Student-driven innovation at Ryerson University

An information session on the proposed Optional Specialization in Zone Education

Spring 2013

The Office of the Provost and Vice-President Academic
Entrepreneurial zone education?

- Experiential learning environment
- Student-driven and motivated
- Active mentorship, coaching and support
- Student teams:
  - Conceive ideas
  - Create, incubate and accelerate start-up companies
  - Test prototypes
  - Develop solutions to industry and community challenges
A broad definition

An entrepreneurial approach can be applied in any area in which innovation is sought = private enterprise = not-for-profit sector = government
Optional Specialization in Zone Education

- i-CUE
- DMZ
Optional Specialization in Zone Education

- Design
- Health
- i-CUE
- Fashion
- DMZ
- Social innovation
- Arts
Structure

- **ZEDXXX** – a single umbrella course/six-credit curriculum for full-time participants
- **ZEDxxy** for part-time
  - Fully experiential
  - A major team-based project
  - Analogous to a *graduate research thesis project* – project milestones are defined and evaluated regularly; week-by-week course outline not meaningful
  - Graded on a Pass/Fail basis
  - Optional addition to a student’s undergraduate education
  - Will appear as a credential on transcript
Stages of zone education

Education Stages

Stage 1: Preparation
- Study modules to develop skills
- Construct teams
- Work with experts/faculty and team to develop concept
- Detailed work plan
- Market understanding
- Feasibility assessment

Stage 2: Development
- Active mentorship, coaching and professional support
- Develop and prototype business plan
- Technical direction and guidance from mentors/experts
- Develop, test and evaluation initial versions

Stage 3: Application
- Complete and test product, service or solution
- Advance company/organization, technology/product via investors, etc.
- Set-up operational structure
- Market readiness assessment

Stage 4: Commercialization/Actualization
- Going concern with ongoing revenue stream

PERFORMANCE EVALUATION
“...Ryerson’s academic units can design and implement Zone Education that reflects the **nuances of their fields** of endeavour while permitting the **cross-fertilization** of ideas and skills from a wide range of disciplines that is part of the **ethos of Zone Education**.”
Student profile

• Open to current Ryerson students and others (enroll as special students)
  Completed first year or higher of undergrad degree with CLEAR standing or equivalent experience

• Interests and traits
  Multi-disciplinary, team-focused and collaborative, industry/sector-facing, highly-qualified, able to prototype and innovate, passionate, confident, disciplined, and able to leverage real-world experience

• Evaluated in terms of prior experience/learning

• 800 students approximately (steady state)
  Equivalent to 10% of graduating student body
Evaluation and assessment

• A performance evaluation approach to reflect “real-world” working experience

• Formal evaluation is done at least once a semester
  o Two-tiered:
    • A panel of experts (Ryerson faculty and industry experts)
      – Provides supervision and mentorship
      – Gives pass/fail
    • A group of peers (the “peer-to-peer” evaluation)
      – Most effective in the application stage once students have some experience of idea development

  o Final Pitch
    Each team required to pitch their product/service/process idea to the expert panel
Governance

• Academic home - single Dean of Record
• Optional Specialization Committee – responsible for academic and admission decisions:
  – Director of Zone Education will be appointed
  – Associate Dean from each of the six faculties
  – Chair (or designate) of the Department of Entrepreneurship and Strategy
  – Optional Specialization Program Coordinator
  – Director of the Digital Media Zone (or designate)
  – Supported by an Optional Specialization Program Assistant
Societal problem

“Technology has dramatically changed the way the world’s problems get solved... **focus not on solving problems but on discovering them.** Discovering new problems is something that computers can’t really do. Discovering new problems is otherwise known as “creativity.””

Don Peppers

Class of 2013: You Can’t Make a Living Just by Solving Problems
The opportunity

• Optional Specialization:
  – Aligns with Ryerson’s current academic plan
  – Furthers Ryerson’s commitment to experiential learning
  – Responds to the needs of the market and society
  – A blueprint/road map for funding opportunities; an extension of Ryerson’s Strategic Mandate Agreement
Where we go next

THINK WITH US

• The Optional Specialization is only one small step in this direction
• Share your ideas about the best ways to move forward on the innovation of higher education – including zones