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Entrepreneurship
Learning on Campus

Abstract: This chapter investigates the efforts being undertaken in higher education to teach entrepreneurship and impart entrepreneurial attitudes and values to students. The chapter charts the development of entrepreneurship education and examines its diffusion from business schools across college and university campuses. Accompanying the growing diversity and number of entrepreneurship courses and degree programs are a range of extracurricular programming, such as innovative incubation programs, start-up workshops, and new venture seed funds. The development of entrepreneurship education at four universities is examined in depth and reveals how the curricular and extracurricular opportunities for students to learn entrepreneurship are often responses to internal and external influences. Overall, the chapter identifies the diversification of models employed inside and outside the classroom to impart entrepreneurial mindsets and skills to students.

Thirty years ago, entrepreneurship education proponent Robert Ronstadt argued sanguinely, “Can entrepreneurship be taught? Can it be learned? The debate continues unabated in the press, at academic conferences, and even meetings of successful practitioners. The continued dialogue is worthwhile but the decision has already been made. Entrepreneurship will be taught and students have chosen in large numbers to learn about starting new ventures and other topics associated increasingly with the emerging field of entrepreneurial studies.” Although the debate as to whether or not entrepreneurship can be taught is ongoing to this day, the notion that colleges and universities should provide entrepreneurial learning opportunities has become well established on campuses across Canada and the United States.

The first entrepreneurship course was introduced at Harvard University in 1947. It was not until the early 1970s, however, that entrepreneurship education began to gain a firm foothold in higher education, and during the 1980s, the number of entrepreneurship courses doubled. During this period of growth, many scholars were critical of entrepreneurship education, with many questioning whether entrepreneurship could even be taught. Despite these challenges to the growth of entrepreneurship education, the field continued to expand. Most recent estimates—already several years dated—place the number of entrepreneurship courses offered in US colleges and universities at over 1,600. Some of these courses are offered at community colleges, which first established entrepreneurship courses in the late 1970s and experienced rapid growth thereafter. By 2004, 62 percent of American community colleges were offering one or more courses in small business or entrepreneurship. In Canada, a similar trend has occurred, where the number of entrepreneurship courses offered at universities grew from 72 in 1979 to 351 by the middle of the 2000s. Most universities in Canada now offer at least one course in entrepreneurship, and large research institutions boast multiple offerings.

Accompanying the rise in course offerings, institutions of higher education in both the United States and Canada have introduced entrepreneurship degrees, certificates, and specialization programs. The first entrepreneurship programs were launched at the University of Southern California: the Master of Business Administration (MBA) concentration in entrepreneurship in 1971, followed by the first undergraduate concentration a year later. By the mid-1980s, there were ten programs offering an entrepreneurship specialization in the