SUSTAINABLE ENTREPRENEURSHIP AT THE ERB INSTITUTE

Erb students and alumni demonstrate leadership in turning planet-friendly innovations into profit-making ventures. Erb entrepreneurs collaborate with distinguished experts from across the University of Michigan, and leverage the award-winning resources offered by the Ross School of Business. Chief among these resources is the Zell Lurie Institute for Entrepreneurial Studies (ZLI), a key partner in providing Erb students with the skills and opportunities they need to pilot and scale sustainable enterprises. Through a combination of coursework, grant awards, competitions and master’s projects, the Erb Institute is empowering the next generation of socially and environmentally motivated entrepreneurs.

ERB FACULTY AFFILIATES INTRODUCE NEW COURSES FOR INNOVATION

In 2011, Professor Jerry Davis (Erb Faculty Affiliate) and Chris White (Ross MBA 2011 and now managing director of the Center for Positive Organizational Scholarship), launched the University’s first course to help students drive social change within large institutions. In “Social Intrapreneurship”, students learn to apply the tools of social enterprise to help established companies—ranging from multinational firms to small businesses—embrace profitable and pro-social innovations.

To bring design thinking to the service sector, Erb Faculty Affiliate Nigel Melville of the Ross School of Business recently introduced “Service Innovation Management”, a course focused on the development of new services in sustainability, education, health care and other areas. In this course, students learn how to use human-centered tools and techniques as well as traditional business practices to better serve consumers and companies. Both courses are offered as part of the Ross School curriculum.

ERB STUDENT ENTREPRENEURS ATTRACTING INVESTMENT

Erb entrepreneurial students benefit from funding at every stage of project development. Opportunities include the Mayleben Family Venture Shaping, Dare to Dream Assessment, and Dare to Dream Integration Grants. The Erb Institute provides financial support through its Mayleben Family Fund and ZLI administers the programs. Recipients include:

Stephen Ahn (Erb ‘13), for Cafe Esperanza, a collaboration to increase the living standards and sustainability of coffee farmers in Honduras.

Raphael Meyer, Richard Grousset and David Yang (all Erb ‘13), for Go Blue Box, a pilot to make reusable takeaway containers a viable alternative to disposables, currently piloting at the University. This project also attracted the investment of UM’s Planet Blue Student Innovation Fund.

Julia Ruedig (Erb ‘15) and Yanning Li (MBA ‘14) for “Wintergreen Stone”, a business model to transform ash from Chinese coal plants into building materials.

Patrick Lord (Erb ‘13) with Brandon Tirrell (MBA ‘14) and Tyrell Robertson (MBA/MHSA ‘15) for Palletizer, a flavor palette profiling technology that can maximize consumers’ enjoyment of foods and beverages.

Devin McIntire (Erb ‘13) for Real Good Food LLC, a food sharing platform that allows consumers to discover, share and enjoy the best food in their communities. Devon received internship support from Erb and ZLI to launch RGF last summer.
ERB ENTREPRENEUR: CAMERON SMITH, ERB ‘13

Cameron Smith knew that he wanted to pursue startups when he applied to graduate school, and one reason he chose the Erb Institute was to have a full three years to take advantage of Michigan’s resource-rich environment.

“U of M’s strength in sciences and engineering means that there are a lot of technology opportunities for MBAs to help commercialize,” says Cameron.

And he has done precisely this. Cameron took advantage of the numerous programs for funding, coaching, and services offered at the University to help launch Kymeira Advanced Materials, a company that offers breakthrough ceramics technology to a vast range of industries. Along with U of M co-founders Vincent Alessi, Dave Hatfield, and Reed Shick, Cameron’s venture recently won the $25,000 First Prize in the Accelerate Michigan Student Competition.

ERB STUDENTS CONSISTENTLY WIN MICHIGAN’S DOW SUSTAINABILITY AWARDS

In 2009, Dow Chemical Company launched the Sustainability Innovation Student Challenge, offering prizes up to $100,000 to promote student-led sustainability projects. In every competition since its inception, Erb student innovations have been among the winners:

2012 - Stephen Ahn (Erb ’14), Ursula Jessee, and Alex Papo (both Erb ’15)
ArborAqua: A plant-based water treatment model for sanitation in the developing world

2011 - Adam Carver and Rachana Patel (both Erb ’12), and Siyang Chen, Aditya Bhandari, Anya Shyrokoiva, and Ricardo Rodriguez
Impact Everyday: A credit rewards program that enables cardholders to use their reward points or airline miles to invest in clean energy

