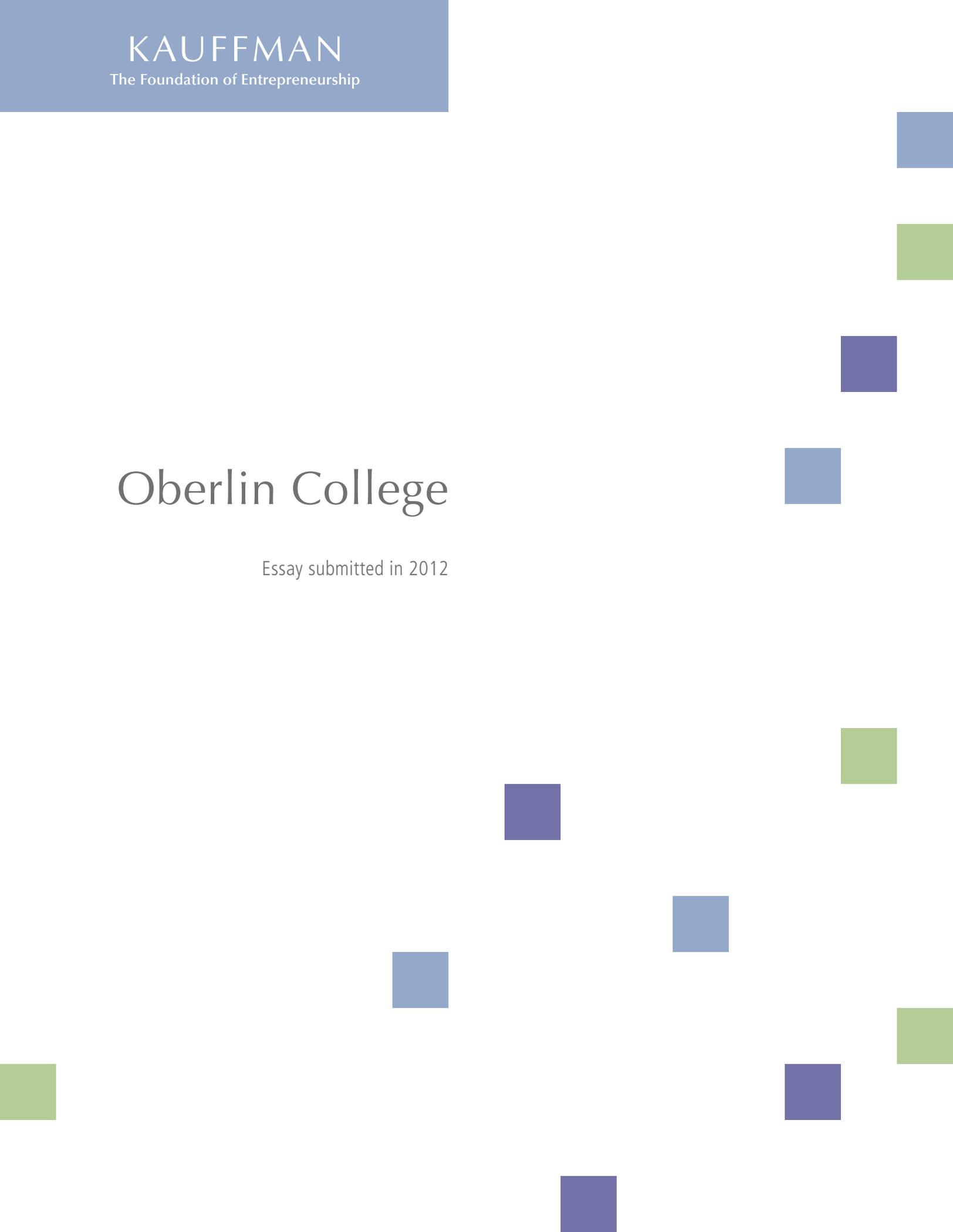


Oberlin College

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Opening Minds, Inciting Entrepreneurship: The Kauffman Campuses Initiative/Northeast Ohio Collegiate Entrepreneurship Program at Oberlin

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Over the past five years, grants from the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation and Burton D. Morgan Foundation Kauffman CampusesSM Initiative (KCI)/Northeast Ohio Collegiate Entrepreneurship Program (NEOCEP) have catalyzed and showcased entrepreneurship among Oberlin students, faculty, and alumni through the College's Creativity & Leadership (C&L) project and enhanced the transformative power of an Oberlin education.

