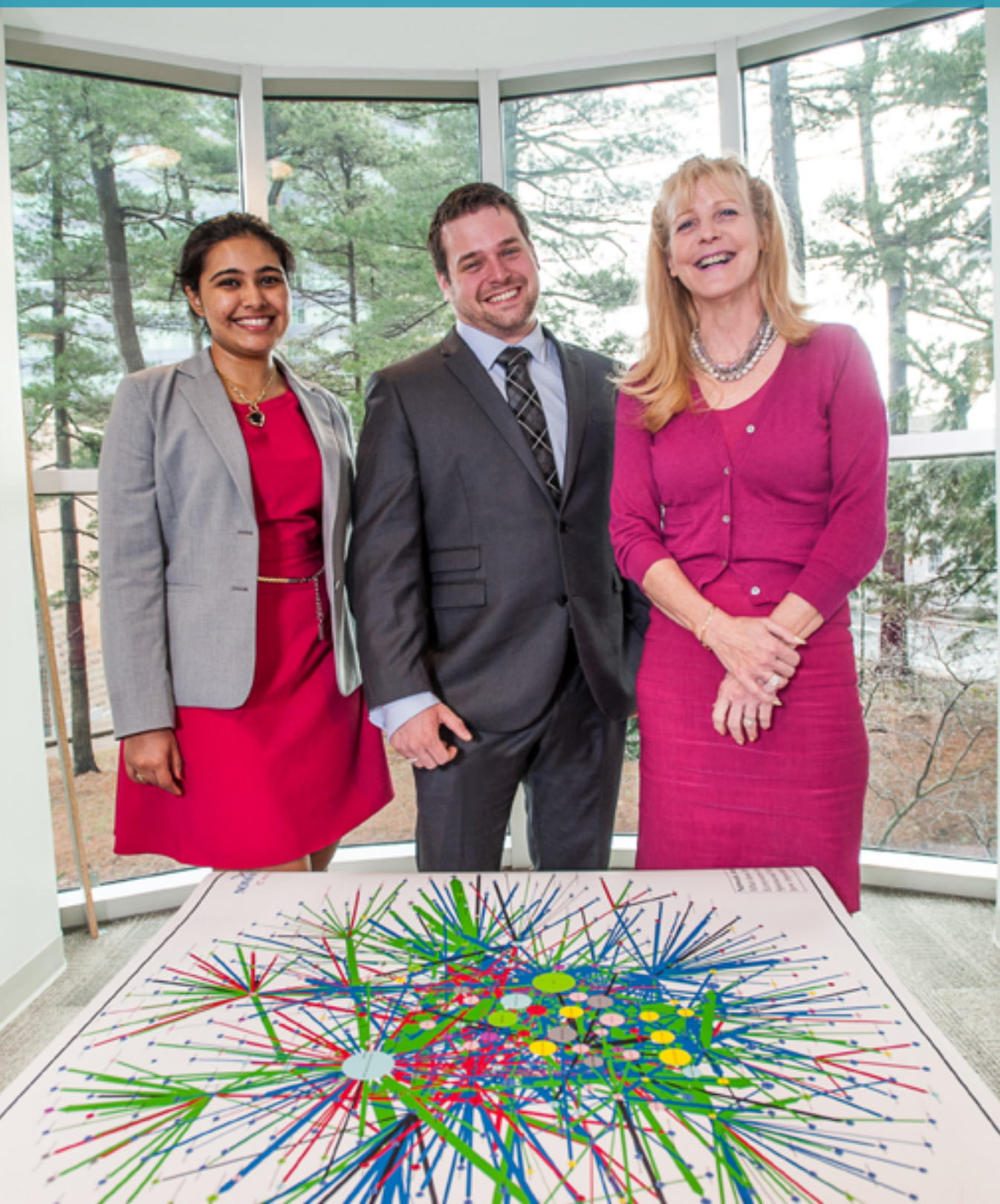


FEBRUARY 2016



ENTREPRENEURIAL EXCELLENCE

Sobey School of Business, Saint Mary's University
Dean's Report to the Community



Entrepreneurial Excellence



Dr. Patricia Bradshaw is the Dean of the Sobey School of Business at Saint Mary's University.

EMPLOYERS WANT TO HIRE PEOPLE WHO THINK LIKE ENTREPRENEURS, WHO CAN CREATIVELY PROBLEM SOLVE, IDENTIFY OPPORTUNITIES, AND IMPLEMENT EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES.

Entrepreneurship is a hot topic. Government economic studies repeatedly emphasize the need for an entrepreneurial economy. They recognize that new jobs are generated by start-ups.

Employers want to hire people who think like entrepreneurs, who can creatively problem solve, identify opportunities, and implement effective strategies. Many people want to work at start ups, where they can be creative and innovative. As a result, many universities are offering academic programs in entrepreneurship.

At the Sobey School of Business, we take that as a compliment. We've been teaching Entrepreneurship for more than twenty years. We recognized early that entrepreneurship is about innovating. It involves a higher level of thinking that is developed with a combination of academic excellence and real-world experience.

