

Editorial

The current issue, highlighting entrepreneurship may be symbolic of the paths now trodden by universities in order to satisfy the ever growing demand for a practical slant in a higher education degree. Active learning, problem and project based learning ultimately spawn entrepreneurship courses where almost nothing distinguishes them from the running of a real company. A particularly illuminating example is given in the paper by Hamilton, Crawford and Suuberg on a technology based entrepreneurship course at Brown University. The course, given to an interdisciplinary team of students—from literature, materials engineering, chemical engineering, computer science, mechanical engineering, electrical engineering—you name it, practically any direction available at university—assembled from students, faculty and senior company advisers, goes all the way up to establishing a start-up company or an experimental product development. Almost the only aspect that is semi guided is that the choice of the theme development is not entirely free, but is given in broad terms. The experience at Brown is that the student teams, in general, do not continue into the post graduation period as start-up companies. This is partly due to the recruiting modalities, where students are offered 'secure' company jobs before graduation, so that the alternative of establishing their own company is less attractive. Once employment opportunities after graduation are less plentiful this trend may be reversed and we will see more companies growing directly out of entrepreneurship activities at university.

The trend towards a very down to earth educational experience is definitely coming, even to established research universities. Higher education paradigms have been in a state of flux ever since the IT revolution. Disseminating facts and methodology is almost beginning to take a back seat. I feel that in order to keep up high level research and development, fundamental knowledge and theoretical approaches will always remain the basis for the advancement of human knowledge and prosperity. But, the entrepreneurial courses are an enriching supplement to the experiences of students.

The special section of this issue was edited by John Feland at Stanford, who was involved in many things while assembling the papers, such as becoming a father, finishing his Ph.D. and more. I am particularly grateful to John for selecting and reviewing the papers. As a small aside, we are including a page in color in this issue. A sign of things to come.

Michael Wald