Defining Entrepreneurship at Oberlin

When Oberlin first received the invitation from the Morgan and Kauffman Foundations to apply to the Kauffman Campuses Initiative/NEOCEP, faculty and the administration recognized the potential for student learning but were uncertain whether Oberlin was a good fit for the program. Many entrepreneurship programs are centered in institutions with robust business programs and introduced entrepreneurship as a related major area of study, but it was clear this would not be an effective model for Oberlin as a liberal arts college and conservatory of music. In extensive discussions examining the nature of entrepreneurship, however, we challenged our initial institutional perceptions of entrepreneurship and realized that that entrepreneurship in fact encompassed a broad range of activities, many of which directly aligned with and would strengthen further Oberlin's educational approach, strategic priorities, and the activities of students, faculty, and alumni.

Our task, therefore, was to define entrepreneurship for Oberlin. We recognized creativity, innovation, action, and leadership as essential elements of entrepreneurial endeavor, and indeed these are the very qualities Oberlin seeks to develop in its students. Oberlin's popular admissions slogan – "Think one person can change the world?" – in fact captured what we came to recognize as an entrepreneurial mindset, and faculty and students immediately saw the connections between Oberlin's culture and the culture of entrepreneurship.

In many ways, Oberlin College itself embodies a long tradition of creating change by posing solutions to challenges and needs. Oberlin was founded in 1833 as the first co-educational college in the United States and in 1835 became the first U.S. college to make the education of African American and white students together central to its mission. Founded in 1865, the Oberlin Conservatory is the oldest continuously operating conservatory of music and is the only major music school in the U.S. devoted primarily to the education of undergraduate musicians. A leader in music education, Oberlin offered the country's first four-year degree program in public school music; introduced the Suzuki method of string pedagogy to the U.S.; was the first U.S. undergraduate institution to establish a program in electronic music; and built the world's first gold-level, LEED-certified music-teaching facility. In the College of Arts and Sciences, Oberlin was among the first liberal arts colleges to offer programs in computer science, creative writing, East Asian studies, neuroscience, and environmental studies. Oberlin remains

committed to ensuring its curriculum is current and vibrant and one that prepares students to meet the challenges of an increasingly complex world.

In developing the proposal, we came to recognize that much of the innovative work of Oberlin faculty was in fact entrepreneurial, from a political scientist offering international consulting services to a clarinetist providing mouthpieces to musicians in all of the country's major orchestras, and a Conservatory professor's founding of a non-profit music program that nurtures the musical development and spiritual growth of young musicians to a faculty member in environmental studies who – together with former research students – launched a company that designs and implements data acquisition and interactive display systems for the green-building industry. These and other faculty are leaders in their academic fields who have developed effective means of applying their research to develop creative solutions. It became clear that the Kauffman Campuses/NEOCEP initiative offered a powerful way not just to showcase their work but also to contextualize it for Oberlin undergraduates as models of entrepreneurship.

In our broader thinking about entrepreneurship, we realized also that some of Oberlin's most-distinguished alumni have created ventures that have had a significant impact on the world. Perhaps the most celebrated is 1885 chemistry graduate Charles Martin Hall, who invented the first commercially feasible process for extracting aluminum from bauxite and co-founded Alcoa Inc. Hall is but one example among many in Oberlin's history of innovators, creative risk-takers, and entrepreneurial thinkers inspired to tackle challenges and meet needs within the market and society at large. Examples include: D.A. Henderson (OC '50), who headed the World Health Organization's international effort to eradicate smallpox; Richard D. Baron (OC '64), co-founder, chairman and CEO of McCormack Baron Salazar, Inc., a for-profit firm specializing in the development of economically integrated urban neighborhoods; the International Contemporary Ensemble (ICE), a critically acclaimed contemporary music ensemble founded by Claire Chase (OC '01) in 2001; Jerry Greenfield (OC '73), co-founder of Ben and Jerry's Ice Cream; and MacArthur Fellow Ralf David Hotchkiss (OC '69), who invented the Appropriate Technology International-Hotchkiss wheelchair and established factories in 25 developing countries where disabled people build wheelchairs from local materials.