For two decades, we have offered a major in entrepreneurship in our Bachelor of Commerce program, and a suite of courses focusing on how to think and problem-solve like an entrepreneur. Over time, we have added a tremendous array of extra-curricular programs and networks to support emerging entrepreneurs.

Students at Saint Mary's have access to a wide variety of support systems, beginning with faculty members, who often get the ball rolling in the classroom through hands-on learning opportunities

tied to course outcomes. For instance, in one class, students develop their own business on a shoestring budget and run it for three months – a real-world challenge.

When students get involved in entrepreneurial activities, they are able to access additional opportunities housed within the university. These include programs at our Sobey School Business Development Centre (SSBDC), the Spark Zone (a provincially funded pre-incubator for business ideas), a variety of student societies and clubs enhancing the student experience, a fantastic entrepreneurship graduate program, and engaged mentors from a strong alumni base. Many entrepreneurial students join Enactus Saint Mary's, a student-driven social entrepreneurship group that ranked second in the nation (2015).

Our students are also encouraged to enter their ideas, plans, models and businesses into pitch competitions around the world. This way, they learn not only to develop high-potential ideas, but also to sell them to potential investors. They learn to network, to work with other professionals, communicate effectively, and develop their social capital.

In these pages I want to share with you just a few of our many successes and highlight the incredible value of these programs. ■



STARTING POINT

Where new business ideas go beyond a “twinkle in the eye”

“We see opportunity differently.”

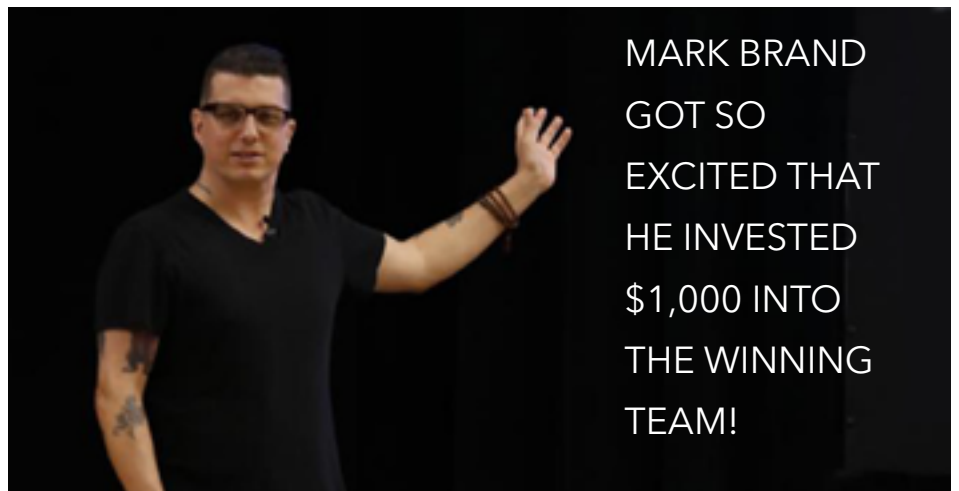
This is how Kaitlyn Touesnard describes the work culture at the Sobey School Business Development Centre (SSBDC), where she is a project manager. Last year, Kaitlyn founded the Starting Point Conference, where student entrepreneurs from across Canada now gather each February.

Kaitlyn, who herself graduated from Saint Mary’s University with a major in entrepreneurship, was impressed by the abundance of entrepreneurial activity at the Sobey School of Business, and thrilled to join that environment. She quickly recognized that student entrepreneurs are among the busiest students on any campus as they carry full course loads while starting and running their own businesses.

As a result, they can get lost in their own worlds of financing and marketing products and services. It helps to meet others like themselves, to share ideas and best practices for running a business while still in school, develop new skills, network, and find the resources and funding they need. Mostly importantly, connecting with others helps them to remain excited and inspired by the vital

and unique role they play in our economy, a role that should be celebrated. Young entrepreneurs need to find a way to connect.

And that’s what happens at Starting Point. In its first year, more than 130 delegates came from as far away as Alberta to meet one another, compete for \$9,000 in startup funding, and learn from experienced and successful



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entrepreneurs. Kaitlyn's goal was to make something big, exciting, and different, and we are happy to report that she succeeded on every count.

Starting Point is founded on the premise that big ideas change the world – in fact, that's the conference's tagline. And the conference itself is a powerful idea. When Kaitlyn proposed the conference to her boss, Michael Sanderson, he said, "Write me a proposal."

Kaitlyn smiled and got to work. Michael himself is an entrepreneur, having owned several businesses over the past two decades, and his attitude was typical of an entrepreneur: quickly willing to support a good idea from a creative mind.

Kaitlyn developed interactive master classes and workshops showcasing high-profile talent like restaurateur, retailer, and super social entrepreneur Mark Brand. She was sure to feature new student ideas as well.

The event had a national focus – connecting our region to young entrepreneurs across the country. Fun and excitement were essential components, hence "funder speed dating" was introduced, where students went funder to funder making five-minute pitches for \$1,000 to invest in their ideas.

