



# SPOTLIGHT

## Business Schools and Innovation

### Featured School:

DePaul University

College of Commerce &  
The Charles H. Kellstadt Graduate School of Business

Chicago, Illinois, United States

[www.depaul.edu](http://www.depaul.edu)

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## College of Commerce & Kellstadt Graduate School of Business

### The Center for Creativity and Innovation

The Center for Creativity and Innovation (CCI) is part of the College of Commerce & Kellstadt Graduate School of Business at DePaul University. The purpose of the center is to be a premier source of knowledge, skills enhancement, and customized facilitation to foster creativity and innovation in the workplace. Activities sponsored by the Center are intended to make a difference in the ways in which individuals, groups, and organizations search for opportunities, solve problems, and bring meaning into their work lives.

Within the College of Commerce and Kellstadt Graduate School of Business, the CCI serves four primary roles:

- 1) to build connections between the College and the business and non-profit communities with regards to creativity and innovation-related activities and initiatives;
- 2) to provide education and professional development through activities such as Conferences on creativity and innovation that bring together alumni, the business community, students, and academics;
- 3) to support the innovation curriculum in the College by facilitating the connection between innovation professionals and DePaul curricula; and
- 4) to extend students' access to education in creativity and innovation through program offerings and support of student organizations such as the Graduate Entrepreneurs Organization and the Student Leadership Institute.

The CCI was begun in 1999 as a response to a number of perceived needs. Dr. Lisa Gundry, the Center's Director, had been teaching courses on creativity in business since 1993. She says that many business schools at that time already had programs and initiatives in entrepreneurship, but few had any infrastructure dedicated to the comparatively more nebulous concepts of innovation and applying creativity to business. The idea behind the CCI, she says, is to distinguish it in both identity and function from the more common entrepreneurship centers by aiming to fulfill the needs of entrepreneurial organizations ranging in size from one-person start-ups to large corporations, including major financial and manufacturing firms. Additionally, the CCI's programs respond to student concerns such as how to make their company culture more innovative, how to help employees become more creative, etc. The result is a center with a balance of both community-focused and student-focused initiatives.

The CCI benefits from broad support within the business school and university. It is housed in space within the business school, and is funded through the College of Commerce, as well as through individual and corporate sponsorships. In addition to Dr. Gundry and a Project Coordinator, Anna Bibik, about 10-12

faculty are affiliated with the CCI, some of whom are affiliated with the business school, and some of whom are from other academic units. These faculty members make service contributions by delivering innovation education programs to teach more effective methods of creative problem solving, contemporary innovation strategies, and managing innovation in organizations. Additionally, according to Ms. Bibik, DePaul University's Alumni Sharing Knowledge (ASK) program within the DePaul Career Center helped in communications efforts, in particular assisting the CCI in identifying alumni innovators for a panel.

### **Alumni and Business Community-Centered CCI Programs**

The Center hosted its 3<sup>rd</sup> annual conference on Sept. 17, 2009<sup>1</sup>. It featured plenary and breakout sessions, and a keynote address by Tom Schlegel of Radio Flyer, Inc., winner of the Chicago Innovation Award. Over one hundred participants attended from the business, non-profit and academic communities. At the conference, the CCI presented its first Innovation Advocacy Award to Carol Oman of Consumer Innovation, at Kraft Foods R&D. The Award was created to recognize extraordinary service to the field, to promote greater understanding and growth, and to celebrate people who contribute significant efforts to educating future innovators and supporting innovation in the business community<sup>2</sup>.

The Center developed and hosts the Innovation Consortium, a forum promoting professional development and networking opportunities for individuals (primarily innovation managers) from the business, non-profit, and academic communities to learn from each other and build awareness of the field of innovation in our respective communities. Meetings are theme-based, and are frequently guest-hosted by members' organizations. Dr. Gundry says the forum is popular with both students and companies, often serving as the springboard for company tours.

The CCI offers educational programming, including its intensive two-day workshop known as the Mastering Innovation<sup>®</sup> Series<sup>3</sup>, designed for managers, team leaders and entrepreneurs who desire to innovate more effectively in their work, business, and careers. The programs help participants sharpen their skills in driving innovation in high performance teams and organizations, and teach innovation tools and strategies to help professionals lead and manage sustainable change.

The CCI also undertakes a number of collaborative projects across the university, which according to Dr. Gundry is one of the CCI's most important roles at DePaul University. These projects have included co-sponsorship of a workshop on innovation in government and the public sector with DePaul's School of Public Service and Chaddick Institute for Metropolitan Development<sup>4</sup>, and workshops for working professionals in collaboration with DePaul's School for New Learning.

Less formal opportunities for faculty, students, and the business community include opportunities to hear and meet with renowned speakers and experts in the field of innovation management. One of the Center's most popular programs is The Innovator's Bookshelf, which features book talks and signings by authors of recent books on innovation. For example, Daniel Pink, author of *A Whole New Mind* and *Drive* recently visited to talk about his work.

Further, the CCI provides advisory services to external organizations, more and more of which are approaching the center, according to Dr. Gundry. In support of this goal, activities and initiatives may include assisting organizations in the development of in-house innovation centers and innovation programs, helping students, alumni, and business professionals generate ideas for launching a new venture, offering expertise through panel and workshop development and participation, writing research reports, and developing conference programs and classes. One recent example is the Chicago Architecture Foundation, which approached the CCI for assistance in enhancing the visitor experience in its new exhibit space.

