

Association of Private Enterprise Education (APEE)
Annual Meeting 2016
Bally's Casino
Las Vegas, NV
Tuesday, April 5, 2016

[2.C.5] Being an Intellectual Entrepreneur

Moderator:

Brennan Brown, Charles Koch Foundation

Panelists:

Audio: [George Crowley](#), Troy University,
“(No Title Listed)”

Audio: [Chris Surprenant](#), University of New Orleans,
“How Academic Research Can Change Lives”

Audio: [Derek Yonai](#), Florida Southern College,
“Developing an Ecosystem for Student Engagement”

Audio: [Joshua Hall](#), West Virginia University,
“The Center for Free Enterprise at WVU”

Question and Answer ([audio](#) at 9:00)

Audio: [Brennan Brown](#), Closing Remarks

Introduction from Koch Foundation

Brennan Brown

(0:00) My name is Brennan Brown, with the Charles Koch Foundation. I am honored to be with you here with you today, and with our edupreneurs, our intellectual entrepreneurs, who will showcase []. I've been with the foundation three years. I'm a recovering economics professor myself, from Northwood University in Midland Michigan, and this is an important conversation. This is really important because this is about being an entrepreneur, an intellectual entrepreneur, or an edupreneur, and focusing in on ways in which you can engage students in meaningful conversations about a *marketplace of*

ideas, a diversity of thought. It's also about important research that a lot of you are doing that's timely, that's relevant, that's focused on a particular issue, that's rooted in a republic of science, and it's also too about mentorship. Academic and professional mentorship. So I appreciate the opportunity to be here, how many folks are familiar with the Charles Koch Foundation? Every single hand went up. Okay. Then you all know that at the Charles Koch Foundation, I won't go into it any more. I think a couple of things we'll want to do is one, just create some awareness of the wonderful work that the four edupreneurs are doing, and hopefully, and secondly inspire some of you to take the ideas that they've kind of started to build on and do more bigger, better, or your own thing to based upon your *local knowledge*, your *vision*, and we might be able to be a part of bringing that to life on your behalf. So I'd like to introduce my colleague Steve Sweet. Steve, you wanna stand up? My guess is that if I ask how many of you are familiar with steve sweet, the same number of hands are going to be raised. And Steve, and Clark Scott will also be here, so that if there are opportunities that you want to talk about right away, after being inspired by our edupreneurs, that option will be available to you. They're delighted to have everyone, thank you so much for being here. Let me introduce our panelists, our edupreneurs. First Dr. George Crowley from Troy University, Dr. Derek Yodai, Dr. Chris Surprenant, and Dr. Josh Hall. Alright we did do a coin flip to determine who would go first, and George won, so George will lead us off on how to be an intellectual entrepreneur, or edupreneur.

George Crowley, Troy University

[\(Audio\)](#)

(2:50)

"I'm thrilled to be here to talk to you a little bit about what we've been able to do at Troy, and introduce you to, kind of, the center for those of you that aren't yet familiar with what we're doing there, and kind of walk through some of the challenges that we've faced and some of the successes we've had, as far as actually getting students connected to these ideas. As everybody in this room knows, you're at APEE, you clearly are aware of the power that these ideas have, and at a place like Troy, students were frankly just not exposed to this stuff, before we got there a couple years ago. So we're gonna try to walk through that process in hopes that if these are challenges you may be facing at your institution, you can hopefully learn from our own mistakes and our successes."

Crowley talks about curriculum

(3:40)

"So quick to kind of demonstrate, or to kind of introduce you to the center, which hopefully is becoming something we don't have to do that much. We've been here for a

little while, but, we were founded in 2010, *with* the initial gift from the BB&T foundation, the Charles Koch Foundation, and then our namesake donor Manuel Johnson, who is a Troy Alum, hired Scott Beaulier, who is our original founding director, he hired myself, Dan Smith, Dan Sutter. Since then we've kind of grown. [...]joke/laughter..] We've got a new director, Steve Miller, and we've kind of grown, from as you're going to see here in a moment, a complete lack of an economics program to a major that now has (an abundance) of students. We've got a masters program now that literally, that just started last fall. **We've been really active on state, especially state policy, and even just kind of broader policy type work.** Really trying to get students engaged with these ideas. It sounds cliché, but it really does really come back to getting the students involved [...] even as it relates to our policy work.

(4:52)

To kind of give you a little bit of a background as far as what we've dealt with at Troy, I arrived there in 2011, Scott before me in 2010. The first things first was getting students engaged in these ideas. We realized fairly quickly that they weren't even getting these ideas actually in the classroom. **At Troy we basically had, economics didn't have a major. It had a major, that had died, and what fundamentally, first thing that needed to be done was actually just getting some of this stuff into the actual curriculum.** We had this weird smattering of courses, we were predominantly a discipline that had disinterested faculty members that had been there forever and were basically serving the business [*students*] by and large. **Our task really was, in a lot of ways, to kind of fundamentally change what Troy was doing.** We were basically a straight teaching school, [giving students] a kind of general business degree, that they then went out and did business generally with, and not actually getting them engaged with the actual ideas.

[...]

[\(6:23\)](#)

So the kind of first order of business, was just getting the actual ideas into the actual curriculum so that we could actually offer classes on these different areas, and not just have to call everything econ seminar and offer a kind of random selection of independent studies[]. They are hard to read, but they are classes in things like austrian, classes in things like public choice, we've got classes all the way up to game theory and econometrics. It really is driven primarily by the faculty that we hired, people that had kind of competence in these areas drove what kind of curriculum we have adopted.

(7:00)

Beyond that it actually [] there were a lot of, just kind of, things that you likely will run into in your own experience, things **all the way down to battling over our textbook. We had an assigned text that every principles student had to use, the McConnell text, [if you're familiar with that] and an early kind of curriculum battle that we had to wage was actually letting the tenure track faculty members choose the textbook.** It was kind of a novel idea.

(7:30)

Moving beyond some kind of just concentration within the general business program to actually an econ major both in the college business and arts and sciences. **We actually at a later point were able to kind of take over the finance major as well []. It is still a straight finance major, but they actually have to take intermediate micro and macro.** Again, just trying to get the ideas to as many people as possible by laying that foundation. If you don't have that struggle, then hats off to you, but at Troy we really did [inaudible] very unique.