A highlight was the ideation tournament, where teams formed, brainstormed, and developed sophisticated solutions to a troubling problem that held relevance for many: student debt. Mark Brand got so excited that he invested \$1,000 into the winning team!

By bringing so many young entrepreneurial minds together with a sprinkling of more experienced experts, our Business Development Centre has created buzz and momentum toward an annual event.



Kaitlyn is busy working on Starting Point 2016, being held February 17-19 at Saint Mary's. This year she

expects 120 delegates from around the world. ■



Not yet out of grade 12, Sacred Heart student Alex Gillis attended the first Starting Point as an already-experienced entrepreneur. Currently, he is behind two businesses, Hoist, a community program to facilitate youth starting a technology business, and Bitness, a company that uses new technology to collect bricks-and-mortar based data statistics to help business. He presented Bitness on Dragon's Den in February 2016. His first business, established when he was 15, was MicroCent, a micro donation platform.

Alex said of Starting Point, "This event is the best, most valuable ever I've attended." ■

Photo credit: Sacred Heart School

Starting Point Student Entrepreneurship Conference features panel discussion, master classes, an ideation tournament, opportunities to network and connect, and more! In 2016 the keynote speaker is Joey Adler, Social Entrepreneur and former CEO of Diesel Canada Inc.





MASTER OF TECHNOLOGY ENTREPRENEURSHIP & INNOVATION

Theory meets practice

The average age a person starts a new technology company is about 29 years old. Old enough to have industry experience. Experienced enough to isolate where challenges lie. And in those challenges are the opportunities entrepreneurs have a habit of finding.

Because a little experience goes a long way, we created our MTEI degree – a Master of Technology Entrepreneurship & Innovation. Students at the graduate level needed training that was aimed at their level of experience. And innovations around new technology are crucial to economic growth.

Now in its third year, the program has produced staggering numbers. Our students have won and placed in entrepreneurial competitions across Canada and internationally. Five of the seven students in the first cohort started businesses. Of the 15 students in the second cohort, 11 own or are engaged with startups and another 3 are interns at startups. In all, that's 16

students engaged with startups in only two years.

The businesses are wildly varied in their economic focus. One student started a studio, and made a record with an artistic and entrepreneurial focus, doing the creative work, launch and marketing. Another created an app that had 25,000 downloads before the promotional work had begun. A group has developed technology to easily select short video segments and display them. Another has developed a software solution for helping manage funded project finances.

Our faculty work hard to inculcate students with imagination and curiosity, to think conceptually, and perhaps most importantly, to see change as an opportunity rather than something to be resisted or feared. *(Cont'd next page)*



Shelley Simpson-McKay

Two-time winner of the ExhibitorLive Buyers Choice award, winner of a Durland Innovation award in the MTEI program, innovator, and businesswoman Shelley Simpson-McKay has continued to lead her company, SGS Solutions Inc., on the mission to reduce the high cost and use of electricity in the exhibit industry in North America. Her products include Showbattery, a portable & rechargeable lithium ion technology and a gold standard for energy storage, plus a complete 360° solution in an easy and affordable lights-and-battery kit.

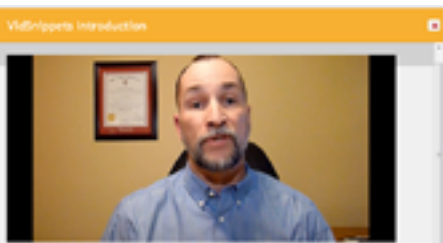
Intelligent, inquisitive, and open-minded, she is a strong support of women in business innovation initiatives. ■

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In its short history, the MTEI program has produced a number of exciting start up projects. Clockwise from right: Afri-Sea's Sulayman Cham and Tim Cranston. Todd Mercer, centre, has moved on to release the Party Up app. Dr. Dawn Jutla. Mandy Woodland, a principal in Caetum, which has a software platform for researchers and clinical investigators. Ian Kamp started Shoebox Studios and released an album. Vidsnippets (Paul Farmer, CEO, shown in an intro video) is a product that improves the usefulness and searchability of video. ■



MTEI Start Ups



We have a tremendous team leading and teaching the MTEI program. Its success depends on collaboration among faculty, students, and the wider business community.

Dr. Dawn Jutla, newly appointed to the Scotiabank Professor of Technology Entrepreneurship and Innovation, is an expert on privacy, security, online standards and technology startups. Dr. Ellen Farrell is a specialist in entrepreneurship, venture capital, and financing. Dr. Claudia De Fuentes is a specialist in innovation practices, getting people to think differently and collaborate toward making change.

Aside from faculty's diverse areas of expertise, at a fundamental level they know how innovation works and how to bring together and cultivate innovative minds. And they are

adept at connecting students with practicing entrepreneurs from the community to learn the fundamentals of planning, starting, and sustaining innovative companies that continue to foster and lead entrepreneurial teams for the long term. ■

We have 16 entrepreneurial, experienced students now looking for internships to start in May 2016, so if your company could use an 8-month infusion of talent, check out their [resumes](#) on our website and talk to:

Shawn Swallow
 Career Services Manager,
 Graduate Programs
 Sobey School of Business
 Sobey Building, Office #203
 902-491-6238
Shawn.Swallow@smu.ca.