To gather feedback from alumni, in summer 2006 Oberlin conducted a survey of graduates who had launched their own ventures. Alumni were asked about the type (for-profit, non-profit) and sector of their organizations, as well as whether courses and experiences at Oberlin were helpful to them in preparing to start their ventures and which courses, information, and co-curricular programming Oberlin could offer to help students in launching their own ventures.

Respondents were fairly evenly divided by gender (45% female, 55% male), with two-thirds from graduating classes in the 1980s and 1990s. The alumni represented a broad range of majors drawn from all four divisions of Oberlin (Conservatory, Arts and Humanities, Natural Sciences, and Social Sciences). Overall, 53% of the initiatives/organizations started by respondents were for-profit, with 38% in the non-profit sector and 9% encompassing both for-profit and non-profit aspects. Nearly one-third of organizations focused on the arts, followed by goods and services, community development/social justice, education, and finance. Over half of

respondents began considering launching their own venture during post-Oberlin graduate study or work experiences, while nearly one-fifth reported that they began thinking about starting their own organization or initiative while at Oberlin.

Even without coursework or programming on entrepreneurship, 50% of the respondents found their courses at Oberlin “very” or “somewhat” helpful in preparing them to launch their organization. Comments attested to the value of an Oberlin education for aspiring entrepreneurs:

Math, Chemistry, Physics. Why? Because strong quantitative skills are essential to success in running a business. Psych and religion. Why? Because you need to understand people.

Alumnus (OC '81), East Asian Studies major
Founded national auto insurance company

I was . . . quite stimulated to be surrounded by all the liberal arts courses and activities. I used every free moment I could find at Oberlin to expose myself to the liberal arts on the campus - studying in the Art Museum, going to art films and lectures, etc.

Alumna (OC '57), Music education major; English minor
Founded for-profit company that organizes small-group, educational and cultural international travel programs

Although indirect, my work in sociology/anthropology started me on the path that led to my interest in organizing and housing development. I also found myself working with numbers in a way that statistics (social science) helped. Finally, taking courses such as women's studies and black studies kept me aware that every normative understanding hides less accessible perspectives.

Alumnus (OC '83), Anthropology/Sociology/Jewish Studies major
Founded non-profit focusing on low-income housing

Most of my environmental studies courses were helpful in framing the issues. While these and other Oberlin courses don't necessarily provide the practical skills to start an initiative, they provide the essential background information and inspiration in any one field.

Alumnus (OC '93), Politics major; Environmental Studies minor
Founded for-profit organization focusing on organization and community capacity building

Respondents found helpful involvement with student organizations such as the Oberlin Student Cooperative Association, community service, and Winter (January) Term internships received the highest scores, followed by research with faculty.

Respondents suggested that Oberlin add curricular and co-curricular programming in the following areas to support students with entrepreneurial aspirations:

- **organizational skills and management** (*e.g.*, start-up; developing a business plan; accounting, bookkeeping, and reporting requirements; fundraising/grant writing; personnel recruitment and management);
- **experiential learning** (*e.g.*, presentations by experienced entrepreneurs, internships, mentoring, community service, involvement with student organizations or campus cooperatives);
- **communications and marketing** (*e.g.*, presentation skills, marketing); and
- **leadership** (*e.g.*, organizational development, definition of mission, conflict resolution, mediation, cross-cultural communication).