(8:00)

Of course that's not actually sufficient, despite what []economic development folks will tell you, you can't build something and expect people to show up to it. So, we actually had some trouble early on. We actually had to We offered intermediate micro for the first time, and had to cancel it, because three people[].

I taught the first section of our Econ Moral Foundations of Capitalism and it was like, a fight to make sure they let us keep on the books and there were only 7 students []. There was clear need to actually get people actually excited about economics generally, the ideas specifically, majoring in economics, and that was something that [] we really took seriously and [] that will be my main crux here [...]

CROWLEY DESCRIBES RECRUITING FROM PRINCIPLES COURSES, AND A SUCCESS STORY

(8:52)

This took a lot of different facets, and a lot of things that some of you who kind of work with CKF [or other places] that let you have your own course, may have done these same kind of programs. **I kind of view, first and foremost, principles classes as my major recruiting ground.** Of course it requires that you have good people that are in there, teaching economics well, getting students excited, but **you get in there and you can actually talk about public choice in principles, or you get in there and you actually talk about the federal reserve in a way that makes sense and not just shifting [], you get in there and you actually expose students at a principles level to the ideas. You get them, basically, hooked so that they end up in your upper level classes,** and you know [] We have [] a...a.. APGAR sponsored reading group where basically we just recruited some students to come get some modest kind of scholarship money to read books and meet once a week. The reason I bring that up is we had a student in there who, we all kind of took turns doing the reading, discussion group.

(9:52)

This one student we had never heard of, poly sci major, showed up, literally sat there silently throughout the entire like 10 weeks of the class, didn't make a comment the whole time. We had them write little essays at the end, and he basically wrote an essay that said "I am a socialist, but now that I've been finally been exposed to some of these ideas, I'm very interested in taking economics."

He switched his major to economics, and kind of banged out the major very quickly, and went on and graduated as an econ major, really just kind of turned on to the ideas themselves. They're that powerful. But it really does require a lot of effort that gets them, gets people interested.

We've done things where we've had Dr. Smith, Dan Smith, he couldn't join us at this conference he is right in the middle of dealing with an undergraduate research competition that we have a Troy where we get students excited about actually doing research, and with that conference where we've brought in undergrads from around, various guest speakers, all kind of geared towards getting students actually excited about the ideas. Dan Smith actually taught some [...] free market economics out in Vietnam, we've done events with IHS, Students for Liberty, and beyond that is actually getting students excited about what you can actually with the ideas on the undergraduate level graduate school, various conferences, things like that.

CROWLEY DESCRIBES POLITICAL WORK

(11:10) Beyond that, in actually communicating why the ideas are important, this kind of branches into our policy focus. **So one of the things that we do at the center is very specifically focused on policy relevant academic research. We've done stuff that had kind of made a splash, at least at the state level.**

Our former director kind of started some fights within the state dealing with medicaid expansion which is something that our Governor has kind of been pushing back on and others in the state are obviously in favor of, and it's been kind of a back and forth. John Dove and Dan Smith actually just had one of these Mercatus, kind of, state diagnostics on the state that kind of made some waves. Dan Smith has kind of taken it upon himself to try to bring down the state pension system [laughter] [...] at least in getting the conversation going there. I've done some stuff on tax reform, I've got a Mercatus [thing?] that will be coming out soon. And in each one of these cases, it actually makes it so that when you go into the classroom, you talk about these things, you try to get students interested, you can point out, "look we actually are doing stuff, this stuff actually matters out there in the real world."

(12:20)

We did a kind of [] project for Alabama, specifically that puts a whole litany of Alabama issues, probably only have gotten to about ten percent of the issues, it's already ten chapters long, or whatever. It basically looks at things like the state's constitution, teachers union's influence, things like this throughout.

It's important of course to make sure that you're not just like shooting from the hip all the time and just writing pithy op eds, that you actually have the academic credentials to back this stuff up, the actual research to back it up. Again, I really think it all comes back to making sure that we're communicating the ideas themselves actually matter to the students.

Beyond the kind of policy wonkish type of stuff, or academic stuff, we obviously are fairly active in [] not academic. Dan Smith especially, Steve Miller, others, we've all kind of written op eds, we've dubbed it feeding the trolls. [inaudible/banter] I feel like that is the metric, the sort of number of comments you get, you're doing it right. But on any issue we kind of get accused of being on the right or the left, so it's kind of funny. We have radio, t.v. One of the main things we've had to strive for at Troy is that we're very obviously the third class university in the state, there's Alabama, there's Auburn, and there's us. And it's really been a big deal for us to get Troy University into actual policy discussions. A Troy University professor said this, and this is something we need to talk about. I think that's a relatively new concept in the state, and something we're very kind of happy about. Bringing in guest speakers so that people can kind of come to us. A personal favorite experience was that we had Jason Riley in, and we invited some donors from our foundation board, one individual John Ferguson, and he showed up and talked to me about it, and the next thing I know he's showing up and sitting in on some of our masters level classes, to just kind of hang out [] he's not paying tuition though ("gotta crack down on that").

(14:44)

And beyond that, we've got Smith and Dove when their policy study got released, they went to Montgomery and actually briefed the Governor's staff on it.

Unfortunately, then the Governor got embroiled in a sex scandal immediately after that, so he's got other things on his mind. [] We've got our own TV show that Dan Sutter hosts. Just to kind of wrap up, the kind of like key that I see anyway of why we've been relatively successful. First and foremost, you have to have good people, and that's students and faculty. So our students I was talking before the session began here about the fact that largely we've just kind of found our students that are already there, and rather than, you know, (15:26) **we've got a lot of students that are kind of first generation college kids from rural Alabama that show up, haven't been exposed to any of this stuff. You turn them on to it and they actually just kind of run with it, get very excited. Obviously, [inaudible].**

(15:37)

We've had an administration that has kind of let us get away with a lot, as far as hiring people very rapidly and ramming through some of the curricular kind of stuff. And one thing that I'll just throw in there, because I'm [...] of the department and I don't have to deal with it. (15:49) Actually, some of it is the relatively annoying stuff, like accreditation, could actually be very useful, it has allowed us to kind of force the issue on making sure people are doing research and making sure that our classes are kind of offered in a way that makes sense. Still lot's to do. We've got a master's level program that is in desperate need of students, so send your students. We have undergrads that are very awesome, and want to go to phd programs, so please take our students. And we want to be able to basically [] with what we've been up to. So that's very brief kind of overview with what we've been up to at the center. [] and I'd be kind of happy to talk [] at the Q&A about any of the challenges we've faced.

