CELEB
Center for Entrepreneurship in Liberal Education at Beloit

Mission Statement
Empowering students to gain fulfilling lives, marked by high personal achievement and public contribution, through imparting the skills of successful venturing in all its forms.

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Welcome to the ninth edition of the CELEB Newsletter. CELEB is an entrepreneurship center and program. Composed of a business incubator, a cable access television studio, a music recording studio, an art gallery, a foundation office, and a video post-production studio, CELEB serves the students of Beloit College in their entrepreneurial ventures in both business and the arts.

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Palmer Launches New Course

Professor Warren Palmer, the Coleman Foundation Chair in Entrepreneurship, launched a new course with entrepreneurial elements this semester, The Life and Financial Planning Workshop. When registration opened, the new course filled fast. Forty-five students from 21 different majors took the class.

“I first began planning this class more than 15 years ago when I saw students’ enthusiastic response to any discussion of personal finance in my classes,” Palmer said. “Students are graduating into an increasingly complex financial world, and they need to know more about that world to achieve their personal goals. The course is about how to make good personal decisions and how to avoid making bad personal decisions.”

In its mission statement, the College promises that it will engage “the intelligence, imagination, and curiosity of its students, empowering them to lead fulfilling lives marked by high achievement, personal responsibility, and public contribution in a diverse society.” Palmer said, “I plan to advance that goal by helping students to recognize the financial components of personal decisions and to develop systematic decision-making skills rooted first of all in the liberal education skills acquired in their majors.”

Indeed, the course starts with identifying and appreciating the broad set of generalizable intellectual skills that the students have acquired in their liberal education. Students need help articulating the distinctive strengths they have developed in their liberal education and building upon these strengths when identifying and pursuing post-graduate opportunities.”

“This course helps students identify the key financial decisions they will face following graduation, gives them the analytical tools to make wealth- and life-enhancing decisions and helps them recognize potential entrepreneurial opportunities in choosing their life and career paths. The class emphasizes that all planning, financial or otherwise, serves short and long-term life goals and that financial resources are means to an end, not the end itself.”

“I strongly believe that creative, entrepreneurial thinking adds value to anyone’s life. I will weave entrepreneurial themes through the class, focusing on micro-business. In my vision, the ideal micro-business is started for fun and profit with the smallest possible start-up capital. The internet is an expanding, entrepreneurial ecosystem for micro-business. For the cost of a night on the town, anyone can start a micro-business, do something they love, make money, and build basic financial skills, skills that will make them more flexible and adaptable in a rapidly changing economy.”

“This class itself,” Palmer concluded, “is an entrepreneurial adventure for me. I may not have to worry about cash flow or accounts receivable, but for the course to succeed, I do have to worry about the wants and interests of my student-customers. I expect to adapt the course as it goes along to fit their needs.”

Viswanathan Awarded Innovation Grant

Led by Professor Rama Viswanathan, a recently awarded $8,000 grant from the National Collegiate Inventors and Innovators Alliance (NCIIA) has enabled CELEB to partner with the science department in developing a pilot course focusing on science and technology commercialization.

“This course was taught by faculty from a number of different disciplines, including chemistry, computer science, economics, and physics. Applying principles of entrepreneurship with a focus on solving real world problems through science and technology, students engaged in practices that are essential for successful tech start-ups including: hands-on experience with computer hardware; electronics; prototype design and assembly utilizing traditional machine shop skills and state-of-the-art techniques like 3-D printing. Other topics included: specifying and safeguarding legal and intellectual property rights and evaluating the social and environmental impact of the proposals. Finally, seminars on business models and assembling a team culminated in pitching to potential “investors”. In the end, the pilot course emphasized problem-solving approaches for start-ups providing goods and services in developing, emerging, and other under-served areas.

Students also applied for funding from NCIIA for so-called E-Teams and faculty attended the NCIIA national conference on March 21-23, 2013 in Washington, D.C.

Artisanal Pies A Hit for McKnight

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Hendricks Headslines Entrepreneurs on Campus

Having our alumni and friends return to campus to share their stories is vital to our program. This past year was another wonderful example of this tradition with an enviable lineup that showcased the network of the college. Our guests included: from the college, Bill Conover; Dan Spaulding ’85, founder of Creditel, a Chicago credit reports agency and now a mortgage lender; Diane Hendricks, Hendricks Holding Company and Trustee; Michael Hennessy; Joe Kirques, business incubator founder, Gener8or; Clay Norrbom; Rich Feingold ’90, founder of numerous start-ups and developer of Jacuzzi Beds; Steve Crom; Dave Myers ’49, serial entrepreneur; Niko Skievaski; Tony Scodwell, Beloit native and 2013 Ferrall Artist-in-Residence. That we can buttress lectures and readings with the experiences conveyed first-hand by our practitioners cements the principles being taught and inspires students to take action. We thank everyone who participated and applaud their willingness to serve.

