

Under the leadership of senior vice president

Caryn McTighe Musil, AAC&U convened a pre-conference symposium at its 2005 annual meeting called “Working Convergences: Liberal Education, Creativity, and the Entrepreneurial Spirit,” with the goal of examining “some of the points of connection, controversy, and creativity that can be found in new curricular initiatives that lift entrepreneurial ideas outside of the confines of business schools and into traditional arts and sciences disciplines.” The symposium was supported by the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation as part of its initiative on liberal education and was also supported by the Kauffman Consortium for Liberal Education and Entrepreneurship and AAC&U’s Center for Liberal Education and Civic Engagement. The Kauffman Foundation is also supporting this issue of *Peer Review*, which features articles that capture the essence of the symposium presentations.

The call for bringing entrepreneurship learning to arts and sciences disciplines and to undergraduates majoring in fields beyond just business is often met by some with skepticism and debate. Symposium participants articulated a wide array of views about the relationship between entrepreneurship and liberal education during the symposium. To give you a sense of the comments and concerns expressed, I include below excerpts from selected symposium participants.

“Entrepreneurship is not limited to business, but this idea may generate some campus turf wars as others try to use the term.”

“I’m concerned that we cloak ourselves in some degree of self-satisfaction about how the liberal arts are fertile backgrounds for entrepreneurial thinking and action....How do we know this is the case?”

“Entrepreneurship is favorably viewed in the humanities... individual faculty ARE entrepreneurs. They administer many community service internships that are quite entrepreneurial in their approach.”

“[My] colleagues would not be able to separate the term from the corporate world, and would not be interested in participating in any effort to use it somehow to describe work in the arts.”

“The spirit of entrepreneurship represents the appreciation of the opportunity presented by the unanticipated situation. Students need to know how and should be trained to optimize such opportunities.”

I attended this symposium with great interest and an informed perspective because I had recently been compelled to pursue some entrepreneurial training of my own. Last spring, after developing a commercial publications project, I realized that, despite my own liberal education, I lacked many of the fundamental skills needed

to support this type of endeavor. I enrolled in an intensive thirteen-week entrepreneurship course sponsored by the National Women’s Business Center in Washington, DC, entitled “Up and Running: Tools You Need to Kick-start Your Dreams.”

The Up and Running class met once a week for three hours and the sessions were taught by dynamic business professionals on topics such as legal and regulatory considerations, business planning, accounting, marketing, pricing, and risk management. Approximately half of my fellow classmates came into the program with straight financial concerns—they were starting traditional businesses and were seeking strategies to increase their bottom lines. The other class members were starting nonprofit businesses to benefit their communities—they expressed the need for practical and philosophical support. Initially it seemed that each half of the class had very different needs.

Through the weeks we learned about the key elements needed to start and maintain a prosperous business enterprise. In addition to learning very practical information, we also discussed the importance of balancing financial considerations with strategic vision, ethics, and values. When the last class session came to an end, I had a clear sense of the factors that might cause a business to succeed or fail. I also came to understand that the needs of the traditional and social entrepreneur were not so different—both need the same basic knowledge, skills, and sense of mission to realize their goals.

My experience leads me to believe that most undergraduate students would benefit greatly from having a more developed entrepreneurial spirit and a set of practiced entrepreneurial skills in their toolkit as they enter the workplace. This issue of *Peer Review* presents many innovative and creative examples of the ways a variety of institutions have infused entrepreneurial spirit into their programs and curriculum. We hope that reading these articles will stimulate further discussions among faculty, administrators, and students. These are certain to be lively interchanges that are filled with enthusiasm, notes of caution, and possibility. —**SHELLEY JOHNSON CAREY**

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