Innovation Essay

Many individuals ask what it means to be a student in the Bachelor of Innovation program. Like topics as broad as science or arts, innovation encompasses a diverse quantity of fields, bringing together multi-talented teams for the purpose of transforming their ideas into an impact on the world. Individuals studying topics varying from business to education to video game design congregate through the innovation program, and it is at this crossroad where the spark of innovation is born. Only by collecting individuals with such unique skill sets and perspectives can we progress forward.

A typical innovation student attends approximately one innovation style class each semester. That is, these classes have a focus on projects and working with a team to achieve a goal. My introduction to this style of course was an introductory entrepreneurship class, where we, as a multidisciplinary team, drafted and conceptualized the details for a grocery delivery service to be presented to potential investors. This was a crucial experience where I learned how to perform a business presentation under high stakes.

This presentation training became immediately useful when I participated in a team responsible for the calculation of construction and upkeep costs of a Space Warfare Command Center. Comprising several months of research and compiling documents the team presented the multi-million dollar deal to the client, responsible for using the findings to generate a proposal for the construction of the new facility. The diverse team comprised members each specializing in specialized fields including computer science and game design, and each member was responsible for totaling costs for different aspects of construction and operation. This boosted my ability to remain comfortable relying on others to fill different roles than myself and realize an innovative team.

Learning to rely on others in this way was crucial to a project where our team developed marketing materials for a board game intended to be distributed to game stores across Colorado Springs. While I focused on redeveloping and updating the client’s website, I relied on other members of the team for obtaining pictures and video footage of the game, designing logos, and generating physical marketing materials. During this time I adjusted to working with the team entirely remotely after becoming able to only meet online near halfway through the project.

This experience was immeasurably valuable when I became a team leader responsible for nine other individuals and a goal of developing an app and generating marketing materials. Throughout the duration of the project the team interacted remotely, and we were able to develop upgrades for the app in addition to generating a surplus of marketing material for the client to use after the completion of the project. The result of so many projects is a great quantity of experience working with others in a team setting, in addition to learning how to interact with clients and perform business presentations.

Working with a team there exists a dichotomy and at the same time a relationship between unity and diversity. Innovation happens when a team of multi-talented individuals collide and transform their ideas into change. It is crucial for a team to comprise a variety of specialties so that no one archetype can dominate the team’s vision. Additionally, members with differing viewpoints bounce off of each other and cover each other’s blind spots. At the same time a team must be unified in their vision and move in the same direction as one to preserve momentum and to achieve their goals. A team that comprises these two elements and reaches the balance between difference in opinions and cooperation in mindset generates the circumstances for innovation to take place.

As an individual my strength lies in gluing the team together. Being naturally very agreeable I struggle to exist in the midst of sustained unproductive conflict. In these groups I end up seeking compromise between warring parties and maintaining the unique vision the team congregated for the purpose of achieving. At the same time I highly value productive or cooperative conflict, where the team can reevaluate their priorities and goals and navigate in an updated direction to avoid obstacles. I draw strength from existing in a trustworthy team, and take pride in the fact that I can rely on another member to complete tasks and fill blind spots where I might otherwise struggle alone. It is this idea, the dynamic of cooperation and conflict within a team, that enables the situation for innovation to occur.

My hope is to enable for as many people as possible to live the life they truly want to live. Throughout my life, as a result of my natural agreeableness, I had always been the type to follow rules and avoid chaos. This approach leads to others liking you but it is important to always remember that you need to like yourself first. Until recently I had been living my life for others and thinking about myself and my own needs last, where they would usually end up being ignored. The problem is, nobody else will fight for you, so you need to fight for yourself. To many this notion comes off as selfish, but this is not quite correct; taking care of oneself is the most noble action to take. You can only expend resources on others for a certain duration before your supplies are exhausted, and then nothing is left. Fighting for yourself means maintaining and extending your ability to help others into the future.