Q: Brown

(16:35)

You're doing a lot at your center? How did it all come together?[] What was the very beginning, did you first start with the, you mentioned the curriculum, was there some small experiments that you ran to see if it was even possible to grow bigger?

A: Crowley

(17:40)

We really kind of got there and there was nothing. No econ major. There was an econ major that had died, decades prior. Our actual, our dean was actually the last like graduate of our troy undergraduate in econ. So really, it sounds very trivial and kind of like tongue in cheek at this point, [] honestly fighting the battle being able to teach out of our textbooks, was one of the first things we had to do, and kind of get out of the, get out of the, there were some other kind of **behind the scenes organizational kind of stuff that had to happen to get a little bit more control of the curriculum**, but really starting there. They were getting principles of econ, from very yellowed notes from somebody who had been teaching the same stuff for a hundred years without any kind of energy, or actual relevance. Really, just kind of getting that in there. It's going to sound like I'm patting myself on the back, but I honestly think that getting good people in the space is the first and foremost the thing to do. Any other immediate questions.

Q: (audience member)

[...] something really big, like seeing your colleague appointed to the senate banking committee?

A: Crowley

(18:20)

So there's that yea. So Thomas Hogan is one of our colleagues there, he's been here [Crowley and Steve Miller banter] Senator Shelby from alabama is the Head of the Senate Banking committee, and he's [appointed Thomas Hogan as. Chief Economist](#), and so he's been there kind of on loan. So yea that is a whole other thing. That is a kind of whole other layer to it...

(FROM Q&A AT THE END OF THE SESSION, [Audio](#))

Q: Brennan Brown

(19:02)

In every case, you all have developed a number of programs that are having impacts on students, or timely and relevant research, or academic mentorship or professional mentorship. What advice would you have to someone in the audience that doesn't have all that infrastructure in place. Where do they start, what would you tell them?

CROWLEY DESCRIBES “TAKE OVER” OF TROY

A: George Crowley

([19:37](#))

Yea, and I guess I would just add, the kind of entrepreneurship part to this, to get back to the theme of all this, is kind of about picking your spot, sort of finding what the opportunities [] to make this thing work. **So, we’ve been very lucky at Troy. We had a big gift, that let us hire a whole bunch of people all at once, and we kind of were able to take over, for lack of a better term,** but it’s still, there’s little spots where we’ve been able to make little incremental changes over and above. **So, we had a finance faculty member retire, and we were able to go and hire Thomas Hogan. He’s an economist, but he had enough finance background that we were able to kind of use that. And so that’s an interesting line that we were kind of like able to take,** and it’s just little incremental things like that. Even if you’re by yourself at a place where you don’t have any [resource] just getting the ideas into the classroom, try to get the students turned on to stuff. I mean, that was my own personal experience as an undergrad, you know, you just get turned on to the idea and then, from there you can see where that goes, kind of picking your spot, and that’s the entrepreneurship part.

(19:10, from [full Q&A](#))

I would just add, at Troy we, the academic side, there’s not been really any pushback at all, we’ve had a little bit of, occasional, kind of, giving some folks in the administration heartburn about some of the policy stuff that comes out, but even that hasn’t been particularly aggressive. It’s mainly, you just, you hang your hat on the fact that you are doing good work. That’s the principle, and that it’s getting the, kind of, Troy brand, in addition to the Johnson brand, like out there in the [] public policy discussion in a way that it’s never been before, and that’s not usually the kind of thing that.. You do have to be, not just a pure ideologue, dogmatic, kind of just shoot from the hip, you have to actually be doing good work.

Chris Surprenant, University of New Orleans, “How Academic Research Can Change Lives”

([Audio](#))

SUPRENANT DESCRIBES HIGH SCHOOL PROGRAM

([6:58](#))

We do an undergraduate program at UNO, but we also run a [high school program](#) at UNO, so we go into local high schools, and we teach classes in philosophy, and then next year, history, social science, and economics¹. **One of the reasons why we started doing that is because we found that, for many of the students in local schools, we found that students didn't have access to these courses. It wasn't just that they didn't have access to philosophy, [] very few high school students have access to philosophy, but they didn't have access to economics, they didn't have access to social science courses, they didn't have access to history courses that weren't using something like Howard Zinn's the People's History of the U.S., some of you may be familiar?** Right? So, we provide an opportunity for these students to engage with outstanding faculty members, so we go out there from UNO, and we give them this opportunity that they didn't have. We've also got an online version of this program where we run all the [classe live] online and reach out to students all across the country, and that's going very well. This is another one of those of us trying to figure out where we can make the lives of people in our own communities better. What is something that they don't have that we can provide them that makes their lives better? And then, that is when you can work with someone, say, like the Koch Foundation where they can help provide you with the resources to get those ideas, to bring them to life.

(8:35)

One of the "problems" of our high school program, from the standpoint of our administration, is the students coming from our programs aren't coming to UNO, they're getting into Georgetown, Michigan, Pomona, full scholarship at Stanford, full scholarship at Harvard. **We're getting some outstanding students, and we're able to take them in a year, year and a half, from the point where they haven't thought much about these issues, to where, I hope they're going to be competitive when they get to Pomona, or when they get to Michigan.** I don't have enough data at this point. I know that our students [...] one student at Stanford, one student at Stanford are both doing very well this year, but you just, you just don't know. So that's the improvement that we've seen.