Oberlin emerged from this background work with a deeper understanding and appreciation of entrepreneurship as a powerful tool for catalyzing students to imagine their lives beyond Oberlin – how their education can translate into their future professional lives – and to practice these lives while at Oberlin. We therefore focused our program on “doing” entrepreneurship; as one of our first entrepreneurship students observed, Creativity & Leadership took “Think one person can change the world?” one step further by challenging students not just to think but to take action.

Entrepreneurship at Oberlin

Creativity & Leadership is a multi-disciplinary effort designed to encourage students to put their innovative ideas into practice. Tailored to Oberlin’s diverse and dynamic intellectual and artistic life, the program exemplifies the synergy inherent in the combination of the complementary educational approaches of a liberal art college and a conservatory of music. C&L offers a variety of opportunities – and multiple entry points – for students of all majors and class years to build the skills, knowledge, and experience they need to test, develop, and implement their ideas during their formative undergraduate years.

Oberlin’s approach to entrepreneurship inverts the traditional educational model. By design, Creativity and Leadership is primarily co-curricular, featuring competitive venture funding at different levels, mentoring, workshops, guest lectures, internships, and networking events. While coursework is an important element of the program, its role is to prepare students to take best advantage of co-curricular programming and to implement their projects at a very high level. C&L strengthens student development while fostering a support network for aspiring entrepreneurs across disciplines, sectors, and generations.

Competitive venture funding is a core component of Creativity & Leadership, one that impels student practice of entrepreneurship, generates interest and excitement in the program, and affirms for students the relevance of entrepreneurship course offerings, internships, and other experiential aspects of the program. Three levels of funding are offered each year.

Through the Creativity Fund, students can apply for starter grants of up to \$1,500 to test their entrepreneurial ideas or to pilot a venture. With three deadlines annually, the Creativity Fund reaches a broad range of students across campus and class years and is very often students’

first applied entrepreneurial experience. The Creativity Fund was not included in the original proposal to the Kauffman and Morgan Foundations but was added with their approval in the first full year of the grant when it became clear that students would benefit from entry-level experiences in venture development and implementation and additional opportunities to gain the experience of applying for funding through a competitive process. Funded projects have ranged from pilot launch of a recording label to a work on environmentally sustainable approaches to storm-water management to interactive video game design. Even for these small grants, the application process is rigorous and includes a written proposal, detailed project budget, and oral pitch of the idea to a committee of faculty and staff. Through the process of applying for funding and implementing their projects, students frequently recognize their need to develop particular skills and to fill in gaps in their knowledge base and subsequently turn to other components of the program. A number of Creativity Fund grantees have gone on to pursue and receive more substantial funding through the program and externally, and students have reported that the Creativity Fund was extremely helpful in testing and refining their models.

Conservatory Initiative Grants Supporting Imagination and Excellence (CIGSIE) offer conservatory students support to develop innovative artistic endeavors during Oberlin's Winter (January) Term, when regularly courses are not in session and students undertake independent or small-group projects outside the regular curriculum. CIGSIE was designed to build on the Conservatory's successful use of Winter Term for professional experiences such as touring, recording, or educational outreach to schools or public audiences. On average, Creativity & Leadership awards \$12,000 and supports three CIGSIE projects annually, with funds awarded competitively on the basis of the quality of the proposed artistic program, the audiences to be served, planned venues, and the viability of the implementation plan. Proposals are reviewed on the basis of the creative merit and feasibility of the project as well as the preparedness of the entrepreneurial team. Such experiences offer excellent preparation for other funding opportunities as well as professional life after graduation. Rafiq Bahtia (OC '10), for example, received CIGSIE funding in 2010 for the New Music: New Audiences project to explore models for increasing access to jazz performances by simultaneously cultivating young audiences and ensembles. Now an independent music professional and composer/guitarist, he continues to work towards realizing the full project and has a forthcoming (2012) jazz album – funded in part through a successful Kickstarter campaign – that includes collaborations with acclaimed jazz percussionist Billy Hart and pianist Vijay Iyer.