Sesame Street Inspires BATV Children’s Show

What do you get when you have education majors who enjoy video production, puppets and, oh yes, clowns? Answers: Celebrated Beloit Belwah, the newest program on Beloit Access Television. Senior, Anthony Bostler was to have had an internship with Sesame Street this past fall. When things didn’t work out, Anthony moved to Plan B. He met with Bill New, his advisor in the Education Department, Dave Knutson at the TV station and the rest of the CELEB team to design a special internship project. What developed was the creation of a new BATV television series. Anthony enlisted a little help from his friends in the Theatre department, broadcast students from Dave’s class and a real, live clown from the Beloit community, Bobo. The productions were shot in the studio at CELEB and at locations in Beloit. As producer, director and editor he had full creative control of the project from conception to completion.

The episodes feature Anthony’s alter-ego Timothy the Turtle. Timothy is a puppet, handmade by Anthony and fellow student Ashleigh Herrera. His target audience is elementary-aged students. Timothy’s adventures deal with issues of friendships, respect and getting along with others. He mixes humorous situations and challenging conversations with his clown friend, Bobo.

Anthony has completed his self-designed internship with the college. His plans are to continue to produce more episodes for the college and the access station. Anthony was recently awarded an achievement award from the Wisconsin Community Media, a group that highlights video entries from the 63 access television stations from around the state.

The episodes can be viewed online at youtube.com/user/boboboomproduce

Artisanal Pies A Hit for McKnight

Associating one’s grandmother with a slack resource can lead to loads of trouble with the family. Be that as it may, for Patrick McKnight ’15, it was true that his Nana had some extra time on her hands, not to mention carries a reputation for baking one fine apple pie. Such were the humble beginnings of Pat’s Pies, a one-plus year old business. McKnight, who hails from Belvidere, Illinois, founded Pat’s Pies based upon his desire to found a student business and bond with his grandmother.

The pair has been spending a fair amount of time together these days assembling and baking a variety of artisan pies in her kitchen for a growing list of loyal customers. McKnight presells the pies around campus and to some employees at local businesses for $10-$12 a pie. When he has three dozen orders, he heads home down I-90 and meets his grandmother for an afternoon of baking.

“We have our system pretty dialed-in at this point; we can pouind out a batch of pies in about three hours,” McKnight says of their process. “It’s a manageable amount of time given my other commitments and a great way to be with her. We’re a good team.” McKnight estimates he works 10 hours per week on the venture and enjoys the satisfaction of making a product and working through the various issues that present themselves: pricing, selling, distribution and production.

McKnight is a very active member of the CELEB community. He can often be found in the Coleman Venture Lab and has taken a number of classroom offerings in the entrepreneurship program, attended several off campus conferences on the subject, and was a contributor to this year’s WISE foundation efforts (of which there is a piece on page 3 of the newsletter). The economics major is also a student-athlete playing 1st base on the Bucs baseball team. A bank teller last summer, he hopes to intern at the insurance giant, Northwestern Mutual. Recently, at the annual Honors Convocation, he was awarded the John E. Hughes Student Entrepreneur of the Year, a prize that recognizes the student who best implements a new business venture or who otherwise best exemplifies the spirit of entrepreneurship as it may be applied in academe.

Maple Tree Studio and CELEB received a generous gift from Dave Myers ’49 at the end of the 2012 Fall Term. The gift resulted from a move of a Portland, Oregon radio company to another location. Mr. Myers, the owner of the building, graced Beloit College with a variety of equipment from the studios. CELEB sent Ian Nie to Portland in October to help select and make preliminary decisions on what to bring back to Beloit. After rounds of communications between Director Morello and Founder Gustafson with Mr. Myers, the gift arrived on a Friday afternoon. Ian had his recording class help with the unloading of the truck.

All the equipment will be useful both to the Maple Tree Recording Studio and Beloit Cable Access. In particular, a beautiful, custom five-piece broadcast console was installed at WBCR, our college radio station. We wish to thank Mr. Myers for offering these wonderful pieces of equipment to us.

