoting the conference. Limited funding and required university approval limit the use of outside PR work. In-house PR is difficult because of the volume of PR generated by
the university. Expansion of the Leagues’ website including research papers and reports as well as educational materials for entrepreneurship researchers and entrepreneurs provide an opportunity to expand the reach of the League.

There are many opportunities to create new projects offered by the League some of which include research on women entrepreneurship and women owned businesses, formalizing the mentoring program, and expanding the educational resources offered to women entrepreneurs. The environment of a research university provides resources and rewards for research efforts. Access to mentors is plentiful as many alumni and friends of the university seek to give back to students. However, formalizing a mentoring program could be difficult given the limited staff and other resources. Designing a mentor program, selecting appropriate mentors and students, matching of mentors and protégés, as well as intervening in unsuccessful matches require time and insight by someone who has both authority of and responsibility for a mentoring program.

Supplementary Readings


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i [http://app1.sba.gov/faqs/](http://app1.sba.gov/faqs/)


vi Vesper, K. 1988. “Entrepreneurial academics-How can we tell when the field is getting somewhere?” Journal of
vi For a review of research see Huggins & Zimmerman “Women entrepreneurs influencing the creation of new
programs within Corporate America,” working paper.