2011 - Hunt Briggs, Paul Davis (both Erb ’11), Robert Levine and Nolan Orfield
ReGenerate: an on-site waste management system that transforms food waste and other organic material into hot water and compost

2011 - Graham Brown, Mike Elchinger, and Ryan Flynn (all Erb ’12) and Andy Lubershane
SmartEnergy: A turnkey solution for financing and implementing energy performance retrofits in municipal facilities

2010 - Cynthia Koenig (Erb ’11), Colm Fay (Erb ’12), and Chris Mueller
Wello Waterwheel: A transportation solution for bringing safe, clean drinking water to the rural poor
WELLO WATERWHEEL GOES LIVE IN INDIA

Featured in media outlets like ABC News, Fast Company magazine, and Triple Pundit, Wello illustrates the power of social enterprise to improve the social and environmental conditions of needy populations. Founded by Erb alumna Cynthia Koenig during her time at U of M, Wello manufactures and distributes the WaterWheel. This 50-liter (13-gallon) drum enables people in the developing world, usually women and girls, to transport four to five times the amount of clean drinking water they normally carry using traditional water containers. Wello's recent awards include:

- 2011 – People’s Choice Award Winner & Global Health Prize Winner, University of Washington Foster School of Business Global Social Entrepreneurship Competition
- 2011 – Unreasonable Institute and Dasra Social Impact Fellowships
- 2011 – First Place, Harvard University Pitch for Change Competition
- 2010 – Grant Winner, Dow Sustainability Innovation Student Challenge

Today, after hundreds of hours designing and prototyping in the field, and conversations with over 1,500 community members, practitioners and experts, the WaterWheel 2.0 is complete and is beginning to reach the rural poor in India.

ERB STUDENTS AS VENTURE INVESTORS

In addition to attracting grants and investments for their own ideas, Erb students are deeply involved in student-led investment funds at the Zell Lurie Institute, including:

Frankel Commercialization Fund

The FCF is a pre-seed investment fund established to identify and accelerate the commercialization of ideas generated within the University community and the surrounding area. The Fund’s Clean Tech portfolio team includes Erb students Emilia Sibley, Wesley Allred and Sam Stevenson (all Erb ‘14), and Connie Yu (Erb ‘15).

Social Venture Fund

The Social Venture Fund is the first student-led social enterprise investment fund, and was recently the first such fund to close a deal. The Fund’s Environment portfolio team includes Erb students Mary Fritz, Martha Campbell, and Nancy Gephart (Erb ‘13), Lizzie Reisman and Berry Kennedy (Erb ‘14), and Will Morrison (Erb ‘15).
**NEW STAFF MEMBER GIVES STUDENTS A LEG UP IN ENTREPRENEURSHIP**

With the hiring in 2012 of the Erb Institute’s new Student Affairs Manager, Emma Wendt, Erb students gained a powerful new resource to help them develop the next generation of sustainable businesses. Emma is a Stanford MS/MBA graduate who comes to the Erb Institute from Ann Arbor SPARK, where she helped local entrepreneurs to develop their business ideas into fully realized ventures. At Erb, Emma looks forward to supporting new and established student entrepreneurs in navigating the many resources that make the University of Michigan and Ann Arbor a world-class center for innovation.

Read more about entrepreneurship at the Erb Institute in the annual report: http://bit.ly/erb-12-annual

**ASSESSING ENTREPRENEURIAL OPPORTUNITY**

A significant number of research projects completed by Erb students through the School of Natural Resources and Environment suggest concrete opportunities for social and for-profit enterprises. Recent reports include:

- **Global BrightLight Foundation** provided valuable input to BrightLight on the development of their social enterprise model as a facilitator for delivering solar power technologies to the base of the pyramid. [http://bit.ly/V2SQI7](http://bit.ly/V2SQI7)


**STARTUPS WITH ERB ALUMNI AND STUDENTS ATTRACTION INVESTMENT AND RECOGNITION**

**Algol Scientific**, a venture using advanced techniques to turn wastewater into safe livestock supplements, recently won Accelerate Michigan’s Grand Prize of $500,000. Team includes Jeff LeBrun (Erb ’09).

**Arborlight**, a startup developing cutting-edge LED lighting components to revolutionize the market for efficient, mercury-free lighting in retail and office settings, recently won “Most Disruptive Idea” in the Michigan Clean Energy Venture Challenge. Team includes Adam Byrnes and Daniel Gerding (both Erb ’14).