SUPRENANT USES AFFIRMATIVE ACTION "TO OUR ADVANTAGE"

(9:25)

What's also nice, is that .. I'm going to try to figure out how to say this in a non-crass way. So, there are certain prejudices that college admissions committees operate on, in terms of people that have a leg up over others. We've been very successful at finding ways to use those prejudices to our advantage, and to get students into universities who, if they were rich, white, middle class students, maybe they don't get into Stanford or Harvard, but we provide these

¹If admitted, the cost to participate in the program is \$120 per student per three-credit course, plus the cost of course texts (which we aim to keep below \$30 per course)." [UNO Alexis de Tocqueville Project site](#)

students with an opportunity that gets them up to the level where they can get in, and then the admissions commission prejudices sort of kick them, kick them over. If that makes sense. I hope that's not too [inaudible]. But that's where we've seen a lot of success. And you know, I think we've make these [] lives better. We've given them an opportunity to be incredibly successful coming from families where, say single mother, didn't go to college, being raised by their grandparents who both didn't go to college. You can really make a [] amount of change [] if you can give them that chance, and it doesn't take a lot of money and it doesn't take a lot of time.

(FROM Q&A AT THE END OF THE SESSION)

Q: Brennan Brown

(12:45)

In every case, you all have developed a number of programs that are having impacts on students, or timely and relevant research, or academic mentorship or professional mentorship. What advice would you have to someone in the audience that doesn't have all that infrastructure in place. Where do they start, what would you tell them?

A: Chris Surprenant

(13:25)

I would figure out what you're really good at. So, for me, I like playing games, I'm very good at figuring out how to use rules to my advantage. Figuring out how to manipulate rules to get what I want, and what I want is to make people's lives better, so I can use the, some of the rules of the university, or some of the structure of the university to advance what I want to do. Figure out how to do that. Figure out what resources you have.

**Derek Yonai, Florida Southern College,
Director of the Center for Free Enterprise
(now at Southern Methodist University)**

“Developing an Ecosystem for Student Engagement” ([audio](#))

(0:36)

...how do we develop the ecosystem of student engagement. So I'm only going to focus on the very narrow portion of what we do at Florida Southern, and I'm going to compare and contrast it with what we did at Campbell and what I'm doing now. With the hopes that stuff I did at Campbell wasn't just some weird outlier event.

(1:22)

One of the things I did, because I am partial to game theory, was to systematize how we're going to use our resources in a way that will be effective, that we can get the most mileage out of those resources. So I looked at student engagement from a game theoretical perspective. Being trapped in business schools, which I think of as the wilderness, you look at the problem if you're given something different [] like George said, students at Troy are much like the students we had at Campbell, **first generation college students, in a business school, want a JOB, they're not thinking of ideas.**

(1:56)

Well, for somebody like me, that sucks. So, what I have to do is fix that. They don't know they are being fixed [laughter]. What you have to do is change that, and as a game theorist, in a world of multiple equilibrium, and I want to get them to the equilibrium I care about, and what we have to do is create common knowledge, create *reinforcing mechanisms* that begin to steer the students toward that desired objective of "ideas matter." What we do in business affects other people in society. You're not just a profit maximizer, you create opportunities to help improve *well being*. There is more to it than just making money, and if you don't understand that, well, woe to our society. **So, for me, it's about creating an environment. So, I like to steal words from the left, cause they steal our words. I want to create an ecosystem, that allows us to create this kind of institutional flourishing and creating a culture for our students to thrive.**

FILTERING AS EARLY AS ADMISSIONS

[\(2:48\)](#)

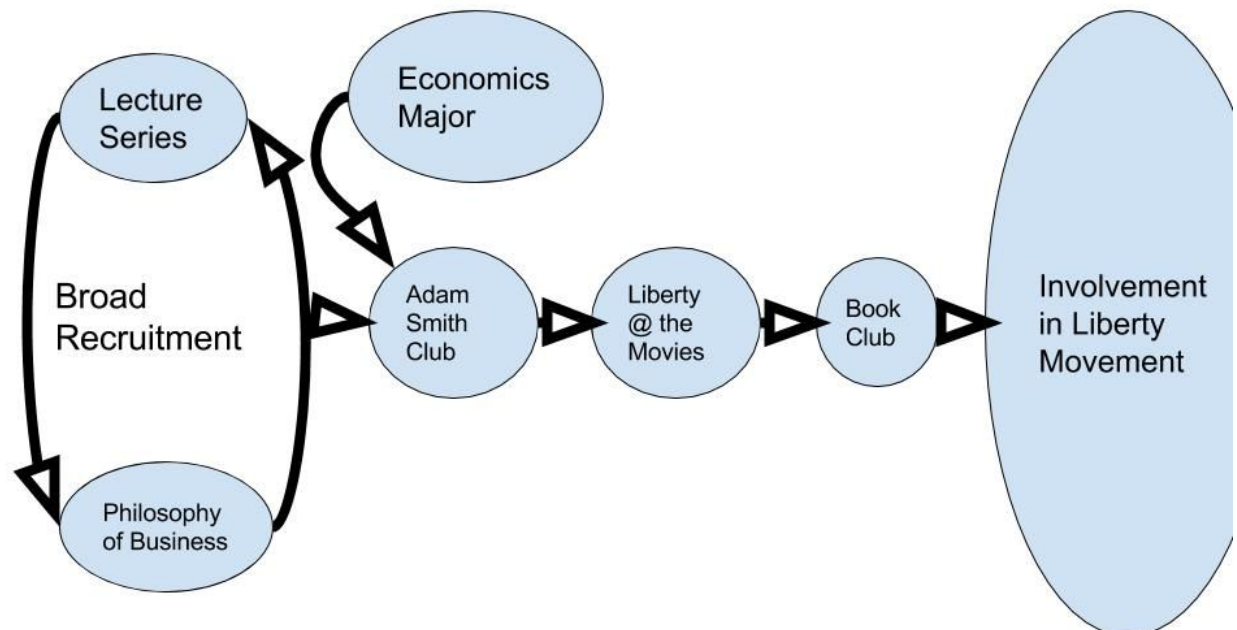
So the base model for engagement is basically a filtering model. You need to have a general recruitment device as George said, his classes. I'm also a big fan of teaming up with admissions, and why not have a kid come to your school because they want to study with you. You get 'em before they even get there. So, start off with general recruitment, expose them to the ideas with a good principles classes, but after that you need that forum for idea refinement, you can't just kind of throw seeds out there and some of them will sprout, just sort of happenstance, you see what you get, then what you get is sort of random. But, if you're going to recruit people, give 'em something, reward them for sticking it out with you. **Create that forum where you begin to talk about these ideas, and to refine these ideas, and then winnow it down to an application of these ideas. How can they apply this, how can they go out and get a job with these things. How can they go out and do something that they find value**

in, as opposed to being closet, sort of, free-market person, and cause they gotta go out and get a JOB.

