



Viewpoints, Outlook

Building connections between universities and society

Reader Responses:

[celizario](#)

6:38 PM on June 27, 2011

The idea the Richard Cherwitz has brought to the forefront is clear: There needs to be a bridge, a connector between the work done at universities across the nation and the work that would be done in the work force. The IE program facilitates this process. His aim (and the program's aim) is entirely lucid and sound. With the recent pressure placed on the importance of research, the IE program and the importance of building a gap between academia and the public is even more pressing. Unfortunately, the depreciation of education has increased in the last couple of years. In a time and age where education has been the source of multitudes of cutbacks and attacks, Richard Cherwitz has provided it with an avenue of renewal and strengthening: The IE program. So for all the readers unaware of it, pass the word on. Let's all try to break this Sisyphean rut that education (on all levels) has found itself in. And IE is the starting point we need.

[AmyK27](#)

10:04 PM on June 26, 2011

Great article, disappointment the issue in discussion went overshadowed by the quick judgment and assumptions of several members online. This article is not about money. It is not about tuition. It is not about teaching the basics (As if The University of Texas does not execute that already). It is about the responsibility of higher education and allowing students to think for themselves, not think the way an institution or society wants them to think.

Community and University partnerships came in to play originally at Brown University when the president wanted to end the stigma that the University was selfish with its resources. Brown shifted focus to the community surrounding the institution, being concerned with a greater good, connecting with the community and ultimately solving local issues and fulfilling a need through the partnership.

The Campus-Community partnership in combination with entrepreneurial efforts help students see how they can plug in to the world around them and utilize the education they are receive. This increases the retention rates of students, decreases drop outs and closes the gaps among first generation college students -- who may have not had the exposure, confidence or perspective to tap into their academic/life potential.

Life and college is not a set of textbook rules. We must do more, think more and help our students succeed, especially in Texas. And whoever brought up cost, that is a completely different topic, but I will say that these programs are not only not getting money, they are losing money. And if we don't take charge and support these vital initiatives we may very well lose them. As well as brilliant professors like Cherwitz, and will have much larger issues when the workforce, future of the country and education is in continuing decline.

SamanthaG

As a former IE student i can vouch for the program and say that IE changed greatly impacted my college academic experience and shaped my career path. IE provides a strong foundation connecting academic with the community. The program creates a unique engaged experience for students that you cannot attain through any other program at UT.

jtparsons

3:41 PM on June 24, 2011

The value of IE is also clear. The program is open to everyone, but ironically enough the ones that participate are often either minority students, or other students that have some sort of difficulty that they had to overcome in getting to college. It has the capability of tackling the hardest of community problems, by using creative and innovative engagement of various departments, points of view, communities, and other resources in that process of problem solving. It helps students understand how to connect the academic to the real world. If students at UT didn't find it, well it is because they didn't open their eyes and ears ... and for students at colleges that don't have IE, well, encourage your college to contact Dr. Cherwitz and have him give input on their developing a similar program.

jtparsons

3:38 PM on June 24, 2011

While Dr. Cherwitz does not set the tuition price, he is better ensuring that students who engage in IE get the most value out of their education. Frankly, many recent grads are going to get their diploma and have no idea how to find their first job, and may be underemployed despite the high debt of current higher ed. Obviously Objective View shows the frustration that the public/parents understandably have, and at some point the price tag for what many get with the degree will be too high. He is trying to get Higher Ed to understand that frustration since I think a primary audience of the piece are those in the Ivory Towers. I think Dr. Cherwitz is also correct that the problems that he notes are ones that must be addressed by higher ed. Higher ed ought to not repeat the mistakes of the housing bubble and CDOs, and ensure that true value is being provided.

