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About these materials – READ FIRST!

Edited by R. Borasi & D.E.Miller

This e-book is part of a larger set of materials entitled, "*Becoming a More Effective Education Change Agent: Learning from Entrepreneurial Educators' Stories*", accessible through the e-book companion ***website***. These materials have been designed to increase the success of educational innovations by empowering educators to learn from stories of successful change agents. The format is intended to not only offer free access to these materials, but also to enable users to further contribute to the initial collection as well as adapt selected documents within the collection.

Why stories of "entrepreneurial educators" are important

Being an effective change agent in education takes more than learning specific strategies and skills – it also involves taking on a new identity as an "entrepreneurial educator". Education and entrepreneurship are often perceived as two very distinct fields, yet being able to initiate and carry out successful innovations is key to the success of entrepreneurs in any field and educators who want to promote change to improve education.

Appreciating the value-added of educational innovations is a critical first step, as to learn how to be a successful entrepreneurial educator you need first to want to become one. The next step is understanding how successful entrepreneurial educators *think* and *approach* situations – what we will refer to as "entrepreneurial practices" throughout these materials. Examining "lived stories" is a powerful tool to advance both goals, as we can attest based on our experience teaching a semester-long course entitled *Entrepreneurial Skills for Educators* to over 400 students to date in our institution.

What you will find in this resource

This **e-book** includes:

- An overview followed by a brief **introduction to key entrepreneurial concepts** of most relevance to educators (Chapters 1-2).
- Reports of the **research-based individual case studies** of eight entrepreneurial educators, representing a variety of roles and subfields within education (Chapters 3-10). Each chapter includes two components: (a) a "story" section, providing background information about the subject as well as the detailed reconstruction of 3-5 of his/her major innovations, and (b) an "analysis" section, where we examine how that subject dealt with *vision*, *opportunities*, *risk*, *resources*, and *growth* – as the most critical elements of entrepreneurial activity.
- The identification and discussion of **key entrepreneurial practices, personal characteristics, contextual factors, and types of innovations** that could be useful for education change agents to consider, as derived from a rigorous **cross-case analysis** of the eight case studies (Chapters 11-13).
- The link to a **detailed report of the research design and process** that we followed to conduct the case studies and their cross-case analysis, for users interested in conducting their own case studies of entrepreneurial educators (Appendix A).
- A **selection of additional stories of educational innovations**, contributed by students and other users over time, to expand our shared images of entrepreneurial activity within education (Appendix B).
- The "**Opportunity Evaluation Tool**" we developed to support the systematic analysis of an opportunity for educational innovation, to decide whether and how it may be worth to pursue it (Appendix C).

On the e-book companion **website** you will also be able to find:

- A **complete set of stories of educational innovations** contributed by users, together with the stories of featured innovations included in our case studies.
- An **annotated list of other resources** – books, articles, videos, websites, and other relevant documents that can complement the e-book contents and may be used for specific learning tasks. Links to the actual documents are provided for any of the open-access items within this list, list, along with information about which of these documents can be adapted as needed.
- A set of **learning tasks** that can be used to leverage stories of entrepreneurial educators and educational innovations. All these learning tasks can be adapted as needed, as well as new ones added on by users.

These additional materials have been intended primarily for instructors and/or mentors who support the development of other entrepreneurial educators, by providing them with resources and insights they could use to design valuable learning experiences for the educators they serve. However, these online materials can also be used by any educator interested in learning more about the topic, beyond what is included in the e-book.

NOTE: *Case studies and stories are open-access but can be used only in non-derivative ways, given their sensitive content. Readers are instead welcomed to modify any of the learning tasks as well as selected complementary resources (as explicitly indicated).*

How you can contribute to this resource

In the spirit of the "open education" approach we have assumed, we welcome users' contributions to this e-book and the accompanying website, so that everyone can benefit from this additional work. Possible contributions may involve:

1. A **commentary** to any case study or innovation story, that will be linked at the end of the relevant case study/ story.
2. An additional **resource** to be used in conjunction with our e-book and stories, for inclusion in the *Other Resources* section of the website.
3. A new **learning task** created to leverage any of the case studies or innovation stories (either by modifying one of the learning tasks already in the collection, or by designing a brand new one), to be included in the *Learning Tasks* section.
4. An additional **educational innovation story**, to be included in the website's *Stories* section and potentially also in the e-book as part of Appendix B.

To ensure consistency across the collection, we are asking interested contributors to follow the directions and provide all the information detailed in the "**Guidelines for Contributions**" for the type of item they want to offer. Any contribution received will be reviewed by the collection editors to decide if and how it can be included. Authors may be asked to make revisions and/or approve suggested edits before a contribution is included in these materials.

How these materials can be used

These materials may be used in different ways depending on your context, audience, and purposes. Feel free to use them as you would for any resource. If, however, you wish for more specific suggestions, click on the scenario that best meets your situation from those listed below:

- Suggestions if you are teaching a higher education course

- Suggestions if you are leading a study-group with peers
- Suggestions if you want to learn about this topic on your own

We also encourage users to take advantage of free tech tools like Hypothes.is and similar annotation apps, to add observations and analysis to our text. These annotations can remain private and/or be shared among students and/or colleagues in the spirit of open education.

Who created these materials

These materials have been gathered and edited by Dave Miller and Raffaella Borasi, the designers and instructors of *Entrepreneurial Skills for Educators*, a course that has been offered at the Warner School of Education at the University of Rochester since 2006. The publicly available materials included in this resource have been contributed by several Warner faculty and students/graduates as well as other users, over time, as explicitly indicated for each included document. Short bios for each of the contributors can be found in the ***Contributors*** section of the companion website.

The case studies reported in this e-book were conducted with the support of a grant from the Kauffman Foundation. This project was also supported by a RCL Open Education grant from the River Campus Libraries at the University of Rochester.

Promoting Innovations In Education

Promoting Innovations In Education

Stories and Practices of Entrepreneurial Educators

VARIOUS AUTHORS

ROCHESTER, NY

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FRAMING

PART I. Framing

◊

CHAPTER 1. Introduction

Raffaella Borasi & David E. Miller

1.1. E-book's motivation and goals

What do educational innovations look like, and what can they accomplish? What does it take to successfully undertake worthwhile educational innovations? How can educators learn to be more effective when engaging in innovations, so as to make a difference in addressing today's education problems? This e-book addresses these questions using entrepreneurship as a lens to examine *how* a few educators, in a variety of positions and roles, have promoted and carried out innovations that added value to their organizations and the clients they served, and by doing so contributed solutions to specific challenges in education.

As educators committed to improving education (broadly defined as *supporting development and learning across the lifespan and in a variety of settings*), we recognize that the educational problems we are facing today are very complex and thus overcoming them will require radical changes in how education is delivered as well as comprehensive social reforms. At the same time, we take a pragmatic stance, wanting to take action *now*, so as to make a difference for at least some of the individuals and communities we serve. As such, we have been heartened and inspired by colleagues who have successfully promoted and carried out value-adding educational innovations, whether these innovations involved teaching innovative units or promoting school-wide curriculum reforms, adding new services, or making organizational change in an educational institution. And we believe that the field of education can benefit greatly if more educators develop the knowledge and skills, as well as the drive and confidence, to engage "entrepreneurially" in similar innovations.

While recognizing the powerful role of innovations in education, we are also aware that initiating change is never easy, and it may be especially challenging in traditional educational contexts that are resistant to change. Furthermore, few educators have been explicitly trained to assume this daunting role, so even those among us who want to promote innovations may be at a loss as to how to go about it. These considerations made us look for concepts and tools that can empower educators to become more effective at promoting innovations.

As we have and continue to pursue this goal, we have found valuable inspiration and concrete resources in an unexpected place: the field of entrepreneurship. In 2004 our university sought and was awarded a grant from the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation to promote "entrepreneurship education" across all programs offered on our campus. In the school of education we were at first somewhat skeptical about the possible contributions of entrepreneurship for our field, but we soon learned that entrepreneurship encompasses much more than just starting new businesses. As we expanded our view of entrepreneurship, we began to recognize many interesting parallels between the practices of entrepreneurs and those of education change-agents. For example, educators who have made a difference for their institutions and their clients do not just have good ideas for innovations, they also are skilled at evaluating and seizing opportunities, developing and implementing well-thought-out plans, building coalitions, securing resources, evaluating and managing risk, and creating a culture that encourages creativity and initiative, all of which are some of the very same skills that characterize successful entrepreneurs in other fields. At the same time, it is also important to realize that *entrepreneurial educators* (which we define as "*educators who consistently engage in innovations that add value to their organizations and the clients served*") may differ significantly from *business entrepreneurs* in many respects. Most notably, the "value" that entrepreneurial educators seek to generate is measured mostly in terms of contributions to their educational mission and the solution of social problems, rather than the economic gains as measured in traditional business-focused entrepreneurial pursuits.

This, in turn, made us wonder whether and how specific concepts and findings from the field of entrepreneurship could help us identify new tools and skills that education change agents would benefit from learning. As we looked at the literature available at the time, we could not find a satisfactory answer to our questions and thus decided to conduct our own empirical study of educators who had been successful at promoting innovations, while using entrepreneurship as a lens. For subjects, we chose eight educators in our community, each of whom will be briefly introduced in the next section and whom we had known and admired for their ability to promote and carry out innovations that truly made a difference for their organizations and clients. We purposely selected these individuals to represent quite different roles as well as a variety of settings where learning and development takes place. We made this choice in part because of our broad conception of education, but also because we hoped that looking at what non-traditional educators (such as CEOs of non-profits and for-profit organizations) have done could help school leaders and teachers – who all-too-frequently operate in more traditional and often more constraining contexts within their institutions – envision new possibilities and begin to "think outside the box". As described in detail in Appendix A, our study involved multiple in-depth interviews with each subject and some of their close collaborators, as well as the collection and analysis of relevant artifacts. The immediate objective was to identify *how* these entrepreneurial educators went about the process of initiating specific innovations in their educational settings, with an ultimate goal to provide shared insights & experiences with other educators.

The stories of these eight outstanding, yet "ordinary" educators, are at the core of this e-book. We hope readers will find them as inspirational as we did, first of all because their stories document the great value that educational innovations can generate. Even more importantly, these stories also show that by promoting value-adding innovations, it is possible to make a difference in education – even for educators in traditional positions such as teacher, principal, assistant superintendent for instruction, or university leader. The very fact that we chose our case study subjects among people we know and work with, within our mid-size city and its surrounding region, is, by itself, a demonstration that these people are by no mean as rare as one may at first think. Indeed, we believe that once you start looking in "your own backyard", you will be able to find similar examples and possibly contribute to this compendium additional valuable stories of educational innovations – in the spirit of an "open education" approach, as discussed in more detail in a later section of this chapter.

A key goal of this e-book and its companion materials is to provide concrete suggestions about what *any* educator can *do* to become more effective and successful at promoting innovations. Besides telling the stories of a group of inspirational entrepreneurial educators, this e-book provides informative insights about the *practices* they used effectively as they initiated innovations. A special focus of our analyses illuminates the following five areas, identified in the entrepreneurship literature as especially important to the process of promoting and carrying out innovations (discussed in more depth in Chapter 2):

- *Vision* – i.e., the role played by an entrepreneurial educator's vision in their everyday activity and when making decisions about specific innovations, as well as how that vision is developed and communicated.
- *Opportunities* –how opportunities are uncovered/created and acted upon by entrepreneurial educators.
- *Risk* – how entrepreneurial educators approach risk, and what strategies and tools they use to evaluate and minimize the risks involved in specific innovations.
- *Resources* – how entrepreneurial educators approach resource issues and what strategies they employ to raise and effectively manage resources to accomplish specific innovations as well as their mission, more generally.
- *Growth* – the extent to which entrepreneurial educators aspire to "expand their sphere of influence" and the different forms this expansion can take, as well as the strategies used to deal with the inevitable changes and challenges that growth brings with it.

As documented in Chapters 3-10, the case studies of our eight entrepreneurial educators reveal some striking similarities between the practices they employed, on the one hand, and the practices identified in the literature as characteristic of entrepreneurs across fields, on the other hand. For example, while our eight subjects often took risks that other educators may not have felt comfortable with, they never did so recklessly. Rather, their assessment of the

risk involved was different, as their risk-assessment practices addressed not only the consequences of failing, but also considered the risk of missing a valuable opportunity to make a difference for their clients or to move their organizations to the next level. Furthermore, in considering the likelihood of the success or failure of a specific innovation they wanted to undertake, these educational entrepreneurs took into consideration their past experiences of success as well as their specialized knowledge of the field. They were also more inclined to take on the inevitable risks of embarking on a new innovation because they were able to put into place systems that would allow them to monitor and stop the initiative if potential damage from the initiative began to appear. And they were also always very open to modifying their plans to respond to unexpected developments.

We believe that this e-book will be of interest to a wide audience within the field of education. This audience will include education practitioners who are interested in becoming more effective at promoting value-adding innovations themselves, educators who prepare the next generation of education practitioners, and researchers who study the process of innovation and change in education more generally.

1.2. The eight featured entrepreneurial educators

To give readers a flavor of the case studies featured in the book and what each may contribute, in the following paragraphs we briefly introduce each of the eight *entrepreneurial educators* we studied. We present these briefs about each of these individuals in the order in which their full case studies are be reported in the book. We have purposefully chosen this sequence to start with individuals who best fit the traditional image of an entrepreneur, and then move to more "traditional" educators (i.e., administrators and teachers) operating within the contexts of higher education institutions and K-12 schools respectively. By doing so, we hope to be able to use the first three case studies to concretely introduce the readers to many of the practices that prototypical entrepreneurs employ to start and grow an organization, so that they can use these practices as a reference point as they read about teachers and administrators implementing innovations in schools and colleges in the subsequent five case studies. We believe there is great value for all educators, and educational leaders in particular, to read about innovations that took place in settings different from their own – and especially non-traditional educational settings like small businesses or non-profit organizations – as a way to challenge taken-for-granted assumptions and constraints, and thus recognize the possibility for very different ways of operating.

Donna Thompson – as co-owner of Fusion Production, Inc. As someone in charge of her own business within the field of education, Donna Thompson is the case study subject that comes closest to the typical image of an entrepreneur. A former high school history teacher, Donna decided after nine years of teaching to join a small firm that provided professional development services, mostly to corporations; a few years later, however, the company was on the verge of bankruptcy, and she and a colleague decided to buy the company and "turn it around." Their vision was to refocus the company to support the organizing of effective meetings for both corporations and professional associations and as a vehicle to provide worthwhile learning experiences for working professionals. After several years of hard work and innovative practice, which also involved at some point a major rethinking of their work to adapt to disruptive technologies, the company became very successful, increasing their staff and annual revenues almost tenfold. While this was a clear success from a business viewpoint, Donna makes clear that her goals and vision for the company were not limited to generating economic value, but also included contributing high quality opportunities for adult learners by capitalizing on state-of-the-art technology and pedagogical techniques.

Roderick Jones – as CEO of the Community Place of Greater Rochester. Our second case study features an example of a social entrepreneur, an individual who thrives at developing new not-for-profit organizations aimed at addressing social problems and grounded in the community. Rod became CEO of the Community Place of Greater Rochester only

a couple of years after this new organization was created from the merger of three separate Settlement Houses. As essentially the founding CEO of this new organization, Rod did much to develop its mission, culture, and structure, in addition to starting several important new partnerships and initiatives. Prior to joining the Community Place, Rod had been a co-founder of the Rochester Step-Off Program, a small non-profit organization that used participation in *stepping* (a traditional form of African American dancing) as the vehicle to encourage and support under-privileged youth to go to college. To all of his enterprises, Rod has brought a strong education agenda. He believes in a community service model that aims at empowering individuals from underprivileged backgrounds to "help themselves" so as to eventually become self-sufficient, and he sees education as a key means to achieve this goal.

Gidget Hoft – as CEO of the Rochester Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired – Goodwill (ABVI). ABVI benefited from Gidget Hoft's dynamic leadership as CEO, for almost 34 years, until her retirement in 2020. While ABVI, funded in 1915**,** was already a well-established organization when Gidget became its CEO in 1986, under her leadership it significantly expanded and somewhat transformed its mission and scope. This was the result of the many new ventures Gidget initiated, including starting new manufacturing operations and thrift stores that could employ visually impaired individuals, as well as developing innovative training opportunities and services for this population. Because of her track-record of starting new ventures within her organization, Gidget can be considered a prototypical example of an "intrapreneur," albeit in the non-profit sector. Gidget's initiatives have added considerable value to her organization and the individuals it serves, not only by providing employment and learning opportunities to a growing number of visually impaired people each year, but also by creating new revenue sources that have enabled ABVI to offer other services to its clients without having to depend on the uncertainties of government funding and donations. A speech pathologist by training, Gidget has devoted her career to empowering individuals with disabilities to become more self-sufficient and productive members of society. An integral part of this mission has been not only to create learning and development opportunities for her clients, but also to educate all stakeholders (her staff, partners, and society more generally) to recognize and value the potential of individuals with disabilities. Therefore, like Rod, we consider Gidget first and foremost an educator.

Patricia Chiverton – as Dean of the School of Nursing at the University of Rochester. When Pat Chiverton took on the role of dean of the School of Nursing at the University of Rochester, a professional school within a highly decentralized private research university, the School of Nursing was in dire financial straits. During her nine years in that role, Pat was able to totally "turn around" this situation through a series of innovations, which included among many others, starting new visionary programs while closing down traditional ones in which the school could not be as competitive, doing aggressive fundraising, and developing "business lines" within the school as a way to develop and test new models of health care as well as to generate new sources of revenue to support teaching and research. Her actions in all of these specific initiatives, as well as her overall approach to her leadership role, present many interesting parallels with those of traditional entrepreneurs like Donna Thompson (our first case study). Although it is clear that for Pat the financial welfare of her institution was never an end goal in and of itself, bringing the school out of dire straights and into financial well-being was a means to accomplish her vision of developing new and more effective models of health care for the ultimate benefit of society. We can also see a strong similarity between Pat's and Gidget Hoft's motivation for and approach to the creation of new business lines within their institutions. Pat's case study is a great illustration of the remarkable value that entrepreneurial academic leaders (i.e., presidents, deans, department chairs, etc.) can generate for their institutions, especially when given the level of autonomy and responsibility provided in a decentralized private university like Pat's.

Ron Dow – as Head of the Libraries at the University of Rochester. This case study features Ron Dow as the Head of Libraries at the University of Rochester, who over his eight-year leadership was able to transform the campus libraries into inviting, vibrant, and functional places for faculty and students to work in. This remarkable outcome was the result of undertaking many successful innovations – from a major renovation of the main library facilities, to a re-conception of the composition of the university library collection, and the role of university librarians. All Ron's innovations, big and small, have been informed by his vision of the library as playing an integral role in the instructional mission of a

college, rather than providing a "service." Throughout Ron's tenure, he was very successful in finding creative ways to fund his initiatives so as to turn his vision into reality, even at times of great financial constraints. In fact, his case study shows how great synergy, rather than tension, can be achieved between fiscal responsibility and pursuing an ambitious educational mission. This case study also highlights the contributions that administrative leaders – not only academic/instructional leaders, can make to an educational institution when they assume a more entrepreneurial approach.

Mary Rapp – as Assistant Superintendent of Instruction at a suburban school district. As a school leader in the same suburban district from 1987 to 2006, first in the role of Principal of one of its elementary schools and then as Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, Mary Rapp took a leadership role in several reform initiatives aimed at improving the quality of instruction offered to students in her district. Her curricular innovations spanned from developing the first reading curriculum for her school (as principal), to the development of consistent curricular frameworks and objectives for all subjects across grade levels (as assistant superintendent). Mary also sought to improve instruction by increasing the quality of teaching, which involved developing an alternative process to evaluate teachers, which was approved by the union for her school when she was principal and eventually influenced district-wide changes in the teacher evaluation process, and engaging in systemic math reform. During the course of these experiences, Mary employed some of the same practices as the entrepreneurial educators featured in the previous case studies, despite the many constraints presented by a public K-12 school setting. Mary's insightful analysis of her different experience in the roles of principal and assistant superintendent, respectively, also provides valuable insights about how the position held in the organization may significantly affect both the kinds of innovations an entrepreneurial educator may be able to successfully undertake, as well as the nature and extent of the impact that can be made on the organization.

Ralph Spezio – as principal of an urban elementary school. Ralph Spezio is another great example of a transformational school leader, yet his case study presents some striking differences from the previous one. During his 12-year tenure as principal of one of the poorest elementary schools in the Rochester City School District, Ralph transformed his school into a place that truly attended to its children's needs through several innovative initiatives. These initiatives, however, did not so much focus on curriculum and pedagogy, but rather addressed other issues that he thought were equally critical to his students' academic success – including, literally, the *building* of a pre-school on his school premises as a means to set up his students for success when they entered first grade, creating a health clinic within the school to address health needs of his students (and families), establishing a special collaboration with a local college to prepare the kinds of teachers he needed, and initiating a community-based movement for the prevention of lead poisoning. Ralph's story shows the power of "looking outside the box" for solutions to many of the problems affecting today's schools, especially when combined with a vision of education as serving the needs of the "whole child" in urban settings. His story also suggests that being entrepreneurial may support other school leaders committed to making a difference in urban education.

Lynn Gatto – as an urban elementary teacher. One may question whether teachers, given their very limited control on their organization's resources and decisions, can be entrepreneurial. The case study of Lynn Gatto, who spent over 30 years as an elementary teacher in the Rochester City School District, one of the poorest urban districts in New York State, dispels any doubts one may have in this regard. Throughout her long teaching career, Lynn has shown remarkable resourcefulness and determination in providing her urban students with the learning experiences she felt they needed to "level the playing-field" and be successful in both school and life. This translated into many innovative initiatives that have spanned from creating (and even publishing) innovative curricula to organizing and funding field trips to other parts of the country to enable her students to broaden their experiences. Lynn has been recognized for her innovative efforts as well as her success in increasing her students' learning with prestigious awards such as 2004 New York Teacher of the Year and 2006 Disney Teacher. Throughout her career, Lynn has been able to bring her ideas to fruition. And, despite the challenges presented by limited funding and the bureaucracy of a large urban school district and by not being in a leadership position, she has demonstrated many of the entrepreneurial attitudes and practices identified in the previous case studies. At the same time, it is important to recognize that Lynn's position in the organization gave her little or no opportunity to affect her organization's culture, resources, or "growth", as other

entrepreneurial educators featured in this book did. She did, however, seek alternative opportunities to "increase her sphere of influence" (i.e., affect more than just the students in her classes), which involved publishing, presenting at conferences, and participating in the preparation of the next generation of teachers.

As you read the case study of any of these entrepreneurial educators, we encourage you to contribute your thoughts about the case as a *commentary*, following the appropriate "**Guidelines for Contributions**". Upon review, all accepted commentaries will be linked to the last section of the relevant case study.

1.3. A growing collection of additional stories of educational innovations

While our case studies were conducted in the mid-2000s, the stories and the mindsets and practices of these eight entrepreneurs have stood the test of time and are still relevant today. Because these case studies were the result of a systematic research study, it is important that they remain unchanged, even though the nature of an e-book allows us to provide updates on the stories of these educators in a specific section of each case study.

In the spirit of "open education," though, we see great value in complementing these rigorous case studies with additional stories of educational innovations that can continue to be contributed overtime by a wider audience. Appendix B of the e-book includes a collection of these stories, contributed in part by students in a graduate course we have been teaching at the Warner School of Education at the University of Rochester, entitled *Entrepreneurial Skills for Educators*, and in part by other users of this e-book.

We encourage everyone reading this e-book to consider contributing to this section, as a way not only to add valuable information to the benefit of other readers, but also to deepen your own understandings of what it takes to undertake successful innovations in education. You may want to report on the story of an innovation you yourself initiated, or "interview" an entrepreneurial educator you know to learn more about how s/he went about a specific innovation you found especially valuable.

To ensure a consistent format and quality, if you are interested in contributing a story, we ask that you follow the directions included in the "**Guidelines for Contributions**" and submit your story for our review. All accepted stories will be immediately accessible in the website associated with this e-book, with a smaller selection also being included in Appendix B of the e-book itself.

1.4. How the e-book is organized and suggestions for use

We conclude this introduction with a brief overview of the contents of this e-book, as well as some information about how it has been organized and can be used.

Chapter 2, as its title suggests, is intended to "set the stage" for the rest of the book, and we recommend you read it next. Here we introduce key concepts and findings from the field of entrepreneurship that informed our study. We also share the conceptual categories that guided our writing of the stories and the analysis of each entrepreneurial educator's practice. Each of these key elements will be used as organizers in subsequent chapters. A section in this chapter also situates our work with respect to other applications of entrepreneurship to education.

Each of chapters 3 through 10 report the case study of one of the eight *entrepreneurial educators* we studied. These case study chapters are divided in two groups – those featuring educators operating in non-traditional settings, and those featuring educators in K-12 schools or universities. Each case study chapter begins with an account of the

individual's professional "story" and the role played by innovation. These stories also include detailed reconstructions of how a few representative innovations were developed, as a way to get a better sense of their nature and value, and even more importantly to shed light on how each educator went about each stage of the process of initiating innovations. Each story is followed by an "analysis" of the subject's entrepreneurial practice, systematically using the five categories identified earlier in this introduction and discussed in more detail in Chapter 2 (i.e., *vision*, *opportunities*, *risk*, *resources*, and *growth*). Each analysis also identifies and discusses other elements that may be more unique to the case. Each chapter closes with a brief summary of key insights gained from the case study.

The closing chapters are different in both content and structure from chapters 3 through 10, in that they look *across* all the case studies reported in those chapters, summarizing selected findings from our rigorous cross-case analysis to draw implications for the field of education. More specifically, Chapter 11 identifies and discusses specific *practices* used by our subjects with respect to *vision*, *opportunities*, *risk*, *resources*, and *growth*, respectively. Chapter 12 identifies key factors that may have helped or hindered our subjects' entrepreneurial behavior by looking at their individual characteristics (or "traits"), characteristics of their organization and other contextual factors, and the types of innovations they might engage in. Chapter 13 examines the *practices* our subjects used at different stages of the process of initiating an innovation, while taking into consideration all the previously identified factors. Chapter 14 concludes the e-book by highlighting the major takeaways of our study for educators interested in capitalizing on entrepreneurship to become more effective changes agents.

Readers interested in learning more about the research design used to derive the findings reported in the e-book can find detailed information about our research design in Appendix A.

A selection of the stories of educational innovations contributed by students and other users of the e-book have been included in Appendix B. The complete set of additional stories, as well as the innovation stories included in the case study, can be accessed on the accompanying website. Here tags have been used to facilitate their search and selection. For some of these innovation stories, an "annotated version" including an identification of practices used at specific stages of that innovation is also available.

The sequence of chapters within the e-book was the result of a purposeful choice on our part, intended to be optimal for readers interested in reading this e-book linearly – as any other traditional book. If you intend to print a copy of the e-book, we recommend that you follow this sequence and print the content in its entirety.

At the same time, we recognize that one of the key values of an e-book is the flexibility it gives readers to choose different selections and sequencing of its contents, and therefore we have purposefully written the case studies so each can be read in isolation and/or in any order. For example, we expect that some readers may prefer to read first about a subject in a position that is similar to their own, while others may prefer a different ordering. We hope, however, that eventually you will be enticed to read all the eight case study chapters, as each provides unique insights and contributions about the practices that can make educators more effective at promoting innovations. We also believe that all educators can learn valuable lessons by looking at the practices of colleagues in other professions – something that educators rarely have the opportunity to do.

We can also envision that some readers – or students in a course using this e-book – may prefer to first read only the "story" component of the case studies, so as to develop an analysis of their own before reading ours. Reading just the stories will also be sufficient for readers who want then to jump directly to the results of our cross-case analysis, as reported in the final four chapters.

The additional stories included in the Appendix can be read at any time and in any order.

Additional ways to assign readings from the e-book in a course or professional development offering are also offered and discussed in the *Learning Tasks* section of the accompanying website.

CHAPTER 2.

Setting the stage

Raffaella Borasi

2.1. What entrepreneurship is really about

To appreciate the potential contributions that the field of entrepreneurship can provide to education, it is important first of all to examine what *entrepreneurship* actually means, and challenge some misconceptions commonly associated with this term. More often than not, entrepreneurship is identified with the field of business and is associated with the start-up of new businesses and the generation of economic returns, though the meaning of the term remains ambiguous (Bygrave & Hofer, 1991; Heber & Link, 1989; Mair & Marti, 2006; Vecchio, 2003). In contrast, scholars in several fields have recently widened the scope of entrepreneurship to include much broader applications (e.g., Bornstein, 2004; Dees, 2001; Mair & Marti, 2006). A selection of definitions of entrepreneurship found in the literature provide valuable insights into how these expanded applications are not only possible but especially relevant for education today (as identified in Figure 2.1 and discussed in more detail below).

Figure 2.1. *Broader definitions of entrepreneurship*

1. Pursuing and carrying out innovations (*Schumpeter*, 1934)
2. "Perceiving an opportunity and creating an organization to pursue it" (*Bygrave*, 2004)
3. "A process by which individuals — either on their own or inside organizations— pursue opportunities without regard to the resources they currently control" (*Stevenson & Jarillo*, 1990)
4. "The process of creating and implementing innovation-based solutions and responses to economic and societal problems and gaps" (*Mars & Metcalfe*, 2009)
5. Transforming ideas into enterprises that generate economic, intellectual, and social value (*Green*, 2005)

First of all, it is significant that one of the pioneers of entrepreneurship, economist Joseph Schumpeter (Schumpter, 1934), described entrepreneurship in terms of pursuing and carrying out innovations, stating that "the defining characteristic [of an entrepreneur] is simply the doing of new things or the doing of things that are already being done in a new way (innovation)" (p. 151). Schumpeter's thinking built upon Cantillon (as cited in Heber & Link, 1989), who saw entrepreneurs as individuals who take risks to realize individual profit and who also thought mostly of innovations in the context of for-profit businesses and the generation of economic value. Schumpeter further identifies several complementary types of innovation, which we believe are all relevant for the field of education; that is, *product innovation* – introducing a new product or service that replaces or significantly improves on an existing one; *process innovation* – making a significant improvement on how a product or service is delivered, or other important processes; *positioning innovation* – in which

an existing product or service is used to solve a new problem or need; and *paradigm innovation* – the introduction of a new product, service, or process that revolutionizes a field (Schumpeter, 1934; Tidd et al., 1997).Drucker (1993) later extended Schumpeter's idea to further connect innovation to the idea of entrepreneurship. While these authors might have thought mostly of innovations in the context of for-profit businesses and the generation of economic value, it is interesting to note the immediate connection with educators who are agents of change, as initiating innovations is what most characterizes their activity.

More recently, Bygrave (2004) has defined entrepreneurship as "perceiving an opportunity and creating an organization to pursue it." Besides bringing to our attention the key role played by recognizing and pursuing opportunities in entrepreneurship, this definition begins to suggest the possible application of entrepreneurship beyond business, as an *organization* could also be a not-for-profit enterprise or even a new "center" or branch within an existing institution.

Stevenson and Jarillo (1990) describe entrepreneurship as, "a process by which individuals – either on their own or inside organizations, pursue opportunities without regard to the resources they currently control" (p.23). This definition, while re-emphasizing the key role played by opportunities, also makes explicit that entrepreneurship is a process, and furthermore associates it with the pursuit of all types of opportunities, and not just those leading to starting a new business. It also makes clear that to be an entrepreneur one does not need to start a new organization, thus opening the possibility for an individual to begin new and innovative ventures and initiatives within his/her organization, a role that has occasionally been called *intrapreneur* (Pinchot, 1985). This concept of intrapreneur is especially important for educators, as educators are often employees within pre-existing organizations. This definition also brings to our attention another element that characterizes the behavior of entrepreneurs in all fields (and to which we will return at various points within the book) – that is, the fundamental attitude that the limitation of existing resources should not unduly constrain the decision to embark in a worthwhile venture, but rather one should simply look for different funding sources to start such ventures.

Over the past two decades, the emerging field of *social entrepreneurship*, defined as the creation of organizations and initiatives that work to address social problems (e.g., Alvord, Brown & Letts, 2004; Bornstein, 2004; Dees, 2001; Leadbeater, 1997; Mair & Marti, 2006; Theobold, 1987), has also shown how the application of entrepreneurial concepts and processes is possible for those who wish to create positive social change. Bornstein (2004), in particular, provides a very appealing description of social entrepreneurs as "transformative forces: people with new ideas to address major problems who are restless in the pursuit of their visions, people who simply will not take 'no' for an answer, who will not give up until they have spread their ideas as far as they possibly can" (Bornstein, 2004, p.1). Mars and Metcalfe's definition – "the process of creating

and implementing innovation-based solutions and responses to economic and societal problems and gaps" (Mars & Metcalfe, 2009, p.2) – encompasses both social and business entrepreneurs, while once again emphasizing the connection between entrepreneurship and innovation.

Another definition that explicitly expands entrepreneurship beyond the business realm is provided by Green (2005), who defines entrepreneurship as the process of "transforming an idea into an enterprise that generates value," where the value could be social or cultural or economic. This definition makes even more explicit that entrepreneurial concepts and processes can be applied to the not-for-profit and service-centered arenas, while recognizing that the end goal may be different in each context, as business entrepreneurs tend to focus on generating economic value, while social entrepreneurs aim first and foremost at generating social and/or intellectual value. It is also important to be aware that this is not a sharp distinction, as both groups of entrepreneurs have increasingly started to consider combinations of economic and social/intellectual value as their goal (Alvord, Brown & Letts, 2004).

Our belief that the study of entrepreneurship can be valuable for educators is based on the promise of these expanded conceptions of entrepreneurship to provide new insights about what it takes to be more effective innovators. The previously identified definitions suggest interesting parallels between the practices of traditional entrepreneurs and those of successful agents of change in education. Even more specifically, if we look at educational leaders who have transformed their institutions (whether these leaders are school principals, district superintendents, or university deans) they have been relentless in their pursuit of opportunities to initiate change that would add value to their organization and clients – just like successful entrepreneurs in other fields. And the most valuable employees in a successful educational institution (whether faculty or staff) are often those who demonstrate creativity, initiative, and most importantly a penchant for developing new value-adding initiatives – traits that have also been identified as characteristic of entrepreneurs and intrapreneurs across fields.

2.2. Complementary ways of applying entrepreneurship to education

Before describing the nature and scope of our own study in more detail, in this section we briefly review a few alternative approaches to applying entrepreneurship to the field of education. As the goal of this review is to better situate and differentiate our work, what follows is a *conceptual*, rather than *comprehensive*, review of the literature at the intersection of entrepreneurship and education (see Rios-Aguilar, Khan & Borasi, 2006, for a more in-depth review).

The broader conceptions of entrepreneurship identified in the previous section are especially interesting in light of recent developments in the field of education itself. First, in addition to the traditional professions of teacher/faculty and school/academic leader, we are witnessing the emergence of many new professionals within education – such as program evaluators, professional development providers, as well as a variety of education consultants, each of who are more likely to work on their own and start for-profit businesses or not-for-profit organizations rather than seek employment in large educational institutions. The current dire state of public education and the many missed opportunities to capitalize on education to improve human conditions have also spurred an increased interest in the privatization of education, as charter schools and independent organizations have emerged to address needs that have not been adequately served by public education. At the same time, this dissatisfaction has led many educators to see themselves as "agents of change" within the school or institution they work in, with the responsibility to promote and carry out innovations that can significantly improve education, and thus make a difference in people's lives.

So, when looking at potential applications of entrepreneurship to education, it will make a difference if people view *entrepreneurship* essentially just as "*starting new businesses*", or instead assume a broader interpretation as "*transforming ideas into enterprises that generate value in any field*". Similarly, it will make a difference if education

is viewed only as pertaining to *teaching and administration within traditional educational institutions*, or rather is more broadly conceived as "*support development and learning across the life course and in a variety of contexts*". The combinations of these different views results in four complementary interpretations of what *entrepreneurship in education* may mean, as summarized in Figure 2.2 and discussed in more detail in the rest of this section.

Figure 2.2. *Complementary views about applications of entrepreneurship to education*

Views of entrepreneurship: *Views of education:*	*Entrepreneurship as starting up new businesses*	*Entrepreneurship as transforming ideas into enterprises that generate value in all fields*
Education as limited to teaching and administration within traditional educational institutions	A. Starting new businesses to take the place of traditional schools and universities	C. Assuming an entrepreneurial approach to promote change within schools and universities
Education broadly conceived as encompassing many occupations to support development and learning across the life course and in a variety of contexts	B. Starting new education-related businesses to provide services that can support learning and development across the life course and in a variety of contexts	D. Assuming an entrepreneurial approach to promote change in education, broadly defined

- A. *Starting new businesses to take the place of schools and universities.* Not surprisingly, the first applications of entrepreneurship in education have focused on starting new businesses such as K-12 private or charter schools, or for-profit universities. There is a growing literature on each of these phenomena (whether or not drawing explicitly on entrepreneurship), as exemplified by the work of Buckley and Schneider (2009) on charter schools, Tierney and Hentschke (2007) on for-profit colleges, and Shane (2004) on university spin-offs.
- B. *Starting new education-related businesses to provide services that can support learning and development across the life course and in a variety of contexts.* If we expand our notion of education to encompass more than teaching and leadership at schools and universities, even a narrow view of entrepreneurship as "starting new businesses" can lead to a wider variety of applications of entrepreneurship in education, as new companies can be created to address a great variety of "gaps" in the services provided within as well as outside traditional education institutions. For example, we can envision new businesses providing needed after-school programs for students, program evaluation services, school leadership training, training programs for businesses or other organizations, just to mention a few. Indeed Hess (2008b) points out the value of looking for innovative solutions outside of schools and universities, as any traditional institution is likely to be resistant to change and thus present too many barriers to radical innovation. In contrast "more typically, radical and disruptive improvement is the result of new entrants devising a product or formula that works for them and managing to devise an organization and culture that provides for fidelity to the innovation at increasing scale" (Hess, 2008b, p.5). This position is also consistent with Christensen's studies of disruptive innovation in industry (Christensen & Raynor, 1997, 2003, 2013) as well as education (Christensen, Horn & Johnson, 2008; Christensen & Eyring, 2011). These studies showed that, while leading companies are very good at developing sustaining innovations (that is, innovations that improve on existing products and processes), very few have been successful when it

comes to disruptive innovations (that is, innovations that propose radically new ways to do things).

- *C. Assuming an entrepreneurial approach to promote change within schools and universities.* When the scope of entrepreneurship is broadened to include innovations of all kinds and not just the starting of new businesses, it becomes clear that educational leaders can greatly benefit from learning more about entrepreneurial concepts and skills so as to become more effective at promoting innovations that can move their school/university forward. The seminal book *The Entrepreneurial Educator*, by Brown and Cornwall (2000), began to uncover this potential by articulating specific benefits of being "entrepreneurial" for K-12 schools and their leaders, and by pointing out attitudes and behaviors identified as "entrepreneurial" in business or other fields that educators should consider using, as well as fundamental differences between the fields of education and business that should be taken into consideration when applying the notion of entrepreneurship in education. Similarly, Clark's book on *Creating Entrepreneurial Universities* (Clark, 1998) examined the relevance of assuming an entrepreneurial approach in higher education institutions, as these organizations are struggling to meet increasingly complex demands with diminishing resources. At the same time, it is important to acknowledge that other authors (e.g., Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004) have voiced serious concerns about the potential risks of embracing entrepreneurship in an educational setting, and especially universities, as they argue that the values informing entrepreneurship may conflict with other fundamental values of traditional educational institutions (see Wall, Borasi & Emery, 2011, for a more in-depth review of this debate within higher education).
- *D. Assuming an entrepreneurial approach to promote change in education (broadly defined).* The relevance of entrepreneurial concepts and practices for improving schools and universities, as discussed above, can also be extended to educational services and professions that take place outside as well as within these traditional educational institutions. The potential of this intersection of entrepreneurship and education (when both are broadly defined) has been explored by several scholars who contributed to Hess' edited books on educational entrepreneurship (Hess, 2006a, 2008a). While these studies contributed valuable principles and insights, they still left open the question of how individual educators, operating in various contexts and positions within the field of education, could make use of entrepreneurial concepts and practices to become more successful at promoting value-adding innovations, and thus become more effective change agents, a key focus of our study.

To conclude this section, we would also like to mention that there is a rich literature in educational leadership and change that has close connections and relevance for entrepreneurship in education – especially in the spirit of box C in Figure 2.2, although it may not make explicit references to entrepreneurship as a concept or a field. This includes works in transformational leadership (e.g., Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005), school change (e.g., Fuller, 2007), and educational innovation more generally (e.g., Senge et al., 1999; Christensen, Horn & Johnson, 2008).

2.3. Rationale for our case studies of entrepreneurial educators

Given our pragmatic interest in empowering individual educators to become better change agents by using entrepreneurial concepts and practices, as we started our study we were struck by the insights provided by the in-depth case studies of social entrepreneurs reported in Bornstein (2004). Unfortunately, only two of Bornstein's subjects worked within the field of education, and we could not find any other in-depth case studies of "entrepreneurial educators" in the literature at the time. Therefore, we decided to conduct our own case studies of educators who had a successful history of initiating and carrying out innovations that added value to their clients and/or institutions.

Mindful of the limitations of early research on entrepreneurship that focused on personality traits that characterize entrepreneurs and as reported in the entrepreneurship literature (e.g., Vecchio, 2003; Baron & Shane, 2004), our study focused on what our subjects *did* when engaging in specific innovations, rather than what "kind of person" they were. Even more specifically, our study aimed at identifying a set of *practices* that contributed to our subjects' success as education change agents and thus could be used by other educators when engaging in their own innovations to increase their chances of success.

As *case studies* and *case discussions* are easily confused, it may be worth clarifying here that the goal of our research study has been to *use a case study methodology* to provide rigorous accounts of individuals' experiences and practices using data collection and analysis methods based on the well-established qualitative research tradition known as "case study methodology" (e.g., Yin, 2003). This is quite different from writing "cases" for discussion in instructional settings;, which are instead vignettes based on real problematic situations that are offered as a pedagogical tool to engage a group of learners in a discussion of possible solutions or decisions.

In the final sections of this chapter, we articulate key concepts and findings from the field of entrepreneurship that informed our case studies of entrepreneurial educators.

2.4. Key characteristics of entrepreneurs

Early studies of entrepreneurship focused on identifying key **characteristics of entrepreneurs.** Key findings related to characteristics of *business* versus *social* entrepreneurs are reported in Figure 2.3.

Figure 2.3. *Characteristics of individual entrepreneurs from the literature*

Characteristics of business entrepreneurs (*summarized from Bygrave & Zacharakis' Portable MBA in Entrepreneurship, 2004*)	**Characteristics of social entrepreneurs** (*from Bornstein's How to Change the World, 2004*)
• 1) *Vision/dream* – having a clear vision and ability to implement it • 2) *Devotion/passion* — Passion and commitment to a mission • 3) *Dedication* — willingness to give 100%, to do what it takes to get the job done • 4) *Determination/ persistency* — not giving up when faced with obstacles • 5) *Decisiveness* — not procrastinating decisions or actions • 6) *Doer* – once a course of action is decided, it is implemented quickly • 7) *Attention to details* – making sure that all details are attended to • 8) *Destiny* – being in charge of and taking ownership of one's own *destiny* • 9) *Dollars* **–** Money is used as a motivation and measure of success • 10) *Distributing* ownership with key employees	• 11) Willingness to self-correct • 12) Willingness to share credits • 13) Willingness to break free of established structures • 14) Willingness to cross disciplinary boundaries • 15) Willingness to work quietly • 16) Strong ethical impetus

While providing some interesting insights about entrepreneurs, these studies have been critiqued as limited, on the basis that what really matters most is what an entrepreneur **does**, not what s/he **is**.

2.5. Entrepreneurial practices

Given our ultimate goal of empowering educators to be more effective agents of change, our case studies of entrepreneurial educators focused mostly on examining what they **did** as they engaged in specific innovations and how they were approaching these situations, so as to identify specific **practices** they used as they approached specific aspects of their work. We chose to focus on the following five areas, which emerged as most significant: *vision*, *opportunities*, *risk*, *resources*, and *growth*.

Below we have articulated the more specific questions that we pursued in all the case studies for each of these areas, and we have identified selected findings from the literature on entrepreneurship that motivated these questions:

1. ***Vision*** – Having a clear vision and being able to share it with others has been identified in the literature as one of the key characteristics of entrepreneurs, in general, and social entrepreneurs in particular. For example, *dream/ vision* is the first item in Bygrave's list, and while Bornstein (2004) did not include vision in his list of characteristics of social entrepreneurs, he describes social entrepreneurs as "people with new ideas to address major problems who are relentless in the pursuit of their visions" (p.1), and also states they are individuals who are "possessed, *really* possessed by an idea" (p.117). Bornstein also points out that specific ideas as well as an overarching vision are not something that just "happens," but rather they are something that get progressively defined and refined in a dynamic process, as social entrepreneurs see new opportunities to address critical needs and consider implementation questions such as, "How to better use local resources to solve a problem? [...] How to finance an organization? How to train others to do the work? How to motivate clients and staff?" (p.119). Therefore, the case studies featured in this e-book are intended to shed light on the following questions: *Do entrepreneurial educators, too, have a "vision" that informs most of what they do? If so, what is that vision? How does that vision affect their decisions and actions, especially when promoting specific innovations? What specific strategies do they use to*

communicate their vision, to get key stakeholders to "buy-in"?

2. ***Opportunities*** – Identifying and pursuing opportunities is at the very core of at least two of the definitions of entrepreneurship we reported earlier, the ones by Bygrave and Stevenson reported in Figure 2.1. Indeed, the literature on entrepreneurship suggests that one of the things that most characterizes entrepreneurs is their approach to opportunities. This in turn raises the following questions: *What roles do opportunities play in an entrepreneurial educator's work? How do entrepreneurial educators recognize and/or proactively seek opportunities? How do they evaluate whether an opportunity is worth pursuing? How do they act upon an opportunity they have deemed worthwhile?*
3. ***Risk*** – Entrepreneurs are often considered as risk-takers, although some research studies suggest that this is not how most entrepreneurs would describe themselves (e.g., Palich & Bagby, 1995; Busenitz, 1999). Rather, some of these authors have suggested that entrepreneurs tend to *evaluate* the risk involved in pursuing a new venture, as well as other risks, differently from most other people. Self-efficacy (i.e., the belief that one can succeed in what one has decided to undertake) can indeed play an important role in the evaluation of the chances of success vs. failure, as well as the potential consequences of both scenarios. At the same time, Brown & Cornwall (2000) suggest that entrepreneurs usually give greater weight to the risk of "missing the boat" (i.e., missing the potential benefits that could have been gained by pursuing an opportunity) versus the risk of "sinking the boat" (i.e., facing the negative consequences of failing in the initiative one has chosen to undertake so as to pursue an opportunity). This is in sharp contrast to what happens in traditional institutions, where "sinking the boat" has real consequences, while rarely people are held accountable for "missing the boat". These considerations suggest the value of asking the following questions: *How much risk can entrepreneurial educators tolerate? How do they evaluate the "sinking the boat" and "missing the boat" risks involved in specific initiatives and decisions? What strategies and tools do they use to reduce and manage risk?*
4. ***Resources*** – Paying attention to resources is critical to what business entrepreneurs do, as they need to secure the necessary funding, personnel, equipment, etc., for any initiative they want to launch, and furthermore their overall success is often measured in monetary terms (Bygrave, 2004). While the success measurement, in monetary terms, does not apply in the case of social entrepreneurs, the extent to which one's vision can be put into practice depends to a great extent on the resources one is able to secure – as captured by the common saying "no money no mission". Entrepreneurs have also been characterized as individuals who "pursue opportunities without regard to the resources they currently control" (Stevenson & Jarillo, 1990, p.23). Furthermore, the need for "bootstrapping" (that is, stretching the available resources as far as possible so as to accomplish what is needed) is a reality for both start-up businesses and non-profit organizations, to the point that one of the definitions we found in the literature ("Specializing in taking judgmental decisions about the coordination of scarce resources" [Casson, 1982]) points to *dealing with scarce resources* as a characterizing feature of entrepreneurship. Since education is a service industry, it is also important to keep in mind that human resources are probably the most critical resource an entrepreneurial educator needs to secure to ensure the success of specific innovations. It seems therefore worthwhile to explore: *How do entrepreneurial educators approach resource issues in their work? What strategies do they employ to ensure funding for the start-up and on-going costs of specific initiatives? How do they go about selecting, compensating, and working with the personnel required to work on specific innovations? What "bootstrapping" strategies do they employ to make the most of their scarce resources? How do they balance fiscal feasibility considerations with the pursuit of their missions?*
5. ***Growth*** – Rapidly growing one's business is often a major drive as well as a measure of success for business entrepreneurs. However, Bornstein (2004) also reported that the social entrepreneurs he studied were not satisfied when their ideas succeeded at a small scale, but rather seemed driven by the desire to "expand their influence" as much as possible. This often meant growing the size of their organization to serve more people or finding ways to have others replicate their "model". The literature on entrepreneurship

also points out how the size of an organization greatly affects leadership structures and roles; therefore, as entrepreneurs are successful in growing their businesses, they also need to change accordingly their role and responsibilities as the leader of the organization (e.g., Kelley & Marram, 2004). These considerations led us to question: *To what extent do entrepreneurial educators aspire to "grow" their initiatives and/or organization, and what different forms may this take? In what other ways may they try to "expand their sphere of influence"? What strategies do they use to deal with the inevitable changes and challenges that growth, broadly defined, brings with it?*

2.6. Stages of the entrepreneurial process

A complementary approach to understanding what makes entrepreneurs successful is to examine what they do at specific stages of the process of implementing a specific innovation. This has been referred to in the literature as the "*entrepreneurial process*".

While different authors have identified somewhat different stages in the entrepreneurial process, the similarities are quite striking. For example, Baron & Shane (2005) have identified the following key components within the entrepreneurial process (using business as their main context): (a) recognition of an opportunity; (b) deciding to proceed and assembling essential resources; (c) launching the new venture, (d) building success, and (e) harvesting rewards. Furthermore, they argue that as entrepreneurs become more proficient at implementing each of these components, they can decrease the risk of failure that is so high when starting a new enterprise. Other researchers have also provided insights into the specific stages of the entrepreneurial process as it takes place mainly in a business context, including how entrepreneurs evaluate opportunities (Timmons, 2004; Sing, 2000), how they assemble the required resources (financial and human) to take advantage of opportunities (Baron & Shane, 2005), and how they manage growth and success (Baron & Shane, 2005).

Few theorists have attempted to understand the process of social entrepreneurship, though many recognize that this process shares similarities with traditional entrepreneurship models (i.e. Thompson et al., 2000), albeit with different end goals in sight. Bornstein (2004) for example, based on his case studies of several social entrepreneurs, proposed that most social entrepreneurs engage in the following actions: see a problem and envision a new solution; take initiative to act on that vision; gather resources; build organizations to protect and market their vision; and, keep improving, strengthening, and broadening their vision "until what was once a marginal idea has become a new norm" (Bornstein, 2004, p. 3).

For our study, we chose to essentially adopt the stages of the entrepreneurial process suggested by Baron & Shane's (2005) model, with just a few modifications. So, when reporting the in-depth stories of specific innovations undertaken by our case study subjects, we have tried to reconstruct key events and decisions related to the following four key components:

- *a)* ***Coming up with the idea and evaluating/refining it***: The first critical step to achieve innovations in education is obviously coming up with the initial idea for a new initiative that can add value to one's organization and/or clients. Yet most educators have more ideas than they can possibly implement, so deciding which of the ideas they have generated (or which of the opportunities they have identified) is worth pursuing is most critical to an innovator's success, Equally important is to understand how entrepreneurial educators use this evaluation process

to actually refine their initial idea into something that has greater potential for success. Entire courses and sections of business entrepreneurship textbooks (e.g., Timmons, 2007) are devoted to providing novice entrepreneurs with tools to guide such evaluation and decision-making process. At the same time, these tools are typically less relevant and less useful for educators, as they tend to focus on ways to evaluate the potential of a venture to realize a profit and the extent of that profit. Therefore, it seems important to look at how entrepreneurial educators approached this first stage of the process to address the following questions: *How do entrepreneurial educators come up with their initial ideas for worthwhile innovations? How do they evaluate and refine those ideas? What specific elements do they look at, and what criteria do they use?*

- *b*) ***Planning and gathering the necessary resources***: The business literature suggests that creating sound business plans can greatly minimize a new company's chances of failure**.** Indeed, we all intuitively know that careful planning is a critical element for the success of any innovation. This planning, in turn, is closely connected with the process of securing the funding, personnel, facilities, approvals, and any other kinds of resources needed to successfully implement proposed initiatives. This raises the following questions: *How do entrepreneurial educators go about planning their initiatives? When will they engage in formal written plans and why? How do they go about securing each of the types of resources identified earlier?*
- *c*) ***Implementing and monitoring the initiative***: Once a new venture/innovation has been decided and planned, a lot still needs to be done to ensure its success. The plan needs to be implemented, making modifications as needed. This implementation needs to be monitored and its outcomes evaluated – both to decide which adjustments may be needed in the original plan, and to decide whether it is worth continuing or not. This stage of the process raises the following questions: *How do entrepreneurial educators manage these various aspects of the implementation stage? How do they set up appropriate evaluation systems? What criteria do they use to make key decisions?*
- *d*) ***Ensuring long-term sustainability and/or bigger impact*** *(when appropriate)*: While some initiatives may be confined to a one-time event, most education innovations cannot be considered truly successful if they cannot be sustained over time and possibly expanded to achieve the widest possible impact. So it will be worth exploring: *How do entrepreneurial educators ensure that this happens – especially after they can no longer be directly involved in the initiative they started? How do they decide whether a successful initiative should be expanded or replicated – or even ended?*

While all these phases (except possibly the last one) take place in some form whenever undertaking an educational innovation, it is also important to note that these phases may not always occur linearly. The strategies employed at each stage to ensure success may also be somewhat different depending not only on the individual educator, but also on the nature of the education innovation itself as well as the context in which the innovation takes place.

2.7. Organizational factors affecting entrepreneurial activity

Our research study also examined the characteristics of each subject's organization that helped or hindered his/her entrepreneurial activity, focusing in particular on the presence or absence of characteristics identified in the literature as common to most "entrepreneurial organizations", as summarized in Figure 2.4 below.

Figure 2.4. *Characteristics of entrepreneurial organizations from the literature*

- a. Culture and structures that encourage innovation and creativity
- b. High tolerance for risk and mistakes
- c. Decentralized decision-making system
- d. Flexible budgeting that looks at potential revenues as well as costs
- e. Informal lines of communications that facilitate getting information to those who need it when they need it
- f. Shared vision and commitment to the mission
- g. Personnel that are committed to "do what it takes" to implement the mission
- h. Obsession with success

2.8. Final considerations

The concepts and questions articulated in this chapter are used as organizers in the systematic analysis of the experiences of the eight entrepreneurial educators in the chapters that follow. At the same time, in each case study chapter we also report on some unique elements outside of this framework, so as to highlight additional insights that each case study contributed to our understanding of what it means and what it takes to be entrepreneurial in education.

CASE STUDIES OF ENTREPRENEURIAL EDUCATORS IN NON-TRADITIONAL SETTINGS

PART II. Case studies of entrepreneurial educators in non-traditional settings

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CHAPTER 3.

Donna Thompson's case: Starting a business to address unmet learning needs of adult professionals

Raffaella Borasi, Jing Che, & David E. Miller

Donna's Profile

After nine years of teaching, Donna, a former history teacher, decided to join a small firm that provided professional development services, mostly to corporations. A few years later, as this firm was on the verge of bankruptcy, she and a colleague decided to buy the company and "turn it around." Their vision was to refocus the company on supporting the organization of effective meetings for both corporations and professional associations, as a vehicle to provide worthwhile learning experiences for working professionals. After several years of hard work and innovative practice, the company became very successful, increasing their annual revenues more than tenfold. Donna's case-study includes the in-depth reconstruction of three transformational innovations: (1) taking over and turning around a bankrupt company, (b) re-inventing the company by embracing new technologies, and (3) moving the company to the next level by taking on a high-risk/high-reward project.

3.1. Donna's story

3.1.1. Introduction to Donna's case

This is the case-study of Donna Thompson, who along with a partner, purchased a company on the verge of bankruptcy and radically transformed it to become one of the premiere businesses producing meetings for companies and professional associations across the country. As co-owner of a for-profit organization which she took over, restructured, and grew, Donna is what many would consider a prototypical example of entrepreneur – hence our decision to choose her as our first case-study. As shown in her story, her entrepreneurial behavior did not stop with the start-up phase of her business, but rather continued over time, as she continually engaged in innovations to keep her company at the cutting edge and bring it to the next level, in the pursuit of her ultimate goal of adding value to her organization and its clients.

While at first one may question the connection between education and producing meetings or conferences, this connection was very clear to Donna, as she explicitly stated, "We view a meeting as a way to teach." For Donna, a former high school history teacher, meetings are indeed a key vehicle to providing learning opportunities for adults, who, after their initial training, rarely engage in coursework or other traditional learning activities within educational institutions. Therefore, she approached the design and delivery of each meeting very much like a big "lesson plan." More specifically, she believed that one needs to start by identifying the learning objectives (i.e., what you want participants to get out of the meeting), then figure out what are the best learning experiences participants can engage in to achieve those objectives, carefully plan and implement those experiences, and then measure the extent to which the participants have

achieved the original objectives. And she also believed that, to do this well, you need to use the same set of knowledge and skills as a successful teacher:

> "I do not see a big difference between adult education and education, and the things that work with adults work with kids" (*Donna*)

Through these shared insights, we see Donna as an educator who recognized the need for a specific educational service, that is, organizing meetings and conferences that would truly provide valuable learning experiences to adult professionals. And, she developed a company to address that need. This description fits well with several definitions of education entrepreneur that are proposed in the literature (e.g., Hess, 2006; Smith & Peterson, 2006; Teske & Williamson, 2006).

It is important to note that this vision for meetings and conferences was quite novel when Donna and her partner took over the company in the late 1980s. In time, they further expanded this vision to reflect the transformative impact of new technologies – such as the Internet, on meetings. Thus, the company's mission explicitly became to ensure that meetings would become a powerful vehicle for adult education by capitalizing on technology to provide new and richer learning opportunities in this non-traditional educational context. The original name of the company at that point changed to Fusion Productions, to emphasize the "fusion" of meetings, learning, and technology that they were striving for.

While the company started with four employees, plus the two co-owners and a half-million dollar debt, it grew, over time, to over 30 employees and increased its annual gross revenues more than ten-fold. Since its inception and until its closure in 2020 due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on conferences, Fusion produced meetings for many professional organizations and companies, helping those entities to further their mission. The company even played a role in events that impacted the national agenda, like the 1999 White House Conference on Travel and Tourism. More information about Fusion is provided in Figure 3.1 as well as throughout the narrative of Donna's story in the rest of this chapter.

Figure 3.1. *Fusion Productions Profile*

Historical notes:

- Restructured in 1989 when Donna and a business partner bought it from previous owners.
- Renamed ***Fusion Productions*** in 1997, when it was re-engineered by adding major technology components and a new partner.

Mission/vision:

- *Slogan*: "Productions that wow. Technology that works. Strategies that win."

Organizational Structure:

- Flat organization, with three co-owners and equal partners making all major decisions, and then project managers and specialized staff (assigned to work on specific contracts)

Subject's position: co-owner

Selected "measures of success" (19892002):

- *Budget*: *increased tenfold*
- *Staff*: 4 over 32

3.1.2. Donna's professional experiences

"What's next?" This question has driven Donna Thompson to engage in new things her whole life. Plus, entrepreneurship was in her blood. She says,

> "My dad was in business, and I had always wanted to at least experience what it was like to be in business." (*Donna*)

Donna recalled starting an "odd jobs" enterprise with a friend when she was only ten:

> "I've always been starting new ventures … when I was a kid … a friend of mine and I formed Odd Jobs Inc. when we were about 10 and did neighbors' work and marketed it, made up little signs, went around and sold it. It was quite the business!" (*Donna*)

Donna's other passion has always been teaching. She was trained at the University of Rochester and became a high school history teacher in the 1970s. During her nine-year term as a teacher, Donna continuously looked for opportunities to challenge herself and learn new things, whether it meant using a new teaching approach, developing new courses, or even leading the teacher union:

> "As I started teaching, I always tried to find a new course, a new way to teach it, a different way to communicate the information … I developed a course in psychology … then I developed a course in sociology … then I have to run the teachers' union, and I have to learn how to bargain a contract." (*Donna*)

After nine years of teaching, Donna started feeling the itch to do something different. She was discouraged by the structure and politics of schooling and had seen too many teachers who "had lost their fire", their love of teaching. She did not want to lose her passion, and she wanted to experience the business world, so she went to work for a small company that did training and marketing education for corporations.

> "…I still loved teaching, and this was a way to take my skills that I learned in teaching and transfer them to another occupation." (*Donna*)

One major aspect of this company's business was to do the stand and delivery type of training programs for companies. Another aspect of the business was to make these training programs into videos or slides so that they could be easily replicated. A third piece of the business was to do surveys and reports for associations. Donna's role in this company required her to learn new skills in marketing and sales, while at the same time applying her educational knowledge and skills, although with an adult population and in non-traditional learning contexts.

3.1.3. Donna's innovation #1: Taking over and turning around a bankrupt company

How the idea came about and was evaluated/refined

The possibility of taking over the company that Donna was working for came up unexpectedly, as she and her future partner came to realize that the company was running a debt of about half a million dollars, and therefore the owners would likely have to declare bankruptcy and close the company. While the reaction of many would have been to start looking for a new job, Donna and her partner began, instead, to consider the possibility of a radically alternative solution, that is, taking over the company in exchange for assuming its existing debt.

> "The business was about to go bankrupt … There was a young guy working

there and we were both doing sales … we sat down and said, you know what, we think there is a good business here, it's got to be run right and … change the business focus, but we think we can make something out of this. So instead of going bankrupt, we got these people to sell us the company for $34." (*Donna*)

A critical element in even conceiving of the possibility of taking over the company was their vision, from the very beginning, about the potential of transforming the company's focus from providing professional development services (mostly to corporations) to producing effective meetings for corporations and professional associations.

The idea of focusing on producing meetings had developed because of their own experiences participating in meetings that were mostly unproductive. They realized that there was an unmet need in the field, which they could address in a novel way:

"What made us have the idea [was] … going to all these meetings … where we were trying to sell our services and [seeing] how badly they were run." (*Donna*)

"Both of us became very concerned … that millions of dollars were being spent and nobody was measuring anything, no-one had any idea if anyone was learning … and trends were coming and business wasn't going to fund this anymore, so people were going to start looking for outcomes … it was an idea that grew out of those observations, and a feeling that if you could put some measurement tool behind it, if you could design something using objectives that people could measure … you would be able to create another type of meeting." (*Donna*)

Donna and her partner had a very short time to decide whether to move forward with their idea, or not.

"In those situations, you have to be able to confront and close quickly. Because the more you elongate those situations … it's probably a bad analogy, but it's kind of like … a divorce. The longer a divorce drags out, the more the lawyers get involved, the more people start thinking, the more their egos get involved. If you can strike while it is hot, you get over it quicker. And yes, you may not walk out with the perfect situation, but that's not what you are in there for." (*Donna's business partner*)

During this short period of time, though, they did a lot of thinking and talking together to further develop their idea of how the company could be changed to focus on meeting production only and what it should look like to do so effectively. They managed to satisfactorily coalesce their ideas and planning, even within this very short timeframe.

They soon concluded that there would be multiple benefits to taking on the company, as doing so would allow them to "salvage" an organization in which they had invested a lot, enable them and other people they cared for in the company not to lose their jobs (and, in fact, possibly end up making a lot more money than they currently did!), and also do something that had never been done before. They also thought they could move the field forward and be beneficial to many clients.

As they evaluated the potential value of their idea of transforming the company to focus on organizing effective meetings, Donna recognized the parallels between "classroom teaching" and "providing effective learning opportunities to adults in the context of business meetings". She believed that her background in education and experience as a classroom teacher would give them a competitive advantage. As her partner recollected:

"… the meeting industry, I think it was clear at this point that there was a need for change. Meetings used to be just fun, you go and have a big party. So, coming from Donna's instructional design background, my business background, it was pretty easy to look at this and say, here's a model that is broken … that we can move into and really grow. …The analysis was that we could do something here that we could all be good at, feel great about, and

> create a model that we recognized was broken before." (*Donna's business partner*)

Donna and her partner had previously thought about the potential of producing meetings, and in fact had already successfully engaged in organizing a few meetings for clients. These experiences gave them confidence that the idea could really work:

> "We found out very suddenly how much trouble the company was in. … the ideas around meetings came before that, and in fact we had started already to do one of our first meetings where we tried out these new things … when the decision came down to, are we going to walk away and get jobs elsewhere or are we going to take this on. I don't know that we would have taken it given its current form, if we hadn't had the vision for what we could do with the meeting business." (*Donna*)

As they examined the market potential for this idea, Donna and her partner realized that potential clients could be not only businesses and corporations but also professional organizations that had a need to run conferences as an integral part of conducting their business. They also thought that this could provide diversification and, thus, reduce their risk. Also, they knew from their own experience that nobody else was doing meetings the way they were envisioning.

A number of other factors were also important in making the decision to take on the significant financial risk of assuming a half-million–dollar debt. First of all, they felt they did not have much to lose by taking that risk, as they knew that otherwise the company would close and they would be out of a job. In contrast, the gains would be great if their idea worked and the company became successful.

Second, they knew that the company had a good reputation in the field, so there was value in taking it on despite the debt. Rather than starting a new company to produce meetings, they could capitalize on the name recognition and reputation, while benefitting from the equipment they would be able to retain. They also believed that their idea of organizing meetings had great potential:

> "We both had a strong belief that it would succeed. I honestly can't tell you that we thought of failure" (*Donna*)

Their vision of what they could do with the company, having confidence in their ability to succeed, and their overall evaluation of potential risks and benefits, led them to decide to move forward with their idea of taking over the company.

Planning and gathering the needed resources

Donna and her partner had only a week – not only to make a decision about whether or not they wanted to take over the company, but also about what kind of offer to make the owners, employees they wanted to keep with them and what those employees should be offered, and how to deal with the creditors. Given these circumstances, it is not surprising that they did not create a formal written plan – especially since there was no need for a written plan for securing financial resources, as buying the company meant essentially agreeing to assume the existing debt. Nevertheless, a lot of important planning did indeed take place during this critical week.

> "When we started, the plan was … so much a part of us that we did not need to write it down." (*Donna*)

As already mentioned, their decision to take over the company went hand-in-hand with the decision to refocus the company on producing effective meetings.

In addition, they also agreed that they would expand their portfolio of clients to include a balance of corporations and professional organizations (for whom annual meetings are a "must"), as a way to manage risk:

> "Our plan was to have our business be about 50% associations and 50% corporate. The strength of that was that when there would be an economic downturn or companies would have a bad year they would cancel a meeting, even if we had a contract they could cancel, the associations did not." (*Donna*)

One of their biggest challenges was the financial one. Because they were assuming such a huge debt, they knew that they could not also take on any additional loans. At the same time, taking on the company's debt ensured that they did not have to purchase new costly equipment, as they would "inherit" all the equipment they immediately needed.

A key decision they needed to make at the planning stage was about current employees that they would ask to stay. This decision, however, was not a difficult one once they chose to refocus on producing meetings, as only some employees had the needed skills set. Fortunately, all these individuals also had the attitudes and work ethic they were looking for, so they were all offered the opportunity to stay.

> "When we bought the company there was probably 12 people working at the company, and we realized that we wanted to keep the very best people … so we picked three people that we knew were outstanding… These were people who chose to come with us. They were excited about the adventure to begin with, they had worked for the company, they knew everything was going to be different." (*Donna*)

> "The good news is we got the right ones from an attitude perspective, [and] we got the right ones from the loyalty perspective. And when we looked at the match of what they could do well, they could do meetings well." (*Donna's partner*)

More challenging was the decision of how to compensate these people in a way that would be affordable, while at the same time encouraging cost-effective and entrepreneurial behaviors among all employees.

> "That was literally the first day that we were planning. My partner and I sat around an old kitchen table and we said, how do we make people feel they are part of this adventure? How do we make them watch the dollars the way we watch the dollars?" (*Donna*)

Inspired by a business article Donna had recently read, Donna and her partner decided on a compensation system that was comprised of a guaranteed base salary, bonuses determined based on individual contributions to the success of the company, and most importantly a profit-sharing scheme where about 10% of the profits each quarter would be equally divided among all employees.

> "I had just read an article … on some form of gain sharing and I said that would be a cool thing, [my partner] loved it … We didn't do the gain sharing the way the [article] did, we couldn't afford to do that, but we put our own plan together and we just did it because it felt right." (*Donna*)

This compensation scheme seemed especially important to entice the people they wanted to stay on, given that the company's dire financial situation would require some severe salary cuts (about 20-25%) for at least the first few months, in addition to the partners agreeing to forego their compensation for the first few months. Interestingly, all the people to whom they offered the opportunity to stay on, accepted their offer.

Implementing and monitoring the initiative

As the decision and planning stage went so quickly, Donna and her partner immediately plunged into the implementation, and a lot of decisions still had to take place at that point.

To manage their financial situation, one of the first things they did was visit clients with whom the company had contracts and explain the situation and their ideas, to ensure that these contracts could be continued. This secured them with some revenues and cash flow from the very beginning.

Another way they managed their financial risk was to work toward reducing their initial debt by going to each creditor and negotiating both the amount and the repayment time for the debt. Someone else with a background in finance made them aware of this option, and this became one of the first steps they implemented after the purchase and transfer of ownership were completed. It is important to keep in mind, though, that as they started, they did not know how much they would be able to reduce their debt in this way.

Given their financial situation, cutting costs as much as possible was a necessity. So, in addition to reducing everyone's salary as planned, they immediately moved to cheaper facilities, and did so essentially on their own with the help of friends, as they could not afford moving expenses! Overall, they very carefully watched how every dollar was spent.

> "We bootstrapped … we just cut spending to the bone. … that meant we did everything ourselves. … We got out of our lease … and went to a little tiny hole-in-the-wall space … none of us had big offices. We basically spent no money. … My partner and I didn't take a salary for probably 6 months … and then we began very slowly once we got the debt paid." (*Donna*)

Donna recalls that the first year was very difficult and intense, especially for her and her partner, as the new owners:

> "It was 24/7 … I do not think we had a day off for easily a year and maybe more … It was incredibly intense because we did not have a salesperson at the time. Hugh and I were doing the sales, but we were also helping in the delivery of the product, so … really you would be doing your selling during the week and then you would work all weekend on the delivery of the product." (*Donna*)

At the same time, this situation enabled Donna and her partner to pay close attention to all the details that would ensure a successful implementation not only of their overall plan, but also their first and most critical contracts. This approach also allowed them to identify if things were not going as expected and make the necessary adjustments.

From the very beginning, Donna and her partner were also very disciplined in setting financial goals and monitoring their accomplishments. At first, their goals focused on eliminating the initial debt, but soon after that they started setting specific sales goals for each year:

> "We knew we had to pay off the debt, so that's a half million dollars. We knew we had to pay salaries. All the people that came with us took a cut in pay, but we knew we wanted to get them back to the salary they had been making before, that was our short-term goal, and then get enough money to keep us going," (*Donna*)

Even after their initial debt was paid out, which took about a year, and they were in a better financial situation, they continued to watch all costs very carefully and find ways to keep costs down.

They were also disciplined in hiring new employees, as they usually waited to hire a new staff member only after sufficient contracts were in place to sustain a new employees's salary.

They were also very strategic about marketing their new company. Recognizing that they did not have the financial resources to undertake a costly marketing campaign or advertising, they tried creative approaches such as developing a relationship with an association called Meeting Professional International (MPI). This gave their business a way to reach potential clients, be in touch with the competition, and stay abreast of what was going on in their field. Donna and her partner were eventually able to secure a deal to produce the MPI annual meeting, which gave Fusion great visibility and served as a marketing tool for them.

Ensuring long-term sustainability and/or bigger impact

Over the next few years, Donna and her partner continued to set more and more ambitious financial goals, and they grew their base of clients by delivering high quality, productive meetings.

Though Donna and her partner took on smaller contracts at the beginning as a way to explore the potential value of specific clients and prove themselves to customers, the team slowly became more selective in what they took on by considering projects based on the following set of questions:

- Is this a good fit? Can we meet the needs of the client with the services we offer?
- What is the potential of this client in the long term? Is their company growing? What other contracts would be possible in the future?
- What are the additional benefits, if any, of this contract for Fusion? Might they help our visibility? Will they help us to establish ourselves as specialists in a particular area?
- Do we have the capacity to do this? If not, are there ways to do it anyway?
- Will they be willing and able to pay for our services?

At the same time, they remained flexible and occasionally took on some contracts that did not meet all these criteria if they felt such contracts had potential for the future or presented a unique opportunity for Fusion in some other way.

As they grew and assumed more and bigger contracts to produce meetings, Donna and her partner also began to delegate more of their responsibilities for the production of specific meetings to project managers, whom they supervised, so that she and her partner could devote more time to managing their growing organization.

Keeping a close look on spending, expecting high performance from the staff (with appropriate compensation incentives), and setting and monitoring clear financial goals, were all important elements to ensure that the company stayed healthy, and not only survived, but grew.

Over the time that Donna was with the company, its staff and revenues grew almost ten-fold in response to a growing demand for their services. The company not only increased the number of clients served but also the size and scope of the meetings produced. They also continued to enhance the kinds of meeting organization services provided to clients. For example, over time they added new tools to measure the extent to which a meeting's objectives had been achieved, more convenient ways for participants to register, and new opportunities for participants to interact before and after a meeting.

While Donna and her partner continued to be driven by the desire to grow the company, there were times when they turned down opportunities for growth. At one point, for example, they considered hiring a person who had the drive and capacity to increase operations. But his personality might have alienated several the original employees who had been loyal for years, so the partners decided to not take on this opportunity.

A number of things changed as the company grew. First of all, moving from a staff of 4 to over 30 changed the dynamics of the working place and working relations, leading to more differentiated responsibilities and less collaboration. Certain things, like gainsharing and bonuses in particular, did not work as well as before. Even more importantly, this growth meant big changes in the co-owners' roles and responsibilities. For example, at first Donna was working in the trenches alongside employees and was directly involved in the production of the meetings. Later she had to learn to teach others how to do what she had been doing and develop explicit systems for what she had naturally engaged in so that others could take on the same role, and she could move to different things.

Perhaps even more important than growth for the long-term success of the company, was the partners' commitment to continually watching the market and the competition to ensure that they stayed at the cutting edge. The U.S. economic situation was a major external factor affecting the growth and operations of Donna's company. The way the economy picked up in the 1990s brought more businesses doing meetings, along with resources to devote to those meetings. As a result, Fusion grew dramatically. But when in the early 2000's the economy experienced a downturn, due to the breaking-of-the-tech-bubble. Many companies also cancelled their meetings and participation to conferences as a result of the attach on the World Trade Center in New York City on September 11, 2001. In one year, Fusion lost more than half of its corporate contracts but managed to survive by continuing to serve professional associations for their meetings.

> "That was a very tough time…when the economy went down; [but] our association strategy [worked] … 50% of our clients were still there, and so, while keeping obviously our corporate clients, we focused on picking up new association clients. Smaller associations, and that filled the gap for us". (*Donna*)

3.1.4. Donna's innovation #2: Reinventing the company by embracing new technologies

How the idea came about and was evaluated/refined

As time passed and Donna's company grew, differentiating themselves and staying at the cutting edge became increasingly critical and difficult. More companies around them "learned" how to produce meetings the way they did, and technology was changing the ways in which things could be done.

> "You see, business is all about differentiation, and when we started, we were the only ones that were doing meetings … with objectives. Well, it did not take long before other meeting companies looked at us and said, well,

we can do that. … so they started doing what we did .. now we were not differentiated anymore. How do we keep re-inventing ourselves? So technology was a big way we could re-invent ourselves and bring something new." (*Donna*)

Donna recalled how in 1997 they began to realize how personal computers and the Internet were going to revolutionize society and especially the ways meetings could be run. Fusion wanted to be a part of it. For example, a big part of their revenues at the time came from preparing slide shows for presentations at meetings. But with the introduction of PowerPoint, anybody could easily and cheaply create and modify a slide presentation; they could see that this part of their business would soon go away. At the same time, they saw several potential applications of new technologies that would allow them to do new things to make meetings more effective. For instance, they envisioned creating websites with an online registration system, setting up chat rooms for people with like interests or special interest groups to communicate with each other both before and after the meeting, and distributing pre- and post-opinion surveys via email to better measure the extent to which the meeting had achieved its objectives. They expected that these new services could become one of their big differentiators.

Donna and her partner recognized this was a potential turning point for the company, and decided it was time for the company to "reinvent itself" through technology. There was no question in the partners' minds that embracing the new technologies was the way to go, if they wanted to ensure the long-term success of their company:

> "You could see the handwriting on the wall, you could see where the world was going and if you weren't able to play in that arena … if you don't jump on early enough you will never catch up." (*Donna*)

The problem was that they felt that neither of them had the expertise needed to effect such a change.

> "As we looked at this explosion of technology and everything, it became very clear that if we didn't have someone dedicated to this both from a visionary standpoint and from an implementation standpoint, we were going to be left behind real quick." (*Donna*)
>
> "We needed a lot of technology skills, we needed really fast, but neither [my partner] nor I had the background to do it." (*Donna*)

However, they did not let this lack of current resources deter them. Instead, they searched for a project leader for this initiative.

A unique opportunity presented itself as a friend of Donna's partner, with the right kind of background, was looking for a career change. The only way to secure his collaboration, though, would be to offer him a full partnership and co-ownership in the business – something that they realized would change the culture that they had created in the organization as well as the dynamic between the two partners. This presented the need for another critical decision in the trajectory of the company.

> "That was a very big [decision,] … tougher than buying the business … because you have a certain dynamic and you know that dynamic works and now you are going to bring in a third person. … I was very well aware of that, and I also knew it was going to totally change … the business … it was going to change the relationship, it was going to change the management." (*Donna*)

They considered this possibility very carefully, as they recognized the risk it presented. Yet they also saw great opportunities for their company in the embracing of new technology. In the end they felt this was the best choice. As it was their practice, Donna and her partner shared their decision and its rationale with the other eleven employees at the time.

Planning and gathering the needed resources

A lot of planning went into figuring out how the three-way partnership would work and how the company would be restructured, even if little of it was put into writing. While Donna and her first partner had brainstormed a lot of applications for technology to make meeting planning and organization better, as they prepared to grow into the technology realm the planning itself pretty much took place with the new partner on board. This involved goal setting, cost planning, equipment needs, hiring of new staff, etc.

First of all, the partners realized that they needed some additional resources to launch this innovation, and they analyzed their finances to make sure that the company could afford to do so. They didn't want to alter the bonuses and

gainsharing program that was already in place (although both had to be reduced somewhat for a while) but the three owners all agreed to temporarily reduce their gains to make this investment.

The new partner was critical in securing the needed equipment at very good prices, using his knowledge and connections in the technology sector. He also was put in charge of hiring the new personnel with the needed technical expertise.

Implementing and monitoring the initiative

A lot of important decisions had to be made at the implementation stage.

To minimize the initial financial risk, the hiring of technical personnel was done by the new partner one at a time, as new, big contracts were secured that needed their specialized expertise.

> "We brought [our third partner] on, and he hired one person, and that one person had one contract, and then [the three of us] went out and got another contract, and when that contract came in … we hired another person to do that contract. …" (*Donna*)

When they first started to bring in new technology-related services to their clients, there was no immediate success. Clients were skeptical of how they were going to do their meetings with and benefit from these brand-new ideas. In their early development stage, the new technologies were not as stable as they are now.

> "[I]t was slow, it was hard at the beginning…but it started to give us a place where we could differentiate ourselves with the competition…" (*Donna*)

One of the unexpected challenges that this innovation brought along had to do with the different kinds of people they would need to hire to attend to the technology:

> "We had built a culture where we had people who had been with us from the start, and loyalty was their hallmark … and now we started hiring people from the techy world who have no loyalty to anyone." (*Donna*)

Ensuring long-term sustainability and/or bigger impact

The technology component of the company continued to grow both in absolute and relative terms, as Fusion continued to proactively look for and adopt new technologies that would allow them to improve the quality of the meetings they were organizing and, thus, the learning opportunities of the participants.

Fusion became recognized as a pioneer in the field with regard to the use of technology, and they eventually chose to organize an annual conference about relevant advances in technology for companies like theirs that were producing meetings.

While this innovation radically transformed the company, sometimes in ways they had not anticipated, both Donna and her first partner felt that, had they not made the decision to transform the company with technology as they did, the company would not have grown and thrived as it did, and perhaps might not even have survived:

> "I would say, had we not done that, we would not be here." (*Donna's business partner*)

3.1.5. Donna's innovation #3: Embracing a high-risk/high-reward project to move to the next level

How the idea came about and was evaluated/refined

Another turning point for the company was the decision in 1999 to bid for the production of a very high-profile meeting, and eventually being awarded that contract. As the Clinton administration went about revamping the budgets for all the major government departments, they decided to hold a White House Conference on Travel and Tourism to facilitate their goal of setting up public-private partnerships between big companies and government agencies to promote travel and tourism all around the world. They asked MPI to nominate some companies that could take on the organization of such a conference, and Fusion was among the names MPI provided. So Fusion was invited to bid for the contract of this White House Conference along with four other companies.

Donna and her partners immediately realized that organizing a conference of such high profile, and involving a lot

of potential big clients, would provide a unique marketing opportunity for their company. They also recognized that it would establish Fusion as one of the premiere meeting companies in the country:

> "It was … the biggest marketing opportunity you will ever have that you get paid for. Every leader in the industry, the travel industry, was at this conference. Every government leader was at that conference. Every person in the world that we ever wanted to get in front of … and because of the nature of the conference and that we were producing it, we were interfacing with every one of those people on a direct level. So despite the fact that … we knew it was going to be the biggest nightmare of our lives to produce, [we wanted to do it]." *(Donna)*

While funding would not be an issue, as the client would cover all the costs if Fusion won the bid, Donna and her partners knew upfront that they did not have in-house all the human resources and equipment that they would need to produce a meeting of this size. However, they were confident that they could find ways to come up with the people they needed, especially since in the past they had already been in positions where they had to rely on the services of free-lancers and had cultivated good relationships with several of them.

More significant for the company was the realization that taking on this contract would mean not only a lot of work but also a big risk:

> "Big opportunity, big, BIG risk. … You fail on C-Span in front of the President of the United States and let me tell you that's a big risk." *(Donna)*'

Yet they knew this was too good and too visible an opportunity to turn it down, and so they went full speed into preparing a proposal to bid for the contract by the set deadline.

Planning and gathering the needed resources

To bid for the contract they were required to prepare a written proposal following specific guidelines and then present it to the committee making the selection.

They realized soon that a good proposal would not be enough to win the contract; rather, they needed to include some innovative elements that would differentiate them from the other companies that were also bidding for this major contract. One way they thought they could accomplish this was by employing a new technology they had recently heard of, which allowed participants, from their seats, to vote on specific ideas and have those votes immediately tallied and reported back to the audience.

They realized that they were taking a big risk taking on such a new and untried technology. To minimize these risks, they contacted the technology developers to make sure that the technology really worked well and to request that the company be willing to partner with them if the contract was awarded. As the preliminary exploration of this technological innovation gave good results and the vendor agreed to partner with them, Fusion decided to include the new technology in their proposal. Yet they also decided to double the equipment and the personnel working the equipment at the conference in case something went wrong!

They knew upfront that this project would be so big that they would need to hire free-lancers as well as partner with other companies to pull it off. They were ready and prepared to enact these additional measures, and they were successful in soliciting and gathering the cooperation of these free-lancers and other companies.

> "We knew we could do it with all the other contacts we had in the industry. … because we had been using peripheral folks for these other meetings that we've talked about before, so we knew we could pull those people in." *(Donna)*

Implementing and monitoring the initiative

When they actually got the contract, Donna recalled that she and her partners looked at each other and said "and now HOW are we going to do it?" Indeed, a lot of planning and decisions still had to take place to make such a major conference a success.