<http://www.smu.ca/academics/sobey/for-business-mtei-interns.html>



ENACTUS AT SMU

Facilitating a culture of entrepreneurship across campus

Michael Sanderson, who is the manager of skills development and training at our Business Development Centre, recalls a powerful moment that happened about ten years ago.

It started with a student who wanted to promote financial literacy among high school students. He created “Dollar and a Dream,” a training workshop based on the bestselling book, *The Wealthy Barber*, by David Chilton.

The student managed to contact Chilton, who helped him figure out what he could use from the book and what he couldn't, and how to get the fundamentals across. He trained 200 high school students that year but the demand was so much greater that he built a train-the-trainer model.

This kind of successful innovation is possible within an entrepreneurial culture. Michael helps facilitate such a culture as

a faculty advisor for the award-winning Enactus team at Saint Mary's. Enactus is a campus-wide community that mobilizes students to improve the community and develop business leadership and innovation skills. It is also part of a larger, international Enactus movement. Enactus projects often



ENACTUS IS A CAMPUS-WIDE COMMUNITY THAT MOBILIZES STUDENTS TO IMPROVE THE COMMUNITY AND DEVELOP BUSINESS LEADERSHIP AND INNOVATION SKILLS.

begin with a social or societal challenge. Project leaders apply entrepreneurial solutions to develop a social enterprise.

At SMU, it started ten years ago with faculty giving classroom presentations urging entrepreneurial students to come together and network. But it really took off when students in the society told their friends and did their own presentations. It has since grown to over 170 students across campus each year.

Throughout, it has remained a student-driven community. It is the energy and drive of the students that draws alumni and faculty advisors – including people in the private sector, community members, and myself.

Often, professionals use vacation time to travel to competitions with Enactus teams. Margaret Murphy, our VP of External Affairs, even coaches our presentation team.

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Although they are students, members come at different stages of their entrepreneurial careers. Some have no business experience but believe they have an entrepreneurial way of thinking and seeing the world. Others have already started and are managing a business. Working together empowers people at all levels and puts them in a position to succeed, giving them opportunities young people don't often find in the classroom or working world.

Six years ago, Enactus members started winning regional entrepreneurial competitions such as the TD Entrepreneurship Challenge. Now, every year, we're a team to beat.

Four years ago, Michael took a team of five students to Malaysia to see the Enactus World Cup, where a select group of 3,500 students, business leaders and academics met to showcase the best in the world in innovative business ideas. They were there to learn more about succeeding in a competition.

They met daily to discuss strategy and debrief. That year the Saint Mary's team made it to the Canadian Final Four.

In 2015, they finished second. After that success, students and advisors came together, sat around and talked about how Enactus had changed their lives.

Will Brewer, a photographer with Artists with Down Syndrome, hired by the team to document the event, told the students what it meant to him to be part of the team. "Everyone bawled," Michael recalls. This is a university community that makes a real difference in people's lives.

There have been many inspirational moments over the

ten years of Enactus, like when two students flew to Peru and put on a week's worth of training in entrepreneurship for women there. Or the work of OPTions Nova, a.k.a. students Simon Gordon, Jake Porteous, Nicole MacPherson, and Amy Hamilton, a project founded on the belief in an opportunity for change in the lives of former inmates at the Nova Institute for Women in Truro.

Simon, Jake, Nicole, and Amy started a series of workshops for the women at Nova in entrepreneurship, financial literacy, and other business related skills, and a mentoring program for recently-released women. For the participants, the goal is to create their own economic opportunities equipped with the proper planning, skills, and confidence to succeed.

Perhaps counter-intuitively, Michael says the key to the program's success is remaining humble, open to opportunities and ideas. That is why our teams make it an unwritten policy to give standing ovations to other teams at competitions. ■