(3:49)

So, at Campbell, I was running the Lundy Chair for the Philosophy of Business, and what we set up was something fairly straightforward. This was what it looked like back in 2013 when it was mature. (refers to slide, see Figure 1)

Dr. Derek Yonai's Ecosystem of Engagement



[figure 1. A reconstruction of Dr. Yonai's power point slide]

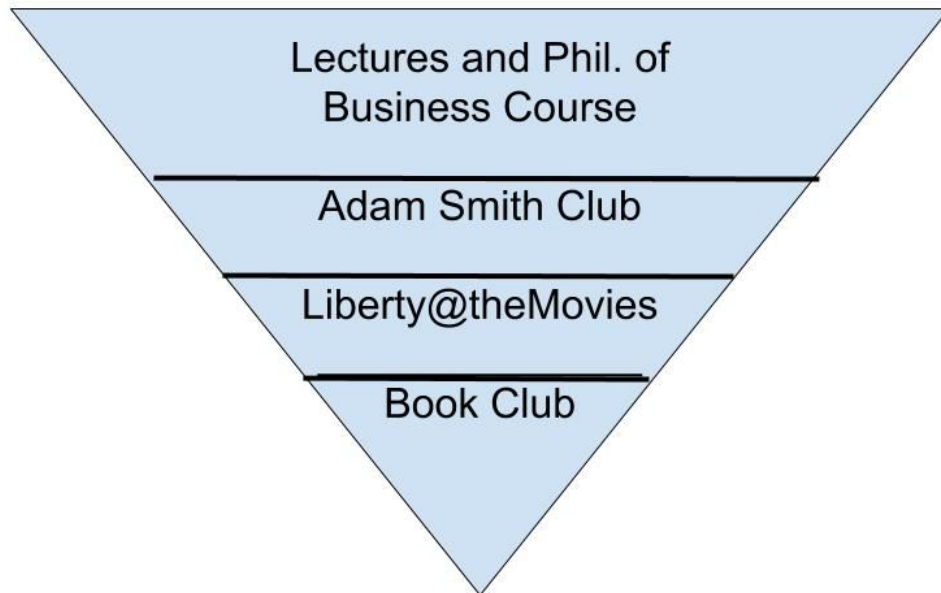
I had a lecture series, and then I had my philosophy of business class, which, **luckily for me, everybody in the entire school of business, if they wanted the degree, had to take the philosophy of business class. So, needless to say, I taught ten years worth of graduates out of the Lundy School of Business.** What I did was, since I had a captive audience, I made them go to my lecture series because I was bringing people who were talking about really interesting topics and, we were talking about, our faculty just did not have a comparative advantage there. So this gives me an opportunity to provide a forum for students to learn that people are doing some seriously sexy stuff in economics. They can come in here talking about things like pirate economics, someone talks about healthcare, and from that broad recruitment they begin to see “well these

ideas are kind of cool, what can I do with them?" And we created a student club, we have an Adam Smith Club. And I'll go into it in some of my later pictures.

(4:50)

I'm not a big fan of using like, Students for Liberty. We have our own internal Adam Smith Club, and we also fed our majors into it, and so we also developed a political economy major at Campbell. When I got there, we only had five econ majors which was kind of bad, and when I left we had over forty. **So, we'd boost our econ majors into the Adam Smith Club, and gave them like a forum where they can see other people are interested in stuff, they begin to realize that there's a subculture for this they're not alone**, and then provide an opportunity for them to go to essentially Liberty movies, show a movie once a month and talk about the philosophical ideas underpinning freedom, liberty, individuality, **what happens if you fight nature**, depending on what kind of film you're watching, and give them the opportunity to talk about some of these bigger ideas in a much more fun setting, of course, feed them snacks, our normal bribe. And give them the opportunity to see that, they watch like, main line movies, were not talking about documentary crap that puts like young people to sleep that we kind of geek out on. You know, we're talking about something like, The Incredibles. You know Disney is great at this, for giving you like the perfect stuff. **Go off The Incredibles, and get them talking about why is it when everyone's super, no body is, except (inaudible), (6:04) And then work into the book club where you can refine those ideas further by reading things like Dan Klein's Knowledge and Coordination, Law Legislation and Liberty, Constitution of Liberty, and then hopefully get them involved in the liberty movement, through FEE (Foundation for Economic Education), IHS (Institute for Humane Studies), KIP (Koch Internship Program), or if they've already done KIP, then eventually into KAP (Koch Associate Program).** Give them resources to go out and say, if you want to go out and do this for a living this is great, if not, you can go out and go to law school, or grad school. Most of my kids at Campbell went on to law school. I had one who clerked for North Carolina Supreme Court Justice about a couple years ago. So, they go out there and they do these things. What's great about this, for those of you who don't like spontaneous stuff, here's something much more linear. (refers to slide, see Figure 2)

Dr. Derek Yonai's Ecosystem of Engagement (filter)



[figure 2. A reconstruction of Dr. Yonai's power point slide]

(6:43)

Each of these things is essentially an off-ramp, so there's a winnowing effect, of where I can identify talent at each level down and figure out who my cream of the crop happen to be, but I also think of it such that, if a kid just wants to watch movies and they don't like to read, they can just exit here, and they're not forced down. What is interesting is some of my students who took these earlier off ramps and just, stopped here, stopped here, or stopped here, actually were the ones who surprised me because they were the more successful ones [inaudible]. Some of the ones who went here just burned out. So by giving them different off ramps, they're given the ability to find what fits for them, and they'll leverage it in a way that makes sense for what they want to do as opposed to be very heavy handed with it. Again, it's about creating that environment.