Electronics Windfall from Myers’49 Arrives

Having our alumni and friends return to campus to share their stories is vital to our program. This past year was another wonderful example of this tradition with an enviable lineup that showcased the network of the college. Our guests included: from the college, Bill Conover; Dan Spaulding ’85, founder of Creditel, a Chicago credit reports agency and now a mortgage lender; Diane Hendricks, Hendricks Holding Company and Trustee; Michael Hennessy; Joe Kirques, business incubator founder, Gener8or; Clay Norrbom; Rich Feingold ’90, founder of numerous start-ups and developer of Jacuzzi Beds; Steve Crom; Dave Myers ’49, serial entrepreneur; Niko Skievaski; Tony Scodwell, Beloit native and 2013 Ferrall Artist-in-Residence. That we can buttress lectures and readings with the experiences conveyed first-hand by our practitioners cements the principles being taught and inspires students to take action. We thank everyone who participated and applaud their willingness to serve.
Founder’s Bites, Director Interviews Founder Jerry Gustafson

Brian: When you began to think about an entrepreneurship center for Beloit just about no one in liberal arts colleges was yet even teaching the subject. What led you to the idea?

Jerry: By the middle ‘90s, I had had a stream of students who wanted to start businesses, especially when they found out they could get seed funding from the Coleman Foundation’s College program. It was always a hassle finding space for them. I wanted dedicated space. I also wanted to attract arts students to seriously explore small business. Their biggest obstacle either to self-employment or finding jobs was technology. We had Dave (Knutson) and Ian (Nie) who had the tech and digital stuff so we decided to partner up. Actually, none of us knew how important this area was to become. Finally, I had learned how entrepreneurship was being taught in the business schools and realized that no one was working on how to accommodate the subject for the liberal arts.

Brian: So you had to figure out how to make entrepreneurship safe for the liberal arts and vice versa?

Jerry: Right. But that is not too hard when you stop to think of it. Conceiving of a goal and committing to it, finding ways and means of achieving it, planning and improvising your way forward to its accomplishment, is essential to an effective life. Entrepreneurship is a vehicle for teaching that process. That process may entail attitude and spirit as well as skill, to be sure, but if Beloit wants its graduates to lead fulfilling lives, we should instill both. That is true whether alumni choose self-employment or not. Any career is enriched by the ability to act entrepreneurially. That students should understand this process is part of our mission.

Brian: So how were you able to get this done?

Jerry: Beloit has been an unusually entrepreneurial college for a very long time and was fertile ground for most any experiment. I had tenure and credentials as a teacher and could risk going outside my expertise. I had fantastic personal and financial support from The Coleman Foundation and alum David Myers’49, and later from almost 200 of my former students and classmates. Without money and passion nothing much happens.

Brian: I recall you as a pretty fair economics teacher. How did any academic get interested in such practical matters?

Jerry: Good question. I have always been sensitive to students’ need for practical application. Over the years I used a sabbatical in D.C. to launch a policy program; as department Chair, I revamped the requirements and curriculum and started an optional business major; I started the old Social Science Lab with an NSF grant, I followed up a Fulbright to Turkey by helping Terry Bigalke to start our student exchange program there, and so on. Building the entrepreneurship program and CELEB was a logical outgrowth of a continuing desire to enhance educational relevance. That was sort of a culmination, I suppose.

Brian: It seems that your attention to entrepreneurship required you to leave Economics. How do you feel about that?

Jerry: Yes, that has been a disappointment. I loved teaching principles and micro. I loved doing courses related to my scholarly interests, like my old seminar called “Politics, Economics, and Welfare.” I am somewhat surprised that the course I miss the most, however, is Management.

Brian: Why is that?

Jerry: I took a great class here from Miller Upton on organizations. I got to know him well, on an intellectual basis, learned a lot about his philosophy of management and administration. He was my favorite teacher and a profound influence. Almost everything I have ever done at Beloit College has its roots in what I learned from him.

Brian: What have been your favorite years at Beloit? You’ll remember, of course, that I am in the class of 1985.

Jerry: Right. I guess I’ll have to say that the early ‘90s were great years! Never had such terrific and memorable students! I am truly grateful for the wonderful students and classmates that I have known at Beloit. Like the old joke goes about marriage, I have had a fabulous life at Beloit College for 38 years. I came here 46 years ago.