Research shows results

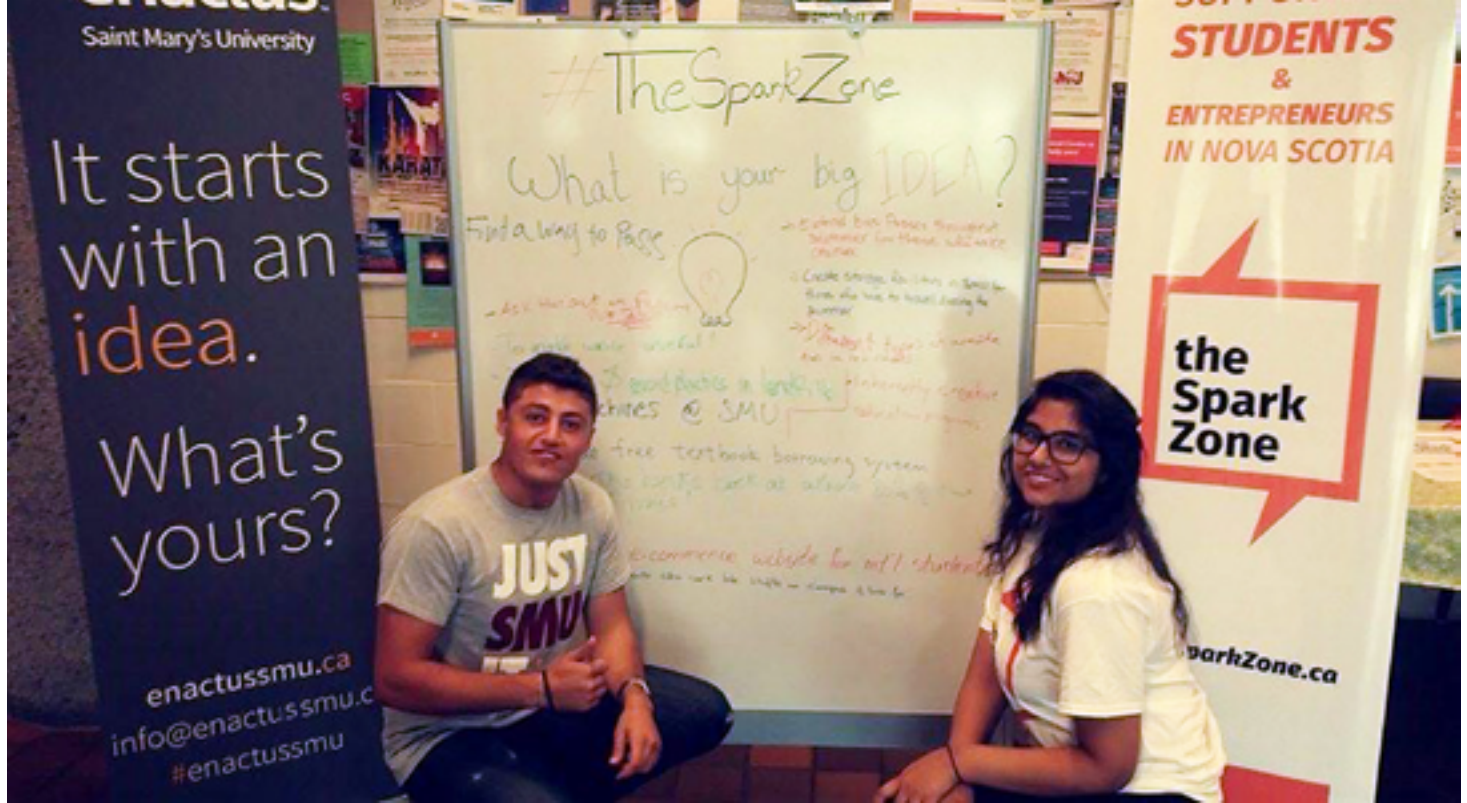
A key lesson that Enactus participants learn is the importance of measuring outcomes and results. That is part of the evaluation during Enactus competitions. Teams track an array of metrics including number of participants, volunteer hours, and ROI of projects.

One measure released by the national Enactus body before Christmas is of particular interest to our Enactus group. The Canadian Enactus office engaged a data company to examine Enactus groups for the ways their involvement impacted participants. The study showed, among other things, that Saint Mary's graduates who participated in Enactus activities are 59% more employable than similar graduates.



Above, the Enactus OPTions Nova team, 2014-2015, OPTions in Bolivia, Speak Up! (A campus group started by ENactus members to encourage international and domestic students to connect in an informal setting.) Start Up 100 was an award-winning project.

<http://www.smu.ca/academics/sobey/saint-marys-enactus-students-most-employable-in-canada.html>



SPARK ZONE INCUBATING IDEAS

In March 2015, 70 students from five campuses across Nova Scotia were given 24 hours to develop an online teaching tool for 5-16 year olds. They were divided into teams, each team consisting of students from various academic fields. A programmer might be matched with a business student and an arts student. They were in different locations and had to come together remotely.

This pressure-cooker competition, called the OneNS Hackathon, was hosted by the Spark Zone, a partnership between Saint Mary's, the Nova Scotia College of Art & Design, Mount Saint Vincent, and the Nova Scotia Community College. One of a series of sandbox projects set up by the government, Spark Zone is essentially a series of virtual and physical environments functioning as pre-incubators for new business ideas.

The Sobey School Business Development Centre proudly staffs and houses the Saint Mary's Spark Zone. It is a chaotic yet supportive, collaborative environment where ideas can be carefully considered and nurtured. This is how we encourage innovation.

The entrepreneurial mind generates a phenomenal number of ideas and knows most of them will either fail or fail to launch. And that's OK. As a matter of fact, it's part of the process of figuring out what works.

Only by sifting through ideas and examining their potential can the entrepreneur determine which ones are worthy of serious investment. The Spark Zone is a place where student and community entrepreneurs come together to do that work to create, develop, and sometimes launch business ideas and social innovations.

We call this kind of space a sandbox, with all the playfulness that implies. It is a creative lab where entrepreneurs can experiment, bounce ideas off successful business leaders already working in the community.