Donna decided to take on the role of project manager for this initiative, given its significance and thus the importance of paying careful attention to myriad details in the implementation. This also allowed her to closely monitor the implementation and notice any possible need for modifications and immediately act, as necessary.

Producing the meeting included not only organizing and running the meeting per-se but also facilitating preliminary meetings in Washington to come up with the initiatives to be discussed at the conference. This process took a long time and required Donna to spend three or four days a week in Washington. During these planning sessions, Donna

fully capitalized on her teaching experience, as she would walk in with clear goals in mind and share those goals with the participants. She would then facilitate the participants' thinking by constantly asking questions and re-organizing contributed ideas into "chunks" using different visual aids.

> "Here's what I want to accomplish in this visit – but you didn't do all of the telling, you asked questions, you got it from them and you helped them organize it so that at the end you had in your head the blocks and you plugged their information into blocks so I would do it in front of them so I would have a whole wall full of paper and I would have columns and when they would say things I would go to one and I would write it down and by the end of the day all of a sudden they would look up and they would have an initiative…they used to say 'how did we do that, I didn't know we got that far'." (*Donna*)

As the conference took place, they also had to be able to continually troubleshoot and make changes in their plans as needed. For example, once during the conference, one of the key stakeholders challenged the decisions made for one session at the very last minute, and Donna had to change the wording and program arrangement half an hour before the meeting started – even though all prior scripts and prompts and plans had already been stored in the equipment used for conducting the in-the-moment polls. Their insight about doubling equipment and the personnel running it had paid off in this occasion!

Despite these occasional problems, in the end the conference was a great success.

Ensuring long-term sustainability and/or bigger impact

Producing the White House conference on Travel and Tourism was a one-time initiative, so the concepts of "long-term sustainability" and "growth" do not directly apply in this instance. Yet it is important to note that the success of this initiative brought forth several benefits for the company, that in turn affected its growth and impact:

Fusion Productions was freely advertised through the cover page story of this event in *USA Today*.

They got to work with very high-level staffs in different sectors, such as the head of American Express, government leaders, and even the U.S. president.

Throughout the process of preparing this conference, they discovered and utilized a powerful new technology that they could use for taking polls in other conferences of a similar scope.

The reward was also personal, as Donna felt that she did give something that added value to the nation and society. As a result, this high-profile conference gave Donna's company a huge push and also gave them an identity that differentiated them from their competitors in the meeting industry. As Donna stated:

> "It allowed the company to move to the next level…That propelled us to want to be an elite meeting design and production firm in the United States. That gave us…the entrée…American Express became a big client". (*Donna*)

3.1.6. Updates to Donna's story

After many years of exciting challenges and successes building and growing Fusion, Donna unexpectedly had to sell out of the business for health reasons. Unfortunately, the company was not prepared for such an eventuality, which made it even more difficult on everyone. Despite these challenges, the company continued and has been thriving under the leadership of the other two partners until the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, which caused the abrupt interruptions of meetings and conferences for several months. At that point, as the remaining partners were also close to retirement, they decided to close the company.

Donna's entrepreneurial spirit and never-ending quest for "what's next?" did not end with her departure from Fusion. As soon as her health had recovered, she began to be very involved with a number of non-profit organizations, including the local Ronald McDonald House and the University of Rochester's Warner School of Education.

> "As I get older I think I'm a little more altruistic. … how do I leave my mark, you know, what am I going to leave behind that's of value to society" (*Donna*)

In the late 2000's, Donna also started a new business venture in education, partnering with Dave Miller in rethinking

the company he had founded a few years earlier, Knowledge Athletes. With the help of a few Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) grants as well as the investment of some personal funds, this start-up company developed a prototype for an early Learning Management System, called *Kajour*, targeted toward supporting K-12 instruction. Donna pointed out many similarities between her work with Fusion and Knowledge Athletes.

> "It's actually in many ways so similar to when we started Fusion. When you look at what the world of education is today there are so many problems associated with it. Reading levels are down, kids don't read anymore. … There's a big problem in education and everybody is looking for a solution, just like with Fusion … [then] people were wasting millions of dollars on meetings and no one was getting anything out of it and that was the impetus … we kept looking at it and saying well there's got to be an answer here. …Well, in looking at [the current situation] Knowledge Athletes says here's an answer, here's a way to help kids do the things they love to do through blogging, through communication on the Internet but around books, around ideas in books, around answering questions and to have teachers still be a part of it. That's the exciting part for me… it's not the only answer but this could be a huge answer, and that's why I got so excited about it. That's why I'm involved … I think this is going to be an incredible venture and it ties into so many of my interests, education, business, development, growth … it takes me full circle right back to the education world where I started." (*Donna*)

While the development of *Kajour* had to be abandoned after the initial SBIR funding, due to a dearth of investors in the public education product space at the time, the value of this idea was eventually proven by the emergence of K-12 Learning Management Systems such as *Schoology* and *Google Classroom*– showing once again the power of Donna's vision.

3.2. Analysis of selected aspects of Donna's practice

3.2.1. Donna's practices about vision

Donna's experience with Fusion was clearly driven by her vision that meetings, when appropriately organized, could provide powerful learning opportunities for adult professionals. As her story illuminates, this vision informed all the key decisions that she and her partners made – both transformational decisions, such as taking over their bankrupt company at the beginning and later re-inventing the company by embracing new technologies, and day-to-day decisions of the contracts to take on. Her vision about the power of technology to transform education is also what led to her decision to get involved in the *Kajour* project.

Another important element of the vision that Donna and her partners had for their company was to create an organization in which people trusted and genuinely cared about each other:

> "It is what differentiates, I believe, great companies. It's not a job, it's a real passion and you know that doesn't mean that we love each other all the time … but there is a respect and a caring that I think is an integral part of a successful company." *(Donna)*

Their vision also influenced how they set goals and measured success. While every year Donna and her partners set clear financial goals for the business, they also developed other goals that connected with their vision and personal values, and they felt were equally important:

> "The business answer is we measure [success] by setting financial goals and personal goals each year, and by the end of the year we looked to see if we made them. Now the financial goals were pretty easy. The personal goals would be things like [my partner] was very interested in the MPI, he really wanted to rise and launch with

the MPI. … I think we also measured success by how well the people who worked for us were doing and how well we were servicing them as well as our clients." (*Donna*)

Donna's enthusiasm and commitment to her vision was evident not only in the actions reported in her story, but also in her words and voice, as she recounted her experience with Fusion in our interviews. She also explicitly mentioned how important it was for her to work toward something meaningful, something that would impact other people and society, as making money per-se was not enough for her:

"I can't imagine putting that kind of energy and effort and stress into something day in and day out that I didn't feel was valuable to people, and gave something to our clients that they wouldn't have had otherwise." (*Donna*)

It was also this passion that, according to her business partner, made other people buy into their vision of what meetings should be for and how they should be produced, whether they were staff or clients of Fusion.

"Donna's strength is to have people buy in." (*Donna's business partner*)

Indeed, we have personally seen Donna talking to people about initiatives she is now involved in and passionate about, and thus can attest to her contagious enthusiasm. She was also a master at using storytelling to paint a compelling picture of both past successes and proposed developments, which caught people's attention.

3.2.2. Donna's practices about opportunities

Donna was always on the look-out for opportunities to pursue her vision, and she was ready to seize them. In the context of Fusion, this meant proactively looking for new and more effective ways to create meetings that would provide learning opportunities for the participants, as well as ways to improve Fusion as an organization so as to more effectively pursue its mission. Keeping her eyes open for opportunities was natural for Donna:

"I can see an opportunity. You can see a way to change something, you can see a way to make something better, you can see that that application is going to have an impact somewhere on someone … and you can see that there is a need for it." (*Donna*)

Each of the major initiatives featured in her story (i.e., buying and turning around the original company, the technology transformation of Fusion, and producing the White House Conference) were all connected with opportunities, although in somewhat different ways. Donna explicitly told us that she and her partner never thought of the possibility of buying and transforming the company they were working for, until they learned that the company was on the verge of bankruptcy. Yet it was a brilliant move on their part to recognize this as an opportunity to take on the company with its current debt and refocus it on producing meetings – something that only the two of them could have done, given their prior experiences and vision about meetings, as well as their willingness to take on the risks involved in such an enterprise. Being invited to bid to produce the White House Conference was also an opportunity that presented itself unexpectedly to Donna and her partner, although in this case everyone in their position would have easily recognized it as an opportunity. What was more unique in this case was their decision to pursue that opportunity while recognizing upfront that they did not have all the needed resources in house to pull it off. Also, it is interesting to note that while this opportunity was unexpected, Donna and her partners had proactively worked for years to gain visibility for Fusion and they had strategically developed a long-term relationship with MPI. And it was this long-term relationship that led MPI to recommend them, when asked to name some companies that should be invited to bid for producing this major conference. In contrast, Donna and her first partner had been considering for a while the need to better capitalize on new technologies; because of their limited background in technology, they had also already realized the need to find a person that could lead this initiative. Yet the technology transformation of the company became a reality only when they recognized and seized the opportunity presented by a desirable candidate, who was dissatisfied with his current job and was looking for an alternative. Once again, they were able to do what it took to seize that opportunity, which meant offering him a full partnership in the company.

Donna reported that she often uncovered new ideas and opportunities from reading. For example, she learned of

the compensation scheme that they devised for Fusion's employees based on an article she had read. This voracious approach to reading books and journals spanning many different fields has proved highly informative and valuable for her. Even more importantly, Donna's knack for making connections between the things she would read and her practice continually added to her idea generation. As she pointed out:

> "I'm a big reader … I read a lot of different things and then it seems as though they synthesize down into ideas." (*Donna*)

She was also quite attentive to what the competition was doing. Differentiating her company from the competition was a constant driving force for Donna, and she was consistently looking for opportunities to do that.

> "You always ask yourself … what's going to make you different from anybody else who comes along as doing the same service?" (*Donna*)

At the same time, Donna was always proactively observing and actively listening to her clients to find opportunities. By identifying unmet needs that could potentially suggest new approaches, Donna believed they could keep their company at the cutting edge and stand out from the rest. Indeed, Donna often turned a problem or challenge into an opportunity. For example, Fusion's clients were not satisfied with the practice of having her and her partner visit a new client for the initial negotiation of a project, only to then be assign a different project manager to execute the contract. By that time the contract was negotiated and then finalized, the client had bonded with the two partners, and the client wanted to continue to work directly with them. Assigning a project manager introduced a new variable for the client and presented a tension that was counter-productive as the company kept growing. The solution they eventually hit on was having the prospective project manager participate with them in the initial visit. This turned out not only to solve the original problem, but it also became a way to train their project managers to assume some of the partners' roles and thus eventually free up the partners for other more critical tasks as the company grew.

> "So that's one example of a problem that provided us with a tremendous opportunity once we got the right solution because it helped our people to grow and develop … and it didn't take any more of our time than it would have anyway because they just watched, observed, and then on the plane ride home we'd talk about what it was they observed." (*Donna*)

Talking with others – whether they were clients, colleagues, friends, experts in the field, or community members – was another way Donna found out about new opportunities or was able to recognize something that nobody else may have noticed before:

> "New ideas come through playing off of other people's ideas and discussions and sometimes … rousing arguments. … It stimulates new ways to think about things." (*Donna*)

In addition to her practice of recognizing and seizing opportunities, Donna also devoted much attention to looking at where the field was going. This helped her recognize possible future trends and needs and prepared her company to respond to these trends. This was demonstrated most significantly in the original vision of the new role that meetings would play when she bought the company, the initial decision to expand their portfolio of clients to include professional associations was a way to counter times of recession, and the analysis of new technologies allowed them to revolutionize the ways in which meetings were run.

Given all the opportunities that Donna uncovered with these practices, it is of interest to know how she decided which ones to actually pursue. While Donna typically had a hard time saying no to an opportunity, she also realized that not all opportunities are equally good, nor could all be followed up at the same time – as demonstrated when she and her partner decided not to hire a certain person who could have helped them significantly grow the company but perhaps not move it in the right direction. This evaluative approach was key when deciding whether to pursue an opportunity.

If we look at the opportunities connected with the key initiatives featured in Donna's story, we can infer that Donna and her partners always seemed to evaluate first and foremost the potential benefits that could result from taking on an opportunity vis-à-vis their vision. Once an opportunity passed this most critical test, then they would consider their capacity to take it on and the risks involved in doing so, including an analysis of forecasted revenues and expenses. They then balanced risks and benefits, usually weighing "missing the boat" risks much higher than "sinking the boat" risks – as shown across their decisions to buy the company, get a new technology partner, and write a proposal for producing the White House Conference. Having all the needed resources in house was an element they considered as part of this

process, but this did not necessarily constitute a "project stopper"; if their analysis deemed a project worthwhile, they were confident they would be able to find a way to come up with the needed resources. This was illustrated in both the technology initiative and the White House Conference.

> "We knew we didn't have the people, we didn't have the time, but it was just too good to pass up!" (*Donna*)

This decision-making approach mirrored the one the company explicitly followed whenever the opportunity for a new contract came along, as reported earlier in the story.

Donna and her collaborators were also always very aware that there was usually only a limited time for making a decision about an opportunity – make the decision, or the decision will be made for you!

> "You see, in a crisis you have to make decisions … there's not a lot you can do … if you stop and dither about it, the opportunity is gone." (*Donna*)

While this reality hit them most dramatically at the time that they had to decide whether to make an offer to take over their bankrupt company, when they had only a week to make that decision, their success throughout depended on making these types of decisions timely and then acting without delay.

3.2.3. Donna's practices about risk

Donna's story provides clear evidence that she was willing to take considerable risks and could handle risk well. Assuming a debt of $500,000 when buying the company would be considered a big risk by many. However, Donna did not look at it this way, as made clear by the following comments:

> "What's the worst thing that could happen? The worst thing that could happen is that we don't succeed, and then what? Okay, we go get a job someplace else … it's not like you're going to hurt somebody." (*Donna*)

"[When we took on the business] I saw an opportunity to save a business that I had put an awful lot of energy into, and the people, and to do something that had not really been done that way before. That was what fascinated me." (*Donna*)

> "I think some people are comfortable with risk, and we were comfortable with the risk. We had a strong belief that it would succeed. I honestly can't tell you that we thought about failure. We really didn't … it wasn't … it just wasn't there." (*Donna*)

These comments suggest that Donna did not take on the risk of a large debt without careful thought, yet her evaluation of this risk was unusual. While she clearly considered the probability and consequences of a worst-case scenario (i.e., failing), she also weighted the elements of a worst-case scenario against potential outcomes. The worst-case scenario was that they might not succeed and would have to search for new employment. Yet another potential outcome was keeping a job for her and her partner *and* others who would stay on with them in the new venture (who would all lose their job otherwise). Furthermore, a third potential outcome was that they could be very successful and earn much more than before, as well as gaining deep personal satisfaction. In making this evaluation, Donna's confidence in their ability to succeed played an important role. She also clearly gave greater importance to "missing the boat" risks (i.e., missing the opportunity to turn-over a company and have greater impact in the meeting planning market) versus "sinking the boat" risks (i.e., having the new company fail and being left with a huge debt to be repaid).

Donna's attitude toward mistakes and failure as an inevitable part of the process, as well as a potential learning experience, was also an important part of her risk-taking mindset and practices.

> "First of all, I don't think you should be afraid to make a mistake. You don't want to make a stupid mistake, but if you've done your due diligence and you've thought about something and you've gone ahead – I think many people are afraid to make a mistake and they're so afraid to make a mistake that they don't do anything" (*Donna*)

Consistent with this belief, Donna was also very tolerant of people in her organization making a mistake, as long as it was an isolated event. However, if she recognized a "mistake pattern" (i.e., if the same mistake was repeated often), she felt that it called for some intervention, so as to promote the needed changes in behavior.

At the same time, Donna's risk-taking was calculated, and she purposefully worked at minimizing risk in a few

complementary ways. Far from ignoring the possibility of negative events and outcomes, Donna tried to forecast possible problems so that she could always, as much as possible, be prepared to face those problems. This was illustrated by her decision to double the equipment and staff in the case of the White House Conference. Part of her confidence also came from the expectation that she would carefully monitor the implementation of each major new initiative, as by doing so she could make adjustments as needed. She also always tried to reduce start-up costs and, thus, financial risks, through a number of bootstrapping strategies as well as refraining from making long-terms investments in new personnel. The initial decision to diversify Fusions' client portfolio to include companies *and* associations can also be seen as a strategy to reduce risk. Finally, Donna often started small, to try out new ideas without great financial consequences, to mitigate potential unknowns and, thus, risk. This was demonstrated in the gradual growth of the technology side of the business.

3.2.4. Donna's practices about resources

Donna did not consider finances her strong suit, and she relied on her first partner for this aspect of the business. Yet she certainly had a good understanding of the economic drivers of her company, which allowed her to actively participate in all key financial decisions of the business. Along with her partners, she was willing to give up some immediate gains to finance worthwhile innovations, and she recognized the critical importance of doing so. Donna was well aware of the importance of watching the cash flow and establishing realistic financial goals each year, carefully monitoring that these goals were achieved.

> "We watched our bottom line so carefully, that even at the end no bill was paid that either my partner or I didn't sign off on it, because we watched cash flow." (*Donna*)

She also recognized the importance of always watching costs by utilizing bootstrapping strategies, and this became a consistent approach across time. At the beginning, when they were trying to get out of debt, bootstrapping was clearly essential. However, even after they achieved that goal, they continued to do things by themselves as much as possible rather than hiring help or consultants, and maintained a very lean staff, hiring new employees only after they had secured a consistent stream of contracts that warranted a new hire.

> "That is always the challenge with small businesses. You can't ramp up with staff until you have the contract, but sometimes you can't get the contract until you have the people to do it. ...that's why I keep saying we bootstrapped, that's what I mean, it's a pay as you go, you get the contract ... you do not get out for seed money, you manage it within." *(Donna)*

It is also worth noting that the compensation scheme they implemented for their employees had been specifically motivated by their awareness that, in order to succeed, everyone in the company had to feel ownership in financial success of the company – and this included all employees keeping a keen eye on costs. Both Donna and her partner explicitly identify this compensation structure as "one of the things that really made us work and work really well", although it also had some unexpected repercussion when the company grew:

> "It was a very important piece. ... Number one, I think it showed people ... we're all in this together. Number two, it created an award system that allowed somebody who was in the administrative secretarial position ... to participate in as much as Donna or I or anybody else, so their value increased, their loyalty increased, their focus increased, their passion increased. By the same token I would say that ... as we grew, ... that forced management to really justify why we would want to bring in [new] people." (*Donna's business partner*)

While Donna and her partners made all the financial decisions, as mentioned earlier, they thought it was very important to be transparent with their employees about those decisions and the company's financial situation – especially as the employees would be directly affected by those decisions in their paychecks through their gain sharing!

> "We always made sure that [our employees] knew where we were in terms of our profit margins. We always

let them know for sure what was happening financially. If we didn't get a big contract, they understood the ramifications." (*Donna*)

As mentioned earlier, Donna and her partner did not hesitate occasionally to embark on worthwhile initiatives, even if they did not have all the resources upfront. They were confident that they would be able to secure those resources, and indeed they were always able to do so through a combination of using internal resources (for example, reducing gainsharing to fund specific initiatives, as in the case of technology, or securing new contracts) and partnering with other organizations or individuals (i.e., by hiring free-lancers or entering into formal partnerships with other companies as in the case of the White House Conference). It is important to note that these partnerships, while critical, did not come without risks or costs, as in each case they had to give up some control and autonomy as well as some of the profits.

Donna was well aware of the importance of hiring the right people and putting them in the right place in the organization. As mentioned in Donna's story, at the time of buying the business, she and her partner carefully selected the staff they were going to ask to stay with them – and they did so based not only on their skillsets but also on their attitudes and alignment with their vision. As they hired people over time, they very purposefully tried to achieve the same balance, although Donna recognizes that it is very hard to make this judgment:

> "Always the hardest challenge is picking the right people. … The more I did it, the more I learned to go with my guts as opposed to fancy resumes and an impressive list of accomplishments." (*Donna*)

Although she got better at it over time, she did not always get it right. When she did not get it right, though, she did not hesitate to take quick action:

> "Sometimes when we hired somebody it worked, we would pick the right person, sometimes we didn't, sometimes it was clear that we had picked the wrong person and usually that became obvious within a couple of months, and we were able to sit with that person and say, you know what, this isn't for you, it isn't for everybody." (*Donna*)

Another important decision in terms of human resources had to happen any time they got a new contract. For this, a team and a project manager had to be selected to work on it. The decision of who would work on the project was usually made by the partners. The partners would select the project manager, making sure his/her skillset and personality were a fit and would promote successful outcomes for that specific project. For any project that required a team, the project manager would then select the team members. On those rare occasions when they did not have sufficient in-house talent to take on a new contract that they had pursued, they either partnered with other organizations (as in the case of the White House Conference), or they pulled together free-lancers they knew well. In these instances, Donna or her partner would lead these externally-sourced teams.

3.2.5. Donna's practices about growth

As is often the case with a successful start-up company, Fusion grew significantly after Donna and her partner took over the company in 1989. By the time she left in 2003, they had increased their staff and revenues by almost tenfold. Indeed, there was an explicit drive to grow the company, especially at the beginning, as reflected in a continuous increase in the financial goals they set for themselves each year:

> "Our immediate vision was to have a nice little business that would allow these four people and my partner and I to make a good living and to enjoy our job. … but, see, what happens is your vision grows, at least with us, and as we became better at what we did, we began to see that we could have a bigger impact. So we began to grow the vision … with every one of those benchmarks in terms of dollars comes a huge change." (*Donna*)
>
> "It never occurred to us that you didn't want to grow." (*Donna*)

At the time, growing the business just seemed the obvious thing to do. Reflecting on this point during one of our interviews, Donna articulated the following complementary reasons for such a drive to growth: (a) their belief in the

quality of their product led them to the desire to influence as many people as possible; (b) the bigger the company, the more successful you felt; and, (c) the success of a company requires that you do not remain static, as not growing may actually be more risky, and potentially lead to failure. In Donna's own words:

> "I think part of it is if you're really committed to what you're doing and you really feel you've got a wonderful service or product, or whatever it is you're offering people, you want to grow because you want more people to have that. I think there's a part of it that is also ego … I think it is "look what I built" … look at how big this is … its not showing off, its not that, but it's the feeling that what you're doing has built something that is lasting, that's important, and that has been able to help people … and then there's also that generative process that if you're not growing, well, what are you doing? Plateauing doesn't sound too cool, you're dying … I don't know about other cultures, … but in America I think there is a cultural predisposition to feel that growth is good … I've never known anyone who was an entrepreneur who said gee, we have a nice little $5M business lets keep it that way." (*Donna*)

At the same time, Donna also pointed out that "It shouldn't be growth at all costs". She identified a couple of occasions when they decided against pursuing an opportunity that had the potential to move them to the next level, because it would come at costs that they were not willing to take.

Yet growth never came without a cost, as a number of things changed as the company grew. As already mentioned in the "story" component of this chapter, the expansion into technology meant hiring several new and quite different employees from the "tech world". With that came the risk of losing the culture they had been so careful to create.

> "You have people who are working in the technology group, you have people working in the meeting area … their whole set of skills is very, very different, their personality type is very, very different, and so what you wind up doing is trying to find ways to motivate two very different sets of people." (*Donna*)

Moving from a staff of 4 to over 30 also changed the dynamics of the working place and working relations at Fusion, leading to more differentiated responsibilities and less collaboration. Certain things did not work as well as before, like gainsharing and bonuses in particular. Even more importantly, the growth that the company was experiencing meant big changes in the co-owners' roles and responsibilities. At first, Donna was working in the trenches alongside with the other employees and being directly involved in the production of meetings; yet later she had to learn to teach others how to do what she had been doing and develop explicit systems for what she had naturally engaged in. This allowed others to take on roles that she had played, so she could move to different things. Developing leadership within the organization beyond the partners was also a key element, as illustrated by the example about the training of the project managers, discussed earlier in the Opportunities section.

The drive for growth that is typical of entrepreneurs sometimes is not limited to growing the size and scope of the company but may also involve growing the impact of one's ideas and products. This was certainly true for Fusion, as they recognized early on that they could not, and did not want to, be the only ones that could support productive meetings. So they began to offer professional development to other companies in the same business, by presenting at conferences and providing workshops. When asked why they would want to help the competition, Donna replied that this was actually an important strategy for them to gain visibility and recognition in the field for being at the cutting edge, and thus, market their company. She also noted that oftentimes, as the participants in their training sessions learned what was needed to organize good meetings, they realized they were not able to put that into practice themselves – so Fusion ended up being contracted to provide support in running some of the meetings organized by other meeting businesses.

3.3. Other interesting elements of Donna's case

The unique challenges and opportunities of starting a new business

While a main theme of this book is highlighting the similarities between starting a new business and other types of innovations, it is also important to recognize that there are some unique elements that operate when starting a new

business – or taking over and turning around a failing business, as Donna did. First of all, the entrepreneur in this case is operating with no "safety nets"; there is no larger and established organization that can back up the new venture and absorb temporary cash shortages or help in unlucky circumstances. This creates a sense of urgency and risk that is unique to the situation. At the same time, with a start-up there is also relatively less to lose than in an established organization, and while some mistakes can mean death for the start-up, failing fast may be more acceptable and less costly. Indeed, it is interesting that Donna reported her perception that the decision to embrace the new technology and take on a third party was actually harder to make than deciding to take over the bankrupt company in the first place.

Starting a new organization also presents unique opportunities in terms of creating expectations and systems that are conducive to innovation and entrepreneurial behavior. Developing a true entrepreneurial culture within Fusion was indeed an explicit goal for Donna and her partner from the very beginning. This cultural framework led them to devise their compensation plan to include bonuses and gainsharing as incentives for employees to be cost-conscious as well as take initiative for projects that would move the company forward. In addition to incorporating this compensation plan into their company's culture, Donna and her partners established a number of structures and other practices to affect the culture of their organization in entrepreneurial and productive ways, including open communication about the company's financial position and the rationale for key decisions the partners made for the company. These practices provided employees with multiple opportunities for input in key decisions and also served as a system for gathering new ideas and developing leadership within the organization.

They also communicated their expectations to employees by modeling these expectations themselves, and by carefully hiring people that shared the same vision and philosophy. Another element that was very important for Donna and her partners was to create an organization in which people trusted and genuinely cared about each other. As a result, most of Fusion's employees shared the same drive to be the best in their field and provide the highest quality meetings for their clients.

Dealing with a disruptive innovation

This case study is also the only example in this e-book where we find an organization dealing successfully with a "disruptive innovation" in the sense of Christensen (e.g., Christensen, & Raynor, 1997; Christensen, 2013). Donna and her original partner were able to recognize that the advent of the Internet along with software such as PowerPoint were not just new sustaining technology; and that is, something that would help them do their current job better. Instead, they realized that these and other forthcoming technologies would radically change the ways in which meetings could and would be conducted. For example, presenters would no longer need external companies like Fusion to produce slides for presentations, an activity that at the time was an important revenue generator, as now PowerPoint would easily allow clients to put together their own presentations and make changes even at the last minute. Donna also recognized that websites could enable virtual activities to take place before and after the actual meeting. Taking on these new technologies required Donna's company to totally rethink its practices and priorities, which was especially hard to do when they were experiencing considerable growth and success. Yet they recognized that not reinventing their practices and priorities would have meant the demise of their company over the next few years. Christensen and Raynor (1997) points out how difficult it is indeed for established companies to take such a step, and the authors provide evidence that very few established companies have been able to do so successfully.

What enabled Fusion to navigate disruption and transition successfully? Although established, Fusion still could be considered close to a start-up company in terms of size. Being small, they had a flexibility that allowed them to change practices and look for a different type of client. They also recognized the importance of taking on a new partner and new staff that could devote attention uniquely to developing the disruptive innovation, while other staff could maintain core, and proven, revenue-generating activities – at least until there was a market and enough clients for the new initiatives. This is one of the successful strategies identified by Christensen and colleagues.

The limited and contextualized role of business plans

Learning entrepreneurial skills is often associated with learning to develop and write business plans. It is interesting to note, though, that even in the business context of this case study, business plans played a rather minor role. Donna and her first partner never had the time to do a typical business plan when they decided to take over their company and restructure it, although obviously a lot of planning took place at that point. They also did not write a business plan

at the other most critical points in their company's development, when they decided to embrace the new technology and acquired a new partner to lead that initiative. The initiatives that called for a written plan, instead, tended to be those in which external funding was needed and those who would be providing the external funding needed to see a compelling plan to give their support. This was the case with their bid for the White House Conference as well as other major contracts to produce specific meetings. At the same time, even when they did not produce formal written plans, they always put considerable thought and planning into their key decisions.

Shared leadership at the top

Donna was the only one of our subjects that shared her top position in the organization with one or more partners. She explicitly mentioned that she would not have ever considered buying and operating a company if she had had to do it by herself.

> "I know for a fact that I would have never … bought the business on my own. It was buying it with [my business partner], it was having the relationship with somebody that we would go through this together and we would be able to share all of that." *(Donna)*

Interestingly, this happened not only with Fusion but also when later she started a new venture, Collaboration seemed indeed an essential way of operating for Donna:

> "I learn by discussing, by sharing ideas, by debating; everything synthesizes and becomes clearer through that process. So for me, collaboration is absolutely critical and I like it. … I do my best work when I do it collaboratively." *(Donna)*

As confirmed by her first partner, as well as Donna herself, they had a very close relationship – as trusted friends as well as business partners, and they complemented each other well because of their different strengths:

> "[He] spent a lot of his time on sales, I spent a lot of my time in the design, the operation – working the teams … We were equal in terms of our authority … [but] we did different things and that was the strength, actually. [He] was better at the finance side than I was. I'm much better at the creative, design, development, people side of meetings … so we were a great balance" (GS1, 610-615)

The three partners at Fusion Productions made all the big decisions together. While they usually were in agreement, this did not happen all the time, and so they developed some rules about how to deal with conflicts as well as the expectation that everyone had to be willing to give up sometimes.

A master at networking

While networking was a skill many of our subjects demonstrated to a high level, nobody was such a master at it as Donna. She very spontaneously would talk with anyone about her business and what they were trying to accomplish, while at the same time trying to learn as much as possible about the other person's interests. Having seen her "in action", we can attest that she did this in a way that was both purposeful and genuine, and as a result she often uncovered many new connections and possibilities for partnership. Truly listening to other people to understand what they are passionate about and ensuring that her suggestions for collaboration will benefit both parties, were key elements of her very successful approach. Equally important, she was very good at following up on the possibilities thus uncovered, taking the lead for the next steps and doing what it took to make those next steps happen. Over time, she developed a powerful network of individuals, both locally and nationally, that she could tap into. Yet she also had no hesitation to pick up the phone or e-mail people she did not know but whom she thought could be helpful to her organization or could provide her with valuable information and advice about a specific initiative.

Interestingly, this behavior was so natural to Donna that she never spontaneously mentioned it in our interviews, nor was she able to describe or analyze what she does so well – even when explicitly asked about it.

3.4. Concluding thoughts about Donna's case-study

As illustrated throughout her story, Donna's entrepreneurial spirit and never-ending quest for "what's next?", led her to continuously engage in new initiatives and innovations – *in addition to* buying and transforming a bankrupt company, which many would consider one of the most typical examples of entrepreneurship. She truly could "*transform ideas into enterprises that added value*" (Green's definition of entrepreneurship – see Figure 2.1) for her company and the clients it served, and she did so in a few complementary ways. Besides starting and growing the company, Donna also constantly looked for innovations that would differentiate the company from its competitors and keep it at the cutting edge – the technology initiative being the most significant and transformative example. A characteristic of these innovations is that they were not a one-time event, but were, at the outset, intended to be sustained over time. In contrast, initiatives such as the production of the White House Conference were something that happened only once and had a clear beginning and end; yet, such high-risk/high-rewards initiatives could also be transformative for the company and have a long-term effect.

When taken together, what was the "value-added" that Donna's initiatives contributed? Probably the most obvious one is avoiding a bankruptcy and significantly growing the worth of an almost defunct business. But these economic gains were not the only, nor perhaps the most important ones, that Donna's entrepreneurial activity produced. Because of Donna's actions and foresight, both partners and employees were able to benefit personally from participating in a business they believed in, while making a living doing it.

> "I think we enhanced the lives of the people that worked for us. … they have better business life than they would otherwise, and frankly they've made a lot more money than they would have anyplace else because of the way we shared [gains]." *(Donna)*

Just as important for Donna, her clients were able to have their objectives better met from the ways in which meetings were constructed. And meeting participants also benefited as they learned more and did not waste precious time.

> "We added value because our clients accomplished what they wanted to do with training and education. In other words, clients were able to really effect change in people because of the techniques we brought to running the meeting, that was very neat. The attendees … valued the whole experience of the meeting and the relationships they were able to forge because of the technology we put into place." *(Donna)*

We chose to start with Donna's case-study as she is the subject closest to the prototypical example of an *entrepreneur* – i.e., someone who starts a new business, and thus we believed she could concretely illustrate many of the key ideas and findings from the literature on entrepreneurship that we introduced in Chapter 2. And this is indeed the case, as her story documents and provides a concrete illustration of how:

- Even business entrepreneurs are driven by a vision that is not limited to making money.
- Entrepreneurs are opportunity-driven, and opportunities play a key role in many of the initiatives they engage in.
- Entrepreneurs often need to make quick decisions so as not to miss a window of opportunity, and they do not hesitate to do so.
- Entrepreneurs are willing to pursue worthwhile opportunities, even if they do not have all the resources in hand.
- Entrepreneurs are very aware of the need to deal with scarce resources, and they develop creative ways to use those resources most effectively.
- Entrepreneurs do not ignore risk, but rather they evaluate it in unique ways based on their knowledge of the situation, ability to uniquely connect ideas and concepts, and self-efficacy.
- Entrepreneurs must be able to address creatively the many problems encountered as they engage in innovations.
- Entrepreneurs are driven to grow their organizations and/or the impact of their ideas.

As it will become evident in the other case-studies included in this collection, many of these statements were also true for other entrepreneurial educators working in more traditional educational settings and roles.

3.5. Commentaries on Donna's case

We are collecting readers' insights and lessons learned from reading Donna's case on the companion website, and we invite you to add yours by following the specific guidelines provided in the "**Guidelines for Contributions**" document.

Posted commentaries about Donna's case – *None available yet*

CHAPTER 4.

Roderick Jones' case: Developing learning-based organizations to serve high-need communities

Frederick Jefferson & Joyce Duckles

(with contributions from Linda Francis)

Rod's Profile

Rod Jones became CEO of the Community Place of Greater Rochester soon after this organization was created as the merger of three separate Settlement Houses; as essentially the founding CEO, he did much to develop its mission, culture and structure, in addition to starting several new partnerships and initiatives. Prior to joining the Community Place, Rod had also been a co-founder of a small non-profit organization to encourage and support under-privileged youth to go to college, the Rochester Step-Off Program. Across all his enterprises, Rod brought an educational model of serving the community aiming at empowering individuals from underprivileged background to "help themselves" so as to eventually become self-sufficient, with education as a key means to achieve this goal.

4.1. Rod's story

4.1.1. Introduction to Rod's case

Roderick Jones joined The Community Place of Greater Rochester (abbreviated as Community Place hereafter) in 2001, right after this organization had been created from a merger of three Settlement Houses, and then became its CEO from 2003 to 2008. As such, he was instrumental in shaping the new organization's vision, mission, culture and organizational structure. This was not a new experience for Rod, who a decade earlier had started with a few friends a new not-for-profit organization — the Rochester Step-Off Education Foundation. As starting new organizations is considered by many to be the hallmark of social entrepreneurship (e.g., Bornstein, 2004; Dees, 2001), Rod can be considered a good example of a social entrepreneur. Furthermore, he explicitly viewed himself as an entrepreneur in his work toward sustainable social change and his commitment to continuing innovation:

> "Those of us in the helping profession … we have a responsibility to be innovative at every turn, to be creative, to be what we call best in class… [but] we're no longer the entrepreneurs … we're not innovating, we're so trapped into feeding machines and keeping people employed." *(Rod)*

Rod's entrepreneurial spirit and his strong vision for the members of his community led to the creation and implementation of several initiatives—as documented in his story.

A strong vision and philosophy guided Rod as a leader within the Community Place and his community. The Settlement mission informed this vision, as stated by one of Rod's close collaborators:

> "the Settlement House philosophy…is that every member of society deserves the best of society…[Rod's] belief was that people shouldn't keep coming back for help, that we should help them get to a better place in their life." *(Rod's collaborator)*

Central to Rod's vision was a rejection of the deficit views that permeate many models of "serving" the community.

Rather than trying to "fix people," Rod focused on "offering opportunities for the community to invest in their success." Rod viewed the community members as experts he needed to listen to and learn from. By understanding the "lived experience" of those we serve, Rod believed that we can work on their challenges from within rather than from outside.

These two aspects of his vision—the need to understand the lived experience of those we serve and the settlement vision of engaging people in their own movement toward change—are central to Rod's story.

In order to empower people to change their own lives, Rod also believed that we need to change the learning culture of helping organizations as well as the learning culture of the community and society at large. By creating new participation structures for youth and families in his community, Rod provided the means for them to see new possible futures while providing access to the resources for making these new futures possible and sustainable. Rod viewed education as a key resource because it leads to people being able to sustain themselves as human beings in a viable way. This is why we consider Rod not only a social entrepreneur, but also an "educator," consistent with our broad decision of education as *supporting development and learning across the lifespan and in a variety of settings.*

The Community Place, the organization Rod was leading at the time of our study, was formed in 2001 with the merger of Genesee Settlement House and Eastside Community Center, with the later addition of Lewis Street Center in 2002. The purpose of the merger was to keep the strong *settlement house movement* in Rochester alive as community centers adapt to the "changing needs and environment of the city." The *settlement house movement* originally formed nearly a century ago to help immigrants of many nationalities and ethnicities integrate into American society. Since then, it has adapted to deal with the changing needs and environments to continue to work with struggling community members to achieve economic and social prosperity for themselves and their community.

Rod and several of his collaborators spoke often of the settlement house history in Rochester and the settlement mission's central role in the Community Place. In Rod's words, "We continue the mission of helping people help themselves to move to another place."

The Community Place serves young children, teenagers, adults, families, the aging and individuals with disabilities primarily living in the Northeast sector of the city of Rochester, (the poorer sector of this urban area), though many programs branch out into the greater Rochester area. At the time of our study, in its 2005-2006 Annual Report, the Community Place reported that a total of 7,606 individuals were served that year in a variety of programs, most offered in partnership with local organizations (see Figure 3.1 for more information).

Figure 3.1. *The Community Place Profile at the time of our study (2006)*

***Historical notes*:**

- Founded in 2001 as the result of merging three previously distinct Settlement Houses

***Mission/vision statement*:**

- "*Rebuilding Community, One Person, One Neighborhood at a Time*"

Main programs and services offered in 2005-06 *(many in partnership with others)***:**

- **Family and Emergency Support Services** (2,531 individuals served) – *includes partnerships with other Settlement Houses, Salvation Army, Ibero American Action League, and others*
- **Early Childhood Services** (1,839): Family Day Care Satellite; Universal Pre-K
- **Youth Services** (1,761): Beacon Centers; Rochester After School

Academy (RASA); Community After School Academy (CASA); Summer camp; case management services + *partnerships including Rochester Step-Off Education Foundation Inc. among others*

- **Senior Programs** (985): Foster Grandparent Program; Senior Companion Program; Senior Centers
- **Programs for individuals with developmental disabilities:** (317)
- **HOST Program** *(described later)* (173)

***Organizational Structure*:**

- *Leadership Team:* CEO, 3 Vice-Presidents, HR Director, 4 Program Directors
- *Board of Directors* (18 members)

Subject's position: CEO

Selected "measures of success" (2006):

- *Overall budget*: $5.5M (74% external funding)
- *Individuals served:* over 7,500
- *Staff*: ~60

4.1.2. Highlights of Rod's professional journey

Growing up in New York City

Rod was raised by a single mother in a tough neighborhood in New York City. He felt that those around him believed there was "no possibility."

> "I grew up in a really tough neighborhood in New York City and it was hard because there were tough things going on. You know, most of it the social ills associated with being poor. … [For] the people I grew up with, frequently there was no possibility. You know, I could remember some of the older guys who would make comments like 'you think you are going to be better than us, well, you are just a N— like us.'" *(Rod)*

In contrast, his mother ensured that he was "raised in possibility." He recalled the lessons his mother taught him through her words and her actions. Through "affirmations and aphorisms" Rod's mother taught him and his siblings that, with hard work, everything is possible. She had him travel to a high school in a more affluent community, which Rod described as both a challenge and an essential learning experience for him, which went well beyond the classroom. One challenge stemmed from being a poor African American teenager among kids with different lives and from different backgrounds, kids who spoke of parents who were surgeons and other professionals. Rod came to realize that he did not need to compete with their stories and that he could embrace his reality:

> "It was at that point that I realized…that I had to be okay with my own life's accomplishments because

we're all individual contributors and that while the kids I went to school with could brag about their parents' accomplishments, what then could you say for yourself?" *(Rod)*

Rod also faced the challenge of being academically underestimated and generally misunderstood by teachers and counselors in his school, a mindset that was contrary to the lessons he was learning from his mother. He felt that his guidance counselor especially had no understanding of the transitions and struggles he went through each day just to get to and from school and the ways that Rod was being raised to see his own potential and his own possibilities.

> "I can remember early in the 11th grade my guidance counselor called me in and I remember the words that he used, he said, " it's come to my attention that you're slated to graduate at the end of your 11th year" …and he started to say "I don't think that you're mature enough or academically prepared enough to proceed to college" … in my mind at that moment I'm thinking to myself, "man you don't know me". You know, you don't know the life I live just to get here every day, what a struggle that is to get through the projects to the train station to get here every day, and you'll be going back to your home on Long Island. I remember concluding that conversation by saying to him, "you really don't want my mother to come here, because it won't be nice." *(Rod)*

The lessons Rod learned from this time period were central to Rod's emerging philosophy about the need to understand the lived experiences of others and about creating the possibilities as a first step to empowering others.

From his mother, Rod also learned lessons about how social and economic networks can be uniquely structured, as families in his neighborhood supported one another. Women often babysat for each other, and they held "rent parties" where the women played pitty-pat and gambled and sold chicken fried dinners. Through these secondary economies, the women ensured that everyone could pay the rent and that children had childcare.

As we present Rod's unfolding story, it will become evident how Rod built on many of these early lessons and experiences in his role as a leader and a social entrepreneur.

From business to the non-profit world

As Rod attended college and began a career in the business sector, his learning experiences continued to shape his vision and his path. He spoke briefly about his years in college. One of the primary influences during these years was his connection with fraternities which led to a strong social network in the Rochester area. Fraternity life also introduced Rod to the world of *stepping*, an African American dance and cultural art form, which also created social ties and served at the base for one of his first initiatives, as described later in this section.

After graduating from college, Rod worked briefly for General Electric (GE) in the field of corporate computing. While working under Jack Welch when GE was expanding with the purchases of NBC and Ryder Truck, he found the business aspect of corporate life fascinating. However, Rod soon became discouraged and dissatisfied with several aspects of the corporate culture.

> "Often times I went to work like there was this place that people were running to get to and nobody told me, and they would step over each other, run over each other to get there and I was the last one to know. But even at that I realized that … it wasn't about being best in class, it wasn't even about merit or innovation, it was about getting by or getting over and I always would say to myself, those things are going to come home to roost in this society in a way that we never could believe." *(Rod)*

In the summer of 1992 Rod left GE to work in the not-for-profit sector. In his new role as case manager for young people at Genesee Settlement House, Rod said that he felt "right at home". Soon after, he moved into a position as a line manager running a youth development program at Action for a Better Community (ABC). This was his introduction to "youth development as a philosophy." He also worked his way up to running a model of youth programs locally as part of a national demonstration model and then moved to the Perinatal Network. At this stage of his career Rod moved quickly into different roles, acquiring a variety of skills and building his vision. As one of his collaborators noted, "Rod looks at a job situation as being trained for a skillset acquisition."

Joining the Community Place

Rod joined the Community Place as Vice-President in 2001, just after this new organization had been created as a result of the merger of two separate district settlement houses. A few months later, a third Settlement House also joined in. This merger brought about some significant challenges as well as opportunities, which Rod described as follows:

> "… there were several years of talks between the two former CEOs and the Board of Genesee Settlement House

and East Side Community Center … In May of 2001 there were three of us brought on as vice presidents to lead the merger into completeness… If you can imagine there were several duplicate programs… there were employees who would be laid off … they were about $1.5M in debt and their operating budget was $1.2M, so we needed to find the money to close the gap. They had a couple of outstanding construction projects that were way over budget… So it was all of those kinds of things that were part of the merger." *(Rod)*

In 2003, Rod took over as Interim CEO following the resignation of the previous CEO. In the meantime, the board conducted an extensive local search with the goal of finding a CEO with specific values and experience, including leadership, strategic thinking, financial acumen, business acumen, and understanding of the Settlement House movement. A board member involved in the search committee told us about their selection of Rod as CEO:

"We picked Rod on his vision, passion and his commitment to Settlement—[these] were really the three driving forces for his selection …There were other candidates that had more leadership experience, people that had been in the non-profit leadership roles for many years, while Rod hadn't yet been in a leadership role… we knew Rod, but he had not acted in the CEO position. So, there were risks associated with our decision, but we really felt his passion, felt we could embrace his vision without really knowing what it was yet, and that his leadership would grow over time and that's literally what we got with Rod." *(Rod's collaborator)*

4.1.3. Rod's Innovation #1: Starting Rochester Step-Off Inc.

In 1994, while still working at Action for a Better Community (ABC), Rod was one of the founders of the Rochester Step-Off Education Foundation ("Step-Off" hereafter), an independent and self-sustaining non-profit organization that later officially partnered with the Community Place when Rod was its CEO.

Stepping is a cultural art form which uses a percussion movement and chanting, combining African boot dance and military drill moves. It uses the form of step which began in Black fraternities and sororities over 100 years ago. The underlying philosophy of Stepping encourages academic achievement and community building.

Rod envisioned the Step-Off program as a way to leverage Black youth's interest in *stepping* to provide them "academic exposure to higher education, support for completing school, physical development, character development, cultural competence and awareness." Kids participating in Step-Off would be expected and supported to perform academically as well as perform the step moves, while also learning to work together.

How the idea came about and was evaluated/refined

Rod's motivation for starting Step-Off stemmed from a "political will" he was sensing in the community. He felt that the United Way and other local funding agencies were saying, "oh no, don't waste any money on teenagers, they're just too far gone at that point, if you don't get them by six, nothing can be done". In contrast, Rod wanted to create participation structures for teenagers to take the path toward higher education and to demonstrate to the community what teenagers can do, and he saw *stepping* as the perfect means to reaching the teenagers.

One of his colleagues and friend had been running an informal program that involved high-school students in *stepping* as a way of keeping them in school. Rod saw both the potential and limitations of this program, as he recognized youth's interest in *stepping*, but also thought that it could be used to develop aspirations to go to college, not just to finish high school.

"Rod would bring the connectedness [to higher education] that I could never do. I knew I'd reach a plateau as far as where *stepping* could go and it would be, that being his criteria. His criteria was it's got to be a vehicle to get students in college; my vehicle, my vision at that point was to keep these kids in school, keep them in class." (*Rod's collaborator*)

Rod envisioned Step-Off's primary goals as providing a path to academic success with a goal of encouraging kids to aspire toward higher education. Rod remembered how he was not encouraged to go to college, no one was "creating the expectation" for him. Rod felt strongly that understanding the opportunity was an essential first step toward future

success. He wanted Step-Off to provide a structure to create expectations for youth to go to college as well as provide the supports and resources kids need to succeed. The heritage and the messages behind *stepping* were important for Rod to pass on to young people. The emphasis on academic achievement was part of Step-Off – if you wanted to participate, you had to "invest" in the process as well.

> "The other part that we say to young people as well is, 'if you choose this path, it's an earned way' … and these are words we use with kids, it's an earned way. You're entitled to nothing…sometimes kids aren't willing to grapple with that …and we say to them sometimes, you can show up and sit at the bench and watch the model until you're ready to invest in it." *(Rod)*
>
> "We quite frankly have kids who will go to school because they know that in order to go into practice you got to go to school." *(Rod)*

Rod told us how the decision to make Step-Off an independent not-for-profit organization came about:

> "…we got together a couple of us and concluded that we're going to … create a showcase that's county-wide for people to understand what teenagers can do and are doing and …to effect the development of young people to progressively move them towards participation in higher education and increase in graduation and be able to do it in a business fashion that would be a model to demonstrate, where the resources are diverse, that you hold to some principles, that you take only enough to do what you need and that you diversify the burden so that you know there's no one person footing the bill but everybody is contributing to the wellness of young people." *(Rod)*

He saw great need for an initiative of this kind, and he was confident that youth would respond positively to it, based on his own experience as an African American teenager who had not received this kind of support.

With respect to the needed resources, Rod was confident that he could call on volunteers for much of the services, based on the connections he had made when in college. He expected the revenues generated by the end of the year performance to eventually enable the organization to be self-supporting. He did also realize, though, that some start-up funds should also be secured from other community organizations and individual donors.

Rod's decision-making process suggests that ultimately his decision to start Step-Off was informed by his overall vision for empowering African American youth, and that he did not pay much attention to the risks involved given his belief in the value of this initiative.

Planning and gathering the needed resources

In order to get Step-Off started, Rod needed to get financial support. He was able to pull together funds from different sources – including the Rochester Community Foundation, United Way and ABC (the organization he was working for at the time) – to cover the costs for the first year-end performance at the Blue Cross Arena. However, a collaborator shared that Rod was hesitant to take outside money for Step-Off, due to his concern that otherwise the funders' agendas would corrupt the true values and goals of the program. Rather, he hoped that the program could became self-sustaining through ticket sales for the year-end performances – a goal that was quickly achieved.

The Step-Off program also relied on a large force of volunteers. To secure these volunteers, Rod used his connections to the fraternity and sorority members within Rochester, who became essential leaders in Step-Off. Rod's connections to higher education were critical to the success of the program.

At the beginning of Step-Off, Rod also assisted in bringing some structure to the new organization:

> "Yeah, one of the toughest things was to make that bridge from being an amorphous organization to being a 501-C-3 … Rod's background with Action for a Better Community … was helpful for us to go through that process." *(Rod's collaborator)*

Implementing and monitoring the initiative

Rod talked to us about the quick growth of Step-Off in Rochester. From 1994 to 2008, Rod estimated that 6,400 kids had been involved in the Step-Off program and 16,000 people had attended the year-end performance at the arena. Over 200 volunteers had been involved as well. These were clearly metrics he had decided it was important to monitor from the start to evaluate progress and success.

More importantly, though, Rod considered Step-Off a success because of its outcomes and "incremental achievements"—as monitored through the grades of the participants and how many of them graduate and go on to college. Rod believed that Step-Off played an all-important role in creating the expectation that the participating youth

will go to college. The financial incentives provided by Step-Off were another means of encouraging youth to continue in higher education, as some of the kids got savings bonds each year for academic performance and there were college scholarships available for seniors. Rod believed these incentives were important for many of the youth as they decided whether to go on to college. Past steppers often came back as mentors within the program, becoming role models and creating the "culture of expectation."

> "After 14 years we have some lawyers, we have some doctors and they come back year over year and they go on to pledge at other colleges so it creates the culture of expectation so that they can participate in higher ed. You know, we believe that there's a pass into middle class, there's a pass into higher ed and then once you have your pass you have to know the rules of engagement so that when our kids get there they can participate." (*Rod*)

Ensuring long-term sustainability and/or bigger impact

The revenues generated by the end-of-year performance, combined with the on-going commitment of many volunteers, ensured the financial stability to maintain this program over many years.

As a way to ensure long-term sustainability for Step-Off, especially as some of the original founders started to leave, in 2004 Rod was able to secure a formal partnership with the Community Place (where he was the CEO at the time). This formal partnership was intended to provide valuable administrative support while maintaining the original spirit of Step-Off, as articulated in a 2007 Newsletter of the Community Place:

> "By serving as a managing agent [of Step-Off], The Community Place provides administrative support to help the organizations operate efficiently and obtain funding from outside sources. The organizations remain volunteer-driven and in tune with the local community from which, and for which, they were formed" (*from The Community Place Pulse, Newsletter, Spring 2007*)

4.1.4. *Rod's innovation #2: Developing the vision and culture of the new Community Place organization*

How the idea came about and was evaluated/refined

As he took on the position of CEO at the Community Place just a few years after this organization was started, Rod had a clear vision for the organization as well as his role. He believed that the board and the previous CEO had laid the groundwork in creating stability. His job now was to take the Community Place to the "next level of delivery," which included a more aggressive, deliberate and pronounced approach to meeting their mission.

> "How we meet our mission, how we advance the organization, how we move the community to a different place, how we engage the community and the type of organization, the type of institution we create … those were all my jobs." (*Rod*)

Planning and gathering the needed resources

Rod identified several steps as needed to move his organization forward on its mission. His first goal was to create a new institutional culture at the Community Place, based on the vision he had formed through his previous experiences and his commitment to the settlement mission.

A basic premise for Rod was that the Community Place should not be a place of hand-outs. Instead, the goal shifted to helping people by empowering them to help themselves.

> "People do not look to us for handouts; rather, they look to us for the tools and support they need to break through barriers and stand up on their own. Many times all it takes is one opportunity, one resource, or one piece of good advice for people to begin to build a better life for themselves and their community." (*from the Community Place 2005-6 Annual Report*)

Rod also referred to this philosophy as "challenging the entitlement notion." This was accomplished by creating clear goals which the community would understand—although this transition was not always easy:

> "If the goal is to stabilize families and to move them forward … when you come, let's identify what caused the

crisis that leaves your house unstable and let's figure out how we work from there – and if we have to give you food for now until you get a higher paying job, then as long as you're moving in that direction we will help to supplement it. I can remember those times when, you know, we probably served 4,000 people in the area and the numbers were down to maybe we had 5 people come in a day…and the staff was saying, you know, we're going to lose our contract 'cause people aren't coming in.' I said no, the people are beginning to understand … this is not what we do, our goal is to help your family, you and your family get to a higher ground. Here's our set of responsibilities, and here's your set of responsibilities and we'll keep our end for as long as you keep your end. …It's a hard transition at times but I think as we're careful about being clear with people where we're trying to get to and people start to see, you know, begin hoping and that your goal is not to put stumbling blocks in front of them but that there's an expectation." *(Rod)*

Rod also recognized that along with a change in culture there also needed to be a change in "doing business" – which in turn led to some changes in operations and services offered.

Implementing and monitoring the initiative

Rod stopped providing daycare and some family services because he found that they were both financially draining on the organization and not helping to fulfill the mission of building sustainability for families and neighborhoods. He adopted the guiding principle of the "three B's – balancing business and benevolence."

"…we've gone quite frankly away strategically from things like babysitting and recreation and isolation of development. If it's not leading to a development that helps people progress to a higher quality of life, we strategically got away from it, which has been fairly difficult. You have people who have served in the organization for 30 or 40 years who believe that you have to offer daycare because it feels good in here [the heart], not that it helps in here, the pocket, you know, it feels good to the heart but the pocket suffers and a part of what we say to our community is that we have some operating principles of which one we call the three B's … it's balancing business and benevolence and those scales must always be balanced." *(Rod)*

At the same time, Rod was asking employees to "practice what they preached" and live their own lives according to the same mission and values that they were trying to teach and nurture. He felt that part of this included ensuring the organization's own financial security, by both becoming less dependent on external sources and by building an endowment.

"So when you talk about cultural changes, that was a lot to ask of people… You cannot "hypocrite", you have to first live it. … That was one of the first things I said to my boss, I don't want to inherit an organization that's broke. After 100 years, we're hand to mouth, and we're telling people in our family services unit here's how you avert crisis." *(Rod)*

As CEO, Rod implemented several key initiatives which helped to ensure financial solvency for the Community Place, while also forward his goals and the mission of the organization within the "new culture" he was creating. While Rod did cancel some programs and services, he also formed several partnerships and began new programs which he felt forwarded their goal of empowering families and building communities. In 2004, Rod began a partnership with The Rochester Step-Off Education Foundation, as mentioned earlier. He also partnered with Families and Friends of Murdered Children and Victims of Violence (FFMCVV), an organization that provides support and resources to victims of violence and their families. The Community Place entered into an agreement with Beacon Centers Youth Development Program to offer more comprehensive services and better prepare youth for college and the world of work.

Rod also worked at developing an endowment for his organization. To revive the public confidence of funders, he made explicit efforts to clearly communicate the new vision and expectations for the Community Place, as well as their implications:

"I think we also have to revive the public confidence of those who we count on for largess, you know, the donor, the contributor …they have to understand the work that we do so that in their mind it's not wasted money, particularly as resources grow limited" *(Rod)*

Though this culture shift was difficult for some people within the organization, Rod believed that it moved them closer to the settlement mission that he and the board embraced. This shift in vision also formed the foundation for many of the programs and initiatives which Rod formed and implemented at the Community Place over his five-year tenure as

CEO.

4.1.5. Rod's innovation #3: Starting the HOST program

One of Rod's first and most significant initiatives as CEO of the Community Place was starting the HOST program (Housing Opportunities for Sustainability and Transition). Here is how this program was described in one of the Community Place's newsletters:

> "Many of our most recent initiatives have centered on helping our community harness the collective power of its members to revitalize neighborhoods socially and economically. Our Housing Opportunities for Sustainability and Transition (HOST) Program sets forth a two-pronged approach to community building. First, the HOST program works to purchase and renovate dilapidated houses and apartment buildings in the Parsells Avenue area. After the buildings are renovated they are rented to responsible individuals and families at below-average rates…The second main goal of the HOST program is to improve the economic viability of our community…By helping businesses grow in our community we can keep dollars circulating here longer, thereby improving the overall economic health of the community." (*From The Community Place Newsletter*, 2008)

How the idea came about and was evaluated/refined

The groundwork for the HOST program began while Rod was still vice-president. Rod and the previous CEO had witnessed the drug dealing and other activities at an apartment building within sight of the Community Place; they watched the kids walk by the building as they came to the Community Place. Rod talked about the risk they took as they purchased this building and began to renovate it.

> "Early on my boss took a huge risk on this project that I wanted to do … it was an apartment building across the street that had 14 units and it would what you would call a gate, you could just go up to the window and buy drugs. It was just falling apart inside and my boss, she was able to persuade the board to let us buy this building. God only knows, you talk about money pit. I can remember the days going over in my overalls … they had these efficiency units in there, so all the stoves, the oven was above it, the stove and sink were all together with the refrigerator … we had to pull all of those steel bays out by hand. We didn't have the money to do it, so I was over there, we'd go over there and knock the walls out and there was a group of us and it took a while to develop it over time." (*Rod*)

Rod's vision and goals for HOST were closely aligned with the settlement mission, leading specifically toward community building through creating opportunities for sustainable and affordable housing while building secondary economies within the neighborhood.

Planning and gathering the needed resources

On his first day as CEO of the Community Place in 2005, Rod presented a position paper which he titled "FABRIC" (Facilitating And Bridging Resources Into Communities) to propose the HOST program to the board. Building on the ideas generated from the purchase of the apartment building, and from the settlement philosophy, Rod laid out his plans to create a program with the goal of building a sustainable community. There are several parts to Rod's vision as presented in FABRIC. Each part guides the shape of the HOST program.

First is getting people reconnected to a sense of community and neighborhood. With all of the transiency in the neighborhood, people were not connecting, not creating a "common social value." One of the central goals of HOST was to create some stability within the community through affordable housing.

The second part of Rod's vision was the building of secondary economies. He believed that this was an essential step in moving toward sustainability. In order to accomplish this, dollars needed to stay within the community through an internal system of supply and demand. Rod planned to create secondary economies by starting to have the Community

Place become the landlord for some of the homes and buildings, and then also bringing businesses owned by community residents into the neighborhood.

> "When you look at communities that succeed … there was a perpetual supply and demand. The dollar turns over ten times, twelve times, thirteen times. You have to have that if a community is going to prosper … and I know we talk a lot about jobs, jobs is only a portion of it. If fifteen of us can work but every dollar we get goes out of the community to a landlord, what do you have? So that means that one of us has to be the grocer, one of us has to be the seamstress, one of us has to be the tutor, one of us has to be the piano instructor, and we have to create enough of the base supply and demand amongst commodities that allows us to have a perpetual supply and demand so the dollar cycles. The way we've found best to do that was to be the landlord, so the HOST has two parts, one is the housing piece and the other is the economic development piece." *(Rod)*

Many partnerships and supports needed to be to realize the HOST program. Support for the program was secured from the REALTORS Charitable Foundation and the Independent Insurance Agents of Monroe County.

The board's support was critical to provide support as well as the human, social and economic capital needed to build the HOST Program.

> "[Rod] did bring it to the board and we accepted the vision as a concept that we wanted to move forward with, then subsequently the opportunity came along where houses became available, so Rod literally looked at inventory in the neighborhood… what can we purchase, who's out there selling. We did have a realtor on the board and a lawyer on the board so we were able to work those transactions, realtor, lawyer and banker, so between the three entities we could work those transactions all within the board gave us confidence and a sense that we're doing the right thing and that someone actually insured that we're going to be a profitable entity." *(Rod's collaborator)*

Implementing and monitoring the initiative + ensuring long-term sustainability and/or bigger impact

Overtime, as part of the HOST program, the Community Place has continued to buy up property to encourage rentals as well as home ownership. They have an operations crew to identify how to bring the homes up to their code for living. They then identify candidates from within the community or workers at the Community Place who would be interested in renting or possibly, potentially buying.

4.1.6. Updates to Rod's story

In 2008, only five years after having taken on the Community Place's CEO position with a transformative agenda, Rod surprised many by deciding to leave this position and take on the leadership of a larger Settlement House in another city.

Given that Rod had been such a strong force in bringing change to the Community Place, when he decided to leave Rochester the board was initially concerned that the growth they had experienced at the Community Place might not continue. However, they found that Rod had built a solid foundation and an entrepreneurial culture that would continue without him as leader.

> "Upon his leaving I am now aware as a board member that it's not just him…These ideas are not Rod, these are Community Place's ideas. Now they could have been Rod's ideas, but they are no longer Rod's ideas, we are absolutely positioned to continue that mission…I was so personally affected that he was leaving and taking the mission with him, but he didn't take the mission with him. We have it, we have the mission, we are moving forward with everything he put in place, and operating exactly as he did or a little differently." *(Rod's collaborator)*

Interestingly, Rod identified as a major leadership challenge that people in the organization tended to focus more on serving him and his vision, than on developing the capacity to serve themselves and their own vision. He observed:

> "I came to realize along this pathway is that control is not yours to have and control of people is even less of yours to have and that change is about choice in time, so the best you can do is equip people for choice. I came

to the realization that I'm in service, that's all. That no matter what I do it's a grace to arrive at a certain place at a certain time prepared to do what I have to do in that moment, and that the best that I can do is to do what I was supposed to do in that appointed time. People being different is about God's business and not about me controlling people, and to do anything else would be manipulation." *(Rod)*

Maybe Rod knew that his service in a community was done when the weight of dependence became palpable. At that time he chose to leave, thereby creating an opportunity for choice and self-determination for the community he "abandoned".

Since leaving the Community Place, Rod first served as President and CEO of a large Settlement House in St. Louis. As of 2021, he was the Executive Director of Goddard Riverside, a non-profit organization serving over 20,000 people throughout New York City through a variety of programs for families at every stage of life.

Regardless of his position or organization, we know he continue to be "in service" furiously and courageously creating new opportunities for sustainable freedom of choice and self-determination.

4.2. Analysis of Rod's entrepreneurial activity

4.2.1. Rod's practices about vision

Rod's vision was the guiding force behind all of the work he did at the Community Place. Based on his personal experiences growing up in NYC, through college, and through working in a variety of businesses and non-profits, Rod developed a philosophy closely aligned with the settlement mission.

With the board, the community, and potential funders, Rod communicated his vision to gain "buy-in" to his programs and initiatives. For example, he distributed a vision paper (FABRIC) the day he became CEO of the Community Place, outlining his goals for the neighborhood and the organization.

In each of the initiatives we discussed with Rod and his collaborators, Rod's vision was a primary influence shaping the organization, the partnerships, and the programs he developed. Under Rod's leadership, a new culture evolved at the Community Place with a focus on helping people to help themselves by creating participation structures for member of the community in a variety of capacities – as potential home-owners, business leaders, and/or community members. The partnership with the Step-Off program focused on creating participation structures for youth which included a path to college. The HOST program evolved to strengthen community through empowerment of residents to invest in their own neighborhood and become active members in creating safe, sustainable communities. As we analyzed these initiatives, we found that Rod's vision of understanding the "lived experiences" of those we serve, of moving away from deficit views and creating possibilities, of empowering community members to move themselves toward sustainability, truly guided everything he did as CEO of the Community Place as well as throughout his professional life.

One of Rod's strengths was getting people to "buy in" to his ideas. He was able to present his clear vision and goals for an initiative to board members, businesses, and community members. When talking about Rod, his collaborators described how they were drawn to him and his passionate clarity-mission-driven-commitment to creating a new order, a new service-movement for freedom and sustainability:

> "Clear vision and initiative definitely, and sharing and getting people to buy in, that clearly is one of his strengths. I mean he can sell it and because of his passion and commitment you get caught up in Rod, you just get caught up in him, and you don't want him to be anything less than successful and so you do whatever you need to do to make it happen." *(Rod's collaborator)*

4.2.2. Rod's practices about opportunities

Rod always found many opportunities he would like to pursue. One way he uncovered these opportunities was from keeping a pulse on the community.

> "It's interesting, he would say that he wouldn't watch the news much, but he knew what was going on and I think he would create opportunities where there weren't any. … He'd go down the street, and he comes back and tells me that the guy in the carpet store [is leaving]; I didn't know that was an opportunity, until Rod told me we had the opportunity to buy the carpet store." (*Rod's collaborator*)

Similarly, Rod also kept up with the literature on his field and what other settlement houses around the country were doing, as a way to get new ideas and uncover possible opportunities for his organization. A collaborator also said that Rod kept an eye towards the future:

> "He was able to see or read the winds of change as they came along and adapt some of his visions towards that … I would say the opportunity to have Step Off incorporated in was one of the examples." (*Rod's collaborator*)

All opportunities Rod uncovered were also evaluated based on his vision, especially his belief in the settlement mission. In each of the initiatives mentioned in his story, it was evident that this was one of the primary measures Rod used when evaluating whether an idea was worth pursuing. For example, the Step-Off program was aligned with Rod's goal of "creating the expectations" for youth to go to college, and the HOST program built on the settlement house goals of improving community by creating opportunities for success of individuals.

Another tool Rod used to evaluate whether an opportunity was worth pursuing was "balancing business with benevolence." Rod recognized that it was necessary to take into consideration the cost of an initiative or program in relation to the value it would provide to the community. He or his staff also had to prepare some financial analyses to the board whenever he proposed a new major initiative.

However, the board felt that Rod still came up with too many opportunities, all which were consistent with their mission. The board often had to be the "bad guy," turning down potentially worthy ideas based on their understanding of their limited resources.

> "So yeah, Rod had energy, he had the intellect, he had the commitment to the people in the community to make all those things happen and then … the sky was the limit … well the board was the limit." (*Rod's collaborator*)

There were a few instances when Rod and his board chose to turn down opportunities which seemed valuable for the community but did not fully fit with the organization's mission. One notable example is the Rochester Surround Care Community (RSCC). In 2006, the RSCC was created as a non-profit organization modeled after the Harlem Children's Zone to improve the north-east quadrant of Rochester (the poorest neighborhood in the city). Taking a holistic approach, RSCC sought the collaboration of many social agencies with the community itself to design and implement comprehensive initiatives to transform this neighborhood. The Community Place, along with all the social and education organization working in the north-east section of the City of Rochester, was offered the opportunity to participate in this major initiative. However, Rod concluded that the program, as it was evolving, did not align with the settlement mission. He considered the possibility of changing the program, by taking a leadership role in it and molding it to fit with his philosophy. However, he and the board saw how difficult that would be and turned down the opportunity to be involved. Interestingly, this evaluation was right on, as RSCC did not survive beyond a few years due to financial and organizational challenges.

4.2.3. Rod's practices about risk

Rod never spoke explicitly about risk-taking in his interviews. He never seemed to approach his innovations and initiatives as risks. Instead, he saw them as evolving opportunities. When asked directly about risk, Rod responded that

he had been "blessed with great opportunities to do different things." In contrast, collaborators did see Rod as a "major risk taker." However, they viewed this as a positive quality which served the Community Place well.

> "I think that Rod can't…[be] restrained [from taking risks]. … I don't know how calculated some of his risk taking was, but he was a major risk taker and you can't hold people like that down." *(Rod's collaborator)*

As Rod's decision to jump into a project was essentially based on whether his vision and philosophy was being addressed through the program, risk did not seem a major factor influencing Rod's actions.

One of Rod's collaborators noted that there was a good balance to Rod's risk taking within the Community Place. Rod often used the board as a check on his risk taking. Both he and the board recognized the value of having an energetic and passionate leader, along with a board who required business plans and was willing to insist on slowing down.

> "I think his threshold of risk is higher than the board's – and it's supposed to be." *(Rod's collaborator)*

4.2.4. Rod's practices about resources

Just as Rod had a strong philosophy guiding his vision, he also had a philosophy guiding his dealing with finances, which he called the "three B's – balancing business and benevolence." As mentioned earlier, he believed that a delicate balance needed to be maintained between spending too much on programs and ensuring that your clients and community members have the opportunities they need to succeed.

> "We're very clear about that … we say to families, you know, this is your financial obligation, and this is our financial obligation, and we always have to keep those things balanced. You go too far over into benevolence, then the business falls off, you may never find yourself having the opportunity to provide benevolence again. If you fall too much on the business side … you may never be able to have such a relationship that that person can move." *(Rod)*

Though Rod sought this balance, collaborators noted that Rod often entered into a new venture without having all of the financial resources in place. Somehow, he would figure out how to get the money to fund his programs. This was true with both Step-Off and the HOST program.

Collaborators also stated that in addition to being good with numbers, Rod also surrounded himself with the right people with the right skillsets to attend to the financial side of the Community Place. He found a strong COO and finance manager, and he tapped into the expertise of the board when needed.

The underlying vision which Rod used to guide his programs was also applied to the ways he dealt with finances. As CEO of a not-for-profit, Rod was not dealing with financial gains. However, he worked to balance his mission and his need to raise money for programs. He is a good fundraiser; as one of his collaborators stated, "Rod can do the ask, I mean he can ask anybody for anything, and he would get it."

As CEO of the Community Place, Rod worked along with donors and others who had supported the Community Place in the past to build relationships and trust. He believed that mistrust had grown between funders and non-profits and he saw his role as rebuilding mutual respect.

> "The only way to collaborate is by mutual respect, but we have to get to that place. I think we also have to revive the public confidence of those who we count on for largess, you know, the donor, the contributor …they have to understand the work that we do so that in their mind it's not wasted money, particularly as resources grow limited" (Rod)

However, he refused to take money if he felt it would compromise the goals of his programs. For example, in some occasions he turned down donations for Step-Off because he felt that there was a "hook" attached to the money which might influence the integrity of the program. Just as he encouraged financial self-sufficiency and security for those he served, Rod also wanted to make his programs as self-supporting as possible. He sought grants if available.

He also looked at creating partnerships as a means to secure the resources needed for a specific initiative. For example, as he believed that the Community Place could benefit by having more services within their community, Rod

would take organizations that were floundering under the wing of the Community Place if they were aligned with the overall mission. These organizations did not require any funding but could benefit from the infrastructure that the Community Place could provide, and in turn this partnership would enable the Community Place to offer needed services to its clients without having to secure additional resources. One board member referred to this as a "marriage of opportunity."

> "Rod could find opportunity with the scarce resources we had. In addition to HOST we also had management agreement with Friends and Family of Murdered Children, Victims of Violence and Step-Off, where he was able to see the opportunity without any investment. … We've got an infrastructure, a pretty solid infrastructure; they're floundering because they don't have infrastructure. Is there a marriage of opportunity and can we assist someone and be successful and make ourselves successful? So an entrepreneurial vision that was executed through boot-strapping and that it didn't cost us a dime to invest in that opportunity." (*Rod's collaborator*)

In several of the programs, Rod used several bootstrapping strategies. He paid attention to cost-saving, keeping a lean staff, and being ready to do things by himself if needed (as illustrated at the beginning of the story of the HOST program).

Rod was very successful in securing the necessary resources for each of his initiatives. Often, these resources involved human capital, though Rod was also able to find the financial capital when necessary.

For several of the programs and partnerships at the Community Place, volunteers were the key to their success. For example, Rod estimated that Step-Off relied on approximately 200-300 volunteers to keep them going. Volunteers helped in many aspects of the HOST program as well. Rod viewed this workforce as evidence that the Community Place was involved in the "movement of social change." He used his social network to recruit the necessary volunteers.

Creating partnerships was another tool Rod used to secure resources his organization did not have internally. For example, he partnered with several organizations to offer specific services, such as Step-Off, Family and Emergency Support Service, and Senior Centers**.** A basic premise underlying all of these collaborations was mutual respect of one another's expertise.

> "I think that if we're to change or if we're to be successful in any discipline we have to learn to collaborate. And collaboration is not in the memorandum of agreement, but it's in the way we engage one another, and I think at the root of that is mutual respect." (*Rod*)

With the personnel and team within his organization, Rod built on his vision of understanding the "lived experience" of the people of the community they served. He insisted that his team "be willing to embrace the difference" and suspend judgment and recognize that the change that they are a part of is owned by the community members.

> "To open yourself up to the multitude of lived experience of other people is a huge thing. It means to suspend judgment … and to be willing to embrace difference, not agree or disagree, but to embrace the difference and I think that's a huge cornerstone … and one of the things we say to people who come to work here is that you have to love people, because if you don't, you're going to have a hard time getting over the hump." (*Rod*)

Rod also spoke about how his staff inspired him. He believed that their creative energy kept him and his organization moving toward innovation and success.

> "…and you talk about innovation, the uninhibited enterprise that exists in each of them challenges me every day to rethink what I think I know… my marketing director is 20 maybe 25 … he creates all of this kind of stuff, he's the brain behind the whole thing… other guys in our youth area who have such a vision for our young people and they can walk you know, both of the worlds between profession and kids. I'll tell you, every day is an adventure … sometimes I have to reserve a certain amount of my mind to keep up with it, but I think it's them that really keeps it moving." (*Rod*)

Rod proactively worked at attracting and retaining individuals on his staff who shared his vision and drive towards innovation, and he also worked to get the right people in the right positions within his organization. He developed ownership of the agenda among his staff by including them in the decision-making process. And, perhaps most importantly, he himself modeled the practices he wanted everyone in the organization to adopt.

He developed leadership within the organization. Indeed, one of the hallmarks of Rod as an entrepreneurial leader

of his organization was his explicit goal of developing a diverse leadership team that could be empowered to be entrepreneurial – with or without him at the helm.

4.2.5. Rod's practices about growth

The Community Place grew and changed significantly under Rod's leadership as CEO. He brought in many other organizations under the umbrella of the Community Place, as he recognized the mutual benefit of creating these partnerships for both the organizations he brought in and for the community which he served.

Rod was also always expanding and building on innovations. He expanded the Community Place by adding more programs, though he also discontinued the programs he felt were either not successful or not in line with the mission and vision of the organization.

The primary challenge Rod faced regarding the growth of the Community Place and his programs was to slow down. The Board of Directors served as the check to Rod's pace of growth.

> "I think he's very successful in handling rapid growth. I think from a board perspective we have to slow that down a little to make sure we're really good at what we do before we take on more growth." *(Rod's collaborator)*

Rod recognized that such rapid growth would lead to changes in the organization and even his role, and addressed this proactively—as stated by the same collaborator:

> "Accepting and dealing with change … I think that's what makes an entrepreneur successful, and it made Rod successful … times are changing, and folks will need to merge over time and reaching out across the table to say 'you could merge with us and we could make this a successful investment'." *(Rod's collaborator)*

Personally, Rod also continuously sought to impact as many people as possible through his practice—something that led him to frequent job changes, including after he left the Community Place.

4.2.6. Other interesting elements of Rod's case

Starting a new non-for-profit organization

Many of the challenges and opportunities of starting a new organization apply to both for-profit and not-for-profit entities. These include most notably the lack of "safety nets" and the need to carefully manage the cash flow to avoid untimely closure, on the one hand, and the opportunity to develop brand new systems and culture, on the other. What is significantly different, though, are the revenue and funding sources the two types of organization can rely on.

Pursuing institutional entrepreneurship

As CEO of the Community Place, Rod worked proactively at developing a new organizational culture consistent with his vision—where bringing about innovation was at the core. Rod viewed entrepreneurship as central to any educational mission and to the not-for-profit sector, even though entrepreneurship is most often associated with business. He felt that those in the "helping profession" were not focusing enough on being innovative and being trend setters.

> "I think one of the things that make any institution strong is their ability to engage in free enterprise and I think innovation is absolutely the life blood of any organization. Without it, forget it." *(Rod)*

In doing so, Rod worked at breaking with existing norms and beliefs, as well as establishing and legitimizing new expectations and norms – what is considered the core of institutional entrepreneurship (e.g., Dimaggio, 1983). Rod was successful in this endeavor, as he created an entrepreneurial culture at the Community Place that lived on even after he left. One of his collaborators specifically commented on how the leadership and all of the people at the Community Place embraced and lived this culture.

The key role of the board in a not-for-profit organization

A factor that was very important to Rod's success was having the complete confidence of his board and staff in his vision and leadership ability. This level of support was essential, given that the new leader came with the intent to fundamentally overhaul the traditional programs and practices of the Community Place. Rod often used the board as a sounding board and a "check", as he conceived visionary and ambitious plans but also realized that he needed a "reality check" about what was or not feasible at a given time.

4.2.7. Concluding thoughts about Rod's case

Rod is a great example of a social entrepreneur whose work is solidly grounded in a philosophical perspective and vision. His story illustrates how his vision developed and emerged from his life experiences, his work experiences, and from the community which he served. The tenets central to Rod's vision can serve as models for any social entrepreneur and entrepreneurial educator. They build on the notions of understanding the "lived experiences" of those we serve and of "offering opportunities for the community to invest in their success."

While informed by his strong vision, Rod's contributions came as a result of a great number of initiatives and innovations he promoted and successfully carried out. While some of these initiatives involved starting a brand-new organization to do something he felt needed to be done (as in the case of Step-Off), most of them involved new ventures within an existing organization – whether they involved a new program like HOST, new partnerships leading to offering new services, or introducing the unfamiliar sport of golf in an after-school program. Interestingly, some of the most important innovations Rod undertook had to do not with a specific "initiative" but rather with the more encompassing goal of transforming the culture and structure of an organization – as he did when he became the CEO of the Community Place.

Each of these initiatives added value to the community, youth and families that Rod and his organization were committed to serve – whether this was by providing neighborhood residents with the opportunity to become home owners or assisting a local entrepreneur open a store front barbershop. Indeed, in this story value-added was never measured as value to the organization, but rather Rod's focus was always on the value-added for the people he served. At the same time, we can see that Rod's tenure as CEO did add considerably value to the Community Place. The HOST program by the end of 2006 had acquired and renovated 6 homes and 2 apartment buildings, and had also established Beacon Centers for Youth Development, a college preparatory program and a new pilot business incubator program.

We conclude with a few of the lessons we learned from our time spent with Rod and his collaborators and from our analysis of his words and his story.

First of all, the settlement house mission of "offering opportunities for the community to invest in their own success" is often not the model adopted within service-based not-for-profits, nor education initiatives aimed at supporting underprivileged students. Both Rod and his collaborators raise the point that many organizations work from the deficit model of "fixing people." Rather than understanding the "lived experience" of those we serve, many organizations position themselves as the experts. Rod and the Community Place assumed a different approach and have faced challenges within the Rochester community in their attempts to break away from this top-down model.

Rod also believed strongly that, as the leader of the Community Place, he needed to model the values and goals which he was trying to encourage within the community. He insisted that his staff become models as well. This included listening to and respecting one another as well as moving toward financial solvency and security. As he said often, we cannot "hypocrite" those we serve.

Rod's story shows us that sustainability can be built into programs in unique ways. Rod's use of secondary economies in the HOST program and the revenue-generating year-end performances in the Step-Off program are wonderful examples of innovative means of ensuring fiscal sustainability. This model can move entrepreneurial educators away from the need to constantly seek outside funders to sustain programs – a model that often fails over time. Rod also

worked toward the sustainability of individual community members by providing them the supports and tools to be self-sustaining.

Finally, Rod often worked on multiple levels with complementary goals. As he worked toward creating an entrepreneurial culture within the Community Place, he also worked toward "reviving the public faith" in the not-for-profit sector to re-establish respect for the expertise of those in non-profit and helping professions.

4.3. Commentaries on Rod's case

We are collecting readers' insights and lessons learned from reading Rod's case on the companion website, and we invite you to add yours by following the specific guidelines provided in the "**Guidelines for Contributions**" document.

Posted commentaries about Rod's case – *None available yet*

CHAPTER 5.

Gidget Hoft's case: Creating new business ventures within a not-for-profit organization to empower individuals with disabilities

Frederick Jefferson & Kankana Mukhopadhyay
(with contributions from Shaza Khan)

Gidget's Profile

A speech pathologist by training, Gidget Hoft devoted her career to empowering individuals with disabilities to become more self-sufficient and productive members of society. While the Rochester Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired (ABVI) was already a well-established organization when Gidget became its CEO in 1986, under her 34-year leadership it significantly expanded and even transformed its mission and scope, becoming eventually "Goodwill of the Finger Lakes". This was the result of many new ventures Gidget initiated, including starting the first manufacturing operation and a Call Center, joining Goodwill to open thrift stores that could employ visually impaired individuals, as well as creating many other innovative training opportunities and services for this population.

5.1.Gidget's story

5.1.1. Introduction to Gidget's case

This is the case study of Gidget Hoft, the CEO for over 30 years of the Rochester's Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired (ABVI hereafter) – which during her leadership greatly evolved its mission and even changed its name, first to Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired/Goodwill Industries International, and then Goodwill of the Finger Lakes. During her time as CEO, Gidget started many new ventures and other innovations that transformed this long-standing organization and multiplied its impact on individuals with disabilities. As such, she is a prototypical example of an intrapreneur – someone who starts new ventures within an existing organization – although in the not-for-profit rather than the business sector.

Although originally trained as a speech pathologist, Gidget devoted her entire career to supporting individuals with disabilities so they could become self-sufficient as well as valued contributors for society. She saw her task as not only providing concrete opportunities for individuals with disabilities to achieve these goals (through creating new support services, training and job opportunities), but also as educating all stakeholders to recognize and value the potential of individuals with disabilities. Since at the core of her vision and practice was supporting learning and development for her clients as well as people in her organization, partners and society at large, we consider Gidget first and foremost an educator.

ABVI, the context in which Gidget operated for most of her career and the focus of this case-study, started as a not-for-profit organization devoted to supporting people who are blind or visually impaired (see Figure 5.1 for more information). ABVI grew tremendously under Gidget's leadership over the last three decades, embracing her vision "to

prepare and empower people who are blind or visually impaired to be self-sufficient and contribute to their families and communities" (2006 revised mission statement). Consistent with this mission, at the time of our study ABVI offered direct employment opportunities to hundreds of blind or visually impaired individuals, as well as several services including vision rehabilitation services, training services for a few specific jobs, career and employment services, and other services specifically geared to children. As such, ABVI appeared to be a school, training center, service provider, jobs incubator and social change advocate all wrapped up in one.

As many other not-for-profit organizations offering educational and/or social services, ABVI experienced the challenge of depending on government funding and philanthropy for providing many of its services. Since these sources of funding are out of the organization's control, and they could be very variable and undependable year by year, as she became CEO Gidget was concerned about securing greater stability and self-sufficiency for the organization. A measure of her success is that at the time of our case study ABVI depended on external funding for only 10% of their budget.

