

The Center for Entrepreneurship

David Pidwell, an alumnus of Ohio University who has spent forty years in Silicon Valley, envisions that southeast Ohio could give rise to an entrepreneurial business community of its own. The catalyst in his vision is the Center for Entrepreneurship at Ohio University. The purposes of this new Center are to integrate existing components of Ohio University's entrepreneurial ecosystem, to create a new approach to entrepreneurship education, and to nurture a culture of entrepreneurship in southeast Ohio.



David Pidwell

The Center for Entrepreneurship is a collaborative effort between the College of Business, the George Voinovich School of Leadership and Public Affairs, and various Ohio University offices such as the Technology Transfer Office, the Innovation Center, TechGrowth Ohio, and The Ohio University Foundation. The Center will benefit students and professors, the university as a whole, and ultimately the wider region.

For students, the Center will provide a certificate program that will combine classes from the College of Business with applied learning. In classes, students will learn entrepreneurial skills such as writing business plans, managing a small company, developing a product from a new technology, marketing, and sales. After some time in the classroom, the Center will assign students to young, regional companies to get a hands-on understanding of entrepreneurship.

The Center will also help faculty develop their research into marketable products. Ohio University is proud to employ many talented researchers, who create technologies worthy of commercialization, but who do not have the experience of commercializing their research. The university is becoming a world-recognized leader in clean, alternative energy technology, avionics, and medical life science devices.

By commercializing Ohio University intellectual property, the Center could enrich the university as a whole. Technologies that university researchers develop and successfully market as products will generate royalties.

Businesses that commercialize technologies created at Ohio University will pay back a portion of their earnings to the university, and the university will hold a small equity ownership in the companies, based on their rights to the technology.

The Center will also benefit the wider southeast Ohio region. Students will apply their learning in regional businesses, and hopefully after graduation, many of these students will remain in the region to start their own businesses or work with local start-ups. The Center will create the infrastructure necessary to support a nascent business community, including a pool of professional service providers such as investors, bankers, lawyers, and accountants.

The Center also will locate alumni of Ohio University who have had success in business, and who are willing to partner with young companies to mentor them. By promoting a culture of entrepreneurship around Athens, the Center will create high tech jobs and opportunities. It hopes to foster a higher rate of new start-up businesses, which will generate business tax revenue for the region and the state.

“The past and future success of the U.S economy largely depends upon its ability to be innovative and entrepreneurial,” says Hugh Sherman, Dean of the College of Business. “This Center will provide opportunities for students and researchers from around our University to develop their entrepreneurial abilities so that they can contribute to creating new wealth and employment opportunities for our region, state and nation.”

The Center for Entrepreneurship is now open, teaching classes, developing a mentorship program, ready to send students to get hands-on learning in regional businesses, and the next year will see a number of young venture business evolving in southeast Ohio. As a result of Mr. Pidwell's generous gift, the Center can afford to hire a director. Mr. Pidwell has taken the lead in giving life to his vision of turning Athens from a sleepy college town into a vibrant entrepreneurial hub. While this vision may seem distant, he personally saw the transformation of orchards and pastures into the Silicon Valley of today. Given some time, talent, and start-up funds, the Center may turn this vision into reality.

The Center for Entrepreneurship may eventually pay for itself, but first it will need more donors like Mr. Pidwell. If you are interested in contributing to the Center for Entrepreneurship, please contact Joseph Foley, Director of Development, at (740) 597- 2643 or foleyj@ohio.edu.