The OneNS Hackathon is a perfect example of this joyful, creative generation of ideas to solve common societal problems using diverse perspectives and skill sets. The winning team, which included students from SMU, Nova Scotia Community College, and Cape Breton University, came up with a program of weekly challenges to help youth explore their entrepreneurial skills. They were guided by guest speaker videos on the value of R&D, product development, and pitching concepts.

This kind of guidance is standard practice at the Spark Zone, which has successfully mentored many student entrepreneurs preparing for competitions such as the BOYNECLARKE Innovative Ideas Awards, where SMU students have taken the majority of awards in the last two years.

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SparkZone has hosted events including Pitch 101, Platform - Share the Idea and the New Product Competition.



NEW SOBEY VENTURE CAPITAL STUDENT GROUP



Dr. Ellen Farrell has started a new opportunity for finance-savvy entrepreneurial students, a Venture Capital group.

This focus at Spark Zone is important because we know the ability to sell ideas and concepts to potential investors is a crucial skill for any entrepreneur. That is why Jason Turner, who manages our Spark Zone, helped ramp up these efforts with a series of Pitch 101 sessions this fall. A pitch specialist was brought in to coach and provide feedback on student pitches at four campuses over a five-day period. The students with the best pitches then competed against one another.

What sets our Spark Zone apart is that it brings together such a diversity of ideas and marries would-be entrepreneurs of all stripes with experienced mentoring and free consultation sessions. While the majority of the 150 registered participants (and counting) are young, anyone can register, from student to senior citizen.

At each location and via online entrepreneurial chat rooms, the Spark Zone provides students access to a variety of services and supports at each partner institution, offering opportunities

for both students and community members interested in developing an entrepreneurial mindset.

In 2016, the Spark Zone partnered with the David Sobey Centre for Innovation in Retailing and Services to present the second annual New Product Competition. Finalists are presented at the Starting Point Student Entrepreneurship Conference. Learn more: <http://thesparkzone.ca/competition/> ■



START UP 100

LAUNCHING YOUNG ENTREPRENEURS

Jacob Campbell and Shekhar Bhadwaj had tried clothing imports, custom t-shirt printing, and organic mushroom farming. Each seemed to have considerable demand and sufficient supply.

But none of these business ideas took off quite the way they'd hoped. They had an entrepreneurial mindset and a nose for opportunity. But there was always a knowledge gap.

When Jacob came to the Sobey School of Business he was eager to fill that knowledge gap quickly. In addition to his undergraduate business classes, he entered every extracurricular entrepreneurship program he could find, paying a visit to the Spark Zone and eventually connecting with more than a 170 other student entrepreneurs as part of Enactus.

At Enactus, he learned about a new program called Start Up 100, which connected 100 student entrepreneurs across the province to interest-free startup loans, and to one another. They networked with each other and mentors in their respective communities as they started 100 new business ventures. The Startup 100 program is typical of the school's focus on not only teaching the best models, but putting thought into action and changing the world.

Start Up 100 was tailor-made for young entrepreneurs with ideas, intelligence, and energy, but in need of support and professional guidance. The program, coordinated last year by Jared Perry at our Business Development Centre, started with the aim of helping young entrepreneurs like Jacob.

Jared and his team reached out to more than 60 small communities

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ENTREPRENEURIAL
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across Nova Scotia, connecting with mayors, councils, CAOs, business leaders, and youth workers. They created a simple website and then an app where youth could download training materials and access an entrepreneurial chat room to share resources, ideas, and advice.

In February, 2015, during its first year, Start Up 100 attracted 137 student registrations and graduated 25 participants who intend to start businesses. They completed 11 different business modules, starting with brainstorming ideas and conceptualizing a brand.

Ideas ranged from starting retail outlets to importing textiles and designing new apparel brands. One participant focused on selling a device for testing the energy potential for wind energy sites.

Next, participants moved to business planning, marketing, and expansion. Each module was taught by industry professionals and Saint Mary's entrepreneurs.

The program was designed to finish during the summer so that graduates could start businesses as part of their summer work experience. Graduates were also eligible to access up to \$5,000 in provincial start up loans.

Jacob was one of the graduates, and



Jacob Campbell, a founder of Superb Moving, a Start Up 100 business.

(Photo: Superb Moving, Facebook)

one of about 10 who were matched with experienced mentors to facilitate the process. Jacob and his business partner, Shekhar, decided to put their energy and focus into the Superb Moving Company.

Superb was one of their many start ups over the years. When they carefully considered costs and opportunities and wrote a business plan analyzing potential demand and costs, they realized that if they intensified their efforts this business had a lot of potential. They targeted students and businesses in the Halifax Metro area, who frequently need affordable help moving short distances, and they received help with branding and promotional aspects from Jacob's mentor.

Based on the feedback from Start Up 100 participants we are not only continuing the program, with the hard work of this year's project manager, Sarah Jamer, we are looking to expand it to other provinces. In the meantime, we will keep working with students across Nova Scotia and supporting them in their efforts to develop our innovation economy. ■



THE ATLANTIC ENTREPRENEURIAL ECOSYSTEM

Connections matter

“WE NEED A CULTURAL SHIFT IN ATLANTIC CANADA. THIS IS A NEW ECONOMY, AND WE CAN BE A PART OF CREATING IT: “WHAT ARE GOING TO DO?””