### **Student-Centered CCI Programs**

One of the most popular programs for students, according to Dr. Gundry, is the "Idea Clinic," a forum for the sharing and discussion of creative business ideas and innovation strategies. (The clinic is open to alumni and business community members as well as current DePaul students<sup>5</sup>.) Participants learn innovation tools to explore ideas and implement solutions pertinent to each session's theme. Recent sessions focused on "Reinventing your Career in an Economic Downturn," "International Opportunities for Innovation," and "Social Entrepreneurship and Innovation." The Idea Clinic features faculty and facilitators from the business community who work with students in these sessions. According to Ms. Bibik, one of the most successful Idea Clinic events was a recent alumni panel in which the panelists shared their experiences starting a business, including the often-overlooked topics of idea generation and development strategies. The Clinic's focus on idea generation is particularly helpful, says Dr. Gundry, for students who wish to enroll in entrepreneurship courses, as they are often expected to begin the course with a business idea that they will then develop throughout the semester.

Finally, the CCI also fosters education in creativity and innovation by supporting the curriculum in the College of Commerce and the Kellstadt Graduate School of Business. One such initiative is the Ideation Sessions with local organizations. Entrepreneurs, business managers or non-profit managers are invited in to the course, and present students in innovation classes with a challenge (e.g., a business problem or opportunity). After preliminary research, students use innovation tools learned in their coursework to generate ideas to solve the challenge. Examples of organizations that have participated in this program include: Snap-On Tools, SmithBucklin, BrightStar Corp, and CareerBuilder. The CCI also matches students with organizations that have projects in need of teams with business innovation competencies.

These can be in the form of internships or extracurricular projects that impact business as well as communities.

The CCI has numerous aspirations for the future. The center will hold its inaugural Innovation Awards in the upcoming 2010-2011 academic year. The awards will recognize students' innovations, and nominees may be individual or team-based. This year's theme will be Service Innovation, since services play a significant role in the global economy as organizations continually strive to create and provide better services to their customers and create new markets. Other ideas for the future at the CCI include expanding the Idea Clinics and Ideation Sessions into a full-blown innovation laboratory, in order to more fully explore the connections between innovation, business, and design, and finding new ways to incorporate the findings into the curriculum, according to Dr. Gundry. Ms. Bibik says expanding the CCI's outreach capabilities through the Internet, using webinars and social media to reach a greater audience, is also part of the CCI's future plans.

### **The Coleman Entrepreneurship Center**

The efforts of the CCI are complemented by the business school's Coleman Entrepreneurship Center, founded in 2003 as an extension of the school's entrepreneurship programs<sup>6</sup>. Dr. Gundry describes the relationship of the two centers as "close-knit," particularly since the faculty and staff of each work in concert together frequently. The CCI programs that target DePaul students often serve as feeders for those of the Coleman Center, because the CCI helps students in the idea stage – to develop their product concept, better suit it to the market, etc. As a result, students are better prepared to develop business plans through the programs of the Coleman Center, such as its virtual incubator, Blueprint.

The Blueprint incubator provides current DePaul students the support and encouragement they need to successfully launch and grow new entrepreneurial businesses or social ventures<sup>7</sup>. Students receive one-on-one guidance, direction, and help from the Coleman Center staff, experienced mentors, and other students. Assistance and resources focus on planning, launching, and growing a venture, and providing information that complements and integrates what students learn in class.

Additionally, Blueprint enables student entrepreneurs and innovators to develop a network of contacts within the entrepreneurial and business communities at DePaul University and its host city of Chicago. This network enables students who work together monthly to build a support system for balancing school with business ownership, and to share best practices and learning.

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## End Notes

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<sup>1</sup> DePaul University, Center for Creativity and Innovation. (2010) Annual Creativity and Innovation Business Conferences. Electronic document, <http://www.creativity.depaul.edu/NewsandEvents/Conference/index.asp>, accessed July 5, 2010.

<sup>2</sup> DePaul University, Center for Creativity and Innovation. (2010) Innovation Advocacy Award. Electronic document, [http://www.creativity.depaul.edu/Innovation\\_Advocacy\\_Award/index.asp](http://www.creativity.depaul.edu/Innovation_Advocacy_Award/index.asp), accessed June 17, 2010.

<sup>3</sup> DePaul University, Center for Creativity and Innovation. (2010) Custom Workshops and Seminars. Electronic document, <http://www.creativity.depaul.edu/Certificate%20Program%2C%20Workshops%20and%20Consulting/CustomWorkshopsandSeminars/index.asp>, accessed July 5, 2010.

<sup>4</sup> DePaul University, Center for Creativity and Innovation. (2010) Past Events. Electronic document, [http://www.creativity.depaul.edu/NewsandEvents/Past\\_Events/index.asp](http://www.creativity.depaul.edu/NewsandEvents/Past_Events/index.asp), accessed July 9, 2010.

<sup>5</sup> DePaul University, Center for Creativity and Innovation. (2010) Upcoming Events. Electronic document, <http://creativity.depaul.edu/NewsandEvents/UpcomingEvents/index.asp>, accessed July 9, 2010.

<sup>6</sup> DePaul University, Coleman Entrepreneurship Center. (2010) Home Page. Electronic document, <http://coleman.depaul.edu/>, accessed July 9, 2010.

<sup>7</sup> DePaul University, Coleman Entrepreneurship Center. (2010) Blueprint: Designing & Building Student-Entrepreneurs. Electronic document, <http://coleman.depaul.edu/blueprint/>, accessed July 9, 2010.