What ABVI/Goodwill of the Finger Lakes is today is the result of a number of extraordinary innovations that Gidget initiated and successfully carried out over her 30-year tenure as CEO. Many of these innovations focused on the creation of new job opportunities for people who are blind or visually impaired, often involving partners in the community or across the nation; these new ventures in turn also contributed new revenues to sustain other services offered by the organization. Other innovations instead had to do with changing the culture, practices, structure and /or scope of the organization. Each of these innovations challenged people in the organization as well as other stakeholders to develop a deeper awareness, understanding and respect for the value and potential of people with disabilities. All of these innovations also required a learning strategy enrolling people in the initiative's possibilities and with the potential to transform perspectives, policies and prejudicial attitudes about people with disabilities. Gidget continuously constructed and led this learning process.

At the time of our case study, Gidget had recently been introduced to entrepreneurship and had also increasingly come to view her work through an entrepreneurial lens, seeking to structure the organization and its processes accordingly.

Figure 5.1. ABVI *Profile at the time of our study (2007)*

Historical notes:

- Founded in 1913 as Rochester's Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired
- In 1994 became a member of Goodwill Industries International, changing its name to Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired – Goodwill Industries International

***Mission/vision statement** (as of 2007):*

- *To prepare and empower people who are blind or visually impaired to be self-sufficient and contribute to their families and communities*"

Employment opportunities offered include:

- Manufacturing Division (producing CD/ROMS, Post-it Notes, Physical Fitness Uniforms for the Air Force and other products)
- Goodwill Stores (selling "gently-used" clothing and household items)
- Food Services and Catering (providing meals to senior and child-care centers)
- Call Center (providing services for 211 and other government/commercial contracts)

Direct services offered:

- **Vision Rehabilitation Services –** including counseling support services to individuals and their families in adjusting to the loss of vision; vision evaluation services including special prescription lenses and visual aids (free for underinsured or under-served); rehabilitation teaching/adaptive skills training; a consumer Shoppe that sells non-optical aids for household and recreation use; a multimedia center that loans large print and Braille books and magazines free of charge; community education and outreach services that provide education and advocacy about blindness and visual impairment to community; WXXI Reach out Radio
- **Employment Services –** including a Job Club that assists vocational-age consumers who are thinking about finding a job and a Pre-Vocational training program that prepares young people for employment.
- **Training Services –** including Goodwill Works! Life Skills Training; Customer Service/Call Center Training; Adaptive Technology (Computer Training); Retail Skills Training
- **Children's Services –** children receive many of the services listed in the above section, plus two programs specifically directed to them

***Organizational structure*:**

- *Key reporting chain*: Directors and vice-presidents ⇗ CEO ⇗ Board

***Subject's position*:** CEO

Selected "measures of success" *(as of at the time of the case-study in* 2007*)*:

- *Overall budget*: $20M (10% external funding)
- *# blind/visually impaired individuals employed*: over 100
- *Staff*: over 300

5.1.2. Highlights of Gidget's professional journey

Gidget's early work experience, beginning with her very first job, provided contexts in which she could experiment and test new ideas for services that would improve the quality of life for children and adolescents with disabilities.

Gidget began her professional work career as a speech pathologist. Because she had limited exposure to professional careers and women in the professions, at the time Gidget believed the career choices open to her were limited to teaching or nursing. Gidget knew she didn't want to teach, "at least (not) in a [traditional] classroom", and she didn't want to be a nurse because of an aversion to blood. Her choice of becoming a speech therapist was influenced by a past successful experience with a speech therapist:

"I remembered being in 1st grade and having a speech therapist work with me for a lisp and …" *(Gidget)*

At the very beginning of her career as a speech pathologist, she was assigned to work with children with intellectual disabilities in a large New York State residential institution on Staten Island called Willowbrook, at a time of great change. In 1972, a group of families filed a lawsuit against New York State demanding changes in the deplorable care and treatment conditions children had to endure in Willowbrook State Hospital. There was enough proof to allow a preliminary injunction which ordered the state to immediately make needed reforms to conform to existing federal guidelines for standards of care and treatment. In 1975, the Governor signed the Decree, which spurred reform of

the entire system serving children with disabilities throughout the state. The legislation created a separate Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities, passed laws against discrimination and established rights to humane treatment for mentally disabled persons, permitting them to live in residential communities – laying the groundwork to begin closing down many institutions, including eventually Willowbrook, Gidget's workplace.

This is how Gidget described this transformation experience at the very beginning of her career:

> "I was trained … as a speech pathologist, and I was hire to work at Willowbrook … as a speech pathologist. Prior to that time, these services were not made available to people in the institution because it was never believed that they could benefit. … But then there was a very large lawsuit in New York State, where the parents and the families of the Willowbrook clients sued New York State for better services and more humane conditions and as a result of that came out the Willowbrook Consent Decree, which was a huge legal precedent that really turned the tide in terms of how people with disabilities were treated in the state and in this country. I happened to be a 22-year-old recent college graduate just when all of this was happening, so I was really part of a revolution in many ways…" *(Gidget)*

At the same time, Gidget was faced with the harsh reality that she had no knowledge or training in working with this population:

> "We didn't learn about this population when I went to college. So I had to become entrepreneurial in my thinking just to learn how to work with people [with developmental disabilities]." *(Gidget)*

In order to learn how to work with children with developmental disabilities, Gidget embarked on a journey of self-education – "I started looking at all the resources out there … I networked." She even joined with others to start a statewide organization for speech therapists working with children with developmental disabilities, so that she could meet people working with that population and start to develop "shared ideas and shared learning." During one of her research visits to other sites that served children with developmental disabilities, she discovered that sign language could be a valuable tool. As she returned to her workplace, she successfully negotiated with her employer to receive special training in sign language, which she then began to use in her work with the children in her caseload.

These early experiences are indicative of Gidget's passion and capacity for self-learning, a characteristic that continued to inform her practice and represented one of her main strengths.

> "…from a very early age, I knew what I didn't know and figured out how to get what I needed to know; and then got real excited about new ideas and new ways of doing things…" *(Gidget)*

During her early work years, Gidget developed a commitment to supporting the development of self-sufficiency potential in individuals with disabilities and began to construct teaching strategies for achieving this end:

> "I convinced my administrator to let me take a room … and turn it into an apartment so that I could start teaching these folks… how to start doing home living-skills …" *(Gidget)*

Gidget soon realized that her ability to gain assent to experiment with new ideas and to push against the edges of accepted practice in providing novel service to children with developmental disabilities was aided by the Willowbrook Consent Decree – as mentioned earlier. The power and effectiveness of promoting positive social change for marginalized social groups by capitalizing on court decrees and legislation would surface again, later, in Gidget's career.

Gidget's next two assignments were with not-for-profit agencies that served individuals with developmental disabilities. In the first of the two, Gidget continued to develop new learning strategies for children with disabilities:

> "…I started working with kids who were really nonverbal… I really became more of a language therapist than a speech therapist …it was the language and the cognitive deficits … that really began to tap into my creative juices, because I really found ways to start to work with kids in terms of language development and I took advantage of everything." *(Gidget)*

In her last assignment before joining ABVI, Gidget served as the Associate Executive Director of a major not-for-profit organization, where she began to develop the critical leadership skills she would need to lead an agency on her own:

> "…I was at ARC (formerly Association For Retarded Citizens) of Monroe County… which is an organization that serves people with developmental disabilities, as the Associate Exec, and that's where I learned to work with boards of directors and to work in a not-for-profit environment, because prior to that I worked for the State of

New York and all of my experience coming out of college up until that point, or about 8 years worth, was all in a union setting, institutional setting, very bureaucratic – the total opposite of entrepreneurial!" *(Gidget)*

In 1986, at the age of 35, Gidget became the CEO of the Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired of Rochester, New York. Gidget brought to ABVI not only her passion for working with persons with disabilities, but also her energy for creative change. By the time she reached ABVI, Gidget was brimming with ideas and a passionate determination to make a difference in lives of people with disabilities:

"…I've always been an idea person,… and when I got into the not-for-profit world … I found… an outlet for my ideas because I could really try them out." *(Gidget)*

5.1.3. Gidget's innovation #1: Starting the first manufacturing initiative at ABVI

Consistent with her overall vision of empowering individuals with disabilities to be self-sufficient and productive members of society, Gidget's first initiatives as CEO of ABVI focused on creating new job opportunities for her clients. She believed that by starting profitable business lines within ABVI the organization could diminish their dependence on external and more unreliable sources of funding, such as those provided by government, local subsidies, or gifts.

As she had already experienced the value that laws and decrees could bring to creating positive change for persons with disabilities in the case of the Willowbrook Consent Decree, she sought to take advantage of the Javits, Wagner, O'Day (JWOD) Act, a law originally created in 1936 to privilege organizations employing blind individuals to sell products to the federal government, and then later expanded to include other severe disabilities in 1971.

"…this law had been on the books for a lot of years, but we only started to take advantage of it big time when I first got here…" *(Gidget)*

This led her to creating her first business line: a manufacturing initiative to produce post-it pads in partnership with the 3M Corporation – the company that introduced Post-it® Notes in 1980.

How the idea came about and was evaluated/refined

Gidget describes how the idea for producing post-it pads came into being:

"…the Javits-Wagener-O'Day Act… under that law agencies, like ours, that employ people who are blind…if we can identify a product that the federal government needs…and we can manufacture that product …then they will buy it from you. There's a mechanism to put it on a set aside list and it actually becomes a mandatory buy for the federal government…" *(Gidget)*

At this point in her career, Gidget had no experience in manufacturing or product development – but this lack of experience did not deter her from pursuing the idea of employing blind and visually impaired people to manufacture a product that the US government could buy:

"I don't have a background in manufacturing, I don't have a background in new product development …well I do now …but I didn't then…but … I want to go after new opportunities…" *(Gidget)*

So she began to look for products that could be manufactured by people with visual disabilities and could be of interest to government agencies. The initial idea of manufacturing post-it pads actually came from one of her employees:

"one of my employees was…looking at post-it-notes on his desk and said 'oh I bet we could make these'." *(Gidget)*

Post-it pads were certainly something that all government offices needed to buy – and in fact Gidget checked that government offices were regularly bidding for these supplies, and she also learned that a number of companies (including 3M, the company that originally invented the technology behind post-it pads) participated in these biddings. So, if ABVI could manage to produce post-it pads, it would have a competitive advantage over all these other companies

in selling the product to government offices, as by law government offices would have to purchase the products made by people with severe disabilities before they could buy it from anybody else.

So the key question really was whether ABVI would be able to produce post-it-notes while employing blind and visually impaired people. Indeed, it took Gidget a while to refine this idea into something workable.

She first thought they could produce post-it-notes independently, by purchasing paper from a mill, finding a formula for glue, and then applying the glue to the paper. She even enlisted the aid of her brother-in-law, a chemist, to help her think through the necessary processes for making the glue. As she realized the complexities of manufacturing post-it pads from scratch, she came up with the alternative solution of partnering with 3M, a strategy that would prove to be the right one for her and the agency.

> "...I actually went down the path of trying to really create a post-it-note and then I realized that ...little old ABVI in Rochester New York wasn't going to be able to do what 3M with all of its millions and millions of dollars have done and so what we decided to do was approach 3M and see if they would be willing to partner with us." (*Gidget*)

The next step was to figure out what approach to take with 3M. Why would they want to partner with this small community agency located in Rochester, New York? What would be the gain for them? Gidget crafted a win-win strategy that would allow 3M to maintain market share with the federal government and increase commercial market share:

> "...fact of the matter, they were starting to lose market share...every year the federal government goes out to bid and some years ... some of their sizes were not winning the bid because other competitors were coming into the market...I said we have a mechanism for you to never bid on a post-it note contract again ...we had to work with their attorneys to help them understand our program and how, if they just sold us the raw material, they would basically have the whole federal market and they'd help employ people who were blind or visually impaired ... they had a charitable component...it was a real win-win ...it turned out to be a fabulous relationship..." (*Gidget*)

As 3M showed interest in the collaboration, Gidget felt confident that she could and should move forward with the initiative. Despite the high financial risks, she felt the potential benefits were well worth it.

Planning and gathering the needed resources

At this point, in consultation with 3M, Gidget began to develop detailed plans about what ABVI would need to set up in order to be able to manufacture post-it-notes, while purchasing the raw materials from 3M. She was able to secure funding for about $2 million as needed to purchase equipment and remodel facilities, from a combination of use of internal funds and gifts.

However, in the middle of the negotiation process with 3M, Gidget and ABVI's board became concerned about not having enough money for the additional cash required to buy the raw material upfront.

> "We had to have almost $1 million dollars in raw material up front ...that was a big chunk. So here we sat almost ready to lose a whole project...a board member suggested 'why don't you go to 3M, 3M is a very wealthy company ... see what kind of terms they can give you on that up front material.'..." (*Gidget*)

Following the board member's suggestion, Gidget approached 3M, their new partner, asking for an unusual concession on the terms of payments for the materials:

> "We went to our partner and we said, look, this is a stumbling block, you know, we have to buy the equipment, we have to renovate the building, we're talking about a couple of million dollars investment, however, the thing that's really breaking our backs is the $800K that we're going to need to pay you to get all that material up front and we said would you be willing to entertain terms..." (*Gidget*)

Gidget's belief in the strength of the new partnership resulted in 3M giving ABVI an astounding 120-day term instead of the usual 30-day term for paying for raw materials – which could be seen as a form of short-term debt. Looking back, Gidget stated:

> "...I think once you start a committed desire to work together, then almost anything is possible." (*Gidget*)

Implementing and monitoring the initiative

The euphoria from the success of clearing the $800,000 hurdle would not last long. The next obstacle was, in many ways, even more challenging. It was a potential deal killer. ABVI's customer, the federal government, was questioning ABVI's capacity to deliver the requisite goods. To guard against that risk, they would offer ABVI a partial contract until they could be assured that their fears were unfounded. Gidget and ABVI protested the decision stating that a partial

contract would not work financially for them, but the head of the General Services Administration (GSA) was unmoved by their entreaties and refused to change his recommendation. Gidget and her board then took a bold step, deciding to plead their case before a committee that oversaw the program processes of the JWOD Act. This was a risky move on the part of ABVI, in that the dissenting head of GSA was a member of this committee. But, as Gidget observed, he had only one vote.

"we could not make this huge investment if we only had a partial contract….So there's a committee, it's called the Committee for Purchase from People who are Blind and Severely Handicapped…and that committee is put in place by law to oversee the [JWOD] law and make sure that the government taxpayer is protected. So we did something that had never been done before, we asked to bring our case to the committee…So we took our attorney, myself, one or two other people to Washington and made a presentation to the committee, explained everything that we had done for the whole year getting this project up and running…and we really felt like a jury was deciding our fate….we're out there waiting, waiting, waiting and finally the chairman of the committee comes out and says congratulation. So we won, it was great." (*Gidget*)

Although ABVI had won the right to a full contract, they were to find out later that GSA was still not convinced and had decided to overstock the government's post-it pads supplies. As a result, ABVI had to wait nine months for its first order. ABVI delivered on time and to specifications, thus cementing what became a lasting relationship with GSA.

> "…GSA thinks we are the best in the world…we have a great relationship…they know that anything we say we're going to do we can do…" (*Gidget*)

ABVI's post-it pads business line made a significant difference for the organization as it not only provided new jobs for people who are blind or visually impaired, but also the cash needed to support some new services Gidget was envisioning to offer through ABVI.

> "…for us, it was the beginning of financial solvency…the margins are great, it does everything you want it to do: it creates jobs, gives us great visibility …gives us the financial leverage to begin to grow our vision rehabilitation services and to do other things…" (*Gidget*)

Ensuring long-term sustainability and/or bigger impact

ABVI continued to produce post-it pads in partnership with 3M, and over the years has grown this venture by making an increasing number of sizes and colors, including post-it easel pads.

Seeking to build on this first success, Gidget remained in constant search for new product ideas that would produce jobs for her constituency.

> "… I'm always looking for new product lines….so when people ask for volunteers to speak to federal customers, I raise my hand and say I'd love to go to talk to federal customers because that gives me an opportunity to see first-hand what the customers want and need." (*Gidget*)

Two other major products were added since the post-it pads and up to the time of our study: a CD/ROM replication business and a Textile Initiative that makes uniforms for the US Air Force (Website abvi.org). Many more were going to be added between then and the time Gidget retired as ABVI CEO in 2020.

5.1.4. Gidget's initiative #2: Affiliating with Goodwill to open thrift stores

How the idea came about and was evaluated/refined

Despite the success of her manufacturing enterprises, Gidget became concerned about the risks of focusing all of their efforts on manufacturing, as she felt that "manufacturing was not the wave of the future." So she started looking for other opportunities that could lead to job creation for individuals who are blind or visually impaired.

She discovered the Goodwill Industries International during one of her many exploratory visits to sister agencies. During these visits she was always on watch for best practices and good ideas that she could take back to ABVI. On

this particular excursion, she was touring the Goodwill facility in New York City and learning about the organization's extraordinary successes. As she participated in the tour, she began to see many new possibilities for ABVI.

> "… I had visited the Goodwill in New York City, I have a friend who is the president down there…I was looking at this organization and seeing how successful they were and thinking… people who are blind can do this…you know, collect clothes, sort clothes, hang them, put them out…we can do that.." *(Gidget)*

So she came back home thinking about the possibility of opening some thrift stores that could be managed mostly by blind and visually impaired individuals.

Gidget began to inquire about Goodwill Industries International, and learned how this not-for-profit organization, founded in 1902 on the idea of collecting donated used goods and then training and hiring poor people to repair and sell those goods, had grown into a multi-billion dollars enterprise. Gidget also learned that Goodwill had an interest in affiliating with existing agencies that would consider becoming a member of Goodwill. Overtime, Goodwill had expanded its mission to "enhance the quality and dignity of life for individuals, families, and communities on a global basis, through the power of work, by eliminating barriers to opportunity for people with special needs, and by facilitating empowerment, self-help, and service through dedicated, autonomous local organizations" (http://www.goodwill.org).

Recognizing the similar missions of ABVI and Goodwill, Gidget conceived of the possibility of not only starting a thrift store managed primarily by blind and visually impaired individual, but also having ABVI partner and become an affiliate of Goodwill.

> "The mission … of Goodwill Industries is to help people with barriers to employment, whether they be socio-economic, disability,…find employment and economic self-sufficiency. And that's exactly what we do we just do it for a very specific population, people who are blind. So our missions were very, very compatible." *(Gidget)*

She saw many benefits to such a partnership, as:

- opening thrift stores would create more job opportunities for blind and visually impaired individuals;
- it would also help diversify their business lines, and thus minimize the risk of manufacturing going down;
- affiliating with Goodwill would greatly help ABVI enter in the retail business, an area very new to them, by benefiting of the expertise Goodwill could provide.

At the same time, Gidget realized that this initiative would present unique challenges because of the implications of affiliating with another organization for ABVI's own identity – in addition to built-in stereotypes about Goodwill stores ("junky thrift stores"). Yet, in the end she concluded that this was an idea worth pursuing, as she believed that the benefits of joining Goodwill would far outweigh these potential obstacles and risks, because it would enable ABVI to make a major step towards better fulfilling their mission of empowering blind and visually impaired individuals to be self-sufficient and contribute to society.

Planning and gathering the needed resources

Gidget began by developing a strategy and plan based on what she had learned from her own research about Goodwill. When Gidget first introduced the idea to her board, she encountered the expected resistance:

> "…first, I put together…a strategy and a plan and I did look at other Goodwills … started getting my board to think about it …we had a lot to overcome…our organization (ABVI) had started to move its image to a very positive sleek image … how does (Goodwill) fit with our image…so I had to overcome that…" *(Gidget)*

Gidget chose a novel approach with her Board to educate them about the potential value that the Goodwill affiliation would bring to the greater Rochester community and other contiguous communities. This involved site visits and participation in Goodwill's conferences.

> "Goodwill, in the last 20 years had really changed its image… they've gone from …rag bag shops to very, very upscale, very lovely thrift stores and that was the image that we wanted to have…So I took …4 or 5 board members to Baltimore, to Pittsburgh, to Buffalo…I took them to Goodwill conferences and started to get them comfortable with the idea and to …see what Goodwill's had really started to do with their stores because they were really beautiful." *(Gidget)*

The visits and conferences provided board members with valuable concrete examples of the work of Goodwill.

However, even when board members began to see the value of creating thrift stores to increase revenue and jobs, they still questioned the need to partner with Goodwill. Gidget reminded the board that specific competencies in retail would be needed and that Goodwill's long experience with retail stores would be an invaluable resource for ABVI.

> "The board would say, 'well why do we need Goodwill…the idea of a thrift store…we could do that ourselves…' I said I didn't know anything about starting a new store…here we have (Goodwill) with hundreds of collective years of experience readily available to us … how do you design your store…how do you process the goods …what is the square footage you need…I couldn't imagine trying to do something like this without a partner like Goodwill." (*Gidget*)

Eventually the board agreed with Gidget's assessment and voted to go forward with the partnership with Goodwill and opening two retail stores in the Rochester community. Gidget acknowledged how tough this process was, and the importance of the trust the board had in her, as she recalled:

> "… getting over the (board's) cynicism was tough…in many ways. Over the years my board has gone along with me I think because of the trust that has been built up … I think that's been very, very important, having that trust, and having those relationships." (*Gidget*)

Implementing and monitoring the initiative

Once board approval was secured, Gidget started her first two Goodwill stores in the Rochester Area, and in 1994 ABVI became ABVI-Goodwill.

Yet the battle wasn't over. While the stores were successful in enabling ABVI to employ more blind and visually impaired individuals, during the next seven years the stores lost a total of $700,000. This led the board several times to question whether they should continue with this initiative. Yet Gidget still believed in the great potential of this initiative, and she did not want to give up on it. This created a lot of tension and doubt in the board. As a board member recalled:

> "… I was on the board when we became part of Goodwill, and the Goodwill piece was not very successful for a lot of years … and the board would periodically, usually annually, if not more often, come back to Gidget and say: we're not making money, are you sure this is the right thing to do. … she'd bring in consultants, or she'd bring in Goodwill … and she would not give up with her vision that this was going to be a revenue stream for ABVI and not only a revenue stream but a way to be able to get the blind and visually impaired jobs … she never gave up on that project and I tell you there are probably times when it would have been easier for her to say: 'you know what, maybe you're right'. She knew it was going to be successful." (ABVI *board member*)

Gidget called consultants from Goodwill several times, before they finally figured out that the problem had to do with project manager:

> "…so we lost $700K before we started making a penny… I was getting frustrated … I had Goodwill up here a million times, we brought experts, what are we doing wrong? Well, eleven years later and tons smarter, I know what I did wrong, and I did it wrong two more times… I had the wrong person [as] the manager." (*Gidget*)

Finally, as she secured the right manager, the situation started turning around for the stores in the 8th year – and after that, the stores' success continued. This experience made Gidget aware of how critical it is to have the right project leader in charge – a lesson she would not forget in later initiatives.

Ensuring long-term sustainability and/or bigger impact

After this difficult start, the association with Goodwill and good management of the stores led to continuous success. In 2005, 11 years after the start, there were four ABVI-Goodwill stores, bringing in a surplus of $500,000 a year.

So Gidget continued to gradually expand the number of stores and operations, building on that success. By the time Gidget retired as ABVI CEO, the organization had established 12 Goodwill Stores, several stand-alone donation centers, a clearance center, and a large warehouse.

5.1.5. Gidget's innovation #3: Starting a Call Center

How the idea came about and was evaluated/refined

As Gidget continued to be concerned about the future of manufacturing, she began again to proactively search for potential services that persons who are blind or visually impaired could be trained to do.

The idea to start a call center within ABVI once again was the result of one of her visits to other organizations, which included a call center in Virginia.

> "…I saw blind people answering the phones and I thought, wow, that's really neat, because the technology today allows that to happen…so I started looking into it…" *(Gidget)*

Even though this was a new area for ABVI, and she knew they did not have sufficient capacity in house, Gidget felt confident that they could handle such a situation. Since this new opportunity fit so well with her vision, deciding to take on this new initiative seemed a "no brainer". Indeed, Gidget's description of the development of this initiative seemed almost "matter-of-fact".

Planning and gathering the needed resources

While once again Gidget and hre organization were entering a field in which she had no background, after her previous experiences starting new business lines within ABVI she now knew how to go about such a situation. She chose to rely right away on expert consultants for the planning and start-up, and also immediately hired the right person as project manager.

> "…the first thing I did was …to hire a call center specialist…so we hired someone who had been working in call centers for 15 years … We put together a business advisory committee of people who own and run call centers." *(Gidget)*

> "…here's an example of doing it right versus doing it wrong. My call center person, I had right from the get-go … retail (Goodwill stores) I had it wrong over and over again." *(Gidget)*

She also managed to secure a grant to cover some of the equipment start-up costs.

Implementing and monitoring the initiative

For the Call Center, Gidget also chose to start small and grow gradually – first by just offering a training program, then adding just a few small contracts as a means for the "trainees" to get some "real" practice:

> "[We] decided on a strategy…what we would start on doing is … training people who are blind, put together a curriculum in customer service and then place them in the community. And we did that. But, it would make our training a lot more effective if we had a small contract that they could work on in the training, so we were able to secure a small contract with XY Office Products. …we were able to get our trainees to carry [this contract] out and get some experience and we learned a lot about a call center and what the customer was looking for. So we really took small baby steps…" *(Gidget)*

With the establishment of a call center knowledge-base and service capacity, Gidget was then ready to go after a much larger contract.

> "… a breakthrough happened when National Industries For The Blind was looking for a customer service delivery system and they were going to go commercial, and I said 'well, wait a second, don't you want to give us a try?' …we're trying to build jobs for people who are blind…" *(Gidget)*

ABVI won the national contract with the National Industries For The Blind and would later get an Environmental Protection agency (EPA) contract for the National Lead Information Center.

Ensuring long-term sustainability and/or bigger impact

In 2005 there were 22 blind and visually impaired employees in the call center, representing a 100% increase from the previous year. The center's inbound services were providing assistance to an estimated 31,000 requests and inquiries per month for national and state organizations.

At around this point, when an unexpected opportunity to take on a big contract for 2-1-1 presented itself, Gidget convinced her board to grab it, even if it required setting up a different structure for their call center:

> "Well, Gidget just happened to be talking to the gentlemen at DePaul [the organization managing the 2-1-1

service at the time] and he had mentioned that it really didn't fit their mission very well any longer … Well you know, Gidget came to the three of us and said: 'how about we take over 2-1-1?' … that was just something we just never thought …to tackle, that didn't really seem to fit our mission [as] it wasn't necessarily blind related, but when you finally boiled it all down, it had a potential to create a lot of jobs for the blind and visually impaired people…" (ABVI *board member*)

The call center eventually grew into two enterprises – one that provided information and referral services along with crisis services (2-1-1) and became a nationally recognized crisis (suicide prevention) hotline, and the other a business enterprise that provided contact center services (calls, texts, live chats, etc.) for other businesses. By 2020, when Gidget retired as CEO, the call center employed over 100 individuals.

Gidget considered the call center one of her greatest successes, as it also increased ABVI visibility and drew public attention on to what blind and visually impaired people *can* do:

"we've done such a great job (with the call center) that it's almost like we have contracts coming out of our ears…the Commissioner of Civil Service (New York State) wants to do a press conference in Albany and he wants us to bring an employee from the call center…. is the kind of thing that has so much appeal…when you bring people in for tours …they are so impressed and it helps to show off what the people's capabilities are…it's exciting." (*Gidget*)

5.1.6. Gidget's innovation #4: Changing the CEO's own leadership style and practices

Bringing these creative innovations to ABVI and assuring their success and sustainability required changes in ABVI's organizational structure and culture, as well as Gidget's leadership style. This happened overtime, in a number of gradual steps.

Early on, Gidget realized that the board structure had to change.

> "…15 years ago…our board was very different from the one it is today. It was more hands-on than it is today and not necessarily in a healthy way, and that was something that I inherited and I had to deal with…" (*Gidget*)

One of Gidget's collaborators, concurs with Gidget's observations:

> "… the board was the kind of not-for-profit board which you see in many small agencies, where the board wants to know not only how much you are spending but who you are buying it from…Gidget realized…that this was not going to work for the agency…She and I, with a few other board members, started talking to the other board members at an off-site retreat where we realized that we needed to change into more of a corporate board model." (ABVI *board member*)

The board restructured itself to fit the changing needs of the organization and to strategically partner with their innovative CEO. It also took on more "entrepreneurial practices" such as reducing the number of committees to only two key ones:

> "…we've even redesigned our board to function entrepreneurially. It used to be that years ago we would have like 12 committees … [now] we have an assessment committee and a planning committee. The planning and resources committee does the strategic plan, they look at business plans, they look at all new initiatives going forward. The assessment committee looks at … how are you doing on that strategic plan and they do all the assessments. … So we … have those two committees … it's very focused on what we're trying to achieve here and the entrepreneurial aspects". (*Gidget*)

Furthermore, in the effort to continually develop the board's capacity, Gidget proactively organized board development sessions at each board meeting. For example, she reported on the following on-going practice she has established:

> "…I select key…individuals within the organization, usually…middle level managers, to come to the board, so

they get face time, and they educate them, about the low-vision center, about the call center; and they talk to them about it in two ways, the double bottom line: why it's important to the mission, and why it's important to the margin… and so the board begins to get a sense and an understanding of what we have and wbat we do… My assessment …we've redesigned the board to function entrepreneurially." *(Gidget)*

Promoting and participating in the organization's culture-change process began to raise leadership questions for Gidget, who then decided to work with an executive coach. This, in turn, led her to reconceive her role and practices as CEO of the organization.

How the idea came about and was evaluated/refined

As she started to work with the executive coach, Gidget participated in a 360 Degree Assessment that involved her executive coach interviewing key staff regarding Gidget's leadership style and its impact on them. Although Gidget was not surprised by much of the feedback she received about her leadership style, she was not prepared for the depth of its negative impact on the lives of her employees.

> "Sometimes you don't realize when you're stuck and I was stuck…I was stuck because of who I was…I was always ready to move the organization quantum leaps, but I always felt like somebody was dragging me back." *(Gidget)*

Gidget seriously considered at this point if it was time for her to leave the organization and move on.

> "Once I was made aware of some of the things that I was doing that were impacting my employees, then I had a choice to make. The choice was, what am I going to do with all this information, and what I said was, you know, this is too much work …you know, maybe it's just time to go". *(Gidget)*

Instead of leaving, though, Gidget chose to turn this into an opportunity for growth for her and the other people in the organization. So, she decided to take steps to improve her leadership style even if she realized that she was taking a great personal risk embarking in such as initiative.

Planning and gathering the needed resources

Pursuing this initiative would not require funding, but rather significant time and good will on the part of herself, her staff and her board. So not only did Gidget need to decide whether she was personally willing and ready to undertake this process, but also had to ensure her staff's and board's collaboration.

The planning of this initiative was inseparable from the implementation itself. Her executive coach played an important part in it.

Implementing and monitoring the initiative

As a way to get started, at the recommendation of her executive coach, Gidget decided to give a copy of her 360 report to all of her direct reports and to meet with each of them to discuss its contents.

> "I gave everybody who worked for me a copy of my 360 [report] …I had to encourage them to read it, and then to talk about what I do that keeps them from being effective…" *(Gidget)*

This approach did more than getting the change process started, as it was critical to build the trust and awareness needed to successfully undertake the changes identified as needed.

> "Once I started having that conversation with people, the trust and atmosphere really improved, and once that happened, I was able to begin to have honest conversations with people and start holding them accountable for what they were doing. Needless to say, we had a lot of people that left the organization, but I stayed!" *(Gidget)*

The result of these conversations and her work with the executive coach led Godget to new insights about herself and the people she was working with, which in turn led her to try to make some specific changes in her behavior as well as in her relationships with key members of her team. Paying attention to how her style and personality affected the work lives of her direct reports was a major insight for Gidget.

> "…I know that my style can be very scary to some people who need to be more thoughtful and planful…because my tendency would be to think that there's something wrong with you because you can't react as fast as I need you to react …I've learned that in order for me to be effective here in this organization with the people I had, I had to be aware of how my style and my ideas and my wanting to just do 10 million things at once were impacting people." *(Gidget)*

This experience had a profound effect on Gidget both personally and professionally.

> "…I was being transformational in some ways …I mean I was communicating vision, I was true to my own values and I was a good role model…but there were a lot of things I wasn't doing and that was what was happening,… because of how other people were being impacted by my behavior I was getting myself frustrated … changing those behaviors was what leadership was all about…..leadership isn't running the organization and doing the budget and solving problems…that's not leadership. Leadership is impacting other people, and how you impact other people and how you help them to perform to their ability to self-actualize their own goals…that was a transformational learning experience for me and that's when I really wanted to start learning about leadership." (*Gidget*)

Soon after that experience, Gidget entered the Executive Leadership Doctoral Program at George Washington University and completed that program in 2005. Since then, Gidget incorporated executive coach opportunities in the development programs for her leadership team.

5.1.7. Updates to Gidget's story

While the data collection component of our research study ended in 2007, Gidget's transformational leadership of ABVI continued until her retirement in June 2020.

Soon after our study was completed, Gidget led ABVI into a strategic planning process that led to a new mission statement – from, "*To assist people who are blind or visually impaired to achieve their highest level of independence in all aspects of their lives*" to "*To prepare and empower people who are blind or visually impaired to be self-sufficient and contribute to their families and communities*" – which reflected the new directions the organization had been going under her leadership. The organization continued to grow and change significantly, expanding the businesses, adding new products and services, serving new populations, and moving into new communities, reaching $50M in revenue with over 700 employees in 2020.

Later ABVI became officially known as Goodwill of the Finger Lakes. While this in and of itself posed new challenges for their brand identity (having been known by most of the community as ABVI), the board and Gidget felt it was very important to expand their mission beyond people who are blind and apply their successful employment and development programs to other populations.

For the last seven years of her career, Gidget also worked passionately to bring to Rochester an Excel Center, a high school for adults who have not completed their education. The Excel Center is a project of Goodwill's that currently operates in 6 states (soon to be 8) and offers a full academic curriculum leading to a regular high school diploma, not an equivalency. While Gidget was not able to reach this goal by the time she retired, her organization was committed at that point to continue to pursue this critical initiative.

In August 2020, Gidget's outstanding achievements were recognized with the National Industries for the Blind's (NIB) highest honor, the R.B. Irwin Award. A few months later, Gidget also learned that her organization was recognized by MacKenzie Scott with a $10M gift; in Gidget's own word "I could not have asked for a better retirement present!".

5.2. Analysis of Gidget's entrepreneurial activity

5.2.1. Gidget's practices about vision

As her story illustrated, Gidget's entire career was informed by her vision of empowering individuals with disabilities to enhance their quality of life, independence and contributions to society. This vision is what motivated most of her actions. It was also the lens she used when "scanning the environment" to identify new opportunities for her organization and deciding whether or not to embark in a major initiative – as discussed in more detailed in the next section, where we examine how she dealt with opportunities.

At the same time, the enactment (and even articulation and operationalization) of this vision was a more dynamic phenomenon, always growing, always on the cusp of transforming. This is especially evident in her efforts at revising ABVI's mission statement, as the 2007 mission statement made explicit that the organization strived not to *assist* but rather *empower* people who are blind and visually impaired, and furthermore set as goals for the population they served not just reaching *independence* but rather *self sufficiency and effective contributions to their families and communities*.

It is also interesting to note that her vision for independence and self-sustainability extended to the organization itself, as overtime she strived to develop "business lines" within ABVI that provided not only meaningful employment for individuals who are blind or visually impaired, but also the revenues that the organization needed to offer services without depending too much on the vagaries of external funding.

Sharing her vision of empowering individuals with disabilities to enhance their quality of life, independence and contributions, and gaining buy-in from the various stakeholders involved in each of her initiatives, were among Gidget's explicit objectives. As mentioned in the introduction and demonstrated throughout her story, at the core of Gidget's practice as ABVI's CEO was educating her staff, board members, partners, and even her clients, about the potential of individuals with disabilities – what they *can* do (rather than what they cannot do) and what they can contribute to society. Gidget's approach to sharing her vision and getting buy in for change was rooted in her belief in the "educational process" and the personal and professional development of others. And she went about this educating very purposefully and strategically.

Internally, she created structures and expectations about "learning" for both her staff and her board that provided a space to keep ABVI's mission very visible and to examine its implications, including developing an entrepreneurial culture in the organization:

> "The entrepreneurial culture, I think, also comes from the fact that I get in front of all my employees at least twice a year. I like to have face-to-face town meetings… it gives me an opportunity to speak personally about my vision for the organization and to talk to them about, you know, the role that ABVI plays." *(Gidget)*

She also created branches of the organization – such as the community education and outreach division of ABVI's Vision Rehabilitation Services – that proactively worked at disseminating a different image of people with disabilities to the public, while also taking advantage of any opportunity to convey such a message.

Gidget's success in communicating her vision and getting buy-in, especially in difficult and controversial situations such as the decision to affiliate with Goodwill, were very much rooted in the trust she was able to develop overtime with all of her constituencies.

> "In many ways over the years my board has gone along with me, I think, because of the trust that has been built up…" *(Gidget)*

This is confirmed by the following observation by one of her board members:

> "…I think persuasiveness is a skill [Gidget has], but that has to be coming from a relationship where there's been trust and confidence build up over time…" *(ABVI board member)*

This trust was built over her years as CEO through a combination of proven successes (that built confidence in her ability to make the right decisions), the credibility and confidence she exuded because of "living" her values and beliefs,

the personal relationships she created with everyone on her staff and her board, and a willingness to be vulnerable with colleagues and superiors.

> "…Gidget is an incredibly passionate person, and when she is committed to doing something, she is committed to doing something… and it is pretty obvious what her passion is related to that project or that event … or whatever it is . She doesn't do anything kind of just half-way… she doesn't do anything just for the sake of doing it, she does it because she absolutely believes it's the right thing, and she believes in the product, or believes in the way that she wants to get something accomplished…" (*ABVI board member*)

5.2.2. Gidget's practices about opportunities

Gidget was always on the look-out for new opportunities for her organization and the clients it serves. As observed by a board member:

> "…I can't even tell you how many times she came up with opportunities for us for ABVI to be able to either find employment, create jobs or find revenue for the organization, and sometimes they were out there." (*ABVI Board member*)

To find these new opportunities, Gidget was constantly scanning the environment for innovative ideas that could open up new possibilities to better serve her clients, as she herself articulated explicitly several times during our interviews:

> "…have your antenna up and you're out there scanning the environment for what's going on and always being alert to opportunities and then taking advantage of those opportunities." (*Gidget*)

> "What am I doing, what behavior am I exhibiting that's helping me to come up with these ideas or make these connections? … its almost entrepreneurial radar, it's an ability to scan the environment and be receptive to what's going on in the environment to a point where I'm always filtering it through this entrepreneurial lens: How can I incorporate that into my organization in a way that could create jobs, would build a mission, generate revenue, and advance relationships?" (*Gidget*)

> "…what I do all the time is scan the environment, I use a metaphor of casting a big net, you know, you're bound to catch some fish. So I try a lot of different things, I throw a lot of ideas out there, I look at a lot of different things…" (*Gidget*)

As we saw throughout Gidget's story, this "scanning of the environment" translated, among other things, in the practice of going to conferences and visiting frequently other agencies that serve individuals with disabilities throughout the country, so she could identify what they did best and pick up new ideas that ABVI could replicate or adapt – as it was the case for both the Goodwill Stores and the Call Center initiatives.

> "…I'm always out there … for example, we have conferences. Our conferences are often hosted by agencies in those communities, so we always get a tour of the facility when we're in that area. Or if I'm traveling for something else, I always visit a colleague, you know, I'm always out there visiting Good Wills and other agencies for the blind…" (*Gidget*)

> "…for example, not too long ago, I visited the … Toledo Agency for the Blind and they had a great children's program, and I brought a lot of ideas back. … there's not much that's original about me, I mean, I steal everybody else's ideas and make them our own. But that's usually where I get my ideas is from – other places." (*Gidget*)

Another practice Gidget used successfully to identify new opportunities was networking and talking with partners or customers about the products and services they provided, again "keeping her antennas up". This is how, for example, she was able to identify the opportunity to take on the 2-1-1 service for their Call Canter when the agency originally offering that service decided to stop doing it (as reported earlier in the story).

Gidget also believed that the continued success of her organization required every employee to be able to recognize and create opportunities:

> "…bringing them to the table so that you really have just an idea factory going on all…" (*Gidget*)

"You know, you can't always anticipate everything that's going to happen, but you can position yourself to take advantage of opportunities and the only way you can position yourself to take advantage of opportunities is if you have a culture of entrepreneurialism … I can't be the only one that's thinking about this stuff…" (*Gidget*)

Gidget was also always looking proactively for opportunities to leverage the authority and power of federal laws that support individuals with disabilities – especially the JWOD Act – as a way to capitalize on her organization's unique competitive advantage:

"…well again the law – the Javits-Wagner-O'Day Law – also applies to services, so we're always scouring the Commerce Business Daily and the Federal Register and other, you know, government communications to find what … contracts are going out for bid … [so] we can sort of like short circuit it and say, 'time out we want to look at this under JWO'D' …" (*Gidget*)

Oftentimes, Gidget interpreted something that other people perceived as a problem or an obstacle as an opportunity. A notable example is her reaction to the surprising results of the 360 evaluation she undertook, which she used as the catalyst for rethinking her own role as CEO and the role of other people in leadership positions within her organization.

Not all her innovations, though, were necessarily generated by recognizing and pursuing an opportunity. For example, she went about the process of transforming the ABVI board as a result of a careful analysis of what the organization needed, rather than in response to a particular event.

Gidget was well aware that she could find more opportunities than ABVI could reasonably take on, and therefore it was important for her – and her board – to carefully evaluate which of the opportunities she uncovered should be pursued. Considerations about the mission of ABVI has always been central to the decision-making process of what ideas and opportunities should be followed.

Overtime, Gidget and her board learned to ask themselves a set of key questions as they evaluated a specific opportunity, especially when it might lead to undertaking a major initiative:

"We have a filter that we always look through, our criteria to see if something is going to fit, and that includes first and foremost, how does this fit with the mission? Can it create jobs for people who are blind or visually impaired? Do we have the resources? How does it integrate with the other things that we're doing? Does it have the potential to generate revenue? … where does it fit on the priority list? We have so many things going on right now, if this is going to be something that's really going to take us away from other things, you know, is it something we can really do right now, even though it might be the greatest idea in the world…" (*Gidget*)

Although Gidget's list of questions included one about resources, Gidget seemed to have the confidence to pursue an idea she thought worthwhile even if she did not have all the solutions and/or resources *in hand* – as she herself articulated when telling us about the post-it notes initiative:

"Can blind people operate guillotine cutters? Sure, you know… I'm the kind of person that says yes first and then figures out how to do it later, and it's been great…" (*Gidget*)

Gidget was also very clear that the main criteria for deciding whether or not to take on a new venture should not be purely financial considerations, but rather whether the new venture would enable you to better achieve your vision and the mission of the organization:

"First and foremost we wouldn't do it if it didn't help us promote the mission … if I can't justify an entrepreneurial venture in terms of the mission, then we're not going to do it." (*Gidget*)

Researching the idea has been an important part of the process of evaluating an opportunity, and something Gidget engaged in constantly and very spontaneously:

"Usually, these things start with me just doing my own research and calling around and talking to people and finding things out and then once I sort of feel like 'yeah this sounds [good]' … then I broaden it to my senior leadership team and start talking to them…" (*Gidget*)

"When you latch on to an entrepreneurial idea, at least I do, all of a sudden you see it all over the place … you're seeing articles in the newspaper, people are talking about it. When your receptors go up, all of a sudden you start to notice … so I start collecting things and put things in a file and I broaden my knowledge about a topic by just being aware and studying what's out there and putting it all together; so that when it comes time to decide whether we're going to do something or not, it's a very educated informed decision…" (*Gidget*)

Gidget also used her board proactively for feedback about her ideas and as a "check" against her tendency to possibly take on too much. She genuinely asked them to challenge, in a constructive way, her proposals, so that together they could come up with the best initiatives for the organization:

> "I tell [my board] this all the time: when I bring an idea to the board, I always think it's already a good idea, because that's why I'm bringing it to you, right, I mean I've done the thinking about it … so now it's your job to throw arrows, and if I can't deflect the arrows, then maybe we got to rethink it. I use that strategy all the time, because I have a healthy ego…" *(Gidget)*

5.2.3. Gidget's practices about risk

As demonstrated throughout her story, Gidget did not hesitate taking on considerable risks when embarking in what she considered a worthwhile initiative – whether the risks were financial (as in the case of the Post-it Notes and Goodwill initiatives) or personal/reputational (as when she embarked in internal changes). Indeed, one may say that she had an "appetite for risk" and enjoyed the challenges involved when taking on new initiatives. Cognizant of this tendency, she often used her board to check on and balance it, as mentioned in the previous section.

Although not explicitly stated, the decisions made in all her major initiatives suggest that Gidget gave greater weight to "missing the boat" rather than "sinking the boat" risks (Brown & Cornwall, 2000). For example, while well-aware of the risks involved in the Post-it and Goodwill initiatives, she thought that the potential benefits for blind and visually impaired individuals that could derive from those initiatives outweighed the negative consequences of undertaking the initiative and failing.

Although we could not identify the use of specific strategies to evaluate and manage risk, this does not mean that Gidget ignored considerations of risk altogether. For example, she tried to minimize the risk of a new business line but starting small and then growing it (as illustrated by starting with two Goodwill stores and then opening new ones only after the first ones were successful, as well as beginning the Call Center as a training operation only). Her drive to diversify ABVI's job-creation opportunities beyond manufacturing was also motivates by the desire to minimize the organization's risk by engaging in different kinds of enterprises.

Gidget was also not afraid to make mistakes and deal with their consequences.

5.2.4. Gidget's practices about resources

Gidget clearly understood and maintained a firm grasp on the finances of her organization. One of the main drivers behind the Post-it, Goodwill and Call Center initiatives was the realization of the uncertainty and vulnerability that a not-for-profit organization experiences whenever it is dependent on gifts and government funding for their operations – what has been referred to as "resource dependence" in the literature (e.g., Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978).

> "…getting that cash infusion was a really big help and has enabled our organization to stay fairly self-sufficient …for all of my tenure here without dependency on federal government or local government subsidies…" *(Gidget)*

The importance for ABVI to reach greater financial independence from government and philanthropic funding, and Gidget's role in achieving this goal, was also recognized by one of her board members:

> "She was always out there … thinking of ways for our organization to be able to be independent, because it was less and less that we were getting from the government … You know, we have a pretty incredible endowment and part of the reason we have that endowment is because of Gidget, that we're able to … be self-sufficient, supportive internally…" *(ABVI Board member)*

At the same time, the recognition that mission considerations had to be given priority over purely fiscal considerations was evident in the following comments about her board meetings:

> "…I was noticing that our board meetings were focusing way too much on finances and I went through the minutes of 6 months and I highlighted where we were talking about finances in yellow, and I highlighted where we talked about mission in another color and the yellow had it all over and it prompted me to show this to the board and we had this conversation … is the mission the foundation or is the margins the foundation." *(Gidget)*

> "…they look at what we call mission measures … Have we served more people this year than we served the year before? How have we done in our outreach to other people with other backgrounds other than Caucasians? How have we done in terms of wages, are our wages increasing for people who are blind?" *(Gidget)*

As mentioned earlier, Gidget also shared the mindset common to many entrepreneurs insofar as current resources did not stop her from pursuing what she thought was a valuable opportunity. She could be very creative and open about how to find the resources she needed and especially looked at new partnerships as a way to secure resources she did not have in house (as well illustrated in the Post-it and Goodwill initiatives). Gidget also capitalized on grant opportunities whenever available, especially for securing start-up funds, as illustrated in the Call Center initiative:

> "…I was able to get a grant to get the money to start with the equipment…" *(Gidget)*

With respect to human resources, as a result of her experience in the Goodwill initiative, Gidget was very aware of the key role played by project managers for any new initiative. Therefore, she paid careful attention about selecting the right person for that position.

Gidget held a self-actualization perspective when thinking about hiring and retaining employees, as well as finding board members:

> "People, after their basic needs are met, they want that higher level of self-actualization that helps them to realize their own intrinsic values, and so I always try to [offer that] … that's how you keep employees." *(Gidget)*

In addition to paying attention to hiring the "right" employee and appointing the "right" board member, Gidget also recognized the importance of continuing professional development so that people in her organization could "grow." This was why she decided to devote a portion of each board meeting to learning more about the organization or other relevant issues.

> "Each meeting we do a deep dive into a particular program that we have here, so it's not just a 10-minute presentation on the program, but what's the history, can we look at the 10-year history, how many people have we served, how is it done financially…" *(Gidget)*

As mentioned earlier, Gidget also believed in partnerships as win-win situations, and thus constantly sought them as a way to secure expertise her organization might not have, especially when starting a new venture.

5.2.5. Gidget's practices about growth

Although "growing" ABVI was not an explicit goal of Gidget's, her organization did grow tremendously under her leadership, in terms of services and job opportunities offered to its clients, the number of its staff members, and its overall budget. This growth was a natural outcome of Gidget's drive to pursue new opportunities as a means to achieve her goal of empowering more and more people with disabilities, as she explicitly expressed when talking about her long-term vision for the Goodwill stores:

> "…our goal is to expand into lots of other communities because we have a huge territory for Goodwill, and the idea there is that each of our Goodwill stores going up in the other communities are going to have a community center within the store, and that community center will be a good size room that we'll be able to make available to organizations in that community, but also for us to have a presence and to provide services in that community." *(Gidget)*

Thus, it looks like for Gidget, growth was never for growth's sake, but rather the inevitable results of trying to impact

as many individuals with disabilities as possible. For example, more products or Goodwill stores meant more jobs for people who were blind and visually impaired, as well as more services ABVI could provide to support them.

Gidget knew from personal experience that organizational change is a necessary outcome of growth, and as such she viewed planning for and dealing with growth as a strategic partnering between her and the board.

5.2.6. Other interesting elements of Gidget's case

An illustration of intrapreneurship in action

As illustrated by her story, over time Gidget undertook many new ventures within her organization – what is considered the hallmark of an *intrapreneur*. She also explicitly worked at developing a more entrepreneurial culture across the entire organization, and she was willing in the process to question and change even her own role and practices as CEO.

Not surprisingly, the organizational culture and structure of ABVI at the time of our study seemed to reflect all the characteristics and values identified in the literature as factors enabling entrepreneurial behavior, as summarized earlier in Figure 2.4.

Knowing when to stop or stick to an innovation that "struggles"

The Goodwill initiative is a good illustration of one of the most difficult dilemmas facing entrepreneurial educators: how to decide if and when to stop an innovation that is not performing as expected. This is never an easy decision because, on one hand, not all innovations are always successful and due to limited resources it is important to "cut one's losses" early enough when something does not turn out right; indeed, the literature on business entrepreneurship warns us that one of the most common mistakes made by entrepreneurs is to get too enamored with an idea and blind to what the market is telling them about its appeal and value (e.g., Timmons & Spinelli, 2007). On the other hand, as illustrated by the Goodwill example, there are times when it is important to give an innovation sufficient time to "work out the kinks", and even to allow the field sufficient time to come to appreciate its potential value – the more so when dealing with radical innovations that may be "ahead of their time".

Ultimately, this decision requires the personal judgment of the person in charge (in this case, Gidget, as ABVI's CEO), as it will depend on that person's values and vision how much risk s/he is willing to take in waiting for the situation to turn. While data (such as in this case sales, revenues, profits, number of jobs created, etc.) are important, this information may not be sufficient by itself. One may wonder, for example, how Gidget was able to stick to the Goodwill initiative for seven years while losing an average of $100,000 a year. Part of the answer is that, while financially a losing proposition, the Goodwill stores were creating many job opportunities for blind and visually impaired people – one of the metrics used to measure ABVI's success.

The ability to be entrepreneurial in many different contexts

While the organizational systems and culture Gidget worked towards at ABVI may have enhanced Gidget's capacity to engage in entrepreneurial behaviors, it is important to recognize that Gidget's behavior was entrepreneurial *regardless* of the environment she operated in, as she herself explicitly recognized when looking back at the early stages of her career:

> "…even in the bureaucratic environment I was always looking for ways to be entrepreneurial and I was always pushing the envelope…" *(Gidget)*

5.2.7. Concluding thoughts about Gidget's case

There is no question that Gidget's creative leadership added considerable value to ABVI and the clients it served, as

illustrated by the number and quality of the services offered by the organization, the number of jobs provided each year to people with disabilities, and a budget increase from $7 million when Gidget became CEO in 1986 to $50 million when she retired in 2020. All these measures, in turn, are a reflection of the increased scope of her organization's mission and visibility, both locally and nationally. Each of the many new innovations Gidget undertook contributed in some manner to this overall success.

Even just looking at the initiatives reported in this chapter (which were a small subset of what Gidget undertook over her long tenure as CEO) allows us to appreciate the great variety of enterprises that Gidget engaged in – all of which were valuable in their own right. First of all, we want to mention her for-profit ventures (like the Post-it, Goodwill and Call Center initiatives), which are quite unusual for a non-profit organization to consider, yet were critical to enable ABVI to pursue its mission, both through the job opportunities they created for the people they served and the funding they provided for expanding their services. Even if we did not spend much time on these in our story, it is also important to note that Gidget was instrumental in the development of new services and education opportunities offered by ABVI – as illustrated when Gidget talked about having observed some interesting services for children in one of her trips, and soon after instituting similar services at ABVI. Equally important to adding new business lines and services, though, were the innovations that Gidget initiated internally to ABVI. These had more to do with changing structures and expectations than starting new initiatives, as for example she restructured the board and reconceived of her role as CEO and that of the members of her leadership team.

Among the many lessons learned from this case study we would like to highlight the following ones. First, it is interesting to note that, as Gidget engaged in her for-profit ventures, pursuing the mission of the organization and strengthening the organization financially did not cause conflict but rather synergy. Through these ventures she was able to both generate new revenues and provide job opportunities for more blind and visually impaired people, thus empowering them to be self-sufficient and contribute to their families and communities (one of the key goals of ABVI). The new revenues generated by the for-profit business lines, in turn, not only provided the funds to offer services that ABVI could not otherwise have been able to afford, but perhaps even more importantly made the organization more "self-sufficient" and less dependent from government funding and philanthropy.

Gidget's achievements also remind us that education and learning can take place in many places besides schools and colleges. ABVI indeed offered many educational services, not only to its clients through training and children's programs, but also to the public through its many outreach programs intended to spread awareness of what blind and visually impaired people *can* do and the contributions they can provide to society. And Gidget also felt that people in her organization – staff and board members alike – needed to develop expectations, and be provided opportunities for, continuous learning and professional development in order to pursue ABVI's mission to the best of their abilities.

5.3. Commentaries on Gidget's case

We are collecting readers' insights and lessons learned from reading Gidget's case on the companion website, and we invite you to add yours by following the specific guidelines provided in the "Guidelines for Contributions" document. Below you find a selection of the commentaries we have received; for a full list, click **here**.

Jayanth Revindran – National University of Singapore, 2021

My group was tasked to present the case study of Gidget Hoft. I have to say I was thoroughly impressed by what she has achieved and she has given me some inspiration as to how to approach my future endeavours. Even though I may not necessarily venture into entrepreneurship, what I took away from her case study was how she tackled so many issues with such passion and also how she viewed every opportunity as having potential. Likewise, I have made it my mantra to also approach life events and life in general with an open mind and with some positivity. In the past few years I have been struggling to find myself and what I really want to achieve in my life. All I know is that I want to delve into some work that involves human interaction. I have always set my mind to becoming a doctor and I am still trying to achieve that goal. However, Gidget Hoft's entrepreneurial mindset has urged to look beyond and seek out other opportunities as well. Her determination was another element that moved me. I am not quite ready to give up on my dream just yet but I am definitely going to give it my best shot. Her zest for seeking out opportunities has also made me question what kind of education I want for myself. Yes, scoring in examinations is important but her case study was a much-needed reality check for myself. It got me thinking about how there are a lot of aspects of life that I have yet to explore and things that I know I want to try but I have casted them aside for studies. I hope to have the courage to take up more of these opportunities to grow as an individual beyond the classroom setting. As some of the groups presented their case studies, I felt that some of the enterprises were tackling issues on the surface level and there is so much that needs to be done to address these issues. I completely understand that we all have to start somewhere and tackling the root of these issues can be very challenging. Now that I have attended this reading group, I view every social enterprise as a stepping stone to innovating better ways in the future to tackle deeply seated social issues with an approach that is more integrated in nature.

Yeo Zhi Hui, Benjamin – National University of Singapore, 2021

Gidget Hop's journey of intrapreneurship was also particularly insightful to read. I learnt about the qualities and characteristics that it takes to be an intrapreneur. More importantly, I learnt about transformative solutions which involves not only empowering a marginalized community through the provision of jobs, but also, by increasing their visibility and hence reintegration with the rest of society. This is crucial in removing any negative stereotypes society has of them and is an example of a truly transformative solution.

CASE STUDIES OF ENTREPRENEURIAL EDUCATORS IN SCHOOLS AND UNIVERSITIES

PART III. Case studies of entrepreneurial educators in schools and universities

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CHAPTER 6.

Patricia Chiverton's case: Transforming a professional school at the brink of closure

Raffaella Borasi

(with contributions from Michelle Ames and Frank Beltram)

Pat's Profile

As Pat Chiverton became dean of the School of Nursing at the University of Rochester, a professional school within a highly decentralized private research university, this academic unit was in dire financial straits. During her nine years as dean, Pat was able to totally "turn around" this situation through a series of innovations which included, among many others, starting new visionary programs while closing down traditional ones where the school could not be as competitive, doing aggressive fundraising, and developing "business lines" within the school as a way to develop and test new models of health care as well as to generate new sources of revenues to support teaching and research.

6.1 Pat's story

6.1.1. Introduction to Pat's case

This chapter reports on the case-study of Patricia Chiverton, the dean of the School of Nursing at the University of Rochester from 1999 to 2008. Pat's effectiveness as an academic leader is unquestionable, as she moved her school from the brink of closure to being recognized as one of the most successful and innovative nursing schools in the country (as documented in Figure 6.1). Her story also makes clear that this success was the result of a remarkable number of radical innovations that she promoted during her 9-year tenure as dean.

A psychiatric nurse by training and the holder of a Doctor of Education degree, throughout her career Pat demonstrated a relentless commitment to improving health and health care. Pat advocated for and concretely worked towards developing new models of health care focusing on health promotion rather than disease management. She also recognized the significance of the many changes that have taken place in the health fields in the past few decades—most notably technological developments that have opened up unprecedented possibilities for delivering health care—along with the current nursing shortage. Furthermore, she believed that nurses should take a proactive role in the development of these new models of health care, as they have the knowledge, attitude and talent to do so. The following quote well articulates and substantiates this position:

> "I really believe with the shortage of nurses we can't provide care in the future the way we're doing it today. So we need to engage with the public, teach them how to become better advocates for themselves, and that's health promotion and wellness, that's what nurses have always done." (*Pat*)

Pat also believed that schools of nursing have a critical role to play in the future of health care in two major ways.

These include first of all contributing to the developments of new models of health care through their research and innovative practice, combined with developing and offering training programs to prepare future nurses for the new roles thus created for them.

> "We want to be on the cutting edge end and we want to pilot the future of nursing – see what works, see what doesn't work, take risks." *(Pat)*

Being the Dean of a School of Nursing in a private research university with a large Medical Center provided Pat with unique opportunities to put her vision into action. The highly decentralized structure of the University of Rochester – where each academic unit is fully responsible for all its revenues and expenses, and the Dean acts effectively as the CEO of that unit (while also reporting to the Provost/Medical Center CEO) – also provided Pat with considerable leeway to act entrepreneurially. Yet she experienced many of the same challenges and tensions shared by most academic leaders in higher education institutions—as she struggled to achieve the difficult balance between academic mission (in terms of research, teaching, and clinical enterprise) and fiscal responsibilities, dealt with a tradition of individual faculty autonomy and the constraints imposed by faculty jurisdiction over curricular decisions, and had to operate within an academic culture not used to change and quick decision-making.

In Figure 6.1 we reported selected information about the UR's School of Nursing (abbreviated as SON hereafter) at the time of Pat's deanship. We hope this information will help readers better understand this context, and also better appreciate the significance of Pat's activities and achievements during her 9-year tenure as dean. It is also important to note SON's history of being a pioneer in their field, as its founding dean, Loretta Ford, developed the first "integrated model" of nursing that bridges across education, research and practice in the 1970's, as well as the new role of nurse practitioner in the 1980's.

Unlike most of the other entrepreneurial educators featured in this book, Pat explicitly thought of her activity in terms of entrepreneurship – at least at the time of our study. Being familiar with the concepts and literature on business entrepreneurship, she could draw explicit connections to both in our interviews – as illustrated in several of the quotes reported in this chapter, and the following one in particular:

> "I always believed that you can do anything you want to do, and you know, whether you have the resources or not, if you create it, it's going to happen and that's always been the case." *(Pat)*

Figure 6.1. *UR School of Nursing Profile (as of 2008)*

***Historical notes*:**

- Programs in nursing at the UR started in 1926
- The School of Nursing was founded in 1972

Characteristics of the larger organization (UR):

- Private Research Extensive University
- Decentralized budgeting
- *Students:* ~10,000
- *Faculty:* ~2,000 (~1300 FT tenure-track)

Mission statement:

- "We improve the health of individuals, families and communities through innovation and collaboration in the integration of education, research and practice."

Key programs/services: *(Programs marked with an asterisk were initiated by the subject)*

- *****Accelerated B.S. in Nursing; graduate programs including new *M.S. in Nursing Leadership; *Doctor of Nursing Practice
- *****Lifelong Learning Center (*offering professional development to nurses in the field*)
- *Center for Nursing Entrepreneurship (*including a Think Tank/Business Incubator, and several for-profit business lines offering health promotion*)

***Organizational structure*:**

- *Key reporting chain: faculty & staff ⇦ dean ⇦ Medical Center CEO ⇦ President*
- *Other key personnel:* Associate Deans for Research, Academic Affairs, Business; Director of the Center for Nursing Entrepreneurship; Directors of specific academic programs (⇦ Associate Dean of Academic Affairs); Directors of specific business lines (⇦ Director of Center for Nursing Entrepreneurship)

***Subject positions*:**

- *Dean:* Ultimately responsible for all academic and financial affairs.

Selected measures of success *(1999-2008)*:

- *NIH rankings*: 28 ⇦ 13
- *Budget*: $8M (*with deficit of* $1M) ⇦ $15M (*no deficit*)
- *Students*: 300 ⇦ 400
- *Faculty*: 118 ⇦ 155

6.1.2. Highlights of Pat's professional journey

Pat liked to describe her successful, and somewhat unusual, career as "being at the right place at the right time." While it is true that she had the good fortune of being presented with some unique opportunities throughout her career, her story shows that she was not only ready to recognize and seize the opportunities presented to her, but she also pro-actively created some of them herself.

It started with receiving her nursing degree at the Bachelor level at a time when most nurses were educated in 2-year Associate degrees programs, because her high school guidance counselor encouraged her to pursue a 4-year degree. This gave her a jump-start in her nursing career, and also opened up the possibility to pursue advanced degrees later in her career, when she was offered scholarships to do first a Master's degree in Psychiatric Mental Health Nursing, and then an Ed.D. in Education.

As her husband was in the military, after graduation she traveled a lot and had some unusual job opportunities and responsibilities for a novice nurse—such as being in charge for a whole medical floor. When her husband was posted to Vietnam, she came back to Rochester and got a job in the Psychiatric Emergency Department. How this job developed is an interesting example of Pat always being on the look-out for opportunities to be involved in leadership and innovation.

> "I came back to Rochester and started working on an inpatient unit. … I was used to being in a leadership role and I found it more difficult to just be a staff nurse. …I had worked there a couple of months and they asked me if I'd be interested in going into the Psychiatric Emergency Department. That was … very exciting … at that time you were the only nurse … so you were really in charge of what was going on, I wasn't reporting to anyone else

and I was working strictly with one of the doctors there in the ED. … I was there for almost 10 years and became the nurse manager. I had the opportunity to participate in research initiatives, to really practice and change the health care system." (*Pat*)

Another example of how Pat managed to "create" new positions for herself came soon after finishing her doctoral degree. As there was a clinical chief position open, she took the initiative to talk with the person in charge about the nature of the position and succeeded in redefining that position before accepting it.

"The clinical chief position in Psychiatric Mental Health was open. I thought about it for a while and said I really like administration, I love creating new programs and putting things together. Now I went to see the Director of Nursing at the time and we talked about it and we talked about creating kind of a different type of Clinical Chief position. So I became the Clinical Chief for Psychiatric Mental Health Nursing. I was responsible for all of the in-patient units, ambulatory care, community projects and everything related to psychiatric nursing. And again, I had the flexibility and the freedom to create new things, to manage budgets, to be in control of what was going on." (*Pat*)

In 1995, she was offered the opportunity to join the faculty of the School of Nursing at the University of Rochester as Acting Associate Dean of Practice, overseeing all the clinical faculty as well as the Community Nursing Center. The following year, she was appointed Associate Dean of Practice. In this role, she managed to turn around the financial situation of the Community Nursing Center, which at the time was experiencing serious financial difficulties, by taking a "business approach" to its running.

"The Community Nursing Center … at the time … had contracts with rural communities, so they would contract for faculty to go to rural communities to practice. Now they were losing huge amounts of money because our faculty salaries were higher than they were paid in the rural communities. … So we came over and said 'we've got to clean this up, we're not doing anything that loses money.' … So we cleaned up those contracts and started new initiatives." (*Pat*)

Because of her success in this role, a few years later Pat was asked to take on the role of Interim Dean for a year, while they searched for a new dean. While she did not see being a dean as her career goal, she agreed to do so for a short period of time to help her school at a difficult point in its history. To her surprise, though, she was quite successful in this leadership role and she enjoyed it! When a national search was held, the search committee concluded she was better than any of the candidates who had formally applied, so she was offered the position.

It is also worth noting that Pat remarked at several points in her story of how helpful her training and experiences as a psychiatric nursing were. She felt she many of the skills that made her successful as a psychiatric nurse were also very beneficial to her throughout her career. She also felt that her experiences as a practicing nurse helped her gain perspectives and attitudes that were alien to the academic world, yet helped her lead some radical innovations:

"I think one of the things I brought to the School of Nursing is a different way of thinking. … It was bringing the practice perspective, the different speed, the different way of thinking about things." (*Pat*)

By the time Pat joined SON in the mid 1990's, the school was experiencing some very difficult times. They were running serious deficits in several programs, there was not much innovation going on, and faculty productivity and morale was quite low. Pat was able to turn this situation around through a combination of many initiatives involving both the creation of new programs and the development of new "business lines" within her School of Nursing, which together increased the school's revenues – thus resolving their financial crisis – while at the same time moving forward their mission.

6.1.3. Pat's innovation #1: Closing the traditional undergraduate nursing program

How the idea came about and was evaluated/refined

One of Pat's major responsibilities as interim dean, and then dean, was leading a strategic planning process for SON, where they examined what they could do best and where they should put their limited resources and efforts so as resolve their financial difficulties and become leaders in the field. The stakes were very high, as the financial situation was so serious that the school was risking closure.

SON's strategic planning process involved, among other things, a critical review of their instructional programs – to decide which ones to keep, which ones to phase out, and which new ones may be needed. Figuring out their competitive advantages was an important part of this process:

> "[We] said: 'What do we do that is different?' And we said, well, we do research and we do a higher level of education, we do advanced practice nursing. … We can't be everything to everyone. … We did a lot of benchmarking and we looked at creating an accelerated program for non-nurses." (*Pat*)

While a new accelerated program for non-nurses might capitalize on the strengths of the faculty in her school and be more competitive, their current undergraduate nursing program was identified as a problem. They did some benchmarking, and by doing so they realized that there were many other schools in the region that were offering a traditional undergraduate nursing program like theirs, but at a much lower cost because they did not have research faculty nor research project that took resources away from teaching.

> "[In] our traditional undergraduate program… we were losing money, and our costs were triple everyone else's costs … so it really did not make sense for us to run a program that anyone else could run." (*Pat*)

As a result of this analysis, Pat considered closing the traditional undergraduate nursing program, and substituting it with a new one-year accelerated program for graduates in other fields who wanted to change career and become nurses.

Pat and her colleagues carefully examined the pros and cons of terminating the traditional undergraduate nursing program, as they realized that closing the program would likely trigger negative reactions from many of their alumni – and alumni were important constituencies for them, especially as they were trying to embark in a major capital campaign. They did more benchmarking, as well as more precise forecasts of revenues and expenses, to learn more about the available alternatives and further evaluate the costs and benefits of both the program they were planning to close and the new one they wanted to propose in its place.

As the result of these analyses, they concluded that closing the traditional undergraduate program and starting a new accelerated one would be critical to the survival of the school, given their financial crisis as well as their vision for the school moving forward.

Planning and gathering the needed resources

Once the decision of closing the traditional undergraduate nursing program was made, a lot of decisions still had to be made. This required first of all figuring out how to phase out the program, to ensure that all current students could complete their program. It also involved thinking about how to communicate this development to various stakeholders. Although they never made a written plan, a lot of planning took place to ensure a smooth transition.

Pat knew that she would need first to gain the support of the faculty – something she knew would not be easy given the novelty of the accelerated program proposed as an alternative, and people's natural reluctance to stop anything they have been doing for a long time. Getting the faculty buy-in involved honest discussions about the financial situation of the school in general and the undergraduate nursing program in particular, as well as the potential benefits of starting a new accelerated program in its place. In the end, Pat was able to gain the faculty support.

Pat also carefully planned how she would announce the decision of terminating the undergraduate nursing program to current students and alumni. She was committed to devote time and effort to make sure such a communication would be as good as possible.

Implementing and monitoring the initiative

While closing the undergraduate program was the logical decision, SON alumni's reactions were even more negative than what Pat had expected:

> "You know, it made many people very disheartened with us, our alumni were furious…" (*Pat*)

Her training as a psychiatric nurse really helped her deal effectively with this difficult and emotionally charged situation.

> "It was funny, I had this group screaming at me and all we were trying to do was fix things, you know, and they saw us as the problem and we weren't. … I understood that, so I wasn't really affected. …I think being a psychiatric nurse in that instance made a huge difference, because for me it was a process, and I understood the process, I understand group behavior – so I do not take it personally. I look at it more from the perspective of what they had to do to get through it." (*Pat*)

Despite this initial resistance, the decision to substitute the traditional undergraduate nursing program with an accelerated program for non-nurses turned out to be the right one, and greatly impacted the school's enrollment and financial revenues for many years:

> "That was one of the initiatives I think that has really made a difference." (*Pat*)

6.1.4. Pat's innovation #2: Creating a new Master in Nursing Leadership

How the idea came about and was evaluated/refined

The idea for a new master's program in Nursing Leadership came from realizing that there was going to be a need in the field – in the future, rather than immediately – for nurses that would have certain leadership skills, rather than just specialized medical skills expected for nurse practitioners.

This realization came, at least in part, from Pat and her colleagues' own practice in creating new business lines.

> "[The MS in Nursing Leadership] was created because we knew doing entrepreneurship that leadership was extremely important and we knew that nurses needed to think differently. …we were creating nursing programs in the nursing entrepreneurship center that needed the skills of those nurses and nurses weren't educated that way, so we knew there was going to be a business need for them." (*Pat*)

To identify what the needed skills would be, Pat and her colleagues tried to project what kind of nurses and skills would be needed.

> "We looked at the future … what's going to be the new nursing role. We looked at *health promotion* and how important that's going to be. At the time, 9/11 had occurred and one of our faculty wrote a book about *disaster management*. So we knew that those two focuses were going to be very important … that was the direction that was going to be very important for the future." (*Pat*)

So they decided to develop a new Master's program in nursing which did *not* lead to certification as a nurse practitioner, but rather provided advanced nursing education for nurses interested in taking on leadership roles within the areas of (a) health promotion and (b) disaster management.

The new program was very much in line with Pat's overall vision of having nurses create and promote new models of health care – as this was exactly what this program was going to prepare current nurses for. As such, Pat believed the new program would be an important addition to the School of Nursing's program offerings, as its novelty would increase the school's national visibility. The new roles for nurses the program created would also benefit the field of nursing more generally.

While a business plan per-se was never prepared, at this stage they did do some preliminary forecasting about number of students and expected revenues, as well as faculty needs and other costs to run the program, to test the feasibility of the proposed program.

> "We did a semi-business plan … included the number of students that we thought would be coming in and the revenue, and the faculty costs, and so we did look at all of that [to decide whether to move forward]." (*Pat*)

At the same time, what made the program most appealing to Pat also represented a risk. Since they were trying to meet a future need that did not yet exist, preparing graduates for jobs that were not yet there, there was no certainty that they would attract students and those students would find the right kinds of jobs.

> "It was probably one of our riskiest initiatives … because it was just our gut sense that this was going to succeed, and we did not have real support from anyone. Like, practice wasn't out there saying we are sending you students. … Some of the criticisms about the program [were]: what are these nurses going to do? You're educating someone to do roles that are not in practice today, because we were really thinking this is what's going to be needed in the future." (*Pat*)

Yet Pat and her colleagues reasoned that this risk was unavoidable when one "invented" new roles that did not yet exist, and they felt confident that they could overcome this risk based on the success experienced in the recent past when their School of Nursing created the new role of nurse practitioner.

> "If we look back when we created the nurse practitioner program there were no positions out there then. I remember when I graduated I had to create a position for myself and so that's kind of what we're doing today." (*Pat*)

So they trusted their "gut instincts" and decided to go ahead with the initiative.

Planning and gathering the needed resources

Since a new Master program required state approval, a formal proposal for the new Master in Nursing Leadership was prepared and submitted to the state. This included a description of key courses and their sequence. One faculty member with expertise in one of the two focus areas was assigned to write this program proposal.

The start-up costs for this new program were essentially covered with internal operating funds – as it is usually the case in all academic institution when new instructional programs are started. At the same time, they expected that the revenues generated by the program over time would eventually make the program not only self-sufficient, but also generate margins that could support the school more generally.

To ensure that this would happen, they identified some specific targets and metrics that they committed to monitor once the program was launched.

Efforts were made to minimize start-up costs as well as reduce long-term financial commitments for the institution. For example, they planned for courses to be initially taught by some of the current faculty (including the Dean herself) and other adjunct instructors on contracts, until they felt that the success of the program warranted hiring new personnel on a more long-term basis.

Appropriate compensation was established for both adjuncts and faculty teaching extra courses, so as to make those tasks sufficiently attractive, while keeping the costs down.

Implementing and monitoring the initiative

While the program was launched as planned, a few obstacles were encountered along the way that required some adjustments.

First of all, the greatest challenge came from having embarked in this initiative without the right "project leader" to carry out the implementation of the initiative (what Pat referred to as the "champion," although this terms is used somewhat differently in the literature and in the rest of this e-book). The faculty member who wrote the initial proposal to the state was too busy with other projects to give her full attention to this new program – and Pat knew that upfront, but at the time thought the first priority was to move fast and get the program approved by the state. However, not having the right project leader in place turned out to be a problem, which caused them to "backtrack" and slow down growing the program until such a person could be identified and secured. To take on this role, they ended up hiring a new person, who had the necessary expertise and personality to carry out the next phase of the program development. She came up with a solid theoretical framework for the program, worked with the faculty to refine and strengthen the curriculum, and did marketing to attract students not only from nursing but other related areas as well. Eventually, she was instrumental to the program's success.

"The new program director is an academic leader who was able to galvanize the leadership faculty. She knew how to mobilize systems." (*Pat*)

As the new program was launched, they were not sure how many students they would be able to attract, so they were thrilled when they filled their first class with 24 students. However, the following year enrollment dropped to 19 students, so they became concerned about the feasibility of the program over time. While they were ready to discontinue the program if it did not attract a sufficient number of students, Pat decided to give it a try for a couple more years, realizing that it would take a while before such a new program could take hold. She realized that they were taking a risk by doing so, but she believed enough in her vision to take that risk – and later she was proved right, as the program built to a steady enrollment of students and attracted very high-quality candidates.

"We knew we were taking a risk doing it. … So I think it had to do [with the fact] that we knew the future direction … we were willing to take a risk we wouldn't have [taken] with other programs." (*Pat*)

As one of the major concerns about this program was whether their graduates would find appropriate jobs, they also monitored what their graduated ended up doing. At the time of our study, all of the graduates had been successfully employed, even if in some cases they had to "invent" new jobs for themselves.

Ensuring long-term sustainability and/or bigger impact

Despite these initial uncertainties and challenges, the Master in Nursing Leadership proved a success and became a permanent feature in the School of Nursing's offerings. The tuition revenues it generated were more than sufficient to ensure the fiscal feasibility of offering this program.

When the coordinator that was instrumental to the initial success of the program left, Pat took great care in ensuring that they hired a good successor who would continue to lead this initiative.

While they initially thought about the possibility of extending this program into other tracks besides the originally two (i.e., health promotion and disaster management), this did not happen. Although at some point they seriously considered adding a track in forensic nursing, they decided that there was not sufficient interest/market to warrant such as extension and ended up pursuing a different path. Having the Master in Nursing Leadership was very instrumental, though, in their effort to develop a new Doctor of Nursing Practice program that was launched a few years later, as it provided some common courses as well as alumni that could be interested in the new doctoral program.

6.1.5. Pat's innovation #3: Creating a new Center for Nursing Entrepreneurship

How the idea came about and was evaluated/refined

As the dean of a school of nursing in a research university, Pat did not downplay the importance of research – which she still saw as the core of the mission of an academic research institution; however, very realistically she recognized that research is expensive and one needs first to secure the resources to make it possible. Pat's "out-of-the-box" solution for funding more research was to generate new revenue streams by starting and running some successful "business lines" within the practice arm of the School of Nursing – what originally was the Community Nursing Center.

"I believe that you need additional revenue streams. Tuition isn't going to do it – it can go up and down, and you can start new programs that do not work. And research isn't going to do it, although is your golden rod." (*Pat*)

The Community Nursing Center had started in 1989 with a grant which enabled a faculty member to work with a local organization to open a senior center downtown for two years – but when the grant run out, they had to close the center because it was not financially sustainable without external funding. In its next phase, the Community Nursing Center provided nursing services to disadvantaged communities below cost – thus providing a valuable community outreach, but one that also led eventually to the serious financial difficulties Pat was asked to resolve when she first joined the School of Nursing as the Associate Dean of Practice. Later, in her role as dean and in collaboration with the new Director

of the Community Nursing Center (a long-term collaborator who had come with Pat when she joined the School of Nursing), Pat continued to expand the Community Nursing Center by starting a number of new "business lines" within it.

An interesting example of "business line" was Health Checkpoint – an initiative that well illustrates Chiverton's interest in promoting new models of health care by capitalizing with new technological innovations. This project was officially described as follows, and was quite revolutionary in the early 2000's, when it was first launched:

> "Health Checkpoint is an innovative method that integrates health promotion advice from nurses with telehealth technology, providing easy access for consumers to health promotion intervention. The following is a case example of this revolutionary technology that brings partnership between health care consumers and nurses to a new height.

The nurse meets with an individual at their work, school or community center. Together they identify a health promotion goal. The nurse then provides the individual with access to a wireless remote monitoring of human vital signs – everything from basic temperature, pulse, respiration and blood pressure t blood tests and lung function. This telehealth technology, HomeMedTM, asks the consumer questions about their health status and symptomatology and can do so in up to seven different languages. All of this information is transmitted wirelessly to the central monitoring station for review and trending by a nurse. *Health Checkpoint* TM is available twenty-four hours a day and does not require the presence of a nurse, after the initial care planning session, for the individual to use the technology. *Health Checkpoint* TM provides immediate feedback to the consumer to let them know if their vital sign readings are within the parameters that have been established to measure their success in reaching their health promotion goals. The consumer maintains on-going communication with the nurse and together they focus on achieving the consumer's individualized health promotion goal. Trended information can be electronically provided to other health care providers." (Health Checkpoint Project Description)

A very different example of "business line" was the creation of a Center for Lifelong Learning (CLL). This Center was conceived initially as a way to reconnect with alumni by serving their needs for continuing education. However, the Center for Lifelong Learning not only succeeded in this initial goal, but also turned out to serve a number of other important functions – such as providing a "testing ground" for potential new programs, attracting new students to their degree programs, and providing additional revenues that can support the school's research and educational mission.

The success of the first business lines within the Community Nursing Center motivated a re-conceptualization that eventually led to the creation of a Center for Nursing Entrepreneurship – the first one in the country. As Pat started to read and learn about the field of entrepreneurship, she realized that "entrepreneurship" truly captured what they had been doing in recent years in the Community Nursing Center. She also began to see a close connection between empowering nurses to be more entrepreneurial, on one hand, and her overall vision for the School of Nursing in promoting new models of health care, on the other hand.

> "So then we looked at what we were doing, and I was thinking about how to write about this … We started with faculty practice … but then we kind of transitioned out of the traditional faculty practice model into these businesses, and I was really struggling with how to conceptualize this … and that's when we decided that what we were doing was entrepreneurship." *(Pat)*

Pat began to conceive of a Center for Nursing Entrepreneurship that would not only provide an umbrella for the various business lines they had created and might continue to create in the future, but also would respond to the unmet need of helping other nurses learn about entrepreneurship and supporting them to start up successful businesses.

> "I would hear that nurses have these wonderful ideas that they were giving away to their physician colleagues, or they were going to tech transfer and tech transfer said 'I'm not interested' because it was a service model and they didn't understand service models. So we said … we're going to create a center where any nurse can come with any idea and we'll help move them through the process." *(Pat)*
>
> "Starting and running [businesses], that's one of the hardest things … to be able to get an idea, generate it, get the champion, provide the business structure and the planning, incubate it for a short period of time and launch it." *(Pat's collaborator)*

As she did some benchmarking, she realized that no other nursing school around the country had such a Center.

Establishing the first Center for Nursing Entrepreneurship in the country had therefore the potential to give great national visibility to her School of Nursing – another reason in favor of pursuing the initiative. She thought that her School of Nursing was uniquely positioned to start such a Center, because of their experience starting new business lines within the school – something few other schools around the country had even thought of engaging in!

> "We looked nationally, and nobody was doing it … Deans across the country were struggling because they did not have these additional revenue streams, so I was being asked to consult all over the country." *(Pat)*

She also knew she already had the right person to direct such a Center on her staff – the current director of the Community Nursing Center, who had also up to that point led several of the business lines they had created. She not only had a long history of collaboration with Pat, but also shared the same entrepreneurial attitudes and beliefs.

Pat felt this was the right time to move ahead with this initiative – given the momentum created by their successful business lines, the faculty's positive feelings about those businesses as they could begin to see how they contributed financially to the institution, the alumni's interest and willingness to invest in it, the fact that she had the right project leader in place, and the value that would come from being the first Center of this kind in the nation.

It is worth noting that a few people were very instrumental in helping Pat conceptualize what she had been doing as "entrepreneurship" and moving it to the next step of creating a "Center" to support nursing entrepreneurship. They included a few entrepreneurs who were alumni and/or friends of the School of Nursing, the director of development in the Medical Center, her colleagues running the various business lines, and most importantly her long-term collaborator and at the time director of the Community Nursing Center.

Planning and gathering the needed resources

As she had already identified the current director of the Community Nursing Center as the right project leader, Pat immediately appointed her as the new Center's founding director and involved her in the planning process.

The new Center for Nursing Entrepreneurship was conceived to subsume the Community Nursing Center with its existing business lines, while also adding the new function of supporting nurses with business ideas through the various stages of the process of starting up a new business in the health care field. Because the Center for Nursing Entrepreneurship essentially "morphed" out of an existing structure (the Community Nursing Center), this is a case when they did not need to, and thus did not engage in, any kind of formal business plan. They did, however, engage in a lot of detailed planning regarding the structure and functions of the new Center, its governance structure, and how they could ensure fiscal feasibility in the long-term.

