

'Idea Launch Pad' offers students with opportunities to share entrepreneurial concepts

Liz Moy
Reporter

Some of the biggest ideas of this generation have been imagined by the youngest innovators — people in their twenties. Elon University's Doherty Center and Student Entrepreneurial Enterprise Development organization encouraged students to voice their ideas at the inaugural "Idea Launch Pad" held in the Koury Business Center Sept. 28.

Students of all majors were invited to bring a concept or idea to share in a two minute pitch for a panel of professors, as well as for other students and members of SEED. Afterward, professors offered feedback not only on the idea the students shared, but also on the overall presentation. They also provided advice to each group or individual.

"It's important to have energy and passion in presenting and to engage with your audience," said Gary Palin, panel member and executive director of the Doherty Center for Entrepreneurial Leadership.

The panel consisted of professor Gary Palin, David Jackson and Barth Strempek, professors of entrepreneurship at Elon, and Amanda Elam, professor at North Carolina State University.

Palin worked with Brian Serow, SEED president and Alex Carberry, vice president of finance for SEED, to assemble the panel and turn the idea of the launch pad into an actual event.

"Turning any idea into a real venture takes a combination of hard work, luck and know-how, and most students simply do not have all of the resources

or experience necessary to launch the ventures on their own," Serow said. "Both the members of SEED and Professor Palin realized this was a need that had to be addressed and independently came to very similar conclusions."

A wide range of ideas were shared by 10 different groups and individuals, ranging from new applications for smartphones to a pedal-electric vehicle. Senior Brittany Hooper proposed the idea of an organic biodegradable cigarette, a concept that she has had since her sophomore year.

"The response was overwhelmingly positive," she said. "I know this idea has incredible potential both in a business sense and in an environmental sense, and it was nice to have the encouragement to seriously move forward with the idea from experts in the field."

-BRITTANY HOOPER
ELON UNIVERSITY SENIOR

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The event participants and SEED executive board said they look forward to taking the next steps to developing the ideas shared and are seeking further information about the different concepts.

"This is just the first step for the relationship between the Doherty Center for Entrepreneurial Leadership and those who pitched," Serow said. "The next step is to work with the students to establish

"If we can't stop society from smoking we can at least stop the long trail of trash behind us," Hooper said. "This was the first time I ever proposed the idea in a formal manner."

Once the event concluded, students were given the opportunity to discuss their ideas together and collaborate. Hooper found the experience to be positive.

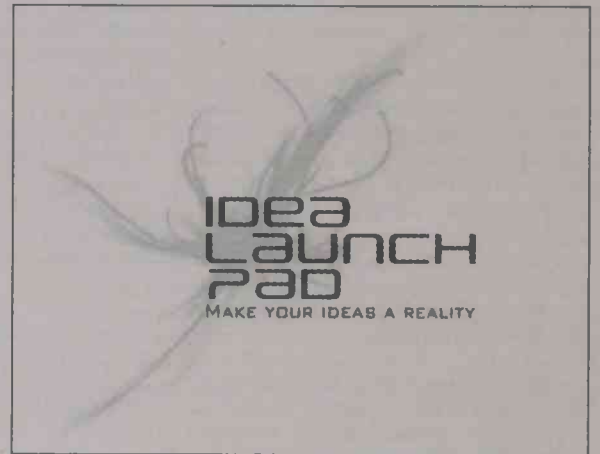


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feasibility and find experts in the respective idea areas that can help them further develop their ideas."

The Doherty Center and SEED members said they aren't finished with these forums. As they continue to work with the current students, they plan to host future forums, since the turnout of the first was a success.

Hooper is currently looking into patenting her idea and has found valuable advisers in personal contacts to further this concept. Students continuing to further their products and concepts, if supported, could end up graduating from Elon having helped start up a business.

"To our knowledge, this is a program unique to Elon University," Verow said. "We find this to be a highly exciting project that has the ability to change how entrepreneurship is taught across the country."

Environmental studies restructures curriculum to suit student interests, adds two majors

Melissa Kansky
Multimedia Editor

Elon University faculty from the environmental science department recently redesigned the department's curriculum, redefined two existing majors and created a new major and minor. Elon faculty approved the program last spring.