The prestigious Creativity & Leadership Fellowships award the most innovative, motivated, and prepared Oberlin students the unparalleled opportunity to spend the year after graduation moving their projects from concept to reality. Fellows benefit not only from funding but also from substantive mentoring by alumni entrepreneurs and C&L faculty and staff.

The one-year grants are awarded annually through a two-staged competition. Phase one includes a written value proposition and implementation plan as well a detailed budget. An adjudication panel of faculty, staff, and alumni assesses the proposals and provides feedback. Candidates who advance to phase two submit a revised proposal and budget that respond to the committee's questions and reflect applicants' further work on their venture. The final stage of selection is an oral pitch to an expanded committee followed by questions. The committee awards a total of \$60,000 in funding annually to two or three ventures across a range of sectors and over the last five years has seen tremendous growth in the quality and sophistication of the

applications as well as the preparedness of the students to launch. At the same time, we saw a clear need for stronger financial literacy and budgeting skills among applicants and Fellows as well as for sustained mentorship and advising throughout their Fellowships. To this end, in 2010 C&L began inviting experienced alumni entrepreneurs to review and provide feedback on the ventures of Fellowship applicants and in 2011 introduced a “boot camp” for new Fellows to help prepare them for the challenges and opportunities of the Fellowship year. For ventures being implemented by teams, the boot camp stressed the importance of determining effective management, communications, and workflow strategies among the members as well as the benefit of creating structured agreements. For Fellows launching ventures on their own, the boot camp – which included presentations by previous Fellows as well as staff from the Alumni, Development, and Deans Offices – introduced important resources for support and encouraged them to develop their own, additional mentoring networks.

Ventures awarded Creativity & Leadership Fellowships include:

2008		
	Inkeren, LLC: Skritter, an innovative software program designed to improve learning of Chinese- and Japanese-language characters	George Saines (OC '08) Nick Winter (OC '08) Scott Erickson (OC '08)
	Kantara Crafts: a fair-trade business that partners with Moroccan artisan cooperatives to offer finely crafted, hand-woven textiles from Morocco in a socially responsible, environmentally conscious fashion	Alia Kate (OC '08)
	RockStarz: a business aimed at stimulating interest in music among youth through dynamic summer-camp workshops, performances, and lessons	Nathaniel Gelb (OC '08)
2009		
	Bread and Butter Collective: a collectively owned and operated silk-screening studio	Sara Krugman (OC '09)
	One World One Rope: an enterprise that teaches jump rope to children and youth in Tanzania and Kenya, using it as a means of fostering confidence, teamwork, and leadership	Michael Fry (OC'09)
	Spin It In: a hip tennis-clothing company designed to serve street cred to the sport of tennis through unique apparel and tennis gear	David Midler (OC'09) Noah Goldman (OC'09)

2010		
	Alessi Technologies: a company that aims to license the technology behind its innovative, patent-pending, automated histological device	Daniel Abramson (OC '10)
	Niger Stove Project: a community-development enterprise that aims to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by dissemination low-cost, fuel-efficient stoves through an alternative income program benefitting disadvantaged women	Rachel Rothgery (OC'10)
	Valley Community Kitchen: a non-profit that aims to promote economic development in the Coal River Valley of southern West Virginia by supporting food entrepreneurship	Emily Arons (OC '10)
2011		
	Near West Empowerment + Renewal Approaches: an initiative to support community and economic development in the near-west side of Cleveland	Erika Zarowin ('11)
	OutHere Productions: a three-D video-production company	Harry Israelson (OC '11) David Sherwin (OC '11) Federico Sanchez-Llanos (OC '11)
	Smarter Grades: an online, test-preparation program serving the Indian subcontinent	Madhav Kaushish (OC'11) Haider Khan (OC '11)
2012		
	Applaud: a company developing a smart-phone application to facilitate an interactive conversation among customers, businesses, and employees	Wyatt Hayman (OC '12)
	Interfaith Appalachia: an interfaith, service-learning initiative that works with mining communities in the Appalachian region	David Fisher (OC '12)

Prior to the launch of Creativity & Leadership, Oberlin was able to provide only modest seed support for student projects upon occasion. C&L greatly expanded resources to launch students' initiatives, established rigorous application and assessment protocols for such funding, and significantly raised the quality and visibility of entrepreneurship at Oberlin. While the Fellowships are designed to support the initial year of a venture, applicants must demonstrate the

financial and structural sustainability of their business models. In fact, two-thirds of the ventures have continued beyond the fellowship year, an impressive testament to the viability of the projects funded, the dedication of these young entrepreneurs, and the importance of this program in fostering entrepreneurship.