For the same reason, "launching" the new Center also did not immediately require substantial investments in infrastructure – and, thus, financial resources – as key people and facilities were essentially already in place. The revenues generated by the existing business lines provided much of the needed start-up money. Being the Dean, Pat also had sufficient control on the School's resources that she could choose to invest some internal funds in the new initiative:

> "I think it would have been very difficult if I wasn't dean. I don't know that we could have been as successful, because I was okay with letting things be kind of loose, where I wouldn't have been if I wasn't involved, if I didn't have that belief in it…The businesses were absolutely key, because it gave us the money we needed." (*Pat*)

The buy-in of the faculty was not a given, since a Center focused on supporting the creation of new businesses may seem quite far from the core missions of research and education of a school of nursing. However, by then the faculty had realized the key role that the Nursing Community Center and its various business lines had played in securing the financial viability and survival of their school, so they were more willing to support the initiative as part of the School's strategic plan.

> "Getting faculty buy-in was interesting, because faculty think our mission is to educate students and ask why are we out there dabbling with entrepreneurship. … they knew we were in desperate straights … they knew that those dollars helped save the School of Nursing. So it paved the way. … I don't think it would have happened as quickly without the original crisis." (*Pat*)

In contrast, the idea of a new Center for Nursing Entrepreneurship generated a lot of enthusiasm and support among alumni and supporters of the school. Pat soon identified a few donors who were excited about the idea and were willing

to "invest" in it by providing the funds needed to establish a seed fund to support new projects and to support specific aspects of the new enterprise.

> "I had a lot of alumns who were very interested, who were willing to invest dollars into it, which was another reason that we moved in that direction." (*Pat*)

Another important step was establishing an Advisory Board for the Center. The Board consisted of a combination of powerful alumni, as well as entrepreneurs and venture capitalists with an interested in nursing. It played an important role for the Center by providing additional expertise, visibility, and also financial support in the form of major gifts to support seed funds and other aspects.

> "I have a national board of entrepreneurs and venture capitalists, nurses or friends of people in nursing. … Members of the board are also interested in venture philanthropy." (*Pat*)

While a lot of important decisions were made at this stage, some important planning continued to occur after the Center was officially launched.

Implementing and monitoring the initiative

The actual implementation of the new Center for Nursing Entrepreneurship was especially critical in defining its nature and operations. For example, it was at this stage that they really figured out how the "Think Tank" and "Incubation" components of the new Center would work, so as to support other nurses interested in starting their own health care ventures.

Both Pat, the Center director and the directors of the various business lines had an important role in this implementation – with Pat taking more the "big picture" role of providing the framework and the external support, the director working on the day-to-day operations and generating and evaluating ideas for new business lines, and the business line directors running their respective business in an entrepreneurial way.

> "I'm not the one running the Center for Entrepreneurship. … I bring the conceptual framework piece to the Center and then we hire people who can actually operationalize it at the Director level." (*Pat*)

Pat identified the fact that the Center was run very efficiently, with minimum overhead and a very lean and capable staff, as a key reason for its success:

> "We have a very lean staff; one of our successes is the ability of multi-tasking – so we do 40,000 flu shots a year, so our nurses may be out doing flu shots, they might be going to corporations and they might be managing psychiatric patients." (*Pat*)

Each business line was also systematically monitored, using metrics that appropriate for the specific nature of the business. Business line directors were very aware that if their business did not make money (or at least break even) after a few years, it was likely to be closed – and this generates significant accountability!

> "If they [business lines] did not bring in dollars, then we closed the business line. … that hasn't happened a lot, but it has happened." (*Pat*)

The Advisory Board also continued to play a very important role. In addition to overseeing the Center as done by boards of non-profit organizations, some board members also provided expert advice and reviewed specific proposals for new businesses, while others helped them make valuable connections with potential donors and investors.

As the Center continued to develop, Pat also made conscious and systematic efforts to keep all key constituencies informed of the progress and achievements made.

Securing long-term sustainability and/or bigger impact

As planned, revenues generated by the business lines run within the Center and gifts from alumni and other donors have continued to secure the financial feasibility of the Center.

From the beginning, Pat also planned for some of these revenues to be transferred to the School of Nursing, as a way not only to contribute to common infrastructure costs, but also to make explicit the fiscal advantages of maintaining the Center operative for the School. This was indeed a very important move to secure the continuity of the Center, even when a later dean did not share the same vision.

6.1.6. Pat's innovation #4: Developing the National Forensic Nursing Institute

The National Forensic Nursing Institute (NFNI), which later became an independent for-profit company offering a variety of services to support professionals involved in forensic nursing, was one of several new "business lines" that Pat and her team initiated at her School of Nursing. We have chosen to examine its development in more depth, as a way to provide valuable insights on the creativity and risk-taking that characterized the creation of most of the business lines created in this academic unit – although this was one of the few that ended up being "spinned off" into an independent company.

How the idea came about and was evaluated/refined

The initial idea for the NFNI came about as Pat and her colleagues realized that there was an increased interest in forensic nursing – as the result of increase in violence – along with an unmet need to prepare nurses in this area.

As they did some preliminary benchmarking, they also realized that there were only two other schools in the country offering programs in forensic nursing. Even if they recognized that this could be only a "temporary" need and opportunity, they thought it would be worth capitalizing on it. At this initial stage, they were thinking just in terms of offering continuing education courses and maybe a new track in forensic nursing within their Master in Nursing Leadership program.

While at the time there was nobody on the faculty with expertise in forensic nursing, they did not let that fact deter them, as they thought that if the program was worthwhile they could always hire experts to develop and run it. At the same time, because of previous experiences they were well aware of the importance of having the right project leader in place before launching an initiative, so they were committed to wait to launch this initiative until such an individual could be secured.

To further explore their initial "hunch" about the growing interest and need for training in forensic nursing, the director of the Center for Nursing Entrepreneurship went to a conference organized by the professional organization for forensic nursing to learn more about that area. It was at that conference that she found the right person to champion the new initiative. Unfortunately, he was not willing to move! The creative solution to this problem was to create and offer him a position as a "virtual" or "distance" faculty member.

> "He's what we call a 'virtual faculty member'. He comes here and teaches in our program; he does online advising; he participates in committee meetings through video conferencing. And it worked out extremely well." (*Pat*)

With the right champion now secured, it seemed the right time to begin to pursue their idea, especially since a popular TV show, "Bones," had just raised considerable interest in forensic issues.

> "Timing is everything, too." (*Pat*)

To get a better sense of the market, they first started to "field test" the demand for education in forensic nursing by offering a few courses through their Center for Lifelong Learning. These courses attracted a lot of students.

> "We offered several course in forensic nursing [within the Center for Lifelong Learning]. Offered one, had over 60 students enrolled, had to turn people away. [So we] said, well, there might be some interest in this." (*Pat*)

The success of these first continuing education courses in forensic nursing led to the decision of offering some of those same courses for credits as electives for their existing nursing programs. They also realized, however, that there were other on-going needs for training and support in the area of forensic nursing that could not be fully addressed just through offering a degree program or continuing education courses. For example, the director secured consulting contracts with various places around the country.

So, they finally settled on the idea of establishing a "National Forensic Nursing Institute" as a for-profit business line that would provide a variety of consulting services within the area of forensic nursing.

Even if they realized that this could be only a "temporary" need and opportunity, they thought it would be worth capitalizing on it. Their main reasons were that they felt that this initiative would help them move forward their mission of having their School of Nursing involved in the development and dissemination of new models of health care, and also

likely generate revenues that could help sustain other initiatives within the school.

Planning and securing the needed resources

Before going further with a business plan and decisions about whether to launch NFNI as an independent for-profit company or keep it as part of the business lines run within the School of Nursing, they decided to "incubate" this business for a few years within the Center for Nursing Entrepreneurship – so part of the planning was de-facto integrated with the implementation of the initiative.

Funds to invest in the hiring of the project leader first, and then incubating the business, came from "seed funds" in the Center for Nursing Entrepreneurship that Pat has previously gathered from donors through intensive fund-raising.

No other staff besides the project leader was hired at this point, with the expectation that all other personnel would be hired as free-lancers through contracts, as a way to maintain flexibility and minimize financial risk for the new company, at least at the beginning.

Implementing and monitoring the initiative

NFNI was launched first as one of the business lines run as part of the Center, using internal funds, to test out its viability and providing it a solid foundation.

> "[In year 1] we hired [the director] … we paid his salary, we gave him time to get the business off the ground, we gave him marketing support, we gave him travel dollars to go out and be visible on one side. On the other side, we expected him to come up with a business plan and an implementation plan for how this was going to work. … Year 2 we had everything together and he was off building the business – so we invested during that year." *(Pat)*

Part of the "incubation period" also included setting some specific targets and metrics to monitor the new business and decide whether it should be continued, and if so, whether it should become an independent company.

There was the expectation that it would take some time before the business could make any profits, and indeed it took over three years to reach that point:

> "We felt that financially the first year he did not make any money, the second year he might have lost some, year 3 he was beginning to show a profit and then year 4 he did and it continued to grow. So once it was on the upward swing and the majority of start-up costs were paid for, we felt that he would do fine in a stand-alone business." *(Pat)*

Ensuring long-term sustainability and/or bigger impact

Based on the positive results achieved during the incubation period, the decision was made to spin off NFNI as an independent start-up company, rather than continuing to run it as a business line within the School of Nursing. This decision was motivated by two major considerations. First, they realized that the School of Nursing did not have the internal capacity to run more business lines at the time. Second, they also felt they needed the flexibility of a stand-alone company so that it could "move faster" in order to respond to new market needs. Thus, we would argue that spinning off an independent company contributed to ensuring long-term sustainability to the business that had been successfully incubated.

The project leader created a formal business plan to launch an independent for-profit company, of which he would be the main owner, but with the School of Nursing maintaining part of the equity and thus benefiting financially. He then presented his business plan to the Center for Nursing Entrepreneurship Advisory Board for feedback and support. The Board was very enthusiastic about the project and recommended that they moved on with spinning off NFNI as a start-up for-profit company in which the School of Nursing would maintain some interest and equity:

> "Our board … gave thumbs up, thought it was very viable, thought that it was a god business strategy, thought we had the right person, thought we had the right business elements, and from there we moved out" *(Pat's collaborator)*

As this was the very first spin-off for a start-up company achieved in the Center for Nursing Entrepreneurship, they had to learn about how to value a company and how to determine the percentage of preferred stock that would be owned by the School of Nursing – so that they could get a return on their initial investment in the development of NFNI by continuing to share in the future profits of the company.

NFNI is now a successful independent company that provides several valuable services, as illustrated by this excerpt from their 2006 brochure:

- NFNI forensic nurse educators and consultants come on-site to provide education and training covering a forensic nursing practice topic …
- NFNI continuing education packages are designed to meet individual program needs [on a variety of specific topics within forensic nursing] …
- NFNI forensic nurse consultants serve as outside mediator and resource for communities as they develop a means to address issues of violence …
- NFNI forensic nurse consultants provide tangible assistance to medical facilities in all aspects of forensic nursing programs development from initial assessment and design to final implementation … (NFNI brochure, 2006).

NFNI has not only contributed financially to the School of Nursing, but also led to greater national visibility and contributed to address a social problem.

6.1.7. Pat's innovation #5: Securing new facilities for the School of Nursing

How the idea came about and was evaluated/refined

The many innovations instituted by Pat in her first years as dean of the School of Nursing brought it to a very different financial position, increased the national visibility and reputation of the school, and also resulted in considerable growth in number of faculty and students. With this growth and success, however, a new set of problems also came along, as they were running out of space!

To respond to the increased need for facilities, Pat thought about expanding the current building by creating a new wing with state-of-the art teaching facilities.

> "We were out of space. We had the increase in enrollment, we also increased our research faculty. … there were pillars in our classrooms, the acoustics were terrible; it was just a dismal place. … I really believe the environment is so important, especially for nurses because they have to feel valued. … So I said, we need new space. We looked at what to do: do we build a new building? Do we renovate space that we have? … We decided not to build a new building because there is so much history attached to [our current building]. … So we decided to renovate and build an addition that would represent the future." (*Pat*)

Planning and gathering the needed resources

Building the new instructional wing was no easy feat, as the project presented many challenges and required considerable fund-raising. Plans had to be developed with architects before they could even know how much the project would cost.

Given many other competing building projects within the university's Medical Center at the time, Pat was also told that she could not take on any debt for this facility project.

> "Believe me, I had to fight for this … in the Medical Center there is a million and one building initiatives and why should you do one and not the other." (*Pat*)

This meant that to move forth with her plan she had to raise all the funds needed for the building by securing gifts. She was successful in her fund-raising, and thus her building construction could begin.

Implementing and monitoring the initiative

Once she secured the permissions and funding, Pat essentially left the responsibility of overseeing the construction of the new instructional wing to other colleagues, who had showed both interest and experience in facilities projects.

The building was completed successful, and it turned out to be instrumental for enabling the School of Nursing to continue to expand their course offerings over time. It also remains as a visible legacy of Pat's leadership and impact on her organization.

6.1.8. Updates to Pat's story

Pat chose to retire shortly after our study was completed, after an 8-year tenure as dean. Her original plans were to come back after a sabbatical year and take over the leadership of the Center for Nursing Entrepreneurship she had helped develop. However, she was not able to implement that plan.

As the person who succeeded her as dean had a very different vision for the school, for a time it was not clear which of Pat's innovation would stay – except for the new instructional wing, of course! However, eventually the Center for Nursing Entrepreneurship as well as most of its business lines she had launched not only survived but continued to thrive, as well as many of the new programs she had put in place.

6.2. Analysis of Pat's entrepreneurial activity

6.2.1. Pat's practices about vision

Pat's story reveals the influence of her vision for the field of nursing, and the UR School of Nursing in particular, of *becoming a leader in the development of new models of health care focusing on health promotion.* It is clear that Pat believed strongly in her vision and that vision informed both big decisions (e.g., the strategic plans she prepared for the School of Nursing, as well as major initiatives) and day-to-day decisions (e.g., when and where to stop a project, who should be hired, etc.). The following examples make explicit how her vision was central to all her major initiatives:

- *Health Checkpoint*: The new monitors made it possible to conceive of a new model of health care which is more "remote" and controlled by patients; Health Checkpoint was created to further develop and disseminate this new model.
- *Center for Nursing Entrepreneurship*: The mission of this new center was specifically to promote new models of health care; the center was created to develop these new models, test them out and if successful launch them as business lines (whose revenues could contribute to support the other more traditional missions of the School of Nursing – research and education).

Pat's vision also was the determining factor in making decisions about whether to continue to pursue an initiative or not when results were not turning out as expected, although she sometimes described this as using her "instincts" or "guts". The story of the Master in Nursing Leadership is a great example, as Pat decided to keep this program alive even if it did not meet their established enrolment threshold at the beginning, because she saw its potential for the *future* of health care.

As important as her vision itself was Pat's ability to have people "buy into" this vision and "making it their own." Both she and her collaborators recognized this as one of her greatest strengths:

> "I'm that quiet, behind the scene – but I can make things happen, you know, and I can get people to buy in and help build it." *(Pat)*
>
> "She does it so well that people buy in almost automatically. … She can convince people of almost anything." *(Pat's collaborator)*

How did Pat get other people to "buy-in" her vision? Characteristics such as being perceived as non-threatening and approachable, and being a very good listener, served her well here. Her strength was not so much in her power of

persuasion, but rather in being able to help other people see how "her mission is their mission" – as suggested by one of her collaborators.

In addition, Pat was willing to spend considerable effort, time and resources to produce good materials about the school that articulate her vision, and also to personally talk and present to various constituencies, especially alumni.

6.2.2. Pat's practices about opportunities

Pat and her team were very aware of the importance of recognizing and capitalizing on opportunities in their work and recognized this as a key element of their success.

First of all, Pat and her collaborators had an extraordinary *awareness of their market* – that is, the health care field – and that awareness was often the source of new ideas (as it was the case for Health Checkpoint and the National Nursing Forensic Institute, for example). Such an awareness, in turn, came from purposefully engaging in a few practices such as going to conferences (in nursing as well as related fields), reading the literature, and continually doing benchmarking. At the same time, they engaged in these activities in a particular way, as they were always proactively seeking opportunities by keeping their eyes and ears open to identify new needs and possible solutions. They were also looking at other fields (technology in particular), searching for ideas and solutions that were new to nursing but could be applied to it. Finally, they were oriented towards the future – that is, they did not just pay attention to current trends and needs, but more importantly they looked at where the health field was going, so that they could recognize in advance what may be needed and work towards that.

Pat also demonstrated the ability to recognize and capitalize upon new opportunities that may be revealed when solving a problem. This happened whenever she realized that the solution they found for a given problem might also provide the opportunity to address *other needs*. A great example of this can be seen in the development of the Center for Lifelong Learning. When they first conceived of this initiative, it was in the attempt to solve the problem of reconnecting alumni, whom they thought could be attracted back to the school by offering professional development opportunities they would find useful. However, Pat was able to recognize early on that such a Center could also provide a perfect context for pilot testing new programs, as well as become a feeder for degree programs (as people who took short courses might got interested in pursuing a new advanced program). These two functions for the Center of Lifelong Learning indeed proved to be the most valuable aspect of the initiative.

Pat and her colleagues were also aware of the importance of "seizing" opportunities when they present themselves – even if they may not have all the needed resources at hand. At the same time, they were also careful about evaluating whether the opportunities they recognize as possible are really worth pursuing – as resources always presented a limition. She and her team used specific strategies to do this analysis, including:

- Benchmarking (to see what competitors were doing and decide whether SON had a competitive advantage in pursuing that opportunity).
- Market research (to better evaluate the extent of the unmet need they had recognized as well as people's willingness to consider the proposed solution).
- Undertaking pilots to test out new possibilities.
- Doing a financial feasibility analysis.
- Making sure they have the right champion/project leader to lead the initiative.

We can notice striking parallels between the practices identified above and those employed by business entrepreneurs like Donna and not-for-profit intrapreneurs like Gidget.

6.2.3. Pat's practices about risk

Undoubtedly, there was a lot of risk involved in many of the initiatives Pat undertook as dean and she could not have handled these situations without a high tolerance for risk – a trait she thought is very critical for successful entrepreneurs.

> "It's important to know that we did not know that these [initiatives] were going to work. I mean, we were taking a risk starting, especially the [Nursing] Leadership program. This was something we believed in but didn't know that it was going to work – and still don't know for sure." *(Pat)*
>
> "I will probably take more risk than a lot of people would take, especially in education." *(Pat)*

While high risk tolerance may be one of her personality traits, a more interesting question for us to pursue is: *How* was she able to deal with high risk and, more specifically, what strategies and practices did she use to minimize and manage that risk?

First of all, Pat was clear that her willingness to take a risk, and her evaluation of the risk itself, were in great part a function of how strongly she felt that the initiative in question was "the right thing" to do, and how knowledgeable she felt about the field:

> "If I believe that this is the direction that nursing is going and that we need to be on the cutting edge, I'll make that decision knowing that our budget is kind of a fine line." *(Pat)*

Therefore, one could say that her propensity to take a specific risk was greater the more she felt that doing so was in line with her vision and her understanding of where her field was going. This can also be connected with her relative evaluation of "missing the boat" versus "sinking the boat" kind of risks (Brown & Cornwall, 2000). Because of her overall goal of maintaining her School of Nursing at the cutting edge of the field, she perceived "missing the boat" risks as very real and potentially costly. In contrast, she feared less "sinking the boat" kind of risks, which she felt may be easier to control and handle.

This attitude may have come in part because of her overall attitude towards mistakes as "learning experiences" – so she was not too afraid of failing:

> "One thing that we truly believe is that it's okay to fail. So, if you try something, it doesn't work, it's just knowing how to cut your losses." *(Pat)*

As suggested by this quote, though, this positive attitude towards mistakes and failure was closely connected with her confidence in the possibility of putting systems in place that could minimize the risk, at least to some extent. Indeed, Pat clearly identified and regularly used a few strategies to reduce and manage risk when embarking in new initiatives, such as:

- Doing some preliminary pilot testing before even deciding to embark in an initiative (as in the instance of the Forensic Nursing initiative).
- Controlling potential losses by having systems in place to monitor the initiative and decide whether to continue it before the losses could become significant.
- Especially when launching a new initiative, securing personnel through short-term contracts to make an exit strategy more possible (as done at the beginning of the MS in Nursing Leadership).
- Reducing up-front costs and, thus, financial risks.

It is interesting to note that, according to her collaborators, Pat's strength was not in the technical evaluation of the risk of a given initiative – a task that she often left to some of her collaborators or hired experts for. However, she clearly had a strong sense of the importance of minimizing and evaluating risk when it came to deciding whether or not to launch or discontinue an initiative.

6.2.4. Pat's practices about resources

Pat's activities undoubtedly fits Stevenson & Jarillo's (1990) definition of *entrepreneurship* as "pursuing opportunities without regard for the resources currently controlled", as suggested by the following statement:

> "There's a group [of faculty] that says well, you know, we are spread too thin, we don't have enough resources to do this. And I don't look at it that way, I look at we'll get the resources that we need to make it successful." *(Pat)*

And this statement was substantiated by her actions throughout her career. Some notable examples reported in her story were her willingness to explore the possibility of pursuing a new venture in forensic nursing even if at the time they did not have faculty in-house with expertise in this area, and planning for an expansion of the School of Nursing building which required considerable fund-raising before it could become a reality.

At the same time, it is important not to confuse Pat's confidence in being able to gather the needed resources for a worthwhile initiative with being fiscally irresponsible. On the contrary, Pat demonstrated a remarkable understanding for the economic drivers for her institution and her success depended in great part from having been able to use this understanding – as well as some creativity – to *actually gather* the resources needed to implement her innovations.

Indeed, her analysis of what needed to be done to solve the School of Nursing's financial crisis at the time of the first strategic plan reflected her deep understanding of the role played by net tuition, research grants, gifts and revenues from practice as the economic drivers of her institution. At the same time, her success also depended on taking on a non-traditional approach about the respective role and relative importance of those revenue sources for a nursing school in a research university.

More specifically, it is interesting to examine how she tried to maximize each of these different revenue sources for the School of Nursing. First of all, she made very strategic decisions about which instructional programs should be closed or started, to ensure that they would attract sufficient numbers of students – and, thus, make rather than lose money for the institution. Because research is the ultimate measure of success within a research university environment, Pat invested in hiring quality research faculty who could eventually be competitive for large federal grants – even if she realized that research will always cost more money than it will make. She created business lines that could develop and disseminate new models of health care not only as a way of fulfilling the School of Nursing's mission, but also because she recognized the potential of these business lines – if successful – to generate critical revenues that can be used to enhance the instructional and research missions of the school.

The additional revenues generated by these business lines also contributed overall to put the school in much better financial position.

> "I really believe the only thing that saved the School of Nursing was the revenue that was generated through the Community Nursing Center, because those were dollars we could use to hire faculty, to invest in new programs, and that helped turn the school around." *(Pat)*

Pat also moved one step further in this direction by conceiving of a new long-term revenue stream for the School of Nursing coming from having preferred shares in companies that have been "incubated" in the Center for Nursing Entrepreneurship and later "spun-off" as independent start-up companies – as done for the National Forensic Nursing Institute. As one of her collaborators explained:

> "Pat and I are creating a legacy for the [School] … the School will get a part yearly of a revenue stream, so there are dollars attached to come to the school without fund-raising, without development, without tuition, without research – and that's really very good for our school!" *(Pat's collaborator)*

Finally, Pat recognized the importance of fund-raising and spent considerable efforts in this direction – with great results that are surprising given the limited resources of the donor pool typical of a nursing school.

> "[Fund-raising] is a huge part of my role. I would say from a school perspective it's about 60% of what I do." *(Pat)*

Pat was aware that an understanding of the financial drivers is quite unusual in the nursing field, yet she thought it was very important for all nurses who wanted to be leaders and "agents of change" in today's health care system.

> "You need information, you need to know what your finances are, you need to know how much money is

coming in, you need to see those accrual sheets and know when your bills are not being paid … so you need the information to manage." (*Pat*)

"One thing that has always been missing in nursing is really that financial piece. Nurses never understood reimbursement, they never understood budget if they aren't nurse managers, but they need to today. They need to understand where the money is coming from, how they can improve quality of care within a budget." (*Pat*)

Pat pointed out that this kind of financial understanding is particularly critical for the leaders of any innovation or venture (what she called the "champions"), as they need to have a very good sense of the current financial situation and to act on this information. This awareness, in turn, motivated Pat's interest in developing new programs (such as the Nursing Leadership program) and infrastructures (such as the "Think Tank" within the Center for Nursing Entrepreneurship) that would support nurses in developing these important skills.

It is especially interesting to look at how Pat balanced the need to be fiscally responsible with the drive to pursue her mission. It is clear that Pat was very conscious of the need for each new enterprise to "make money", or at the very least "not to lose money." At the same time, it is also clear that her decision-making was mostly governed by her vision of how to move the School of Nursing to be the leader in the field in developing, testing and promoting new models of care, rather than financial considerations alone.

"I will never go into anything if it looks like we are going to lose money – but as long as we're generating a little bit of revenue and I believe that that's the right direction, then we'll take the risk." (*Pat*)

Another important element of Pat's overall approach to resources was the recognition of the value of bootstrapping – that is, doing the most with the limited resources available. Pat recognized the importance of bootstrapping in the success of most of her initiatives, and she also saw bootstrapping as something that characterizes entrepreneurial activity and contributes to its success. Among the specific bootstrapping strategies she and her team used, she explicitly highlighted the following:

- *Having a "lean" but very capable staff* – Since most of the costs of her initiatives were personnel, being able to have a "lean" staff could result in a very significant cost-saving. At the same time, they realized that to be able to function with a small staff, that staff needed to be very capable, flexible and willing to do what it would take to get the job done. Staff also needed to be able to "multi-task" – that is, be able to work on a number of different business lines or projects at the same time, making the best use of their time by dividing it among these different projects.
- *Having most personnel paid through contracts* – as this could save considerably in overheads and also give the institution more flexibility (and less risk) when starting a new venture.
- *Carefully watching expenses* — always looking for the cheapest way to do things and for cost-savings.

Pat pointed to the Center for Nursing Entrepreneurship as a living model of bootstrapping, especially when it came to having a cost-saving attitude. She attributed this to a combination of having a different appreciation of the value for money because of being involved in business (and thus being responsible for *generating* the funds one would be using), and having been used to make the most of scarce resources as practice nurses.

There were also occasions when specific partnerships were formed, as needed to carry out a specific initiative – for example, Health Checkpoint required a formal partnership (sanctioned with a legal contract) with the company who produced the monitors.

It is interesting to note that Pat's deep understanding of economic drivers and appreciation of financial considerations did not come hand-in-hand with a facility with the more technical aspects of running a business – such as creating financial analyses and detailed business plans. Indeed, both of her close collaborators we interviewed pointed out that her strength and interest was more in the "big picture" than in the actual evaluation of the financial feasibility of specific projects. However, since Pat was aware of this limitation, she always made sure that she had collaborators that were good managers and financial analysts.

Pat recognized dealing with human resources as one of the most critical components of her activity and stated her belief that the secret to the success of any initiative or organization is in the quality of the people involved. More

specifically, she greatly valued creativity, innovation and openness to change in the people she selected to work for her organization or for specific initiatives. She also mentioned the importance of identifying people who had a similar vision and attitude towards innovation, as well as passion and commitment:

> "Another really important factor is … getting people who kind of have my same vision and feel like you can get anything accomplished and that makes a big difference… that have a passion that they want this to succeed." (*Pat*)

Furthermore, Pat emphasized the importance of identifying the right people for the right position, while also recognizing that "different people are necessary at different stages in your growth," or even just for specific initiatives. For example, in the case of the Nursing Leadership program, she soon realized that the first champion she had appointed at the beginning to move the project forward and get the program approved by the state was not the right person to continue to lead the project to the next stage; so she had to find a different person to take the lead from that point on.

Starting new ventures and initiatives, and recognizing that such ventures can grow and change significantly overtime, all call for a high degree of flexibility in personnel. As mentioned earlier in this section, Pat preferred to hire most of the personnel needed for new programs and business lines on contracts – as it both provided for greater flexibility and helped minimizing risk. At the same time, she discovered over time that in order to secure the services of the best people, she would need to offer them more long-term contracts once they have "proven themselves."

One of Pat's strengths, according to both herself and her close collaborators, was being able to delegate and not micro-manage.

> "I believe that anyone can be entrepreneurial, that they just need the support and encouragement, and I believe – one thing that I think has really helped me – is that I do not micro-manage people. I really look at the strengths in people, and give them control over what they do, and then just say go develop something – and I think they are twice as likely to be successful. They kind of go and get excited, and they own it, and they have their own ideas, and they move forward – so I think that makes a difference too, not trying to tell people what to do but give them the freedom to do something." *(Pat)*

Delegating and not micro-managing, though, went hand in hand with careful selection of and a high level of accountability for the people she worked with. She thought that in order to develop the trust that is needed in order not to micromanage, the key is putting the right people in the right position, giving them the resources to perform their job, monitoring their results using appropriate metrics, and not being afraid to move people out of a position if it does not work.

> "I'll give the resources they need and the support – I'm always very supportive but I'm not going to do the work for them – and if they don't pull it off, then they're not going to stay. And I think you have to set that expectation, or else people will just hang around and not do a whole lot." (*Pat*)

Pat identified securing a "champion" (what other subjects have referred to as "project leader") for each new initiative as one of the most critical steps to ensure the success of that initiative. We have seen that finding the right "champion" sometimes may require looking far and outside the box – as it was the case with the Forensic Nursing initiative. It may also take more than one try – as illustrated, for example, in the case of the Nursing Leadership program.

What did Pat look for when searching for a champion? Most of all, she looked for passion, dedication, motivation, initiative – some of the very same characteristics identified in the literature as typical of entrepreneurs – and she tried to make a judgment about these qualities based on the person's past record and performance at the interview:

> "We look for someone who is very passionate about things, who wants to have high standards and high ideals, who is a real 'go getter'. … You know that from past experience, we look at what they have developed over time and do they have the initiative to kind of just go and do it." (*Pat*)

Once a champion was identified, the next step was putting together a team that could work well with that champion – and if needed complement the skill set of the champion. Pat recognized that there is no "set formula" to go about creating such a team, as it depends on the personality of the champion as well as the nature of the enterprise.

It is worth noting that, because of her position as dean, Pat was able to exercise great control on the hiring and retention of personnel in her organization – something that is not true for most educators. At the same time, several

of the team-building practices she used may be relevant for anyone who is in the position of choosing collaborators to work on a specific initiative.

6.2.5. Pat's practices about growth

The School of Nursing experienced tremendous growth under Pat's leadership. Over her 8-year tenure as dean, the number of programs and business lines grew considerably, the number of students and faculty increased by over 30%, and the budget almost doubled. When asked to comment on this growth, Pat first of all recognized it as the inevitable consequence of her mission to promote new models of health care and the desire to influence as many people as possible in the field of nursing and health care more generally.

Looking at the implications of this growth for her and her team, Pat pointed out that her role did not change so much overtime, although the role of the people in her leadership team did:

> "I think the people, the team that you need, changes over time as a result of the growth. … You need a different type of leader when you need people to be more empowered and less micro-managed … and that in some ways changed my role because I do not need to be as involved." (*Pat*)

She also recognized that, as an organization grows and succeeds, one also tends to have different problems to deal with. In her case, this meant that overtime she experienced less dissatisfaction and day-to-day problems, and more problems generated by having hired high-power people with difficult personalities. Another typical problem created by growth is running out of space. As the School of Nursing experienced this problem, they took on the challenge of raising the necessary funds to build a new wing, thus establishing a visible testimony to their success.

6.2.6. Other interesting elements about Pat's case

The role of creating new organizations within the institution

The creation of the Center for Nursing Entrepreneurship represents a special kind of innovation, one that has some interesting similarities with the starting of a new business or not-for-profit organization discussed in previous chapters – yet some differences as well. While the new "organization within the organization" still benefits of the security and financial background that can be provided by the larger organization (especially at the beginning), as a new branch it also opens up the opportunity to create new structures and expectations without having to "fight" current norms and expectations, thus allowing for a "parallel" system to be established and explored with minimum disruption and resistance from the rest of the parent organization.

This may be very valuable, especially when trying to deal with very radical and potentially "disruptive" innovations. For example, Christensen and Raynor (1997) points out that among the very few companies that have succeeded in absorbing (rather than being left behind by) a disruptive technology, most created independent organizations to explore and begin to capitalize on the new technology – whether these organizations operated as a rather independent unit within the organization, or were "spinned off" as independent companies in which the parent company still maintain the majority of the stocks.

The value of creating "niche programs"

Pat also promoted the creation of programs in areas where there may be an intense but only temporary need – what she called "niche markets." She accepted the reality that some programs may only have a short life, yet be valuable for the institution and the students it serves during that period of time. However, this short life span has important implications in terms of personnel. A good example of this was the need for programs and services in forensic nursing, which led to a series of initiatives culminating in the creation of the National Forensic Nursing Institute. These new

"niche programs" created the need for hiring more faculty on contracts or in clinical positions, for whom only short-term commitments could be made, and with the expectation that the continuation of one's position was dependent on the success of a program.

Developing an identity as an "entrepreneur"

It was really only as she conceptualized the Center for Nursing Entrepreneurship and began to read and write about entrepreneurship, that Pat started to think of herself as an "entrepreneur." A few colleagues and friends of the school played an important role at this stage, as they introduced her to the field of entrepreneurship and mentored her in this new area and/or provided an important sounding board for new ideas. It is worth noting that, despite her involvement with starting new businesses, Pat's view of entrepreneurship was much broader, as revealed by the following quote:

> "In the 80's, it was talked about in terms of nursing going into private practice, there was a big wave back in the 80's and they talked about entrepreneurship as private practice. But today the way we are describing it is somewhat different. It's really about innovation, how do you do things differently, how can we address the nursing shortage by creating new models of care." (*Pat*)

The importance and challenge of making quick decisions

While all our subjects were prompt in making and executing decisions – one of the traits identified by Bygrave (2004) as characteristic of entrepreneurs – Pat was probably the most articulate in discussing the need for this practice and the challenge it presented in a traditional academic institution.

First of all, being an innovator often put her in the position of deciding whether or not to engage in specific new ventures or initiatives (following a process very similar to the one articulated when discussing how she evaluates an opportunity), or whether or not to continue with an initiative. Such decisions often needed to be made timely, in order to take advantage of a specific window of opportunity, or to minimize financial losses. Indeed, Pat believed that making quick decisions was the only way to take advantage of opportunities that might need to be acted upon immediately, as more often than not "timing is everything" for the success of a new venture. Similarly, she found it important to make timely decisions about whether to continue with a specific initiative that was not progressing as expected – as it was the case, for example, with the Master in Nursing Entrepreneurship.

Therefore, Pat put great emphasis on the importance of being able to make "quick decisions" in her position – even when this meant that she could not collect and consider all the information that could be useful to make the best possible decision:

> "I don't look at a lot of data. I mean, I'll get the basics, but I think I make decisions quickly. … I kind of go to people who will give me input and take what I hear from them and then make a decision fairly quickly. … If it's the wrong decision, then we go back and revisit it, and that happens sometimes – but again I look at it as a learning experience. If I made the wrong decision, then how do we fix it." (*Pat*)

She was well aware that this was not the way decisions are usually made in an academic environment. Therefore, she was prepared for some resistance and misunderstanding on the part of some of her faculty.

> "I think the faculty – not everyone, [but] there's a couple of tenured faculty who don't like the idea that I push initiatives. I mean, they see that the faculty should be making these decisions, even though it takes them a year to make a decision. They don't like it that I come up with ideas and kind of push them forward." *(Pat)*

She also attributed her willingness to make quick decisions – as well as a similar willingness shown by her colleagues in the Center for Nursing Entrepreneurship – to their common background as practice nurses. Nurses in the field are always called to make quick decisions with only partial data available, so they learn to do that and then develop different expectations and habit with respect to decision-making.

Capitalizing on "crisis" to legitimate change

While not the only person who operated in a crisis and used the situation to support some radical innovations, Pat explicitly commented on this factor and as a result provided some valuable insights on this point.

Pat believed that the fact that her school was in a very difficult financial situation made a big difference in terms of accepting some of the radical changes in culture and processes that she instituted in SON – such as starting to operate for-profit business lines within the school, establishing processes to make and implement curricular decisions quicker,

and having more short-term contract employees. The immediacy of the risk of closure moved faculty to consider and accept alternatives that might have been more difficult to accept otherwise.

> "When we went through the strategic plan – well, I am a very open administrator, and tell them what our budgets are like and let them know what the situation is, because I have to help solve it. So they knew that we were in desperate straights and that the … Medical Center would have closed the School of Nursing if it hadn't been for the Community Nursing Center. So they knew that those dollars helped save the School of Nursing. … I don't think it would have happened without that." (*Pat*)

The importance of operating in a decentralized university

Pat also mentioned the decentralized structure of her university as most critical to her success as a transformational leader, as it gave her the needed control on resources that allowed her to invest where she perceived there was the greatest likelihood to generate more revenues – in her case, the business lines run through the Community Nursing Center.

> "[The fact that it was a decentralized school] was so important, absolutely important … it gave me the freedom and the flexibility to do whatever I wanted, I was responsible. All [my supervisor] cared about was my draw [on endowment] was 5.5% and I was making money, and that was it. So as long as I did those two things, I could do whatever I wanted." (*Pat*)

Some unique challenges presented by an academic environment

Pat pointed to the following "impeding organizational factors" that are specific to working in an academic unit within a university, where there are strongly held beliefs and practices about faculty responsibilities and their role in governance:

- *Internal tension between research and practice faculty*: There is a historical tension and misunderstanding in research universities between faculty whose main responsibility is to produce research (what is the "golden rod" of success at a research university) and faculty who have different responsibilities (i.e., instruction and/or practice). Pat found this tension in her school and identified it as a negative force.
- *Self-centeredness of tenured faculty*: Pat noted that tenure-track faculty are not used to take revenues into considerations, nor worry about what would pay for their research as well as all the other aspects of the organization. Rather, most tenure track faculty tend to focus on their research and expect that others will take care of the rest. Given faculty's governance over curriculum, though, sometimes this attitude may impede making the right decisions in terms of instructional programs for the institution.
- *Tenure system does not allow for sufficient flexibility*: As tenured faculty are guaranteed employment (barring a major financial crisis or misdemeanor on their part) regardless of their productivity or willingness to adapt to the needs of the institution, it is inevitable that some people in that position will have little incentives to be productive – and may even become a financial burden on the institution.

6.2.7. Concluding thoughts about Pat's case

There is no question that Pat's leadership not only added considerable value to the University of Rochester's School of Nursing, but also transformed this organization in some significant ways. We can point to a few tangible measures of success – such as improving the school's national ranking, increasing the number of research faculty and external funding for research, increasing the number of students and graduates, and having significantly more resources to pursue the instructional and research mission of the school (as documented in Figure 6.1 at the beginning of this chapter). Equally, if not even more valuable, however, was the progress made in terms of culture and climate during Pat's deanship.

While we could point to some specific initiatives as especially significant during Pat's tenure (such as the initial strategic plan and the creation of the Center for Nursing Entrepreneurship), the transformation she led cannot be

associated with just one or even a few isolated initiatives. Rather, it is the cumulative result of *many* innovations, both large and small, that she continually – and successfully – initiated in various areas and along different dimensions (including instructional programs, for-profit business lines, structures, ways of operating, facilities, just to mention a few). Perhaps even more importantly, the end-result was also more than the sum of the value added by all those innovations, as it involved a change in mindset and expectations about what it means to be a successful School of Nursing and a member of such an organization.

It is also worth noting that both the number and the pace of the innovations Pat initiated are quite atypical of an academic environment where decisions often take a long time and change tends to happen very slowly (as observed by other authors who have studied academic entrepreneurship – e.g., Mars & Rios-Aguilar, 2010). Therefore, her achievements are even more remarkable.

To conclude, we would like to articulate some additional insights, besides those reported in our analysis, that we gained by looking in depth at Pat's activity and thinking:

- *Long-term sustainability of a program is NOT always a desirable goal:* The financial success of an organization may be enhanced by the ability of taking timely advantage of "niche markets" or opportunities that may have a short life yet be profitable – for example, responding to the need for training in a new technology or to help people in a period of transition. Doing this successfully, however, requires the ability to move very quickly, as well as to be prepared to "exit" timely – which in turn calls for certain structures (for example, "contract" staff that could be easily dismissed or moved to different projects).
- *Sometimes the ultimate goal and measure of success for an initiative is not to sustain it directly, but rather to "spin it off."* An organization has always limited capacity – no matter how large. In order to achieve one's social mission, oftentimes the best outcome is to create a new organization that can then continue to pursue the initiative without requiring additional assistance from the "mother" organization, or pass the project on to others to continue – even if this means losing control and ownership of that initiative.
- *Many large enterprises are not conceived and created from "nothing", but rather grow out of other smaller enterprises.* It is reasonable that in most circumstances one would want to start up smaller and grow; when that happens, the final venture may be quite different from the original one in both size, scope and nature – yet because the venture gradually transformed, there may not be the same kind of business plan and "launch" that is usually described as an integral part of the process of starting a new company.
- *Most entrepreneurial educators are not able to implement all of their initiatives:* As the leader of an educational organization, Pat did not have the time to lead the implementation of all the many initiatives she wants to initiate, so she was obliged to rely on other people (what she referred to as "champions") for this critical task. This seems a price one has to pay for success and growth!

6.3. Commentaries on Pat's case

We are collecting readers' insights and lessons learned from reading Pat's case on the companion website, and we invite you to add yours by following the specific guidelines provided in the "**Guidelines for Contributions**" document.

Posted commentaries about Pat's case – *None available yet*

CHAPTER 7.

Ron Dow's case: Turning the library into the learning hub of the campus

Andrew Wall & Nikhil M. Varerkar

(with contributions from Tahir Rauf)

Ron's Profile

Ron Dow, the Head of Libraries at the University of Rochester for 8 years, was able to transform the campus libraries into inviting, vibrant and functional places for faculty and students to work in. This outcome was the result of undertaking many successful innovations – from a major renovation of the main library facilities to a re-conceptualization of the composition of the university library collection and the role of university librarians.

7.1. Ron's story

7.1.1. Introduction to Ron's case

In this chapter we put forward the case of Ron Dow, who as Head of the Libraries at the University of Rochester initiated a host of innovations that transformed the purpose, perception and use of the library at this research institution, enhancing students' learning opportunities as a result. Indeed, Ron was known throughout the campus as an innovative and transformational leader. While we may not always think of librarians as educators, Ron (who also earned a Ph.D. in Higher Education) forcefully argued that this is indeed their central function. As stated by a collaborator:

> "Libraries are often called services, and we talk about the library service, or a service institution … Ron immediately said no, the library is not a service, it is part of the educational mission of the university. Services are dormitories and dining halls. Services can become an outsource at any time and so you must remember the library is integral to the educational mission of the university and that's how we're going to be positioned." (*Ron's collaborator*)

The library, for Ron, was not just a place, but rather it embodied the hopes and dreams of students who toiled in its stacks and scholars whose ideas filled its shelves. The library, for him, was the hub of the campus, the one place all students must go again and again to discover. Ron devoted his career to make this vision a reality.

Ron made a big first impression. It was not just that he was a large man (though he was!), rather it was the strength of his personality, the vigorous nature of his handshake and the quick manner in which he sized you up and began to tell you about his library. Upon our first meeting, when he ushered us into his office and we sat across from him at a small meeting table, he began to share his passion about the library. He had pulled out a series of photos from before his leadership, and then showed us some current photos, and quickly reeled us in to his vision. It was apparent that it was not us who were conducting an interview for a research study, but rather Ron who was pitching to us why the library matters within the context of the modern research university.

The focus of this case-study is on Ron's leadership as Head of the University of Rochester's libraries. This is a library system intended to support the academic activities of a top ranked research university, and boasted over 3.5 million

volumes and an extensive collection of electronic resources at the time of our study. While its collection is stored in several locations across the campus, the main library has been traditionally located in a very central building that is literally and figuratively the University of Rochester unofficial symbol and community landmark. (See Figure 7.1 for more facts about the University of Rochester Libraries).

Ron's case is especially instructive of how leaders in higher education can apply entrepreneurial processes towards advancing traditional academic values that are rooted in the disciplines of the academy while at the same time navigating the challenges of fiscal resource tensions. The modern university is faced with the challenge of balancing academic values associated with the freedom to teach, learn and engage in inquiry toward ends that have been agreed upon as just and in the public good, while simultaneously facing on-going fiscal resource tension and growing calls for public accountability. Leaders within this context are challenged to maintain institutions of higher education as both committed to higher learning and as financially viable. What is perhaps most surprising in this case-study is that rather than finding a tension between financial interests and the academic mission, we found congruence. The lack of obvious or insinuated tensions revealed an instructive case for navigating troubled financial times and supporting the mission and values of higher education as a purveyor of the public good.

Figure 7.1. *UR Libraries Profile (as of 2007)*

University characteristics:

- Private Research Extensive University
- Decentralized budgeting
- *Students:* ~10,000
- *Tenure-track faculty*: 1300
- *Total Faculty and staff*: ~20,000

Libraries Characteristics:

- *Size of collection:* over 3.5 million volumes
- *Library staff*: over 100

Organizational structure:

- *Key reporting chain:* Library staff ⬖ Head of Libraries ⬖ Provost ⬖ President

Subject's position:

- *Head of the Libraries*: Charged with providing leadership for the library in relationship to managing the collection, stewarding resources, guiding facilities and overseeing staff. A significant role has emerged for the Head of the Library in relationship to developing campus and community relationships in relationship to the mission of the library.

Selected measures of success:

- *Library reputation:* Reputation has emerged since 2000 to be a national leader in developing digital access to the library and in the use of assessment to drive programming and facilities renovation.
- *Library physical facilities:* The Library contains close to 42 miles of shelving. Floor area is over 350,000 sq. ft. Total seating capacity is about 2070, providing a seat for almost every third student on River Campus

7.1.2. Highlights of Ron's professional journey

The library and higher education are two things that Ron knew extremely well. Professional experiences in libraries were Ron's formative professional experiences, and he spoke somewhat longingly of his first professional appointments in the University libraries, of the mentors that he met along the way, and the lessons he learned about the role the library carries in the lives of students and in maintaining an archive of knowledge. Ron's commitment to the idea of the library as the hub of the campus was fostered by his formative professional experiences at a library first at Hamilton College, then at Dartmouth in the Business and Engineering section, and ultimately at NYU's business library.

Ron's interest in business came from an academic course exploring the subject that was a part of his Library Science Master's degree program. Indeed his interest in both business and the library took him beyond the comfortable stacks of the university and to libraries in the business sector, expanding his experience and understanding of the role libraries can play in business and life. Ron knew of the library also beyond university walls, and he told a sober tale of his days running one on Wall Street. His description of his experience there had a harder edge; he spoke first of his experience building a library for Lehman Brothers, Inc. that ultimately had a staff of 64 and a budget larger than the University of Pennsylvania library's of that time. But the story was not simply of his success in a business context; rather it was also of hard days and the difficulty of watching people lose their jobs. At this point in his story, the pace changed and we were transported to seeing him pushing though his days in the context of a dog-eat-dog business environment.

Ron knew libraries, and he had experience with the stark realities of business. One got a clear sense that both these contexts shaped his approach to leadership itself.

Ron Dow left Wall Street to return to the academic library, landing at Penn State University where he would be a leader within their large library system, and where he would become Ron Dow, Ph.D., and would be promoted to full professor with tenure (as at Penn State, librarians are considered part of the faculty). His doctorate was in higher education administration, partly explaining the fluency with which he spoke seamlessly about a broad range of higher education issues, be it the organization, finances or history of the academy. Ron's scholarly commitment to the library and higher education helped to land him as the Head of Library at the University of Rochester, the position we found him occupying on a fall day in 2007 when we first visited his office to talk with him about his entrepreneurial experiences as an administrator within the university.

7.1.3. Ron's innovation #1: Changing the library collection strategy to solve a fiscal crisis

How the idea came about and was evaluated/refined

Ron was selected as Head of University Libraries in 1996 at a time of significant fiscal tensions at the University of Rochester. One of his first challenges became emblematic of his entrepreneurial spirit – the need to make a budget recommendation in a time when budget cuts were imminent. Ron's strategy was not to protect his new library budget, but rather he saw the budget crisis as an opportunity to radically change the paradigm of the University of Rochester library itself. While higher education library budgeting is typically seen to be incremental, where each budget year is an extension of the previous year, Ron decided to propose a budget based upon a re-thinking of the entire University of Rochester library collection.

Ron began his leadership at the library with the goal of increasing the quality of the library collection despite the extreme budget constraints of the institution of the time. He began this process by recognizing that in order to increase the library collection quality over time he needed to garner the support of institutional leaders for the library. To garner support in a difficult budget year Ron decided to propose a voluntary library budget cut, saying:

> "I knew … that the collection that was being purchased wasn't necessarily the right collection, it was simply things being purchased along this 'just in case' model … So I wrote to the Provost and said, I want the 2% cut, and my thinking was, one, it makes me a better partner with the college for later, two, it gives me an opportunity to create extensive urgency in the library for doing something different, and three, if we did it right we would never again have to hear the argument from the college administrators, or anybody else, that the collection we were purchasing did not match what was going on at the University of Rochester." *(Ron)*

He was convinced that in the end this change would be beneficial to the students and the faculty at the university, as the collection would better match their interests and needs.

Planning and gathering the needed resources

The urgency created by a budget cut created the context for Ron to go to his librarians and explain that each of them would need to make a 35% budget cut. He asked his staff to consult with faculty to come up with a list of core materials that were essential to support the faculty and curriculum of the University of Rochester, and subsequent cuts would then be made after first and foremost fulfilling the must-have items that faculty needed, thus reducing the collection of anything the faculty did not report needing. The change in thinking was remarkable in that it focused not on continuing past material collections, but rather refocused the library collection on what the faculty and students had to have to complete their activities. In his own words Ron indicated:

> "…you're going to take a 35% cut to your budget and what you must do is come up with a core collection for the discipline you support, meaning serials and list of publishers where we buy everything, that if we did not buy them you couldn't say we supported this discipline at all and you couldn't even really offer degrees in this discipline because you're not following the standard things. So… you the librarian must go to the faculty and come up with a list of what are the standard titles, you then must come back to the head of collections and convince that head of collections that you have done that." *(Ron)*

The library was committed to buying those collections that faculty reported they must have, but everything else that had been purchased till then was open to removal from the budget. Once the collection had been trimmed to include only those items reported to be needed by faculty, then faculty were asked for a list of wants. This, in turn, ensured the buy-in of the faculty for the radical move of stopping to purchase many of the existing collections.

Implementing and monitoring the initiative

This plan was put into action, and this required still a lot of decisions to be made in terms of what to purchase or discontinue.

Ron reported that after all the faculty requests were met, expenditures for that year were $200,000 less than previous – funds that could be reallocated even after the 2% overall budget cut to support some of the innovations he was envisioning.

Although responding to the budget cut was a one-time initiative, the radical restructuring of the library collection that was achieved as a result had important long-term consequences. Now Ron had effectively positioned the library to be able to keep up-to-date the most essential areas of its collection within the existing fiscal constraints, and even more importantly had gained the support of faculty and central administration for this radical move:

> "To sustain that collection meant that we need on average 9% new money every year just to buy the same things that the faculty have told us we must have. Every year since then I've gotten the money that we've needed to sustain that collection plus some additions. So that overcame a reluctance on the faculty to deal with resizing the collection because now they were in charge. It showed the college and the provost I was the team player because never in our provost's entire academic life had he ever had anyone take a 2% cut, ever." *(Ron)*

The paradigm shift from seeing the library collection as an incremental and constantly growing set of materials to a collection organized around supporting current faculty teaching and scholarship was a risky step for a new Head of the Libraries, one that Ron navigated to both transform thinking about the library and build rapport with University administration. This non-traditional approach to advancing the library collection was symbolic of the entrepreneurial leadership spirit that Ron brought to the University library. His ability to see fiscal resource constraints as an opportunity for redefining the paradigm of the library is indicative of his leadership approach.

7.1.4. Ron's innovation #2: Transforming the library into a student-centered space

How the idea came about and was evaluated/refined

Ron's vision for the library was not simply as a collection of books, a repository of knowledge, but as a uniting experience for all students. A key challenge he faced in realizing this vision, as the Head of the Libraries at the University of Rochester, was the fact that the existing facility that was the University Library was not inviting to students. As Ron described the library facilities when he started:

> "[The] University of Rochester has this important literature [but] the literature of the disciplines was put in a very tired looking facility … the furniture was worn out, the spaces looked tired, they looked like they were from the 50s and 60s and there were no students in the library except during test times, so it was a pretty empty place." *(Ron)*

Ron began to put forward a vision of the library that would invite students to participate in literature and learning:

> "It seemed to me that if you wanted to focus as a librarian on bringing students to the literature, to support what was going on in the classroom and going on in the major, then you needed to go back to the issue of facilities because the facilities had to reflect the same quality as what was going on in the literature that was in the library." *(Ron)*

Thus, Ron's commitment to renovate the main building housing the University Library came forth as an integral component of his efforts to transform the library into a vibrant student-centered place.

The real challenge he faced was a financial one, as facilities renovation projects are inherently very expensive and at the time the university was experiencing severe fiscal constraints. Ron was aware that funding his proposed renovations was not likely to be considered a priority by the central administration. Yet he was confident that he could succeed in securing at least some gifts that would allow him to begin to renovate a few key rooms. While he knew that at his university such an entrepreneurial approach to fund-raising was not encouraged, he was willing to take the risk of disregarding current practices and channels in order to achieve his goal.

Planning and gathering the needed resources

The strategy that Ron employed to address the library facilities reflected his entrepreneurial leadership approach and large personality. Ron described telling the story of the need for facilities improvements in every venue that he could, including in front of the University Trustees. As he sought funds from donors on his own to transform the environment, he would communicate his vision of the library as not simply a collection of books, a repository of knowledge, but as a uniting experience for all students. His approach was to talk about the need for facilities upgrades to change the library to be a place for students to engage in learning. All students spent time doing research for classes, writing papers, engaging the collection filling the library shelves and as such the library should invite students in. The following passage shows how Ron made the case to one of the University Trustees in order to support a specific remodeling project.

> "I was invited by the provost to talk about the library and my agenda for it and I said basically the same thing and [a trustee] was a member of that group and he followed me over. You know, I didn't recognize him, but he came over and he looked around and then he came to see me and he said 'I understand what you want to do, what could you do for $250,000 in the periodical reading room …' and so we began to look at it and we said, you know, the chairs were old and worn down, the floor was cork and worn out, there were florescent lights on the ceiling so you couldn't see the art on the ceiling, so it looked like a space that was very tired. It didn't have lights on the tables, it didn't have Internet access, it didn't have anything basically and it was pretty empty. We said for $250,000 we could do this, but for $500,000 we could do much more and so he gave us $500,000." *(Ron)*

This first initiative, as well as all the other initiative comprising Ron's facilities renovation project, was informed by student input, so as to ensure that the new spaces being created would truly attract and better serve students on campus. Listening to students in qualitative ways became a key resource for Ron and his staff to understand how to transform the physical space, use and educational culture of the library. Ron saw student assessment, conversations

with students, and an understanding of how students live and experience the library as key resources for making decisions that would bring the library closer to his vision of an engaged student learning space.

> "So one of the things that students said is they want to be able to move seamlessly between the different environments in the library, the quiet study, the collections, the group study, group talk, meetings, food, technology, entertainment, general reading, a place to just chat and meet – All of those elements have now been designed in some fashion into this building and yet it still has to meet the scholarly needs of faculty, graduate students." *(Ron)*

In the effort to gather information about student needs and study habit as part of the design process, at some point Ron made the innovative move of hiring an anthropologist full-time on his staff, to lead a series of research and evaluation studies. This anthropologist also had the task of training library staff to do ethnographic interviews, so as to empower them to be a part of the research team engaging in these studies.

> "Listening" to his clients' needs sometimes led to controversial decisions that were not too popular with his staff. For example, one evening after having visited with the university student government association and hearing about their desires, he made the unpopular decision of allowing students to bring food and drink into the library:
>
> "One of the things he did was food and drink. Well, if we had taken a vote, believe me, the library staff would never have agreed to food and drink in the library and he just one day announced we will permit food and drink in the library. And I thought my God, you can't do that! And now most libraries are doing it, but we were really one of the first and … and there are reasons why you don't want food in the library because it puts your collections at risk, because … you get bugs and things, but nobody has ever dropped a soda on one of our computers. I mean, it is surprising as much food that comes in here, and we never had a really serious bug infestation in our stacks, so it's hard to argue." *(Ron's collaborator)*

Implementing and monitoring the initiative

Ron pursued his vision for transforming the library facilities one room at a time, as soon as he was able to secure a donor for a particular space – sometimes coming up with creative solutions!

> "[A donor] would've liked to redo the Welles Brown Room, but you can't rename the Welles Brown Room. But we could [rename] the lobby, so he paid to do the lobby and the Welles Brown Room including the air conditioning for the room so that we could recreate the front of the library and make it … a more welcoming place, a place that appeared for students to represent what was inside. … Along the way we ran into Bill Gamble, who did the Gamble Room upstairs and we got to know … the primary Board Directors of the Gleason Foundation, and the Gleason Foundation generously gave us the money to renovate the Great Hall and they've given us $5M to renovate the back of the first floor." *(Ron)*

As success breeds success, Ron's projects became more and more ambitious. His last project, funded by a gift of $5 million from the Gleason Foundation, involved the transformation of 20,000 square feet previously used for storage and staff offices into an innovative space for students' use that included both quiet spaces and spaces to work together in small groups, using furniture that was conducive to different types of activities students might desire to conduct at the library. This innovative library space attracted national attention, as for example it was feature in a 2007 article in the Chronicle of Higher Education (Carlson, 2007).

The transformation of the library into a space that truly invites students in was a core initiative for Ron. Remaking the library facility was a key to achieving Ron's vision of the library as a student-centered space that contributed to student learning and growth. The library in that vision becomes the hub of campus academic life, and the librarian, by extension, becomes no longer just keeper or locator of material, but an educator who is a learning partner of faculty and students. Depicting this vision was part of Ron's leadership, and selling that vision was central to raising the funding necessary for achieving facilities transformation that will stay with the University for a long-time.

7.1.5. Ron's innovation #3: The Library Technology Initiative

How the idea came about and was evaluated/refined

Ron always envisioned integrating the University of Rochester library with student life on campus. Ron knew that for students to use library resources effectively, they first need to visit the library frequently. But this was not enough. In his own words, here was a second component of his vision.

> "The second component of the vision then was getting students involved with the collections and that meant beginning to work with the librarians. Librarians have a very set way of thinking about things and they're very passive, they wait for students to come. They're very helpful, but they're very passive, and they view the library as delivering a service to the campus – so that when you come in I will assist you because I deliver a service – and I disagreed with that perspective. My perspective was that librarians are educators and that the reason a student comes to the library is to read, to study, for social interaction or because their faculty members have charged them to undertake a writing assignment." (*Ron*)

He emphasized a proactive approach by librarians and shared his belief that 'librarians are educators' with his colleagues and staff. He encouraged the ideas of hosting a breakfast for incoming students' parents and an annual Halloween event called the Scare Fair for students, as ways to initiate and establish a rapport with the student community.

He also felt that today's youth are used to many technologies and would expect to be able to use them in the library, but he also recognized that his library was way behind the times when it came to technology.

Planning and gathering the needed resources

So, sensing the need for upgrading and integrating technology in the library processes, Ron also identified the right persons who could develop and lead the initiative of a 'digital library', and put this person in charge of the planning. In this, as well as other cases, Ron showed skill in identifying collaborators who would complement his limitations. He knew how to hire the right people for the right task. Despite his initial skepticism about the cost and legality issues in digitizing the library, he never allowed it to be a barrier and instead encouraged new ideas to flow and provided his collaborators with the required freedom to innovate and come up with solutions that would benefit the community.

Implementing and monitoring the initiative

As a result, new technology initiatives were launched which included development of course pages and creating digital reserves, and all this at a very marginal rise in cost. For example, the library invested in the integration of web search engines with traditional card catalog and on-line library reference materials. Rather than seeing the library as a physical location, these investments in technology, in infrastructures like a search engine, and in digital collections, all created a new vision of the library as a hub of materials that can be consumed in traditional or through technology as a vehicle. The libraries investment in this technology encouraged the digitalization of the library via access, searching and purchasing processes.

Ron was very astute in assessing and understanding the changing role of technology in the world of library. He was aware of the constraints that confined the library from making larger investments in technology and thus sought creative solutions that would make the technology initiative possible.

> "We realized that we had to invest in making the technology more users friendly, more students friendly. We buy the technology, so we have Voyager [their online catalog created as part of the technology initiative], we buy it, we can't change it we don't have the code, we can't make that product any different than what is sold to us, but we can change the front end, so we began inventing different ways of getting into the catalog." (*Ron*)

Most importantly, he redefined the roles and responsibilities of his staff in order to make this happen:

> " So we cut back on their [the librarian's] other duties, outsourced training, and that gave the same number of people freedom then to do the kinds of work that the library was coming to count on, because we were coming more and more the technological center". (*Ron*)

Ron allowed his team all the possible freedom to be creative and approach the problems and constraints as if they are opportunities to accomplish their vision for library. Ron calls this "painting a vision." He believed in articulating a

vision, giving a broad statement – a broad feeling to generate energy and build momentum around a vision – and then empower people to do their job and invent ways to achieve that vision. The success of these initiatives built a strong case for more investment in technology. The integration of new and effective technology in library has since become a continuous process.

7.1.6. Updates to Ron's story

In 2008, Ron decided it was time for him to retire. As he left the University of Rochester Libraries, he also left behind a cadre of capable and dedicated staff and leaders who had played a role in his many innovative initiatives. One of those leaders was appointed as the next Head of Libraries and continued to move forward and expand many of his initiatives, most notably the library facility renovation and the technology integration.

7.2. Analysis of Ron's entrepreneurial activity

7.2.1. Ron's practices about vision

Ron's library budget, facilities and technology initiatives reflect his ability to articulate a clear vision and provide a direction. His decision to take a 2% budget cut when most of the other departments were struggling to protect their budgets was part of his strategy to achieve his vision for the library. He had a very clear idea about how this initiative would contribute in successfully achieving his goals for the library. His voluntary commitment to a budget reduction was appreciated by the top leadership and provided Ron with the necessary platform to develop and strengthen a positive relationship with senior administrators at the university. Ron then successfully capitalized on his strengthened relationship with senior university leaders to make a strong case for the necessity to restructure and upgrade library facilities. In implementing these initiatives Ron was very focused on getting students to come and use library facilities. He was well aware that he needed to urgently do things to upgrade library facilities so as to make it attractive for students. While restructuring the environment was the beginning for Ron, his vision encompassed changing the culture of the library on the University of Rochester campus, which in turn required changing the way his staff and students viewed the library, from a passive location of resources to an engaged location of education and ultimately learning.

Entrepreneurial success demands a clear vision, but it is not enough to have one without having the ability to share it with team members, colleagues and collaborators and inspire them to achieve it. A good sense and understanding of the environment in which a vision would endure and flourish is an important ingredient for entrepreneurial leadership. Ron had the ability to quickly analyze the institutional environment and use it astutely to promote his vision. He also had the skill to communicate it effectively to all his constituencies and initiate dialogue and build confidence in his staff. One of his collaborators described Ron as "a very political animal who really understands the intricacies of the campus politics".

Along with the ability to look at a larger picture and provide a broad vision, Ron also possessed the effective skills of a practitioner who understood how to transform that vision into a reality. He had a very good grasp of ground realities and facts. In his own words,

> "My approach with major change is to articulate a vision, give a broad statement, a broad feeling to generate energy around doing something, build momentum and then don't do anything. And if I'm successful, the people

> I'm trying to convince will have internalized what I have said. … But when I don't do anything, if I've been successful, they will run ahead of me and they will invent it". *(Ron)*

Ron was also very successful in communicating and sharing his vision with his constituencies outside of his staff, and as a result created space for him to challenge the protocol and lead the process of raising additional funds to restructure and upgrade the facilities. He was especially effective at making people feel that *their own dream* and vision – for the library, the students, or the university at large – could be achieved by supporting his initiatives. Ron was constantly making the case for the library. For example, in our interviews with Ron, he consistently gave us his pitch, making us feel as though the library was our library, that we had a vested interested in the how the library has been transformed as a space and how it functions as a part of campus life.

To support these communications, Ron used a number of complementary strategies. First of all, he was a great story teller, and was able to generate excitement about his vision for the library by recounting the development of some of his major innovations, and showing the difference they had made. He also used very effectively visits to the library facilities, especially the newly remodeled spaces, so that people could appreciate first-hand the kind of environment he had been able to create – or, conversely, the dire state of some facilities so as to motivate the need for their renovation. He also had sets of photos about how various spaces looked before and after a renovation that would show the remarkable difference, while always discussing the implications in terms of improving students and faculty's learning experiences and, thus, the core mission of the university.

7.2.2. Ron's practices about opportunities

Ron is a good example of a 'learning leader' who has always been open to new ideas and looked for opportunities in a dynamic environment. 'Success strikes when opportunity meets preparation' – Ron exhibited excellent insight in identifying opportunities and inspired his team to prepare for them in order to achieve their goals.

Ron was an idea generator as well as facilitator of idea as an individual. His colleagues described that he tried to "flood the system with ideas". Flooding the systems with ideas is a key concept that emerged from discussion with and about Ron's library leadership. One was never sure in the discussion of a particular leadership initiative whether the idea was Ron's, his staff's, or someone yet unnamed, rather one was clear that new ideas were valued and that ideas were the fuel of his library leadership. Comments from Ron's collaborators would lead one to believe that while we heard from Ron about projects or initiatives that were successful, not all of his ideas were so successful. Rather, many of them did not succeed or take flight. It was perhaps Ron's open-door policy with staff and his approach to flooding the system with ideas that led one to understand that not all ideas or opportunities became actions, programs or activities that innovated the library, but those that had success were connected strongly to his vision of the library as a place of student learning, where ideas and literature are themselves alive.

Where did Ron find opportunities for innovation? First of all he seemed to be very alert and attuned to the needs of his clients (i.e., the users of the library) and to proactively search to understand what these needs were and how they could be addressed – as illustrated in all of the innovations featured in this chapter. He wanted to understand what the faculty really needed before making his radical revisions of the library's budget and collection. He employed creative ways to discover students' study habits as an integral part of the process of remodeling the library facilities. And he recognized the reliance on technology of today's undergraduate students as a motivation the technology transformation of his library. He was also not afraid to critically examine his practice and the practice of his staff to make sure that it met the needs of the students and faculty using the library, and to suggest even radical changes when he thought they were needed. He was also very aware of what was going on in other libraries and the field of higher education more generally, scanning the environment to identify novel solutions and, thus, opportunities for his library to improve through their adoption. He recognized the contributions that other fields can provide – as especially illustrated by his

looking at technology as a way to revolutionize how a library can support student learning and faculty research, and his decision to hire an anthropologist as part of his staff.

Ron also saw opportunity where others may have seen problems or roadblocks. As we saw in his story, a budget crisis created the context to change the libraries' fundamental approach to collection purchasing and building good will; space in need of enhancement became the opportunity to transform the library into a student-centered place; technology changing the way libraries are experienced became an opportunity to transform the librarians' practices and the type of services offered to students and faculty. And Ron also expected his entire staff to embrace this approach to problems:

> "What I do is I give people the opportunity to solve those problems and I don't deal with them as problems, I deal with them as opportunities." *(Ron)*

While Ron was good at uncovering many opportunities, evaluating which of those opportunities were worthy of investing time and energy was a key element of his process of initiating innovation. While assessing new opportunities, Ron drew from his rich work experience in academia as a professor, educational administrator and a librarian. While Ron was clearly the final "decider" in these cases, he understood leadership to mean that he wanted staff to move forward with ideas of their own accord.

Moving from recognizing an opportunity to acting on it also involves a process of determining which ideas will "take." Ron Dow described that he "floated" a lot of ideas and saw what "sticks," a process of seeing how stakeholders take up or don't take up any given idea. Ron promoted the idea of getting to know students through ethnography assessment approaches, where librarians intentionally gather information from students by talking with them. His commitment to assess what students needed from the library was emphasized by his bringing a university ethnography researcher onto his staff to lead these assessment activities. The formal use of ethnography assessment approaches to understanding the library and its users were an important component of Ron's leadership and understanding of the library; yet his entrepreneurial initiatives were driven not simply by data, but also by a clear vision for the library as a place of student learning and engagement. His push to orient the budget to the collection utilized by students and faculty, to improve facilities, and to advance technology, all fit within a broad vision of the library, one that assessment data supported but did not drive forward. While data supported his thinking, he was also known to make decisions about whether to pursue an opportunity that were bold and more ad hoc.

7.2.3. Ron's practices about risk

The ability to take risk, the skill to evaluate it and the astuteness to minimize it are essential traits of an entrepreneur that Ron demonstrated to a high degree. Ron's initial budget decision, his push to transform the library facilities, and his willingness to support technology development, when they began were all unproven and risky endeavors. In all of these circumstances, Ron seemed to evaluate the risk of "missing the boat" higher than the risk of "sinking the boat."

Ron's leadership revealed not only his appetite for risk, but also his talent for evaluating and minimizing it. For example, suggesting a reduction of 2% in the budget at a time when the library was struggling with poor infrastructure was a decision that involved financial risk. However, the risk involved in this decision was carefully assessed. Ron and his team had a clear strategy to minimize the risk and optimize the benefits derived from it. The library staff was proactively involving faculty and systematically streamlining the library collections by trimming down the less needed collections. Ron and his team knew the significance of strengthening the relationship with university authorities and were aware that only with the support from senior leadership would their various library initiatives be sustained and grow. Ron had evaluated the risk well and was prepared to take the budget cut in return for more autonomy especially in fund raising.

Ron also seemed not afraid of making mistakes, or even having his staff make mistakes, as illustrated for example by his decision to let a staff member go ahead with experimenting with the idea of a digital reserve even if he himself had some reservations to this regard. In fact, Ron was seen by his colleagues as someone who supported the development of ideas realizing that not all ideas will "take hold", or in other words be successful. Ron almost brushed past the multiple ideas

that never "took hold", rather focusing on the successes, seeing the ideas that didn't pan out as a part of the process; indeed making mistakes or unfulfilled efforts were all a part of his leadership.

7.2.4. Ron's practices about resources

Economic and financial barriers are major constraints that an entrepreneur has to deal with to successfully accomplish the set objectives. Ron was very aware of these constraints and had a good understanding of the economic drivers for his organization, while demonstrating creativity and ingenuity to get the resources he needed to make his vision a reality.

First, he strongly held that libraries should invest in Research and Development, stating:

> "Years ago I wrote an article for a financial journal in librarianship arguing that libraries needed to invest in R&D and if we look at companies who remain viable they tend to invest between 4 and 5% of their annual assets in R&D and we should too …" *(Ron)*

Ron saw the need to invest resources in developing new knowledge in librarianship, based upon a business language and budget model. His investments included anthropological research on students and faculty to identify work habits and needs impacting their use of the library, systematic assessment of the major innovations implemented, on-going technology training for his staff, and more generally making sure that all his staff was staying up to date.

While operating in a very decentralized higher education institution, as head of the libraries Ron had very limited opportunities to generate significant revenues through its own operations – and, thus, to increase the funding available to him – except for fund-raising. Rather, his core revenues came from allocations paid by the various academic units, determined each year through negotiations with the Provost. Ron saw these year-to-year budget negotiations as opportunities to generate good will and new opportunities. As observed by a colleague:

> "It is not a matter of numbers … we would get increases in our library budget when nobody else on the campus was, and part of that was that he so well understood the process that he would know what year it was appropriate to go to the provost and say well we understand the university is having a hard time so we're only going to ask for this much and we're going to do it in this way."

It was not simply good will that was created in budget negotiations, but it was also the recognition that Ron was very aware, astute and good with people in relationship to finances. A colleague described Ron's finance dealings in the University this way;

> "He's very astute, I think I wouldn't say clever, I think astute describes him better, he connects with people who can give us money"

Yet major innovations such as renovating the library facilities or other major projects required him to go beyond this core operating budget and look for grants as well as donors willing to support his vision. As described in the story, Ron was very successful in fund-raising, something he perceived as a critical component of his work. Central to his fund-raising practices was the development of relationships with the donor and the ability to provide a compelling case for his vision for the library and how a specific initiative would allow the donors to achieve some of their dreams. Ron articulated his approach to fundraising in the following way:

> "You don't just ask for money, you build a relationship and you create an excitement, you get people interested in what they can do and then you make the ask, and then you celebrate them and then you keep them informed. So there's a process." *(Ron)*

For example, Ron told the following story of fostering a major gift from a senior friend of the university. Due to his long-lasting relationship with the donor, he knew not to directly ask her for money, so rather he took her on the tour of the library and showed her the space he would like to renovate. He described for her what the space could be like and later she asked what it might cost to do the project. He told her and she ultimately made a gift to support the entire project.

Where Ron did have significant discretion, though, was on how to use the funds secured through both the internal budgeting process and fund-raising. With the help of capable staff, he was able to make every dollar count by utilizing many bootstrapping practices. One example is his extensive use of student help in the library to extend library hours and service for minimal cost. Another example was his use and fostering of his existing human resource talent. Ron was known to promote his own or the universities staff, rather than rely on externally attracted expertise. His ability to use staff to pursue library technology, learning and assessment strategies point toward how he was able to add value to the library services using bootstrapping approaches that maximized its limited resources.

Ron recognized the library personnel as a key resource and valued the people with whom he worked a great deal. He believed strongly in creating a supportive environment in which staff could have freedom to succeed and excel. He pointed out that this belief was supported by the low turnover rate of his staff, and the success his staff had in being nationally recognized.

> "One of the reasons that few people leave here is because they can't find any place else to go that will give them that same **amount of freedom**, or have an open enough vision that they will accept what they are now." (*Ron*)

Ron also took the view that individuals of high ability and training, who shared the same vision of the library as the hub of the campus and were passionate about their job, were more important than traditionally qualified staff. In the context of the library, Ron hired PhDs in other disciplines to be librarians rather than simply hiring trained librarians, believing that the educational background in another discipline offered the library a value-added component.

> "We hire the person who can do it the best. [Staff member] couldn't get a job in many libraries because he doesn't have a library degree; he has a doctorate in literature. We can live with that, and we get a really good product". (*Ron*)

Ron emphasized freedom to be creative, support for different types of skills and abilities and the support to try new ideas, even when he was reluctant. An example of this occurred when one of his librarian's championed an idea for which Ron had doubts. Yet, Ron supported the librarian's initiative and ultimately the individual and the idea found success.

> "[A staff member] brought forward a proposal to do digital reserves. She had been reading about it, she thought it was easy to do and I was reluctant, cause I thought you know, this is going to be a lot more expensive. We're going to need new equipment, we're going to need servers, there might be some legal issues. I said well why don't you do a test and come back and tell me what it's going to cost and she never did. She just did it and then came back and said its working and it didn't cost anything, and I said, terrific, you're the employee of the year!" (*Ron*)

A key element of Ron's entrepreneurial leadership was the value he placed on individuals as a part of his team. Ron described himself throughout the interview as wanting to support his staff in bringing ideas forward. He wanted them to assess those ideas carefully, of course, but he was keen on seeing staff as a key resource to be valued, listened too, and engaged in the process of creating a new vision for the library. And he was always ready to "share the glory" with them when their ideas turned out to be successful.

As head of the libraries, Ron's role was more that of conceiving ideas and securing the resources, rather than to carry them out into practice. He simply did not have the time, and often the expertise, to personally oversee the implementation of the initiative he started. For this, he relied on his staff, and once he assigned a project leader to a specific initiative, he gave him/her great autonomy as well as responsibility to carry out the task. He recognized the importance of assigning the right person to this role, and he was good in making this kind of decision.

7.2.5. Ron's practices about growth

In the case of a university library, "growth" as traditionally interpreted (i.e., in terms of achieving an increasingly larger collection, budget, staff and number of customers served) may not be always realistic nor within the control of the

head of the libraries – especially in consideration of the lack of opportunities for generating revenues beyond fund-raising discussed in an earlier section. Indeed, this kind of growth may not even always be necessarily desirable per-se – especially if "growing" the library may occur at the expense of other important functions or operations of the university, given the finite pool of resources. Rather, in this case study we may want to look at growth in terms of the success achieved in providing an increased number of useful – and utilized – services to students and faculty.

Within this interpretation of success and growth, we can confidently state that Ron was driven by the desire to "grow" and throughout his tenure continued to be very successful in this endeavor. It is also interesting to note how "success breeds success" and thus allowed him to take on bolder and bolder innovations overtime – as demonstrated for example very concretely by the growing scope and impact of his facility renovation projects over time.

Since his budget and staff did not grow considerably over time, Ron did not have to deal with the radical transformations in the organizational structure and his own leadership role that are inevitably associated when with "traditional" growth. However, over time he purposely developed and empowered several individuals in his organization to take on more leadership responsibilities – as a way to both grow leadership capacity within the organization and allow him to devote more of his efforts to "big picture" activities and fund-raising.

7.2.6. Other interesting elements of Ron's case

The unique challenges of operating a non-revenue generating unit

While Ron and Pat operated in the same university, and thus were both able to benefit from its decentralized budgeting system and governance, as well as its tradition of entrepreneurial thinking and practices, there was a critical difference between their situations. While the School of Nursing had control on its revenues – as it could raise tuition from students, be awarded research grants, and even as we saw in the previous chapter start some for-profit business lines – Ron's library was not a revenue-generating unit. Therefore, Ron could not increase the size of his budget except through increasing donations and rather depended on Central Administration decisions regarding the size of his budget.

This essentially reduced his ability to generate new funds to fund-raising with individual donors and foundations, and made the need for bootstrapping even greater. At the same time, within these fiscal constraints, as Head of the Libraries Ron had a lot of freedom about how to use the funds at his disposal and how to select and utilize his staff; indeed, many of his innovations could not have taken place without such a freedom.

Taking advantage of the "loosely coupled system" characteristic of universities

Educational organizations – and universities in particular – are great examples of loosely coupled systems. According to Weick (1976) "Loose coupling conveys the image that coupled events are responsive, but that each event has an individual identity and the coupling can vary over time. It also suggests that one can break organizations into largely self-functioning subsystems, and loose coupling is really the "glue" that holds them together". Loosely coupled organizations may detect changes in their environment better than a large, tightly run organization. It provides more diversity to adapt to changing environmental situations by allowing more novel solutions and mutations to occur than a tightly coupled system.

A very sound understanding of the university's organizational structure was Ron's asset and he effectively capitalized on the loosely coupled system that existed in his university as a platform to allow the library organization to persist through rapid environmental fluctuations and fiscal uncertainties. He used this loosely coupled system to improve the library's sensitivity to the environment and allowed local adaptations and creative solutions to develop.

The library was insulated from the market forces and external economic pressures, and this allowed more space for Ron and his team to be creative in their endeavors to restructure and reposition the library on campus. The process of reshaping the organizational culture was very critical, and if not for Ron's maverick approach it would have been an unachievable task in a loosely coupled organization like the University of Rochester.

Capitalizing on the principles of professional bureaucracy

Within the library itself, Ron also initiated, nurtured and effectively used the principles of *professional bureaucracy* (Mintzberg, 1979, 1980). Professional bureaucracy reflects decentralized structure where core professionals or specialists work closely with clients and largely independent from their colleagues. Professional bureaucracy indicates that the work to be done may require great knowledge and skill and tasks to be performed are controlled by those who perform them.

Ron not only hired trained librarians, but recruited professionals and specialists from other disciplines who were very capable and duly trained for the operating core, and then gave them considerable autonomy and control over their work. This approach allowed these professionals to work independently within the organization, but closely with the students and faculty that they served. Throughout his leadership he proactively worked at developing new expectations about the role of librarians and the library on campus, new systems to evaluate new ideas and make timely decisions, open communication expectations and vehicles to invite open two-way communication between leadership and other employees, and most importantly multiple leadership opportunities for his staff. He truly tried to empower his staff to be innovative and entrepreneurial themselves, and that meant giving them room to experiment and take some risks.

Creating crisis as a way to promote innovation

While we have seen in other cases the use of existing crises as a motivation for innovation, Ron occasionally *created* crisis as a way to generate urgency for change and innovation. For example, the potential of a budget cut in the university could be considered more of a difficulty than a crisis, yet Ron used the potential budget cut to create an urgency to change the way in which the library budgeted for purchasing the library collection – one of his most transformational and lasting innovations within the organization.

7.2.7. Concluding thoughts about Ron's case

This case-study reveals a story of how a communicated vision, keen attention to fiscal resource pressures and supportive management of people can generate a context for organizational transformation. The library under Ron's leadership clearly changed in three important ways that added value to the students and faculty it served, as well as the University of Rochester as an institution. First, the library was physically transformed into an inviting space where students and faculty are pleased to be and visitors are brought to see. Second, the library moved from being library centered to being student centered, focusing on how the library could be an important partner is the education of college students and adding to the learning experience of the students. Third, the library was transformed into a forward-looking technology center, where the vision of the library as a "place of books" is transformed into a digital hug of disciplinary knowledge and learning and students can access the collections in ways that may be more efficient and close to the way they are used to operating. Perhaps the single most entrepreneurial leadership act undertaken by Ron, though, and the biggest value he added to the university was not the voluntary budget cut, renovation of the library facilities, or the development of any specific new technology, but instead it was the use of each of those initiatives as opportunities to transform the culture of the library from a passive environment to one that is active, engaged in outreach and sees itself as a core component of the educational mission of the university – thus enacting Ron's vision of the library as an educational space that is not a service, but a foundation of students' educational experience.

These contributions to the University, its students and faculty, came as the result of not just a few major initiatives – although these were clearly critical – but also from Ron's continuous engagement in innovations, both big (like the budget initiative) and small (like allowing food and drink in the library). Each of his big initiatives can also be seen as resulting from the collection of a number of smaller ones – as the facilities renovations, for example, not only developed "one room at a time", but were also interspersed with important moves such as hiring an anthropologist to lead the study of students' campus life and work habits, and training librarians so as to gather the needed input to inform the renovations. Altogether, Ron's initiatives spanned across many areas, including offering new services for library users,

starting a new budgeting system, facilities projects, restructuring staff roles and responsibilities, and overall changing the culture of the library.

None of these efforts would have been possible had it not been for Ron's first initiative, to have a vision to realign the library with key faculty disciplinary collections in a time of a budget crunch. The opportunity to transform how the collections were purchased created good-will with administrators and faculty alike. As Ron said, "faculty was satisfied—the only things they said to the provost were positive things."

The case of Ron Dow presents a story of how entrepreneurial leadership can add in organizational transformation when both core academic values and fiscal resources issues are attended to simultaneously. While there may be academic examples where entrepreneurial processes and practices create contexts for the application of business ideas to higher education that threaten core activities and values of universities, none of that is clear here. Rather, Ron's leadership affirmed at every turn the institutional commitments to disciplinary scholarship and to student engagement in learning, as well as to the key idea that the library is a central and common component of academic life. Ron's leadership is a case-in-point example of the potential of entrepreneurial thinking and action when applied to the challenges of leadership in higher education. Ron was effective and successful in taking advantage of the loosely coupled organizational structure, which also allowed him sufficient space to be a maverick in his approach. Ron used fiscal resource tensions to drive change and saw his job as providing the resources to maintain and advance the library as a place of active learning. His vision of the library was compelling to think about and made that much more appealing when you sat and listened to him selling you on the virtues of the library. His entrepreneurial leadership provided solutions to problems faced by mission-oriented institutions, who also ultimately have to survive, sustain and grow in a world with harm economic realities.

The fiscal realities of higher education make it clear that the academy needs leaders that consider both the fundamental mission of institutions to be places where students can be transformed through the acquisition of knowledge and skills. However, this transformation needs to happen in the context of leadership that attends carefully to providing resources that can make lofty mission statements possible. Ron's sage leadership through difficult budget times begs the question of not simply, "Is there an entrepreneur in the library?" but "Where else do institutions of higher education need entrepreneurs that have the sense to balance fiscal tensions with core academic intentions?"