(7:28)

So, I went to Florida Southern College. There was nothing there and I had this model sitting in my back pocket, and I figured, what the hell. I've got money, let's go get to work. So we did, and it's a lot more complicated now. So, broad recruitment is still the same, same lecture series, I didn't just cut and paste [inaudible] we now teach an intro to philosophy and business, but we start with this high school program. We have a summer

camp for high school students on entrepreneurship and free enterprise. Part of it is a way to bring in people who probably wouldn't come to Florida Southern, but we get them exposed to the ideas on how freedom, liberty, and markets, generate trust, but the hope, and the hope of our admissions department, is that they'll eventually filter in and become one of our free enterprise majors, either business or free enterprise, or political economy major. Once in, they'll take their econ classes, they'll take their philosophy of business classes, and they'll also feed into our lecture series since our econ faculty are very good about getting their students to our events. I've also had some of our high school students who haven't come to our college just show up at our lecture series, and other people in our community show up to our lecture series. So it's a broad recruiting activity.

(8:37)

I'm also very, even though [inaudible] I'm still active with the admissions department in doing [inaudible] on-campus events and talking to prospective students, talking to prospective parents about how we're different and about how the center may change their educational life, and hopefully they become better for it. And again from there, much like the old model, Adam Smith Club. If it works, why change it? And again, liberty at the movies, and the book club. But here's the thing. I'm not a patient guy. At Campbell, when you are some place for ten and a half years, you got all the time in the world. I had to wait five years for cultural changes to take place. Well, I'm on a three and a half year contract, so five years for cultural change, report you know, to create a return on investment doesn't work, so I created these Center for Free Enterprise weekend seminars. We host two a year, one in the fall, one in the spring. Our spring for the last few years has been on humanomics, and the one in the fall has been rotating. The first one we did was on the theory of experts, [.book], and then last year was on Law, Legislation, and Liberty. Now, some of you have sent your students my way, thank you. The idea of this is to bring in students from all over the country. Get them into a room, host a liberty fund seminar, and talk about really cool things. Get them excited to back to campus, and doing cool stuff. That's the sort of altruistic part of this program [inaudible].

(9:57)

The selfish part for me is, I'm using your students to help share culture with my kids, because they don't have any. And what's the easiest way to get culture? Import it. Seriously. Import culture. So, I got one or two students show up to these things and when you have one or two students with eighteen other students who are just jazzed about this, excited about it, talking about this twenty four hours a day, my students come back even more excited, and ready, willing, and able to tell their friends, this is really cool. Yea he's really intense but this stuff is awesome.

(10:37)

And what I bet my students from the Adam Smith Club, I listen to what their comments are during movie night, whether it's intellectually sophisticated, whether they can handle these kinds of conversations, the same thing with the book club, and so I use these seminars if you will as a catalyst to help gem up speed here, that I didn't have before, to get them into, essentially, the liberty, the freedom movement. So again, the more linear

approach (referring to diagram), we have our lecture series, our class, our econ majors, our [inaudible], and our summer program as a broad recruiting device.

PROF DESCRIBES OUTSOURCING TO STUDENTS FOR LIBERTY

(11:07)

Basically, my attitude is go far, go wide, find people with heartbeats who actually care about humanity and bring them here, and then begin to winnow'em down. Get'em involved in the Adam Smith Club, get'em involved in liberty at the movies to talk about these ideas. Get'em involved at the seminars, get'em involved into our book club, and then letting them figure out where they're comfortable, and then allowing me, if you will, as sort of the expert to say sort of find a good fit. **Maybe you're better going to a FEE seminar, maybe you're better going to an IHS seminar. Maybe you'd be a good candidate for KIP. But it gives me a chance to let them know, there are options for them out there.** And even for the student that just wants to get a JOB, which is not a bad thing, it gives me the opportunity to sit down and say, to have them go, you know I really love this stuff but I need money, I want a job, my parents want me to go get one, you know, a stable occupation, and **I tell em, look, you understand these ideas, you are the best foot soldier we have in this fight for economic freedom because, I talk about it, you get to live it. You get to show people what these principles mean by the ways you act.** You're much more effective at this than I am, you're going to [inform] far more people than I am, so just figure out, **where are these students going to be placed, what are they going to be doing because each and every one of them can be valuable in order for us to change, if you will, the trajectory, uh, with regards to economic freedom.** So, for those of you who want scalable models, here it is. You don't have to get involved with admissions, that [] a lot of work. Use your classes. Get all your friends together, use their classes. Use these classes as ways to recruit people about the notion that ideas are cool. Ideas matter.

(12:50)

Create a student club. Once you get them into these ideas, don't just leave them hanging. Reward them. Give them a place where they can come and talk about it. Now, I know some people outsource it to Students For Liberty. I don't. The reason being is I think there is too much baggage with it. It's also harder to sell depending on how "UnKoch" your campus is. I like the Adam Smith Club because it comes off as fairly innocuous to most people, you can bring in people from poli sci, people from mass comms, biology. It gives me a freedom of recruiting that I otherwise probably wouldn't have, and I get to control the messaging, in terms of, this is about academic ideas. It's not about ideology, it's not about libertarianism, it is about understanding the ideas we need to flourish, and I keep it academic. And then, find a way to apply the ideas. At Troy, they're doing research. They get a chance to see these real applications right there. I write a ton of, I write a lot of pithy

op-eds. They see that I can engage the public. **They can go off, and do their internships during the summer with the James Madison Institute and other folks to see how they can affect the world.** But ultimately, if there's one point, it is this. We're all basically doing the same thing. The difference is, what we need to do is step it up a little bit more to where it's purposeful. You do it with a sense of mindfulness, and you do it strategically and understand that with these different activities need to build on each other. You're not just shotgunning it to see what sticks. I've never had that luxury, because I've never had that much money involved. But you've got to figure out, and can these things build on each other in a way that builds the engagement opportunity for the students, and builds their human capital.

YONAI DESCRIBES FACULTY "METAOBJECTIVES"

(14:37)

Or another way to put it is, **how do your activities act as a focal point for whatever your meta-objective is? I know sometimes we do these things, I just want to a book club, but why in the hell do you want to do a book club? What are you trying to achieve? Or, I just want to get students into my major. Well who the hell cares about that? What are you trying to achieve? It brings us back to the big picture. What is the meta-objective?** So, that's it.