Two of the ventures funded through the first round of C&L Fellowships, for example, are now in their fifth of operation and continue to have strong growth. Kantara Crafts has expanded its product line to offer custom rugs and has formalized the social-entrepreneurship component of the business through development of *Untangling Threads: Women Artisans in Morocco's Rug Weaving Industry*, an educational art exhibit that displays hand-woven rugs beside documentary photographs of women weavers. The venture's direct work with women artisans is fostering entrepreneurship in Morocco while providing western markets with high-quality textiles made in compliance with fair-trade standards and without the use of child labor. Skritter – founded in 2008 by three C&L Fellows who majored in computer science/math/East Asian Studies, economics/cinema studies, and computer science – has not only expanded its language-learning software to include Japanese as well as Chinese but also recently launched iOS App versions of the Chinese software program for iPhones and iPads. Moving into the smartphone and tablet market is critical to Skritter's continued development, and as noted on the company's blog, the iOS platforms are the result of 19 months of intensive work and thousands of hours refining the product with more than 75 test-users. Skritter and Kantara Crafts are powerful and compelling examples of ventures launched with C&L Fellowship funding, and C&L regularly brings these and other Fellows back to campus to assist with orientation of new Fellows and to present on their experiences to students in *Introduction to Entrepreneurship*.

Introduction to Entrepreneurship is designed to introduce students to the concepts, history, and practice of entrepreneurship. Through case studies and discussion, students consider: ethical issues of entrepreneurship; the role of mission/vision and the challenges of balancing them with economic realities and pressures; and successful and failed ventures. The course centrally features presentations by Oberlin alumni and northeastern Ohio practitioners, who share their experiences, challenges, and achievements in developing and sustaining an organization. *Introduction to Entrepreneurship* is a prerequisite for applying for a C&L Fellowship.

The goal of the introductory course is not to teach the skills required, but rather to: 1) give undergraduates an intellectual and philosophical grounding in the concept of entrepreneurship; 2) familiarize them with entrepreneurial models; 3) introduce them to the range of skills entrepreneurs need; 4) help them begin considering their own preparedness for such work and ways to relate coursework, co-curricular activities, employment, and community service to develop their skills; and 5) familiarize them with other Creativity & Leadership courses, experiential activities, and venture funding.

Over the course of the grants from the Morgan and Kauffman Foundations, Oberlin has created other new courses and enhanced the content and structure of a variety of existing classes, in order to expose students to practical, global, and socially responsible perspectives on entrepreneurship. Among these classes are: *Business Model Innovation*, which guides students through the process of developing a viable value proposition; *Principles of Financial Accounting*; *Presentation Skills*; *Grant and Proposal Writing*; and an upper-level course in the Politics Department in which students provide research and analysis for local businesses, non-

profits, and government organizations. In addition, several courses were introduced to address the need for more specialized skill development in particular fields. *Professional Development for the Freelance Artist*, for instance, introduces musicians and artists to marketing, negotiating, networking, and interview skills, while *The Promotional Short: Promotional, Online Video Production* is a production workshop in the growing field of Internet video. Each student produces two, high-quality short videos featured on the Oberlin College website; videos produced during the class are also entered into a short film festival at the end of the year, and students are eligible to apply for positions in media production in the College's Office of Communications. These courses have proven essential to ensuring that students have the capacity to bring to their entrepreneurial endeavors the same standard of excellence expected in their core academic work.