7.3. Commentaries on Ron's case

We are collecting readers' insights and lessons learned from reading Ron's case on the companion website, and we invite you to add yours by following the specific guidelines provided in the "**Guidelines for Contributions**" document.

Posted commentaries about Ron's case – *None available yet*

CHAPTER 8.

Mary Rapp's case: Achieving systemic reform in a public school

Judith Fonzi & Raffaella Borasi

Mary's Profile

As a principal and assistant superintendent of instruction in a suburban school district, Mary Rapp took a leadership role in several school reform initiatives aimed at improving the quality of instruction – despite the many obstacles to innovation presented by a public school setting. Her innovations included, among many others, developing the first school-wide and district-wide curricular frameworks, adopting research-based reform curricula for mathematics, and changes in the teacher evaluation process.

8.1. Mary's story

8.1.1. Introduction to Mary's case

In this chapter we report on the case study of Mary Rapp as an innovative Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction, from 1997 to 2006, in a suburban district where she had been an elementary principal for the previous nine years.

This was a period of great change in K-12 education, as recommendations from educational research clashed with conflicting political and economic pressures. On one side, we had studies calling for change in *who we teach* (claiming that all students have the right to a high quality education and that the needs of many students have been underserved by our current system), *what gets taught* (to keep up with advancing knowledge and our increasingly complex and technological world), *how we teach* (in light of current research about how people learn), and *how we assess learning* (to determine if what learned can be applied in meaningful situations). In contrast, in the political arena we witnessed a movement towards accountability and standardization, which often translated into high-stakes tests privileging routine skills and knowledge, which in turn influenced what got taught and encouraged more drill and practice (in contrast to recommendations of research about how people learn). These opposing calls for reform were also occurring together with cuts at the state and local level that required districts to reduce per pupil spending, resulting sometimes in counter-productive changes such as increased class sizes and reduced funds and opportunities for professional development. Add to this mix a laundry list of state and local calls for change and you have K-12 education chaos!

Despite this challenging and at time disheartening context, Mary never gave up coming up with new ideas to increase the learning opportunities offered to students in her district, and carrying them out in the face of inevitable resistance and obstacles. Among the innovations she promoted were ambitious and high-impact ones such as developing district-wide "curricula" for all subjects and grades to ensure all students' exposure to high quality content and instruction, leading a comprehensive reform initiative in K-12 mathematics instruction, and contributing to new models for professional development and teacher evaluation. As such, her story shows us what a committed, capable and

innovative school leader can do to significantly improve instruction and learning for all students – even within the many challenges of public education.

Throughout her career as an educator – first as an elementary teacher in both private and public settings, then as a principal and assistant superintendent at Penfield, and even later as a faculty preparing future school leaders – Mary's actions were informed by a vision for education that she refered to as a "humanistic philosophy." At the core of this vision was that schools should foster and enhance students' ability to think and problem solve and do so in a way that honors individuality – thus educating them for participation in a democracy. In her own words:

> "I feel so strongly that the student's cognitive uniqueness and identity have to be fostered, enhanced … I came out of a Catholic education, which stressed memorization and which had no recognition of who I was or of helping me to develop who I was … I really want kids to learn to think well … so that they'd know how to identify a problem and to approach solving it … but [also] to do this in such a way that really honors individuality. … my point is, it was about educating students for democracy. And it was about what you needed in a democracy – this ability to think for oneself, and to be oneself, and … to be a member of a community." (*Mary*)

To better understand the context in which Mary operated as a school leader, in Figure 8.1 we have provided some key factual information about the Penfield district at the time of our study. Additional information about other aspects, such as district culture and its changes overtime, or specific issues and pressures Mary faced, will be introduced in the narrative of her "story" as most appropriate.

Figure 8.1. *Penfield District Profile (as of 2006, when Mary retired)*

District characteristics:

- Midsize suburban district (6 schools: 4 elementary, 1 middle and 1 high)
- *Median family income:* $65,000
- *Percentage of free/reduced lunches:* 8
- *Students:* 4,800
- *Teachers:* about 450
- *Graduation rate:* 91%

Student demographics:

- 90% White; 4% African American; 2% Latino/a; 4% Asian or Pacific Islander
- 1 % student with limited English proficiency

Organizational structure:

- *Key reporting chain:* Teachers/building staff ⇗ building principals ⇗ Superintendent ⇗ Board of Education
- *Other key personnel:* Department chairs (⇗ principal); teachers on special assignment/TOSA (⇗ principal or ASI, depending on job description); POSA **(**principal on special assignment**,** Director of PD, (⇗ ASI); Assistant Superintendent for Business Affairs (⇗ Superintendent); Assistant Superintendent for Personnel ⇗ Superintendent

Subject's positions:

- *Building Principal (1987-96):* responsible for all educational programs within the building, hires for building level positions
- *Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum & Instruction* (ASI) (1997-2006): ultimately responsible for all

educational programs, and effectively in charge of the instructional budget (with ultimate oversee by Superintendent and Board); hires for/appoints many district level positions.

8.1.2. Highlights of Mary's professional journey

Early experiences as a teacher

Some people can pinpoint the moment they decided on their career. For others, it is an evolution of places and experiences. Such was the case for Mary. A graduate of catholic schools, where she said she was typically taught to memorize not problem solve, Mary reported that her decision to become an educator and her vision for education truly began as an undergraduate at the University of Rochester (UR). At that time, Mary was one of a group of students who, under the leadership of a professor, started a school based on the British Infant School System – the Atkinson School.

> "When I was doing my undergraduate work, I became involved with a group that started a school. It was the late 60s/70s and there was a group of people that I was part of that felt that public schooling was not maximizing the potential of young children. And a number of us were in a psych of education class together and so we started to pull this together, and we started a school called the Atkinson school. … And it was a school for preschool to fifth graders and we intended it to be modeled on the British Infant School model." *(Mary)*
>
> "…it was great fun, there was a lot of energy in this group. I was not the leader, it was the professor who was leading the group and numbers of us from the class joined, and people from the community also joined." *(Mary)*

The school, which Mary calls her "first initiative," lasted nine years, although Mary only stayed on for the planning and first year of implementation, as she disagreed with the philosophy of the Head Teacher. Mary then spent a few years teaching in a private elementary school, where she was able to carry-out her beliefs about what schools should do for kids. She soon moved on to teach in a public school, driven by the desire to offer the same opportunities to all children.

> "I had a belief…that what we wanted to do at the Atkinson School, and what I did do at this other small private school … should be available to kids at public school." *(Mary)*

Her first job in a public school involved teaching first graders who were not ready for formal schooling. So, she proposed and carried out a new program to address this situation:

> "I started to teach 1st grade in [a public] school and at that point we had kids coming in to first grade who were not ready for the curriculum. First grade curriculum was pretty "lock-step" then, so my next foray was to propose a program to the school principal that would be specifically designed for two groups of kids: a group of kids who weren't ready for their first grade curriculum … to be integrated in the classroom with a group of kids who were ready for 1st grade, so they would have role models." *(Mary)*

Experiences as an innovative elementary principal

After nine years of teaching, Mary moved on to be principal of a rural elementary school. Three years later, in 1987, Mary became principal at an elementary school in the Penfield District.

When Mary applied to the Penfield District, there were two principalship positions open, and she really wanted to work in the more progressive school—so she told the Superintendent she would only consider that job! Mary recalls:

> "[This] elementary school is a school that doesn't have walls. So the classrooms were organized into groups of six, five classrooms around a central area. The school was started in '69, about the same time I was starting the Atkinson School, with the idea that there would be a different kind of education available to kids. And the teachers were really thinking about continuous progress when they started the school. And I really didn't want to go to the "normal school," I wanted to go to [this more progressive] elementary school … When the

Superintendent called to offer me the job I had the boldness to say, "I really would be happy to work with Penfield but only if I could be principal of the [progressive] Elementary School … and that I really wasn't interested in [the other] elementary school." (*Mary*)

As she started as principal of her elementary school in Penfield, Mary felt reaffirmed in her belief that this was the kind of school she wanted to lead:

"It's a wonderful school; the culture was so strong. Teachers could see each other, their teaching improved because they could hear each other. They're absolutely committed to kids; there's never any question that you had to do what's right for kids" (*Mary*)

Mary soon learned that the culture in the district was one where "teachers do their own thing when and how they want to". As a result, she also discovered that, as kids moved through the grades, they were often encountering repetition, gaps, and instruction informed by very different beliefs about how students learn. There was little coordination within and across grades.

"So I got there and analyzed the situation there and found that the faculty was still very committed to continuous progress, but over time that had gotten translated into: everybody in the math class had a workbook and you worked through the workbook at your own pace. And so there really wasn't much going on in the way of instruction. … So that was a real concern to me. And also at that school, there were four basal programs in use with the idea being that children learn differently … which meant that a child could be learning all phonics in 1st grade and Look-Say at 2nd grade and back to phonics in 3rd grade and onto something else in 4th grade." (*Mary*)

Looking into the district's policies, Mary also learned that the district at the time did not have a policy or practice of coordinating curriculum or instructional practices – something she felt was important to ensure that all students had the best opportunities to learn and grow. So, one of her first initiatives as principal was to establish and co-lead a committee that would develop a comprehensive "reading curriculum" for her school. This reading curriculum was intended to help coordinate what teachers were doing within and across grade levels, as well as improve reading instruction overall by articulating common goals, identifying research-based instructional strategies, and generating a list of good literature for students.

"So I was the administrator on the Language Arts committee and we wrote the first-ever 'reading curriculum' for Penfield, which was not lock-step…it was a continuum of skills that you started with. And then we started reading real books. This was back when basals didn't even have snippets of good literature. That was back when they read 'sit on the mat, the cat's name is Pat. Pat the dog.' … So we chose literature [for children to read]." (*Mary*)

Because reading instruction is the responsibility of all elementary classroom teachers, this innovation impacted all of the teachers in Mary's school and significantly affected how teachers did their work. In addition to fostering changes in classroom instruction, this innovation fostered changes in their professional practice. Teachers began talking about their beliefs, instructional practices and curriculum in other content areas.

As a principal, Mary continued to seize opportunities to influence the culture of the school and kept the focus on maximizing the potential of every student. She realized early on that a key to ensuring that students had the best learning opportunities was to focus on teaching quality and teacher decision-making. The process used to evaluate teachers in her school at the time entailed "grading" the teacher as S or U at the end of the year, with a few descriptive sentences and a separate "grade" for each of 7 or 8 categories; she started questioning if this evaluation process was adequate to foster teachers' growth and improve their instructional practices.

Unsatisfied with the current process for teacher evaluations, Mary used existing permissive language on the teachers' contract and obtained the cooperation of the union and her teachers to initiate a new portfolio-based process that she believed would encourage her teachers to "extend their thinking" and "become better at what they do":

"My idea was that my teachers would be better teachers if I could help them be better thinkers about teaching. So, one of the ways to do that was to get them involved in portfolios. So I got permission from the union to set aside the negotiated program that they used to evaluate teachers, and teachers started setting goals and sharing their goals with me, and then collecting evidence of their progress toward that goal over the course of the year. And then every 3 years, teachers in Penfield have a very big evaluation and I would use their portfolio as the basis for that evaluation." (*Mary*)

This system was successfully put into place in the elementary school where Mary was the principal. Interestingly, a few years later the entire district revised its teacher evaluation system, using what done in Mary's elementary school as an inspiration and model:

> "Having done that in [my] elementary school, it opened the way for a completely new evaluation system in the district. It's not a portfolio system as such, but what happened was the union and the administration set up a committee that would seek to change the evaluation system. And here we had at [my] elementary school this lovely model that was in action already and while it took that committee probably six years to actually change the evaluation system, what we came out with was an evidence-based system. And so it truly made an impact." (*Mary*)

A few years later, Mary was faced with another challenge related to the evaluation of her teachers, which motivated yet another innovation. This involved the introduction of "Collegial Circles" – that is, groups of teachers meeting on a regular basis to investigate and learn about a topic, issue, or instructional strategy they are all interested in, with the goal of improving one's practice – as an alternative to direct classroom observations by the principal. This was a novel idea at the time, although Collegial Circles are quite widely used in public schools. What prompted this change was the personal need to figure out a way to handle the number of classroom observations she was expected to conduct as a principal.

> "In the middle here, we created something called 'Collegial Circles.' This was borne out of need…I was still principal, my faculty was turning over, I was getting new teachers and lots of people were retiring. New teachers need to be observed many more times than tenured teachers and I was dying…because I was having pre-observation conferences, I was observing, I was having a post-observation conference, I was then writing up the conference and giving it to them and if they wanted to talk about it … they could meet with me again. So I was dying. So I proposed to the union that teachers, on their off years, the year they weren't getting their three-year big [review]… that teachers could put themselves into small collegial circles, identify an action plan or problem they wanted to solve or something they wanted to study; and that they could do that instead of being observed that year." (*Mary*)

The Collegial Circle option also later became part of the district-wide new evaluation process for teachers, supporting the goal of teacher improvement and fostering a more collaborative culture within and across grade levels.

> "And again, that went from [my] elementary school to the district, so, for several years now, all the teachers in the district have had the ability to be in a collegial circle on the years that they're not receiving their big evaluation and they do it, if their principal agrees, in lieu of an observation session." (*Mary*)

Each of these school-based innovations informed major district-wide initiatives later on, as Mary moved to the position of Assistant Superintendent for Instruction.

Moving to the role of Assistant Superintendent

Mary explained that her move from Principal to Assistant Superintendent was a carefully thought-out one. On one hand, she felt satisfied with what she had accomplished for her school and was ready to move on:

> "I had been at the principalship for 9 years, and I had set goals and they had been accomplished … truly very ambitious goals had been accomplished. So it was time either to set a new round of goals or to move on. This was very conscious thinking at that time … I didn't have the heart to set a whole new set of goals … I started thinking about what would be next with my life." (*Mary*)

At the same time, she also felt the drive to move to a higher administrative position as a way to impact more students:

> "Here I am, now the district is my palette and I'm still back to thinking, "we should be able to do in public school what we were able to do in the little private schools." Okay, I did it in the classroom, I did it at the school, now let's see if I can do it at the district." (*Mary*)

So, when the Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction (ASI) left and Mary was asked to take on this position (first as Interim, and then as a permanent role), she was ready for it.

By this time, the mid 90s, the calls for change were approaching full volume. The national standards movement was sweeping the nation and impacting all of the state's curricula. New laws regarding students with disabilities brought these students back into the mainstream classrooms. The state education department instituted grade 4 and

8 assessments in mathematics and ELA and began what would be become a series of changes to the high school graduation requirements. We were also seeing local budget cuts, school closings, and urban flight. But Mary remained optimistic, and she spent nine very active years as ASI coordinating and leading collaborative work that sought to maximize the potential of all students while honoring their individuality.

In what follows, we will report on three major innovations Mary carried out as ASI, chosen as especially illustrative of her practices in this position.

8.1.3. Mary's innovation #1: Writing the first district-wide curricula

How the idea came about and was evaluated/refined

Coming into the position of Assistant Superintendent, Mary knew that the district did not have articulated curricula – i.e., learning outcomes and means to assess these outcomes across grade levels and within subject areas. And, based on her prior experience developing a first reading curriculum as an elementary principal in the same district, as well as her knowledge of the literature, she continued to believe that without such curricula, reform would not go very far:

Mary wanted all students to have more and better opportunities to learn.

> "So the vision for curriculum was to get commitment amongst the teachers and to build a set of agreements about what it is we teach. So that a student would have an integrated, coherent, program. … that a student moving through the school district would have learning opportunities that have been consciously coordinated across levels." (*Mary*)

She also knew from her previous experience developing the reading curriculum in her elementary school that engaging teachers in the process of curriculum writing could have a positive effect on their professional practice.

> "Well, one of my beliefs is that … one of the easiest ways for people to change is to be engaged in activities. And so, if I can get a teacher engaged in using this curriculum, because it's organized around essential questions and concepts, if I can get a teacher doing that a little bit, what I'm actually doing is helping their thinking change about what you do when you teach. So that's really powerful to me, and that was one of the issues when we wrote curriculum—not only that it had to be robust, but in its robustness, it's the magnet pulling teachers into more sophisticated thinking about teaching." (*Mary*)

Mary knew that putting together these curricula would not be easy, as it would require teachers to give up the common assumption that "they could do whatever they wanted" behind their closed classroom doors – the current culture in the district. But, having already successfully accomplished the writing of the reading curriculum at her elementary school, Mary had confidence that she could succeed in this endeavor. She also felt that the organization was as ready as it could ever be to undertake such an initiative.

Mary was willing to put the time and effort needed to oversee this initiative personally, as she believed it would represent one of the most critical components in implementing her vision.

Mary was very aware that writing curricula for all subjects and all grades in the district would be a monumental, daunting and time-consuming task. However, she ultimately decided to undertake it because of her belief that this would make a real difference in terms of the learning opportunities offered to all students in the district for many years to come.

> "Having a guaranteed and viable curriculum is a research-based indicator of opportunities for students to learn. You can expect a large effect-size in student achievement in the school district that has a viable and guaranteed curriculum." (*Mary*)

Planning and gathering the needed resources

To achieve the ambitious goal of developing district-wide curricula, Mary employed the "signature process" she had developed earlier in her administrative career. Before involving others in this initiative, Mary engaged in what she calls

a "period of input" where she spent time developing her own thinking about writing curricula by attending national conferences, reading the literature and talking with researchers and experts, as well as listening to other people in the district so that she could get a sense of the value others in her district might offer. She explained:

> "Because, when I move forward with one of these projects, I always engage teachers, but I have to be grounded myself before engaging teachers, so that I have a sense of the value of what's being offered." (*Mary*)

Towards the end of this "input" period, Mary secured the collaboration of a few influential and strategic colleagues – the curriculum assessment coach, the coordinator of professional development, and a principal – to grapple with the idea of written district-wide curricula in all subjects, and more specifically to develop a format or template to ensure consistency and high-quality across these curricula.

> "The big issue—the big decision—was how to organize the format of the curriculum. Because the form in which we were going to ask people to do this work was going to direct their thinking, so we needed to come up with a format that could remain robust for ten years—because by the time we had a whole curriculum, at the appropriate level of quality, it might be ten years!" (*Mary*)

> "Writing curriculum … entailed choosing a framework that would work, that would be standardized across the district and would point people in the right direction. So enduring understandings, essential questions, alignment of assessment to the unit outcomes—that all got expressed in a template, by me with teachers, and now five or six years later we've almost written curriculum for everything we teach." (*Mary*)

She also thought strategically about who else in the district should be involved to gather the necessary support for such a major initiative, as well as to begin to develop people who could later lead the curriculum writing work across the district. Most notably, she involved the curriculum development committee in creating the template to be later used by each curriculum writing group – as this committee was made up of teachers and has some decision power on how the summer curriculum work would be defined and assigned.

> "There's a curriculum development committee that is a teacher committee (they have people who make the decisions about summer funding) so that group of people had to first sign on to the goal that I wanted, then participate in some way in getting this template designed and used universally." (*Mary*)

She also used this process as a way to develop people who could later lead the curriculum writing work in the district in ways that she could not, given as official role as ASI.

She purposefully did not publicize these first informal efforts until she was confident in what she wanted to propose.

Implementing and monitoring the initiative

Mary purposefully implemented this initiative incrementally, starting with carefully selected subjects and grade levels, with an overall plan that would cover all subjects and grade levels over a few years – and then hopefully start all over again. She felt that curricula should not become stale and the process of regularly reviewing curricula would maintain the district and the teachers on the cutting edge.

Mary identified three critical elements in the implementation of this initiative after the template had been created by the small group:

1. Rolling out the template, thus establishing the expectations about how curricula should be written.
2. Getting people to use the curricula that had been written.
3. Establishing a system to ensure quality control of the written curricula.

Each of these elements presented its own challenges, which Mary set out to address creatively using her deep understanding of the district's culture and operations. The first step, rolling out the template, was more challenging than one might expect, because the culture of the district at that time was, "you do whatever you want, whenever you want." So, teachers not only had to buy into a change in practices (i.e., having district-wide written curricula) that would take away some of their autonomy, but they also had to use a given template for writing these curricula.

Indeed, Mary received considerable objections from the teacher's union for changing the process for writing curricula.

> "Now I will say, this was very unpopular with the union … "How dare she tell us how to write curriculum?" And so there was a lot of pushback. And basically, I was a stone wall. I didn't engage, because my title as assistant

superintendent for curriculum and instruction … empowers me to make these kinds of decisions. [I said] 'I made it in consultation with teachers. It is what it is, and after you've used it for a year, I'd be glad to hear your input and consider adjustments, but this is it folks.'" *(Mary)*

The curriculum development committee, in conjunction with the team that developed the template, decided that teachers had to attend a workshop introducing the template and its rationale before they could participate in the summer curriculum writing. This group, together with Mary, also identified what curriculum writing would be funded in the first summer (as the curriculum development committee was in charge of deciding how to spend the funds which had already been ear-marked for the summer).

Mary also expected teachers to resist implementing the completed curricula as teachers have "doors that close" and they have patterns of behavior – the culture in the district being that 'I am in charge of what happens in this class and I make those decisions'. This culture, coupled with the fact that teachers – who already felt pressed for time – were going to have to search for materials and develop new lessons and assessments on their own time, required a very carefully thought-out implementation plan. Implementation had to be embedded in everyday practice; it had to become part of what was expected of teachers and administrators. Having anticipated this, Mary laid the groundwork to push on implementation in two ways: (a) through the required principal observations, and (b) by setting new expectations for the annual reports to be presented to the Board of Education:

> "… principals were directed, requested, cajoled, into – at the pre-observation conference – asking the teacher, "where does the lesson you're teaching fit into the written curriculum? What unit are you on? What goals are you reaching for?" so that people would say, "hmm, better get that document out." And of course, after that happens once you tell your colleagues and pretty soon people are coming in ready" *(Mary)*

> "Then another pathway I used was [in] designing the format that we would use for the next cycle [of program reviews by the Board of Education] [where] I added the number of units that had been written in the district's curriculum template. So that meant that for the next five years, every time we were going to the Board of Education to talk about [a program] they had to go and count their units." *(Mary)*

During this implementation, however, Mary found that the quality of the curricula that had been produced during the summer work was uneven. Earlier on, Mary had identified a teacher who was especially talented at writing curricula and had her facilitate the required pre-requisite workshop. To ensure more consistent quality in the curricula produced, she proposed that the curriculum development committee require all subsequent curriculum writing projects to be facilitated by a teacher skilled at curriculum writing.

At the time of our interviews Mary was proud to share that 90% of the programs in the district had a written comprehensive and cohesive curriculum to guide teachers' instruction.

> "Well, we've already rewritten things that we wrote six years ago. But the template has stayed relatively the same; we've made very few changes in it. And it still has vitality for many years to come." *(Mary)*

Ensuring long-term sustainability and/or bigger impact

This approach to curriculum writing came together with a process that could be replicated for different subjects and grade levels overtime, and it included the expectation that it would be repeated after a certain number of years to keep each curriculum vital through revisions and updates.

It is important to note that calling for a change in practice from one where teachers are free to teach what they want when they want, to one where all students in a grade level or course will be held to the same learning outcomes, transformed the entire culture of the district from one of isolation toward one of collaboration on behalf of students. Moving forward, instruction would be guided by research and best practices in the field.

The ability demonstrated in this initiative to get key players to develop ownership for the vision and the process, as well as to anticipate challenges and needs, are emblematic of Mary's leadership skills.

8.1.4. Mary's innovation #2: An attempt at addressing differentiated instruction

How the idea came about and was evaluated/refined

Relatively early in her tenure as ASI, Mary became aware that district administrators (including the superintendent), as well as teachers, were realizing the students were not being well served by the "one size fits all" approach to instruction that pervaded the district. This was true in general, but it was particularly obvious in mathematics. At the middle school, some students were bored and some were not succeeding. In the high school, the state test scores were not as high as they should be.

Working with a group of teachers and administrators, Mary seized this public discontent as an opportunity to challenge teachers and administrators to examine their instructional practices. This started with a movement towards differentiated instruction (DI) (Tomlinson, 1999), initiated by a middle school teacher.

> "I learned about differentiated instruction in the process of trying to figure out what to do about math. […] This was NOT a case where I was out in front at conferences learning. This was a case of the teacher [and a principal] bringing it to me, "have you looked at this?" And I hadn't. I had a principal in the middle school who saw DI as THE answer to the middle school instructional divide. And she very much wanted that to be the initiative for her school. I supported her with resources … so that got moving with my support but not my leadership." (*Mary*)

Planning and gathering the needed resources

Several teachers and principals were sent to Dr. Tomlinson's differentiated instruction leadership training and became the districts' teacher leaders for this initiative.

Implementing and monitoring the initiative

While the concept of differentiated instruction was initially recognized as 'the right thing to do for kids,' as time went on these teacher leaders began encountering considerable resistance from their peers. Some teachers felt burdened by the expectation that they could, should, and would differentiate every lesson and assessment tool, while others felt they had already accomplished differentiation using their own methods. Ultimately, some teachers began to challenge the underlying principles of the formal differentiated instruction program and solicited allies among parents and community members.

In order to maintain a commitment to the underlying principles informing differentiation, Mary decided to quietly move away from Tomlinson's formal program but continue to push teachers to consider the needs of all students.

While this may be considered by some a "failed innovation," we included it in our story to show how Mary was a master at knowing when to move full speed ahead, when to slow down, and when to shelve initiatives. She had a network of people who were her eyes and ears on the ground. She trusted their interpretations and was comfortable making mid-course corrections. At the same time, in a way this initiative prepared the ground for a larger systemic reform initiative of the K-12 math program, which Mary initiated soon after her "strategic retreat" from pursing differentiated instructions.

8.1.5. Mary's innovation #3: Leading a district-wide mathematics reform initiative

How the idea came about and was evaluated/refined

Developing a more rigorous K-12 mathematics program and improving student mathematics achievement was a major initiative that Mary undertook as Assistant Superintendent of Instruction over a period of several years.

This initiative began in response to a few simultaneous 'grass fires.' These 'grass fires,' which might also be thought

of as 'the perfect storm,' included (a) K-5 teachers' desire for a new mathematics textbook; (b) middle school teachers' and administrators' dissatisfaction with how students were accelerated in mathematics; (c) the district's engagement in writing district-wide curricula (as part of the initiative described as Mary's Innovation #1), and (d) the creation of a professional development team to develop a professional development plan for the entire district. Though Mary considered this set of circumstances to be a "hot political issue," she also believed there was opportunity here for effecting some significant and needed change. From her vantage point looking across the district, she actively sought a way to weave these disparate factors together to improve mathematics instruction and ultimately student achievement.

This is a good example of how Mary capitalized on her role as ASI to create synergy among different forces and events, always directed towards the implementation of her overall vision.

> "I think this happens over and over again, because I'm in a position in this district where I can see how all the things connect." *(Mary)*

At this critical time, Mary met Judi Fonzi, a mathematics educator from the University of Rochester who had been working with some local districts to implement an inquiry approach to teaching mathematics and was putting together a grant proposal to support the continuation of this work. After some mutual interviewing, the two decided that their visions and goals were aligned, and Mary invited Judi to work with the teachers in the district.

> "Judi Fonzi — here's the opportunist [in me]— offered resources to us in terms of ways of thinking about mathematics and materials for mathematics and a research project. And Judi sort of interviewed me and I sort of interviewed her—it was happening simultaneously—and I judged that I had a connection to the University of Rochester, so that's a good start because that's my alma mater, but I judged that the two organizations' interests could mesh, that we could benefit from this. And so the UR started to help us to look at materials, which then became more than I ever bargained for! (laughs)" *(Mary)*

The decision to partner with the UR was grounded first of all in Mary's belief that engaging in systemic change addressing both curriculum content and pedagogy in mathematics that would be very instrumental to giving students in the district the opportunities to learn significant content and learn to "problem solve and think" – goals that were at the very core of her vision. She was also not concerned about finding the necessary funding to support the initiative, as she had always been able to find sufficient internal funding to implement any initiative she thought really worthwhile. Furthermore, she realized that the grant, if funded, would provide even additional resources.

So, Mary began to work with Judi to reconceive her initial idea to make some changes in her district's mathematics program, in such a way that would allow her to capitalize on this new opportunity and aim even higher than she had originally expected.

Planning and gathering the needed resources

As a result of this collaboration, the Penfield district joined with a few other districts and the UR to write two grant proposals, one to the New York State Education Department and later one to the National Science Foundation (NSF), that were both awarded. The first grant was to develop a cadre of lead teachers that would work with their colleagues to learn about mathematics reform, begin making changes in their instructional practices, and examine for possible adoption the recently published mathematics curricula materials that had been developed as part of a major effort from the National Science Foundation. The second grant was designed to continue the development of lead teachers and to focus on deepening and enhancing teachers', administrators', parents' and community members' mathematical content knowledge.

Mary recognized that this collaboration was critical to her reform initiative, because the grants brought not only financial resources that she could use synergistically to achieve her goals, but also critical expertise the district did not have:

> "To provide [similar] professional development we would have had to figure out ourselves where we were going, we would have had to read all of the research. I have no idea how far we would have gotten without the resources that Judi brought to the project." *(Mary)*

Person-power for carrying out the initiative was also enhanced by the two grants, as they made it possible to create and support a cadre of teacher leaders engaged in a leadership development program to learn to support their colleagues.

Interestingly, Mary chose to structure all these new teacher leadership positions through short-term contracts as "teacher on special assignment (TOSA)". She created two 5-year such positions, and hired substitutes to cover for their original duties.

Implementing and monitoring the initiative

This complex initiative spread over many years and was not implemented in a linear or pre-determined way. The following points represent the initial steps which focused primarily on the elementary grades, with the middle and high school grades weaving in over time, mostly as a result of grant funding.

- A few middle school teachers, who had been working with Judi Fonzi prior to the formal arrangement with the district, asked Mary if they could pilot some of the new NSF-funded curriculum materials with a group of students over three years. Mary agreed and worked with the principal to figure out the necessary scheduling changes.
- K-5 teachers attended conferences funded by the state and NSF grants to learn about NSF-funded instructional materials.
- K-5 texts from one of the NSF-funded curricula were adopted, and their implementation was phased in over a seven-year process, one grade at a time.
- Professional development went on, supported by the district and the grants, to prepare teachers to teach using these non-traditional curricula and employing the constructivist pedagogy called for by these materials.
- The mathematics teacher leaders also played a very important role throughout this process.

Mary played a key role at critical points in this process. For example, she inserted a new criterion into the K-5 text decision-making process—the book or program had to be consonant with the NSF approach to teaching mathematics (i.e., one informed by constructivist learning theories).

> "It comes time to make a decision for the elementary school about books. And those decisions are generally made by an elementary committee. The process is they make a recommendation to the elementary principals' group that I chair and then the principals and I make a decision and take it to the board. We'd been working in the project for a year and – I don't know how I got away with this, but I did! – I said that whatever was to be recommended for the elementary book or program, needed to be consonant with the National Science Foundation approach to teaching mathematics. … How I got away with it? I think it was [because] the teachers who were on that committee were convinced enough that that was the right thing to do." (*Mary*)

She also worked closely and very strategically with the middle school principal in order to address the initial resistance from some teachers in that school:

> "At the middle school, there was more resistance amongst the teachers but [they had] a very influential principal, a very strong principal who was a very strong ally of mine … and we were able to sit together and design. Once we knew where we wanted to go, we had a teacher colleague or two … who could help us know how realistic it was. … So we knew how fast we wanted to go there. And then … [the teachers leaders] would propose input for the principal, who went to the department and made the case. He had the skills to use his own position and his own influence and to call a vote of the department and to have a unanimous vote, and then to write it up in a memo to me so that it was carved in stone and everybody knew how the decision had been made. So it wasn't that there wasn't resistance, but the principal and I and the teacher leaders would sit down and figure out "What are we going to do and how are we going to make that happen?" (*Mary*)

Mary recalls how at first everything seemed to be working very well, especially at the elementary level:

> "And during all that time, we had committees working, we had all of the professional development from the university, we had [an] elementary principal really doing a lot of leadership. We had parent meetings. It was a very smooth implementation. There wasn't a bump in the road. I mean, it was hard learning, it took a lot of time, but in terms of doing it, I think it went really smoothly. … I'm not sure I know everything that happened, but it just kept happening. And part of keeping it moving was, at that point in the grant, we had teacher leaders … the teachers who supported teachers were getting training so they would be good at that and would be thoughtful about that, and so I think that's why that implementation went so smoothly." (*Mary*)

However, as the high school began to implement an NSF-funded mathematics curriculum, a few teachers who had refused to participate in the professional development began complaining about the content and instructional approach. Despite Mary's early awareness of the situation, her intervention to provide a forum for everyone to present their thoughts, and her decision to slow down the implementation, these disgruntled teachers made their feelings known to students and some parents.

A small, but very vocal, group of parents began a campaign to "get rid of the new programs and return to how and what we used to teach". Mary pressed forward, gathering examples of powerful student thinking from implementing teachers, calling on supportive parents to share their thoughts and the experiences of their children, presenting the research and emerging data from her district and across the country.

Throughout this initiative, which spanned several years, Mary kept careful watch on student registration in high level math courses and achievement overall, and regularly reported out to the faculty and the Board of Education that both factors were improving. This monitoring and reporting was critical to ensure the Board of Education's support for the reform agenda.

Ensuring long-term sustainability and/or bigger impact

Despite these obstacles, by the time Mary retired the district had adopted reform-based curricula at the K-8 level, and teachers at all levels had participated in intensive professional development that affected their teaching practices and the opportunities to learn central mathematical ideas offered to their students. As such, this initiative had catalyzed the use of a more student-centered approach to instruction district-wide.

Mary was hoping that the following elements (which she had purposefully worked on) would help to sustain this radical reform in a number of complementary ways:

- Having adopted district-wide K-12 math curricula – as they would not change at least until the new cycle of curriculum review took place.
- Having adopted reform-based instructional materials – they would continue to guide teachers' content choices.
- The success experienced by math teachers that engaged in the change practices.

While these strategies did help, a number of backward steps were also taken since Mary's retirement.

8.1.6. Updates on Mary's story

After 9 years as an Elementary Principal and another 9 years as an Assistant Superintendent, Mary decided it was time for her to retire from her school district.

Her career as a change agent in education was not over, though, as she then brought her wealth of experience and wisdom to the preparation of future school leaders at the University of Rochester. For another decade, as a clinical faculty member at the Warner School of Education, Mary was very influential in strengthening their K-12 leadership preparation program, where she spearheaded several curriculum innovations informed by her vision and experiences, as well as changes in accreditation standards.

8.2. Analysis of Mary's entrepreneurial activity

8.2.1. Mary's practices about vision

Mary's clear vision for education was a vital force throughout her career, as illustrated by her story and explicitly stated by Mary herself:

> "Well it's always present…it's like the air you breathe, it's like the water you swim in if you're a fish…it doesn't have to be conscious" (*Mary*)

Indeed, all her major initiatives were consistently driven by her belief that schools should foster and enhance students' ability to think, problem solve and develop as individuals. When deciding whether to engage in a specific innovation, her key question was "is this good for kids?" Her vision also affected decisions with respect to hiring personnel, especially in leadership positions, as she looked for people who shared a similar commitment to student learning and respect for students' individuality.

Most importantly, her vision was what gave her the strength to face the inevitable difficulties that accompany engaging in innovation:

> "We absolutely have to be courageous … that's where that piece about vision comes in. Because it has to be worth it to go out and be the standard-bearer of change, because schools are just not set up to change … schools just hate change, whatever it is." (*Mary*)

Effectively communicating her vision to the various stakeholders (i.e., superintendent, Board of Education, teachers and administrators, parents, community leaders) was critical to gain these constituencies' buy-in for specific initiatives. Indeed, Mary herself considered this communication a very important part of her job. Her own steadfast passion and commitment to her vision, along with her ability to articulate it and support it with relevant research, proved to be effective tools to realize that vision.

8.2.2. Mary's practices about opportunities

Mary was always thinking about how to improve instruction and student learning. Looking across her story, we can see that her ideas often came from recognizing opportunities for innovation from a few different and interrelated sources. In most cases, the stimulus was presented by a problem or unmet need she recognized in her students – for example, her curriculum writing initiatives were motivated by the realization that students had too many "gaps" and repetitions as they went through the various grades, and the mathematics reform initiative started with the recognition that students were not achieving at their fullest potential in mathematics courses. Sometimes the problem or unmet need she reacted to was something that she or her staff were experiencing – as in the case of the development of new teacher evaluation procedures. She also listened and followed up on ideas from her staff – as illustrated in the case of the differentiated instruction initiative. Reading, going to conferences and talking with experts played an important role in all her innovations, as they made her more alert to problems and opportunities, and helped her "ground" and refine her original ideas.

She was always very attentive to her community, "scanning the environment" to recognize new opportunities and assess the "readiness" of her institution to pursue these opportunities.

> "Well, part of that is being an opportunist. Because if you have a belief system about what should be happening, and there's something out in the external world that will help make your case, snag it!" (*Mary*)

"An 'environmental scan' is a really important thing. You've got to know what's going on …with your union …your schools …principals …community …budget…" (*Mary*)

When asked how she decided whether to follow a specific opportunity she identified, Mary claimed that all her ideas were filtered through her vision. She also told us that she asked herself the following three questions: 1) Is it good for kids? 2) Can I pull it off? 3) Is this the right time? If the answer to all three were YES, then the project was a go!

It is worth noting that this set of questions does not include "do I have the resources?" or "can we afford it?". While this may seem surprising in a climate where many public schools constantly struggle with budget cuts and deficits, it reflected the reality for Mary at the time. As discussed in more depth in the section on Resources, Mary felt very confident that, given her understanding and control of the district instructional budget, she could always find the needed resources for a worthwhile project – so this was not a determining issue for her.

8.2.3. Mary's practices about risk

While Mary's initiatives never involved great financial risks, embarking in any major innovation presented considerable risks to her reputation and position – especially when we consider that educational institutions seem to tolerate the risk of "missing the boat" much better than "sinking the boat" (as suggested by Brown & Cornwall, 2000). The more radical the innovation, the greater the risk of upsetting some of the constituencies – as demonstrated in the case of reforming the mathematics program. Mary recognized that schools do not like change and knew that each time she promoted an innovation she would encounter resistance and some personal risk:

"In this work you've got to be willing to have people say awful things about you, you've got to be willing to stand by what's best for kids, you have to be willing to hurt people's feelings, sometimes … There's just a lot of things that are uncomfortable that I would have preferred not to have done in my life, [but] that are required if you want to do something other than the status quo." (*Mary*)

While aware of these risks and their potential consequences, Mary was willing to take them on whenever she concluded that an initiative met some critical needs and had a reasonable chance for success. As she said in the case of the curriculum writing initiative:

"'it had to be done!' It's so self-evident that it had to be done, that I couldn't imagine anybody saying anything to me that could convince me that it wasn't the proper thing to do." (*Mary*)

At the same time, Mary recalled times when she decided not to pursue an initiative she thought was worthwhile, or to pull back from an initiative she had already started, because she felt that the "risk-reward" balance was not right.

"If you take on too great a risk, you are really undermining what it is you are trying to accomplish – now that's not smart. So, keep the risk/reward equation in mind as you decide what you're going to do, and take only as much of a risk as you think you can manage." (*Mary*)

Indeed, far from being reckless, Mary was very careful about evaluating the risks associated with every innovation she wanted to pursue, as well as figuring out ways to minimize those risks. She told us that her first step was to ensure that the superintendent would support the initiative and was willing to support her if things went wrong. Indeed, it was because of the trusting relationship she had developed with her first superintendent, and the mentorship he provided, that she felt comfortable undertaking some innovations she might otherwise have thought too risky:

"I didn't feel like much of anything was a risk to discuss with [my superintendent] because he was so honest and so forthcoming that I could tell him whatever I was thinking and he'd support it or not, but he'd tell me – so it didn't … feel like a risk." (*Mary*)

Mary was very purposeful and strategic when involving key players in the initial discussions about a potential initiative, deciding whether and how to launch an initiative, and in the planning of an initiative. This was done not only to benefit from their input, but also to have them develop ownership for the initiative and its success, and thus reduce the risk that they would oppose it – as illustrated in the curriculum writing initiative. Similarly, she was careful to keep

key constituencies informed of the progress of an initiative to maintain their support. Other times, depending on the nature of the innovation and her reading of the political climate, she would purposefully work quietly and try to stay "under the radar screen."

Finally, it is important to note that she approached her innovations with the expectation that there would be resistance and that she would not be successful every time. Therefore, fear of failure did not deter her from embarking in a difficult and risky project. And, though she always gave her initiatives her best thinking and effort, she was also ready to face the consequences if things did not work out:

> "You try your best – you have to be willing to have that fall apart and face the music". (*Mary*)

8.2.4. Mary's practices about resources

As Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction in the Penfield district, Mary had responsibility for curricula and instruction decisions and had ultimate control over the district budget.

"Penfield is a funny place. We're a funny size, we're too big to be small and we're too small to be big. And so I have control of a tremendous amount of [resources]. I mean, any professional development that any of the 500 teachers go to during the day, I have to approve. I know what everybody's doing. Any instructional purchase that is made in the entire district, I have to approve. It all comes here, so I can see what's leftover and I can see how money is being spent here and not spent there and you know what? If I go into somebody's budget now, which I just did, and their textbook money isn't spent, I can call up that principal and say, 'I need those dollars for…'" (*Mary*)

While Mary acknowledged that she had to live within her budget – and in fact, she was very fiscally responsible – she had the freedom to redeploy funds to support her innovations.

> "There's redeployment, you move it around and I'm good at it. … I could move dollars across many categories and I've just had a tremendous amount of financial freedom." (*Mary*)

In theory, this meant that, as ASI, if she thought a program was important, she could initiate it and fund it. In practice, as we have seen from her story, things were not that simple. Nevertheless, she did find that this control over the use of many district resources was critical to her success initiating and carrying out specific innovations at the district level.

Mary was also successful in capitalizing on grants to support some of her initiatives – as illustrated in the case of the mathematics reform initiative. However, Mary was aware that her suburban district was not always eligible nor likely to be funded by grants as a large urban district would, so she did not often pursue this funding strategy. Rather, she was ready to seize opportunities when they presented themselves – especially in terms of entering into partnerships with other districts and higher education institutions. When grant funds were available, though, she was able to make the best use of them, creating synergies with internal funds:

> "… once I understood the district budget and the grants, I could see how to organize so that I freed up money – I made it more efficient – and freed up money that then became at my discretion." (*Mary*)

This analysis of Mary's financial practices enables us to better appreciate why she felt that resources were never a major constraint for any of the initiatives she promoted. Indeed, when asked if there were any projects she had to forego because of a lack of funds, Mary confidently responded, "No, I did everything I wanted to do".

At the same time, it is important to note that she was quite good and creative at minimizing expenses ("bootstrapping"), and she proactively sought ways to leverage internal funds with external sources whenever possible (such as participating with other schools in state and federally funded projects that would cover some of the costs of the innovations she wanted to pursue, and taking advantage of state funds available for collaborative projects).

Mary was also very good at using creatively temporary leadership positions – such as "teacher on special assignment" (TOSA) and "principal on special assignment" (POSA) – to appoint project leaders for a particular initiative. While this would require her to hire a long-term substitute for the original position, this was usually quite affordable and within

her budget, and had the additional benefit of guaranteeing the project leader the ability to go back to his/her position once the assignment was completed.

Mary fully realized the key role of human resources and she was especially aware of the importance of choosing the right people to lead and participate in the teams that would implement a specific initiative. She worked hard and strategically to make this happen, despite the challenges presented by a public school setting, where teachers' tenure, union contracts, and even more the commonly held expectations about the roles and rights of teachers and administrators, make it very difficult to make changes after a hiring has taken place. So, she tried to hire the right people in the first place, as she played an important role in hiring the teachers in her school (as principal), and the principals and administrators in her district (as assistant superintendent). One of her key hiring criteria was to secure people who shared the same commitment to promote and support learning for all students.

If people did not work out in their position, she first tried to support them as much as possible to see if the situation could change. However, if this did not happen, she was ready to do whatever it took to move them to a different position or out of the district (a difficult and sometimes politically challenging move).

> "I have a very long fuse. I don't know if forgiving is the right word—but I work a long time with someone before I give up on them. But the giving up happens very fast when it happens! So you try real hard to structure the situation so that they can learn, and think aloud with them and you try teaching them. And if they can't learn, you have to cut your losses." (*Mary*)

Mary recognized the pivotal role played by the leader in charge of a specific initiative – a role she had often played as principal, but not so often as assistant superintendent. For each of her initiatives, Mary identified key persons in the district that she trusted (or with whom she could develop trust) and that had the trust of their colleagues. These people would be her eyes, ears and "shepherd of the ideas" on the ground.

> "Once the project is decided, then [you need] … someone in a confidential relationship with me … that I can really trust that they're not filtering, that they're speaking truth to power, and that is out there gathering—it's not gathering, it's testing out the idea, and then bringing it back and talking it through to kind of evaluate it and decide what to do." (*Mary*)

Picking the right people for this role, and building mutual trust, was especially critical. Maintaining good communications with each project leader was also important to her, so she made sure that there were regular opportunities to meet face-to-face or though written reports. Mary recalled for us an instance that well illustrated how this worked and the importance of this role in her overall strategy:

> "She was making some decisions for me, so how you pick that person? That person has to think like me. We have to have a lot in common, because—she's a surrogate out in the field, making judgments all of the time. So, you know, [NAME] sent me the email before the parent group got upset about math facts, because she had had a conversation with the people around the schools and she knew that it was coming—that it was trouble, that it was real—before the parents ever said a word! Teachers knew it, [NAME] heard them because her job was to be out and about, and her judgment was 'tell Mary right away.' … you have to know this person really well, and know how to work effectively with them. And that means knowing yourself and your own style well, so that you can manage the information that comes in with that person in a way that keeps the project going." (*Mary*)

Mary also told us that she made a conscious effort to identify and mentor teachers and administrators that demonstrated potential in this direction and develop their leadership capacity. Indeed, she identified the cadre of capable leaders she developed during her tenure as assistant superintendent as one of her greatest legacy to the school district.

> "I needed people in the schools who had the same belief system, and sometimes … I found people with the same belief systems, but they didn't have as much experience or as much knowledge. That meant "growing them up", sending them to conferences, getting them out talking to people from other districts, and really promoting them, their own development for its own sake obviously, but also because they could become influential helpers. … there have to be people in all the right places, and that just doesn't happen spontaneously." (*Mary*)

8.2.5. Mary's practices about growth

Mary's desire to "expand her sphere of influence" was the main motivating factor behind her moves from being a teacher (where she could affect the students in her class), to being a principal (where she could affect the students in her school) and finally to being an assistant superintendent (where she could affect the students in the entire school district).

> "I started out in the classroom, I went to the principalship because I wanted to do in a school what I could do in a classroom, and [now as ASI] I wanted to do to a district what I did in a school." (*Mary*)

Along with her change in position came a shift in her role in implementing innovation. She often found that she could not affect change as directly as Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction as she could in her previous position as Principal. This shift in role is very consistent with the literature on entrepreneurship which suggests that, as their organization grows, successful entrepreneurial leaders have to give up direct contact with – and, thus, ability to influence – the implementation of specific innovations.

8.2.6. Other interesting elements of Mary's case

Balancing quickness and thoughtfulness in decision-making

Mary differed somewhat from most of the other case study subjects in her decision-making style, as she was deliberately thoughtful and usually took some time to think through a problem or decision, looking at the literature and consulting with important constituencies and trusted colleagues – what she referred to as a "period of input". However, after that phase, most often a solution/decision would somehow emerge quickly and holistically, and she was then swift in acting on it. She described this process as follows:

> "I remember when I learned this in graduate school. It was when I was doing these reviews of literature and I couldn't write—I couldn't write it at the end. And one time, for some reason or another, a week went by when I stopped reading and then I wrote and, holy mackerel, there it was! And so I said, 'okay! Think about it a long time and then stop…'…So there's percolation, but there's also filtering. And there's also synthesis of ideas and information from a lot of different places … it has to come together as a whole, you have to be able to get your arms around it and that's something that minds do." (*Mary*)

At the same time, Mary recognized that there are situations where the timeframe to make a decision is limited, and in those cases she was willing to make a decision with the information available even if limited.

> "I love this quote from Colin Powell who said, 'If you know 40% of what you need to know to make a decision, you don't know enough. If you know 90% of what you need to know to make a decision, you know TOO much.'" (*Mary*)

Engaging staff in innovative activities as a means to achieve change in beliefs

Mary believed that, if appropriately designed, the tasks or initiatives teachers engaged in could challenge their existing beliefs and practices and thus impact the school culture. As reported earlier, she explicitly said "one of my beliefs is that … one of the easiest ways for people to change is to be engaged in activities." She believed that if teachers could be convinced to engage in some new effective teaching practices, the better outcomes achieved by their students as a result would make them want to continue those practices. Indeed, one of the main reasons she put so much emphasis on developing rigorous district-based curricula and in adopting NSF-funded math curriculum materials, was that she believed this would force teachers to engage in new teaching practices.

This position is consistent with one of Gee's key identity theory principles, as he stated that professional identify development most often started with *participating* in key practices and discourses of one's community of practice (Gee, 2001; Leuhmann, 2007).

Key role played by project leaders

Mary recognized the importance of having the right people in charge of implementing a major innovation – what she referred to as the "shepherds" of an initiative. Especially when she realized that, as ASI, she could not take direct responsibility for the implementation of each district-wide initiative, she thoughtfully brought key people into the conversations very early on and worked directly with them to develop a vision and plan for implementing the initiative. Then, once the initiative was underway, she counted on regularly scheduled meetings with her implementation "shepherds" as well as their spontaneous feedback to provide her with enough opportunity to support and adjust the work as necessary. She pointed to the curriculum writing initiative as a good example of how this process would work when successful.

The importance of having support from the "top"

Mary spontaneously talked about the importance of having a supportive superintendent, and the important role played by her first superintendent, who was already in that position when she began as a principal and remained in it until 5 years prior to her retirement. In his longevity he had won the respect and support of the entire Penfield community, and as a mentor and supporter of Mary's he taught her how to do the same.

> "The superintendent I worked for took me on as a protégé and he thought out loud for me, when I had a problem he would model how I might talk about it with the person I needed to deal with it, and that was very powerful. … So having him—for those first 13 years was important because he was giving *me* permission, he was probing and making sure my thinking was sound and then he was helping me do the politics of making education better." *(Mary)*

Pros and cons of moving higher in the hierarchy

Mary observed that, as ASI, her role as a change agent was quite different from when she was a building principal. First of all, she explicitly identified changing the culture of the school she was leading as a principal as one of her goals, and she felt that she had been quite effective in this endeavor. She believed that as the head of the building everything she did was closely observed and thus could act as a model, so she behaved accordingly. For instance, when she interacted with teachers, staff, or students she did so in an inquiring way, and whenever she was confronted with a problem or dilemma she made her thinking visible. In contrast, she did not feel that as assistant superintendent she could have as much effect on the overall district culture. She believed that since she was not the head of the organization she was not as closely observed by, or have the same ability to act as a model for, the district's constituencies – this was reserved for the superintendent.

> "…I really didn't feel I contributed anywhere near as directly to the culture in Penfield as I did to the culture in the school." *(Mary)*

Another important difference Mary noted in her two leadership roles was that as principal she worked directly on initiatives, whereas as Assistant Superintendent she often needed to find others who could lead and carry out that work.

> "At H Elementary School I was a lightning rod, I was a proposer. In this world, I'm much more of a permission-granter, resource provider, recognizer of good ideas brought in from other people…I can't affect change as directly in this role as I could with the principalship. Here, I'm completely dependent on others. At the principalship, you're dependent on your teachers always, but I had daily contact with them. I could nudge that culture, I could affect their thinking, I could help them get to the place where I thought we should all be. But here, I can't do that, I'm isolated. So I need other people to do that." *(Mary)*

Impeding factors of public schools

Mary identified the following characteristics of her district – which are common to most public schools – as creating obstacles to her vision and progress:

- *Teachers are with kids all day every day:* In her district teachers only had one "free" period a day, otherwise they were in classrooms with their students until the end of the official work day leaving no time to work with them on new initiatives; and, preparing for and recovering from having a substitute teacher is a huge task for teachers – so they did not have the time to prepare for, nor reflect on, the innovations undertaken.

- *K-12 schools are very slow to change*: In K-12 schools there are few accountability measures, especially for tenured

teachers and administrators, and this is coupled with a culture of independence with respect to what and how one teaches significantly slows institutionalization of reforms – this creates a systemic problem of consistency that can seriously undermine systemic reform.

- *Tenure system does not allow for sufficient flexibility*: as tenured teachers are guaranteed employment (barring some major infraction) regardless of their productivity or willingness to meet student needs, many tenured teachers have little incentive to be innovative.
- *Teachers' and administrators' unions don't always promote what is good for kids*: As a union's primary function is to look out for its members (i.e., teachers and administrators), fighting for what is best for students and their learning takes a lower priority; as teaching and learning sometimes involves "costs" for teachers and administrators, this can create a tension for those professionals who want to support initiatives but also want to have union support when needed.
- *Parents advocate for their own children sometimes at the expense of what is best for all*: while Mary welcomed and recognized the important role of parents' voices, she was also aware that parents at times can cause roadblocks to worthwhile reform because they do not see – or care sufficiently – beyond what is best for their own child; in contrast, she saw it as her responsibility to work for what is best for all children in the district.

> "One of the interesting things about parents, though, is this question of "who are my clients?" Parents would like me to believe that the taxpayers are my clients because they tell me that … But I believe that democracy is my client, and that's a very different thing. … Parents, and I am one, are selfish about their children and want for their child and do not consider the many. And my job is to consider the many and to consider how to prepare the many to be citizens, and that means critical thinking, that means literacy." (*Mary*)

8.2.7. Concluding thoughts about Mary's case

We find this case-study inspirational, as it shows that much can be accomplished by entrepreneurial instructional leaders in K-12 public schools, despite the undeniable challenges of the current situation and the many forces conspiring against reform. Mary showed us how even today it is possible to support school professionals to keep the focus on doing what is "good" for kids, rather than requiring teachers and administrators to do more with less and use high stakes tests as the whip.

Throughout her 18-year career as a school leader at Penfield, Mary engaged in many innovations that, taken together, added considerable value to the organization and the students it serves. Among the most important and sustainable of her achievements we would like to highlight promoting a learner-centered approach to instruction and a new way of thinking about mathematics instruction, developing a set of curriculum maps for all subjects and grade levels that will guide what is taught in the district for years to come, developing a budget structure and base that could continue to have room to sustain important initiatives in the future, and developing some leaders within the district that could continue to carry on her core values and be change agents. At the same time, her initiatives sometimes yielded benefits that were more limited in time, and yet were still very valuable for the students who were served during that period of time – for example, this was the case with her differentiated instruction initiative, and some aspects of the mathematics reform (such as the adoption of specific NSF-funded curricula and textbooks at specific grade levels). As such, we believe that the value of those initiatives should not be dismissed. Mary herself was very aware that in school reform one has to start with ambitious goals that may take years, sometimes even generations, to fully achieve, and therefore success should be measured in terms of the progress made, rather than whether or not that ultimate goal was achieved.

> "I consciously would say to myself at the end of the day "did I move the work forward today?" and if I said "yes" then I could go home and feel satisfied. I never asked if I got the work done, because the answer would have been "no" and it would have been too discouraging." (*Mary*)

Not surprisingly, given the responsibilities and authority associated with the roles of principal and assistant superintendent for instruction she assumed during her career at Penfield, Mary's major initiatives focused on curricular and pedagogical innovations. She also made explicit efforts to make her initiatives sustainable over time, to make them part of the "system" and thus affect students in that school or district even beyond her departure – a goal that was achieved in many cases, even if not with every single initiative. It is also interesting to note that the nature and scope of her initiatives changed significantly with her official role. As a principal she focused her attention on her own school and as the assistant superintendent the district was her context.

Because Mary took on two different leadership roles in the same organization, her case also makes clear how the position held in the organization can greatly affect the entrepreneurial behavior of an educator. Not only will the scope and nature of the innovations be different, as commented above, but also the role one plays in those innovations changes – as Mary reported that as principal she was directly involved and in charge of the implementation of innovations she initiated, but as ASI in most cases she needed other trusted people to play this key role. Looking back, Mary stated that being ASI did not give her the "same satisfaction" as being the principal, yet what she accomplished as ASI would "live longer". So, there may be important trade-offs for educators to consider when they choose to move to higher administrative positions in the organization in response to their drive to increase their impact and influence.

Mary's story also illustrates the complexity involved in making systemic changes in curriculum and instruction in public schools. These innovations involve so many stakeholders and can trigger so many conflicting forces that leading this kind of change will always require someone who had a strong vision and commitment and is also sufficiently thoughtful and political to have the capacity to lead the system and the people involved. While not easy, Mary's case demonstrates that it can happen!

8.3. Commentaries on Mary's case

We are collecting readers' insights and lessons learned from reading Mary's case on the companion website, and we invite you to add yours by following the specific guidelines provided in the "**Guidelines for Contributions**" document.

Posted commentaries about Mary's case – *None available yet*

CHAPTER 9.

Ralph Spezio's case: Adding unusual services in an urban elementary school to attend to the needs of the "whole child"

Raffaella Borasi, Ruthanne Vitagliano, & Frederick C. Jefferson

Ralph's Profile

During his 12-year tenure as principal of one of the poorest elementary schools in the Rochester City School District, Ralph Spezio transformed his school into a place that truly attended to its children's needs through several innovative initiatives. These initiatives did not so much focus on curriculum and pedagogy, but rather addressed other issues that he thought were equally critical to his students' academic success – including literally building a pre-school on his school premises as a means to set up his students for success when they entered first grade, creating a health clinic within the school to address health needs of his students (and families) that interfered with their learning in school, and establishing a special collaboration with a local college to prepare the kind of teachers he needed.

9.1. Ralph's story

9.1.1. Introduction to Ralph's case

This is the case study of Ralph Spezio, retired principal of one of the elementary schools in the Rochester City School District. Ralph was the principal of one of its elementary schools from 1990 to 2002, and during this twelve-year period he initiated many innovations that impacted not only his students' learning but also their lives and their families, and often went beyond what we may expect to be the purview of a school principal.

Ralph's school, especially when he began his principalship, confirmed all the commonly held stereotypes for urban schools (as documented in the data reported in Figure 9.1). There were about 700 children in this K-5 building, almost all of whom were eligible for the Free or Reduced Lunch program (and, thus, considered to live in poverty). The school also had a large population of English as a New Language (ENL) learners. Ralph recalls that student performance on standardized tests was very poor. The overall physical condition of the building both inside and out was dismal. Many of the rooms were in need of paint. Equipment and supplies were scarce. Furthermore, there were problems with the preparation and commitment of his teachers, a negative force that came with an already established culture that he characterized as "toxic". Ralph also faced challenges with the larger structure of the organization, as his school was part of one of the largest and poorest school districts in the state. As one principal among many, he often needed to present his non-traditional ideas to central office for approval, and these were not always well received.

As he took on the leadership of this school, Ralph vowed to make changes any way he could to support his students for success in life. For him, this meant looking beyond the quality of learning and instruction his school offered. A critical component of Ralph's educational philosophy was his emphasis on meeting the needs of "the whole child". Indeed, he understood that children came to his school with plenty of needs that often involved their families and communities, and

consequently, his initiatives would need to meet those needs first in order to ultimately improve his students' learning. As he recognized that most of his students started school at a disadvantage, he was also absolutely committed to do what it took to help "level the playing field." He was convinced that children should be at the center of the schooling process, thus his leadership and his team's work was focused on children, not on "what is comfortable for adults". As stated by one of his collaborators,

> "… he always kept telling us, it's the whole child… I can't change what happens in your house on nights and weekends… but I can make sure that while you are in school all your needs are going to be met…".

As a result of this vision and beliefs, Ralph's efforts and resources were employed to design innovative and comprehensive solutions that addressed the needs of the whole child – as demonstrated in the story reported in this chapter. These solutions involved, among other things, the addition of a pre-school program (along with the building needed to house it), a partnership with a teacher preparation institution to better prepare urban teachers who could then be employed in his school, and the creation of a family health care center on the school premises.

Figure 9.1. *Ralph's Elementary School Profile (as of 2004 when he retired)*

School characteristics:

- Part of a large urban district (69 schools; $582M budget – and deficit of about $58M)
- *Percentage of free/reduced lunches:* 99%
- *Students:* 721
- *Personnel:* 54 teachers + 19 staff

District student demographics:

- 14% White; 64% African American; 20% Latino/a; 2% other

Organizational structure:

- *Key reporting chain:* Teachers/building staff ⬖ building principals ⬖ Deputy Superintendent for Elementary Schools ⬖ Superintendent ⬖ Board of Education

Subject position:

- *Building principal:* Responsible of all the school's operations

9.1.2. Highlights of Ralph's professional journey

Early experiences of discrimination

Ralph was raised in a suburban neighborhood in Western New York State, very near to the urban setting that would eventually become the site for his practice. Ralph, the son of an Italian immigrant family, lived in what might be considered a rural neighborhood at the time, where few if any Italian families resided. Ralph remembered his father wanting to be a farmer and wanting to capture the "American Dream." Early on, Ralph recognized how his own ethnic background differed from the other children in the neighborhood. Ralph often faced questions about his ethnicity from the children of this small Anglo-Saxon community. Oftentimes, conflicts arose regarding ethnicity and Ralph's father

became concerned that his teenage son would try to solve any conflicts with his fists, instead of his head. He recalls his father telling him:

> "You can't change people's attitudes with your hands…you have to change them with your actions. People don't respect you if you threaten violence with your hands, but they will respect you for what you accomplish." (*Ralph*)

These early experiences taught Ralph about discrimination and the harsh effects it could have on the young. Years later, working with children in the inner city, he made sure students in his own classroom were taught to respect one another, as he was deeply dedicated to helping students understand and appreciate the role of diversity in their lives. He reported telling children in his schools:

> "We all have strengths and we all have needs…I never forgot those things. Those are values that were burned into me." (*Ralph*)

Ralph's adolescence was centered on typical teenage boy experiences. At school Ralph developed into a strong athlete; he worked hard for his coaches and found lasting friendships among his teammates. Over time, Ralph perfected his ability to communicate, a skill that would serve him well in the future. Ralph became an excellent communicator at a very early age, which in turn helped him develop his social relationships with others in his neighborhood.

Becoming a teacher

After graduating from high school, Ralph entered into the teacher preparation program at a nearby college. He recalls always knowing he wanted to be a teacher. His college offered education students what was then called the "The Professional Year", which allowed student teachers to spend an entire year in a classroom. This program gave Ralph the opportunity to teach and to connect to children and, as a result, he discovered the joy and value of helping children learn.

Upon graduation from college, Ralph began his professional career as an elementary teacher in an urban elementary school. Soon his reputation for being able to teach and work with all types of students grew and he found himself with a classroom containing many of the most challenging students in the school. Ralph took these students in and embraced their challenging personalities. Year after year, his principal placed more and more children in his classroom. Ralph knew he was over the maximum class size, but he never said a word. Ralph fondly recalled how he was able to build a rapport with the most difficult students by providing them an opportunity to exhibit positive behaviors in school.

> "I turned the biggest scorchers into the best leaders in the classroom by setting them up for success…" (*Ralph*)

Working with the administration in the building, Ralph reported creating situations whereby these difficult students were called upon to do some positive task in the school. By prior arrangement, the principal of the school then rewarded each student, praising them for their good deeds, thus these students became a part of the school instead of a problem in the school. He also rewarded his class for their hard work by letting them participate in games without keeping score, subtly teaching them how to exist in groups and how to be team players, where everyone learned the importance of helping each other. He carefully and deliberately generated a positive classroom environment where even the most troubled youth found success. He saw the need to develop motivation in his students, knowing that this internal motivation could lead to a much more important outcome—self-efficacy. Motivating others would become a key element in Ralph's future leadership role in education; time and again he would skillfully demonstrate his ability to motivate many stakeholders within the larger school community.

Moving into school leadership roles

After fifteen years of successful teaching in the urban classroom, Ralph considered leaving a small community of learners to become, first, an instructional specialist for his district and, later, an elementary vice principal. He did so with the goal of exerting a bigger influence or "multiply the effect" by impacting more children. He initially worried about transitioning from working directly with a few children in his own class to working with a whole school community, especially the adult population of a school. Over time, however, he was able to develop skills for recognizing the good teaching from the bad, and as an instructional leader more generally he was able to assist teachers in their growth and development.

When recalling the many who assisted him during his early years as an emerging leader, Ralph credited the work of several of his mentors for guiding him down a new pathway. These people took a special interest in talking and working with him, providing guidance and wisdom he carried with him throughout his professional journey. The strong

mentoring he received helped him move successfully from teacher to vice principal to principal of the school. One of the most important lessons he learned was that there are certain ways to build a positive culture in a school, ways that he would put into practice after he became principal in his own school. Having been vice-principal and then appointed to principal in the same school, he knew "the lay of the land" and was able to quickly begin to make important changes.

An innovative school principal

Ralph's principalship began in an urban elementary school in need of much guidance and care, as mentioned in the introduction to this chapter. He was especially concerned about the existing "toxic" culture of the school, and the negative force it represented. As a result, Ralph vowed to make changes any way he could.

In one of our interviews, Ralph stated that "leadership starts with a foundation of trust." And with this trust, "comes the ability to see organizational goals and the ability to see the strengths of people and being able to build on them." These are tenets Ralph began leading with and tenets that he passed onto others he worked with during his principalship.

Ralph launched his twelve-year career as elementary school principal by having the usual opening day meeting. Looking out at his first group of teachers and staff, he recalled how, in that occasion, all eyes were on the new guy as "every word is weighed and it is the beginning of my 12 years as principal with all these people and all these responsibilities that it brings… I mean it was just an incredible weight on me."

As Ralph looked down at his scripted notes, he realized how wrong the words were for the moment – as they were "the same old junk." Instead, he turned to his audience, becoming himself and said "Let's celebrate the beginning of a new academic year. This is wonderful that we're together." Ralph reported that he looked his staff in the eyes and told them of the challenges facing all of them. That very moment, he began transforming the culture of his school by explaining to his staff that he could not "do this" alone, that the challenges were many, and he would need the help of everyone in the room.

As Ralph continued with his somewhat impromptu talk, he had his staff envision what they considered to be their "perfect school". He pretended that they were in a time machine and that they were able to move three years into the future. He asked the staff to think about this future school and to think of what it looked like, what it felt like to walk into this winning school. He captured the teachers' and staff's imagination, asking them to see the children most clearly, what were the children doing and saying and learning? He remembered teachers moving in their chairs and starting to talk and think about his questions. Then he took this "moment" one step further and had the teachers writing their ideas on chart paper posted around the room. They all talked about the ideas generated from this activity.

> "They were involved in their school and they were thinking and they were dreaming and that was our mission and vision right there…captured. Afterward I silently prayed, 'Oh thank you, thank you for that guidance!'" (*Ralph*)

With this activity, Ralph carefully and skillfully created another space, another time, for his teachers to envision what the school could be, what they should strive for, and how in this very moment they would clarify their goals for the future.

This was the beginning of Ralph's journey towards making this urban elementary school, with high poverty rate, a positive place to learn, and a place where the whole child could come and be welcomed.

> "The 99% poverty to me really defined how high the mountain is, the goal to go from A to Z. My job as principal is to support the mountain climbers…those are the teachers, the children and the parents. How else are we going to climb the mountain if the mountain climbers aren't supported?" (*Ralph*)

Ralph made it very clear to his community that he put children first and would support anyone on the staff that would do the same. His message to all was "I'm cheering for you. I want you to be the best teacher in the building…I'm going to make it my responsibility to help you." And he reported telling his teachers:

> "What we're talking about here is the 'will' of the missionary spirit, the calling to education, the ability to never give up on a child. I mean just absolutely do everything within your power to teach that child. Children who live in survival mode, 24 hours, 7 days a week, in excruciating poverty, are the most intuitive human beings I've ever met. They know exactly where you're coming from. They know if you are doing your job. I say set them up for success…many have already been set up for failure." (*Ralph*)

When he became principal of his elementary school, Ralph quickly identified a negative faction among the faculty, with unsatisfactory work ethics. Fearing that a negative group of teachers might dominate the culture of the school, he

worked hard to communicate and establish new expectations for the school. His message spoke clearly to that of the "toxic" culture he initially sensed among his teachers.

> "I'm your principal, so you need to know what's important to me … and there are three things: Professionalism … that's acting, dressing and all those things considered professional. Hard work is important to me. I don't think you accomplish anything that's of significance without hard work, that's my opinion. And loyalty… loyalty and devotion to children, loyalty to each other, loyalty to the profession." *(Ralph)*

Along with this message, Ralph knew he had to make major adjustments with staffing. The expectation that teachers and other staff in his school should have a "missionary spirit" meant that he did not think everyone worked well in his school. Indeed, there were considerable personnel changes in his school during his tenure as principal. At the same time, he also always tried first to figure out how to support teachers who were not performing to expectation and to identify their strengths so as to build on them as much as possible.

Central to Ralph's initiatives as a principal was his ability to create partnerships with other organizations. He never settled for what the district could supply his school. Rather, one of his strengths was the ability to work creatively to secure outside community support so as to create opportunities to better the conditions for his students and his teachers. For example, early on he recognized a need to get more books into the hands of children. So he formed partnerships with two suburban schools. The suburban schools held book drives for Ralph's school and in turn students at his elementary school gave musical concerts as a show of thanks to those schools.

> "I'm not looking for a hand-out, I have things to give too…I make that very clear. … We bring things to the table too. The children are wonderfully skilled, artistic and have powerfully creative talents. We gave a beautiful performance of our gospel choir … made people cry … or my string orchestra … So we gave back a lot. … Anytime you have a partnership, I think people who work with you need to feel your enthusiasm, they need to see the fact that you are giving of your time to … this partnership." *(Ralph)*

The following are just a handful of projects that Ralph initiated to help close the gap for the children in this community:

- Because there was no pre-kindergarten program at his elementary school, Ralph formed a partnership with Kodak, and using Edison Technical and Vocational High School students, built a building to add a pre-school. He then brought in a full Montessori program and was the first pre-school program in NYS to have received NAEYC National Accreditation.
- He changed almost the entire teaching staff at his school and hand-picked many of his classroom teachers from a unique urban teacher preparation program that he developed in partnership with an area college. This program received national attention because it not only brought minority men and women into the urban elementary school, but it also was more rigorous than the traditional method of teacher preparation.
- He partnered with St. Mary's Hospital (now Unity Health) and built the first community health center of its kind in the state that was attached to the school and open to the entire community even when school was closed. The children are viewed in the context of the entire extended family, and because of a sliding fee scale, no one is turned away.
- He partnered with Strong Health to double the size of the community health center and include a full-service dental facility operated by Strong's Eastman Dental Center. This center has over four dentists, two operating rooms, and also has a sliding fee scale so that even without dental insurance, everyone is cared for. Even when the school is closed, this facility can remain open.
- He developed *Project Success* which was a before and after school tutoring program that brought in over 80 college students from area colleges each week. He had large academic summer school programs and integrated programs with the neighborhood Charles Settlement House, which is directly across the street from the school.
- He secured a grant for violins, violas, cellos, and stringed bass and crafted a partnership with the Eastman School of Music to have a full stringed orchestra at his elementary school.
- He developed a partnership with the Empire Statesmen and the Rochester Crusaders Drum and Bugle Corps to form a tuxedoed elementary school marching band.
- He developed a huge and vibrant Parent/Teacher Organization that was a chartered PTA at his school. Each

classroom had a Classroom Parent, both primary and intermediate grades had Parent Advisory Councils, parents were a welcomed and equal partner on the School Planning Team, and monthly PTA meetings brought very large numbers of parents for a dinner meeting (with childcare) which was directed and run by the neighborhood parents.

- Partnerships were developed with suburban schools where student and staff exchanges took place on a regular basis.

Many of these projects were made possible through partnerships which enabled Ralph to leverage support and contributed funding that was critical to make significant innovations possible. Collaborating with the police department, the churches, the city government, businesses and others in the community was also very important for Ralph. Building a sense of community was so crucial for him that he made the bold decision to approach his district and request that students from outside the neighborhood not be bussed to the school. He felt that if his campus was to truly be for the neighborhood, then only children from the immediate area should be the focus of the school population. This radical decision demonstrates his willingness to take risks whenever he thought it was in the best interest for his school.

In what follows we now describe in more detail three of these innovations, to give a better sense of the different types of innovations he engaged during his principalship as well as how he went about this process.

9.1.3. Ralph's innovation #1: Adding a new pre-school

How the idea came about and was evaluated/refined

A significant example of Ralph's risk-taking and ability to build partnerships occurred in his very first year as principal. Ralph recognized early on the need to enhance the early childhood education program at his school, as most of his students already entered kindergarten disadvantaged. If he wanted to give his students a chance to succeed, he felt that he needed to offer them a quality pre-school program.

Unfortunately, his initial requests to add a pre-school program to his school were denied on the grounds that he did not have enough room for it. In response, he set out to build a new pre-school building on his campus!

There was no question in Ralph's mind that this was a critical need that must be pursued no matter what, because it was critical to the success of his students and central to his vision of "leveling the playing field" for his students so they could compete and have a chance of success. He did not even consider the risks of undertaking such an initiative, as he thought it was a necessity – although making this dream a reality took tremendous vision, perseverance, risk-taking and collaboration.

Planning and gathering the needed resources

When Ralph told his teachers about his plan to literally build the structure for the pre-school on the existing school property, they were highly skeptical of this idea. They did not know Ralph well enough to know just how creative and persistent he could be!

To radically cut down the expenses for the new building, Ralph secured a partnership with a nearby technical school in the district. If he was able to secure the needed materials, the high school students would build the frame structures for the new pre-school and move it to his school's premises when ready. This arrangement was a win-win, as it would also provide a unique learning experience for these high school students.

Ralph first looked for support and funding from a major corporation in the city. He recalls visiting a top executive in the corporation (whom he knew personally as they had participated together in a previous education initiative) and pointing out to him the school from his office window, while he presented the need for a pre-school as a way to "level the playing field" by providing support to his students as early as possible. He remembered saying "If you can help me get a building, I promise you, I will put a first-rate program there." This promise secured Ralph $500,000 to build his pre-school.

Once he secured the funding resources for the building, Ralph felt compelled to fill it with the best possible pre-school program. After extensive research, including visits to model pre-schools throughout the country, he chose the Montessori program and proudly reports that his Montessori school was the first pre-school in the state to receive national accreditation.

Throughout this process, Ralph had to secure the support of the central office. This did not always come easy. He recalls that at one point he put his keys on the table and stated that if he could not provide his students a quality early start, he did not feel he could do his job effectively—a pretty bold move for a first-year principal! Yet in the end he got what he felt his students needed in order to be successful.

Implementing and monitoring the initiative

As planned, the technical school students were able to build the frame structure for the new pre-school, and then moved it to the parking lot of Ralph's school. Ralph recalled this event saying:

> "Teachers literally gasped, because when they walked in from the parking lot in the morning there was no preschool building, and when they walked out later on, there was a building standing there… I had five flatbed trucks and cranes bring the building [sections] over that kids at the Tech school built… Teachers said 'Oh my God, this is what he's talking about. Yeah, we *can* do this stuff'" *(Ralph)*

With a building to house it, Ralph's elementary school has continued to have a pre-school program ever since!

9.1.4. Ralph's innovation #2: Establishing a school-college partnership to prepare urban teachers

How the idea came about and was evaluated/refined

Early in his principalship, Ralph also experienced challenges with some of the new teachers he had hired. He clearly recalled the case of a new teacher who had great difficulty managing a group of first grade students. Other teachers came to him quite concerned about this situation. Out of desperation, Ralph asked a more veteran teacher to mentor the new teacher by being in the classroom most of the day. Although this remedied the situation in the short term, it was costly and took a staff member out of an assignment. He knew he could not do this with every new teacher. He also knew something had to be done to better prepare the new teacher work force to handle the challenges of the urban classroom.

> "I said, I can't do this with every teacher that comes in here. If the colleges are not going to prepare teachers for high-needs [students] then I'm going to prepare them. We have to do something tangible to get there." *(Ralph)*

This led Ralph to create one of his most important initiatives, resulting in a partnership with a college to establish an innovative teacher preparation program that involved prospective teachers in longer and intensive internships in his elementary school. As Ralph recalls:

> "This program developed from my frustration of not getting teachers sent to me that had the skills to meet the needs of high needs children. … They didn't have a clue, and then what we were forced to do was to train them all over again and we didn't have time to train them." *(Ralph)*

Ralph thought that if he could contribute to develop a teacher preparation program that would better prepare urban teachers, the following benefits could be gained:

- The graduates from the program would provide him with a ready supply of teachers to choose from and hire, for which he would know what experiences they had already received and that many of his staff would already be familiar with;
- Other urban schools besides his would benefit from better prepared teachers;
- And, most importantly, his students would benefit because they would be more likely to have better teachers and

less "transitions" (as hopefully fewer novice teachers would not work out and need to be substituted).

Ralph knew he would need a higher education partner for this initiative, but he was confident that he could find one in his alma mater, as it was a local college that already had sent student teachers to his school. Except for this, the initiative would not require resources other than his staff's time.

As he did before he committed for any of his major initiatives, Ralph asked himself whether this was "good for the kids", and since the answer in this case was a clear yes, he had no hesitation moving ahead – especially as in this case both the financial commitments and risks would be minimal.

Planning and gathering the needed resources

To bring his idea to fruition, Ralph contacted a professor from his college alma mater, requesting to have a meeting with someone in charge of the teacher preparation program and then invited these people to tour his school. At this critical initial meeting, Ralph brought his own support team consisting of a teacher leader, a parent and his vice-principal to help him sell the idea. The college sent three people from their education department. Ralph reported setting the tone of the meeting by making it clear that he was looking for ideas from the partners to design the best possible experience for everyone, including the children. He then proposed his idea to have student teachers in his building for at least three semesters.

> "We had [proposed] a spiraling curriculum where they put one foot in the water and became more and more comfortable until the last semester. The students took their methods courses in our school, learning in 'chunks', until they were driving the 'vehicle' on their own completely. I wanted them to have multiple experiences in each grade level and I wanted them there in my first staff meeting in August." (*Ralph*)

Ralph knew the moment that he suggested student teachers attend the first meeting in August that an immediate barrier to his plan would arise. People shook their heads and said, "We start our student teaching in October." Ralph responded by saying they were "cheating" their student teachers by doing that. Ralph urged the group in his office to think of student teachers seeing the new room for the first time and how important it would be that they help to set the furniture up, help in transforming the room into a welcoming, warm, colorful environment for the first day the children and parents come into the room. He also stressed that the bonding issue is absolutely critical to the children, as children need to know that someone is there to care for them.

> "So the teacher in a high-needs school with children on survival mode, coming from a third world-type poverty level, needs to understand how to gain trust from children. That's called the bonding process and you need to see this happen. You can't learn it from a methods book, you have to watch it and the current student-teacher preparation program is denying student teachers that opportunity. By the time October comes that bonding process is done. The student teacher walks into that classroom, has no clue what happened before hand and they are able to get a teaching certificate …but when they go to get a job, they don't know what hit them. They don't know what hit them because they have missed the critically important bonding process, and we have to teach them. It's not fair to the student [teachers], it's not fair to the children, and it's not fair to us as professionals because we have to mop up afterwards." (*Ralph*)

When the meeting was over, the college people left without guaranteeing Ralph anything. He waited to hear from the college as to whether his request for student teachers to be at the opening August meeting would be granted. Four days later he got the phone call that said 20 to 25 student teachers would be assigned a mentor for their internship in Ralph's school and they would be there for the first staff meeting in August. His vision for this initiative was beginning to become a reality.

Implementing and monitoring the initiative + ensuring long-term sustainability

Once launched, the collaborative teacher preparation program was a success. As one of Ralph's close collaborators stated:

> "That program…that was a winner where he created his own teachers… You were growing your own teachers and had young people coming in from all walks of life who really see what it's like to teach in an urban environment." (*Ralph's collaborator*)

The program lasted ten years and provided many of the new teachers Ralph hired for his school. The fact that the

school was able to hire graduates from his program created an incentive to continue it for both parties. However, this was not sufficient to sustain the program after Ralph's retirement, although the school continued to promote some partnerships with area colleges to strengthen the internships of prospective teachers so as to better prepare them to work in urban settings.

9.1.5. Ralph's innovation #3: Developing an on-site health clinic within an urban elementary school

How the idea came about and was evaluated/refined

Another major innovation was initiated as Ralph tried to understand the factors that were impeding his students' success, and he recognized that health problems were a major issue. As a result, he conceived the idea of building a health clinic on the school premises that would provide many of his students—and their families—the medical care they needed as a prerequisite to being successful in school. This was undoubtedly one of Ralph's biggest risks and strongest partnerships.

Ralph recalls how the idea for this initiative first came to him, as he recognized that many of his students were suffering serious health problems that kept them from learning.

> "I am like a parent to the kids and when a child who comes to school without their primary needs met…if they have a cavity in their teeth for example…they don't learn because they're focused on the pain in their mouth. If they are hungry… if they have asthma…one child in my arms almost died from asthma…we're not talking fluff here…this is real stuff." (*Ralph*)

The problem wasn't only that the students and their families did not have access to needed medical services, but also that when offered, these services were not coordinated nor easily accessible.

Ralph recognized that his confidence in undertaking such a risky project was built on his past successes and the partnerships he had already created:

> "Unless you have certain foundations in place, you're not going to do anything of this magnitude. There are certain things you must have in place first, as a leader, before you can think of raising $1,200,000… I don't want folks to think 'Oh, gee whiz, I can just whip up a little idea like that and go forward.'" (*Ralph*)

The process started with recognizing the potential of a special partnership with a neighborhood hospital. Personnel from the hospital were already invited to provide nutrition programs at the school. Ralph told us about thinking that the partnership could do much more, given their common goals. Ralph also knew the hospital had the same philosophy about supporting children who lived in poverty by treating the whole family. He believed that, as schools are not open all year long, there needed to be another structure in place to treat the child in a family with high needs. The hospital, having the same passion for wanting to provide more for the urban children, began the fundraising for the proposed health center. The hospital won a large community service award of $75,000. Ralph was invited to the reception honoring the hospital and soon found out that the hospital had decided to match the award and to give to him a check for $150,000.

Ralph considered this money as the first payment towards the construction of the new "full-service community health center," as identified by the State. He knew he had to raise more money, but he was committed to this initiative, as he felt it was something he *had* to do for his students to succeed.

Planning and gathering the needed resources

The news of Ralph's mission spread to other areas of the city and resulted in more support. For example, a Woman's Board of the partnering hospital funded over $400,000 for building the health center and considered this a flagship project. Ralph also sought advice from a long-time friend and corporate executive who told him how to go about "selling" the project.

> "He said, 'Listen… let people make their own decision, and once you hold it up and communicate the project, if it's worthy then the money and support will come." (*Ralph*)

There was much leg work to be done to secure funding for the health center and Ralph knew the burden to communicate the vision for it was his. He also knew if he failed in communicating it, he failed the children. He needed people to "see" what he was envisioning to react positively to his ideas, so he had an architect do an elevation drawing on a large poster size board and whenever he was talking to potential donors about the project, he would show them the poster so they could envision walking in the entrance and down the hallways of the proposed health center.

Ralph developed a critical partnership with a key person who was working for the partnering medical center in the capacity of director of an outreach health program, serving what she called "vulnerable populations" in the city. She was a grant writer and knew the "ins and outs" of federal funding for special projects such as the one Ralph was envisioning. In her interview with us, she admitted that she was quite outspoken at first with regards to school clinics, which she felt were extremely inadequate for providing year-round care for vulnerable populations. When Ralph approached her with his idea for building a full health facility on his elementary school campus, however, she agreed to listen.

> "I was just flabbergasted. I went over and met with him and I could tell instantly that he knew what he was doing. He was one of the most engaging people I have ever met, and he could relate to any culture, at any level. … I've observed him with bank presidents, with nurses, with physicians, with lawyers, with teachers … because he's so passionate … he's very logical … he presents his stories not only with passion, but he's always got the figures to back them…he really knows what the children need and how to get it." (*Ralph's collaborator*)

She and Ralph worked through such challenges as finding funding for low-income families who did not have medical insurance. She helped write and secure a grant from the federal government targeted for "vulnerable" populations.