Q:Brennan Brown

(15:13)

My question is, to what extent, on your various levels, are your activities designed and organized by the students themselves.

A: Yonai

(15:26)

For example, I didn't have the idea of movie night. The students were like, hey, can we watch movies and talk about them? That sounds really cool, let me think about that for a minute. Right? And so, it was, yea. **And then it's a question of how do we leverage it. So, a lot of it is, and even before I learned about MBM (Market Based Management), it was very much, I wanted to leverage their *local information*, because I'm not an undergrad.** I had no idea what the hell they are into, they do. So, what are you guys interested in, what would get other people here, what would get your friends interested in these ideas, and then, as they pitch them, keep reminding them, our meta objective is, try to get people excited about all this..[], so i bring them in as if you will almost co-decision maker, in terms of having them understand what the *mental model* is, and then helping them vet what their ideas are. So they're very much directly involved.

PROFESSORS SEEK OUT STUDENTS WHO DON'T FIT IN

(16:19) Q: How busy are students in general?

[...]

(16:57) Where I'm at now, our retention mechanism is get them over-involved in everything, whoa, I thought we were here to teach not like create, social clubs for four years, but we create social clubs for four years, and all of our students are overcommitted, and this is the first time I've had to deal with it.

(17:18) But for the past few years what we've done is basically, I've looked for the students who don't fit in, basically because, I see where I'm at now is like high school part two, and you get all kind of the d-bag people, who do all the sort of cool things, and all the frat thingies. They're very shallow, so I don't want them anyway. I want the people who are really interested in ideas, who maybe don't necessarily mesh well with all the people who are very sort of shallow, and finding them because they're out there. And like I explained to our retention committee, if I were a student here, I'd be in hell.

(17:57) It's finding them, and then having them talk to their friends. **So I'm purposefully, kind of like Christianity, I'm purposefully going after all the people that the normal government has totally neglected and turning them into, like, our people.**

(FROM Q&A AT THE END OF THE SESSION, [Audio](#))

Q: Brennan Brown

(8:55)

In every case, you all have developed a number of programs that are having impacts on students, or timely and relevant research, or academic mentorship or professional mentorship. What advice would you have to someone in the audience that doesn't have all that infrastructure in place. Where do they start, what would you tell them?

A: Derek Yonai

(12:45)

Building off of what Chris and Josh were saying, one of the things, and I'm going to make sure to answer this backwards, one of the things I feel a lot of people do when they try to start seminars is emulate other people, or there seems to be this common recipe that people tend to follow. Do a speaker series, do this, do that, magic happens. Sort of build it and they will come. And again, having been out in the wilderness, dealing with a \$1500, I get sick when I see that, like physically ill because I just see wasted resources that I never had. My first bit of advice is to figure out what the heck do you want? What do you want to be? You can't chart a path somewhere if you don't know

where you want to go. So the first thing is figure out what you want to be. What direction do you want to go in? Do you want to help generate grad students the way Bob did over at Capital, do you want to do policy work? What do you want to do?

Joshua Hall, West Virginia University,

“The Center for Free Enterprise at WVU” ([Audio](#))

(0:52)

Our faculty and graduate students taught over 4,000 students last academic year.

(2:27)

What do you want to do, and what is your skill set, and how can that interact well with your institution? I'm about creating value for other people, and I kind of see the most value for people in the liberty movement writ large, and so what the center does with financial income, we have sort of, our donors [foundations] and our alums of the college provide us with opportunities I can have a conversation.

(4:40)

It is hard. But to focus on people who are creating value, a lot of your problems disappear because, whatever institution you're at, they care about excellence and hiring good people. Creating value for everybody, not just in your centers. How can anybody be against that? People come, hey here's our books. **Here's what we do. You're against placing students well? You're against undergraduate research assistants? You're against free courses? We, we contribute twelve free courses to the college of business, economics through our visitors, our managing director, and our programing. That creates a lot of good will, that you then can use to make inroads in other areas.** So what [] has caused me to think about is [] you're good at. What if you're good at creating value for graduate students, and you can not be good at creating value for undergraduates. Or, we can't be good at being, at this current time, being good at the policy research side. Why? Institutionally, it just doesn't work. We're three hours, on a good day, from the state capitol. The opportunity cost is just enormous for us to be engaged in that way, but we can be engaged by doing research in journals that may or may not have a policy focus, and then [the heartland institution institute for public policy, or something else will take that and run with it, and we'll be a part of the conversation, uh, uh, that way. Don't be dogmatic, but be firm. What I mean by that is be somewhat ecumenical when people come to you with interesting ideas, but gut check that against the mission, and be firm when it comes to saying, nope I don't [] our mission. Or can you tell me how that would be a [benefit to our] mission.

Q&A Begins

Q: Brennan Brown

[\(8:55\)](#)

In every case, you all have developed a number of programs that are having impacts on students, or timely and relevant research, or academic mentorship or professional mentorship. What advice would you have to someone in the audience that doesn't have all that infrastructure in place. Where do they start, what would you tell them?

A: Josh Hall

[\(12:35\)](#)

That was my first thing I would say, is how can you do what you already do a little bit better, and a little more public. And maybe get some resources to help bring students to APEE, and..

i

A: Derek Yonai

[\(12:45\)](#)

Building off of what Chris and Josh were saying, one of the things, and I'm going to make sure to answer this backwards, one of the things I feel a lot of people do when they try to start seminars is emulate other people, or there seems to be this common recipe that people tend to follow. Do a speaker series, do this, do that, magic happens. Sort of build it and they will come. And again, having been out in the wilderness, dealing with a \$1500, I get sick when I see that, like physically ill because I just see wasted resources that I never had. My first bit of advice is to figure out what the heck do you want? What do you want to be? You can't chart a path somewhere if you don't know where you want to go. So the first thing is figure out what you want to be. What direction do you want to go in? Do you want to help generate grad students the way Bob did over at Capital, do you want to do policy work? What do you want to do?