SusanFillippeli

12:05 PM on June 24, 2011

As an academic now working in the private sector, I understand the challenges Professor Cherwitz raises in this article. Bridging the gap between the academic and business worlds is not a new concern, but it will require much less disdain on the part of academics who frown on for-profit business. It will also require those in business to appreciate the insights and knowledge developed by those in academia. These should never be mutually exclusive endeavors. Cherwitz is exactly right in calling on universities to increase engagement with their communities.

jeteye

11:17 AM on June 24, 2011

What is old is new again...way, way, way back..universities and the mercantile class (yes mercantile, look it up) used to form apprenticeships to learn a skill or trade or profession. During the last 100 years or so in the US, this connection all but vanished as the needs of the workplace changed and the roles that higher education played no longer totally aligned with those needs. Now, here is a program that is TRYING to

get students not just be good at accumulating basic facts, but to put the facts to work and be CREATIVE...yes, creative...and sometimes that means FAILING...badly...as any entrepreneur can tell you we learn most from our failures. This mindset is totally counterculture to the way most universities think in terms of GPA and entrance criteria. Yes, Dr. Cherwitz might be a bit too formal in his presentation (hey, he is a PhD), but the idea has so much merit as to diminish any criticism about being too erudite. Well done and kudos for such a supposedly stodgy institution on implementing this and bravo Dr. Cherwitz for your dogged determination on seeing this through.

cpgreene

11:15 AM on June 24, 2011

I also want to commend this article and the IE program's efforts to create an engaged experience for students. Having read some of the comments here, it seems as if some people are missing the point of the program itself. It is to provide students with meaningful opportunities that will inspire them to choose their own paths to success and to follow their dreams by helping to equip them with the tools necessary to reach their goals. In other words, this program is largely about student choice. Figuring out what they want to pursue and then helping them to do so. It is not out to make students activists, unless that is what THEY want to pursue.

It is also about trying to further foster critical thinking and problem solving skills, in terms of real-world applications, for future generations whether that means coming up with creative solutions for problems they encounter in their professional work and/or their roles as citizens. Finally, it provides students with mentors and connections with community members who will support them in their various endeavors.

Finally, I think that IE represents the possibility for change within the university itself. As someone else posted here, it is a true attempt to bridge the gap between the so-called ivory tower and the so-called real-world. In other words, it demonstrates a direct connection between what a student learns and how that knowledge then can be applied to solve problems or to come up with creative strategies for engaging in the world.

jjb713

6:08 PM on June 23, 2011

Bringing the university into the community--literally and through the development of new ideas--is a wonderful way of helping the institution meet its obligation to that community. I am encouraged by the programming described in this article and believe that many of IE's initiatives will solve the problems Cherwitz describes as the faces and goals of academia begin to change and, hopefully, better reflect the

bohemiottx

6:03 PM on June 23, 2011

To me, what Dr. Cherwitz and the IE folks throughout the world (starting in Warsaw, Poland) are trying to do is advance Town and Gown. What could be cooler as far as economic development types are concerned?

Tuttabella

4:02 PM on June 23, 2011

The fact that many people commenting here seemed to have missed the entire point of the editorial is proof of a disconnect between academia and the general public. It would have been helpful had Professor Cherwitz hired someone else to present his ideas in language that was easier to understand.

Paulina77

3:47 PM on June 23, 2011

I am currently a student at UT Austin and am an alumni of Intellectual Entrepreneurship Consortium. What can I say as a student that experienced the IE program firsthand?

First, what Dr. Cherwitz is touching on: the importance of synergy and BRIDGING THE GAP between the academic institution and the community is exactly what it sounds like. One of the things that I learned through this program is that we, as students, have a huge opportunity to really engage with our community on a direct and very personal basis. Second, another huge part of this program is that every undergrad participant locates and finds a grad student to serve them as their mentor. My mentor was phenomenal! He was a 3rd year law student who really helped me understand what law school, the application process, and even the internship/networking aspect was all about.