Internships give students additional opportunities to experience and practice entrepreneurship. Oberlin awards need-based internship support on a competitive basis through formal application and an interview. Assistance in identifying possible internship sites to support students' entrepreneurial interests and development of relevant skills is provided by Creativity & Leadership staff and the Office of Career Services. The availability of C&L internship funding has helped raise the visibility of internships on campus – and student perception of their value – and as a result the overall number of internship applications more than doubled in the first year of the program and has grown steadily since then. Examples of recent internship sites include the Baryshnikov Arts Center, the advertising and marketing company Interference Incorporated, the northeast Ohio venture-development organization Jump Start, and the start-up beverage company Runa.

Internships and the Entrepreneurship Scholars Program – held in January during Winter Term – have proven effective ways to connect current students with alumni and engage alumni with the Creativity & Leadership program and the College in general. Serving students who have already articulated an entrepreneurial objective, the Entrepreneurship Scholars Program creates a cohort of student entrepreneurs who work intensively with alumni mentors in selected cities to refine their ideas, develop business models, and practice pitching and networking. During the 2012 program, nine Oberlin students spent one week on campus examining case studies and participating in workshops, two weeks on their own further developing their models, and then a final week in New York City consulting with and getting feedback on their ventures from alumni entrepreneurs.

Creativity & Leadership has provided other unique opportunities for students and alumni to work together. In 2010, for instance, an alumnus with expertise in arts marketing mentored a group of students responsible for developing a marketing strategy for three arts projects on campus. In 2008 and 2010, C&L organized highly successful symposia that brought together current students, alumni, and faculty to explore aspects of entrepreneurship. The 2008 event – *Inventing the Future* – featured keynotes by Ben & Jerry's Ice Cream co-founder Jerry Greenfield (OC '73); Dr. Jonathan Merrill (OC '84), founder and CEO of Astute Technologies; and Michael Alexin (OC '79), Vice President of Soft Product Design and Development at Target Corporation. In total, 25 alumni returned to campus to participate with faculty in panel discussions on entrepreneurship in a variety of fields including music, the environment, the arts, social entrepreneurship, and finance. For a number of these alumni, the symposium was a

catalyst for their first return to campus since graduation. The impact of the symposium was broadened and enriched by the participation of students, faculty, and staff from other northeast Ohio colleges participating in NEOCEP.

The 2010 symposium – *Designing the Future: From Idea to Impact* – expanded the 2008 format to include student presentations as well as formalized networking events. A central focus of the event was a student design challenge. The Creativity & Leadership project charged twelve students with designing a line of Oberlin College apparel that would appeal both to current students and to alumni. In addition to designing the clothing, the students were tasked with developing a marketing plan that included market research and a strategy for distribution. These students, who represented different years and majors, came to the challenge as individuals who shared a passion for design but worked together to design clothing that was eventually sold at the Oberlin College bookstore. Their engaging designs were showcased at a dynamic fashion show to a capacity crowd in Oberlin’s historic Finney Chapel. The event, which featured live music and performers, was designed and produced by a second group of Creativity & Leadership students, who had the unique opportunity to implement their artistic vision for the specific purpose of marketing a product. The student designs were critiqued on stage by a panel of prominent alumni from the design community: Carleton Varney (OC ’58), President and Owner of Dorothy Draper & Co.; Michael Alexin (OC ’79), Vice President of Soft Product Design and Development at Target Corporation; and singer, song-writer, and producer Brad Walsh (OC ’04). The fashion show was an exciting kick-off to a weekend of discussion and case studies of entrepreneurship in a range of fields examined through the lens of design. The student design challenge garnered national attention and was featured in an article in *The New York Times* (“Oberlin College Entrepreneurs Take on the T-Shirt,” 24 May 2010). The design challenge was run again in 2011-12, to give another group of students this valuable experience in design and marketing. Setting its sights still higher, the 2012 team founded ObieWear as an ongoing, student-run line of Oberlin clothing.