A: George Crowley

[\(14:10\)](#)

Yea, and I guess I would just add, the kind of entrepreneurship part to this, to get back to the theme of all this, is kind of about picking your spot, sort of finding what the opportunities [] to make this thing work. **So, we've been very lucky at Troy. We had a big gift, that let us hire a whole bunch of people all at once, and we kind of were able to take over, for lack of a better term,** but it's still, there's little spots where we've been able to make little incremental changes over and above. **So, we had a finance faculty member retire, and we were able to go and hire Thomas Hogan. He's an economist, but he had enough finance background that we were able to kind of use that. And so that's an interesting line that we were kind of able to, kind of like, take.** And it's just little incremental things like that. Even if you're by yourself at a place

where you don't have any [resource] just getting the ideas into the classroom, try to get the students turned on to stuff. I mean, that was my own personal experience as an undergrad, you know, you just get turned on to the idea and then, from there you can see where that goes, kind of picking your spot, and that's the entrepreneurship part.

A:Chris Suprenant

[\(15:45\)](#)

How much of my story do you want to hear where they tried to, I had a dean who hired me to do what I am doing now, and within the first three months of my, of being at UNO they tried to get me fired. They said they didn't like what I was doing, they didn't like the ideas. Fortunately that dean is gone. The dean I have now is very friendly. But I think that you ask people to judge things on the merits. And say, what exactly am I doing that you don't like? Is it mentoring students? Is it bringing outstanding speakers to campus? So, I've [brought] us three and a half years from a handful of very far left faculty who were very upset when I got there, and doing things with the dean to try to cause me problems. But now, those people are coming to our events, sending their students to us. They still disagree, with me, but these were all people who sat on the P&T (promotion and tenure) committee at the university and put me through within literally thirty seconds of a discussion. My suggestion if you encounter problems, is if you have some money, not much money, ten, fifteen bucks, take someone out to lunch. So if someone is giving you problems, a colleague. Shoot them an email, take them out to lunch, and have a discussion with them. Just figure out where the common ground is, because my sense is that most of the disagreements we have are empirical disagreements. I have never found a faculty member where I've gone in and said like, look, I'm interested in making people's lives better. Here are all the problems that we face in New Orleans. Everyone agrees with me. I say, okay, then our disagreement is just empirical. It's just well, what's the best way of doing it. Oh, let's just have the students read it and let them decide for themselves. And noone's given me any problems. So, my advice, take people out to lunch, \$20 bucks.

A: Derek Yonai

[\(17:47\)](#)

The feedback I've had has been completely positive, now, that's ex post. Ex ante they were looking like, this is crazy, we wanted you to run a center. God. But as soon as they see the result of what kind of culture we're creating, right now they're sophomores, with our sophomores and we're creating with our freshman, the kinds of activities we're doing, the kinds of, if you will, survey responses we're getting back and the feedback we're getting back, from the stakeholders, and the public...

The faculty in the school of business, no matter where they are in the ideology spectrum, ...let me put it to you this way: they love what we're doing so much, that right now, they're scared they're going to lose it. Outside the school of business, we've partnered up with our poli-sci department, which is very far on the liberal left, but they helped us

push through our political economy major, they actually co-sponsored our minor. We actually had them push it through, and they've been sending students to our classes. So the feedback has been really good, part of it has to do with the fact that, again, my goal has been about intellectualizing the discussion.

When I go there, the concern was that I was going to be some crazy nut job ideologue. When they found out that I'm an academic, and that I cared about intellectual debate, it really seemed to soothe a lot of nerves. With all the activities the students are engaged in, and the fact that I will play the devil's advocate, and challenge them when they seem like they are being very dogmatic for freedom, that has done a lot in gain [...] in general a lot of support, on campus, and especially off.

A: George Crowley

(19:10) I would just add, at Troy we, the academic side, there's not been really any pushback at all, we've had a little bit of, occasional, kind of, giving some folks in the administration heartburn about some of the policy stuff that comes out, but even that hasn't been particularly aggressive. It's mainly, you just, you hang your hat on the fact that you are doing good work. That's the principle, and that it's getting the, kind of, Troy brand, in addition to the Johnson brand, like out there in the [] public policy discussion in a way that it's never been before, and that's not usually the kind of thing that.. You do have to be, not just a pure ideologue, dogmatic, kind of just shoot from the hip, you have to actually be doing good work.

CO-OPTING STATE RESOURCES

A: Josh Hall:

(20:10)

Ultimately, what we're trying to do is just get people excited about these ideas!, it gets people excited!, even if you disagree, it's the way you look at it, it's like yea, let's keep doing this. It's something to re-energize. Like, a faculty member in the college who had never, had not written anything since nineteen ninety-one, and Scott Beaulier and I show up, and suddenly he's like, writing papers, like within six months. Part of that is Scott's, you know, influence, but these things become infectious.

And ultimately, [I think] resources, more importantly, I want to co-opt resources [laughter]. So, it was a brilliant move to hire Tom Hogan when that opportunity presented itself, and I want to get as many people on the state of West Virginia resources as possible, and so how do you do that? You have to understand your institution, and bring people along that want to be a part of what you're doing. That's why we have only two funded lines, but four affiliated faculty. People say, I want to be a part of that.

A: Josh Hall

(23:03)

How can you do what you already do a little bit better, and a little more [inaudible]. And maybe get some resources to help bring students to APEE.

Q: Brennen Brown

[\(0:33\)](#)

In closing, I think it's pretty clear that what brings us all together is the belief in, and the commitment to the power of ideas. Let me share a quote with you from Charles Koch, who I believe sums it up very well. This is what he said. He said, "I have a passionate belief in the power of ideas of liberty. If we fail, it is our failure, not that of the ideas. My commitment is such that it is to them, the ideas, I am dedicating my life. (80:36) If the work of these edupreneurs, these intellectual entrepreneurs, and the words of Charles Koch for example, speak to you, and resonate with you, then I invite you to talk to Steve Sweet, my colleague who's here, Clark Scott, who I believe is also here, to talk to you about your vision, your ideas, and how to develop that intellectual entrepreneur within you. And thank you so much for being here, and thank you so much for the experts here who are with us. Chris, George, Derek, Josh.