The arduous task of building a health center connected to an urban elementary building often met with what might have seemed insurmountable obstacles, but Ralph's perseverance prevailed. Two very large roadblocks came from both the State Education Department and the State Health Department, but they were both successfully resolved.

> "Each of the State directors absolutely refused to sign off on it.… They told me, "You can build it, but you must turn it into classrooms because you're not going to put a health center in there. You're going to have a mental health component on an elementary campus? Are you crazy, Ralph?…We're not going to be liable for that. We've never done that before" … The whole concept of an integrated school/community health center seemed to be a deal-breaker … We had three people … the County Executive, the Mayor and the District Superintendent send a special courier to directly hand deliver a message of appeal to the Governor … the Governor then directed those two department heads to sign off on this project. We soon received a one-sentence memo from each department head telling us to proceed with the project." (*Ralph*)

Implementing and monitoring the initiative

Once all the permissions and funding were secured, the process of building and staffing the health center was relatively straightforward – and the Orchard Street Community Health Center became a reality.

Ensuring long-term sustainability

Even after Ralph retired as principal, the health center has continued to provide services to the vulnerable populations living near the urban campus. The funding stream that started with the first grant continues to currently support the Health Center, so families can receive the necessary health care and children can go to school ready to learn.

A collaborator commented on the success of this initiative, "I know it's been very well utilized in the neighborhood; I think having it proximate to the school has led to trusting relationships."

9.1.6. Updates on Ralph's story

Ralph's story as an entrepreneurial educator did not end with his retirement from the principal position. Rather his quest to improve the lives of urban children continued in a different form, which might have been even more impactful, and

he worked at addressing the critical issue of how lead poisoning affects small children and what we, as the public, must do about it.

Six years before retiring as principal, Ralph discovered that many of his students were continually having learning problems despite all the efforts put forth by his school. He noticed that many children were having trouble attending to the teachers and performing in the classroom. Even though he had placed high-quality teachers in his classrooms, there still continued to be behavioral and learning problems in children that perplexed him. He worked with the Building Intervention Team to try and find the root cause to these problems, and one day he happened upon a form from one of the nurses that had a column for lead poisoning on the health sheet.

Ralph wondered whether this might actually provide some answers to the problems his students were experiencing. He did extensive research on the damage of ingesting lead and what it could do to a young child's system. He found that thumb sucking and crawling are ways children ingest the poison into their bloodstream and then into the brain. He suspected that many of the children in his school might have lead poisoning so, with the permission of the County Health Director, he secured the health reports of the children in his pre-school. The results of the tests were astounding. 41% of the 3, 4, and 5-year-old children tested were starting school with brain damage and 100% of the younger children in Special Education population had significant loss of I.Q. and brain damage that could be related to lead poisoning.

Ralph's discovery prompted city and county officials to join forces to start a fight against lead poisoning and to recognize the need to educate the community on the dangers of lead poisoning. Ralph told the media and the public: "There's an invisible monster devouring our children, stealing their I.Q.s and stealing their futures." He emphatically urged politicians and health officials to establish educational awareness programs for parents and landlords. He answered the poignant questions on how to deal with this serious issue by telling people that it is important to recognize the dangers and to educate everyone.

Soon after discovering that almost half of his incoming elementary grade children were affected by lead poisoning, he co-founded the Coalition to Prevent Lead Poisoning. He became the spokesperson for the State, traveling and talking to all types of audiences. He met with politicians in the State capital and was instrumental in helping pass a city ordinance, one of the first of its kind, to create the primary prevention of childhood lead poisoning. With the help of a State senator, Rochester was designated as a national model for this cause. Even in his retirement, Ralph was once again striking through barriers and getting the necessary work done in the name of children. He said, "Everywhere I go now, people want to speak to me about this project." His commitment to this vital project was also intended to "level the playing field" for children and "to protect the children." This is a mission Ralph continually pursues each and every day.

9.2. Analysis of Ralph's entrepreneurial activity

9.2.1. Ralph's practices about vision

Throughout Ralph's story, it is clear how consistent and influential his vision was. As he was convinced that children should be at the center of the schooling process, his leadership and his team's work was focused on what is good for children, not on what is comfortable for adults. Because of his emphasis on meeting the needs of "the whole child", he also engaged in initiatives that went beyond what most principals would consider in their purview—as illustrated especially in the development of the family health care center.

While being a visionary leader was critical for Ralph's success, being able to effectively communicate this vision was equally important. Ralph was certainly skillful at doing so. As stated by one of his collaborators:

> "He is a big picture person, and he can convince anyone to do anything. I don't think I've ever turned him down

for a request. I mean … he always has compelling arguments and as I say, he's compassionate, and … it definitely comes through." (*Ralph's collaborator*)

Telling moving and compelling stories about his school and his students was a tool that Ralph uses very effectively. This was demonstrated by the stories he told during our interviews as well as in presentations to the community we were privileged to attend.

Ralph also used field visits to his school very effectively as a vehicle to gain support from partners and influential members in the community:

> "…let's face it, Ralph brought a lot of people into the school … the Surgeon General, the Governor, you name it. He attracted those kinds of people to his school, and they toured the school. He'd bring people in that building and walk them through just like everyone was going to be on task and do what they were supposed to do…and there were sometimes that it wasn't perfect, but it was okay, because this is a school and that sometimes happens." (*Ralph's collaborator*)

His passion and total dedication to his school and students also gained him credibility and support from both staff and community members. In all his partnerships, he also purposefully tried to show his partners how his vision was going to support mutual goals—as especially evident in the cases of the teacher preparation program and the health clinic. A close collaborator commented on Ralph's commitment to children:

> "He's a people person, a caring person, he's totally committed and invested in whatever task or project he engages in, and he doesn't half do anything. Once he focuses on something that needs to be done, he attacks it with such a vengeance and such aggressiveness … he's a risk taker." (*Ralph's collaborator*)

His "no excuses in life" motto resulted in Ralph forming a solid community network of partnerships over many years to get done what had to be done.

9.2.2. Ralph's practices about opportunities

The dismal conditions in which the school operated when Ralph became principal (e.g., poor facilities and the "toxic culture" within the school), combined with the poverty experienced by children and their families, helped Ralph and his team members recognize multiple needs and, thus, opportunities to help children succeed. When we asked Ralph how specific initiatives (e.g., the health care center, the teacher preparation program, and many others) originated, he told us that it was a collective effort, meaning that he invited teachers, staff, and parents to participate in the process of generating ideas to meet the many needs of children and their families. We also observed, though, that he was personally driven to identify his students' needs and to find ways to address the problems they experience, and he dID so in a very proactive way by looking for out-of-the-box solutions — as illustrated in particular in the case of the Health Clinic and Lead Poisoning initiatives. In other words, because he personally cared for his students, he was always on the look-out for opportunities to better address their needs.

Ralph recognized a constant sense of urgency that he believed most principals who work in urban school settings share, as the context in which these schools operate makes it imperative to react quickly to meet the needs of children and families. In fact, whenever he missed an opportunity, he felt really upset because he knew his students would be the ones losing.

However, he also argued that principals need to be careful when evaluating whether to pursue a specific opportunity or initiative, because sometimes they "put all their energy into putting out little fires" instead of thinking about the bigger picture and engaging in a more thoughtful process for evaluating ideas that will truly meet the needs of the "whole child".

So, he shared that he developed a systematic process for him and his team to evaluate opportunities and ideas for innovations, which he referred to as a "filtering" process (or "filter). In his own words,

> "We sit around in the decision-making team and someone … has a project or an idea that's great, that's cool, or

that's interesting, so we say, "Let's put it through the filter". In other words, it's not what's comfortable for adults necessarily, it's what's best for children… Now does it make it through the filter?" (*Ralph*)

Ralph's "filter"—i.e., evaluating whether and to what extent any innovation represented "what is best for the children"—was perhaps one of the most important features of his entrepreneurial process, as this screening process helped him and his team focus on designing initiatives that added value to the services offered to children and families and that had a long-term effect. Indeed, this focus on providing value to the client over the organization was a characterizing element of Ralph's entrepreneurial activity, as well as the other case study subjects operating in K-12 schools. It also shows the key role played by an overarching vision in making decisions about which initiatives to undertake. It is also clear from his story that once he determined that a specific opportunity was worthwhile, he would pursue it no matter what, and he would not let considerations such as lack of resources or permissions stop him.

9.2.3. Ralph's practices about risk

As evident from his story, Ralph was not afraid to take on even significant risks if he felt that an initiative was critical to the well-being of his students. Indeed, he seems to be the paradigmatic example of an individual who weights "missing the boat" over "sinking the boat" risks (Brown & Cornwall, 2000). From his story, one might even wonder if he ever evaluated the risks involved in an initiative, as his behavior might suggest that he ignored risk considerations whenever he believed an initiative was critical to the success of his students. Yet, when we asked Ralph to talk about his risk-management practices, he said that he thought of himself as a leader who takes calculated risks. Moreover, he believed that taking calculated risks can help educational leaders to be more innovative and successful.

"I've never been reckless… I am not a gambler, but I do take risks … I do. They are calculated risks … they are strategic risks … You've got to take a risk in anything that you do, otherwise you stay where you are." (*Ralph*)

9.2.4. Ralph's practices about resources

Ralph was aware that understanding the needs of the children and using the "filter" to evaluate opportunities was, simply, not enough. He also needed to gather the necessary resources to successfully implement the initiatives he had been deemed necessary.

As the principal of a public school, Ralph did not have much control over the district's financial resources, nor the capacity to generate revenues that could support new initiatives. Therefore, he turned to seeking external funding in the form of grants (as illustrated in the Health Clinic initiative), gifts from corporations and other organizations in the community (as illustrated in the case of both the Health Clinic and Pre-School initiatives), and most importantly partnerships. As Ralph explained in his own words:

"I think it's your duty to make partnerships and to move the agenda forward with bringing in resources … linking arms I call it … in the name of kids. Let me just say this … I've discovered first-hand that people want to help … As the entrepreneurial leader, it's your duty, it's your absolute responsibility to create the vehicle that allows people the ability to help." (*Ralph*)

One of his close collaborators confirmed Ralph's unusual ability to create these successful partnerships:

"He instilled pride in the community where no one [before] would bother with their school, because that was important to the community and to him. He didn't mind bringing people into his building and it didn't matter what you looked like, smelled like or what you needed, he found a way to help you." (*Ralph's collaborator*)

The many partnerships Ralph developed with leaders of the business community in which the school operated led to raising millions of dollars for the school. A collaborator jokingly commented:

> "People got to the place where if they knew he was coming downtown for something, then they'd say … 'put away your checkbook'. Because they knew by the time he finished with you, you were going to give him what he was asking you for!" *(Ralph's collaborator)*

Ralph attributed the success of his fundraising to what he called his "magic formula":

> "The magic formula is to recognize the need or problem, surround it with reliable data, and use that data as a baseball bat to drive resources into the school and the community for the children." *(Ralph)*

Indeed, it is clear that Ralph was able to attract funds to implement his initiatives because they were innovative and because they were oriented towards meeting needs of children. Ralph was also good at using information strategically, as he gathered compelling evidence that documented the feasibility as well as the urgency to pursue the initiatives he wanted to implement. Showing results was also important; as a collaborator commented: "I saw his test scores have gone up from 33% to 83%". In other words, being able to point concretely to past successes resulted in more partnerships and more resources.

Finally, to help him gather the needed resources, Ralph was also able to effectively use the social capital he had built over time by developing meaningful relationships and partnerships with leaders of the community.

Ralph was also skillful when it came to secure the human resources he needed. Ralph had a particular strategy to select members of his organization. He said that "every single member of that staff was hand-picked" to ensure that they shared the same commitment to children and were willing to do whatever it took to help all children succeed. He knew how he wanted to build his team and what kind of teachers he needed in his school. As mentioned earlier in the story, he wanted teachers who would put children first and who would never give up.

> "I have created an opportunity to pick people with a missionary spirit and put children first … and to select those adults who reach a child's mind through their heart … and don't give up on kids … and all those things are important, you know." *(Ralph)*

> "You need to have the skill and the will. I can help you with the skill, but I cannot help you with the will… The "will" is the missionary spirit … the ability never, never to give up on a child – never, never." *(Ralph)*

While this was not easy to achieve, given that the hiring of teachers was in part handled centrally by the district, he found ways to work with this system to get the people he needed for his school.

9.2.5. Ralph's practices about growth

As the principal of a public school, Ralph was in no position to "grow" his school in terms of number of students or staff members. However, he did grow the number and types of *services* that his school could offer to its students and their families—by adding a pre-school program and an on-site health clinic, among other things.

As an individual, Ralph felt the drive to increase his "sphere of influence". He explicitly explained his decision to move from teaching to administration as motivated by his desire to influence more and more children and to "multiply the effect". His later efforts towards creating future school leaders and working in many other community initiatives were similarly motivated by the desire of impacting more children in this way.

9.2.6. Other interesting elements of Ralph's case

Persistency combined with flexibility when facing problems

As shown throughout his story, Ralph encountered many obstacles and problems while implementing his unusual initiatives. In each case, Ralph took a proactive approach and tried all possible ways to overcome the obstacles. Once he

had decided on a course of action, he was also very persistent and would not give up, but rather figure out a way around any problem or obstacle.

> "He didn't really see things as obstacles. If he had an obstacle … he used to say … if you can't come by the front door try the back door, if you can't get in the back door try the side door … he would always find a way, and really I think the harder you made it for him, the more of a challenge it became." (*Ralph's collaborator*)

By taking an "out of the box" approach to problem-solving, and by looking deeply at the root-cause of problems, Ralph often suggested solutions that were non-conventional. For example, in investigating the causes of the low levels of academic achievement experienced by his students, Ralph identified and addressed health-related issues that had not been previously thought of as having a negative impact on students' achievement, or as being in the purview of a school.

Figuring out how to work within a bureaucratic and dysfunctional system

Public schools are usually not very "entrepreneurial" as organizations, and Ralph's school and school district were no exceptions. Ralph did not benefit from a decentralized decision-making system, nor had much control on this budget and resources; even hiring was to a great extent controlled at the district level. However, Ralph found ways to work within this challenging system.

According to Ralph's collaborators, one of the most significant obstacles he encountered during his principalship was the bureaucracy of the school system. To implement many of his major initiatives, he needed to get permissions at the school district level and sometimes even at the state level, and that was not an easy task. However, Ralph never mentioned bureaucracy as his biggest challenge. Instead, Ralph discussed the importance of developing skills to be able to "swim in the political soup". He understood the importance of respecting the hierarchy, norms and regulations of the schooling system, yet he was also unwilling to compromise his vision. When he needed to insist and to persevere, he did so. When he needed to give credit to school officials, he also did. In sum, he did not use the limitations of the system as an "excuse", but rather thought he was still responsible for making a difference and the only way to do so was to work hard in favor of children *within* the existing system (while also pushing its boundaries).

Ralph was also able to take advantage of the dysfunctional organizational structure of his urban district to be more entrepreneurial – as the lack of attention to what other members of the organization do, characteristic of dysfunctional environments, allowed him to engage in unusual initiatives without attracting too much attention (at least some of the time!).

9.2.7. Concluding thoughts about Ralph's case

Ralph's story is evidence that being entrepreneurial as a school leader can lead to tangible benefits, such as more effective organizations and higher student achievement. His principalship was characterized by a series of radical and unusual innovations that transformed the nature and operations of his school, including the creation of a healthcare center serving entire families, the creation of a teacher preparation program, and multiple partnerships with the community. Taken together, these innovations greatly increased the success of the school (i.e., "added value"), as measured in terms of not only student learning, but also increased sources of funding for the school, improved school building and grounds, and positive labor/management relations.

It is worth noting that Ralph was able to achieve these goals *despite* working in an organization—a large urban school district—that was not very conducive to entrepreneurial behavior. While accepting to work within the constraints of this bureaucratic system, he was willing to "push back" and take some strong stances if he thought it was critical to the welfare of his students. He did not let the limited control on the resources he had stop him from pursuing worthwhile initiatives and rather found alternative ways to secure the resources he needed. He also proactively worked at changing the organization at least where he had some control—that is, by developing a different climate, culture and expectations within his own school.

As Ralph's story unfolded, it brought to our mind Williams' (2006) identification of the "James Dean" type of entrepreneur operating in K-12 schools. Indeed, the following description aptly applies to Ralph:

> "[W]e are talking of creative school leaders who generally believe that rules are for fools if they stand in the way of creating better schools. Note that we are not talking about ignoring the rules that protect the welfare of the children under their charge, nor are we talking of breaking all the rules. James Deans usually consider common sense in picking their battles. ... The underlying assumption guiding the James Deans is one of serving their students by any means necessary. That is, they see the problem in modern school systems as systemic in nature, and that effectively educating students requires creative measures and rule-breaking." (Williams, 2006, pp.132-3)

Ralph's story is also especially interesting because it challenges some common expectations about what is in the purview of schools and school leaders. Ralph argued very forcefully and convincingly that you cannot address the most fundamental problems faced by urban schools and urban students today if you limit yourself to look at curriculum and pedagogical issues – important as they are. Rather, you must look at the "whole child" and address rather than ignore factors such as health, malnutrition, violence, poverty, that greatly affect a child's capacity and readiness to learn.

At the same time, schools cannot do this alone, but rather need to work in partnership with other social organizations. These considerations suggest that there may be more parallels between social entrepreneurs like Rod, and entrepreneurial school leaders like Ralph, than one might have initially expected.

9.3. Commentaries on Ralph's case

We are collecting readers' insights and lessons learned from reading Ralph's case on the companion website, and we invite you to add yours by following the specific guidelines provided in the "**Guidelines for Contributions**" document.

Posted commentaries about Ralph's case – *None available yet*

CHAPTER 10.

Lynn Gatto's case: Creating unique learning opportunities for urban elementary students

Raffaella Borasi, Shaza Khan, & Ruthanne Vitagliano

(with contributions from Linda Francis)

Lynn's Profile

Throughout her 30-year teaching career in the Rochester City School District, one of the poorest urban districts in New York State, Lynn Gatto showed remarkable resourcefulness in providing her elementary students with the learning experiences she felt they needed to "level the playing-field" and be successful in both school and life. This translated into many innovative initiatives that spanned from creating and even publishing innovative curriculum, to organizing and funding field trips to other parts of the country to enable her students to broaden their experiences.

10.1. Lynn's story

10.1.1. Introduction to Lynn's case

This is the case-study of Lynn Gatto, an accomplished urban elementary teacher with over 30 years of teaching experience in one of the poorest school districts in the country. Throughout her teaching career, Lynn engaged in many innovations that added value not only to the students in her class, but often also to their families as well as other students and teachers across the country. Her innovations not only involved the development of innovative instructional units and pedagogical practices, but also extended to extra-curricular activities, interventions with families and communities, and the dissemination of curricular and pedagogical innovations. Her outstanding pedagogy and passion for teaching did not go unnoticed. Among other awards and recognitions, Lynn Gatto received the 1998 Presidential Award for Excellence in Science and Mathematics Teaching, the 2002 Toyota Tapestry Award, 2004 New York State Teacher of the Year Award, and the 2006 Disney Teacher Award.

Lynn spent all her teaching career in the Rochester City School District, teaching students at all elementary grade levels, in both mainstream and special education classes, and in several different schools. Her district is one of the five largest urban districts in New York State and one with amongst the highest poverty rate within the state. As such, it shares many of the challenges common to urban school districts across the country—including serving a largely underprivileged student population, experiencing low student achievement and graduation rates, facing frequent budget deficits, operating with old facilities and limited technology, and overall struggling with a large bureaucratic and rather dysfunctional system (see Figure 10.1 for some statistics documenting these challenges).

Teaching elementary students in a large urban school district can be rewarding and challenging at the same time. It takes skills and dedication to deal with the many issues urban students face each day they are in school, as well as the pressures from the school district to have students performing at or above proficiency on high-stakes exams. Lynn chose to take this job on full force; in her own words:

"I will be trying to make schools a better place for children until the day I die or get placed in a nursing home." (*Lynn*).

It is witnessing the many needs of her students, and how most schools fail to address them, that made Lynn recognize the need for radical change in schools and teachers' practices, and it is what fueled her constant drive towards innovation. Her husband, also identified by Lynn as her "number one collaborator", testified,

"She wants to provide for her students opportunities to experience the world just like all the other kids are experiencing the world. That's her underlying mission." (*Lynn's husband*)

Figure 10.1. *Rochester City School District Profile (as of 2005, when Lynn retired)*

District characteristics:

- Large urban district (69 schools; $582M budget – with $58M deficit)
- *Percentage of free/reduced lunches:* 85%
- *Students:* about 36,000
- *Teachers:* about 2,900
- *Graduation rate:* 49%

Student demographics:

- 14% White; 64% African American; 20% Latino/a; 2% other

Organizational structure:

- *Key reporting chain*: Teachers/building staff ⇗ building principals ⇗ Deputy Superintendent of Teaching and Learning ⇗ Superintendent ⇗ Board of Education

Subject position:

- *Classroom teacher*: Making ultimate decisions about what is taught in her class and how, but within constraints created by state tests, district curricula and additional mandates that may be specific to a school

Subject's current school:

- 632 students (with similar demographics as the district); 51 teachers

10.1.2. Highlights of Lynn's professional journey

A *young entrepreneur* AND *teacher*

Lynn grew up in a family of entrepreneurs, as her father and mother started and operated their own business. However, she also knew from an early age that she wanted to be a teacher. Lynn recalls being only nine years old when she started her own, albeit unofficial, business.

"As a kid I was, I don't know, nine years old. I had business cards made up, little business cards, and went around the neighborhood and passed out my business cards… I took care of kids all the time. I had like this little nursery school, it was called the Lilliputian School, which I took from Gulliver's Travels." (*Lynn*)

Other experiences helped her sharpen important skills. One of the most beneficial of these early experiences was a high school job as a shoe sales representative, which helped her become better at listening to her customers, identifying their needs, and marketing the company's products. Lynn initially took this job because she wanted to have her own money to spend. She states,

> "My parents lived on a budget, on this very strict budget. So when I went to high school … everybody had these really nice clothes, and I wanted nice clothes. But my mother was like 'No'. I remember her saying to me, 'If you want those clothes … get yourself a job'. So the day I was fifteen I was working." *(Lynn)*

Although her initial motivation was to make money, she found that she enjoyed her sales job, particularly because she was able to spend time just talking to her customers, and through this, build relationships with them. The conversations with her customers helped her get inside their mind, giving her a better understanding of their needs and wants. That then enabled her to frame products in their terms, making her one of the most successful sales representatives in her company.

Skills related to "selling," such as developing a relationship with customers and being able to show them how a product would meet their needs, turned out to be useful later on for Lynn, not only as she applied for awards or grants seeking funding for her initiatives, but also in her approach to students and their families. She herself draws an explicit parallel between teaching and "selling":

> "I think teaching is selling. You're selling a product: the knowledge … or the reading or the science experiment." *(Lynn)*
>
> "A big part of being a successful teacher is knowing every single one of your students—who they are as people, who they are as learners." *(Lynn)*

Although Lynn found success as a salesperson due in part to her ability to create relationships with others, one place this ability was not beneficial to her was as a student in primary and secondary school. In fact, school is one of the places where Lynn most vividly recalled being a "failure". This was because, given her outgoing personality, Lynn took advantage of any unstructured learning time to chat with her peers. Additionally, she found the teachers too boring, the subject matter too unapproachable, and the classroom rules too confining. Instead of flipping through the pages of a textbook during class, Lynn read books of her own liking, which she tucked secretly under her desk.

> "I think one of the greatest regrets in my life is that I didn't know that what I was learning through school and college was actually going to be valuable to me as a teacher. No one ever made that clear, because I just thought being a teacher was being good with kids, having fun, you know, opening the book, whatever the book tells you to do, you do it, because that's what I saw my teachers doing … I didn't care about anything they were teaching me unless it was remotely interesting—then I would pay attention. But, otherwise, I sat with a notebook up in front of me and read. So I was not a good student, needless to say, and I did not go to a great undergraduate program." *(Lynn)*

These negative experiences as a student were another critical factor feeding in her decision to become a teacher, and it subsequently shaped her educational philosophy of making school a place where kids have fun while working towards personal and academic successes.

Lynn recalled always wanting to be a teacher:

> "I was born a teacher…I never played with my dolls as my babies, they were my students." *(Lynn)*
>
> "From the first day of kindergarten when I came home from school and school was so much fun, I just wanted to be there forever. I just—I've always known I've wanted to be a teacher, and I don't think I've ever wavered from that." *(Lynn)*

Early experiences as a teacher

Yet finding a full-time job as a teacher was not as easy as Lynn had expected. After obtaining her bachelor's degree, she worked as a substitute teacher for two years but was unable to find any permanent teaching positions. This is what led her to pursue an advanced degree in special education.

> "I graduated from college … I was a hippie chick of the 60s and I was going to save the world and I could not get a job. … There were, however, special education jobs, so I went back to school full time and got a degree in special education – because I didn't care what I taught, just as long as I could teach". *(Lynn)*

Lynn's first teaching job was as a special education teacher in a self-contained class for students with severe emotional problems—a job nobody else had wanted to take!

> "I was the fifth teacher in the room that year … that's how I finally got a job, the fifth teacher, they couldn't get anybody else to take this class, I said I'll take it … the first day kids were picking up whole tables and throwing them, they were like little 5-year-olds … so I remember that night emptying the room out of everything … saying, okay, we got to start right from the basics." *(Lynn)*

This extreme situation really challenged Lynn to question how she could reach difficult students and have them learn—as she knew that working from the textbook would not do it! This started a life-long journey to develop a child-centered and inquiry-based pedagogy.

> "Over the years I've become a better teacher … I thought the textbook would tell me how to do everything, and it was boring and horrible. And I started with emotionally disturbed children, and they were not about to sit for anything." (*Lynn*)

Even in this early stage of her career, Lynn was proactively looking for opportunities to meet her students' needs, beyond what might be considered the traditional purview of a classroom teacher. For example, as she was assigned to a new position as a resource room teacher, "learning disability" was a new label that was just starting to be used. Lynn perceived an urgent need as she realized that her students and their parents were just as confused about the label as she was. In order to successfully teach her students, she felt it was necessary for her students, their parents, and herself to build an understanding of what it meant to have a learning disability and its ramifications on the student's educational and personal future. To address this need she sought a district-funded grant to pay for the production and distribution costs of an educational video on learning disabilities, that she designed together with a videographer.

Challenges and opportunities of working in a large urban district

Lynn spent over thirty years as an elementary teacher in the Rochester City School District. During this time, she witnessed the coming and going of several different superintendents, and she changed several schools and grade levels over the years. Her ability to work and grow as an entrepreneurial educator fluctuated somewhat depending on these contextual factors.

At times, her district provided direct support for her creativity and passion for teaching, thereby helping her provide her students with rich learning experiences. The district was also able to provide grant funding for initiatives from time to time, as well as professional development and connections with other innovative educators. For example, Lynn identified as one of the highlights from her career when she was mentored by a scientist from Brandeis University. With enthusiasm exuding from her voice and body language, Lynn recounted the unique opportunities this gave her, which in time had a direct effect on her growth as a teacher:

> "I had a mentor out of Brandeis University, a science mentor; he was a physicist. How many teachers who are becoming better science teachers have a scientist as their mentor? Not many! I had the opportunity to… go to other urban sites… We had little mini conferences [where] we really developed some close relationships with other teachers who were trying to do the same kinds of things that we were here in Rochester… [T]hat's why I say, personally and professionally this organization has been very good to me in many ways." (*Lynn*)

Other times, though, she felt stifled by the environment, often facing resistance to her unique pedagogy and activities from district and building personnel. Yet, Lynn did not let these negative conditions change her approach. The success experienced by her students in standardized tests caused many district administrators to remain quiet about her unconventional ways. At the same time her innovative practices, national recognitions, and successful students at times caused some jealousy and animosity amongst her building colleagues. Lynn responded to this hostility by finding alternative sources of support, often leading to professional partnerships that extended beyond her school walls, as well as searching for external validation for her success through national awards and presentations to conferences.

> "That's what winning awards has done for me, it has sustained me through all the naysayers … I feel so alienated so often that I think these awards have made me feel as though it's not me, there is nothing wrong with me, it's them, the people I work with." (*Lynn*)

Her decision to pursue a Ph.D. in Education from the University of Rochester was also another way to receive

professional development, find validation, and find a like-minded community where she could continue to grow professionally.

Relentlessly engaging in instructional innovations

Lynn was continuously on the look-out for ideas to make learning relevant and engaging for her students. First of all, she wanted to make sure that school would be fun and enjoyable for her students:

> "I believe school should be fun for kids … the bottom line is that they are kids, and learning is fun, and I want school to be fun. I want them to have a good time!" (*Lynn*)

But she was also clear, though, that having fun is not enough by itself—as she wanted her classes to prepare her students for life. Aware of the limited time students spent in her class, Lynn was always very careful about using that time most effectively, and this desire informed her design of specific instructional experiences.

This approach translated in many unusual yet extremely valuable experiences for her students—such as building a walk-in butterfly vivarium together with her students:

> "We started with this idea of building a walk-in butterfly vivarium which is basically a habitat to raise butterflies … The science was all about the life cycles and habitats, and then there was an unbelievable amount of math in terms of measuring and geometric figures, and what's the right shape and construction of it, how much netting … what kind of plants would fit in there. Just an unbelievable amount of everything went into that huge project and we're still using the vivarium … the kids still use it, it sits in the front hall of the school." (*Lynn*)

Over her years as an urban teacher, Lynn engaged in many of these curricular innovations. These included, among others, building a greenhouse for her school, making plant feeders for nursing home residents with her students, using video-conferencing technology to communicate with a "sister" class in rural Kentucky, and engaging in a long-term project involving visiting a local park in different seasons and preparing written materials for a "kiosk" that would enable other students to use the park more effectively to learn science.

These innovative learning experiences often called for creativity and ingenuity to come up with the needed resources, as well as to overcome unexpected obstacles in their implementation. These points are well illustrated by this account of how she built a greenhouse for her school, as provided by her husband:

> "We happen to be walking into Sam's Club one day and she saw a portable greenhouse that you could build, so she ended up getting money in grants to go and buy this little greenhouse. Now it came all in parts, she found somebody that would deliver it, they donated their truck, she gave them a gift certificate to a restaurant out of her pocket. The greenhouse is now all stacked up, she got volunteers to come and assemble it in a rainstorm … she looked at the instructions and it said it must be on a stone base … she didn't budget in for a stone base, so she said what can I do, so we called around. So and so could deliver the stone for $60 … but he can't deliver it on this date. So, then we got an idea, I said you know what, why don't we call this friend of ours who happens to be in charge of the City Environmental Services; we called him up, the next day the city crew is down there pouring stone and smoothing it flat so the greenhouse could be assembled, no charge, part of what they do." (*Lynn's husband*)

At the same time, Lynn was always very attentive to what was going on in the world around her, and ready to seize opportunities to create learning activities for her students. For example, when the disaster of the Columbia space shuttle occurred, her class stopped everything else to discuss this event; connections were made with science as they discussed information provided by the media about the cause of the accident, with history as they remembered other explorers, and most importantly they touched upon the importance of having individuals risk their lives for the good of humanity. In another occasion, when the school district announced they may cut the school librarians because of budget constraints, she coached her students as they decided to write a letter to the Board of Education explaining how important the librarian was for their learning.

Lynn's pedagogy was based on constructivism and inquiry. She encouraged children to ask and pursue their own questions and interests, and to build knowledge from hands-on experiences. Much of her curriculum comprised of integrated units, where she wove in specific subject matters and skills around real-life situations and themes relevant to her students.

Lynn did not conceive of her role as teacher as being limited to helping her students learn the curriculum specified

for their grade level, or even just gaining academic-related skills. She genuinely cared for each of her students as an individual, and she was willing to "do what it takes" to enable them to learn. This led her to engage in several acts of advocacy on behalf of her students, as illustrated by the following quotes:

> "That … family now has a brand new … front step because when I made [a house visit] I almost broke my neck, the bricks were falling all over the place … I knocked at the front door, I said, oh my God, these front steps are horrible…[the mother] says, well, that's why we don't use the front door … I said the landlord needs to fix these steps…. I said you call that landlord and you tell him the teacher was here and you tell him the teacher is coming back in 2 weeks and if she breaks her neck on these steps, she's got a really good lawyer—and don't think that those steps weren't fixed!" (*Lynn*)
>
> "If the student needs reading services, she'll advocate for reading services. If the parent has to sign paperwork, she goes to the parent's house and makes sure the parent signs the paperwork. If a kid needs glasses, she'll even go and take the kid to get glasses…she goes above and beyond what normally people would think of as a teacher." (*Lynn's husband*)

Lynn's desire to "change schools" led her also to take on active roles in teacher preparation and professional development, especially towards the end of her career. This took on a few different and complementary forms.

First of all, she made her classroom very open for visitors—whether they were student teachers, other teachers, or educational researchers from all over the world. Almost every year she had one or more student teachers interning in her class, and for several years she taught as an adjunct professor some of the elementary methods courses offered at the University of Rochester as part of its elementary teacher preparation program. She partnered with Dr. Joanne Larson, an education professor at the University of Rochester, in research taking place in her classroom, and reported on the results at professional conferences. She also offered several professional development workshops for teachers both within and outside of her district. Her drive to provide more students with learning opportunities similar to those experienced by the students in her classroom also led her to look at publications as a way to empower other teachers to do what she did and thus significantly expand her sphere of influence.

The following stories are good illustrations of the creativity and skills required to carry out these instructional experiences successfully as a teacher.

10.1.3. Lynn's innovation #1: The Cookie-Cutter instructional unit

Sometime in the middle of her teaching career, Lynn secured a $1000 School to Work grant that allowed her 4th grade class to create and sell a teacher's guide for a geography lesson requiring the use of cookies cut in the shape of New York State, while also manufacturing the large cookie cutters needed for that instructional activity. The students were involved in all parts of the enterprise, including making the cookie cutters, writing the teacher's guide, and learning about how to create a company that would allow them to sell these instructional materials to other teachers.

How the idea came about and was evaluated/refined

Lynn recalled that she read about a geography lesson involving a cookie cut in the shape of New York State, but she could not find a cookie cutter big enough to do what she wanted with it. So, she decided to create the large cookie cutters with her class!

> "There was this great activity I read about, where you could cut out a cookie [in the shape] of the state and use little chocolate chips to show where the mountains were and little colored candy beads to show where the major cities were, and a star candy to put where the capital [was]. But the state cookie cutters that I could find were only this big, so how could they really work? … I'm like: 'I need a big cookie.' So I went on the search for a large cookie cutter and couldn't find one, so I said ah hah … we'll make them." (*Lynn*)

She realized that this initiative would require some resources for buying the materials needed to produce the cookie-

cutter, so she began to look for some possible funding sources through grants. Sometime later, as she received a flier in her teacher's mailbox advertising a $1,000 grant for teachers, she began to think that this could be a good match. Based on the grant guidelines, Lynn began to reevaluate her initial idea and decided to develop a larger interdisciplinary unit in which the students themselves would produce and sell the cookie cutters, and by doing so they would also learn what it would take to start and run a business.

Lynn thought that such a unit would be very rich of learning opportunities both in terms of traditional content and in terms of life skills for her students. As such, it was going to move forward her vision of providing urban students with learning experiences that were "fun," while at the same time preparing them for life and providing them with experiences available to their more privileged peers.

She knew that to do this unit she would only need the materials to produce the cookie cutters, as well as access to the equipment needed to make the cookie cutters. She was confident she could find a technology teacher who could give her free access to the equipment, and she also concluded that the other costs associated to the experience were within the scope of the $1,000 grant.

Based on these considerations, she decided it would be worthwhile to go ahead and write a proposal for this grant. She was clear, though, that she would be able to go ahead with implementing the unit only if she got the grant – and, thus, the resources needed to purchase the materials to produce the cookie cutters.

Planning and gathering the needed resources

Lynn wrote the grant proposal. As it was her practice, she tried to provide a clear image to the funders of what the outcome of the project would be and what her students would gain from it. The grant proposal also included a plan of how she would develop an interdisciplinary unit with her students around producing the cookie cutters.

Lynn was thrilled when she learned she was awarded the grant! However, at this point she also discovered that, because of restrictions on the use of government funds, she could not use any of those funds to purchase metal and then resell it. So, she had to either give up the grant or re-conceptualize the project. After talking with the grant program officer, she came up with a creative solution that allowed her to keep the grant:

> "So, I get the grant and … it turns out there's this little fine print thing that you cannot buy raw materials with federal funds and then resell it. … Oh my God, what am I going to do? … I started thinking and I went, wait a minute, … if the kids create a teacher's guide and talk about how to do the lesson and all the other things that we did around that and learning about New York State, we could sell the teacher's guide and a free cookie cutter could come with it. [The program officer] goes: 'Oh, that will be great,' and so I went okay, we're in business." *(Lynn)*

As her elementary school did not have the equipment to produce the cookie cutters, Lynn reached out to the metal shop teacher in one of the high schools in her district. She explained the project, and her idea that the high school students could serve as mentors to her elementary-aged students, giving both groups an opportunity to learn from each other in a hands-on learning experience. The metal shop teacher agreed to participate in the project, realizing its value for his own students.

> "I called over to Edison Tech because I knew they had a metal shop there and spoke to the metal shop teacher. … I didn't know the guy, I sought him out … and talked to him about the project … he said, oh yeah, no problem, we can do that … he said you know the kids could do this, his kids could do a piece of it … he was all excited because it would be something interesting for his kids to do …" *(Lynn)*

Lynn carefully planned the experience as a multidisciplinary unit where her students would create a company that would produce, market, and sell the activity guides (along with the free large NYS cookie cutter) for interested teachers. To help her students understand all of the processes involved in such a task, she persuaded local businessmen, lawyers, and other community professionals to invest their time and share their expertise with her students in how to create and maintain a company.

Implementing and monitoring the initiative

Implementing the unit required a lot of attention to details – as for example arrangements had to be made with the technology teacher as well as all the other volunteers who had agreed to participate in the project, and important decisions had to be made as unexpected elements came up.

"I worked it out with the metal shop teacher first and figured out how to make this big New York State cookie cutter. And [then] we went over there and we made the cookie cutters." *(Lynn)*

"[My students] did a field trip over to Edison Tech and they did the rivets … they learned how to work in the metal shop and the high school kids worked with the kids and this is really cool … then we wrote up this little teachers' guide, and it was really cute … like I did a little cover … but I made the kids do all the printing on the inside and it was when we had just gotten computers … so they wrote everything up on computers with their own little mistakes, and I left everything the way the kids had done it … they talked about the activities they had done in the classroom about New York State and the things that they [the teachers] could do with their class. It was really cute, and it was sort of like the kids writing to other teachers all over New York State." *(Lynn)*

Since Lynn was directly in charge of this initiative, she was able to attend to all of the details, doing what necessary to make everything work well. Being so directly involved with the implementation also gave her the opportunity to monitor closely how the unit unfolded and make changes in her plan as seemed appropriate to her.

Implementing the unit included not only producing the cookie cutters and writing the teacher guide for the geography unit using the NYS-shaped cookies, but also marketing efforts to sell the guide to local teachers. A real break-through occurred when a newspaper reporter learned about the activity and published an article on this experience in a statewide magazine for teachers, as this generated a lot of requests for their product:

"I was just going to have the kids write letters to the teachers in the Rochester City School District and we'd sell them …. Well, the New York State Teacher Magazine ran this big article … and I don't even know how they got the story … they called me and said 'we heard you have this cookie cutter' … well so they came …and they took pictures of like the kids with like these piles of New York State cookie … We sold out in 2 weeks." *(Lynn)*

Overall, the Cookie Cutter unit's implementation was a big success!

10.1.4. Lynn's innovation #2: Organizing a field trip to Kentucky for urban 4th students

How the idea came about and was evaluated/refined

One of the forces driving Lynn's practice as a teacher was her belief that, in order to level the playing field, her urban students needed to gain "life experiences" important for their success in life that were often denied to them. For example, after years of working in her urban school district, Lynn realized that several of her students never traveled or even left their urban neighborhoods. So, she felt they would need at least some understanding of their broader surroundings in order to fairly compete with students from wealthy backgrounds for jobs and other future opportunities. She stated,

"If there's going to be any sense of equality, you have to give them some of what is out there, so that they are aware of what's going on outside of their neighborhood and what are the possibilities." *(Lynn)*

Thus, she instituted a culminating field trip at the end of every school year that took her students outside of their city neighborhoods to suburban and rural places both within and outside of the state. Since she recognized that neither the district nor her students' parents would be able to finance these trips, she and her students fundraised each year to pay for the expenses and obtained donated frequent flyer miles to pay for any associated flight expenses.

One special field trip provides insight into the entrepreneurial nature of these initiatives. This field trip was scheduled to occur during the 2001-2002 school year and was to take Lynn's students on a field trip across the country, from New York to Kentucky, to visit the class of another teacher Lynn was collaborating with. The two teachers had met at a science conference ten years back, where they found that they had very similar personal and professional backgrounds. Additionally, and most importantly, they found that they had a similar educational philosophy.

Building on the friendship and collaboration cultivated by the two teachers, their students also became familiar with

one another through numerous shared activities which occurred over email and using teleconferencing technology. This caused Lynn to begin thinking about Kentucky as an ideal end-of-the-year field trip.

The two teachers decided to pursue this idea, even as they realized the many challenges it would present to fly an entire class of 4th graders across the country. They felt that this field trip would provide the students the experience of a lifetime, especially since the demographics of their classes were so different – Lynn's being predominantly urban African American, and her colleague's being predominately rural Caucasian.

Planning and gathering the needed resources

The planning of this trip developed over several months, as there were a lot of details to attend to. The two teachers made detailed plans for their students, mapping out how to get the most "academic mileage" out of every minute of their stay and working out how to obtain the necessary financial resources. They organized for the students to get hands-on learning opportunities at a local university, exposing them not only to interesting science projects, but also to a university environment that many of them had not experienced before. In addition to this, they also discussed how they would help the kids from the two classes get to know one another in an easy, comfortable manner. Lynn's colleague provided insights into the level of detail that the two teachers had to go into to plan this trip, and some of the rich experiences this trip provided to the participating students.

> "From my end, I had to start with the orientation for parents, and make sure that they were on board with what we were going to do before we started all the little details of everything. Then, it was a matter of deciding what we were going to do with them [Lynn's students] when they arrived. We knew we wanted to put our students on a school bus, take them over to the airport, meet Lynn's kids coming off the plane, and all of us ride back to school on the bus; that was a given. So that meant I was going to have to have all of her ticket times, everything had to get to me so I knew when they were coming and all that stuff. Then I had to get in touch with the bus garage and make sure that the bus could be at the school at the right time to get over there, make sure that the bus could wait and not have to go back to pick a load of kids up, [and] it had to be a free bus… And the students were going to spend the rest of the day at school with my kids and we were going to leave school, and we were going to go to a local environmental center where … we could bring the kids in and have both groups go through these classes at the extension service to get to know each other. So we did all these outdoor education classes … then went inside to see some astronomers give a little presentation because it was getting close to evening, and astronomers took them outside and showed them the night sky, and they talked about all the things in the night sky, and then we all, [Kentucky] kids and Rochester kids, stayed all night in that center." (*Lynn's Kentucky colleague*)

A few parents and grandparents volunteered as chaperones for the trip (and some of them were as excited as the children, as they had never been on a plane before!). Lynn's husband also came along to support her, and the Kentucky teacher capitalized on many of her connections to organize free lectures and activities for the students.

The plan the two teachers put together already included very creative ways to minimize costs while in Kentucky, yet plane tickets would have to be purchased. So Lynn engaged her students in several fund-raising activities. She also obtained donated frequent flyer miles from friends to pay for most of the flight expenses. And in the end, she also put in some of her own funds to cover the difference.

Yet after all this planning, when the 2001-2002 school year began, an unexpected event rattled not only their professional plans, but the entire nation. On September 11, 2001, the U.S. was faced with a terrorist attack, which eventually caused Lynn's district to make strict changes to its field trip policy. They sent a directive to all the teachers stating that any field trip to take place would have to meet the superintendent's approval, wherein this approval would be given only twenty-four hours in advance. A cross-country field trip could obviously not take place with such little notice. Airline tickets needed to be purchased, and all the collaborators—the university professors, astronomers, etc.—would have to know beforehand whether or not the fieldtrip was taking place.

After some months went by, and once Lynn was convinced that the personal safety of her students would not be jeopardized by this trip, she contacted district administrators asking for permission to go on this field trip. She received no response. After several attempts and no response from her district, she called a meeting to discuss the issue with her students' parents. Almost every one of her students had a parent present at the meeting, and most felt this field

trip was too important not to happen. This was, after all, one of the only times many of their children would have the opportunity to fly to another state. They decided that they would all write letters to the superintendent, requesting permission to let their children go on this fieldtrip. As the date for their scheduled field trip got closer and Lynn received no response from the superintendent, she decided she could wait no longer for the district's approval. She went to her school principal, received his support, and was on her way to making this field trip happen.

Implementing and monitoring the initiative

In the end, the fundraising done by her class, the detailed planning that she and her colleague engaged in, the efforts put forth by herself and her students' parents to curb district resistance, and Lynn's desire to provide her students with an unforgettable learning experience won out.

Things mostly went as planned – although a few decisions still had to be made on the spot to make everything go smoothly. The two teachers were there all the time, ready and able to respond to any surprise and make the necessary adjustments.

This experience was an unqualified success for everyone involved – as documented as part of A *Life Outside*, a video documentary of a year of Lynn's teaching (included among the *Other resources* section of the companion website).

10.1.5. Lynn's innovation #3: Publishing an elementary science curriculum

Lynn's desire to provide more students with learning opportunities similar to those experienced by her students led her to create and publish an entire innovative science curriculum for elementary school.

How the idea came about and was evaluated/refined

This project came about through a happenchance meeting at a national science teachers' conference. She was walking around the vendor's stalls when she ran into someone she knew, who was working at a stall that had science curriculum kits. As they caught up on life, Lynn looked through the products he was selling and saw the innovative science curriculum they were marketing for secondary schools. She felt it was an interesting and valuable curriculum and wanted to purchase a similar one for elementary school teachers, but she was told that they had no such product available. It was at that point that the owner of the publishing company walked over. Lynn was introduced to him, and he caught a glance of a ribbon on her nametag, which indicated that she was a recipient of the Toyota Tapestry Award, a national award given to innovative teachers. He then asked whether she might be interested in publishing an elementary science curriculum herself.

After returning to Rochester from the conference, Lynn received a phone call from the owner. He and his partner were interested in seeing Lynn in action, to determine whether having her write elementary science materials was truly an opportunity worth pursuing. Once they saw her teach, they were convinced that she was a perfect candidate for writing an elementary school science curriculum that was both hands-on and innovative. Thus, the owner of the company pursued her to work on this publication.

Lynn was originally uncertain of whether this undertaking was worth her time and energy, but she also felt it was a unique opportunity to put something new and teacher-friendly on the market. Publishing this kind of curriculum and having it used in elementary classrooms across the nation would also indirectly realize her vision of empowering more urban students to learn and succeed. She also thought it could be of value to her personally, both financially and as something to have on her resume as she looked for different job opportunities after retirements. After being convinced of the educational as well as personal value of this opportunity, Lynn signed a contract with the company to develop nine science kits aligned to the national science education standards.

Planning and gathering the needed resources

Throughout the development of the elementary science curriculum, Lynn had substantial input in how the final

product would eventually turn out. Most importantly, she did not want it to be "teacher proof". She wanted it to push not only the students, but also the teachers to new levels of understanding science.

> "I wanted to provide something for teachers that was not saying to them 'Here is what you do'. I wanted them still to make decisions on their own. It [was] about them being motivated and them being part of the process of their own growth or their own change in practice." (*Lynn*)

To fulfill this goal, Lynn felt there was a need for an introduction to the guide that included a theoretical framework, informing teachers of the approach and method that she used in creating the curriculum guides.

Gathering resources was not an issue in this case, as the contract covered for expenses – although Lynn still had to find the time to devote to this demanding initiative!

Implementing and monitoring the initiative

As she wrote these curriculum materials, Lynn used her knowledge of education in the structure and content of the book.

> "I know teachers, I know … what are road blockers. So I try to anticipate that in my notes." (*Lynn*)

She included sections that had suggestions to teachers on how to modify the lessons for grade level instruction. She also aligned the goals of the modules with the national science standards. In all, her published curriculum guide turned out to be a comprehensive, easy-to-read book providing engaging ways to learn more about scientific concepts. It also included science kits providing teachers with all the materials required to teach the curriculum.

In the published version, Lynn wrote,

> "The focus of It's Alive! is to provide an environment that encourages children to be scientists…The goal of It's Alive! is to educate children to think like scientists through the study of the characteristics of organisms; therefore, teachers must think like scientists. The teacher promotes inquiry by being an inquirer her/himself." (Gatto, 2005, preface)

When she initially agreed to complete the project in six months, she had not fully realized how big an undertaking this was. Although she based the materials on her own practice, writing the text and creating the kits took her a lot longer than she expected – especially because she wanted to make sure that the materials would remain true to her goals of engaging students in inquiry:

> "I really worked hard at trying to develop activities … that would actually invite kids to question things. Materials was a problem because they wanted it cheap … and that's something that I never really gave much thought to." (*Lynn*)

Furthermore, her responsibility did not end with the production of the curriculum material, as the contract also included her helping with selling it by giving workshops across the country and being at available at conferences.

Having a published product ensured that Lynn's creativity in designing experiences for elementary children would live on.

10.1.6. Updates on Lynn's story

While Lynn retired from the Rochester City School District soon after the end of our research study, her mission as an education change agent did not stop by any means! She was immediately hired, first as a Visiting Professor, and then as a Clinical Faculty, to direct the Elementary Teacher Preparation program at the University of Rochester Warner School of Education. In this role, she initiated many innovations that transformed that program and greatly increased its effectiveness in preparing high-quality elementary teachers.

Before even starting in her faculty position, Lynn was instrumental in establishing the first university-based Horizons Summer program – a 6-week full-time summer camp for urban K-8 students, following basic principles established by the national Horizons organization, but with significant leeway in terms of the curriculum to be offered. Lynn was the director of this program for its first eight years, growing the program from 30 to almost 150 students over this period

of time – and doing most of the curriculum development, fund-raising, staff hiring and training, required to run the program.

After her (second) retirement from the Warner School in 2019, Lynn still continued her mission through publishing.

10.2. Analysis of Lynn's entrepreneurial activity

10.2.1. Lynn's practices about vision

As mentioned in the introduction, Lynn's vision was centered on the well-being and future success of her urban students and her understanding of what it would take to provide them with a "level playing field" and the experiences they needed to be successful in life. Her commitment to this vision was also quite strong, as testified by two of her closest collaborators. Her colleague in Kentucky stated,

> "She doesn't just have a passion for the teaching; she has a passion for the students…She knows who she has to attend to… it's not administrators, it's not other teachers in the building. She knows that her vision [is] for teaching these students" (*Lynn's Kentucky colleague*).
>
> "She gives 100% all the time, get the job done. To her, teaching is her profession. It doesn't end at 4:00 when the kids walk out the door, she's committed even at home." (*Lynn's Kentucky colleague*)

Lynn's passion for this mission was demonstrated in her multi-pronged efforts to provide underprivileged students with social and cultural capital, regardless of the challenges and the cost to her.

Lynn also recognized the importance of sharing and spreading this vision, as she wanted to promote change in education that went beyond her classroom. This prompted her involvement in professional conferences and publishing. An important part of her message, in these cases, was dispelling myths about urban students. She stated:

> "As [New York State] Teacher of the Year, I've been able to go around and say to people, you know, what you hear and what you see in the paper or in the news are not true. City kids are smart and they're great people, and the parents are great people. And no matter what, city parents love their kids, no matter what." (*Lynn*)

Lynn recognized that these issues were important to address if city school students were truly going to compete with their suburban counterparts once entering the workforce.

Lynn also recognized that empowering the parents to advocate for their children's rights was a critical element in this cause. Lynn helped parents understand the language and approach they must use in fighting for their rights. For example, when the parents decided they wanted their children to go to Kentucky, one parent suggested that they call the superintendent with their concern over the field trip restrictions. Knowing that their calls would not get through, Lynn suggested that they write letters to the superintendent instead, pointing out that this was a more effective way of getting his attention. To help them compose their letters, they wrote one sample letter together on the board, giving parents with limited English proficiency the opportunity to make themselves heard as well.

Lynn showed a great ability to share her vision with others and get their buy in as needed to gain participation in her various projects—as illustrated throughout her story. Her passion, determination, and the personal rapport she established with people all contributed to her success:

> "She just is a very determined person, and people who see her passion for this are willing to buy into her mission. … She breaks it down in such a way that people cannot refuse … they want to participate." (*Lynn's husband*)

Providing a clear and concrete image of what she was trying to achieve also served her well, especially when writing grants.

"I want people to see what I'm seeing and picture the outcome, the same outcome that I'm picturing, or the product." *(Lynn)*

10.2.2. Lynn's practices about opportunities

Lynn was always full of ideas for new initiatives, and treated each of those ideas as an opportunity to put her overarching vision into practice:

"I guess that's how I view myself, I view myself as an educational inventor…I invent a lot of this stuff and… invent lessons. … I've got an idea a minute" *(Lynn)*

"She is always seeking innovations, ways to improve things." *(Lynn's husband)*

Her ideas traditionally stemmed from recognizing an unmet need of her students or in her practice, and then trying to find ways to address that need – as typical of many business and social entrepreneurs. Since she taught in a high-needs district, identifying such needs was never difficult!

"They've all come from a need, either my own personal needs, or to take kids out of their present environment to move them to another, to show them another place." *(Lynn)*

Sometimes it was a specific problem that provided the impetus for an innovation—as illustrated with the case of the Cookie Cutter Unit. As such, we can say that Lynn approached needs and problems as opportunities and catalysts for innovation.

Ideas and opportunities for innovation also often arose from the desire to improve her own practice. Lynn adjusted to changes in her professional environment by continually reflecting on lesson and unit plans she conducted in previous years. Her husband explained,

"She keeps everything in big Rubbermaid tubs in the basement and periodically… when she's going to do that unit she sits down and says okay, 'This is how I did it last time, how can I improve on this? How can I make my work less, yet the kids get the same experience out of it?' … she'll come in and say, you know, 'Remember five years ago I did this? How can we make this look better now? Is there better technology out there now that we can use?'" *(Lynn's husband)*

Lynn was also an early adopter of technology and she often looked at new technologies as opportunities to enhance her students' learning, and she worked proactively at developing new ways to capitalize on them. She was also always on the look-out for new ideas through reading, participating in professional conference, and talking with other teachers. In fact, many of her curricular innovations originated from ideas she gathered from one of these sources—although almost always she ended up significantly enhancing and transforming the original idea, as illustrated in the case of the Cookie Cutter Unit.

Lynn saw so many opportunities for innovation that she recognized she would never be able to implement them all. In fact, she developed the practice of writing down some of her ideas and putting them in a "grant folder" for future reference, ready to be implemented if the right circumstances came along – whether it was a new grant opportunity that would allow her to fund the materials or other expenses involved in a specific initiative, or a new curriculum mandate that could be addressed through one of the learning experiences she has thought about:

"I used to have a big folder of ideas and so when a grant comes out I flip through it and if there's something that matches then I write it up." *(Lynn)*

So, how did she choose among the many ideas and opportunities she generated? First of all, she relied on her vision to decide if the opportunity or idea is truly worthwhile. In the case of curricular initiatives in particular, this meant first of all evaluating the learning opportunities the experience could offer to her students. Lynn purposefully pursued opportunities that would produce the most "academic mileage" for her students. In the case of curricular initiatives, she looked for activities that could cover the most substantial amount of academic ground for her students, while

attempting to give them learning opportunities that also built their social and cultural capital. Further, she chose to pursue opportunities related to her own personal and professional growth.

If an initiative was deemed worthwhile and she had a sense that she could pull it off, Lynn often did not stop to evaluate its specific costs and would move mountains to make it happen—as illustrated throughout her story and captured in the following quote:

> "Sometimes you have to jump feet first into a project and later figure out where you are heading and how." (*Lynn*)

Yet funding and capacity considerations were not ignored, as suggested by her very practice of setting aside some ideas in her "grant folder," to be revisited if and when the appropriate funding opportunity came along.

Lynn admitted, however, that sometimes she had been uncertain about whether a specific initiative would be worth the effort, as it was the case for example when she was offered the opportunity to publish an elementary science curriculum. In some of these cases, it took others to convince her to make the investments required—be it time, emotions, or her own money—to pursue it. With the science curriculum, for example, she was not sure if the project would be successful, and the company had to reassure her that they would not be undertaking it if they thought it would fail.

10.2.3. Lynn's practices about risk

While Lynn's initiatives rarely involved any financial risk, many of them involved breaking or bending the rules—a family trait!

> "My father was a rule breaker. My mother always says, you are just like your father, you think the rules are made for you to break them." (*Lynn*)

> "When I break the rules, it's only for their kids and they know that… and [parents] know I am their biggest ally." (*Lynn*)

While Lynn did this purposefully and with considerable ease, she realized that the rule-breaking presented a personal and professional risk for her.

Some of the initiatives Lynn was involved in presented a risk to her reputation. Lynn felt that publishing the science curriculum, for example, was a great personal risk, not so much in terms of the product's "success" or "failure", but rather how it would be received by her own teacher colleagues.

> "What if people read this and say …'This woman doesn't know what she's talking about'. 'This is terrible'. There was tremendous personal risk." (*Lynn*)

One of Lynn's collaborators describes her as a calculated risk-taker:

> "She does do a lot of risk taking. A lot of it is calculated, a lot of it isn't. She'll take the risk to the point where she knows she can do certain things. If she ends up coming up against an obstacle, there's ways around it, then the calculating starts, but most of the time she's a very good risk taker." (*Lynn's husband*)

Indeed, as we saw in the previous section, most often Lynn would not embark in a new "costly" initiative until she had a grant or some other means to secure critical resources. Ultimately, taking those risks was always worthwhile for Lynn if she saw a significant benefit involved for the students and the parents.

Lynn was also not afraid of failure and mistakes, as she stated,

> "I see failure as the opportunity to improve or to do [something] again and succeed." (*Lynn*)

10.2.4. Lynn's practices about resources

As a teacher in a public school, Lynn had essentially no control on her organization's resources and no discretionary budget. Furthermore, her urban district was often under-resourced in terms of equipment, technology, buses to do field trips, etc. As some of Lynn's initiatives required funding—especially her field trips—she had to find creative ways to secure the needed resources. This usually involved a combination of grants, fund-raising, in-kind donations and even her own funds – as well illustrated for example by the account of her construction of a greenhouse for her school, as reported earlier in her story. Lynn also used her award money to bring in more resources and opportunities for their classrooms, students, and schools; for example, she had a Smart Board installed in her classroom which she purchased with funds provided when she won a national award.

Her approach to grant-writing was quite purposeful and successful. Lynn was always on the look-out for grant opportunities specifically for teachers that could match some of the ideas she had placed in her grant folder. When an opportunity came about, she was quick at seizing it. She understood the basic principle that in order to get funded it is not enough to have a good idea – you also need to understand what the funders want and "sell your idea" to them. Lynn made an explicit connection between seeking funding and "selling":

> "…that was why I sold shoes so well … a lot of times women would come in wearing a dress, and I would bring out [some shoes] and I'd say, 'well you know, this looks good but they're not as comfortable, so you could try these' … so I'm just seeing what the other person, how they think or how they perceive what you're trying to tell them or sell them." (*Lynn*)

Lynn also learned overtime the importance of identifying concrete products or outcomes in her grant proposal:

> "I try and give people a vision … I want people to see what I am seeing and picture the outcome, the same outcome that I'm picturing or the product. … I always am very explicit in terms of giving examples." (*Lynn*)

She was also very creative in how she presented herself and her ideas, as illustrated by the following quote about how she differentiated herself in the interview leading to one of the major awards she won:

> "When I went to New York State Teacher of the Year we had an interview at a table with 15 people; they interviewed the 5 finalists … I walked in with a bag because I knew generally what they were going to ask me … I brought artifacts [from my teaching] so when they asked me about something … that would help to jog my memory … so they were floored … they said you are the only person who has ever brought anything in all these years … How can you walk in with nothing, you're selling yourself." (*Lynn*)

Lynn (as many teachers!) was also very good at bootstrapping. As illustrated throughout her story, she significantly reduced the need for start-up costs by figuring out what she, her husband, and her kids could build rather than purchase; she asked for donated equipment and services; she found ways to secure free access to equipment her school did not own; and she asked for volunteers among her students' parents as well as her friends.

Since as a teacher Lynn did not have any control on other staff's time, by necessity all her initiatives were such that she could carry them out on her own, at best with the help of volunteers. However, overtime she was able to gather a group of friends, colleagues, students' parents, and community members that she could call on to help her develop, launch, improve, or sustain a specific initiative. At times, she sought out people with technical expertise that she did not have, such as the metal shop teacher who helped her class create New York State cookie cutters. Other times, she sought to work with individuals who shared a philosophy similar to hers, such as her colleague in Kentucky. At times, Lynn also reached out to some teachers within her building for some collaborative activities. In addition to this, her relationships with the school librarian, custodians, and other school employees were critical to some of her projects.

The most important team members in all her initiatives, however, were her students and their parents. These were the individuals who worked with her on a daily basis to inspire, create, develop, and sustain various initiatives. The parents, for example, helped her fight for their right to go on the field trip to Kentucky and served as chaperones during the trip. The students worked tirelessly to create a successful company that produced cookie cutters and lesson plan booklets for other teachers to use. Furthermore, the students were the source of most of her ideas and the inspiration

for all she did. Without their enthusiasm, support, and desire to learn, Lynn would neither have launch nor sustained her entrepreneurial initiatives.

Lynn was never shy about asking people to volunteer for her class. The following account from her husband sheds light on how Lynn went about securing volunteers:

> "She just is a very determined person … she'll say to somebody, the parents for example, I need five parents to be on an overnight … we're going to an overnight at a girl scout camp in the middle of Fairport and I need people to come and spend the night … 'well, I can't spend the night' … 'well, can you come for a couple hours and help with the meal?' … 'yes, I can do that' … so, she breaks it down in such a way that the people cannot refuse. So, they actually buy into the whole project but not necessarily are doing the whole project. So you got a parent, for example, who brings in some wood for the kids to work with in class … and maybe sticks around and helps them out, but that's not important, they did their share of the mission, of the total picture." *(Lynn's husband)*

10.2.5. Lynn's practices about growth

While as a teacher Lynn was not in any position to "grow" her organization, or even add to the services it could offer to her students and community, she shared the same drive to impact as many urban students (her "clients") as possible as the other entrepreneurial educators featured in this book. Interestingly, though, she did not choose to achieve this goal by moving to administrative positions within her school system (as Mary and Ralph did, in the previous two case-studies). Rather, she reached students outside of her class by working with their teachers through providing workshops, presenting at conferences, publishing innovative curricula, and participating in teacher preparation programs – as described in details in the last section of her story.

10.2.6. Other interesting elements about Lynn's case

Willingness to break rules

Lynn's innovations rarely were smooth and her story is full of examples that show her persistency, determination and creativity in the face of obstacles. She never let a problem stop her projects, but rather would search for alternative approaches till she could reach her objective – as illustrated for example in the building of the greenhouse. In this process, she was always willing to bend or even break some rules!

> "To be successful, you have to learn how to get around something, under it, or over it. … There's always a way to get around the rules." *(Lynn)*

A notable example of her "rule breaking" was going on the Kentucky field trip even if the district had put additional restrictions on such trips that year (although she sought her principal support to do that when the district did not respond to her request). More frequently, she simply did not ask for permission for things beyond the norm and tried to do them "quietly" to avoid being noticed.

She jokingly recognized this as being a family trait, as she reported her mother saying to her at a young age: "You are rule-breaker just like your father."

Capitalizing on networking

Networking was a critical component of Lynn's entrepreneurial practice. For example, her work on the science curriculum arose out of a happenchance meeting with an old colleague at a national science teachers' conference. The Cookie Cutter Unit was made possible by the collaboration with a high school technology teacher. Her friends and acquaintances helped the Kentucky trip by donating miles.

Mostly, Lynn built this social capital by talking to people. These conversations often helped her build relationships

with people she could later invite into her classroom to visit or volunteer, or as experts in a certain field, as illustrated by the following examples:

> "I was at the jewelry store, talking to my jeweler. And his wife was there and … she said she wasn't working; her children were all gone off to college. And I said 'Well, then, what are you doing all day?' She says 'Well, I'm working here.' And… she's a certified teacher! I said 'Well, then, I've got a job for you!' So now she comes … every Wednesday morning and actually it has been great because I walk my kids to the nursing home once a month and we do this connection with community service with the nursing home, and so now I make her come every Wednesday morning so she comes with me to the nursing home, and she loves it!" (*Lynn*)
>
> "I was in the liquor store the other day and the lady who has the liquor store was talking about how she was a teacher, and I said 'Now you own a liquor store? How did that happen?' And I get the story and I said 'Well, gosh, you know, I could use some help in my classroom.' That's just how I do it. I just pick people up." (*Lynn*)

Through these casual conversations, Lynn built relationships with other individuals who served as important assets to her classroom activities.

Choosing not to engage in organizational change

Lynn did not have the power nor the desire to change the culture of her school or district into one that was more entrepreneurial. This was not just because classroom teachers are often not given the authority to make such structural changes, but also by personal choice, as Lynn explained:

> "I just stay out of school leadership. I have been burned so often. I was on the school base [planning team] and all of those kinds of leadership positions, and it has really only made me enemies, mostly because I don't think the way most people do." (*Lynn*)
>
> "Someone said to me recently, 'you cannot be a prophet in your own land.' And you know what? They're so right!" (*Lynn*)

Creating entrepreneurial spaces within her own classroom

Lynn proactively sought to create an entrepreneurial culture in the one place where she had control: her classroom. That is, within each of her classes, with the students she taught, she tried to create an entrepreneurial culture by involving students in the planning of some units and having them make decisions about their own learning, as well as by being very transparent about her own decisions and their rationale.

Lynn felt that all of her students took a piece of her entrepreneurial spirit with them as they went through life. For example, one of Lynn's previous students called her up a year later wanting to know if there were any grants available that he could apply for; when asked why he wanted the money, he explained that they were receiving horrible food at his summer camp and he hoped to get better food by writing a grant to fund this. Because Lynn was so open with her students about her own methods of obtaining resources for her classroom activities, her students became aware of avenues they too could pursue when in need of such support.

Capitalizing on dysfunction in the organization

Lynn pointed out that being in an urban district in a constant state of crisis, where the students were failing and the system was dysfunctional, did provide her with more freedom than she might have enjoyed in other more typical districts, as her superiors were more willing to overlook her most unorthodox methods if they yielded good results — or even simply because they did not realize what was going on until it was too late to stop it! Even in describing the dysfunctionality of her urban district, Lynn recognized that this enabled her to be the kind of innovative teacher she was:

> "One of the great joys of teaching in the Rochester City School District is that… the fingers on the right hand don't even know what one another are doing, so I can get away with a lot. Also…I don't teach to the test, and I don't use any of the text books that they hand me… But the kids are successful, or I am deemed successful, because my students test well." (*Lynn*)

10.2.7. Concluding thoughts about Lynn's case

This chapter has shown how one elementary school teacher was able to employ many entrepreneurial practices and processes in a manner that took advantage of the strengths associated with her students, school, district, and community in order to meet the unique needs of her students primarily, but also their parents and communities. Her innovations as a teacher involved not only continuously designing innovative learning experiences for her students, but also providing her students with unique extra-curricular opportunities (such as her end-of-the-year field trips), constantly improving her teaching practices (for example, by learning and integrating new instructional technologies), developing initiatives for parents (such as her early video on learning disabilities), and also disseminating her innovative ideas and practices to other teachers through presentations, publications and professional development workshops.

It is important to note that Lynn was able to find innovative ways to help her students reach their individual best *despite* being in a non-leadership position and working in an institution that, in many ways, did not encourage entrepreneurialism. To do so, though, she needed to find or create spaces that would allow her to be entrepreneurial. Eventually, this opposition worn her down and she decided for early retirement – although she continued to be involved with teacher preparation and began a new entrepreneurial activity (developing a new summer school program).

Perhaps even more than Ralph Spezio, the case reported in the previous chapter, we see Lynn as a prototypical example of "education James Dean" as described by Williams (2006). This is especially true, unfortunately, when it comes to Lynn's difficult relationship with her colleagues and superiors:

> "[T]hese James Deans tend to become folk heroes of sort and often have complicated relationships with administrators and union leaders. They tend to have a healthy chip on their shoulder and some degree of confidence in their ability to make things happen. Often times, the only thing that keeps them employed is the fact that they can point to measurable results and have used their entrepreneurial skills to forge political support among key stakeholders, like politicians, business leaders and parents. (Williams, 2006, p.132)

A key point drawn from this case study, however, is that the behaviors, practices, and processes of entrepreneurship require reinterpretation within the context of teaching in an elementary school. As exemplified by Lynn's key innovations, it is clear that she held neither the same control nor power of a CEO or even a school leader. Therefore, she had to find alternative ways to conceive of, carry out and spread innovations. Nonetheless, this case study still points out many similarities between the actual behaviors, practices, and processes she used and those of other entrepreneurial educators.

10.3. Commentaries on Lynn's case

We are collecting readers' insights and lessons learned from reading Lynn's case on the companion website, and we invite you to add yours by following the specific guidelines provided in the "**Guidelines for Contributions**" document.

Posted commentaries about Lynn's case – *None available yet*

LESSONS LEARNED

PART IV. Lessons Learned

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CHAPTER 11.
Looking across the cases: Entrepreneurial practices related to vision, opportunities, risk, resources, and growth

Raffaella Borasi & Constance Flahive
(with contributions from Kara Finnigan)

Each of the stories reported in the previous chapters is interesting and valuable, in its own right. However, once we look **across** the eight case-studies, there is more that we can learn about how educators can become more effective change agents.

As educators have greatest control on their own actions (rather than their personal traits or their organizations), we believe that it will be most helpful for education change agents to become aware of specific *practices* that contributed to our case study subjects' success as change agents and that they can consider using them in their own innovations. With this as our ultimate goal, in this chapter we will identify and discuss specific practices that we noticed some of our subjects use effectively, organized according to the five "areas" that have been the main focus of our analysis of each subject's practice within the previous case study chapters; those areas are: *vision*, *opportunities*, *risk*, *resources*, and *growth*. As there are some inevitable overlaps among these areas, we have attempted to minimize repetitions by discussing specific practices in detail only in one section, even though that practice might also be relevant elsewhere.

This analysis will be complemented in the next two chapters. First, in Chapter 12 we will examine *characteristics* of these entrepreneurial educators, their organizations, and the types of innovation they undertook, which may all have affected their entrepreneurial behavior. Then in Chapter 13 we will look at how all these elements played out in practice at each stage of the entrepreneurial process as our subjects engaged in specific innovations.

It is important to note that the practices identified in the following sections are not intended as prescriptions or recipes, but rather as a "toolkit" that each entrepreneurial educator may draw upon in specific circumstances. Indeed, the very fact that most of the entrepreneurial practices we have identified were used by some but not all of our subjects (as documented in the summary tables at the end of each section), and even by the same case study subject when engaging in certain innovations but not others, makes clear that their use is highly context-dependent.

The findings reported in this chapter, as well as the following two chapters, were derived from a systematic cross-case analysis of the eight case studies (as described in Appendix A), which included a verification by two different researchers of whether and how each subject reflected each of the identified practices. While it is not our goal here to report in detail the findings of this analysis, we have included summary tables that list all the relevant entrepreneurial practices identified in each section and document the occurrence of each practices across the eight case study subjects. The extent to which each practice was used by each entrepreneurial educator we studied has been captured in these tables using the following conventions:

- "X" means that we found direct evidence of that practice;
- "*" means that, while we did not find direct evidence of that practice, we can infer it based on our knowledge of the case study subject;
- "No" means that we have evidence that the practice in question was not used by the subject;
- A blank cell indicates we do not have clear evidence to state anything definitive.

To make more explicit the "role" of each subject, we have used the following identifiers rather than the subject's name in each column of the tables:

- Owner: Donna
- NFP (not-for-profit) CEO 1: Rod
- NFP (not-for-profit) CEO 2: Gidget
- HE (higher education) dean: Pat

- HE (higher education) admin: Ron
- Suburban leader: Mary
- Principal: Ralph
- Teacher: Lynn

11.1. Entrepreneurial practices related to vision

Our study confirms that being driven by a vision is key to the success of an entrepreneurial educator – just as it is for the business and social entrepreneurs studied in the literature. Indeed, all our subjects were motivated by some greater purpose, whether it was trying to develop new models of health care (Pat), providing opportunities to underserved students (Ralph and Lynn), educating students for democracy (Mary), or empowering individuals with severe disabilities (Gidget). Even Donna, the owner of a for-profit company, clearly stated that realizing her vision for the company as "supporting adult learning through the production of effective meetings", and by doing so achieving something that had not been done before, was what inspired her work, more than simply making money. It is interesting to note that while each of our subjects mostly developed his/her overarching vision early in their careers and did not radically depart from that vision, this does not imply that a vision needs to remain "static" and inflexible.

In addition to providing impetus, motivation, and direction to one's work, our subjects also used their vision as the ultimate guide and filter for critical decisions. This translated in the following common practices related to *using vision as a lens*:

- ***Using one's vision as a "filter" when "scanning the environment" to identify potential opportunities for innovation***(as discussed further in the Opportunities section).
- ***Using one's vision as the ultimate criteria when making decisions about whether to engage in an innovation, andwhether to stop an innovation*** (as discussed further in the Opportunities and Risk sections).
- ***Choosing individuals who share the same vision as collaborators and project leaders*** (as discussed further in the Resources section).

There are some interesting parallels between the role played by vision in these practices and the "Hedgehog Concept" discussed in *Good to Great* (Collins, 2001). One of the main findings of Collins' insightful study of what characterizes successful **C**ompanies is that all the fifteen "great" companies in his sample were guided by a very simple, yet powerful "core concept" that they successfully used over and over again as a guiding principle for their actions and decisions. Collins describes this concept as coming from the intersection of (a) what they were passionate about, (b) what they could be best at, and (c) the economic drivers of their company. Indeed, the way each of our case study subjects used their overarching vision is very similar to how Collins described great companies using their Hedgehog Concept.

While having a clear vision that drives actions and informs decisions is critical, equally important for an entrepreneurial educator is to recognize the importance of having key stakeholders buy into that vision. It is rare for education change agents to accomplish their innovations alone. Rather, they need the support and collaboration of people higher up in the organization or on their governing Board (who have the power to give or withhold the necessary approval or access to resources), their staff (who will be key actors in the execution of specific initiatives), partners and potential funders (who hold critical resources needed to implement an initiative), and also their clients (who are the very people they are trying to benefit, and whose understanding and cooperation is also critical to successfully implement the innovation).

What can entrepreneurial educators *do* to persuasively communicate their vision to influential audiences? Looking across our eight subjects, we were able to identify the following *practices to communicate one's vision:*

- ***Making explicit efforts to articulate one'soverarching vision and missionfor various audiences.*** Depending on the context, this translated in different actions for our subjects. For example Rod, Pat, and Gidget wrote mission statements and/or position papers for their organizations. Pat and Gidget prepared promotional/ marketing materials targeted to specific audiences (such as donors and prospective "clients"). Ron and Ralph constantly looked for opportunities to share their visions in public presentations as well as individual meetings with influential individuals.
- ***Providing concrete images as a way to share one's vision and gain buy-in.*** A recommendation often made to fund-raisers and grant-writers is to make the case for one's proposal by providing concrete images of what the initiative would look like in practice and its potential impact. Sometimes this can be best achieved by describing in detailed and concrete terms what a new initiative would look like and how it would affect one's clients (as Lynn did very effectively, especially when writing grant applications). Other times, telling compelling stories of past achievements and/or current needs can be very effective to gain support and buy-in, as demonstrated by Donna, Ralph, Ron, and Rod in particular. For example, listening to Ralph recount the story of how one of his students almost died in his arms because of asthma, cannot fail to raise high emotions and the desire to do something to address urban students' health problems. With stories such as this, one feels that anything is possible. This finding supports Lounsbury and Glynn's (2001) claims about the power of storytelling. Several of our subjects (Gidget, Ron, Ralph, and Lynn) also invited key stakeholders for "field visits" that would allow them to literally "see" what they had already been able to accomplish.
- ***Making other people feel that their dreams can be achieved through one's vision.*** As people seeking grants or fund-raising learn quickly, other people are not likely to put their time and/or money behind a proposed idea unless they can see that it can further *their* goals. As explicitly articulated by Ron and demonstrated by several of our subjects, this involves genuinely *listening* to a potential funder/supporter, to understand what his/her dreams are, and then finding and articulating clear *connections* between those dreams and one's own vision.
- ***Using one'spassion and commitment to get people to buy in.*** Several collaborators reported that our subjects' visible passion, enthusiasm, and commitment for their vision served as a powerful vehicle to convince others to support their innovations. This finding is consistent with our common image of successful change agents as very charismatic people, who can convince others by the force of their personality and convictions – a description that well captures most of our subjects. Yet, it is important to keep in mind that such a charismatic personality is not a necessary condition to the successful use of this practice. For example, while quiet, Mary and Pat were also successful in communicating their passion and commitment through their actions, and by doing so were able to secure the buy-in needed for the success of their visions and innovations.

- ***Developing credibility and trust as a way to get people to buy in.*** Another strategy our subjects used consistently and purposefully to gain the buy-in of key constituencies was to proactively work at developing credibility and trust. They did this by building a record of successful innovations they could point to, as well as by creating personal relationships with influential individuals. This is well demonstrated, for example, by Ron's statement that "success builds success" along with his strategy of showing renovated spaces in the library as evidence of past accomplishments to inspire new donors. In a quite different context, Mary also built on the success of earlier and more modest innovations within her school district to gain credibility and the trust of key constituencies before engaging in more bold and potentially controversial initiatives.

Table 11.1. *Entrepreneurial practices related to vision*

	Owner	NFP CEO1	NFP CEO2	HE Dean	HE Admin	Sub Leader	Prin-cipal	Tea-cher
Practices around using vision as a "lens":								
Using one's vision as a "filter" when "scanning the environment" to identify potential opportunities for innovation	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Using one's vision as the ultimate criteria when making decisions about whether to engage in an innovation, and whether to stop an innovation	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Choosing individuals who share the same vision as collaborators and project leaders	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Practices to communicate one's vision:								
Making explicit efforts to articulate one's overarching vision and mission for various audiences	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Providing concrete images to share one's vision	X	X	X	*	X	X	X	X
Making other people feel that *their dreams* can be achieved through one's vision	*	X	X	X	X		X	
Using one's passion and commitment to get people to buy into the vision	X	X	X	*	X	*	X	X
Developing credibility and trust as a way to get people to buy into the vision	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	

11.2. Entrepreneurial practices related to opportunities

As mentioned in Chapter 2, seeking and pursuing opportunities is considered by many authors as one of the core

elements of entrepreneurship. Indeed, as we look at the innovations described in Chapters 3-10, with very few exceptions they were linked to an opportunity, although the role played by the opportunity often differed across cases.

For example, Donna and her partner would not even have conceived of the possibility of buying and transforming the company they were working for, had they not recognized an opportunity to do so when they discovered that the company was on the verge of bankruptcy. Lynn's creative unit around producing the NYS-shaped cookie cutters would not have happened if she did not notice and pursue a relevant grant opportunity from the New York State Education Department (NYSED); even though her initial idea of producing and selling a large NYS-shaped cookie cutter had come earlier, it needed some modifications in order to respond to the grant's guidelines. At the beginning of her math reform initiative, Mary recognized that the grant she was asked to participate in could provide a unique opportunity to move forward her agenda to improve math instruction. After thoughtful consideration, she concluded that this was indeed an opportunity she did not want to miss, as it would provide her with unique means and resources to address needs she had already identified in her school district. Within the context of this recognition of opportunity in the grant, Mary decided to take on the offer even if it involved embarking on something bigger and a bit different from what she might have originally envisioned.

Indeed, it is hard to find examples where an opportunity did not play a role in our subjects' innovations, either as a catalyst for the innovation or at least as something that made it possible to turn an existing idea into reality by providing the necessary funding or conditions for success. Yet we do have a few counterexamples. For instance, Mary's curriculum writing initiative seemed to have developed mostly from a very carefully thought-out plan about what was most critical to do to ensure a sustainable and significant improvement in the quality of instruction offered to students in her district, rather than responding to or capitalizing on a specific opportunity.

Another observation that stands out, when looking at the examples of innovations reported in the previous chapters and their related opportunities, is that not everyone would have reacted in the same way to those opportunities – or perhaps even recognized them as opportunities for innovation in the first place. For example, not many people in Donna's position, when learning that their company might go out of business, would have considered the possibility of taking it over. Similarly, the opportunity Lynn she saw in the NYSED call for proposals for "school to work initiatives" depended on her making the connection with an idea she had already developed around producing and selling a large NYS-shaped cookie cutter.

Looking at how our eight subjects dealt with opportunities within the context of initiating innovations, we have identified practices that fell into the three key categories:

- *Proactively seeking opportunities to realize one's vision.*
- *Evaluating the opportunities thus identified to decide which ones should be pursued.*
- *Acting on opportunities that have been deemed worth pursuing.*

In what follows, we will discuss each of the categories of opportunity-related practices separately.

Proactively seeking opportunities to realize one's vision

With respect to *opportunity recognition*, it is worth noting that our subjects did not just passively *recognize* opportunities as they presented themselves, but most often *proactively sought them out* or even *created* them. To do so, they used a number of complementary practices, as described below:

- ***Scanning the environment for innovative ideas and possibilities.*** Each of our subjects was always very aware and alert to what was going on in their field, their organization, and with their clients, so as to be able to identify new ideas for meeting their clients' needs and/or to add value to their organization. In Gidget's words, "You [always] have your antenna up." At the same time, this "scanning of the environment" could take a number of different and complementary forms, including: reading the literature and going to conferences to learn about new ideas and developments in one's field (as illustrated by Mary and Lynn), benchmarking with the competition to stay at the cutting edge (as Donna and Pat did systematically), doing field trips to observe best practices implemented in other organizations (as Gidget did when she visited Goodwill and other organizations serving individuals with

disabilities), looking at other fields for inspiration or new connections (as Pat and her team did regularly by reading articles and going to conferences outside their field), or even just carefully observing what is going on within one's organization and with clients in order to identify unmet needs (as well demonstrated by Ralph and Rod). Two other powerful ways to "scan the environment" that some of our subjects (Lynn, Rod, and Donna in particular) used very consistently and effectively were engaging in conversations – with clients, staff, collaborators, and mentors, as well as with experts and casual acquaintances – and capitalizing on one's networks. It is also important to note that, as they scanned the environment and looked at other fields for new ideas for innovation, our subjects were often looking toward the future; that is, they looked at where their field was going, rather than only taking into consideration the current status. This served to identify future needs and opportunities. Examples of this practice in action can be found in Donna's decision to transform her company when she realized that Internet-based technologies would revolutionize the way meetings could be managed. Another example is Pat's development of the M.S. in Nursing Leadership as a way to prepare nurses for roles that did not yet exist, but that she could see emerging in the near future. Pat also quoted Steve Jobs, one of the most successful entrepreneurs of our time, to have said, "There's an old Wayne Gretzky quote that I love. 'I skate to where the puck is going to be, not where it has been.' And we've always tried to do that at Apple." (in Gallo, 2007).