I have grown so much through this program not only personally but also academically. I feel a much closer connection to my community and to my academic institution. Because, honestly as a student, you are in an interesting spot. We are part of the community, but we are slowly becoming a bigger part of the academic community as well- and this program encourages us to continue giving back to our community through ways such as this: <http://blogs.utexas.edu/ddcecentral/2011/06/21/4317/>

Mentorship is a definite way to bridge the gap between college grads and undergrads, undergrads and grade schoolers, grade schoolers and their peers. We live in a society where academe is hugely important and necessary to progress and succeed, but it is not easy. Now and days, having a Bachelors degree is not enough to reach that goal you are aiming for, but you know what? With that degree, you can further your education even still, mentor someone younger than you, and give back to your community in a number of ways.

How can we give back to our community? This program really helps show us how. Thank you Dr. Cherwitz!

JBfromOU

3:44 PM on June 23, 2011

Dr. Cherwitz makes several important points. As someone who has experience with the IE program, I have witnessed its ability to integrate academic research with real issues in the community. Sadly, some of the criticism of his article reflect common problem in our society, including: (1) ad hominem attacks (e.g., "elitist multicultural pseudo intellectual communists" and (2) misunderstanding of the basics of the university system. In fact, professors like Dr. Cherwitz do not set tuition rates. That is attributable to the decrease in state funding for education that happens virtually every year.

Tuttabella

3:42 PM on June 23, 2011

Professor Cherwitz is calling for universities to justify their value to the public by transforming intellectuals into activists. This is asking too much, because they live in two completely different worlds and think in entirely different ways. Intellectuals don't often have the people skills and organizational ability necessary to be community activists. As thtor recommends, intellectuals can best prove their worth by teaching,

which is what they do best.

As for contributing to the community, this role has usually been filled by the STUDENTS via volunteer work, especially in areas pertaining to their major field of study.

DTrain

3:31 PM on June 23, 2011

With people increasingly questioning the value of a college education, the rising cost of a college education, and entrepreneurs offering \$100,000 grants for young people to NOT go to college, colleges would do well to work on the challenges Dr. Cherwitz brings up...

HardenWiedemann

3:29 PM on June 23, 2011

I find the prior entries very puzzling. If these folks had half a brain they would know that this IE (intellectual entrepreneurship) model is sweeping the country & the leading universities in the U.S. as a vibrant, viable model for effective inclusion of EVERYBODY, including all minorities, into a robust program, at the undergraduate level, for exploring graduate careers & professional opportunities, in a way that provides for realistic, practical examination by a student. What could be more relevant than that in

ABattaglia

3:28 PM on June 23, 2011

I want to commend Dr. Cherwitz and those engaged in the IE project for both their intellect and their service. It's difficult to connect public institutions to citizens of their states when some citizens refuse to engage in sincere, civil discussion. It is impressive that Dr. Cherwitz not only took the risk to create and direct such an innovative program that is seeing success that can be measured in both qualitative and quantitative terms, but that he continues to be reflexive and constructively critical.

Luckily, for all those engaged in this work for our youth, the program is proving to be a success. How do we know? Student after student success story. You can find these stories along with the IE Placement Report here: <http://communication.utexas.edu/ie/2010-2011-ie-pre-graduate-school-internship-placement-report>.

And, according to the Fox New's coverage of IE, "One of the unexpected outcomes of the pre-graduate program is that it has become a driving force for diversity. In fact, about 50 percent of it's interns are either underrepresented minorities, first generation college students or both. And the majority of them are women." (http://www.myfoxaustin.com/dpp/good_day/UT-Reporter:-Intellectual-Entrepreneurship-Program-20110411-ktbcgd#ixzz1Q8GzdkEH)

It's difficult for me to be dismissive of ANY effort that reaches out to high school youth to encourage them to develop their passions and complete college in a timely and fiscally reasonable manner (check out the E4 Youth summit: <http://e4youth.com/>). Moreover, an effort that encourages youth to give back to their communities is the type of effort our education systems SHOULD be making. The IE Program is that type of effort.

