

The Laney College Entrepreneurship Center: A Concept Paper

By Boku Kodama on behalf of the
Entrepreneurship Center Collaborative

Defining the Laney Entrepreneurship Center

The New Working Majority

Across the country, entrepreneurs are increasing in numbers – an increase that’s been steady since 2014 with over 500,000 new *legal* launches each year. According to the Kauffman Foundation in 2013, new businesses created nearly 100 percent of America’s net new jobs. Another group, the Gig Economy (part time independent contractors) is considered the fastest growing working segment. According to SAP, the business management giant, by 2030, 50 percent of today’s global jobs will be replaced by a new kind of work handled by the *3000 percent* increase in Gig workers. Coupled together, they form an unprecedented force comprising our new Working Majority. In reality, they are all entrepreneurs.

The speed of change in our economy is forcing sustainable entrepreneurs to learn to pivot in order to stay relevant to consumers. New competencies defined by recruiting managers - creative design thinking, systems thinking and the ability to collaborate –also happen to be vital traits of an entrepreneurial mindset. The preparation of this Working Majority will define our economic health.

Our public institutions are slow to support and finance this emerging economic environment – one that will affect every person and every family. What’s vital for us as educators and practitioners is to embrace the role of entrepreneurship in today’s society.

This concept paper is a first step towards 1) building a strategy to address our new erratic working environment, 2) shifting our paradigms about workforce development and 3) promoting an entrepreneurial approach to a constantly changing ecosystem of 21st century work.

Serving the New Working Majority

In local and national studies, what has proven effective in preparing our new entrepreneurs has been the services of entrepreneurship centers. That is, physical places where would-be, new and existing small business owners can seek assistance and knowledge to operate their enterprises, something that many entrepreneurs rarely take the time to do because the access is not convenient.

Entrepreneurs who regularly utilize resources available for their businesses are 89 percent more likely to reach the five-year mark. In comparison, over 60 percent of those who go it alone are

likely to fail by their third year. This translates to 400,000 businesses failures each year. (*Source: National Business Incubator Association and the US SBA*) For those in the Gig Economy, without the proper knowledge to function as independent contractors, it would not be a stretch to predict their rate of failure as running at a similar pace.

The National Association of Community College Entrepreneurship (NACCE), a group that's been around only since 2002, has two goals that our collaboration could adopt as long term goals:

1. *Empower the college to approach the business of leading a community college with an entrepreneurial mindset, and*
2. *Grow the community college's role in supporting job creation and entrepreneurs in their local ecosystem.*

If we can achieve these two goals through the birth of a campus entrepreneurship center, we've done our job. But it won't be easy. Developing an entrepreneurial mindset doesn't happen overnight, but it takes months of learning, understanding, and finally "getting it" with practice. The process can be uncomfortable and challenging so that many of us may revert to our old ways, especially when one has existed in an institutionalized environment. (*Please read the attached NISOD Paper entitled "An Entrepreneurial Mindset for Student Success, May 2016.*)

Our goal is to begin with a visible, concrete place-based solution – an entrepreneurship center – that will serve as the hub of innovation, a resource center, and a foundation navigating a chaotic economic future. What happened in the 2008-09 meltdown that destroyed the livelihoods of millions of unprepared workers is becoming the norm. How we address students' ability to pivot, to maintain their assets, and to acquire the knowledge to stay above the fray will benchmark the effectiveness of this collaboration.

What's being proposed at Laney is rare: A One-Stop Entrepreneurship Center (akin to the One-Stop Career Centers) that holds the capacity, expertise and connections to address the needs of most entrepreneurs. Whether by choice, focus or limited funding, few centers have marshaled the wide range of expertise and activities needed by entrepreneurs. Many centers focus on a specific purpose, such as education or financing. As a result, business owners must spend time searching for the answers or work without them.

An entrepreneurship center that addresses 90 percent of what an entrepreneur needs (including things they didn't realize they need) in one location is efficient for the business owner and raises the likelihood that they will use it. By implementing a collaborative model with a diverse segment of expert partners, we can create a center meeting the needs of most entrepreneurs. And only through collaboration can a quality model of services and community engagement truly revolutionize a process that will serve students and clients with sustainable results.

