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GROVE CITY COLLEGE ALUMNI MAGAZINE

Fall 2018



A BETTER WAY

College embraces trend toward redemptive entrepreneurship

PROJECT FOR RURAL
MINISTRY LAUNCHED

STUDENT UPRISING
OF 1968

PROF'S WORK BASIS FOR
REAGAN BIOPIC

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

THE REDEMPTIVE ENTREPRENEURIAL SPIRIT

When Yvonne (Korloch '97) English, executive director of the Center for Entrepreneurship + Innovation and assistant professor of Entrepreneurship, encouraged me last spring to attend the Praxis Redemptive Imagination Summit, I was initially reluctant. The timing wasn't great. It was the weekend before Commencement and a Board of Trustees meeting. And to be honest, I'm not a big fan of conferences, having shuffled around to hundreds of plenaries, breakouts, workshops, roundtables, and panel discussions over the decades. Still, it seemed intriguing. The topic was "a central gathering place for an emerging community of practice focused on redemptive entrepreneurship." I'm a sucker for anything with the adjective "redemptive" in front of it.

I also knew that Grove City College's partnership with Praxis was important to our Entrepreneurship program. Praxis describes its mission as the belief "that Christian entrepreneurs who are spiritually serious, culturally astute, and in community have a unique ability to build a better society and demonstrate the beauty and goodness of the gospel across all of life." The College's vision is to develop leaders ready to fulfill this inspiring mission. To that end, our students have been participating in the Praxis Academy, a week-long summer program designed to encourage the next generation of entrepreneurs and innovators through mentoring and interaction with startup founders.

Needless to say, I thoroughly enjoyed the conference. I met many impressive young entrepreneurs and experienced investors. I was challenged by some outstanding presentations on redemptive entrepreneurship, which was defined as the work of joining God in creative restoration through sacrifice by way of venture building and innovation. Not unlike the ideas developing in our own Center for Entrepreneurship + Innovation, many of the startups I learned about were focused on specific needs or challenges in the world. In addition, a significant number of other new businesses are distinguished by the way they treat their employees and the value of their products and services. In sum, the business initiatives featured at the summit were intentional about serving the common good.

You'll be hearing a lot more about redemptive entrepreneurship at GCC in the days ahead. At the core of the College's mission is a calling to prepare students to look at the brokenness of the world through a redemptive lens. As acclaimed speaker and writer Andy Crouch explained at the Praxis Academy summit, biblical redemption had an economic connotation for the early church. A slave could be ransomed – set free from bondage – through a sacrifice or offering. Those who have been set free from the bondage of sin and death through Christ's shed blood are called to develop a "redemptive imagination." They must envision wholeness where there is brokenness, prosperity where there is poverty, and human flourishing where there is despair and hopelessness.

Grove City College has a vibrant entrepreneurial spirit. Hundreds of students participate annually in our various business competitions. Connecting this energy and creativity to a needy world is our business. Please enjoy learning more about what is happening in this exciting area in the pages ahead. We welcome the fruits of your own redemption imagination, so don't hesitate to contact the Entrepreneurship Department or me. Also, please consider an offering of your financial support to the Center for Entrepreneurship + Innovation. There is no limit to the collective good we can accomplish together with your generous support.



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PRAXIS PARTNERSHIP

Turning thought into redemptive action

The word *praxis* comes to us from the Greeks and has been a buzzword of philosophers for centuries, from Plato to Kant to von Mises. It is the process by which an idea is realized. It is turning thought into action.

Praxis is also a venture group that is the primary advocate and articulator of redemptive entrepreneurship. Grove City College's Center for Entrepreneurship + Innovation (E+I) has partnered with the non-profit organization that connects entrepreneurs, students, and innovators who are motivated by their faith to use their gifts and earned wisdom to create new ways to meet society's needs and desires, to serve God, to renew a broken culture, and lift a fallen world.

Josh Kwan, co-founder of Praxis, asks and provides some answers to a central question in his essay *Roles of the Redemptive Entrepreneur: Anthropologist, Custodian, Prophet*: "So what differentiates the entrepreneur who lives on the redemptive edge, who seeks to embody the gospel in creating and building a venture that leaves a meaningful impact on the world?"