- participant survey response

The Sobey School is proud of our stellar faculty research. Dr. Ellen Farrell’s work with venture capital and entrepreneurship is well known internationally. Last year, she undertook a groundbreaking project examining and tracking the connections in the community of Atlantic entrepreneurs. This research mapped the webs of the Atlantic Entrepreneurial Ecosystem. In September, 2015 we hosted a conference at Saint Mary’s University focusing on the outcomes of this research.

The Atlantic Entrepreneurial Ecosystem: A Policy Workshop to Build our Region’s Entrepreneurial Economy gathered 136 representatives of the “nodes” of the ecosystem – entrepreneurs, of course, but also government, universities, financiers, support organizations and others representing all four Atlantic Provinces. The conference provided a forum for those participants to collaborate with some of the world’s leading experts in successful entrepreneurial ecosystems.

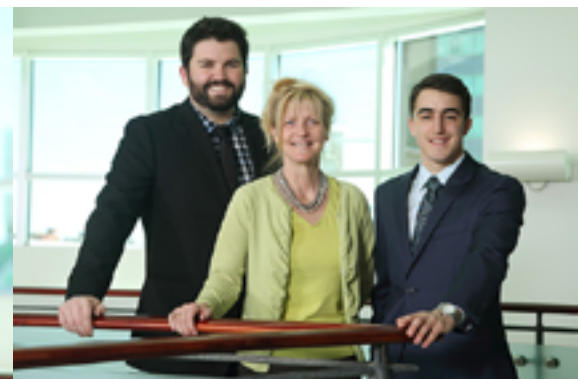
In addition to Dr. Farrell, speakers included noted researchers and authors on the subject of entrepreneurship including David Audretsch, Distinguished Professor and Ameritech Chair of Economic Development at Indiana University; Benson Honig, the Teresa Cascioli Chair in Entrepreneurial Leadership, DeGroote School of Business, McMaster University; Colin Mason, Entrepreneurship & Regional Development Professor, University of Glasgow, and Dane Stangler, Vice President of Research and Policy at the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation. Also presenting was well-known local innovator and entrepreneurial champion Gerry Pond.

For many years isolation was one of the most-cited challenges of being an entrepreneur. Dr. Farrell’s research visually demonstrates the way that members of the entrepreneurship community are interdependent, and the myriad ways that they connect.

Event participants were encouraged to think harder about the role they play in this system, and how each of them is a critical gear in driving the overall economy. ■



Attendees at the Entrepreneurial Ecosystem reception. Dr. Claudia De Fuentes, second from left, is a Sobey management professor currently conducting research to identify the determinants for innovation in services and retail firms. This research is financed by the David Sobey Centre for Innovation in Retailing and Services (DSCIRS).



Above, among our 2015 competition winners were Free2Charge, Ben Lynds and Pascal de Villers; Christie Chaplin-Saunders, entrepreneur behind AquaSol; Ryne Kingsbury and Ryan Hogg of Cookery with Dr. Ellen Farrell.

SELLING IDEAS

Sobey School of Business students are winning big at entrepreneurial competitions

In recent years, Sobey School of Business students have devised literacy enhancement technology, improved agricultural methods, manufactured public-use cell phone charging stations, and created a social media platform for Chinese ex-pats.

The entrepreneurial nature of our school is showing, and our students took home four of six BOYNECLARKE Innovative Ideas Awards in February, 2015. They swept all three awards in the social innovation category and it's the second straight year they've taken a majority of the awards.

To be clear, winning at competitions isn't an end product for us. It's a natural result of a school that has, for two decades now, been designed with innovation and entrepreneurship in mind.

That's why the Sobey School of Business team took the award as the *Entrepreneurial Powerhouse* university for the second year running at the 2016 BMO Apex Business Plan Competition. At the same competition last year, Sobey BComm students Ryan Hogg and Ryne Kingsbury won 2nd place for

Cookery in the Undergraduate category and MBA student Christie Chaplin-Saunders took 3rd place in the Graduate category with AquaSol, an innovative garden product. This year, Todd Mercer took 2nd place in the Graduate category with his Party UP app.

Innovation is simply a part of what we do and our variety of entrepreneurial classes and programs are how we do it. Professor Ellen Farrell, one of our great champions of entrepreneurship, covers her office door with newspaper clippings about student and graduate wins and other successes.

In 2015, MTEI student Tim Cranston's Afri-Sea technology took home first place in the BOYNECLARKE Social Innovation Stream. Afri-Sea also finished 5th out of 4,000 entrants in the International Business Model Competition at BYU in Utah, a competition they managed to qualify for on a wild card entry.

Tim marvels that the Sobey School has been so recognized for social innovations, yet "we don't even have a course in social enterprise." That's because the core of our entrepreneurial approach – in our

classrooms and extracurricular programming – is to identify societal needs, innovate to solve them, and market effective solutions.

Tim's technology is a fine example of this kind of thinking. It converts coastal sea plants into a sustainable alternative to chemical fertilizers, organically reducing the impact of drought on farming communities.