The Collaborative Partners (So Far)

As of June 21, 2016, our collaborative partners include:

- Laney Business Department
- Laney Entrepreneur Club
- Kiva Zip Oakland
- Renaissance Entrepreneurship Center
- Working Solutions
- Youth Business America
- Sustainable Economies Law Center
- Sustainable Business Alliance
- Oakland Housing Authority
- Ability Now Bay Area and
- Urban FIRE

The Three Stages of Development

Stage #1: Gather Information and Research

- Conduct workshops with Laney students and community members to gather feedback
- Create an information pamphlet on our partners to create awareness of services provided
- Develop curriculum that addresses the following questions:
 - Type of classes (credit, non-credit)
 - Will a certificate be desirable
 - The overall content of the program including advising, post-graduation services
 - Qualification of the instructors to participate in the program

Stage #2: Create the Center Structure

- Management of the center
- Financing
- Location on campus (and satellites off site?)

Stage #3: Plan Opening Date and Break Down the Necessary Work

Content of the Entrepreneurship Center

Using feedback from our collaborative partners, the general concept of a Laney entrepreneurship center would include:

1. Education

- Education/training specific to operating a successful business (including hack-a-thons)
- Training on developing the entrepreneurial mindset
- Diverse curriculum team to develop continuous best practices and new innovations
- Promotion of the college's classes that will enhance an entrepreneur's skill set and knowledge

2. Incubators and Open Work Spaces (fee based)
 - Incubator program, one-year residence for new businesses with benchmarks
 - Drop-in work space (large, wide open space) on first-come, first-reserved basis
3. Financial Advising and Resources
 - Onsite offices for microloan, peer-to-peer and conventional loan providers
 - Bookkeeping and Accounting advice and services
 - Tax services for entrepreneurs
4. Business Assistance and Resources
 - Offices for key partners, e.g. financing, education, legal, marketing, accounting
 - Set hours for student drop-in and appointment based assistance
5. Legal and Government Assistance
 - Weekly office hours for legal assistance – SELC, Legal Services for Entrepreneurs
 - Monthly one-on-one advising by local governments on their business requirements
6. Onsite Triage “Navigators”
 - A template “Creating a Business” roadmap – a step-by-step startup guide using onsite resources
 - Trained personnel who directs visitors to the right resources both internal and external
 - An application to assist visitors in selecting the right actions for their entrepreneurial venture
7. Forums, Workshops and Events
 - Regularly scheduled events promoting entrepreneurs and entrepreneurial activities
 - Networking events to allow entrepreneurs to make connections
 - Workshops by partners on specific topics, e.g. SEO, web designing, logo designing
 - Pitch events when entrepreneurs can compete for funding and/or professional advice
 - Speed events such as speed advising, speed networking (similar to speed dating)
8. Internships
 - Partner with local businesses to provide hands-on experiences for recent graduates
 - Train students to apply for internships
9. Marketplace and Pop-up Stores
 - Establish a campus marketplace for new entrepreneurs at very low rents for a six-month lease
 - Create a quarterly showcase student businesses with a bazaar style popup store.
 - Connect with the greater community including Oakland Grown, Oakland Makers, Buy Oakland, to participate in their selling events.
10. Local Business Partnerships
 - Corporate partners providing introductory access to new entrepreneurs
 - SBDC (Small Business Development Center) link to consultants, events and workshops

The Back Story

In 2002, Paul Lamb and I cofounded the Bay Area Technology Education Collaboration (BayTEC), a large regional partnership consisting of 30 East Bay city governments, educational institutions and community organizations. We secured over \$5 million from the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) and private foundations to train residents in low income communities with the skills for the high tech industry. BayTEC graduated 4,400 students over a three-year period. It wasn't smooth sailing by any means given the diversity and interests of so many different groups. We created a strong collaboration with the exception of one key player, the Peralta Community College District.

At the time, we wanted Peralta's participation so that our students would receive college credit. We were willing to accept the conditions termed by Peralta because we believed their educational expertise for job training was essential. What we had not counted on were the constant resistant to listening to community voices and limitations to creating innovative curriculum that would cater to our student clients. After two years, the collaboration terminated its relationship with Peralta.

Fast forward to May 2016, and I'm again working with Peralta , more specifically with Laney Community College's Business Department, to assess the feasibility of launching an entrepreneurship center on campus with strong ties to the Oakland community, so that entrepreneurs can work in their communities where support, ideas and clients exist.

At this time in Oakland's rapid re-emergence, if Laney students are to increase their potential for success, they need to connect and seek out the resources that are reside in their own backyard. If we don't train our students to gain entrepreneurial skills, odds are damn good they'll have a harder time in the rapidly changing marketplace, whether they start a business or work in the emerging self-directed/entrepreneurial environment.

I'm optimistic that our starting collaboration will form a venue that will last for decades with the flexibility to pivot with the times. This isn't just one for the books. If done right, it will have a reverberating, tsunamic, positive impact on Oakland.

-Boku