- ***Using peoplenetworks to uncover potential opportunities.*** Somewhat connected to the previous category is the practice of leveraging one's networks, personal as well as professional, to become aware of potential opportunities. For example, Donna got the opportunity to bid on the White House Travel Conference because of her long-term connections with a professional organization, and Lynn realized the possibility of publishing an elementary science curriculum and creating greater impact by talking to a person she knew at a conference.
- ***Looking at problems as opportunities for innovation.*** Many of the innovations our subjects started came about in response to a specific problem they noticed. For example, the financial crisis in the company where Donna worked became the opportunity to buy and reconceive the company itself. For Lynn, not finding a cookie cutter big enough to implement the geography activity she had read about became the stimulus for developing a very creative unit. And for Ralph, discovering his students' pervasive problem with lead poisoning gave him the impetus to initiate a movement to contain and prevent lead poisoning. These examples suggest that entrepreneurial educators should look at problems encountered in their consider practice not just as something to be solved and move on, but rather as a call to action to promote some long-term change that can improve the organization. Furthermore, opportunities for innovation can be found in problems that one's clients experience, limitations in one's own practice, or problems encountered by one's organization.
- ***Seeking ways to use one's competitive advantages.*** While only a few of our subjects used this practice, two notable examples of this practice are provided by Gidget's search for new opportunities to take advantage of the Javits-Wagener-O'Day Act (which would require government offices to purchase products produced by blind and visually impaired individuals over the competition) and Pat's decision to close the traditional undergraduate

nursing program and start a new "accelerated" program based on the analysis of the unique strengths and limitations of her faculty. It is also worth noting that this practice is at the core of any strategic planning process, a practice that is becoming more and more popular in non-profit organizations and universities.

- ***Seeking other people's ideas.*** Several of our subjects also proactively and explicitly asked colleagues, clients, and others to share their needs and ideas and then discussed those ideas with collaborators and/or mentors to learn from these inputs.

Cutting across all the previous practices, it is also important to remember our subjects' constant ***use of their overarching vision as a lens or filterto identify something as a potential opportunity***, a practice we already mentioned when discussing vision-related practices in the previous section.

Evaluating the opportunities thus identified to decide which ones should be pursued

While being alert to and able to recognize opportunities is critical to the success of entrepreneurial educators, perhaps even more important is how these change agents evaluate the opportunities thus identified. All our subjects (like most education change agents we know) identified many more opportunities than they would have the time, resources, and capacity to take on, and thus they felt that determining whether an opportunity was worth pursuing was a very important part of their practice.

Some of our subjects shared that over time they had developed a set of questions that they and other people in their organization asked themselves whenever making this most critical decision, as reported in their respective chapters. As illustrated by the following examples, these sets of questions presented some striking similarities, while at the same time reflected the uniqueness of each educator's vision and his/her organizational mission:

- Donna: *Can we meet the needs of the client with the services we offer? What is the potential of this client in the long term? What are the additional benefits, if any, of this contract for the organization? Do we have the capacity to do this? If not, are there ways to do it anyway? Will they be willing and able to pay for our services?*
- Gidget: *How does it fit with our mission? Can it create jobs /services for people who are blind or visually impaired? Do we have the resources? Does it have the potential to generate revenues? Where does it fit on the priority list?*
- Mary: *Is this good for the kids? Can I pull it off? Is this the right time to do it?*
- Lynn: *Can I get mileage in terms of kids being successful and having opportunities beyond what they would normally do?*

Looking across these sets of questions as well as the processes employed by our subjects when evaluating specific ideas for innovation, we were able to identify the following *opportunity-evaluation practices*:

- ***Evaluating thepotential value-addedof a proposed innovation in light of one's vision.*** Identifying the potential benefits that could be derived from a proposed initiative and then using these findings to decide whether or not to engage in the initiative, is already a common practice in education. What differentiated our subjects in this analysis, however, is that first and foremost they tried to determine if and how any of the opportunities they had identified would help them further the implementation of their overarching vision and goals. This was often reflected in the very first question they asked themselves when beginning to examine an opportunity. For example, Ralph and Mary each asked, "*Is it good for the kids*?"; Lynn, "*What is the academic mileage for my students*?"; and Gidget, "*How does it fit with our mission*?", *and* "*Can it create jobs for people who are blind of visually impaired*?" With several of our subjects we noticed that if an initiative did not pass this first and most critical "filter," it would

not be further examined. Conversely, if the potential value-added identified through this initial evaluation was such that the subject felt the initiative was too good to miss, it would color any further evaluation (this was especially the case with Ralph and Lynn).

- ***Evaluating themarketability/demand for the proposed initiative.*** Most of our subjects took into consideration not only whether the idea seemed worthwhile to *them*, but also what the people they were trying to serve thought of it. This is especially evident in Donna's questions, "*Can we meet the needs of the client with the services we offer*? *What is the potential of this client in the long term*?", although we saw this attention more implicitly in other subjects as well.
- ***Evaluating the organization's capacityto carry out the proposed innovation, but without letting a current lack of resources prevent thepursuitof the initiative.*** For innovations deemed worthwhile based on the previous analysis, our subjects then asked themselves the question of what it would take to implement the innovation and whether there was sufficient internal capacity to do so; and if not, how could they gather the needed resources. This meant, most importantly, examining *who* would have the expertise, as well as the time, to carry out the innovation. Making sure all the needed approvals could be secured was also critical for some innovations, as was figuring out whether the organization had a sufficient competitive advantage to be successful in that endeavor. ***Evaluating the costs and revenuesof the proposed innovation*** was also part of this evaluation, and this involved a determination of the costs (not just financial, but also personnel time, facilities and equipment, etc.) required to engage in the innovation. It is interesting to note that our subjects rarely engaged in a formal cost/benefit analysis unless required by an external funding agency or governance Board, in the case of unusually expensive innovations. What instead most differentiated our subjects was how they went about determining whether and how their organization had the capacity to take on the costs they had identified. Like most entrepreneurs described in the literature, our subjects did not just look at the resources already available in house, but rather were very creative in identifying alternative ways to secure the resources they did not have (for example, considering the possibility of external funding or partnerships, as discussed in more details in the Resources section).
- ***Evaluating the risksassociated withthe proposed innovation.*** Our subjects were more willing than most to take on the risk of pursuing a worthwhile innovation even before all resources were secured, a point we will revisit in the Risk section of this chapter.
- ***Determining the right timeto launchthe proposed innovation, taking into account the window of opportunity as well as perceivedurgency.*** Once our subjects determined that an initiative was worthwhile and doable, they often had to also evaluate the best time to launch it. For example, Lynn reported

that she would put aside, in a "grant folder", ideas about innovative learning experiences requiring significant resources, until she found a grant opportunity that would allow her to fund the initiative. Mary went further and talked explicitly about the risks of starting an innovation before the organization is ready for it, regardless of the value of the innovation. Indeed, some of our subjects included the question, "Is this the right time?", as part of the set of questions they asked themselves when evaluating an opportunity for innovation. This evaluation process was rarely straightforward, as the organization and clients' readiness for the proposed innovation needed to be considered vis-à-vis the urgency of meeting an unmet need of one's clients and not missing a "window of opportunity". Furthermore, the current lack of certain resources (e.g., limited cash) might be offset by the risk of losing other key resources in the future (e.g., the right project leader is available now but may be assigned to another project in the meantime).

Acting on opportunities that have been deemed worth pursuing

Finally, our subjects distinguished themselves in how they decided whether an opportunity was worth pursuing and how they acted on that decision, suggesting the following *opportunity-seizing practices* as characteristic of entrepreneurial educators:

- ***Relying on one's vision as the ultimate guide to decide whether or not to pursue an opportunity for innovation.*** Given the complex nature of the complementary evaluation elements described above, it is not surprising that the "pros and cons" identified when analyzing an opportunity still need to be sifted and weighted in order to make a decision about whether (and when) to take on a specific opportunity for innovation. We noticed that, for all of our subjects, their overarching vision played a major role in this final evaluation and often became the determining factor in their final decision. This was especially evident in controversial situations where our subjects reported using their "gut instincts" (although we would argue that these "instincts" were significantly honed through experience and professional knowledge!). At the same time, this final evaluation was informed by each subject's overall approach to risk-taking and failure – a finding that is consistent with the literature on entrepreneurship and is discussed in more depth later in the Risk section.
- ***Pursuing a worthwhile opportunity even if not all the resources have been secured upfront.*** Entrepreneurial educators oftentimes need and are willing to take the risk of pursuing an opportunity, even if they have not yet been able to secure all the funding, personnel, or even approvals upfront. Meaningful examples include when Ralph took on the construction of a pre-school building, when Ron began to implement his vision to renovate the library facilities, and when Donna and her company bid for the production of the White House conference. However, this decision to pursue an opportunity, even if all resources have not been secured, does not come without risks or costs. For example, it may require the education change agent "starting smaller" or proceeding only up to a certain stage while they concurrently work toward securing the missing resources. Or, it may call for entering into partnerships that will provide the missing resources but at the same time will likely add some constraints to one's control and/or potential

gains.

- ***Pursuing a worthwhile opportunity quickly.*** With few exceptions, our subjects tended to act quickly in executing their decisions to pursue opportunities they had deemed worthwhile. In some cases, these decisions were determined by the need to make sure they would not miss the "window of opportunity" associated with the initiative they were considering. Most often, however, the quick turnaround seemed determined more by the urgency they always felt regarding their mission (as it was the case especially for Lynn and Ralph) than any other external factor.

Table 11.2. *Entrepreneurial practices related to opportunities*

	Owner	NFP CEO1	NFP CEO2	HE Dean	HE Admin	Sub Leader	Prin-cipal	Tea-cher
Opportunity-recognition practices:								
"Scanning" the environment to identify potential opportunities to realize one's vision	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Using one's networks to uncover potential opportunities	X		*				*	X
Looking at problems as opportunities for innovation	X	X		X	X	X	X	X
Seeking ways to capitalizing on one's competitive advantages	X		X	X				
Seeking others' ideas		X	X	X		*		X
Using one's vision as a lens or filter to consider something as an opportunity	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Opportunity-evaluation practices:								
Evaluating the potential value-added of the proposed innovation in light of one's vision	X	X	X	X	*	X	X	X
Evaluating the marketability/demand for the proposed innovation	X	X	X	X	*			X
Evaluating the organization's capacity to carry out the proposed innovation (without letting current lack of resources prevent its pursuit)	X	X	X	X	*	X		X
Evaluating the costs and revenues of the proposed innovation	*	X	*	X	*		*	X
Evaluating the risks associated with the proposed innovation	X	X	X	X	*	X	*	X
Determining the right time to launch the proposed innovation, taking into account the window of opportunity as well as perceived urgency				X		X		X
Opportunity-seizing practices:								
Using one's vision as the ultimate guide to decide whether to pursue an opportunity for innovation	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Pursuing a worthwhile opportunity even if not all the resources have been secured upfront	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Pursuing a worthwhile opportunity quickly	X	X	*	*		X	*	*

11.3. Entrepreneurial practices related to risk

Our case studies confirm several of the findings in the literature regarding entrepreneurs' risk-taking. Our subjects were described by their collaborators as willing to take significant risks (both financial and personal/professional) while they saw themselves more as "calculated/ informed" risk-takers. All of our subjects also demonstrated high self-efficacy (i.e., had confidence in their ability to succeed in their endeavors), had high tolerance for mistakes and failure, and often approached the evaluation of the risks associated with a specific innovation differently from other individuals in the same situation.

While these findings document another striking parallel between the entrepreneurial educators we studies and business/social entrepreneurs, it is even more useful to examine how our subjects approached the evaluation and management of risk. Our data led us to identify several risk-related practices used by at least some of our subjects, and many of these practices are by no means typical of what we are used to seeing in education.

With respect to *risk evaluation*, we would like to highlight the following practices:

- ***Evaluating "sinking the boat" risks in light of one's experience.*** When considering a new innovation, our subjects all seemed to evaluate at the very least the possibility of a "worst case scenario" and its consequences (what Brown and Cornwell [2000] referred to as "sinking the boat" types of risks). However, this evaluation took into consideration their own inside knowledge of the situation as well as past experiences of success, which often made them more inclined to conclude that the risk was negligible or at the very least manageable. For example, when asked about their feelings around taking on the leadership of an organization running a significant debt, both Donna and Pat pointed out that they were not overly concerned, as whatever they were going to do was going to be better than the status quo.
- ***Explicitly considering 'missing the boat" risks and weighing them highly.*** It was striking that all eight subjects seemed to seriously consider the risks associated with *not* engaging in an initiative and thus depriving their organization or their clients of valuable opportunity (what Brown and Cornwell [2000] referred to as "missing the boat" types of risks). Furthermore, they often seemed to weight those risks more than the risks associated with "sinking the boat" risks. For example, Ralph and Lynn often mentioned that when they saw an opportunity to make a significant difference for their students, they just could not let it pass. This behavior is especially significant when we consider it in light of Brown and Cornwell's (2000) observation that in most educational institutions, educators are penalized if they fail in an initiative they have undertaken, but rarely do they experience any negative consequences for having missed an opportunity to do something good for their institutions and/or clients.
- ***Conducting a risk-benefitanalysis.*** Our subjects did not seem to evaluate the risks of engaging in a specific innovation in isolation, but rather they always weighed these risks against the potential benefits of that innovation. While this analysis was critical for all of our subjects, we noticed that it was usually conducted in a very informal way, using one's vision and "instincts" as the main guide rather than a quantitative approach. The only one notable exception was Pat, the Dean of Nursing, who occasionally employed external consultants to do a rigorous risk-benefit analysis in the occasion of some

large projects. This general lack of formal risk assessment can be partially explained by the fact that several of the innovations our subjects were considering did *not* involve high financial risks but rather personal, reputational, and/or missing the boat risks that are difficult to quantify and are much more subjective.

Our findings suggest that even more than being the result of a careful risk assessment, the confidence our subjects felt in taking on what others may have considered as very high risks, often came from their ability to find ways to contain or minimize the potential risks they had identified. Here are some *risk-management practices* some of these entrepreneurial educators used effectively – and other educators might consider, too, even if the practices we observed are all quite context specific (as suggested by the data reported in Table 11.5):

- ***Forecasting potential problems and developing plans to deal with them.*** While Donna was the only subject who explicitly articulated this practice, this is obviously an important element of good planning (and a skill many of our subjects shared). Forecasting potential problems not only helps in the risk-evaluation process, but more importantly it can enable a change agent to put into place systems to address the problem, timely, if and when it occurs.
- ***Doing some pilot testing, or starting small, before fully launching an initiative.*** Trying things at a smaller scale before investing in a costly initiative (as for example when Mary had a smaller group of teachers try out a new textbook in their classes before finalizing the decision to adopt it for the whole district, or Pat piloted some short courses in Forensic Nursing as part of the Center for Lifelong Learning to test interest before embarking on the creation of the National Forensic Nursing Institute) seems indeed a very reasonable approach to minimize financial risks.
- ***Reducing upfront costs (and, thus, financial risks).*** An important practice shared by many of our subjects was to carefully examine the start-up costs required to launch a new initiative, and creatively cut some costs to reduce the need for an initial investment and, thus, the financial risks associated with the initiative. We will return to this practice in the following section on Resources to examine the specific strategies some of our subjects employed to achieve these cost-savings.
- ***Strategically bringing in key constituenciesin the development of an innovation, to secure their buy-inand ownership.*** Engaging key individuals and/or constituencies early on in the process of designing, evaluating, and launching an innovation can be very instrumental in gaining support as well as to benefit from constituents' input at a time when change may be easier to make. Mary was especially skilled and strategic in implementing this practice, as highlighted in her story. While this practice may be most critical in contexts such as public school and non-profit organizations, where the change agent may not be able to carry out his/her innovations unless such buy-in is achieved, engaging key constituencies at critical stages is indeed essential in most education initiatives – as one's superiors, governing board, staff, or clients are often critical to the success of the initiative.

- ***Working "under the radar" to avoid attracting attention that may lead to complaints or withdrawal of permission.*** When deciding whether to employ the previous practice of securing buy-in by key constituents, education change agents need also to balance its benefits with the consideration that one may want to avoid bringing attention to an initiative too early – especially when an innovation is particularly sensitive and its outcomes uncertain. For example, given her expectation that the teachers' union and several of the teachers may react negatively to the idea of developing district-wide curricula, Mary did not publicize her intention to embark on this major initiative until she (a) had been able to develop a template for writing these curricula together with a small group of collaborators, and (b) she had sought the input and secured the support of the district curriculum writing committee. It is worth noting that working "under the radar" may be most appropriate and needed especially in situations in which a change agent is highly dependent on the approval of certain constituencies. This is not uncommon for educators working in a university or K-12 school context as well as non-profit organizations governed by a board of directors, but it is less typical in a small business where the owners have full authority and decision power.
- ***Diversifying one's portfolio of clients and/or ventures.*** This practice is well illustrated by Donna's strategy to produce meetings for both professional associations as well as corporations. Gidget's desire to develop job opportunities for the blind outside of manufacturing (despite her initial success with such initiatives) is another illustrative example. While minimizing risk through diversification is indeed often critical for a for-profit company, and to some extent could benefit a non-profit organization as well, it is important to be aware that it does not make much sense in the context of public education.
- ***Carefully monitoring the implementation of an innovation, being ready to make changes as needed.*** We believe that the willingness of our subjects to try out potentially risky innovations had a lot to do with the confidence that, by carefully watching an innovation as it unfolded, they could spot problems and take damage-control actions before it was too late. This, in turn, affected their evaluation of the negative consequences of the potential risks they may have identified. At the same time, it required their willingness to adjust their plan for a specific innovation, or even stop it if needed, depending on the resulting insights from their monitoring.

Taken together, this analysis suggests that even risk-management strategies that were observed in only one or two of the case studies are worth knowing about, as these may be of inspiration of other educators. Indeed, we believe that the best way for education change agents to deal effectively with risk is to be proactive by: (a) identifying potential risk factors; (b) having a rich "toolbox" of risk-management strategies to draw upon to minimize or control each of the risks thus identified; and perhaps most important, (c) planning to carefully monitor the implementation of an initiative so that

potential problems can be immediately identified and resolved or alternative paths chosen, if things are not working out as expected.

Table 11.3. *Entrepreneurial practices related to risk*

	Owner	NFP CEO1	NFP CEO2	HE Dean	HE Admin	Sub Leader	Prin-cipal	Tea-cher
Risk-evaluation practices:								
Evaluating "sinking the boat" risks in light of one's experience	X				X	*	X	
Explicitly considering "missing the boat" risks (and weighing these highly)	X		*	X	X	X		X
Conducting a risk/benefit analysis	X	*	*	X	X	X		
Risk-managing practices:								
Forecasting potential problems and developing plans to deal with them	X					X		X
Doing some pilot testing or starting small, before fully launching an initiative	X	No	No	X	X	X	No	No
Reducing upfront costs (and, thus, financial risks)	X		No	X	X	X	*	X
Strategically bringing in key constituencies in the discussion and launching of an initiative, to secure their buy-in and ownership of the initiative	*	X	X	*	X	X	X	X
Working "under the radar" to avoid attracting attention that may lead to complaints or withdrawal of permission		*	No	X	X	X		X
Diversifying one's portfolio of clients and/or ventures	X	*	X	*			No	
Carefully monitoring the implementation of an innovation, being ready to make changes as needed	X	*		X		X		X

11.4. Entrepreneurial practices related to resources

All our subjects understood that the success of their organization and the extent to which they could implement their

vision depended on the resources they were able to secure and their careful management of those resources. Indeed, they all seemed to subscribe (at least implicitly) to the statement "No money, no mission." Furthermore, each of them felt personally responsible to secure the resources needed to make the specific initiatives they were proposing a reality. And for most of them, people rather than money was the most important resource they needed to secure and then manage for their innovations – as expected in a service industry like education. Therefore, in reporting our findings in this section we found it useful to focus first on how our subjects dealt with *financial* resources and then how they dealt with personnel and other *human* resources.

Financial resources

Most of our subjects in leadership positions used good fiscal practices that are known and recommended to all educational leaders. However, in what follows, we focus specifically on those fiscal practices that are more specific to *funding specific innovations* (what we have identified as central to the practice of entrepreneurial educators), *bootstrapping* (as dealing with scarce resources is also at the core of entrepreneurship, according to Casson's definition), and practices aimed at *increasing the financial well-being of the organization* (which most educators may not consider to be in their purview, yet all our subjects felt responsible for in order to achieve their mission to the maximum extent possible).

When looking at our subjects' behavior with respect to *funding specific innovations*, we would like to bring back the point (already mentioned in both the Opportunities and Risk sections) that none of them would let the currently available resources determine their decision of whether to pursue a specific innovation. This is consistent with the definition of entrepreneurship as "a process by which individuals pursue opportunities without regard to the resources they currently control" (Stevenson and Jarillo, 1990, p.23). This approach, in turn, seems closely linked with their confidence that they could always find the necessary funds as well as other types of resources to support an innovation that was truly worthwhile. This uncommon attitude toward resources did not stem from an unconditional optimism; rather, this attitude seemed linked to their knowledge of what needed to be done to secure the necessary resources. This attitude, in turn, was based not only on their past experiences of success, but even more importantly on being able to rely on a set of creative and effective practices to go about securing funding for specific initiatives. These practices which included:

- ***Identifying and securing internal funds that could be used to support the innovation.*** Whenever they identified a new initiative worth pursuing, some of our subjects were very good at finding the needed funds internally – and also very confident in their ability to do so. For example, when embarking on their transformative technology innovation, Donna and her partners were able to use of the company own funds to support this initiative. Once she had established revenue-generating business lines, Gidget was also able to rely on these internal funds to pursue other mission-oriented projects. Even Mary, who was working within the constraints of a public K-12 school system, felt very confident that she knew how to reallocate or "free up" funds to support a worthwhile initiative, as in her role as Assistant Superintendent for Instruction she had some discretion in deploying funds from one account to another – and she thoroughly understood how her district budget worked. Not all education change agents, though, may have such control on their organization's resources.
- ***Seeking grants.*** Almost all of our subjects considered grants as a potential revenue source, although the grants available to them differed significantly depending on their context and the types of innovations undertaken – a point we will return to in Chapter 13. It is worth noting, though, Gidget's and Rod's explicit concerns about not becoming dependent on grant funding alone. They both pointed out that too many educational innovations that had initially been funded by grants did not survive past the initial funding, as grants usually fund the start-up of an initiative but very rarely will provide on-going operating funds.
- ***Seeking gifts.*** Rod, Gidget, Pat, Ron, and Ralph all sought gifts from

corporations, community organizations, and individual donors. These subjects went about this practice using several established fund-raising strategies – including individual asks, organizing fund-raising events, and even embarking on comprehensive capital campaigns. Story-telling was often used as a powerful tool to make a compelling case to potential donors. It is worth noting, though, that individual donor's gifts were not an option for Mary as a suburban school leader or Donna as the owner of a for-profit company.

- ***Seeking in-kind contributions.*** This practice involved getting free access to many different types of resources needed to implement an innovation, such as specialized and costly equipment, expert advice, or supplies. While especially important for Lynn (who as a teacher did not have access to funds to purchase such resources), this practice was used by other subjects as well (Ralph and Rod in particular).
- ***Finding investors.*** Among our subjects, only Pat used this approach when looking for funding to spin off the National Institute for Forensic Nursing. However, this is one of the most common strategies used by start-up companies to secure funding, and it should not be discounted by both for-profit and non-profit organizations starting new business lines.
- ***Taking ondebt.*** This practice was used by Donna (as she took over the debt that came along with the bankrupt company she decided to take over) and also Gidget (as she got a loan from 3M for materials in order to start manufacturing Post-it pads, in Gidget's innovation #1). Although these were the only instances of this practice we encountered in our study, it is worth noting that it is not uncommon for colleges and even public K-12 schools to assume a debt to support building new facilities or major renovations.
- ***Using personalfunds.*** We observed the use of this practice only by Lynn (who sometimes chose to pay directly for the costs required by small innovations) and Donna (who invested personal funds in the business and with her partners agreed to forego her own salary and/or profits, at times, to finance critical initiatives).
- ***Partnering with other organizations to acquire resources one does nothave.*** One practice that seems accessible to most change agents in education, and indeed several of our subjects used this approach very successfully, is partnering with another organization for a specific initiative, as a way to secure resources that may not exist "in house". For example, when Gidget conceived of branching out to establish and run retail shops, she partnered with Goodwill to benefit from all the expertise and infrastructure of the Goodwill organization in an area that was new to ABVI. Mary partnered with the University of Rochester as she engaged in her math reform initiative to enable her district to receive high quality professional development and consulting they would not have to pay for, as it was grant-funded. This is indeed a creative solution to the problem of finding the needed resources

while staying within the fiscal limits of educational institutions and non-profit organizations. At the same time, it is important to be aware that these partnerships do not come without costs, as some control on the initiative is lost by sharing its implementation with others.

It is worth noting that many of the funding practices identified above are not equally relevant or accessible to all education change agents. Funding and funding access generally depends on the institutional context and the change agent's position in the organization – as suggested by the frequency of use as reported in Table 11.4 and further discussed in Chapter 13.

In addition to looking for funding for specific innovations they wanted to implement, our subjects' financial practices were characterized by always having to deal with scarce resources, a reality that most education institutions and non-profits share with start-up companies. As a result, *all* our subjects engaged in some form of *bootstrapping*. In fact, we observed that bootstrapping, even more than a set of specific strategies, constituted a way of operating with a, "make every dollar count" mindset, which informed how they generally approached the use of the resources at their disposal. This may also be connected with the passion and urgency of their drive to realize their vision and impact as many people as possible through their work. This typically meant that the resources available were never enough!

The specific *bootstrapping practices* our subjects employed, however, were quite varied and were used differentially across subjects. Since these practices are quite self-explanatory, we have simply listed them below and refer to Table 11.4 for information about use of these practices across subjects. It is worth noting that only the first three of these bootstrapping practices are accessible to educators who are not in leadership positions and thus cannot make financial decisions for their organization:

Looking at the list in Table 11.4, it is interesting to note that most of the bootstrapping practices identified had to do with making the best use of human resources, rather than other types of resources. This is not so surprising, given the key role played by qualified and committed individuals performing specific services in educational initiatives. In the next section, while discussing our subjects' practices vis-à-vis human resources, we will come back to *how* some of our subjects went about avoiding the start-up costs and financial risks involved in hiring new personnel when starting a new venture.

While all our subjects directly engaged in securing the funds needed to carry out specific initiatives and engaged in bootstrapping, *improving the financial well-being of their organization* as a whole was an explicit goal only for those leaders who had control over both expenses *and* revenues. Donna (as co-owner of her company), Rod and Gidget (as CEOs of non-profit organizations), and Pat (as the dean of an academic unit within a decentralized private university), are all examples of entrepreneurial educators who had this control over both expenses and revenues . In contrast, educators operating in public schools, even those in leadership positions such as Ralph and Mary, had essentially no control on the revenue side of their budgets. Comparatively, Ron (as head of libraries) also had no control on the size of his core budget, which was determined by the Provost and based on allocations paid by the revenue-generating academic units that use the libraries. At the same time, Ron could, and did, augment the funds at his disposal through fund-raising.

Despite these important contextual limitations, we believe it is still worthwhile to identify and discuss the specific practices some of our subjects used to increase their organizations' financial well-being, as listed and discussed below:

- ***Developing new revenue streamsby starting for-profit ventures within the organization.*** Both Pat and Gidget, and to some extent Rod as well (as part of his HOST project), started for-profit enterprises *within* their organizations as a key strategy to develop new sources of revenues for their organizations. It is interesting to note that the main motivation for both CEOs of non-profit organizations was to become more independent from government funding and gifts. They recognized that these funding sources were not very reliable nor in their control, and changes from year to year of gifts or government funding could even cause their organizations to be significantly impacted or even collapse.

- ***Developing an endowment.*** The drive to bring more predictability and security into revenues generated through philanthropy was also behind some of our subjects' attempts to provide their organizations with an endowment. The creation of an endowment can channel portions or all of a philanthropic gift into an interest-bearing account, from which only the interest could be drawn upon, as needed, to support the organization.
- ***Seeking diversification in revenue sources.*** Thispractice was used to some extend by all leaders in top positions in their organizations. For example, in addition to the traditional businesses served, Donna diversified her client roster by developing revenue-generating relationships with and services for professional organizations. Rod and Gidget sought to invest in different and complementary business lines, and Pat started for-profit business lines while also trying to continuously increase revenues from tuition, grants, and gifts.

All these practices suggest a good understanding of the economic drivers specific to each subject's organization – something many educators do not even think as relevant to their jobs yet characterized all our subjects that held leadership positions.

The subjects who worked toward ensuring the financial well-being of their organizations had to wrestle with balancing this attention to fiscal issues (and related practices) with the pursuit of their mission. However, in most cases this did not seem to create a conflict, as they were all clear that the mission of the organization came first, and yet they recognized that the extent to which this mission could be pursued was dependent on the strength of their organizations' financial positions. In some cases we could see that this dual goal caused synergy rather than tension, as well illustrated in the cases of Gidget (whose for-profit ventures not only provided the funds to offer new services for blind and visually impaired people, but also created job and training opportunities for many of their clients), as well as Pat (whose business lines not only helped some research and teaching initiatives but also provided opportunities to experiment with new models of health care and offer valuable internships to some of their students). We revisit these points in Chapter 14.

Table 11.4. *Entrepreneurial practices related to financial resources*

	Owner	NFP CEO1	NFP CEO2	HE Dean	HE Admin	Sub Leader	Prin-cipal	Tea-cher
Practices to fund specific initiatives:								
Identifying and securing internal funds that could be used to support the initiative	X		X	X	X	X	*	
Seeking grants/ special funds		X	X	*	X	X	X	X
Seeking gifts	No	X	*	X	X	No	X	*
Seeking in-kind contributions			*			No	X	X
Finding investors				X	No	No	No	No
Taking on debt	X		X			No		
Using personal funds	X					No		X
Partnering with others to acquire additional resources not available within the organization	X	X	X	*		X	X	No
Bootstrapping practices:								
Devoting attention to cost savings in all circumstances	X	X	X	X	X	X	*	X
Maximizing the use of available resources	X	X	X	X		X		
Doing things with internal resources or by oneself (rather than hiring outsiders to do it)	X	X	No					X
Creatively re-allocating budgeted funds	X		X	*	X	X		
Having a lean but very capable staff	X	X	X	X	X		No	*
Avoiding the hiring of long-term personnel when starting a new venture	X	*	X	X	X	X		
Practices to improve the organization's financial well-being:								
Developing new revenue streams by starting new for-profit ventures within the organization	X	X	X	X	No	No	No	No
Developing an endowment	No	*	*	X		No	No	No
Seeking diversification of revenue sources	X	X	X	X	*	X	No	No

Human resources

As we examined the specific ways in which our subjects dealt with human resources, it was clear that our subjects

demonstrated good skills in the area of managing human resources – , with the only exception of the teacher who had no control over other staff. These skills involved most notably: proactively hiring high quality personnel and putting "the right people in the right position" (Collins, 2001); empowering people to do their jobs while also keeping them accountable; not letting people who do not work well "hang on"; providing opportunities for professional development; establishing good communications among personnel; and growing leaders within the organization. While all these practices are critical for competent educational leaders, once again in this section we report only on those practices that have to do with engaging in constant innovation and change. In particular, we chose to look in depth at two areas: (a) identifying and empowering project leaders to oversee the implementation of specific innovations; and, (b) securing people to work on specific innovations.

A first important realization is that the more a change agent is involved in simultaneous innovations and the higher s/he is in the organization, the more s/he will have to rely on other people to successfully implement specific initiatives. Most often, our subjects focused on identifying and planning worthwhile innovations as well as securing the resources needed for their execution, but they did not have the time to oversee all the details of implementing their innovations. In fact, only Lynn in her teaching role, and Donna at the start-up stage of her company, were in charge of implementing most of the initiatives they had initiated. In all the other cases, one of their most important responsibilities was to appoint and empower the right person as the project leader to lead the implementation of a new initiative they had decided to undertake. Indeed, two of our subjects, Pat and Gidget, reported innovations that initially failed and ended up being considerably delayed because they did not have the right project leader in place.

As a result, most of our subjects recognized *identifying and securing the right project leaders* as a key responsibility, whenever they were deciding to initiate an innovation. They went about this task of identifying and securing the right project leaders, using some specific practices:

- ***Selecting project leaders who share the same visionas the innovator.*** This required ensuring that candidates for the project leader role fully understood and were committed to the nature and goals of the project as well as the overarching vision informing it.
- ***Selecting project leaders with an entrepreneurial attitude.*** A few of our subjects explicitly mentioned the importance for a project leader to have sufficient initiative and determination to overcome the inevitable obstacles to be encountered along the way, in addition to the skillset and personality needed to oversee the assigned initiative.
- ***Proactively developingpotential project leaders from within the organization.*** As our subjects recognized the important role played by project leaders and the value of selecting the right ones, they also realized the need to develop capacity for such leaders within their own organization. They went about addressing this need by proactively identifying internal staff that showed potential in at least some dimensions and then investing in the further development of these individuals by providing them with special training and/or professional development as well as opportunities to try out their leadership skills in lower stakes projects.
- ***Being creative in defining the position and compensation to secure the right project leader.*** In cases in which the right person to lead a new initiative was not immediately available within the organization, some subjects reported strategies that ranged from training someone within the organization with the potential but not yet all the needed knowledge and skills, to looking outside of the organization to secure the person with the required skills and knowledge. Sometimes securing this person was not straightforward and

required out-of-the-box solutions. For example, Donna and her original partner agreed to share their ownership of the company with a third partner, in order to secure the right leader for the technology transformation of their company. Pat created the first remote-work, "virtual faculty position", in her school for the person that she wanted to lead the National Forensic Nursing Institute, as the candidate was not willing to relocate.

- ***Empowering projectleaders to do their job independently but also holding them accountable and staying in close touch.*** Almost all our subjects that appointed project leaders recognized that, in order for these individuals to be effective and accountable for the outcomes, they needed to be given sufficient autonomy and decision-making power. At the same time, it was also important for the entrepreneurial educator who initiated the innovation to maintain contact with the project leader, to make sure that the innovation continued to develop and perform as expected or, if not, decide together on next steps.

Operating with scarce resources and especially not letting the lack of currently controlled resources stop the decision to undertake worthwhile initiatives, most often required our subjects to find creative solutions to the problem of securing the personnel needed to carry out specific initiatives. Their stories enabled us to identify the following *human resource practices*.

- ***Using existing staff whenever possible when starting a new initiative (whether by redistributing responsibilities or through extra-comp).*** Using existing staff in the implementation of specific innovations was still the preferred solution for our subjects whenever possible. This approach has obvious financial benefits, and in addition current staff are a known quantity in terms of vision and skills. Insiders may also have greater motivation and ownership for the innovation, especially if they have bought into the overarching vision for the organization and if they have participated in the initial planning of the specific initiative. Depending on the nature of the innovation and the amount of time to be devoted to it, using existing staff can be accomplished simply with a redistribution of responsibilities. Ron, as head of the library, did this often with some of his staff, as administration roles changed over time. In other instances, using existing staff can be accomplished through extra compensation for leading the new task. The extra compensation approach can be relatively easy to implement with teachers and faculty, especially if the task can be accomplished mostly during the summer months, when most teachers and faculty are not on regular payroll. Most of our subjects were also willing, when needed, to temporarily release the staff members needed for a new venture from some or even all of their routine responsibilities. Of course, this required using other staff members or even new short-term hires to backfill regular tasks. For example, Mary, in her assistant superintendent leadership role, often secured the participation of current teachers or administrators in a specific initiative by giving them a "special assignment" for that academic year (e.g., Teacher on Special Assignment – TOSA). In turn, Mary would hire a short-term substitute to backfill the regular position. Another advantage of this arrangement is that the reassigned staff member can go back to the regular position once the special assignment is completed and with minimum disruption and long-term financial commitment for the organization. This may be especially important if the initiative is short-term or funded by a one-time grant or gift.
- ***Using short-term contracts rather than hiring new staff for new ventures.*** Whenever the necessary human capital could not be found within the organization, such as when branching into new areas, some of our subjects were not afraid to look outside for the right persons. In these

circumstances, however, whenever possible our subjects tried to secure the services of these new hires through short-term contracts (for example, as adjuncts or clinical faculty in the case of Pat) so as to avoid a long-term commitment for the institution, and limit the risk in case the new venture turned out not to be successful and needed to be discontinued.

- ***Creating partnershipsto secure expertise and human resources that do not already exist within the organization.*** The problem of securing the expertise and services needed for a new initiative was also often resolved through partnerships with other organizations that could contribute the needed personnel and without requiring new financial investments – as discussed in a previous section.
- ***Securing the services of volunteers and using them well.*** A strategy accessible to all our subjects except for the business owner was making use of volunteers, although it was used most extensively by Ron, Gidget, Ralph, and Lynn. Volunteers were especially critical to Lynn's initiatives, because, in her teaching role, she did not have decision-authority that allowed her access to other human capital. At the same time, it is important to take into consideration that relying on volunteers' services has its own challenges, as significant effort and skills are required not only to recruit the volunteers but also to make good use of their unique talents and to ensure that they feel their contributions valued. Training of volunteers may also be needed in most situations, which in turn requires resources.
- ***Being creative and flexible in the ways in whichkey players are secured and compensated.*** While Donna's case presents the best illustration for this practice, it is worth noting that most of our subjects were also willing to find other creative ways to compensate key players when needed for specific initiatives, even when operating within the constraints of traditional educational institutions.
- ***Using business and personal networks and connections to identify potential partners, volunteers,and/or new hires.*** It is also worth noting that most of our subjects, at one time or another, called on their existing networks to help them secure the resources needed to carry out an initiative they had decided to pursue – whether it meant setting up partnerships, seeking financial support, identifying the right person to lead a specific initiative, or recruiting volunteers. Our subjects did not hesitate to tap into their social capital to gain the support and buy-in they needed for specific initiatives. And several of our subjects also did not hesitate making new contacts with individuals or organizations that they did not already know but they thought could be helpful for a specific initiative.

To conclude this section, we would like to comment on the fact that the great majority of the innovations that our subjects initiated were joint ventures. Although Donna was the only one of our subjects who took on all her major initiatives together with a partner on an equal level, most often our subjects had to secure the collaboration of

colleagues, superiors, employees, boards, parents, and at the very least their clients. Even Lynn, who as a teacher tended to carry out most of her initiatives on her own, relied on a few close collaborators as well as her students and their families in carrying out her initiatives. Indeed, it is very rare for an education initiative to be carried out by an individual in isolation, a point that suggests the value of looking in-depth into the practices that can make these collaborations successful.

Table 11.5 *Entrepreneurial practices related to human resources*

	Owner	NFP CEO1	NFP CEO2	HE Dean	HE Admin	Sub Leader	Prin-cipal	Tea-cher
Practices related to appointing and empowering project leaders:								
Selecting project leaders who share the same vision	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	No
Selecting project leaders with an entrepreneurial attitude	X	X	X	X	X			No
Being creative in defining the position and compensation to secure the right project leader	X	*	X	X		X		No
Empowering project leaders to do their jobs independently, but also holding them accountable and staying in close touch	X	*	*	X	X	X	X	No
Proactively developing potential project leaders within the organization	X				*	X	X	No
Practices to secure the human resources needed to carry out a specific initiative:								
Using existing staff whenever possible when starting a new initiative (whether by redistributing responsibilities or through extra-comp)	X	*		X	X	X		*
Using short-term contracts rather than hiring new staff for new ventures	X			X		X		No
Creating partnership to secure expertise and human resources one does not have within the organization	X	X	X	*		X	X	X
Securing the services of volunteers and using them well		X	X				X	X
Being creative and flexible in the ways that key players are secured and compensated	X	*	X	X		X	*	No
Using one's networks and connections to identify potential partners, volunteers, and/or new hires	X	X	X					X

11.5. Entrepreneurial practices related to growth

Our findings support the claim made in the entrepreneurship literature that entrepreneurs are driven by the desire to

grow, although, depending on the context, this growth may be interpreted and occur differently (as already suggested by Bornstein [2004] in the case of social entrepreneurs). Furthermore, such growth is inevitably accompanied by the need to make changes in the organization to deal effectively with the increased scope, which entrepreneurs need to be aware of and prepared to handle (Kelley & Marram, 2004).

The practices used by our subjects to expand their impact suggest several different dimensions in which growth can occur, and these often are related to the nature of the subject's organization as well as his/her position in it:

- ***Increasing the size of the organization.*** This is the most traditional and obvious way to think about growth, and indeed it is most often the case that the extent of one's impact and the scope of one's mission is proportional to the staff and fiscal resources of an organization. At the same time, it is important to realize that this practice is most applicable to for-profit and not-for-profit organizations, and to some extent academic units within decentralized private universities, but not to public schools – where size is determined by external factors. Furthermore, only education change agents in top leadership positions (i.e., owner, CEO, or equivalent) have the authority to purposefully engage in the kinds of growth that requires control of both revenues and expenditures.
- ***Increase the number, quality,and usefulness of the services offered by the organization.*** Growing the size of the organization, however, is not the only option. For example, while Ron (as head of libraries) and Ralph (as principal of a public school) did not have much control on the size of the units they led nor the larger organization they belonged to, during their tenure they were both able to significantly increase the impact of their units by increasing the number, quality, and usefulness of the services they provided to their clients. Ralph offered his students and their families health services that no other elementary school was providing. And, Ron radically changed the services his librarians provided to the students as well as how those services were delivered, to better fit students' working habits and lifestyles.
- ***Moving to higher administrative positions as a way to expand one's sphere of influence.*** An alternative avenue that some of our subjects chose (and that is open to most education change agents) was to take on higher administrative positions within the larger organization. This in turn allowed them more control of resources and, thus, key decisions. For example, both Ralph and Mary explained their career decisions to move from teacher to administrator as driven by their desires to impact more students and thus multiply the effect of their ideas and actions. It is interesting to note, though, that moving to a higher position within an organization – either through a promotion within the same organization or because one's responsibilities as the top leader change as the organization grows (as it was the case for Donna and Gidget) – usually involves both gains and losses in terms of power and/or control. While higher positions and responsibilities often mean that one has more control on decisions affecting the entire organization, by leaving the implementation of specific initiatives to others one also loses valuable control on the many details that can make or break the success of an initiative and affect the extent of its impact. Mary's case is a good example, as being Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction placed her in the number two leadership position at a higher

organization level (i.e., school district level), while as Principal she was number one at the school level. As she explicitly commented, she felt that in the principal role at the school building level she had a lot more authority and power to influence what went on *in her school*, despite the fact that as principal she had to report to the Assistant Superintendent for certain decisions. At the Assistant Superintendent level, Mary could multiply the effect of her ideas and actions across the district, yet she had less day-to-day control of the many details carried out at the building level.

- ***Disseminating one's initiatives so other educators can repeat them and thus reachmore people.*** Moving to a leadership position is not the only option open to education change agents interested in expanding their sphere of influence within traditional education systems. For example, Lynn chose to remain a classroom teacher, yet she was able to affect students beyond her class by disseminating her ideas and practices to other teachers, who could in turn leverage Lynn's expertise in their classrooms for the benefit of their own students. She accomplished this by presenting at conferences, publishing on her experiences, publishing innovative curriculum materials, and taking on responsibilities in teacher preparation. These roles can be easily generalized to educators operating in other sub-fields of education.

How did our subjects deal with the changes in their roles as well as changes in their organizational structures that inevitably came with growth in its various forms? The analysis of their cases suggests the following *growth-management practices*:

- ***Delegating the implementation of most initiatives to others.*** Whether successfully growing the size of their organizations or taking on higher administrative positions, most of our subjects had to learn to delegate some of their original responsibilities to others. In particular, they could no longer engage directly in the implementation of many of their initiatives but instead had to entrust this critical stage of the process to project leaders (a point we already discussed in the Resources section).
- ***Developing within the organization leaderswho can take on some of one's original responsibilities and empowering them to do so.*** Because they could not be directly involved in specific initiatives and day-to-day operations, our subjects in leadership positions also had to rely on project leaders, as well as other trusted collaborators within the organization, to be their "eyes and ears" in the field. This allowed our subjects to continue having a pulse of the situation and be able to adjust the course of an implementation as well as be able to identify new opportunities. At the same time, the project leaders, chosen for their entrepreneurial proclivities, would need sufficient freedom and authority to be successful in their roles as project leaders.
- ***Translating what one does intuitively into processes that can be taught to others in the organization.*** Delegating one's responsibilities also meant that our subjects needed to be able to articulate and teach to others what they were doing effectively, and in many cases intuitively, themselves. This, in turn, meant making their thinking and decision-making processes more

visible as well as developing systems, processes, and procedures that others could follow and that could be consistent across different individuals.

- ***Securing new facilities to accommodate growth.*** Increases in the size of the organization and/or growth in the number of services offered, occasionally required larger and/or more sufficient facilities to accommodate these developments. While in the Donna's case this meant moving to larger rented facilities, in most of the other cases this involved the construction of new facilities (as in the case of Pat and Ralph) or extensive remodeling of the existing facilities (as for Ron and Gidget). And each of these facilities projects required significant capital expenses and/or accompanying pressure to raise additional funds to support growth.

Table 11.6. *Entrepreneurial practices related to growth*

	Owner	NFP CEO1	NFP CEO2	HE Dean	HE Admin	Sub Leader	Prin-cipal	Tea-cher
Practices to increase impact:								
Increasing the size of the organization	X	X	X	X	No	No	No	No
Increasing the number, quality, and usefulness of the services offered by the organization	X	X	X	X	X		X	No
Moving to higher administrative positions as a way to expand one's sphere of influence and the opportunity to reach more people and make more lasting changes		X	*	*		X	X	No
Disseminating one's initiatives so other educators can repeat them and thus reach more people	*	X		X	*	*	*	X
Growth management practices:								
Delegating the implementation of most initiatives to others	X	No	X	X	X			No
Translating what one does intuitively into processes that can be taught to others in the organization	X							X
Developing leaders within the organization who can take on some of one's original responsibilities and empowering them to do so	X	X	*	X	X	X	*	No
Relying on trusted people within the organization to be one's "eyes and ears"			X	*		X		No
Securing new facilities to accommodate growth			X	X	X		X	No

11.6. Concluding thoughts about entrepreneurial practices for educators

The findings reported in this chapter confirm our original hunch that there are remarkable similarities between how education change agents and business/social entrepreneurs approach new ventures/ innovations. As made explicit in this chapter, the entrepreneurial practices employed by the entrepreneurial educators we studied provide a wealth of concrete ideas for other educators. We believe that becoming aware of these possible strategies can be beneficial to all education change agents, as this awareness can extend the toolkit that education change agents can rely on to work on specific aspects of the processes of initiating and carrying out innovations. The effectiveness of a specific practice, however, also depends on whether it is appropriate for the specific situation and context in which it is being used as well as *how* it is used. Indeed, to fully benefit from the practices identified in this chapter, educators also must devote some effort to become proficient at the practice itself – as well as learn about its appropriate contexts of use. This important point will be more fully elaborated in the next two chapters.

These results also support our original belief that educators can benefit from learning more from the field of entrepreneurship, although it is crucial to keep in mind the important differences that exist between the fields of education and business. For example, rather than always trying to reinvent the wheel, we may want to look at what has been written about the issues associated with *dealing with the growth of the organization* in the field of entrepreneurship, and then consider which of the strategies and solutions recommended for growing businesses may have relevance to educational leaders who have increased the size or services offered by their organizations. We think that educators will be surprised to discover how useful and inspirational this "cross-fertilization" of approaches between business entrepreneurship and educational innovation/educational entrepreneurship can be.

CHAPTER 12.

Looking across the cases: Key factors impacting entrepreneurial educators' activity

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One of the main goals of our study has been to identify entrepreneurial practices that all educators could consider using to increase their innovations' chances of success. Our key findings on this topic have been reported in Chapter 11. We also recognize, though, that there are other factors that educators engaging in innovations need to consider when deciding *which* of these practices to use in specific instances.

In this chapter we are going to identify some of these factors, looking at three complementary areas: personal characteristics and preferences of the *individual* entrepreneurial educator, characteristics of the *organization* the entrepreneurial educator operates in, and characteristics of the *type of innovation* the entrepreneurial educator is undertaking. When combined, these elements will reduce the set of practices appropriate to consider at specific stages of the entrepreneurial process for a specific innovation – a topic we will address in the next chapter.

12.1. Individual characteristics of entrepreneurial educators

When we looked at the characteristics of business and social entrepreneurs identified in the literature (as reported earlier in Figure 2.2), we found that many of these characteristics were shared by the entrepreneurial educators we studied – with just a few interesting exceptions. More specifically, our findings (as documented in Table 13.1 at the end of this section) suggest that the following characteristics of business entrepreneurs well described *all* our case study subjects:

- ***Dream****/vision* **– having a clear vision and ability to implement it.**
- ***Devotion****/passion* **– Passion and commitment to a mission.**
- ***Dedication– willingness to give 100%, to do what it takes to get the job done.***
- ***Determination****/ persistency* **– not giving up when faced with obstacles.**
- ***Decisiveness– not procrastinating decisions or actions.***

The following characteristics also applied to most, but not all, of our subjects:

- ***Doer – getting satisfaction from getting things done.***
- ***Attention to Details – making sure that all details are attended to***
- ***Wanting to be in charge of one's own Destiny.***

In contrast, we do not believe that the last two characteristics of business entrepreneurs identified by Bygrave (2004) (i.e., *using money as a motivation and measure of success*, and *distributing ownership with key employees*) were relevant for the entrepreneurial educators we studies – with the notable exception of the one operating in the for-profit arena (Donna). However, a strong sense of fiscal responsibility and even more importantly the ***drive to increase the resources available to pursue one's mission*** were indeed common to all our subjects.

Our findings also suggest that most entrepreneurial educators demonstrate – at least to some extent – all but one of the characteristics of social entrepreneurs identified by Bornstein (2004), that is:

- ***Willingnessto self-correct.***
- ***Willingness to share credits.***
- ***Willingness to cross disciplinary boundaries.***

- ***Willingness to work quietly*** *(at least when warranted to achieve the desired outcomes).*
- ***Strong ethical impetus.***

Indeed, the only characteristic of social entrepreneurs identified by Bornstein which did not apply to our subjects was the "*willingness to break free of established structures*" – as almost all our subjects worked in established organizations they had not created, as do most of the education change agents we know. However, if we interpret this item more broadly as ***willingness to break free of conventions or rules*** when needed, all of our subjects showed that characteristic as well.

Although Bornstein did not explicitly mention *vision* among the characteristics of social entrepreneurs, some of the other elements he identified are closely connected with this concept and were embodied by our subjects. First of all, the same strong *ethical impetus* that characterizes social entrepreneurs (Bornstein, 2004) can be seen in the desire to improve the world that informed each of our subjects' vision (although at different levels of intensity depending on the subject's organization and its mission). Most of our subjects also felt a sense of urgency linked to their vision – especially so when working with clients who had traditionally been marginalized (like urban students, individuals with disabilities, or families living in poverty). As such, their *passion*, *dedication* and *persistency* around their work was integrally linked to their underlying goals and vision. At the same time, the belief in their vision and its potential impact is what gave them the strength and courage needed to continue to promote innovation, year after year, despite the effort this took and the resistance they encountered (as the inevitable response to change, especially within traditional education institutions).

It is important to note that, as documented in Table 12.1, not *all* our subjects shared these individual characteristics of entrepreneurs, nor did they do so to the same extent. However, as demonstrated in the stories reported in Chapters 3-10, these characteristics seem to have supported entrepreneurial action and contributed to the success of worthwhile educational innovations – and, thus, can be valuable for education change agents. It is also interesting to note that, in many cases, subjects who did not personally share some of these characteristics (attention to details in particular) tended to choose collaborators who did – almost as a way to compensate for that "deficiency".

This analysis highlights some striking parallels between business entrepreneurs, social entrepreneurs and entrepreneurial educators – thus confirming the value for education change agents to look at the field of entrepreneurship for inspiration. Although we argued earlier that individuals are unlikely to change their traits or dispositions, we also believe that knowing which characteristics are shared by most entrepreneurial educators may be of value to education change agents, as it will make them more aware of the potential impact of those characteristics and may encourage them to find collaborators that can bring in entrepreneurial characteristics they themselves lack.

We conclude this section with a table summarizing the entrepreneurial characteristics we identified and the extent to which those were reflected by each of our case-study subjects. As in the previous chapter, the following conventions have been used to fill in this table:

- "X" means that we found direct evidence of that characteristic in the data we collected;
- "*" means that, while we did not find direct evidence of that characteristic in our data, we can infer it based on our knowledge of the subject;
- "No" means that we have evidence that the characteristic in question does not apply;
- A blank cell indicates we do not have clear evidence to state anything definitive.

Table 12.1. *Characteristics of entrepreneurs shared by the case study subjects*

Characteristic: **Subject:**	Owner	NFP CEO1	NFP CEO2	HE Dean	HE Admin	Sub Leader	Prin-cipal	Tea-cher
Characteristics of business entrepreneurs:								
Dream*/vision* – having a clear vision and ability to implement it	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Devotion*/passion* — Passion and commitment to a mission	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Dedication — willingness to give 100%, to do what it takes to get the job done	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Determination*/ persistency* — not giving up when faced with obstacles	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Decisiveness — not procrastinating decisions or actions	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Doer – getting satisfaction from getting things done	X	X	X	X	*	X	*	X
Attention to ***Details*** – making sure that all details are attended to	X	No	*	*	X	*	*	X
Wanting to be in charge of one's own ***Destiny***	X	X	X	X	*	*	X	X
Dollars – Money is used as a motivation and measure of success	X	No	*	*	No	No	No	No
Distributing ownership with key employees	X	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Characteristics of social entrepreneurs:								
Willingness to self-correct	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Willingness to share credits	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	*
Willingness to break free of established structures/rules	*	*	*	*	X	*	X	X
Willingness to cross disciplinary boundaries	X	X	X	X	X	*	X	X
Willingness to work quietly	X	X	No	X	*	X	No	*
Strong ethical impetus	*	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

12.2. Characteristics of the organization and other contextual factors

The organizations our subjects worked in were very different, not only with respect to the nature and scope of their missions, but also in terms of organizational structure and culture. First of all, there are considerable differences in the ways for-profit and non-profit organizations, on the one hand, and educational institutions such as K-12 schools and universities, on the other hand, operate. And even within this second group, Pat and Ron worked in a very *decentralized*

private university which gave them considerable autonomy and control on resources, while Mary, Ralph and Lynn all worked in public K-12 schools, which are more *centralized* organizations and thus gave them very different autonomy and control on revenues and fiscal decisions.

Most of our subjects and their collaborators agreed that the following list of "enabling organizational factors" identified in the literature (as introduced earlier in Figure 2.3, and explicitly shared with them in an interview) would support entrepreneurial behavior:

- ***Shared vision and commitment to the mission.***
- ***Informal lines of communication that facilitate getting information to those who need it when they need it.***
- ***Personnel that is committed to "do what it takes" to implement the mission.***
- ***Culture and structures that encourage innovation and creativity.***
- ***High tolerance for risk and mistakes.***
- ***Decentralized decision-making system.***
- ***Flexible budgeting that looks at potential revenues as well as costs.***

At the same time, our subjects differed significantly in their evaluation of the extent to which their own organization reflected each of these characteristics – as documented in Table 12.2 at the end of this section. In fact, there was a sharp separation between the subjects working in a public K-12 school setting (who reported that almost none of these enabling factors were present in their institution) and the subjects working in a decentralized private university or a for-profit/not-for-profit organization (who instead identified many of these factors).

Another enabling factor that was common to several contexts, and yet was not in the list we initially derived from the entrepreneurship literature, was the presence of a ***crisis***. It is indeed striking how almost all of our subjects operated at times of crisis – as for example the for-profit business where Donna worked was close to bankruptcy when she and her partner took it over, Pat took the lead when her School of Nursing was risking closure, the Community Place was running a deficit when Rod joined it, Ron started his leadership of the library at a difficult financial time for his University, and Ralph and Lynn worked in an urban school district constantly marred by violence, high student drop-out rate and low achievements on state-wide tests. But what is most significant is that all of these educators leveraged this state of crisis as a way of moving their vision and entrepreneurial initiatives forward – recognizing that when the status quo is not desirable, people may be more willing to consider change and the inevitable risks associated with it. We can also see a connection between this finding and economists' claim that contexts characterized by uncertainty and disequilibria can encourage certain individuals to be "alert" and to seize opportunities (Kirzner, 1979). Thus, times of crisis are often an opportune time for entrepreneurs to take advantage of society's (or the organization's) willingness to accept reforms (Duhl, 1990). At the same time, some of our subjects (as best illustrated by Ron in his library) purposefully *created* a sense of crisis to promote change – a point connected with Schumpeter's principle of creative disruption.

When combined with the observation that all our subjects were successful in initiating innovations *regardless* of the institution they operated in, the findings reported in this section suggest that all the enabling organizational factors identified in the literature, as well as a few others our study uncovered, are not *necessary conditions* to the success of entrepreneurial behavior and innovations. However, since their presence can make the job of initiating innovations much easier, productive and rewarding, they may significantly affect entrepreneurial activity – so it is important for entrepreneurial educators to be aware of these factors and to work towards developing them within their organization, at least whenever they are in a position to do so. For example, we believe that both Mary and Lynn would not have chosen early retirement had their institution been more supportive of their innovative efforts.

It is also interesting that several of our subjects mentioned that their training and early professional experiences significantly affected their entrepreneurial behavior. More specifically, Donna talked about how she carried her training and expertise as a classroom teacher to the planning of meetings, and this gave her an advantage compared to others in the same industry. Pat often referred to her background as a psychiatric nurse as something that influenced the way she approached problem solving, the need to make quick decisions, making the best of scarce resources, and dealing with the emotional aspects of making change. Gidget reported on how her early experiences as a speech pathologist

working with individual with disabilities – an area she had *not* originally received training in – influenced both the way she approaches learning about a new field and looking at laws as providing a competitive advantage for organizations working with individuals with disabilities. Given the diversity of these background and experiences, however, one wonders whether the critical factor was not so much the *content* of the training or experiences our subjects had, but rather their ability to make the most of it, to see unique connections between past and current experiences, and to capitalize on them in new ways.

Table 12.2. *Enabling contextual factors experienced by each subject*

Subject: / **Factors:**	Owner	NFP CEO1	NFP CEO2	HE Dean	HE Admin	Sub Leader	Prin-cipal	Tea-cher
Enabling factors identified in the literature:								
Shared vision and commitment to the mission	X	X	X	*	X	No	*	No
Informal lines of communications that facilitate getting information to those who need it when they need it	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	No
Personnel that is committed to "do what it takes" to implement the mission	X	*	*	*	*	No	*	No
Culture and structures that encourage innovation and creativity	X	X	X	X	X	No	*	No
High tolerance for risk and mistakes	X	X	X	X	X	*	*	*
Decentralized decision-making system	X	X	X	X	X	*	*	No
Flexible budgeting that looks at potential revenues as well as costs	X	X	X	X	*	No	No	No
Other factors highlighted by our study:								
Operating in a state of crisis	X	X		X	*	No	*	*
Relevant prior professional training	X		X	X			*	

It is also important to point out that the *position* the subject held in the organization seemed to be another important factor affecting the impact that the characteristics of their organization may have had on their entrepreneurial behavior. As Donna, Rod, Gidget and Pat, were essentially the CEO of their organization, they had a lot of control on resources – both fiscal and human – and they were also in a position that enable them to influence the organization's culture, norms and expectations. This was not the case for Ron, Mary, Ralph and Lynn; and even in this group, the influence each of them could have on their organization was quite different.

12.3. Types of innovation

As we examined the *nature* of the specific innovations undertaken by our eight case-study subjects, we realized that their innovations presented a great variety not only in terms of content and context, but also the *kind* of innovation involved. This, in turn, suggested the value of identifying common "types" of educational innovations, as they night call for somewhat different approaches.

Our analysis identified the following four "types" of educational innovations:

1. ***Creating a new organization*** – whether for-profit or not-for-profit
2. ***Starting a long-term venture within an organization*** – such as a new Center, business line, instructional program/ course or other service.
3. ***Undertaking a one-time high-impact initiative*** – such as renovating or building a facility, engaging in a transformational initiative, organizing a unique learning experience, and even publishing or deciding to terminate an existing program.
4. ***Developing new practices and norms*** – such as working on developing a specific practice you want yourself or others in the organization to get better at, or engaging in "systemic reform" that may involving multiple dimensions and more radically change "how business is done".

In what follows we will examine what characterizes each of these types of innovations, with the ultimate goal of identifying elements entrepreneurial educators need to take into consideration when undertaking them. Key to this analysis will be identifying specific innovations from the eight case-studies that provide illustrations for each type and sub-type.

12.3.1. Creating new organizations

Several authors in the literature on entrepreneurship equates entrepreneurship with the creation of new organizations – whether *for-profit* or *not-for-profit*. While in Chapter 2 we criticized this definition of entrepreneurship as too narrow and limiting, we nevertheless believe it makes sense to start by looking at this most "classic" type of innovation, as it presents some unique characteristics.

We found only two examples of this kind of innovation in our study:

- ***Starting a new for-profit company***: This is essentially what Donna Thompson did when she and her partner *took over and turned around a bankrupt company* to support the organization of productive meetings for companies and professional organizations (Donna's innovation #1).
- ***Starting a new not-for-profit organization***: This type of innovation is exemplified by Rod Jones' creation of *Rochester Step Off* as an independent organization to leverage Black youth's interest in step dancing as a means to support their academic and life development (Rod's innovation #1).

Both of these examples show the value of creating a new organization to provide an educational service that traditional education institutions are not able to offer, yet would be of value to special populations. A new organization may be better able to respond to emerging needs, as it can be more nimble and open to radically new solutions and ways to deliver those solutions. One of the great appeals of creating a new organization is the ability it gives to break free from the constraints created by the structures (and culture/practices) of an existing organization, and to establish new expectations, new culture, new practices, new structures. In contrast, trying to "fix" an existing organization may harder, given the inevitable resistance to change.

Yet it is also important to consider that starting a new organization has a different level of magnitude and risk than any of the other innovations featured in our case-studies. When creating a new organization, it is more a "whole or nothing" situation – either you succeed and have a long-lasting impact and mission, or you fail and you cease to exist! There is also no "safety-net" to help in the case of initial mistakes or unexpected events. Creating a new organization also calls for significant resources – so securing the needed funding becomes paramount before being able to launch this initiative and can be challenging. This is probably also a main reason why Donna and Rod gave most attention during our interviews to reconstructing what it took to create and launch their organization, although in both cases it was equally important how they "built success" so as to make their organization sustainable and truly making an impact.

While the previous considerations apply to starting both for-profit and not-for-profit organizations, there are also some important differences between the two. First, for-profit and not-for-profit organizations do not have access to the same sources of funding. In particular, only not-for-profit organizations will be eligible for gifts/charitable contributions, foundation grants, and support from community organizations, while for-profit companies may look for investors and venture capitalist (although some "charitable" venture capital have also begun to emerge – see Hess, 2008). Another interesting difference is that in the field of education non-profit organizations are more easily accepted, while for-profit companies are still looked at with more suspicion – as many educators still believe that there is an unsolvable tension between seeking to make a profit and fulfilling a social need (even though our case-studies of Gidget and Pat in particular challenge this notion).

12.3.2. Starting new long-term ventures within an organization

Few educators start a *new organization*, whether for-profit or not-for-profit, and if so, it is likely to happen only once or twice in their career. In contrast, all but one of our subjects started at least one *long-term venture* within their existing organization – that is, a value-adding initiative that was intended to "live on" – and the majority of them did so multiple times. This kind of activity is what is most often associated to the work of *intrapreneurs* in the entrepreneurship literature.

These long-term ventures, though, varied considerably in both nature and scope – and, therefore, the value they added to the organization and the people they served. Among the several innovations featured in our case studies that belong to this category, we identified the following sub-categories as especially relevant for the field of education:

- ***Starting new "branches" within the organization***: This type of initiative is well illustrated by Pat Chiverton's *creation of the Center for Nursing Entrepreneurship* within her School of Nursing (Pat's innovation #3). Starting a new branch may allow an organization to create a space to do certain things (like running business lines for Pat's Center) that are different from one's core operations, and yet add important new dimensions in the pursuit of one's mission. Like creating a new organization, starting a new branch allows to establish new expectations, structures and ways of operating – as for example it allowed Pat to have different rules about hiring and compensating personnel, and approving new non-credit-bearing courses. This, in turn, may allow greater flexibility and nimbleness than running the new programs/ operations within the current structure of the larger organization. Indeed, starting a new branch may allow an organization and its leader to develop a space where they can be more innovative and break from tradition, without needing to abandon the organization or making sweeping changes within it – thus significantly decreasing risk.
- ***Starting new for-profit business lines within one's organization***: While only Gidget and Pat created business lines within their organizations, they did so multiple times and with great success. This shows first of all that starting for-profit businesses does not always require the creation of an independent organization, but rather can also take place within an existing organization – even a not-for-profit one! What is most striking across all of Pat's and Gidget's examples, though, is that while each business line contributed financially to their institution in very

important ways, the main reason for starting it and the greatest value to their institution was not only economical. In the case of Gidget, each of her business lines was developed first and foremost to create employment opportunities for blind or visually impaired individuals – thus contributing to their ability to become independent and contribute to society, a key element of ABVI's mission. Similarly, Pat was interested in creating business lines as a way to develop and disseminate new models of health care focusing on health promotion; as such, these businesses contributed directed to the research mission of Pat's school (by developing new models of health care) and to its instructional mission (by providing unique sites for observations and internships for nursing students). Therefore, neither Gidget nor Pat felt that establishing for-profit business lines within a non-profit organization or university created any tension between "fulfilling their mission" and "maintaining fiscal feasibility."

- ***Starting new instructional programs*** *(broadly defined to include courses and professional development offerings, besides traditional degree programs*): While starting new business lines may seem rather foreign to educators, starting new instructional programs and courses is a much more common experience – especially within universities. Pat launched several new programs during her tenure as dean, of which "*Starting a new Master in Nursing Leadership* (Pat's innovation #2) was just one example. Indeed, as reported in her case study, initiating new instructional programs was a critical element in her strategy to ensure critical revenues as well as differentiate her School of Nursing. Starting new instructional programs and courses is less common in K-12 schools, given the prescribed structure of the curriculum at this age level; however, Ralph Spezio's addition of a pre-school program to his elementary school is a good counterexample, as this innovation provided an important vehicle to "level the playing" field for many of his urban students, who were entering kindergarten and first grade already at a disadvantage. New instructional programs are also no longer the prerogative of schools and universities, as more and more non-profit and even for-profit organizations may offer such programs. For example, designing and offering training programs for blind and visually impaired individuals continued to be a major component of what Gidget Hoft's organization (ABVI) offered, and Rod's organization (the Community Place) created many new educational programs for the people it served – even though none of these ventures were explicitly featured in their stories.
- ***Starting new "supporting" services***: New instructional programs and courses are not the only way in which educational institutions can serve their clients and contribute to their learning and development. Rather, educators are becoming more and more aware that promoting learning and development also requires attending to the needs of the "whole" person. Three of the innovations reported in our case studies involved starting new supporting services – Ralph Spezio's urban teacher preparation program (Ralph's innovation #2) and school-based health clinic (Ralph's innovation #3), and Rod Jones' HOST Program (Rod's innovation #3). Other among our subjects also engaged in this type of innovation sometime in the course of their career. For example, Ron's Library Technology Initiative (Ron's innovation #2) involved among other things providing a better on-line catalog to navigate the university collection, instituting a digital reserve (which would allow students to access materials put on reserve for their classes from their computer, rather than having to physically go to the library), and creating a D-space for faculty and students to display their unpublished work. Each of these services directly added value to the students and faculty using the library, by making it easier and more convenient to access literature they needed to support their academic work, and also by developing a different perception about the role and value of the library for them. Gidget and Rod also developed new services to serve their target populations in addition to what included in their stories.

While the specific innovations included in this category may seem quite different in content and scope, a common element at their core is that they were all designed to address specific unmet needs of the parent organization and/or the people it served by launching an initiative that was expected to "live on" – at least for a significant period of time. Therefore, figuring out ways to *sustain* the initiative in the long-term was always a critical element. This involved not only financial considerations, which in turn called for developing some sustainable revenue generation models, but also raised the challenge of ensuring continuity despite leadership changes that inevitably would occur overtime.

Innovations in this category also presented other interesting similarities. Most notably, they all required similar

processes to evaluate whether the specific program/service should be offered, and to gather the needed resources to launch those new initiatives – although differences in scope may have called for the use of different practices, a point we will return to in Chapter 13.

These considerations suggest that starting new ventures within an organization has many similarities with starting a new organization in terms of processes and practices – so it is not surprising that some definition of entrepreneurship include creating new enterprises or ventures, rather than just new businesses/organizations. Yet starting a new venture within an existing organization present a very different level of magnitude and risk, as the overall organization can provide some security that allows one to be more daring and learn from mistakes and failures. With lower risk, however, also come a lower level of freedom.

The examples reported in this section are evidence that starting new ventures is something that educators in most organizations and positions can do. Yet the fact that the teacher in our group did *not* engage in any innovation of this kind suggests that being in some leadership position may greatly facilitate undertaking a "new venture" within the organization – and the bigger the scope of the innovation, the more it will require support and approval from people high up in the leadership hierarchy.

12.3.3. Undertaking one-time high-impact initiatives

Some of the innovations our subjects reported on did not fall in either of the previous two categories, as they could be characterized as "one-time initiatives" that took place at a specific point in time without the intention of ever being continued or repeated on a regular basis, and yet they provided great and long-standing value to the organization and its client. As such, they would not fit any definition of entrepreneurship that involve the creation of "enterprises" – yet, given their value-added, it seems important for entrepreneurial educators to learn how to engage in innovations of this kind effectively.

These one-time high-impact innovations could take several different forms. Based on the innovations identified in our case studies, we would like to highlight the following categories as especially significant.

- ***Building/remodeling facilities***: Three of our featured innovations – Pat Chiverton's building a new wing for her school (Pat's innovation #5), the Library Remodeling project by Ron Dow (Ron's innovation #2) and the building of a new pre-School by Ralph Spezio (Ralph's innovation #1) – fall into this category. Furthermore, we know that other case study subjects also initiated and carried out facilities projects at least once in their career. For example, housing new manufacturing operations and Goodwill Stores required Gidget to secure new facilities, which in some cases involved building or remodeling; some of Rod's housing projects also involved major remodeling. At first, it may seem surprising to see so much "construction activity" – especially given the costs of facilities projects and the scares resources that characterize most educational organizations. However, needing to secure new facilities is often an outcome of engaging in innovations that lead to growth in the organization. Building new facilities or doing major remodeling of existing ones may also appeal to many educational leaders because of their *permanent* nature, as those facilities will stay on and continue to be used over time, thus also helping to ensure sustainability for the programs they house. At the same time, given the significant level of funding required and limited flexibility, it is also important to carefully evaluate these projects against possible alternatives. It is interesting that Donna, as a business owner, chose to rent as a way not only to reduce start-up costs, but also to gain flexibility for future unpredictable growth.
- ***Publishing to disseminate successful solutions***: At first one may wonder why we chose to include publishing projects as educational innovations. However, we believe publishing is a critical tool to disseminate innovative ideas and practices and achieve wide-spread reform – especially in the field of education. Furthermore, projects leading to publication present some interesting commonalities with facilities projects, as publishing one's work is a

one-time initiative culminating in the published product, yet the impact of that product can be long-lived as the publication can be used by many other people over time. Among the educators we studied, Lynn Gatto, the urban elementary teacher, was the one who most extensively and consistently engaged in publications as a way to increase the impact of her instructional innovations beyond her classroom. Indeed, Lynn engaged in many publication projects throughout her teaching career, beyond the video for parents of students with learning disabilities and the set of instructional materials for teaching elementary science (Lynn's innovation #3) mentioned in her case study.

- ***Undertaking one-time transformational initiatives***: Our case studies also showed the power and long-term implication of undertaking some high-risk/high-reward one-time initiatives that can be transformational for the organization. The best examples among our featured innovations were Donna's company taking on the organization of the White House Conference on Travel and Tourism (Donna's innovation #3) and Ron's response to the budget cut that led to reconceiving how keep the library's collection on the cutting edge (Ron's innovation #1). In the first case, bidding for the White House Conference contract forced Donna's company to move outside their comfort zone and try out new technologies, yet they were willing to do so as they knew that, if successful, it would result in moving the company to the next level by significantly increasing their reputation and visibility. In the second case, by taking an out-of-the-box approach to solving a budget cut for the library, Ron was able to establish a better way to approach new acquisitions for the library collection that stayed on even after that fiscal crisis was resolved. In both cases, although the initiative itself was not repeated, it had some long-term and impactful effects on the organization.
- ***Designing and implementing innovative learning experiences***: Also creating a new instructional unit or professional development offering may be conceived as a one-time event. Sometimes these events can be repeated multiple times, but most often they are not – as it was the case for both Lynn's Cookie Cutter unit (Lynn's innovation #1) and the field trip to Kentucky she arranged for her 4th grade urban students (Lynn's innovation #2); nevertheless, the impact of these unique learning experiences on Lynn's students should not be underplayed. Furthermore, often specific innovative learning experience, even if not repeated, inform the design of future learning experiences; publications resulting from these experiences can also lead to greater and longer-term impact, as other teachers and their students may benefit from the original ideas. This is definitely the kind of innovation that is most likely to appeal to teachers, although many of our subjects also engaged in it – as for example the meetings and conferences Donna's company organized were always explicitly designed to provide valuable learning opportunities, Gidget reported creating a number of learning opportunities for her board as well as creating educational programs for blind people, and Ron's many presentations about the library to donors also had a teaching dimension. Therefore, the value of this type of educational innovation should not be under-estimated!
- ***Terminating existing initiatives when needed:*** While we tend to think of innovations in terms of starting *new* programs or services, or making improvements and changes that add to the status quo, equally important are innovations that *eliminate* existing initiatives that have become obsolete or are running a deficit, so as to leave space – and resources – to implement new ideas. The tendency in education (and the path of least resistance for educational leaders) is to let current initiative continue, no matter how inefficient it may be – especially if it is not losing money! However, "trimming" initiatives that do not work anymore is as important as starting new ones. So it should not be surprising that we found only one of our featured innovations belonging this category – Pat's closing of the undergraduate nursing program (Pat's innovation #1) – although Rod also mentioned his decision to stop offering daycare services and a few other initiatives when CEO of a Settlement House. Both Pat and Rod explicitly stated that ineffective programs and operations are a liability, as they draw on the organization's limited resources that could be better employed for other initiatives.

The many examples mentioned in this section demonstrate the considerable value that can come to an organization from engaging in one-time high-impact innovations – so these innovations should not be discounted, even though they have a different "live span" than long-term ventures (which are at the core of several popular definitions of entrepreneurship). As shown by examples like Donna's White House Conference, Pat's facilities expansion, and Lynn's

Kentucky field trip, just to mention a few, one-time innovations can still have a long-term impact even though the concept of sustainability (which is central to both starting new organizations and new ventures) may not apply to this type of innovation.

As the nature of the innovations belonging to this type differ significantly across sub-category, it will be important to take those differences into consideration when embarking in specific one-time innovations. Indeed, the examples encountered in our case studies ranged from multi-million facilities projects requiring significant funding to innovative learning experiences that could be undertaken for essentially no cash costs. As a result, the risk associated to these initiatives, as well as what it would take to secure the needed resources, would be very different, and in turn call for different processes to evaluate whether the initiative is worth pursuing. It is also worth noting that some of these innovations required securing *support* even more than *resources.* This was especially true for innovations involving terminating existing initiatives, as discontinuing something is always going to be unpopular with, at the very least with the people associated with those initiatives, who may also feel threatened by their elimination.

12.3.4. Changing practices, norms and/or culture

Some of the most significant innovations we observed our subjects engage in had to do not so much with a clearly identifiable "initiative," but rather with a long-term and carefully orchestrated attempt to make changes in pervasive and persistent practices, norms and cultures within their own organization. Because of their long-term nature, each of these innovations often included multiple components and tended to be more iterative in nature. Nevertheless, they were probably the innovations with the greatest chance of making a sustained difference if successful – although they were also the most challenging!

We identified two sub-groups within this category of innovations:

- ***Developing a specific new practice***: Examples in this category from our case-studies involve most notably Gidget's decisions to change her own practices as CEO (Gidget's innovation #4), as well as Mary's attempts to change specific teaching practices, first as principal by changing the process for evaluating teachers, and later as Assistant Superintendent for Instruction by trying (unsuccessfully) to institute differentiated instruction strategies (Mary's innovation #2). While implementing these initiatives did not require almost any financial resource, they were among the most difficult ones to succeed – give how challenging it is to develop new practices.
- ***Engaging in "systemic change"***: Innovations within this category differ from the previous ones in that they involve much more encompassing and interconnected changes, often requiring to reconceive the entire way of "doing business" in the organization, and/or involving changes in norms and mindsets as well as practices. Notable examples from our case-studies included: Mary's math reform initiative (Mary's innovation #3), which required to reconceive what and how to teach mathematics from kindergarten to grade 12; Mary's district-wide curriculum writing initiative (Mary's innovation #1), as it implicitly called for changing the established norm that "teachers could do what they wanted in their classroom"; Rod's efforts at developing a new culture in the Community Place, when he joined that organization as CEO (Rod's innovation #2); and Ron's and Donna's technology initiatives, which involved radically new roles and responsibilities for staff. All these initiatives where not only affecting the entire organization in significant ways, but they were also more "fluid," "morphing" from other things and often involving multiple connected initiatives – yet always very purposeful and linked to the entrepreneurial educator's vision. As a result, it was also more difficult to pinpoint their beginning and end.

Innovations within this last category feel different from the previous types we identified in a few important ways. They seem to depend less from identifying and responding to an opportunity, as they are more "strategic" and thoughtful in nature. The changes they involve are also often those that one does not want to bring too much attention to, but rather keep "under the radar screen." Therefore, they may require different approaches and skill sets, as they are usually

more "political" – and may require a lot of time (and patience!) to develop. While some of these innovations may require significant financial and staff resources (as in the case of Donna's and Ron's technology initiatives), the resource most critical to their success is always "social capital" and good will to ensure buy-in – and thus they may be among the most difficult innovations to achieve. Most of these innovations also require the influence and authority of an acknowledged leader within the organization in order to be pursued.

It is also important to note, though, that because they affect the very structure of the organization, innovations of this type are the ones that could be more transformational/ impactful and long-lasting.

12.3.5. Concluding observations about the nature and impact of different types of innovation

It is important to keep in mind that the different types of innovation identified and discussed in this section are not necessarily mutually exclusive, as a specific innovation may include elements from more than one category – as for example Ralph's addition of a pre-school for his elementary students (Ralph's innovation #1) involved both a "new program" component (*new long-term venture/ new program*) as well as a main "facilities" component (*one-time high-impact initiative/ facilities project*). Despite this caveat, we believe that the different types of "innovations" we have identified may provide a valuable conceptual tool to highlight complementary ways in which education can be improved – and hopefully show education change agents possibilities they may have not considered before.

As a way to summarize the previous discussion, in Table 12.3 we have listed the types and sub-types of educational innovations identified by our study, along with examples from the "featured innovations" included in our eight case studies. Whenever a featured innovation included multiple components reflecting different types of innovation, we listed it only under the category that we believed described it best (for example, Ralph's pre-school initiative was listed as an example of "facilities projects" rather than "new programs", as the most salient part of his story focused on building the premises for the new pre-school program).

Table 12.3. *List of our subjects' featured innovation by "type" of innovation*

Creating a new organization	
Creating a for-profit company	• Taking over and turning around a bankrupt company (Donna 1)
Creating a not-for-profit company	• Founding Rochester Step Off Inc. (Rod 1)
Starting a long-term venture	
Starting new business lines within the organization	• Starting the first manufacturing initiative at ABVI (Gidget 1) • Affiliating with Goodwill to open thrift stores (Gidget 2) • Starting a Call Center (Gidget 3) • Developing the National Forensic Nursing Institute as a new "business line" within a school of nursing (Pat 4)
Starting a new branch within the organization	• Creating a new Center for Nursing Entrepreneurship (Pat 3)
Starting new instructional programs	• Creating a new Master's program in Nursing Leadership (Pat 2)
Starting new "supporting" services	• Starting the HOST program (Rod 3) • Establishing a school-college partnership to prepare urban teachers (Ralph 2) • Developing an on-site health clinic within an urban elementary school (Ralph 3)
Undertaking one-time transformative initiatives	
Publishing to disseminate innovations	• Publishing an elementary science curriculum (Lynn 3)
Engaging in one-time high-risk/high-rewards initiatives	• Embracing a high-risk/high-rewards project to move to the next level (Donna 3) • Changing the library collection strategy to solve a fiscal crisis (Ron 2)
Designing and implementing innovative learning experiences	• The Cookie-Cutter instructional unit (Lynn 1) • Organizing a field-trip to Kentucky for urban 4th students (Lynn 2)

Undertaking facilities projects	• Building new facilities for the School of Nursing (Pat 5) • Transforming the Library into a Student-Centered Space (Ron 2) • Adding a new pre-school (Ralph 1)
Terminating existing programs	• Closing the traditional undergraduate nursing program (Pat 1)
Developing new practices, norms and culture	
Developing a specific new practice	• Changing one's leadership style and practices as CEO (Gidget 4) • An attempt at addressing differentiated instruction (Mary 2)
Engaging in systemic reform	• Re-inventing the company by embracing new technologies (Donna 2) • Developing the vision and culture of the Community Place as a new organization (Rod 2) • The Library Technology Initiative (Ron 3) • Writing the first district-wide curricula (Mary 1) • Leading a district-wide mathematics reform initiative (Mary 3)

That said, some categories of "innovations" may be more appropriate for a particular context (i.e., K-12 schools, vs. universities, vs. non-profits vs. for-profits), role (especially in terms of leadership level within the organization and thus authority to make certain decisions), or personal characteristics. For example, developing new programs and courses may be especially valuable for an academic department or school within a university, and it is usually the prerogative of an academic leader (dean or department chair). At the same time, individual faculty members can be instrumental in starting new courses and even programs; new elective courses can be started in high schools by principals, teachers and Assistant Superintendents for Instruction; and some non-profits and for-profits can offer new programs and courses as well.

We also hope that our analysis will contribute to the debate in the field of entrepreneurship of what should "count" as the object of the "entrepreneurial process". Depending on the definition of entrepreneurship assumed, authors have argued that the study of entrepreneurship should only focus on just starting new organizations (e.g., Bygrave, 2004), or also include new enterprises/ long-term venture (e.g., Green, 2005), or even apply to any kind of innovation (e.g., Shumpeter, 1934). Our study suggests that there are important differences among the different types of innovations we have identified, as well as interesting similarities. Therefore, there is indeed value in both looking for commonalities that may cut across different types of innovation and thus have wide applicability, and purposefully studying specific types of innovations among those we have identified to uncover special elements that should be taken into account in those cases.

We conclude this section with another table (Table 12.4) that indicates which of our subjects engaged in each of the types and sub-types of innovation we identified at least one time in their career. In this table, for each case-study subject "X" indicates that at least one of the "featured innovations" that were reconstructed in detail as part of their case-study belonged to this type of innovation, "*" indicates that we observed the subject engage in at least one innovation of this type – as reported in their interviews or based on our knowledge of the subject; "No" means that we could conclude with confidence that the subject did *not* ever engage in that type of innovation, while we left a blank cell whenever we did not have enough information to make a clear determination.

Table 12.4. *Types of innovation undertaken by each subject*

Factors: / Subject:	Owner	NFP CEO1	NFP CEO2	HE Dean	HE Admin	Sub Leader	Prin-cipal	Tea-cher
Creating new organizations:								
Creating a new for-profit organization	X	No	No	*	No	No	No	No
Creating a new not-for-profit organization	No	X	No		No	No		No
Starting a new venture within the organization:								
Starting a new branch within the organization	No			X	No	No	No	No
Starting new business lines within the organization			X	X	No	No	No	No
Starting new instructional programs		X	X	X			X	No
Starting new services	X	X	X		X	No	X	No
Undertaking one-time high-impact initiatives								
Undertaking new facilities projects	No	X	X	X	X		X	No
Publishing to disseminate								X
Undertaking one-time transformative initiatives	X				X			
Designing & implementing innovative learning exp.	X	X	X	*	X			X
Terminating obsolete initiatives		X		X				No
Changing practices, norms, and culture								
Developing a specific new practice			X			X		
Launching systemic reform efforts	X	X	X		X	X		No

12.4. Concluding thoughts about factors impacting entrepreneurial educators' activity

The considerations reported in this chapter have highlighted the many ways in which entrepreneurial educators' decisions, while informed by the general mindsets and practices identified in Chapter 11, will also be influenced by their own personality traits and/or preferences, contextual factors such as the kind of organization they work in and their role within it, and the type of innovation they are undertaking. In the next chapter, we will see how all these factors come together at specific stages of the entrepreneurial process of initiating and carrying out a specific innovation.