Transforming Students and Future Directions for Creativity & Leadership

Creativity & Leadership highlights and expands a culture that has long existed at Oberlin but had not been directly supported or actively encouraged. The program has provided a vital mechanism for integrating entrepreneurship into the educational fabric of the institution. Indeed, entrepreneurship has proven an effective tool in helping students interweave their coursework, co-curricular activities, and personal passions in ways that enable them to imagine and practice their professional lives beyond Oberlin.

In its first five years, the impact of the program has been significant. Creativity, leadership, innovation, and entrepreneurship are now cited proudly as hallmarks of an Oberlin education by all constituencies, from students to members of the Board of Trustees. Students across campus see C&L as a destination for guidance and support for developing and launching their entrepreneurial ventures as well as for exploring and taking steps to realize possibilities for life after Oberlin. Awareness of the program now extends to prospective students and their parents, and orientation for entering first-year students includes a well-attended session on entrepreneurship at Oberlin. The Creativity & Leadership program has also become a focal point for Oberlin alumni and a powerful way of engaging alumni as mentors, consultants, and donors.

As we look to the next phase of the Creativity & Leadership project, leveraging alumni engagement is a key area of focus. In January 2013, for instance, C&L in collaboration with Oberlin's President's Advisory Council will pilot LaunchU, a new and intensive entrepreneurship accelerator that will bring together alumni investors and mentors with student and alumni entrepreneurs. LaunchU's design combines key aspects of our entrepreneurship symposia, campus-based pitch competitions, the Entrepreneurship Scholars Program, alumni guest/mentorship program, and Oberlin's entrepreneurship classes and so represents lessons learned over the past five years. Importantly, LaunchU will extend C&L's support beyond current students to alumni aspiring entrepreneurs. LaunchU programming will include a speaker series and an intensive week of workshops, case studies, and feedback sessions, and it will culminate with a pitch competition before a panel of alumni and other investors. Funded by alumni and developed by C&L staff in collaboration with members of the President's Advisory Council, LaunchU positions Oberlin to increase further the visibility of C&L – on campus, among alumni, and in the northeast Ohio region – and it will enable Oberlin to support the development of young entrepreneurs after they have graduated. LaunchU is already attracting strong interest from young alumni who participated in C&L activities while at Oberlin but were not yet ready to implement ventures, and it will also serve and benefit entrepreneurially minded alumni who attended Oberlin prior to C&L.

The components outlined above all demonstrate the new opportunities for entrepreneurship set in motion in the college of arts and sciences and conservatory of music by the grants from the Kauffman and Morgan Foundations. The spirit of entrepreneurship burns brightly at Oberlin today, and an increasing number of our students are embracing C&L's broad array of learning opportunities to turn their innovative ideas into ventures that meet needs and create value.

But Oberlin's student-entrepreneurs speak more eloquently about the impact of the Morgan and Kauffman Foundation funding than I can. The experiences of Emily Arons (OC '10), one of three graduating seniors awarded a Creativity & Leadership Fellowship in 2010, attest to the transformative impact that the Creativity & Leadership Program has on students and its power to accelerate and incubate entrepreneurship. Reflecting at the end of her C&L Fellowship year on the challenges and rewards of implementing a venture, Emily wrote:

Overall, this whole fellowship process has been incredibly life changing. I have a new confidence in myself, as a person who can make change happen and turn her ideas into a reality. When I first heard about the Creativity and Leadership program, I thought that I was not a good fit for a program that supported entrepreneurship. I was not a person with big ideas, know how, or a track record of starting and leading projects. A little more than a year later, I find myself absorbed in an entrepreneurial mindset. My dream for the future is to own my own small business; one that allows me to cook, continue promoting the local foods movement, and directly benefit my local community. While the idea is still new and unformed, I find myself running it through my head every day, constantly considering how I can make it different, unique, and creative.

This is a powerful testimonial to the value of the Creativity & Leadership project and the impact the Kauffman and Morgan Foundation grants have had on Oberlin students. In looking back at the growth of C&L over the past five years, we at Oberlin are inspired by the experiences and successes of our student entrepreneurs to date and committed to fostering the entrepreneurial aspirations of generations of students to come.