

Teaching Philosophy

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Entrepreneurship education allows students the freedom to explore non-linear real-world problems, while finding actionable solutions that are often congruent with their skills, beliefs, and values. The pioneers of our field believed that entrepreneurship acts as the ‘liberal arts’ of the modern business school. As a scholar and teacher of entrepreneurship, I whole-heartedly embrace this idea. Courses in entrepreneurship supplement those that train students to specialize in discrete skills (e.g., finance, accounting) by encouraging students to create and be creative. Like a high-quality liberal arts education, entrepreneurship helps our students become independent thinkers, engaged citizens, and leaders in their respective fields. Moreover, entrepreneurship education extends well beyond teaching our students to be entrepreneurs – it offers an environment to think and act entrepreneurially.

I aspire to create an inclusive yet challenging, cross-disciplinary learning environment, often informed by current research programs in the field of entrepreneurship.

Integrating Theory and Practice

The research we conduct as scholars needs to be relevant to the many stakeholders the academy serves. Leveraging our research to inform our teaching is one of the most fruitful mechanisms to ensure relevance amongst our most important stakeholder group – our students. This can also be useful to supplement textbooks, as the velocity of published research is closer to the velocity of change in the world. For example, new findings concerning the positive elements of neurodiversity in entrepreneurial settings aids in the further destigmatization of those with mental health disorders – an issue even more relevant on college campuses post COVID-19.

Self-determination and Learning

I have been fascinated with theories of well-being since the beginning of doctoral studies. What is seemingly a simple research question – what factors allow people to live their best lives – is quite complex. One theory that resonated with me is self-determination theory. Self-determination theory posits that individuals thrive when they are allowed the autonomy to pursue self-identified goals, face challenging tasks that build their competence, and connect with others in a meaningful way. I rely heavily on these principles to create a fulfilling course experience.

First, *students learn in a manner that aligns their current disciplinary pursuits and career goals* – in hopes to fulfill their need for autonomy. For example, students seek out an entrepreneur of their choosing to interview. The assignment provides students with the freedom to find individuals within their specific areas of interest, ranging from small-scale luxury car manufacturing to boutique spa operators.

Second, *students are challenged via exercises and assignments to push themselves and learn something new*, either about entrepreneurship or themselves. To do so, students discuss a variety of case studies, some of which are inspired by my own entrepreneurial endeavors. These cases

include conceptual issues (e.g., ethical approaches to difficult business decisions) and the more pragmatic (e.g., strategizing paths to financial break-evens for a music release).

Lastly, *students experience equal parts of group and individual assignments*, as self-determination theory suggests that individuals thrive when they can connect with others. Though a delicate process since the advent of COVID-19, I still try to offer opportunities to work with others without compromising a student's safety concerns or other situations that prevent from functioning efficiently in a team environment.

Relevance, Rigor, and Grand Challenges

Entrepreneurship education challenges students to think about problems that society faces every day as well as those that extend far into the future. Some entrepreneurs solve commonplace problems, such as creating a more ergonomic pet carrier, while others aim to change the world more drastically, like creating a vegan bacon that mimics the real thing. I highlight both entrepreneurial situations equally throughout the semester and illuminate them with an array of special guests to share their perspectives. For example, I previously hosted regulators who gave an insider's perspective into the 'red-tape' entrepreneurs face when doing business within city limits and how regulators approaches different projects balancing the demands of the numerous (and at time unexpected) stakeholders.

Complementary to our invited guests, students solve case studies from problems encountered in my own entrepreneurial endeavors. For example, my most recent venture was an independent record label. This generation of students witnessed firsthand how the Internet transformed the ways in which music is consumed, and how the music industry has adapted to promote the work. Thus, they apply this knowledge by navigating the various challenges of releasing music as an independent record label, spanning format issues (vinyl versus digital break-even scenarios), investments in marketing (viral stunts versus traditional promotion), and managing contracts (cashing in on a hit while not seeming bureaucratic).

Students with less background on the entrepreneurial phenomena may believe that entrepreneurship is only for outliers, such as Elon Musk or Steve Jobs. One of my earliest notes of emphasis in the course is to dispel this myth and highlight that the aspirations of entrepreneurs are heterogenous, and many aspirational goals extend beyond financial gains.

Embracing Diversity

Entrepreneurship inherently celebrates diversity. Individuals can design a job to suite their individual needs, which is not always available in other occupational settings. I often highlight the numerous entrepreneurs who have used their diverse identities to find success and thrive in their fields. For example, Richard Branson, an entrepreneur in the Virgin Companies, refers to his ADHD diagnosis as a superpower – allowing him to manage a complex, wide-ranging portfolio of firms, while also approaching the portfolio in a simple manner.

In addition, I integrate a multiple disciplinary perspective to offer students across different majors the opportunity to contribute their own expertise to the discussion. For example, those who study sociology and psychology might offer unique insights into team-forming behavior and common

biases among entrepreneurs (and potential stakeholders) or insights into consumer behavior and product-choice tendencies.

Looking Forward

I plan to continue developing as a scholar-teacher by continuing to participate in balanced conferences such as USASBE, and begin to develop pedagogical theory to submit to journals like Academy of Management Learning and Education or Entrepreneurship Education and Pedagogy. More specifically, I'm interested in learning about the relationship between previous experience and efficacy in the classroom. Further, my doctoral advisor Johan Wiklund and I are applying for grant funding to develop games to test and develop entrepreneurial self-efficacy, with a focus on neurodiversity, where we hope to broaden perceptions of the value of entrepreneurial education.