Kwan proposes three personas to emulate: Anthropologist, custodian, and prophet. An anthropologist studies and embraces culture to discern what products and services fill a need that serves God's plan. A custodian understands the value of stewardship and the responsibility of maintaining core values. A prophet is a truth-teller and guide, Kwan writes, and very different from the angry loners of the Old Testament.

"Today's redemptive entrepreneur aspires to be a winsome witness whose venture is a demonstrated apologetic for the Christian faith. Gone are the rod and the robe. What persists is the prophet who brings God's vision to bear on the culture," Kwan writes. "(W)e must gaze beyond profits and hone a message that offers timeless truth, just as a prophet carries truth to his audience."

That kind of zeal is contagious at Praxis

Academy, an annual event that brings students to Los Angeles for a week to dig deep into the redemptive entrepreneurship model with leading practitioners through lectures, round table discussions, worship, and fellowship. Hundreds of students from more than 70 colleges, from the Ivy League to Council of Christian Colleges and University schools, have gone through the Academy since it was founded in 2014.

**"We aim for redemption
(in) all of our operations,
no matter how big
or small."**

Levi Roberts '19

"Praxis is an amazing partner," Yvonne (Korloch '97) English said, and the academy is transformational for most students.

"They seriously use the same description time and time again when they return from Praxis Academy – 'life-changing.' When they hear from entrepreneurs who are in the world running organizations that are doing His work, it's inspirational and moving. When students return from the summer academy, they are on fire to apply what they have learned to everything that they do in life, whether it's starting a business or not," she said.

Senior Levi Roberts '19 – a co-founder of Chute!, a student startup that "upcycles" old parachutes into drawstring bags and channels some of the profit to veterans groups – was one of a dozen Grove City College students who spent a week last summer at Praxis Academy. He described it as "magical," for the shared faith of participants and the new relationships he developed with others at the academy, bonds that transcend the networking opportunity that initially drove his interest in Praxis Academy.



Liz Finnegan '21 was one of a dozen Grove City College students who attended Praxis Academy in the summer of 2018.

"Socially-entrepreneurial-minded Christians in college are quite the niche category," he said. "It was quite refreshing to share ideas, energy, and ambition with like-minded individuals ... We came from a dozen countries and states, represented a handful of nationalities, and yet we all made friends with one another," he said. Roberts fell in with a group that included a photographer, a hip-hop artist, a rock artist, and a fashion designer. "I have never experienced such harmonious diversity in my life. It felt borderline fantasy – almost dream-like – in an age of seemingly peak divisiveness," he said.

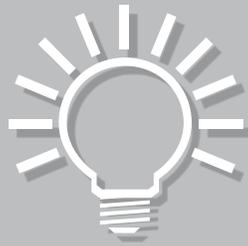
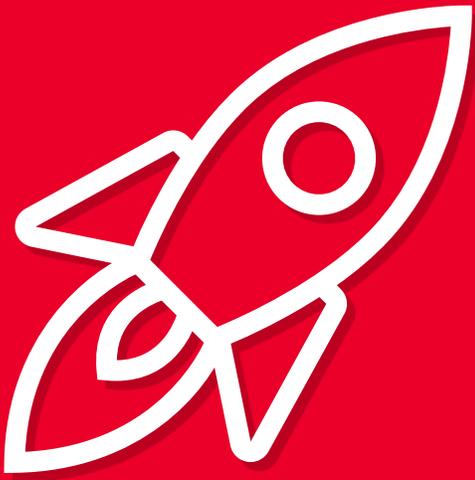
Roberts said the lessons learned at the academy strengthened his faith and boosted his lifestyle, career, and mental health: "Praxis focused on how God's calling for me – entrepreneurship – interacts with my faith."

Roberts said he and his partners in Chute! are committed to something deeper than creating a successful business.

"We aim for redemption (in) all of our operations, no matter how big or small. This ranges from respecting our customers to respecting each other as business partners. A redemptive venture is an ethically sound venture," he said.