The new structure provides students with the opportunity to earn either a Bachelor of Arts degree in environmental studies or one of two Bachelor of Science degrees, either in environmental studies or environmental and ecological science. Individuals can also minor in environmental and sustainability studies.

In a changing environment, the faculty acknowledges that courses need to change accordingly.

"Faculty do periodically look at the curriculum and realize we can do better," said Michael Kingston, interim chair of the environmental studies department. "We can serve our students better by making some changes. It's not good to stay with the same curriculum for 30 years."

Making changes

The environmental studies program is changing the degrees offered with the new majors, according to Janet MacFall, associate professor for environmental studies and biology.

"The way the major was structured before the revision," MacFall said, "we had a B.S. track and an A.B. track, but the A.B. has been completely restructured and the B.S. has been divided into two separate and new degrees."

The older curriculum did not offer a degree in environmental and ecological science nor did it allow students to take a minor in the department.

The Bachelor of Arts track incorporates environmental education and arts, Kingston said. It gives students more flexibility to learn about communicating and speaking to the general public.

The Bachelor of Science environmental studies degree prepares individuals for a career in management, urban planning or working in Washington, D.C. with the

state legislature. He said students in the B.S. program are not scientists, but are interested in science in some way.

"We decided it is better to tailor the degrees to specific interests," Kingston said, "and not force everyone who was an environmental studies major to be a scientists first and then specialize."

According to Kingston, the new program includes new introductory classes for students who are not particularly science-oriented.

These courses include Strategies and Environmental Inquiries, which is a second-year methods course that reinforces skills related to accessing, analyzing and interpreting public data. The course is required for all three majors.

Kingston said he hopes this new class will better prepare students before their senior seminar.

"The new major provides students with more environmentally-focused courses," MacFall said. "We really wanted to prepare opportunities for students that are interested in science to have a degree in environmental science."

The faculty recognized that not all careers pertaining to environmental studies require a deep knowledge of science.

"You can go to work for a corporation that needs to produce media to show how the company is doing environmentally sound business," Kingston said.

The environmental and ecological science major suits those interested in becoming a wildlife biologist or naturalist for a zoo, he said. These students are scientists and work with the technical side of the field.

Students can easily migrate from one of the three majors to another as they better understand what they want to learn from college, Kingston said.

Blending academic departments

The new design also provides students with the opportunity to double major.

Political science, economics and English are the three most common double majors for students interested in the Bachelor of Arts environmental studies track, MacFall said.



JULIA MURPHY | Staff Photographer

Elon University's community garden is a large element of the environmental studies program, which is looking to create a new major, as well as add more faculty and student interest.

"The environmental and ecological science program is designed so students can double major in biology and chemistry," she said.

Interaction with other departments at Elon has translated into a growth in faculty, propelling the creation of the new major and minor. With only three full-time members of the environmental studies department, the major relies on faculty throughout campus to sustain the major.

"We don't really grow by adding more bodies, we grow by faculty on the campus discovering an interest in environmental studies," Kingston said.

Elon's Martha and Spencer Love School of Business has altered its mission to accommodate the increasing student interest with respect to environmental studies, but has yet to redesign the courses.

"The business school has strong sustainability initiatives," MacFall said, "but they don't have courses in place that promote sustainability training for students."

According to MacFall, the environmental studies department hopes to provide some training to help students understand and assess sustainability.

"Faculty members that have always been concerned with the environment have been teaching courses," Kingston said. "We put all those courses together and that's how the program started in the first place."

Even though the department uses these secondary faculty members, it's planning to hire another primary faculty member.

Implementing the new design

As the interest in the faculty grows, MacFall said she also expects student interest to increase.

"We're hoping these majors are attractive majors for students," MacFall said, "and they help students prepare for the society and economy to come."

The course catalog only features the new structure of environmental science majors.

"While it would be nearly impossible for seniors to complete the new major," MacFall said, "any student that is a freshman, sophomore or junior should be able to do the new major if they so choose."

Although seniors would not be able to take the new major, the minor is available to them, she said.