Mystery Dinners Promote WISE Foundation Mission

The What Is Social Excellence (WISE) Foundation seeks to investigate the elements of a truly good society, one that offers joy and fulfillment to its members. WISE promotes panel presentations from various experts, engages students and others in careful discussion, and presents proposals to support such activities.

One tenet of a truly good society is having people interact who come from different backgrounds, and not just in the usual socio-economic sense, but also from different disciplines, geographies, and modes of thought. Research has shown that as people interact with others similar to themselves, societies become more fragmented, and there is a loss of ideas and potential for collaboration.

Enter the WISE Foundation’s Mystery Trips.

The WISE Foundation hosted three mystery trips in the 2012 fall semester. Behind the mystery trips is getting students out in the community, but not necessarily with all the power dynamics that occur when providing a service. The trips are a mystery as students are unaware of their destination or what they are going to do.

By compensating community members for their time and resources with an honorarium students heard from people we have identified as valuable parts of the Beloit community. Likewise, community members are told that they are going to host a small group of college students for a conversation about the community, college, and life in general.

So, expectations for students:
• Be willing to deal with uncertainty
• Think about your group of friends and think of how diversified it is in terms of race, sex, age, region, major discipline, religion, etc.
• Reflect on whether there are gains from getting out and exploring the Beloit community
• Appreciate the diversity of the City of Beloit
• And for community members:
  • Host students for a meal, art demonstration, etc.
  • Share your passions and work experiences
  • Talk about where you see room for improvement in interactions between Beloit College students and the community
  • Be willing to answer questions from curious college students
  • Finally, do not be scared by the mass quantities of food college students consume!

Beloiters Journey to SEA

Brian Morello, Dave Knutson, Ian Nie, Warren Palmer (economist and new Coleman Foundation Chair in Entrepreneurship), and Jerry Gustafson accompanied some 30 students to the 15th annual Self-Employment in the Arts (SEA) conference, hosted by North Central College in Naperville. During the two-day affair, students heard entrepreneurs describe their arts-based businesses, listened to their advice on how to achieve success, and received expert advice on intellectual property issues, contracts, finance, accounting, record keeping, and other matters. Beloit students have attended this conference for each of the organizations 15 years. Voodoo Barbie, Beloit’s student comedy improv troupe, performed for the 6th straight year, as did dancers from Chelonia’s repertory company class. A high point was a workshop offered for the first time by Brian and Warren on “How to Start Your Own Campus Business – Right Now.”
Jerry Gustafson’63 marked his retirement at the end of this term. A letter carrier’s son from Rockford, Illinois, Jerry came to Beloit in 1959 where he immediately flourished and unwittingly found what would become a home for life. A member of Tau Kappa Epsilon, he spent many evenings discussing the elements of a good life with his fraternity brothers. Among the important attributes, they concluded that meaningful and challenging work is the path to a fulfilling life. He graduated with honors only to return to Beloit in 1967 after earning a PhD in Economics from Johns Hopkins.

In the midst of six decades, he indelibly soaked into the fabric of the college. Teaching and advising students, collaborating and socializing with peers, Gustafson is known for being close to the action. From college presidents of whom he served under five, to student groups, when important issues arose, it was Jerry’s counsel that was sought; always in the mix, he is often cited as an influential person by alumni and frequently asked to introduce honorees at college functions.

For his last class period, Jerry gave his capstone lecture “The Secret to Life”, based on the work of University of Chicago psychologist, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, whose monumental work in the field of positive psychology resulted in the book, “Flow.” Csikszentmihalyi’s survey participants reported satisfaction and fulfillment when they were challenged and working hard. Conversely, when at leisure, they reported apathy and felt dull, weak, and dissatisfied. From this, the distinction between pleasure and enjoyment is drawn, where the former is inert and energy-saving, like a cat lying in the sun while the latter engages one in an experience and takes energy. To have “Flow”, one must fight this predisposition toward pleasure. So, the secret to life: focus attention on investing in short-term, meaningful, and achievable goals that match skills with opportunities for action.

Jerry describes Beloit as “yeasty.” By that he means things here can grow fast and unpredictably, maybe even seem a little out of control. It means some leeway is afforded to see where an idea may lead or what can be discovered. I guess it’s a place where a public policy economist at the height of his career can align a new course of study, entrepreneurship, with the activities he’d been, in practice, promoting all along.

Hats off to you, Jerry!