The Grove City College-Praxis partnership enables students, faculty, and administration to engage with the Praxis team and community of startups – which includes leading entrepreneurs, scholars, and cultural thinkers. As well as the academy, Praxis hosts businesses and nonprofits in two virtual accelerator programs and is currently developing other programs in order to spread the idea of redemptive entrepreneurship. ■

Entrepreneurs assemble in the Center for Entrepreneurship + Innovation suite in the Hall of Arts and Letters on campus. From left: Levi Roberts '19, James Hayward '21, Patty Jo Nickoloff '21, Dr. Tim Sweet, chair of the Department of Entrepreneurship, Yvonne (Korloch '97) English, executive director of E+, Ethan Hayward '20, Anna Cook '20, and Liz Finnegan '21.





A BETTER WAY

Grove City College has become a leading proponent of redemptive entrepreneurship, a concept that incorporates Kingdom principles into one of the College's most dynamic and innovative disciplines. It's a new approach that makes faith the central focus of the entrepreneurial process.

The idea that "there's gotta be a better way" is central to entrepreneurship. Finding that better way is the challenge that entrepreneurs accept. Their successes – new products, new services, and new ways of doing business – can, at the least, be personally lucrative, and, ideally, have the potential to, in the Silicon Valley cliché, "make the world a better place."

For more than a decade, the Department of Entrepreneurship and the Center for Entrepreneurship + Innovation (E+I), the

College has been teaching and training students of in the art and the science of the discipline. With entrepreneurial alums working on dozens of new ventures and growing concerns, hustling for investment for startups, seeing services and products in demand, and even enriched by buyouts from some of the nation's leading companies, the College's record of success is mounting.

This year, the United States Association for Small Business and Entrepreneurship recognized the College's efforts on a national

level with the Model Emerging Program Award, which validated Entrepreneurship as a bold and innovative program that other colleges and universities can emulate. It would be understandable for the powers-that-be behind the program to rest on their laurels and leave an award-winning model as-is. But "don't mess with success" isn't a very entrepreneurial approach – and it has been proven inadequate over and over again.

That makes the program's current shift to a new paradigm not so much remarkable,



E+I Executive Director Yvonne (Korloch '97) English talks with student entrepreneurs.

but perfectly understandable. For years, entrepreneurship efforts have been divided into commercial and social enterprises. The goal of the former is obvious – making money. The latter is a little trickier. Social enterprises are focused on solving a problem that market forces might not consider, or using those forces to generate a profit that can be earmarked to address a problem.

But that doesn't get to the heart of what makes Grove City College such a unique institution. The College focuses on the integration of faith and learning with the ultimate goal of empowering graduates to live their faith in every aspect of their lives. Social entrepreneurship is a positive force, but it's basically an agnostic effort. It serves society and the common good, but not the great commandment to "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind."

That's where redemptive entrepreneurship comes in. It's a new approach that makes faith not just an integral part of entrepreneurial process, but the central focus. It is "the work of joining God in creative restoration through sacrifice, in venture building and innovation," according to Praxis, a non-profit clearinghouse for ideas, inspiration, connections, and investment that Grove

“Entrepreneurship is centered on the idea that ‘there’s gotta be a better way,’ and we at Grove City College believe that we have found that better way in the form of redemptive entrepreneurship.”

Yvonne (Korloch '97) English
Executive Director, the Center for E+I and Associate Professor of Entrepreneurship

City College is partnering with to provide opportunities for students and develop a curriculum centered on redemptive entrepreneurship.

Yvonne (Korloch '97) English, executive director the Center for E+I and associate professor of Entrepreneurship, is a close observer and participant in startup culture through her work with Silicon Valley and international programs. The system as it exists

now, she said, is “fundamentally and terribly broken” and a new approach is necessary.

“It is a machine that chews up and spits out people without regard to their humanity, mental health, and spirituality. The levels of depression, suicide, hopelessness, and burnout are skyrocketing in Silicon Valley and beyond. I believe that this is because something is missing. Entrepreneurship is centered on the idea that ‘there’s gotta be a better way,’ and we at Grove City College believe that we have found that better way in the form of redemptive entrepreneurship,” she says.

It is an unabashedly Christian concept, English said. “As a redemptive entrepreneur, you’re committed to going to the next level by intentionally building your venture upon Kingdom principles. It’s carefully considering whether your products and services point humanity toward beauty or toward brokenness. It’s building an organizations that honors, respects, and uplifts your employees, vendors, customers, and community. It’s following Christ by truly being willing to sacrifice while joining Him in the redemption of all things.”

