

Proceedings
Teaching Entrepreneurship to Engineering
Students

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Mississippi State University Engineering
Entrepreneurship Program

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**MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY ENGINEERING
ENTREPRENEURSHIP PROGRAM**

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Developing entrepreneurial thinking in our graduates is one of the primary learning goals of the College of Engineering at Mississippi State University. To fulfill this goal, we have established a multilevel engineering entrepreneurship program to serve students with different levels of interest. The base mission of the program is to expose our students to the broader elements of running a business and the general managerial skills required to prepare them for opportunities in management. For a more limited number, our mission is to equip technologically creative students to recognize opportunities and help instill the confidence to act on these opportunities to start entrepreneurial businesses.

The basic and broadest element of the entrepreneurship program is a weekly seminar series in which successful entrepreneurs present case histories or experts discuss specific items, such as patents, hiring employees, and venture capital. The next level is the Idea Fair and team projects. At the Idea Fair featured companies are invited to present ideas for products or services that may have commercial value. For those that generate significant student interest, interdisciplinary student teams are formed to develop the product or service. The participating companies provide guidance and encouragement. The projects also provide credit for design or technical elective classes. The Idea Fair produces 10-15 student projects each semester.

For students with higher levels of interest, a formal course of study leading to an Entrepreneurship Certificate is available. The certificate program requires a minimum of 15 semester hours. Students gain skills in finance, marketing, and accounting followed by a management course in entrepreneurship where the capstone project is a business plan.

An alumnus has established an endowed chair in Entrepreneurship and a successful entrepreneur is directing the program. All elements of the program are in place and enthusiastically embraced by the students. Some seminars have filled the 150-seat hall, twelve 'company projects' are underway, and about 30 students are planning on pursuing the Entrepreneurship Certificate.