Because this innovation fills a crucial need with minimal impact, it is already in demand. The Gambian government has endorsed the technology and the World Bank is reviewing it.

Our faculty take pains to ensure that what they teach in the classroom is deeply connected to real-world practice. Successful graduates often help current students prepare to pitch their business plans.

Competition winners also benefit from substantial media coverage. We were all proud when Nelson Xie, a Sobey student intern at CBC, co-wrote a story about Jinbo Chen, a Sobey student who along with Guarav Rao and Mingqi Yang was recognized with a BOYNECLARKE award for

ENTREPRENEURIAL EXCELLENCE

EC Life, a “one stop shopping information and social platform for newcomers in their own language.”

Through his website, Chen helps Chinese immigrants settle in the most practical of terms: finding services in their own languages, Mandarin or Cantonese, and finding a community for networking and socializing. The site is monetized by online ads and it has attracted large corporations such as Sunlife and Royal Bank. It has quickly become the most high-traffic Chinese-language site in Halifax.

Chen, who has always been passionate about mental health and helping newcomers, is now working to create a mental health

support service for international students from China.

Sobey student Pascal de Villers also took home a prize from BOYNECLARKE for Free2Charge Inc., which is working to manufacture publicly available smart phone charging stations. Free2Charge is a wonderful example of forward thinking in a rapidly evolving technological world. As de Villers and his partners say on their website, “never be disconnected from the modern world.”

For our students, succeeding in competitions is more than a feather in the cap (or bullet point on the résumé) of young business leaders. Often, winners get seed

money to help them advance their ideas and turn them into thriving, job-generating businesses. Jason Turner, who manages the Sobey School Spark Zone, put it very clearly:

“Extra-curricular activities such as entrepreneurial competitions are key drivers of student success. For some they provide a healthy outlet for their competitive nature while others benefit from learning to craft a pitch in a pressure-packed environment.”

From sitting in a classroom learning about effective business models, these students have moved into competitions and then into launching businesses. We’re proud to accelerate their success. ■

A taste for competition



Cyra Belbin

Ask Cyra Belbin (MBA’08) how she came to parlay leftover pasta into more than a quarter of a million dollars in prize money, and the Sobey School MBA grad is surprisingly brief.

“Laziness,” says Belbin. “Sheer laziness.”

The longer version of the story:

“We had guests coming over and I was just too tired to cook,” she says, “so I looked in the fridge and spotted some leftovers.”

Summoning the creative cookery skills she normally reserves for fancy cupcakes, Belbin whipped up a batch of hors d’oeuvres by breading and frying balls of cold macaroni and cheese. “They had a crazy, mutant look,” she recalls, “but everyone loved them, so over time, I experimented until I perfected them.”

The next step was snagging a spot on CBC’s *Recipe to Riches*, a six-episode, reality TV series that pits amateur home cooks against each other in five different food categories. As the winner of the savoury snacks competition, Belbin earned \$25,000, product development for her Mexi Mac ’n’ Cheese Bites under the President’s Choice brand, and a shot at the finals.

“My MBA course work taught me to be strategic and organized,” she says. “I got things under control by preparing a communications plan and a social media calendar, so I was actually able to relax and enjoy the events leading up to the grand finale.”

Canadians voted online for their favourites. Cyra emerged the winner, wading across the stage through scattered sequins to accept a cheque for \$250,000.

“As a student in the Sobey School of Business, I made connections that helped me get my job with NSLC four months before graduation,” says Belbin. “At the time, I thought I couldn’t get any luckier.”

Turns out she was wrong, but the Saint Mary’s alumna isn’t complaining. ■

Excerpted from *Maroon & White* magazine, Spring 2014



SEEING OPPORTUNITY DIFFERENTLY



“WE SEE OPPORTUNITY DIFFERENTLY.”

I keep coming back to those wise words from Kaitlyn Touesnard of our Business Development Centre. We have long believed in embracing change, in finding solutions that society and the economy need.

created better social services for Chinese immigrants, invented technologies to improve literacy, created a world class marketing platform ... the list is far too long to include them all here.



The result is not merely a series of classes and programs, but rather an immersive and complete entrepreneurial culture that permeates the life of our students, faculty, and staff. We live and breathe entrepreneurship; we teach and practice innovative thinking.

In acknowledging the stellar work of our staff and faculty, and the generous support from the entrepreneur community, I don't want to take anything away from our students. Their successes – some of which I've featured here – speak for themselves.



With the support of our committed staff and faculty, Sobey students and graduates have achieved remarkable things at home and abroad. They've taught business skills to marginalized women in Peru, helped a low-income neighbourhood fight stigma, helped imprisoned women create a better future, improved connectivity for smart phone users,

But I will say that when you create an element of rigour – with high-level research, high academic standards, and the expectation of participation in real-world business activity – you tend to attract some of the brightest lights. Our students and alumni are incredibly smart, talented people with initiative, and we're proud to see them out there changing the world. ■



CONNECT WITH US

How would you like to be involved?

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Alumni?

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