It is also a concept that can appeal to Grove City College students, according to Dr. Tim Sweet '85, who chairs the Department of Entrepreneurship.



“Exploring possibilities for redemptive impact is an important part of the course in the context of corporations, startups, non-profits, small businesses, and social enterprises.”

Tim Sweet '85
Chair, Department of Entrepreneurship

“Our students have a natural affinity for entrepreneurship that has a redemptive edge. They are eager to create innovative businesses and organizations that have real impact, not only economically and socially, but in ways that have a positive spiritual effects in people’s lives,” he said.

The department is strategically integrating the philosophy into the existing course catalog. “Redemptive entrepreneurship provides a framework for every subject we teach, but we are particularly intentional about applying the principle in certain courses,” Sweet said.

“I teach a course called Entrepreneurship and the Mission of the Church, which explores some of the significant ways that entrepreneurship and the Gospel intersect. We explore a biblical theology of ‘newness’ and focus on the practical implications of biblical restoration and new creation in businesses and organizations,” Sweet said.

The class studies churches and missional organizations that behave in entrepreneurial ways and examine businesses that are trying to foster kingdom impact. Students also work on a service learning project in connection with a local business or non-profit. Last spring, students conducted research for a local homeless ministry called Beloved Mercy Ministries, and provided the organization with innovative ideas and tools for expanding their reach.

In English’s Innovation for Impact class, students learn about a process for innovating called “design thinking.” Students learn how to tackle problems faced by real organizations in the community and how applying design thinking methodologies can have true impact.

“Exploring possibilities for redemptive impact is an important part of the course in the context of corporations, startups, non-profits, small businesses, and social enterprises,” Sweet said.

In English’s Lean LaunchPad class, students learn about and apply the lean startup methodology to their own ventures, following traditional principles straight from Silicon Valley. Then they take it to the next level,

examining how their ventures can be redemptive in nature and join God “in the renewal of all things.”

E+I is also embracing the concept in its activities and programs for student entrepreneurs.

“As our students ideate and start businesses around their nascent ideas, we challenge them to think about how they can integrate the Gospel into their organizations from the first day,” English said.

That doesn’t require pushing religion on customers, citing Jesus in the mission statement, putting Bible verses on every product, or forgoing the profit that’s necessary to sustain a venture, she stressed. “You must always figure out how to create a sustainable business model as a redemptive entrepreneur. Without a successful plan for sustainability, your organization will cease to exist and thus have no impact on the world. We do not see profit as shameful. We are an institution that celebrates a fair market and, in reality, you need money in most instances when you’re doing this type of work,” she said.

The work done in class and by the Center for E+I is augmented by Praxis.

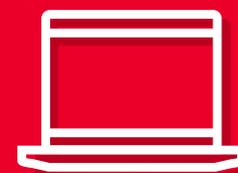
“Our relationship with Praxis has inspired us and accelerated our thinking about Redemptive Entrepreneurship. It’s exciting to engage with such an organization that is on the frontier of thought leadership in this area, and which connects us to startups that are putting redemptive principles into practice in creative ways,” Sweet noted.

In the last few years, groups of students have attended Praxis Academy, a week-long retreat at the organization’s southern California headquarters where they team up with students from around the country, thought leaders, and successful entrepreneurs to learn about and experience redemptive entrepreneurship. They invariably describe it as “life changing,” English said.

“When they hear from entrepreneurs who are in the world running organizations that are doing His work, it’s inspirational and moving. When students return from the summer academy, they are on fire to apply what they have learned to everything that they do in life, whether it’s starting a business or not,” she said.

Last spring, Praxis further integrated Grove City College into its network by inviting College President Paul J. McNulty ’80 to participate in Redemptive Imagination Summit in New York, an “ideas and action festival” that brought Praxis Fellows, alumni, mentors, philanthropists, and investors together for conversations that intersect the areas of theology, culture, and entrepreneurship.

That intersection is the great promise of redemptive entrepreneurship, to bring together the truth and hope that Christianity holds, an understanding of the world as it is, and an innovative spirit so that entrepreneurs can find a truly “better way” – His way. ■



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