Thank you, Dr. Cherwitz, for continuing this important conversation even in the face of those who want to shut it down. Most importantly, thank you for inspiring our youth to go to college, finish, go on for advanced degrees at prominent institutions all over the country, and become tomorrow's leaders.

TX_Educator

3:13 PM on June 23, 2011

Dr, Cherwitz,

Thanks for submitting this article. I have seen the partnerships and projects you mention working first hand. The issue is that so many of us are caught up in these old paradigms. America is undergoing fundamental change and that's alarming for many... as evidenced by some of the vitriol expressed towards your ideas here in the comments section.

Some of us think that if we simply return to the "good ole days" everything will get better. It's just not true. We currently have IE Mentors working directly with middle and high school students within the fields of science/tech, media, the arts and entrepreneurship to solve real problems in the community. This is how you cultivate true innovation while establishing rigor as a norm.

Product development can no longer be done in discreet silos. We must remain flexible and be able to aggregate cross discipline teams to solve today and tomorrow's problems. Later this summer, well kick off a project where IE Science Mentors lead students as they develop and install an irrigation system for a community garden. STEM Mentors also play an integral role in developing a web based reality series on healthy lifestyles in which we bring together experts and low income families to promote healthy diets and exercise. All of these efforts are documented and published by media communications oriented students and mentors. The cost is minimal but the benefits are exponential.

porcupine

2:20 PM on June 23, 2011

Say what?????

How about the duty of universities to hire professors, especially those hired to teach communication, who can think clearly and then express clearly what they're thinking? This article is beyond depressing.

ObjectiveView

10:18 AM on June 23, 2011

"If we expect the public - legislators, students, parents - to pay higher education's increasing sticker price, building additional relevant connections between academe and society is a must."

Here, we have the disconnect. Rick Cherwitz does not understand that the public does not want the higher sticker price. Parents and students want an education that is affordable.

During the four years my daughter was getting her undergraduate degree, tuition costs rose steeply every year while inflation remained low. The total cost of sending her to college was more than we paid for our first home. A college education is now financially out of range for many middle income families. If a student isn't a star athlete, academically gifted or a member of a minority; there is little financial help available except for loans. Universities try to help the underprivileged, but they've do so by putting most of

the burden on middle and upper class parents and students.

If colleges and universities truly want to build understanding with the public, they need to reign in costs.

Rhino111

9:47 AM on June 23, 2011

Dr. Cherwitz, I have no idea what point you're trying to make. But I do happen to have an opinion regarding academia's ability to make meaningful contributions to technology research. I am on the business side of this issue, having contributed (and subsequently pulled back) millions of dollars in private research grants to two Tier 2 universities in the US.

In my opinion, the fatal flaw in academia's "business model" for research is that they center their research business practices on ownership of intellectual property. I wasted many months trying to negotiate agreements where I would pay 100% of the cost of the university's research to support my programs, but where I would walk away with the relevant intellectual property that emerged from the projects I paid for. Both universities refused to have nothing in the agreement like it. Finally, I had enough and pulled back my funding and went to a private company who had the research expertise to help me. I got the agreement I needed in a very short time.

The university research model is severely broken. I will not return to the universities to collaborate until this is fixed.

tthor

6:44 AM on June 23, 2011

"dynamic community-university partnerships designed to transform lives," cross-disciplinary, multi-institutional teams", "synergy groups," "arts entrepreneurship incubator," "oral histories to promote culturally sensitive communication." Huh? WTH? Is this gobbledygook what passes for academic erudition these days?

If Dr. Cherwitz, et al., want to demonstrate their public worth, perhaps they might consider providing collegiate-level instruction in English, mathematics, science, engineering, and the Classics. Teach!

TexKB

3:26 AM on June 23, 2011

Purging the halls of academia with a majority of tenured protected elitist multicultural pseudo intellectual communists would be an excellent start.

ReformReformNow

11:44 PM on June 22, 2011

Pure buzzwordorrhea.

If this is supposed to be an example of a connection, it fails. It's an example of the disconnect with reality among academia. Seriously?