CHAPTER 13.

Looking across the cases: Practices in action at specific stages of the entrepreneurial process

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In this chapter we will focus on how the entrepreneurial educators we studies engaged in the *process* of initiating and carrying out specific innovations – what has been referred to in the literature as the *entrepreneurial process*. Our ultimate goal is to identify concrete *practices* that our subjects used effectively at specific stages of the entrepreneurial process, so that other educators can become aware of those practices as potential tools to increase the chances of success of their own innovations. While some of these practices may be especially appropriate for specific *educational contexts* or *types of innovation* (as identified in Chapter 12), other may have much broader applicability.

More specifically, building on findings reported in the previous two chapters about our subjects' *entrepreneurial practices*, their *organization's characteristics*, and the *types* of educational innovations they engaged in, we have systematically analyzed the reconstruction of the 27 "featured innovations" reported in Chapters 3-10 to identify concrete practices used at each stage of their development. As identified in Chapter 2 and used consistently to structure the narrative of each featured innovation in Chapters 3-10, these stages include:

- *Coming up with the idea and evaluating/refining it*
- *Planning and gathering the needed resources*
- *Implementing and monitoring the initiative*
- *Ensuring long-term sustainability and/or bigger impact (when appropriate)*

For each of these stages, we have collected in tables the practices that were employed by at least one of the subjects in one of the featured innovations – so as to create a broad inventory of possible practices other educators could consider when engaging at that particular stage of the process in future innovations. Without the goal of being comprehensive, we will also share some considerations emerging from our analysis of how our subjects used some of these practices, with attention also to identify if specific practices may be most appropriate for certain contexts or types of innovations.

13.1. Coming up with the idea and evaluating/refining it

This is probably the most critical stage of the entrepreneurial process, in education as well as other fields. Interestingly this is also the stage that our subjects spent most time on when telling their story of specific innovations – thus indicating that they also considered it the most important part of the whole process.

At its core, this stage involves an iterative process of refining an original idea by gathering additional information and perspectives, guided by strategic considerations; therefore, it is not linear. However, we have found it helpful to conceptually identify and examine separately the following three critical components of this initial stage of the entrepreneurial process:

- *Coming up with the initial idea for a worthwhile innovation*
- *Evaluating whether the idea is worth pursuing*
- *Making a final decision about whether to pursue the idea, and if so in what form*

All of these components have a lot to do with how entrepreneurial educators approach opportunities – as already discussed in Chapter 11. To avoid repetitions, for each of these components here we will just share some general considerations, and then provide tables that identify more "concrete" strategies within relevant practices already identified and discussed in Chapter 11.

Coming up with the initial idea for worthwhile innovations

We noticed a striking difference between what our subjects did at this very first stage of the entrepreneurial process,

and what we found in entrepreneurship textbooks and trade-books about starting a new business venture. Many of these books suggest to engage in a purposeful process for coming up with the idea of a potential new business, proposing techniques such as brainstorming exercises or the systematic analysis of industries and/or market areas experiencing growth and change. In contrast, we noticed that *none* of the educators we studied engaged in such a process unless their organization was involved in a strategic planning effort (an experience only two of our subjects, Pat and Rod, explicitly mentioned in their interviews). Rather, it seemed to us that they were always full of ideas about how to better serve their client and/or improve their institution's operations, without requiring a purposeful and structured process to generate them. These ideas seemed instead to come spontaneously from their continuous search for opportunities to put their vision into practice, which constituted an integral component of their everyday practice.

At the same time, we would not want to convey the impression that good ideas simply "happened" to our subjects. Indeed, when looking across the featured innovations described in the previous chapters, we were able to identify a few practices that these educators employed on a regular basis, which contributed to making them alert to recognizing opportunities that might present themselves, and in some instances may even have pro-actively created some of these opportunities. Building on the more general practices identified in Chapter 11 about uncovering and creating opportunities – that is, "*scanning the environment" for potential opportunities*, *approaching problems as opportunities*, *using your networks to get to know about new opportunities*, *seeking and/or capitalizing on competitive advantages*, and *building on other people's ideas* – in Table 13.1 we have identified more "concrete" practices we observed our subjects employ in specific innovations as a way to operationalize each of the previous categories.

Before we list and comment on these more concrete practices, though, we would like to remind about the central role played by one's vision and mission at this initial stage of the entrepreneurial process, combined with our subject's approach to opportunities. Depending on what our subjects were passionate about – whether it was leveling the playing field for urban students so that they could have equal opportunities to achieve success in their life (as in the case of Ralph and Lynn), developing new and more effective models of health care (Pat), or finding ways to enable blind people to live an independent and productive life (Gidget) – they lived and walked around with that vision in their mind, always proactively looking for new ways to move it forward. Because of this passion and drive, these educators were likely to recognize opportunities that others may not have seen, as well as be more open to considering taking on those opportunities. For example, many would find it surprising for a school principal to conceive of opening a health clinic on school premises (especially in the 1980's!), yet Ralph thought it was a logical next step after realizing the many health problems affecting his students' learning.

Table 13.1. *Practices to come up with ideas for worthwhile innovations*

***Seeking and/or capitalizing on competitive advantages*:**

"Scanning" the environment for ideas and potential opportunities:
A1. Proactively seeking to understand your clients' unmet needs
A2. Looking at what is going on in your organization to recognize unmet needs and potential opportunities
A3. "Being" alert to what goes on in the community
A4. Getting inspiration from the literature in the field (by reading, going to conferences..)
A5. Getting inspiration from benchmarking (i.e., from what peers do best OR do not do)
A6. Looking at the intersection of different fields for new connections/ opportunities
A7. Looking at where the field is going to project future needs
A8. Reviewing grant RFPs
Approaching problems as opportunities:
B1. Using a specific problem/challenge experienced by your clients as stimulus for a new initiative
B2. Using a specific problem/challenge experienced in your own practice as stimulus for a new initiative
B3. Recognizing limitations of current initiatives and coming up with ways to enhance them
B4. Looking at crisis and negative events as opportunities for change
Using one's networks to uncover potential opportunities:
C1. Receiving information about possible opportunities from one's network
C2. Talking to people in your networks, proactively looking for new connections and opportunities others may have not perceived
D1. Proactively looking for ways to utilize your competitive advantages
D2. Identifying new ways to gain competitive advantages
D3. Seeking ways to diversify your products/services
D4. Engaging in a strategic planning process
Seeking other people's ideas:
E1. Inviting and listening to ideas brought up by other people in the organization
E2. Encouraging and listening to ideas brought up by clients
E3. Refining initial ideas by discussing them with collaborators and mentors

The practices listed in Table 13.1 are by no means exclusionary, but rather complementary and somewhat overlapping. Indeed, often the idea for the innovations we studied in depth as part of our case studies benefited from the use of multiple strategies. For example, Lynn's unit around producing and selling large NYS-shaped cookie cutters (Lynn's innovation #1) came from the combination of the following practices: (a) reading in the literature about a geography lesson for elementary students (*getting inspiration from the literature*) that she thought would be worthwhile to do in her class, which in turn made her search for a large cookie cutter in the shape of New York State; (b) realizing that there was no cookie cutter she could buy in the size she needed, and beginning to think that she could produce and sell such

cookie cutter with her class as a way to teach her students about business, math, and other valuable content (*using a specific problem in her practice as stimulus for a new initiative*); and (c) keeping her eyes open for grant requests for proposal (RFPs) that could provide the funding she needed to put this idea into practice, which gave her the final idea for the instructional unit (*reviewing grant RFPs*). As this example illustrates, coming up with the idea for an innovation is also often an iterative process that takes place over time, and includes refining one's original rough idea into a concrete and "doable" project – a point we will come back later in this section.

Evaluating whether an innovation is worth pursuing

Evaluating whether an idea for innovation is worth pursuing has been identified as critical in the literature on business entrepreneurship. As most educators have more ideas for innovation than they have the time and resources to implement, it becomes even more important to decide which of the opportunities one has identified should be pursued. Yet, when examining existing textbooks on entrepreneurship about this topic, we realized that the approaches and tools they provided were very "business-centric" and would not be very applicable in education. Therefore, we believe it is particularly important to look at how our subjects approached the evaluation of their educational ideas, so to as identify key questions they asked themselves as they examined and tried to refine their initial ideas.

In Chapter 11, when discussing our subjects' approach to opportunities, we already identify the following areas as being considered by at least some of our subjects when evaluating opportunities for innovation: the ***value*** the innovation could add; the ***marketability/demand*** for the proposed innovation; one's ***capacity*** to actually carry the initiative out; ***costs and revenues*** the innovation would involve; possible ***risks*** and way to manage them; and what would be the ***right time*** to embark in it. In Table 13.3 we have listed more specific strategies we observed our subjects using to purse their evaluation within each of these components in the context of specific innovation, while taking into account the considerations reported in Chapter 11 about their overall approach to *risk* and *resources*, respectively.

First, though, we want to comment on a few "general" practices we also noticed our subjects use at this stage of the process, which involved *how* they approached gathering the information they needed in order to make their evaluation, and were not previously discussed in Chapter 11:

- *Learning more about the "problem" or solution – from the relevant literature and/or practice/ research community* AND/OR *utilizing one's networks*: All our subjects recognized the importance of continuing to gather information from a variety of sources so as to refine their understanding of the problem they were trying to solve, as an integral part of their evaluation process. This, in turn, often suggested modifications of their original idea – and sometime even a quite different solution, as when Gidget's explorations around starting thrifts shop led her to consider affiliating her organization with Goodwill (Gidget's innovation #2).
- *Doing some preliminary field-testing to further develop and better evaluate the idea:* In addition to gathering existing information, some of our subjects also tried to generate some new valuable data by trying out their idea in a small way, before committing to a larger initiative. An illustrative example is when Pat's school of nursing started offering some professional development on forensic nursing as a way to "test" the interest in this topic, before deciding to create a business line in this area and eventually spinning off the National Forensic Nursing Institute as a separate company (Pat's innovation #4).
- *Refining initial ideas by discussing them with collaborators and mentors*: Perhaps the most important take-away from the opportunity evaluation processes we observed is that our subjects did not embark in this evaluation with the goal of reaching a yes/no answer to the question of whether their *original* idea was worth pursuing. Rather, they used the process, and all the information and insights they gained through it, to *refine* their original idea – by making modifications that would make the innovation more valuable, marketable, affordable, feasible, and overall more likely to succeed. This element most often involved generative discussions with other trusted people – both within and outside their organization.

Table 13.2. *Practices to evaluate whether the idea is worth pursuing*

General:
F1. Learning more about the "problem" or solution from the relevant literature and/or practice/ research community
F2. Refining initial ideas by discussing them with collaborators and mentors
F3. Learning more about the "problem" or solution by utilizing your networks
F4. Doing some preliminary field-testing to further develop and better evaluate the idea
Evaluation of the potential value-added of the proposed initiative:
G1. Evaluating the extent to which the initiative will move the vision forward
G2. Evaluating the benefits the initiative could provide to the clients
G3. Evaluating the benefits the initiative could provide to the organization
G4. Evaluating the benefits the initiative could provide to the field
G5. Evaluating the personal benefits the initiative could provide
Evaluation of the marketability/ [market demand] of the proposed initiative:
H1. Identify potential clients/users for the proposed initiative and forecasting their potential interest
H2. Proactively seek clients' input and feedback that can help evaluate the need/ demand for the initiative
H3. Benchmarking (to see if this is a gap to be filled and what the competition is already doing)
H4. Discussing an idea with potential funders to determine their interest
Evaluation of the costs and revenues of the proposed initiative:
I1. Identifying the resources needed to carry out the initiative, their costs and how those costs could be minimized
I2. Forecasting revenues as well as expenses to test fiscal feasibility
I3. Evaluating costs other than financial
Evaluation of one's capacity to pursue the proposed initiative:
J1. Figuring out if there are creative ways to secure needed resources that are not available "in house"
J2. Identifying the right project leader to lead the implementation of the initiative and how that person could be secured
J3. Examining whether your organization has a competitive advantage in pursuing the initiative
Evaluating the risks associated with the initiative:
K1. Evaluating both 'missing the boat' and 'sinking the boat' risks
K2. Evaluating risk in light of one's unique knowledge of the situation and past experiences
K3. Evaluating how the risks thus identified can be managed/ minimized
K4. Field testing the idea in a small scale to decide if it is worth investing more in
Evaluation of the timeliness of the proposed innovation:

L1. Evaluating if the organization is ready for the proposed innovation
L2. Evaluating if the market is ready for the proposed innovation
L3. Evaluating if the needed resources can be secured at this point in time
L4. Ensuring that the right project leader is available as a condition to be met before the initiative can be pursued
L5. Evaluate if there is enough time to respond to the window of opportunity

Based on these findings, we have created an "Opportunity Evaluation Tool" (See Appendix C) targeted specifically for the evaluation of educational innovations. This tool is intended to guide a systematic and iterative analysis of a specific opportunity for educational innovation, with the goal not only of deciding whether that opportunity is worth pursuing, but also of identifying what additional information may be valuable to collect towards making that decision and (perhaps even more importantly) what modifications in the original idea may increase is chances of success.

Making the decision about whether or not to pursue the idea

As already mentioned in Chapter 11, it is important to note that, while undertaking their evaluation and coming to a conclusion about whether or not to pursue a specific innovation, our subjects were greatly influenced not only by their *vision*, but also by their overall approach to dealing with *risk* and *resources*. Given their evaluation of "missing the boat" versus "sinking the boat" risks, as well as their confidence in their ability to manage risk, our case study subjects were more likely to decide to undertake initiatives that other educators would have considered too risky. They also did not let lack of resources be a decisive factor in deciding whether they had the capacity to undertake the proposed innovation, but rather had the expectation and confidence that they could find those resources by using strategies they had used successfully in the past – as discussed in the *Resources* section of Chapter 11, and to be further revisited in this chapter when discussing practices related to *gathering the resources needed to launch the innovation*. Their *vision*, however, ultimately played the most critical role in reaching a decision. So, in the end, their decision may have been very different from what other educators would have made based on the same information and outcomes of the evaluation process.

It is also worth noting that several of our subjects reported that they ultimately "trusted their guts" when it came to make a decision of whether to pursue the innovation they were considering. Yet it is also important to realize that their guts/instincts were "very well trained", as they were grounded in their deep understanding of the clients' needs, the capacity of the organization, and the environment. It is also important to take into consideration that, by the time they came to a decision, in most instances what our subjects ended up undertaking was not exactly their original idea, but rather an innovation that had been refined as a result of what learned during the evaluation process – and as such had much greater chances of success.

Finally, we want to comment on the fact that in many occasions our subjects recognized the importance of making the decision of whether to pursue a specific innovation quickly – whether because there was a limited window of opportunity they wanted to take advantage of, or because they felt compelled to address an unmet need without delay. This tendency may also be connected with the common *decisiveness* trait identified in Chapter 12.

Table 13.3. *Practices to make a final decision about whether and how to pursue the innovation*

Making the final decision:
M1. Using one's vision as the "filter" to ultimately decide whether the innovation is worth pursuing
M2. Not letting current lack of resources prevent the pursuing of a worthwhile initiative
M3. Willingness to take on even significant risk if one believes that the idea has great value
M4. Considering the initiative worthwhile even if it has a "short-term" application, provided it can provide sufficient value in that timeframe
M5. Making a decision about whether to pursue the innovation quickly so as not to lose the window of opportunity

To conclude this section, we want to recognize an important limitation in our study, which may have affected the findings reported in Tables 13.1-13.3. Because the entrepreneurial educators we studied reported mostly on innovations they did end up pursuing successfully, we do not know as much about "failed" innovations, and even less about ideas that did not even get to the stage of being pursued. Despite this caveat, it looks like our subjects were quite good at hitting at ideas for *worthwhile* innovations that added value to their organization and/or the people they served. This may have been the combined effect of (a) the ways they came up with ideas (which were all grounded in their deep understanding and commitment to the needs of their clients), and (b) their ability to effectively "weed out" less valuable ideas through the process they engaged in to evaluate the ideas they had generated.

13.2. Planning and gathering the necessary resources

In this section we first report key insights we gained about how our subjects went about *planning* their initiatives, with special attention to their decision of whether and why they decided to create formal plans. Specific practices we observed them using in specific innovations to this regard will be captured in Table 13.4.

We will then discuss how our subjects went about gathering the necessary resources to launch the innovation, building on the practices previously identified in Chapter 11 about "dealing with resources" and looking at how they specifically played out at this stage of the entrepreneurial process. Once again we have created a table (Table 13.5) to identify concrete practices used to secure the funding, personnel, facilities, approvals, and any other resources needed to launch the initiative.

It is important to keep in mind, though, that the *planning* and *gathering resources* component of the innovations we studies were always very interconnected. They most often took place concurrently and influenced each other – as not only the final plan ultimately determined what resources needed to be gathered, but the plan itself often went through a series of modifications as the entrepreneurial educator realized what resources were available. It is also not always easy (or productive) to clearly separate this stage from the evaluation of the idea discussed in the previous section, as it is natural for some preliminary planning and decisions to take place as the initial idea gets refined as a result of the evaluation process, and explorations around the organization's capacity to carry out the innovation may lead to identify and secure some initial resources (especially in term of key personnel that will be involved in the proposed innovation).

Planning for the launch of an innovation

Business courses and textbooks devote a lot of attention to developing a well-thought-out business plan. In contrast, while all the featured innovations reported in Chapters 3-10 were indeed carefully planned out, we were surprised to notice that few of our subjects engaged in writing *formal* plans. In fact, the only times when we encountered formal plans was when such plans were required to get funding (for example, when applying for grants or bidding for a contract) or approval (for example, when registering a new degree program with the state).

The nature of the formal plans our subjects wrote also depended on the specific demands of the funding agency or the entity that needed to give permission, which in turn varied considerably across types of innovations. For example, business plans were only written when needed for new business lines by Gidget and Pat. Grant proposal were more common, as several subjects looked at government or foundation grants for funding their projects. In a few occasion, plans for specific innovations were also included within larger strategic plans involved the entire organization (like in the case of Pat and Rod). "Smaller" innovations rarely required formal plans.

It is important to note, though, that the absence of written formal plans should not be taken as evidence that our subjects did not value *planning*. Rather, in most cases they reported choosing not to write formal plans because it was difficult to justify the time commitment required by this task given the other demands on their time, yet they all developed careful informal plans for their own sake – as documented in their story.

Table 13.4 below lists several planning practices we were able to observe in at least one of the featured innovations reported in Chapters 3-10. In addition to some more *general planning practices*, we also identified more specific practices related to *minimizing risk* as well as *reducing costs*, as we observed that these elements figured out as critical in most plans to make the desired innovation possible despite the challenges it presented. These two sets of practices were informed by more general practices already identified and discussed in Chapter 11, when we reported findings about the case-study subjects' practices related to *managing risk* and *bootstrapping* in particular – so we refer to those sections for more detail.

Table 13.4. *Practices to develop plans*

Planning practices
A1. Making informal yet detailed plans
A2. Preparing a formal written plan as needed to meet the requirements set by an external audience (i.e., to receive needed approval, or get funding)
A3. Assigning the task of writing a formal plan for a specific audience to others
A4. Including key stakeholders and/or potential donors/ investors in the planning, so as to develop ownership and buy-in
A5. Seek advice from experts for specific aspects of the plan
A6. Creating back-up plans
A7. Devising ways to minimize risk
A8. Devising ways to reduce costs
A9. Find creative ways to address obstacles that come up in the planning stage
A10. Doing some pilot testing/ incubation to create a stronger plan
A11. Deferring some of the planning to the implementation stage
A12. Developing concrete images of the outcomes of the initiative (to communicate to potential funders/ permission grantors)
A13. Determining governance and profit-sharing structure
A14. Continuing to learn about the problem and solution
Practices to minimize risk
B1. Doing some pilot testing first to minimize risk
B2. Planning ways to monitor the initiative so as to make the needed adjustments
B3. Forecasting potential problems and developing plans to deal with them
B4. Working "under the radar screen" so as to avoid attracting attention to the initiative
B5. Looking for diversification of products/ services and/or clients to reduce risk
Practices to reduce costs
C1. Looking for cost-saving opportunities
C2. Creatively allocating budgeted funds
C3. Looking for ways to maximize available resources
C4. Looking for ways to do things by yourself (rather than paying for it)

Since planning practices were not among those discussed in Chapter 11, we would like to add some comments here about a few of the practices listed in Table 13.4. First of all, while some of the practices listed in Table 13.4 may be quite specific to the context and nature of the innovation (such as A10-*Doing some pilot testing* and A13-*Determining governance and profit-sharing structure*), the majority of the practices we identified could be applied in most situations.

It is also worth noting how the planning stage can present additional opportunities to refine the innovation idea

– especially as the entrepreneurial educator works at figuring out ways to minimize risk (A7) and reduce costs (A8), although addressing new obstacles (A9) are also likely to call for some adjustments in one's original idea. Conducting some pilots (A10 + B1) can also be very valuable at this stage – as well as during the evaluation process – to help identify and manage risk, and may also suggest further modifications to increase the proposed innovation's chances of success. Continuing to learn about the problem and possible solutions (A14) and seeking advice (A5) are important at this stage as well, and it may lead to additional changes.

All considered, it is also worth noting that, given their wealth of experience, our subject may also have been able to manage with more informal written plans, or even "planning in their head". In contrast, novice education change agents may benefit from engaging in a more formal planning process.

Gathering the resources needed to successfully launch an innovation

All of our subjects showed great creativity and resourcefulness in gathering the resources they needed to launch innovations – especially when those resources were not "currently in hand", as it was often the case. Often challenges related to securing resources called for modifications in the original idea and plans so as to make the innovation more feasible – as well illustrated in Lynn Gatto's Cookie Cutter unit Lynn's innovation #1), where she had to significantly reconceive her original unit plan when she discovered some limitations in how she could use the funds awarded to her by the grant.

The practices identified in Chapter 11 about *funding specific innovations* and *securing the needed personnel* seemed to greatly inform what our case study subjects chose to employ at this stage, although this choice was also influenced by the *type* of innovation they were undertaking, their context (and the funding sources available to them), as well as what resources their organization could offer. In Table 13.5 we have listed all the specific practices we observed our subjects use to gather resources in at least one of the featured innovations at this stage, using essentially the same categories identified in Chapter 11.

Table 13.5. *Practices to gather the resources needed to launch the initiative*

General strategies to secure the needed resources:
D1. Seeking in-kind contributions whenever possible (i.e., donated equipment, free access to equipment, free help/ advice, etc.)
D2. Seeking partnerships to secure resources not available in the organization
D3. Capitalizing on social networking to secure partnerships, support, access, fund-raising, etc.
D4. Planning to generate revenues to make the initiative eventually self-sustaining
Practices to secure the funding needed to launch the initiative:
E1. Identifying internal operating funds that could be used to support the initiative
E2. Using "seed funds"
E3. Applying for special funds available for the organization or that type of initiative
E4. Seeking grants/ awards
E5. Seeking gifts
E6. Organizing fund-raising events
E7. Looking for investors thru a business plan process
E8. Taking up debt
E9. Using personal funds
Practices to secure the personnel needed to work on the initiative:
F1. Hand-pick staff to work on the initiative
F2. Using existing staff whenever possible
F3. Using free-lancers or short-term contracts rather than hiring new staff for an initiative
F4.Creating partnerships to secure expertise and human resources one does not have
F5. Identifying and securing the project leader
F6. Having the project leader pick the other members of the team
F7. Being creative and flexible in the way key players are secured and compensated
F8.Securing the services of volunteers
Securing access to needed equipment and facilities:
G1. Looking for creative ways to secure the needed equipment and facilities at minimal cost
G2. Securing free access to specialized equipment and facilities one does not own
G3. Renovating or building new facilities as needed
Securing needed approvals and buy-in:
H1. Working "quietly" and asking for forgiveness rather than permission whenever possible

H2. Engaging influential members of various constituencies at various stages of the development of the project so as to gain their buy on

H3. Strategically choosing what and what to communicate to key stakeholders at key stages of the planning process to gain their buy-in

H4. Putting one's position on the line if needed to get the necessary approvals

H5. Educating key stake-holders about the proposed initiative and its potential value

H6. Using one's credibility and social capital to gain the needed approvals

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The sheer number of specific practices we were able to identify and list in Table 13.5 is by itself an indication that gathering resources may require different strategies in different situations.

First of all, depending on the type and scope of the innovation, the amount of resources needed to launch the initiative can be very different – calling in turn for different types of strategies. For example, at one extreme we have projects involving building new facilities (like Pat's construction of a new wing for her school, and Ralph's construction of the pre-school building) that require major fund-raising and/or taking up debt – even in the case of K-12 schools and colleges. In contrast, there were several featured innovations across our case studies – mostly those including instructional innovations and changes of norms/culture – that could be accomplished with relatively little cash expenses, although they would always require time from selected people within the organization.

The context in which each entrepreneurial educator operated gave them access to different kinds of funding. For example, CEOs and high-level leaders were able to "move around" operating funds and personnel assignments, while subjects holding different positions in the organization (like Ralph and Lynn) did not have much access to internal resources. Also, while business entrepreneurs can use investors to gather start-up funds, they do not have access to other funding sources that are instead available only to not-for-profit organizations – and vice-versa. For example, seeking grants was especially important for Lynn, who as a teacher could not easily access institutional funds; it is also worth noting, however, that as an individual Lynn could only apply for some small grants specifically targeted for teachers (rather than organizations) – where she was very successful. High-needs K-12 schools, universities and many non-profit organizations have greater access to large grants from government and foundations, although even for-profit businesses may compete for some of those grants (as many government funding agencies have funds set aside for Small Business Innovation and Research grants [SBIR]). A variation of this practice was also observed in the context of public schools, where there are special funds set aside at the district, local BOCES or even state level that individual schools can apply to finance special projects (such as for example COSER funds in New York State, which Mary used extensively). Interestingly, we have observed that many school leaders do not always take full advantage of these opportunities – as we saw instead Mary and Ralph do.

It is also worth noting, though, creative strategies used by the subjects with less "power" within their organization – such as seeking in-kind contributions (D1), partnering (D2) and leveraging volunteers (F8) – that can be used by almost anyone else.

One type of resources that turned out to be critical to many of the featured innovations was securing the needed permissions/ approvals – both from people in position of power, and other stakeholders. This is something that may be less important in a business context, yet it is often critical in educational settings – so it is important for entrepreneurial educators to pay special attention to it. Several of the practices we observed had to do with good communication with the various key stakeholders about one's vision for the innovation (H2, H3 and H5) – building on the strategies identified in Chapter 11 when discussing our case-study subjects' practices about communicating their vision more generally. Using one's own social capital was also important (H6) as well as being willing to take a strong position even if it came at a personal risk (H4). The most surprising practice we observed, though, was choosing to work quietly (H1) so as to stay "under the radar screen," at least for enough time to be able to prove the value and feasibility of the proposed innovation; interestingly, this is one of the traits of social entrepreneurs identified by Bornstein, and all but two of our subjects demonstrated it (as reported in Chapter 12).

We also want to highlight here the importance of securing the right "project leader" at this critical stage of the

process. In the *human resources* section of Chapter 11 we already discussed the key role played *in general* by the "project leader" or "champion" in any innovation. Interestingly, our subjects varied with respect to whether they felt that the role of project leader was so critical that they would not launch an initiative until the right project leader was secured (as explicitly mentioned by Pat and Gidget), or move on with an initiative first and then identify the project leader along the way (as it was more often the case for Mary). Pat, in particular, was very adamant about not proceeding with an innovation unless she had secured the right project leader – as she had learned this lesson the hard way from previous experiences. Donna also warned about the downside of bringing in a new project leader only at the implementation stage – as she realized early on that her clients needed to develop a relationship with the project leader during the planning stage, in order to feel comfortable trusting them with carrying out the project.

13.3. Implementing and monitoring the innovation

This stage of the entrepreneurial process focuses on what happens once the plans have been set and approved, and the key resources gathered, so the innovation can be officially launched. Launching an initiative is different from what it takes to "grow its success" and sustain it over the long haul (which will discuss next as the last stage of the entrepreneurial process) and indeed presents some unique challenges. Being able to manage those challenges well may make the difference between success and failure for any innovation – regardless of how good the idea was and how well the plans had been laid out.

This is why monitoring how the innovation is doing is particularly important at this stage and is closely connected with the implementation of the innovation itself. It is through monitoring the implementation – especially at its launch – that an entrepreneurial educator can identify whether the desired results are being achieved, and make the necessary adjustments if this is not happening. Monitoring is also important throughout the implementation, though, and will also inform key decisions about next steps – in particular, whether the innovation should be continued.

Even though in practice the implementation and monitoring of the initiative need to happen simultaneously, we have found it helpful to examine these two components separately – as discussed in the next two sub-sections and their relative tables.

Implementing the innovation

Before introducing the list of concrete practices related to implementing the innovation that we identified as a result of our case-studies, it is important to note that not all our subjects participated *directly* in the implementation of all the innovations they promoted. While everyone was fully involved in the first two phases (coming up with and refining the idea through a rigorous evaluation, and then developing plans and gathering the needed resources) as well as in making decisions about next steps, the higher up their position in the organization, the more likely it was that they would pass the responsibility of launching and overseeing an innovation to the person they had identified as the project leader. This was probably due to the significant time and dedicated effort required to launch an initiative well – time that many of them did not have given their other responsibilities.

Therefore, the practices listed in Table 13.6 reflect strategies we observed used in the featured innovation by either our subjects themselves, or the other people in the organization they had put in charge for this stage.

Table 13.6. *Practices to implement the initiative*

Implementation practices
A1. Continuing to refine the plan through implementation decisions
A2. Making changes in the plan as called for by monitoring results
A3. Paying attention to details to ensure a successful implementation
A4. Doing what it takes to get things done
A5. Being creative and persistent in solving problems and challenges
A6. Bootstrapping and running an efficient operation to keep costs down
A7. Delegating the day-to-day implementation to a trusted project leader
A8. "Marketing" the initiative to get the most out of it
A9. Reporting back frequently and strategically to key constituencies so as to ensure their continuing support
A10. Engaging key constituencies in the implementation of the initiative to gain ownership and buy-in
A11. Starting small and gradually expanding as revenues come in
A12. Overseeing the initiative directly

Looking at the practices listed in Table 13.6, the first thing that stands out is the importance of *attention to details* at this stage of the entrepreneurial process. While attention to detail (one of the entrepreneurial traits identified in the literature and discussed earlier in Chapter 12) is always important, it is especially so when an initiative is first launched, as it may truly make it or break it. Attention to detail did not only show up explicitly (see A3), but it is also embedded in almost all the other practices listed in Table 13.6. While some of our subjects were very skilled at engaging in the details of the implementation (ex: Lynn), others appreciate the importance of attention to details but had delegated this function to trusted colleagues (ex: Pat and Ralph).

This is also the stage when problem solving (A5) played a key role and required creativity as well as "guts" on the part of the person in charge of the implementation. Given the higher risk usually involved in the innovations undertaken by our subjects, and the fact that they were almost always under-resourced, challenges had to be expected and dealt with. This practice is also closely connected with *doing what it takes to get things done* (A4) – something shown by all our subjects, as well as the successful project leaders they appointed.

Attention to *bootstrapping* (A6) also seemed to characterize most of the innovations we featured in Chapters 3-10 – again, as it was a necessity given the limited resources our subjects (and most educators) had to deal with. Several of the practices identified in Table 11.4 (see Chapter 11) were utilized at this stage, depending on the nature of the innovation. Having limited resources was also part of the reason why, whenever possible and appropriate, several of our subjects started small and then gradually increased the scope of their innovations (A11) – as seen especially in the business lines build by Pat and Gidget, but also Ron's approach to the library renovations. It is also important to keep in mind, though, that this approach may not work for some types of innovations – most notably, but not only, projects involving the building of new facilities.

It is also worth noting how refining the innovation is something that often continued at this stage as well – and was closely connected with monitoring.

Monitoring the implementation

An important part of implementing an innovation is to continuously evaluate whether it is successful enough, so as to determine whether to continue it as is, modify it, stop it, or grow it. This monitoring can – and should – occur in both formal and informal ways.

First of all, as already mentioned in Chapter 11, we noticed that one of the key reasons our subjects seemed willing to launch more "risky" initiatives was their expectation that they would closely monitor their implementation, making changes as needed. This flexibility, along with the expectation for an iterative design and implementation, has a lot in common with an "engineering design process" – yet it is not an approach that is very common in the field of education.

Some, although not all, of our subjects also found it important to set up from the beginning some systematic ways to monitor the innovation (i.e., to measure the extent to which it was performing the way one expected and delivered the outcomes it was designed to deliver), and collected data at key point of the process to evaluate whether to continue the innovation. For example, Donna and Pat reported setting out in advance some quantifiable "measures of success" and targets, systematically collecting data to check whether the set targets were met over time, and being ready to stop the initiative if those targets were not met so as to ensure that they would not lose too much money. Lynn, who personally implemented all her innovations, did not need such quantified targets, but rather was constantly observing her students' reactions to the innovative learning experiences she had planned and was ready to change course quickly if she did not get the responses she had expected. At the same time, this was never a mechanical decision, as the subject still used his/her judgment and vision to interpret the results and decide whether the innovation needed more time to prove its value, or whether there may have been unexpected factors at work that need to be addressed before making a final decision. The story of Pat's Master in Nursing Leadership (Pat's innovation #2) is especially interesting, as it did not initial get the expected results, yet Pat and her team decided to give it more time – and their decision proved to be the right one. The same happened with Gidget's Goodwill stores initiative (Gidget's initiative #2).

Despite these two notable counterexamples, it seems indeed critical to be able to stop an initiative if it does not meet a set minimum level of performance, as doing otherwise may mean continuing to lose time and resources that could be better spent in other ventures (especially important when resources are scarse). Indeed, knowing when to stop an innovation that is not working, and acting on this realization, is as important as expanding successful ones – and likely much more challenging, especially in the field of education! Yet, it was not easy to get our subjects to talk about this kind of situation – although we do have a few examples in our case studies, most notably Pat's decision to terminate the traditional undergraduate nursing program (Pat's innovation #1) and Mary's decision not to further pursue her initial push for differentiated instruction (Mary's innovation #2).

Table 13.7. *Practices to monitor the initiative*

Monitoring practices
B1. Monitor informally by paying close attention to how the implementation unfolds
B2. Identifying upfront some concrete metrics and targets, and monitoring progress overtime with respect to these measures
B3. Having an external board oversee the initiative
B4. Monitoring whether the project leader is the right one and substitute him/her if needed
B5. Using existing reporting practices to monitor the initiative
Making decisions about whether or not to continue an initiative
C1. Being prepared to stop the initiative if it does not work out (i.e., targets are not met after a certain period of time)
C2. Giving it some time before evaluating the success of the initiative
C3. Ultimately using personal judgment to decide whether or not to continue with the initiative when encountering initial difficulties

13.4. Ensuring sustainability and bigger impact as appropriate

A common measure of success for an educational innovation is the extent of its impact. As discussed in Chapter 12, there are some *one-time* initiatives that have high-impact for the organization and/or the people they serve – such as Lynn's field trip to Kentucky or the programs Pat launched to address very specific and timely problems. While recognizing these notable exceptions, most innovations are intended to live on; in other words, an educational innovation that fizzles out quickly is not usually considered successful. Therefore, it is important to examine what our subjects did to ensure that their innovations were sustained over time – whenever this seemed appropriate.

The drive to achieve the greatest impact which characterizes social entrepreneurs and entrepreneurial educators alike – as discussed in Chapters 11 and 12 – also calls for expanding and/or replicating successful innovations. So in this section we will also look at how our subjects evaluated whether and how the successful innovations they launched could be expanded and/or replicated, and what strategies they used to do so.

The considerations reported in this section assume that (a) the type of innovation undertaken is of a kind that can be continued and/or expanded, and (b) its launch was successful and deemed worthy of continuing and/or expanding.

Ensuring the innovation's long-term sustainability

Even the most valuable innovations can die once their start-up funds are exhausted; so a critical goal for several of our subjects was to ensure their innovations' *fiscal stability* over time. Pat and Gidget, and to some extent also Rod, often achieved this goal by *ensuring a revenue stream* connected with the innovation – whether it was tuition associated to a new instructional program, or other revenues. This by itself may not be enough, though, as to continue the revenue stream the innovation also needs to continue to be competitive over time – which in turn requires to stay *at the cutting edge through continuous innovation* (something Donna, in particular, was especially aware of and vocal about).

Several of our subjects also identified changes in leadership as another common threat to the long-term sustainability of the innovations they launched. It is worth noting that such changes in leadership need to be expected and planned for, as not only people will eventually leave their organization (as they retire or take another job), but also because as entrepreneurial educators conceive of new possible innovations, they will not have the time to continue to run all their old ones. Appointing a new project leader or "champion" that can lead the innovation is probably one of the most critical steps to sustain that innovation – and one that will likely need to be repeated over time! Interestingly, while an education leader can do so for specific initiatives while still in charge, most education institutions are not set up for (and do not seem to value) the idea of planning an exit strategy for the leader of the organization – and this can be problematic to the continuation of innovations that leader may had been successful at establishing.

Another strategy we observed some of our subjects use to ensure long-term sustainability included "*institutionalizing*" *the innovation* – that is, making it an integral part of the "system" and everyday operations of the organization, so that eliminating it would cause significant disruption. This was the case, for example, for innovations that involved changes in structure that were sustained for a certain period of time (as it happens for successful "systemic initiatives"). Pat also purposefully tried to *create internal incentives* to keep the innovation going; for example, she believed that the revenues added to the school of nursing by the new business lines she established would make it very difficult to close them, even if a new leader did not otherwise appreciate their value – and she was proved right!

It is also interesting to note that, at least in one instance (the National Institute for Forensic Nursing, Pat's innovation #4), long-term sustainability was secured by *spinning off an independent company*, rather than continuing that enterprise within the original organization.

All these different ways to achieve sustainability are summarized in Table 13.8.

Table 13.8. *Practices to ensure long-term sustainability (when appropriate)*

Ensuring sustainability
A1. Keep a close look on maintaining fiscal feasibility
A2. Ensuring a revenue stream that will sustain the initiative after the initial funding is over
A3. Keep competitive and at the cutting edge through continuous innovation
A4. Securing a new project leader when the original one leaves
A5. Institutionalizing the initiative
A6. Spinning off an independent company, maintaining involvement and equity in it
A7. Creating internal incentives to keep the initiative going

Increasing the innovation's impact

Assuming that the decision has been made that a specific innovation was successful and worth continuing, the next question is whether – and if so, how – it could be expanded. While this question may not be relevant for some innovations – for example, changes in practices or norms, as well as one-time high-impact initiatives – in most cases the desire to achieve the biggest impact and benefits to the organization and/or the people it serves leads to seeking some form of "growth" for the successful innovation. And while many of the entrepreneurial practiced about *growth* identified in Chapter 11 will inform these decisions, it is also important to note that the concrete practices employed to "grow" a specific innovation will likely present some important differences.

Looking across our case studies, we noticed that the growth or expansion of a specific innovation could take a few different forms. It might involve increasing the *scope* and reach of the original initiative – for example, adding more cohorts to an instructional program (as Pat did with her successful programs once launched) or undertaking the renovations of more rooms within the library (as in the case of Ron). Or it might involve providing additional *products or services* in a similar way – for example, as Gidget did when looked for other products that blind people could help manufacture, after her successful experience with producing Post-its. Increasing the impact of an innovation may also be realized by *empowering others to replicate it* – whether it is through publicizing it through publications or workshops, or even by creating a franchise or spin off.

The various concrete practices we observed our subjects use across various innovations are listed in Table 13.9.

Table 13.9. *Practices to increase the initiatives' impact (when appropriate)*

"Growing" the initiative and/or its impact
B1. Evaluating if and how to expand
B2. Increasing the scope of the initiative (i.e., # of clients reached, etc.)
B3. Increasing the range of products/services provided by the initiative
B4. Empowering other people/organizations to implement the same innovation (through publications, conferences, workshops, etc)
B5. Empowering other people/organizations to implement the same innovation through franchising/ spin offs
B6. Empowering people within the organization to take over one's roles by articulating "systems"

13.5. In-depth look at the practices used in a specific innovation

To show how the practices we identified in the previous tables may play out in practice, in this section we selected one of the innovations featured in our case-studies and "annotated it" by recording on the right side the practices that the subject used at each stage of the entrepreneurial process. Each of these practices are identified in the same way as they were listed in the tables related to each stage of the entrepreneurial process.

For this illustration we chose Pat's development of the Master in Nursing Leadership (Pat's innovation #2) – as first of all it is one of the featured innovations where the use of several practices is quite evident in the narrative, and furthermore developing new programs is one of the most common types of innovations in education. The same analysis was done for all of the other featured innovations across the eight case-study, and provided the basis to identify the list of practices collected in the tables included earlier in this chapter. All the annotated stories can be accessed in the *Stories* section of the companion website.

Example of annotated story: Developing a new program in Nursing Leadership (Pat's innovation #2)

Coming up with the idea and evaluating/refining it

The idea for a new master's program in Nursing Leadership came from realizing that there was going to be a need in the field – in the future, rather than immediately – for nurses that would have certain leadership skills, rather than just specialized medical skills expected for nurse practitioners.

A7 *Looking at where the field is going to project future needs*

This realization came, at least in part, from Pat and her colleagues' own practice in creating new business lines.

> "[the MS in nursing leadership] was created because we knew doing entrepreneurship that leadership was extremely important and we knew that nurses needed to think differently. …we were creating nursing programs in the nursing entrepreneurship center that needed the skills of those nurses and nurses weren't educated that way, so we knew there was going to be a business need for them." (*Pat*)

B2 *Using a specific problem/challenge experienced in your own practice as stimulus for a new initiative*

To identify what those skills would be, they tried to project what kind of nurses and skills would be needed.

> "We looked at the future … what's going to be the new nursing role. We looked at *health promotion* and how important that's going to be. At the time, 9/11 had occurred and one of our faculty wrote a book about *disaster management.* So we knew that those two focuses were going to be very important … that was the direction that was going to be very important for the future." (*Pat*)

A7 *Looking at where the field is going to project future needs*

So they decided to develop a new master program in nursing which did not lead to certification as a nurse practitioner, but rather provided advanced nursing education for nurses interested in taking on leadership roles within the areas of (a) health promotion and (b) disaster management.

The new program was very much in line with Pat's overall vision of engaging nurses to create and promote new models of health care – as this was exactly what this program was going to prepare current nurses for. As such, Pat believed the new program would be an important addition to the School of Nursing's program offerings, as its novelty would increasing the school's national visibility. The new roles for nurses the program created would also benefit the field of nursing more generally.

G1 *Evaluating the extent to which the initiative will move the vision forward*

G2 *Evaluating the benefits the initiative could provide to the clients*

G3 *Evaluating the benefits the initiative could provide to the organization*

G4 *Evaluating the benefits the initiative could provide to the field*

While a business plan per-se was never prepared, at this stage they did do some preliminary forecasting about number of students and expected revenues, as well as faculty needs and other costs to run the program, to test the feasibility of the proposed program.

> "We did a semi-business plan … included the number of students that we thought would be coming in and the revenue, and the faculty costs, and so we did look at all of that [to decide whether to move forward]." (*Pat*)

I2 *Forecasting revenues as well as expenses to test fiscal feasibility*

At the same time, what made the program most appealing to Pat also represented a risk. Since they were trying to meet a need that did not yet exist, preparing graduates for jobs that were not yet there, there was no certainty that they would attract students and that those students would find the right kinds of jobs.

> "It was probably one of our riskiest initiatives … because it was just our gut sense that this was going to succeed, and we did not have real support from anyone. Like, practice wasn't out there saying we are sending you students. … Some of the criticisms about the program [were]: what are these nurses going to do? You're educating someone to do roles that are not in practice today, because we were really thinking this is what's going to be needed in the future." (*Pat*)

H1 *Identify potential clients/users for the proposed initiative and forecasting their potential interest*

L2 *Evaluating if the market is ready for the proposed innovation*

K1 *Evaluating both 'missing the boat' and 'sinking the boat' risks*

Yet she and her colleagues reasoned that this risk is unavoidable when one "invents" new roles that do not yet exist, and they felt confident that they could overcome this risk based on the success experienced in the recent past when their School of Nursing created the new role of nurse practitioner.

> "If we look back when we created the nurse practitioner program there were no positions out there then. I remember when I graduated I had to create a position for myself and so that's kind of what we're doing today." (*Pat*)

K2 *Evaluating risk in light of one's unique knowledge of the situation and past experiences*

So they trusted their "gut instincts" and decided to go ahead with the initiative.

M1 *Using one's vision as the "filter" to ultimately decide whether the innovation is worth pursuing*

M3 *Willingness to take on even significant risk if one believes that the idea has great value*

Planning and gathering the needed resources

Since a new Master program required state approval, a formal proposal for the new MS in Nursing Leadership was prepared and submitted to the state. This included a description of key courses and their sequence.	**A2** *Preparing a formal written plan as needed to meet the requirements set by an external audience (i.e., to receive needed approval, or get funding)*
One faculty member with expertise in one of the two focus areas was assigned to write the program proposal.	**A3** *Assigning the task of writing a formal plan for a specific audience to others*
The start-up costs for this new program were essentially covered with internal operating funds – as it is usually the case in all academic institution when new instructional programs are started.	**E1** *Identifying internal operating funds that could be used to support the initiative*

At the same time, they expected that the revenues generated by the program would eventually make the program not only self-sufficient, but also making some margins that could support the school more generally.

D4 *Planning to generate revenues to make the initiative eventually self-sustaining*

To ensure that this would happen, they identified some specific targets and metrics that they committed to monitor once the program was launched.

B2 *Planning ways to monitor the initiative so as to make the needed adjustments*

Efforts were made to minimize start-up costs as well as reduce long-term financial commitments for the institution. For example, courses were initially taught by some of the current faculty (including the Dean herself) and other adjunct instructors on contracts, until they felt that the success of the program warranted hiring new personnel on a more long-term basis.

A7 *Devising ways to minimize risk*

A8 *Devising ways to reduce costs*

C1 *Looking for cost-saving opportunities*

C4 *Looking for ways to do things by yourself (rather than paying for it)*

F2 *Using existing staff whenever possible*

F3 *Using free-lancers or short-term contracts rather than hiring new staff for an initiative*

Appropriate compensation was established for both adjuncts and faculty working for extra-compensation, so as to make those tasks sufficiently attractive, while keeping the costs down.

F7 *Being creative and flexible in the way key players are secured and compensated*

Implementing and monitoring the initiative

While the program was launched as planned, a few obstacles were encountered along the way that required some adjustments.

A1 *Continuing to refine the plan through implementation decisions*

A2 *Making changes in the plan as called for by monitoring results*

First of all, the greatest challenge came from having embarked in this initiative without the right "project leader" to carry out the implementation of the initiative (what Pat referred to as the "champion," although this terms is used somewhat differently in the literature and in this e-book). The faculty member who wrote the initial proposal to the state was too busy with other projects to give her full attention to this program – and Pat knew that upfront, but at the time thought the first priority was to move fast and get the program approved by the state. However, not having the right project leader soon turned out to be a problem, which caused them to "backtrack" and slow down growing the program until such a person could be identified and secured. To take on this role, they ended up hiring a new person, who had the necessary expertise and personality to carry out the next phase of the program development. She came up with a solid theoretical framework for the program, worked with the faculty to refine and strengthen the curriculum, did marketing to attract students not only from nursing but other related areas as well. Eventually, she was instrumental to the program's success.

> "The new program director is an academic leader who was able to galvanize the leadership faculty. She knew how to mobilize systems." (*Pat*)

B4 *Monitoring whether the project leader is the right one and substitute him/her if needed*

As the new program was launched, they were not sure how many students they would be able to attract, so they were thrilled when they filled their first class with 24 students. However, the following year enrollment dropped to 19 students and they were concerned about the feasibility of the program over time. While they were ready to discontinue the program if it did not attract a sufficient number of students, Pat decided to give it a try for a couple more years, realizing that it would take a while before such a new program could take hold. She realized that they were taking a risk by doing so, but believed enough in her vision to take that risk – and now she has been proved right, as the program built a steady enrollment of students and attracts very high-quality candidates.

> "We knew we were taking a risk doing it. … So I think it had to do [with the fact] that we knew the future direction … we were willing to take a risk we wouldn't have [taken] with other programs." (*Pat*)

B2 *Identifying upfront some concrete metrics and targets, and monitoring progress overtime with respect to these measures*

C1 *Being prepared to stop the initiative if it does not work out (i.e., targets are not met after a certain period of time)*

C2 *Giving it some time before evaluating the success of the initiative*

C3 *Ultimately using personal judgment to decide whether or not to continue with the*

initiative when encountering initial difficulties

As one of the major concerns about this program was whether their graduates would find appropriate jobs, they also monitored what their graduated ended up doing. At the time of our study, all of the graduates had been successfully employed, even if in some cases they had to "invent" new jobs for themselves.

B1 *Monitor informally by paying close attention to how the implementation unfolds*

Ensuring sustainability and growth if appropriate

Despite all these initial uncertainties and challenges, the Master in Nursing Leadership proved to be a success and has become a permanent feature in the School of Nursing's offerings.

A5 *Institutionalizing the initiative*

The tuition revenues it generates are also more than sufficient to cover all the expenses and thus maintain the fiscal feasibility of offering this program.

A1 *Keep a close look on maintaining fiscal feasibility*

A2 *Ensuring a revenue stream that will sustain the initiative after the initial funding is over*

When the coordinator that was instrumental to the initial success of the program left, Pat took great care in ensuring that they hired a good successor who would continue to lead this initiative.	**A4** *Securing a new project leader when the original one leaves*
While they initially thought about the possibility of extending this program into other tracks besides the originally two (i.e., health promotion and disaster management), this is not as yet happened. Although at some point they seriously considered adding a track in forensic nursing, they decided that there was not sufficient interest/market to warrant such as extension and ended up pursuing a different path. Having the Master in Nursing Leadership was very instrumental, though, in their effort to develop a new Doctor of Nursing Practice program that was launched a few years later, as it provided some common courses as well as alumni that could be interested in the new doctoral program.	**B1** *Evaluating if and how to expand*

We hope that this "annotated story" has not only helped provide further illustration of some of the specific practices we identified in this chapter, but it will also suggest the value for readers to engage in a similar analysis on their own for other innovation stories – those made available in this collection, and/or others they may have identified and are interested in better understanding how they "worked".

13.6. Concluding thoughts about the entrepreneurial process

We believe that the findings reported in this chapter contribute further evidence in support of the claim that entrepreneurial educators and traditional entrepreneurs have similar overall approaches to the entrepreneurial process. At the same time, many of the practices identified in this chapter are specific to both the educational context and the types of innovation undertaken.

We can also observe that the general practices identified in Chapter 11 about *vision*, *opportunities*, *risk*, *resources* and *growth* overall informed how our subjects approached the process of initiating and carrying out an innovation. Yet these mindsets and practices also had different relevance and translated into somewhat different concrete practices at particular stages of the entrepreneurial process. Furthermore, what practices our subjects ended up using for a particular innovation also depended on the type of that innovation as well as other elements related to their context.

Another key take-away from this analysis is the realization that any "innovation idea" gets refined at essentially each stage of the entrepreneurial process, and that this refinement process is critical to its ultimate success. Indeed, innovation ideas do not just come "fully formed" but rather get shaped – and sometimes even radically transformed – as an integral part of the entrepreneurial process. The *evaluation* stage is when one most often begins to realize problems and limitations that may create serious impediments to realizing the original idea; these realizations, in turn, will likely suggest some modifications of the original idea to avoid or at least minimize those problems. As one proceeds *planning and gathering resources* to launch the initiative, other problems and limitations are likely to be encountered, calling for further modifications; in particular, the lack of resources originally deemed necessary, or conversely the discovery of some unexpected resources, may suggest new and better ways of doing things. As one actually engages in *implementing the plan* – even the best thought-out ones! – unexpected events and opportunities as well as new constraints are likely to emerge, requiring a revision of the original plans. Finally, as one moves to consider if and how to *grow* a successful initiative, any expansion is likely to require some changes to adapt to new contexts, audiences and/or applications. This requires not being wedded to the original idea – or way to realize that idea – and keeping an open mind throughout the process, something our subjects were masters at.

CHAPTER 14.

Conclusions: The potential of entrepreneurship for education revisited

Raffaella Borasi & Andrew F. Wall

14.1. Revisiting the value of assuming a pragmatic standpoint

This book has explored the potential of entrepreneurship to support educators committed to improving education by undertaking specific innovations. We started with the premise that such a potential exists, and in this final chapter we want to revisit and elaborate on this premise in light of the empirical findings of the case studies of entrepreneurial educators reported in the previous chapters.

First, we want to start with a reminder that change – to meet new students' needs, changing world conditions, and prior educational shortcomings – has become a central theme of educational leadership. Education is continually called upon to evolve, grow and ultimately to change to better satisfy the perceived educational needs of our time (Hursh, 2007; Powell & Snellman, 2004). Yet this need for change occurs in an educational context that is perceived as resistant to lasting systemic change, for reasons that are varied and complex, and include among other things the need to work with scarce resources as well as in opposition to prevailing forces such as local or self-governance, strong teacher unions, or even just the strength of tradition.

Throughout this e-book we have argued that entrepreneurship can provide an avenue to meet the many challenges of promoting needed change in education. At the root of entrepreneurship is the notion that an individual can make a difference by creating something new, which may involve the formation of a new organization or more often an innovation within an existing organizational structure. Entrepreneurship can be seen to be instigated by an individual (as in Schumpeter's view) or growing out of organizational context requiring action (closer to Schultz's view). The potential of applying entrepreneurial thinking to education is compelling – that is, suggesting the potential of an individual or organization to create, innovate and transform for the purpose of improving education and ultimately add value to students' lives.

At the same time, the potential of entrepreneurial thought and action in education is not without its risks and pitfalls. The application of market or market-like behavior, as is implied in the application of entrepreneurial ideas (which have been historically linked to business practice) to education has been seen by some to undermine the public good or social justice purposes of education, as it could signify the movement of education toward market-based ideals, and in so doing emphasize a view of education that serves the purposes of the global marketplace above all else (e.g., Slaughter & Rhodes, 2004). In contrast, Clark (1998) argues that entrepreneurial adaptations to changing educational context is necessary and not inherently in contradiction with core academic values associated with student opportunity, learning and social justice. In support to the latter position, the stories reported in this book suggest that the application of entrepreneurial ideas in education is not inherently market-oriented, but rather it is ultimately the *direction of change* promoted by educational entrepreneurship that matters for how education will evolve to serve society, be it more or less toward the public good or market-oriented elements of society.

Consistent with this position, we would like to characterize the approach to entrepreneurship taken in this book as beginning with a highly pragmatic premise – that is, that promoting innovations is needed to help improve education and individual lives, and therefore education change agents should become better at initiating and carrying out innovations that are both worthwhile and successful. The educators portrayed in this book seem to have shared a similar pragmatic assumption, as they recognized that the work they wanted to do called for them to take initiative, which in turn required them to be concerned with new ideas for innovations as well as the resources needed to put these ideas into practice. Indeed, the examples reported in this book are of pragmatists, not idealists.

Assuming this basic pragmatic stance, in this final chapter we summarize key findings of our study and their

implications for education change agents. More specifically, in what follows we will examine the important roles that innovations can play in education in light of our subjects' stories, the value of judiciously employing the entrepreneurial practices identified in Chapter 11, how context matters yet entrepreneurial behavior can occur in all educational institutions and positions, and how synergy can be achieved between mission and fiscal responsibilities. We then conclude the chapter with some considerations about what it may take for educators to learn about and from entrepreneurship, so as to capitalize on the potentials we have uncovered to increase educators' effectiveness in starting and carrying out value-adding innovations and, by doing so, improve education for the public good.

14.2. Innovations can make a difference in education

As documented throughout the previous chapters, each and every one of the featured innovations added value and ultimately enabled the organization to better serve its clients, thus contributing somewhat to the significant change that each of our subjects was able to achieve by the end of his/her career. At the same time, it is important to note that in each case the educational change achieved could never be attributed to any *one* particular innovation, but rather was the result of the *accumulation* of innovations overtime – as our subjects were relentless in their efforts to pursue their vision to the maximum extent possible, and continuously sought and took on opportunities for innovation to achieve that ideal.

That said, there is value in looking across the many different innovations our subjects initiated so as to identify complementary *types of innovations* that educators could consider to support their efforts towards educational change. As discussed in Chapter 12, these types include:

1. *Creating a new organization* – whether for-profit or not-for-profit – which may be considered the prototypical example of entrepreneurial activity, but is also rare.
2. *Starting long-term ventures within an organization* – which fits definition of entrepreneurship focusing on creating "enterprises" and could take a number of different forms (most notably involving starting *a new branch*, *new business lines*, *new instructional programs* or *other new "supporting" services*).
3. *Taking on one-time value-adding initiatives* – which may not fit traditional definitions of entrepreneurship, yet are innovations that can bring great value and be transformative (such as *facilities projects*, *publications*, *innovative learning experiences*, other *one-time high-impact initiatives* – and even *discontinuing obsolete initiatives*).
4. *Developing new practices, norms and culture* – which also may not fit most traditional definitions of entrepreneurship, yet are at the core of institutional change and thus may be particularly powerful as well as challenging.

It is also interesting to note that, with very few exceptions (such as Donna's and Ron's technology transformations) the innovations described in this book would be considered "sustaining" rather than "disruptive" by Christensen and his colleagues. Yet this does not take away from the value these sustaining innovations added to the organization and its clients – therefore, we would argue that it is worth to pay attention to how all these types of innovations can be carried out successfully by educators.

Regardless of the specific category the examples included in this book could be identified with, however, all the innovations we reported on were laced with leadership visions associated with maximizing learning and individual growth towards a better world. Visions of betterment included Ralph's efforts related to reducing lead poisoning or Gidget's efforts to create new job opportunities for individuals with disabilities so that they could be self-sufficient and contribute to society. Thus the innovations featured in this study could be best described as value-directed toward humanistic rather than economic ends. This also meant that the measures of success of the entrepreneurial efforts

of our case study subjects – and, indeed, most educational innovations – were often ambiguous and difficult precisely because the metric of success was centered more on human betterment than the organizational bottom line (though that might have also been an important auxiliary measure of success).

When taken together, these findings confirm our initial premise that, despite its obvious limitations, there is a value to individual agency in education and that assuming an entrepreneurial approach focused on promoting value-adding innovations will encourage such a behavior and benefit the field.

14.3. Using entrepreneurial practices can contribute to the success of innovations

Once we recognize that engaging in value-adding innovations can indeed be instrumental to promoting educational change, it becomes obvious that educators should learn to become more effective at initiating and carrying out innovations. This seems especially important as the history of education unfortunately offers many more examples of innovations that failed than innovations that succeeded and, while some degree of failure has to be expected (as concluded when discussing *risk* in Chapter 11), given their limited resources educators cannot afford to squander them in too many false starts.

As stated from the beginning, a main goal of our systematic cross-case analysis was to identify a set of *entrepreneurial practices* that our subjects used effectively when engaging in innovations, and other educators could consider using as well to increase the chances of success of their own innovations. As articulated in Chapter 11, and summarized in the tables concluding each section of that chapter, our study specifically identified a rich set of practices to deal more effectively with each of the following areas:

- *a. Vision:* (a1) using one's vision as a guide and filter when making critical decisions regarding an innovation, and (a2) communicating that vision effectively to key constituencies so as to ensure their buy-in (see Table 11.1).
- *b. Opportunities*: (b1) recognizing opportunities for innovation, (b2) evaluating which of those opportunities are worth pursuing, and (b3) acting on the opportunities deemed worthwhile (see Table 11.2).
- *c. Risk*: (c1) evaluating the risks related to engaging in a specific innovation, and (c2) managing those risks (see Table 11.3).
- *d. Resources*: (d1) Securing the funds needed to implement specific innovation, (d2) bootstrapping to make the most use of the resources available, (d3) increasing the organization's revenues (so as to have more resources to support innovation), (d4) appointing and nurturing project leaders, and (d5) securing the personnel needed to work on specific innovations (see Tables 11.4 and 11.5).
- *e. Growth*: (e1) Increasing the scope and impact of one's successful innovations (when appropriate) and (e2) dealing with the changes brought about by growth (see Table 11.6).

Many of the entrepreneurial practices identified in this study have parallels to ideas present in transformational leadership and contingency leadership theory among others (Burns, 1978; Kezar, Carducci, & Contreras-McGavin, 2006). For instance, vision-communication practices such as making other people feel their dreams can be reached through the vision, or developing credibility and trust with people to gain support, are similar in concept to dimensions of transformational leadership. Similarly, practices that suggest different approaches to evaluating the risk of an innovation, along with making decisions about when to stop or sustain a specific effort, are conceptually congruent with engaging in leadership that fits the context and is contingent in its action (Kezar, Carducci, & Contreras-McGavin, 2006).). These similarities point toward how concepts of leadership and entrepreneurship are intertwined and

interconnected; good leadership surely is a component of adopting entrepreneurial practices, whether they are related specifically to vision or resources.

At the same time, it is also important to note that some of the practices we identified – especially in the areas of opportunities, risk and growth – set our subject apart from most other educational leaders we know, even successful ones. In particular, this seems connected with their differential evaluation of "missing the boat" versus "sinking the boat" risks, which in turn affects their approach to opportunities for innovation and their willingness to pursue worthwhile innovations even when they do not have all the resources in hand at the start. Other notable differentiating elements were our subjects' willingness to embark in an innovation while being open and ready to make modifications as they went along, as well as their drive to increase the "sphere of influence" of their innovations. All these elements, in the end, seem to come back to the passion our subjects felt for their mission and the urgency they felt in achieving their vision – always ultimately with a higher purpose towards the public good.

While we offer our findings with respect to entrepreneurial practices to help educators become better at promoting innovations, it is important to clarify that they are not intended as a "prescription" for entrepreneurial practice, but rather as a set of concrete tools that educators could use as they consider, enter into, and move through a risky venture that is grounded in their educational vision. We fully recognize and appreciate that an educator's use of entrepreneurial practices must be done taking into consideration the complex organizational dynamics within which s/he is operating – a point made in Chapter 13, and which we will elaborate in the next section. In fact, the results of our study (as documented in the tables reported in Chapter 13) point to the nuanced and differentiated application of entrepreneurial practices by our subjects and suggest that a specific entrepreneurial practice may not be effective in all situations. Rather, the adoption of any of the entrepreneurial practices we identified should occur with consideration of the organizational context in which an individual is working as well as the specific type of innovation undertaken. In this manner, employing entrepreneurial practices becomes one the tools available to educators as they pursue their educational change goals. Adopting entrepreneurial practices as part of a broader educational toolbox will also help guarding against holistic fads like adoption of practices from business or other settings as the "answer" to the challenges of education.

14.4. Entrepreneurial behavior is possible in all educational institutions and positions – although context matters

The stories featured in this book are proof that entrepreneurial behavior is possible – and powerful – across all educational institutions and positions within those institutions. Indeed, we purposefully chose subjects who operated in educational contexts that included for-profit companies, non-profit organization, private universities and K-12 public schools. Furthermore, while most of our subject held the top leadership position in their unit (i.e., owner in the case of Donna, CEO in the case of Rod and Gidget, dean of a professional school for Pat, head of the libraries, or principal for Ralph), others did not (as Mary was Assistant Superintendent and Lynn was a teacher with no leadership position). In fact, with the exception of the business owner, even the unit leaders in our set reported to people higher up in their organization, and/or to a Board.

The lesson to be learned from these stories is that many different individuals from different places in organizations can advance innovation through entrepreneurial action. One need not start a new school, or even be the head of a school district, president of a university or CEO of a company, to be entrepreneurial. It is not the position of an individual that is important to foster organizational change and innovations; rather, what is most important is the adoption of an entrepreneurial approach and practices appropriate to one's organizational context. At the same time, each subject's organization and his/her position within it greatly affected *how* our subjects could be entrepreneurial, including but not

limited to the specific entrepreneurial practices they were able to use effectively – as discussed in the previous section and further elaborated below.

First of all, for-profit companies and non-profit organizations are more likely to provide the kind of norms and structures that are supportive to entrepreneurial behavior, such as a shared vision and commitment to the mission, having informal lines of communications that facilitate getting information to those who need it when they need it, personnel that is committed to "do what it takes" to implement the mission, culture and structures that encourage innovation and creativity, high tolerance for risk and mistakes, decentralized decision-making system, and flexible budgeting that looks at potential revenues as well as costs. This is especially the case when starting a new organization, or even a new branch/unit within the organization, as this allows the establishment of a new set of norms and expectation without having to fight already entrenched ones.

Unfortunately, most traditional educational institutions – such as universities and K-12 schools, and especially public ones – do not share these norms and values. And while Pat and Ron were able to leverage some characteristics of a decentralized private university (such as decentralized decision-making system and budgeting) to support their entrepreneurial actions, they still had to fight other impeding factors. At the same time, our subjects were able to leverage other characteristics of educational organizations – the fact that they operate as *loosely coupled systems* and a *professional bureaucracy* – to their advantage in support of their innovations. Although it may at first seem counter-intuitive, an organization where employees have considerable latitude in their day-to-day action as to how they follow organizational directives (*loosely coupled system*) and they have considerable autonomy of action based upon assumptions of professional competency – as illustrated for example by school teachers and college faculty members or administrators (*professional bureaucracy*) – allows room for individual agency. At the same time, to take full advantage of this potential, some of our subjects needed (and were able) to create "entrepreneurial spaces" within their organization that were less encumbered by traditional bureaucratic and culturally normative forces and, thus, provided powerful locations of innovation. Some interesting examples of those spaces are provided by Pat's Center for Nursing Entrepreneurship (a specific organizational place that existed within the University system, but was not confined by a faculty labor market reward structure and thus allowed staff more freedom to explore fee-for-service work that became the bedrock of the School of Nursing's entrepreneurial efforts) and Lynn's classroom (where she took advantage of the professional autonomy afforded teachers in a classroom, within the limits imposed by her school and district – which unfortunately became progressively more constraining overtime as the accountability movement took hold – to professionally self-define her classroom as a place of exploration and innovation).

Throughout these considerations we can see again the value of agency at play, as each entrepreneurial educator tried to create the best possible conditions for his/her innovations by working on organizational changes and/or creating entrepreneurial spaces, depending on the constraints of the institutional context as well as the opportunities that could offer.

14.5. Achieving synergy rather than conflict between mission and fiscal responsibility

The debates about entrepreneurship in education found in the literature (especially in higher education) often seem to imply that there is a conflict between pursuing the service-oriented mission of traditional educational institutions (such as public schools and universities) and embracing an entrepreneurial approach to resources. In contrast, one of the greatest lessons to be learned from the entrepreneurial educators in our study is how they were able to balance the need for fiscal resources with educational objectives.

A key component of the entrepreneurial stories reported in this book was the direct linkage of visionary efforts to fiscal reality. "No money, no mission" is the saying and such is the reality pointed to in each case. For Pat Chiverton,

without new revenue the School of Nursing would have closed, for Rod Jones the Community Place had to have resources to meaningfully serve the citizens of Rochester in need of services – and for the great majority of the stories, we can say that resource generation was central to pragmatic mission achievement. It was also clear from the discussions with our subjects that identification of resources was central to facilitating mission success. Yet, the resources generated were seldom from traditional funding streams, rather our case studies of entrepreneurial educators suggest a set of practices that encourage identification of new sources of revenue to support educational innovation. Perhaps even more importantly, our subjects proactively took responsibility for finding the resources needed to support their ideas. Take the case of Lynn Gatto: Lynn was successful as an innovative teacher because she did not simply wait (though she may have wanted to!) for her school leaders to allocate funds for her ideas, but rather took the initiative to write grants, do some fund-raising, contact individuals or corporations for in-kind contributions, and even use her own fund when needed. The findings of this study capture stories of individuals who embraced the connection between innovation and resource identification to move their innovations forward.

Indeed, as the ability to create educational opportunities for all students rests upon resources and opportunity, ensuring equitable education will require both ideas and resources generation – two elements of educational practice (one administrative, the other instructional) that need to become more interwoven. And while some tension between mission and resources may be inevitable, our subjects demonstrate that great synergy can come from assuming a more entrepreneurial approach to the gathering and use of resources to support innovations.

14.6. Education change agents can learn a lot from entrepreneurship – but what will this take?

We now come back full circle to what originally motivated our study of entrepreneurial educators: the desire to empower educators to become more effective at implementing innovations by capitalizing on entrepreneurship. Our study has shown remarkable parallels between entrepreneurs and education change agents – in terms of both personal characteristics and behaviors. It also documented the value of using specific entrepreneurial practices to be more effective at achieving one's goals in education, while paying close attention to unique elements of the context one is operating in. What, then, should educators learn about entrepreneurship, and how could this learning be achieved most effectively?

To address this question, we will draw from our personal experiences as learners and teachers of entrepreneurship. First of all, as mentioned earlier, it is important to keep in mind that we ourselves had to *come to appreciate that entrepreneurship has a lot to offer to educators* before we felt interested in *learning about specific entrepreneurial concepts and practices* that would help us become more effective at pursuing our mission. Therefore, we suggest that college courses and professional development experiences intended to introduce future educators to entrepreneurship should explicitly address both components. In other words, we need to recognize that embracing entrepreneurial mindsets and practices is not just a matter of learning some new concepts and skills, but it may also involve changes in beliefs and even one' *professional identity* – which are much more challenging to achieve.

To help educators *come to appreciate that entrepreneurship has a lot to offer* to them, we suggest introducing and discussing alternative definitions of entrepreneurship proposed in the literature as a way to publicly identify and challenge prior beliefs about reducing entrepreneurship in education to starting new education-related businesses. Educators also need to see the many parallels between the practices employed by entrepreneurs and education change agents, as well as become aware of the power of educational innovations to transform education – something that we hope reading the case studies included in this book will help achieve, as "stories" are a powerful way to influence identity development. At the same time, facilitators of courses or professional development on entrepreneurship for educators will also need to keep in mind that lectures and readings are usually not enough to change ones' beliefs and practices;

so it will also be important to engage participating in learning activities that allows them to directly "experience" at least some stage of initiating an educational innovation, so as to at least become aware of the importance of employing entrepreneurial mindsets and practices in that process.

It is also important to realize, though, that acquiring this awareness is not enough, as the effective use of several of the entrepreneurial practices identified in this book also requires mastering new complex skills. Building on research on learning complex skills (e.g., Collins, Brown, and Newman, 1989), Borasi and Finnigan (2010) suggested the value of the following experiences:

- Inviting entrepreneurial educators as guest speakers, and/or having students interview entrepreneurial educators of their choice, with the goal of reconstructing in detail how they carried out a specific innovation (as a substitute for traditional "modeling").
- Engaging students as a class, under the direction of the instructor, in carrying out at the least the first stages of a new initiative that everyone in the class has some familiarity and investment in.
- Engaging students (individually or in small groups) in carrying out independently the first stages of a new initiative of their choice (for example, culminating with the decision of whether or not to pursue a specific opportunity, or with a business plan/grant proposal to fund the initiative).
- Using case discussions to involve the class in "quasi-genuine" decision-making and/or problem-solving, and then reflect on the strategies used and their entrepreneurial nature (or not). (Borasi and Finnigan, 2010, pp. xx)

Explicit reflections – whether they occur through reflective assignments, shared journals or blogs, chat rooms, or face-to-face classroom discussions – can also play an important role in conjunction with any of these experiences, by helping individuals make connections with their past experiences and beliefs, as well as deriving implications for their future practice. This is consistent with Gee's *recognition principle* in professional identity development, as he suggests the importance not only of engaging in practices and discourses at the core of the community of practice one aspires to belong to, but also of having that practice recognized by self and others (Gee, 2001; Luehmann, 2007).

More concrete suggestions about learning tasks that can help educators develop a better appreciation for the value of assuming an entrepreneurial approach to education, as well as to begin to develop some specific entrepreneurial practices, are provided in the *Learning Tasks* section of the accompanying website. We encourage instructors/facilitators to make use of any of the documents included in that section, modifying them as needed to fit their unique situations.

14.7. Concluding thoughts

The study reported in this e-book has revealed stories of entrepreneurial innovations that are engaging, bold, and ultimately assisted in revealing a set of practices that other educators can judiciously adopt to foster innovation and change in their educational setting. Adoption of entrepreneurial tools in context does not support a rigid view of what should be adopted when, but rather asks individuals to carefully study their environment, constantly "scan" it, and adopt approaches or practices that best fit given the nature of the organization, the innovation in question, or the stage of that initiative.

Just as there is a rich history of entrepreneurship in the American business environment, there also has been an entrepreneurial spirit, albeit sometimes unspoken, in American education (see Thelin, 2004). As much as the values promoted by entrepreneurial educational practices could be a concern for education, there is ample evidence from multiple areas of education that celebrated educators have for years been entrepreneurial. Early one-room schoolhouse teachers were entrepreneurs of the prairie; the common school movement required an entrepreneurial spirit to advance

building projects and public education support. In higher education, early American universities depended on the resourcefulness of their faculty (who were also the institutional leaders) to raise funds, develop curricula and solicit students (Cohen, 1998; Rudolph, 1962/1990; Thelin, 2004). In a contemporary setting, it is the professor who champions a new idea for grant funding, the school principal who creatively finds money to fund a new program for at-risk youth, or the researcher who translates basic research into concrete applications to improve individual lives (Mars & Metcalfe, 2009). The seeds of the entrepreneurial spirit are a component of American culture and alive and well in elements of educational practice – as illustrated by the additional stories of innovation contributed by our students as well as users of the resources we have created. There must be acknowledgement of the limitations and pitfalls of the application of entrepreneurial educational efforts, but there is also much that educators would lose if they ignored the potential contributions of entrepreneurship to promoting change in education.

Education needs entrepreneurs now, just as it always has, to build the schools and universities of tomorrow to meet the emerging needs of an advanced society. We need more entrepreneurial educators to build the on-line curriculum that will become the standard summer education which replaces "summer break," create a funding model to assist those from impoverished backgrounds to be able to afford a quality college degree, or develop new delivery systems in our primary classrooms for reading, math and science. Yes, we need research on best practices and evidence of impact of our educational efforts, but we equally need innovation of practice if we want to successfully meet the challenges of tomorrow. We hope that reading this e-book provided *you* with the inspiration as well as the confidence to take on this role – regardless of your background, educational organization, or the position you hold in it.

This is where you can add appendices or other back matter.

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Appendix A.
Case studies research design

This "methodological" appendix has been included to provide information on the research design and methods employed in conducting the case studies featured in the e-book, with two main goals. First, we wanted to show that the findings we reported were the result of a systematic and rigorous empirical research. Second, we hope other researchers interested in conducting case studies of entrepreneurial educators to benefit from our experience.

Since we expect that not all the readers will be interested in this level of detail, we chose to simply provide here with the link to the online document we created for this **Methodological Appendix**, along with its Table of Contents.

CONTENTS:

- **Introduction**
- **The research team**
- **Rationale for choosing a case study methodology**
- **Selection of the case study subjects**
- **Overview of the research design**
- **Data collection**
- **Data analysis**
- **Ensuring validity and reliability**
- **Final reflections**

Appendix B.
Selected additional stories of educational innovations

The "educational innovation stories" reconstructed in our eight case studies are necessarily limited in terms of numbers, contexts and time – so we chose to include this Appendix to complement them with additional stories contributed over time by users of this e-book. While this Appendix includes only a selection of the stories we have been able to collect to date, you can find the entire collection in the *Stories* section of the accompanying website – where you can also more easily sort through the available items using tags.

We encourage you to contribute to this growing collection of stories by submitting your own, following the directions provided in these "**Guidelines for Contributions**" to ensure consistency.

Here is the list of all the stories included in this Appendix, in alphabetical order by the last name of the entrepreneurial educator portayed:

- ***JoAnna Berger: Unleashing Creativity in Radiologic Technology Education*** *(by Jessica Milliman)*
- ***Kima Enerson: Creating innovative learning experiences as a K-12 "maker educator"*** *(by Seth O'Bryan)*
- ***Rebecca Mushtare: Creating story-telling workshops and exhibits for people with Alzheimer*** *(by Sarah McConnell)*
- ***Kathy Rideout: Increasing Diversity in the Workforce*** *(by Jennifer Ann Hoffman)*
- ***Bonnie Rubenstein: An innovative counselor educator****(by Maggie Dorgan)*
- ***Carol St. George: Developing an externally-funded reading program for disadvantaged elementary students*** *(by Allison Yerger)*

Appendix B-1.

JoAnna Berger: Unleashing Creativity in Radiologic Technology Education

Jessica Milliman – University of Rochester (2023)

Background information

JoAnna Berger is the clinical coordinator and a full-time tenure track faculty member in the radiologic technology program at Monroe Community College (MCC). JoAnna's background includes a longstanding career as a registered radiologic technologist, previous experience as a "Dual X-ray Absorptiometry (DEXA) Expert" in a clinical research role, and advanced education in the field of Healthcare Administration. JoAnna aims to have an inclusive classroom where she can teach in a multitude of different ways and have honest conversations with her students. With a passion for promoting excellence and professionalism in the field of radiologic technology, JoAnna supports the mission statement of MCC's Radiologic Technology program which states that the program "prepares students to enter the profession as diagnostic radiographers who are professionally competent".

Key innovations and their value-added

Implementation of Anthropomorphic Phantom Pixies into Radiographic Procedures II. In response to a gap in student ability to clinically apply knowledge and skills from Radiographic Procedures II, JoAnna restructured the course by implementing a practical simulation segment that was previously exclusive to Radiographic Procedures I. This alteration allowed for a broader hands-on approach to the curriculum and ultimately a more comprehensive learning experience.

Diverse Part-Task Trainers for Venipuncture. JoAnna spearheaded an innovative initiative aimed at enhancing representation and clinical competence. As she prepared to deliver the annual venipuncture skill class, JoAnna couldn't help but observe a significant lack of diversity among the well-worn part-task trainers. Recognizing the importance of addressing this disparity, JoAnna took it upon herself to raise awareness about this gap, gather the necessary resources, and introduce a series of part-task trainers that encompassed a range of diverse skin tones. The implementation of diverse part-task trainers not only improves representation but also enable students to acquire the necessary skills on a range of skin tones. This innovation serves to foster a more inclusive learning environment and give students valuable hands-on experience in placing intravenous lines in patients with a variety of skin tones.

The Skullfie Project. The Skullfie project has been integrated into the Skull Imaging course in the radiologic technology program at Monroe Community College, aiming to address a perceived gap in students' knowledge and skill sets. In this project students are instructed to take "selfies" in various radiographic positions of the skull and outline and identify the structures and landmarks on their image. This unique project enables learners to establish a direct connection between their own facial features and the radiographic positions of the skull, enhancing their understanding of the course material while enabling them to apply it to real-world situations, bridging the gap between theory and practice.

In-depth story of an innovation: The Skullfie Project

How the idea came about and was evaluated/refined

JoAnna inherited the responsibility of instructing a Skull Imaging course after the course had gone through many changes. The course had been taught by a handful of different instructors over the years and the number of credit hours was adjusted from 3 credit hours to 1 credit hour several years prior to her inheritance of the course, yet no adjustments to the course materials, expectations, or projects had been made. JoAnna frequently interacts with graduates of the radiologic technology program as she visits the local clinical sites as part of her duties as the Clinical Coordinator.

"A *large number of techs who graduated in the past few years mentioned that I needed to do* SOMETHING *about that* AWFUL *skull project, so I investigated*!"

What JoAnna found during her investigation was that the project, originally designed and implemented during the period when the Skull Imaging course was allotted three hours of time, had undergone absolutely no revisions despite the reduction in course time allowance. The original project involved students working in groups and compiling many skull radiographs, taken on anatomic skull models, into a portfolio which would then be presented by the student to the

instructor along with a verbal self-reflective critique of the portfolio. Although useful, this original project had become riddled with flaws as it was passed from instructor to instructor and through the course credit hour reduction.

With 21 students currently enrolled in the course and the limited one hour of meeting each week, JoAnna realized that time was a significant constraint that may impede students' ability to successfully complete the original skull project. Moreover, even if they were able to complete it, they might not gain a proper understanding of the intricacies of skull positioning, but rather only gain frustration and develop a disinterest in the subject.

In addition to the issue of time, JoAnna delved into other possible issues with the project. If she was going to address this problem, she wanted to solve the entire problem. She had heard recent graduates of the program often say that the Skull Imaging class only taught them landmarks, anatomy, and "textbook" positioning, not how to apply those concepts to a living person. When she looked at the original project she identified a potential reason, as the students were only learning the landmarks and practicing positioning on skull models that were only composed of bone, no flesh! No nose, no eyes, no ears, no skin!

With the problem areas identified, JoAnna started the brainstorming process and collaborated with her program colleague in search of possible solutions. She sought to create a project that would be not only educational and engaging, but that would also foster connections between the course material and real-world applications. Additionally, her goal was to create a project that students could access and work on from home, without requiring access to the X-ray labs at the school.

JoAnna developed a set of preliminary instructions for the project, keeping in mind the end goal. She then tasked one of her colleagues to test the project and provide feedback. During the testing process, it was observed that it was easy to get "lost in the image" and focusing on one's own selfie became uncomfortable and distracting.

Upon receiving the feedback, JoAnna realized the necessity for a solution to this additional problem. After deliberation, she devised a solution wherein the pictures would be inverted and adapted to a color scale reminiscent of an X-ray. JoAnna shared this new idea with her colleague, who deemed it to be an effective way to tackle the "awkwardness" of examining one's own selfies in detail. The modification was made and JoAnna felt confident moving forward with the innovation.

Planning and gathering the needed resources

When JoAnna began to plan the implementation of the initiative, she knew she needed to gather some resources and supplies. She informed her students that the first part of the project was to submit 10-12 "selfies" and that they would find out the rest of the project in the weeks to come. She needed the pictures in advance because she didn't want the financial burden of printing 10+ full page selfies using color ink to fall on her students. She also worried that if students made a mistake the first time around, they would need to have another set printed and some may not have been able to afford that. If she had put that responsibility on them, she felt like the results would be inconsistent and skewed. With that in mind, she set up a meeting with the print center, who informed her that she needed to meet with the cost center because the total cost for what she was requesting to have printed was just under $200.

When she met with the cost center, she presented them with the project instructions and presented her "pitch" as to why this project (and using color ink for it) was important enough to fund. Ultimately the cost center approved the printing of the packets for the project with very little pushback and JoAnna returned to the print shop to work with them and ensure the pictures came out as she envisioned.

As a compassionate educator, JoAnna also took into consideration that not all her students may have access to art supplies for the drawing portion of the project. To ensure that all her learners were able to complete the project without any hindrance, she took it upon herself to use her personal funds to purchase colored pencils to distribute along with the project instructions and packets. This removed one more potential frustration for her students allowing them to focus on the task at hand.

Implementing and monitoring the initiative

When the time came to finally roll out the project announcement, JoAnna's students eagerly awaited the reveal of how their selfies would be used. JoAnna emphasized the need for thoughtfulness and careful work, as each student's submission would be hung in the classroom at the end of the semester with their markups for peers to learn from. Although JoAnna gave instructions with grading criteria, she did not create a rubric for this project's debut. She instead

decided to view all the submissions before determining her expectations and grading approach. Thankfully, most of the students produced thorough and accurate projects with an appropriate level of effort.

To assess the success of the "Skullfie Project," JoAnna surveyed some of the students on their impressions and the project's impact on their developing "X-ray vision." She also observed students in their clinical rotations practicing skull positioning and was pleased to hear several students reference the "Skullfie Project" when asked how they determined certain anatomic points and projection angles. After carefully reviewing the course evaluations, JoAnna found that almost all students agreed that the "Skullfie Project" helped them improve their skull positioning confidence.

Ensuring long term sustainability

JoAnna had originally planned to oversee this project for many years. However, unexpected life changes have required her to relocate out-of-state before the project can be assigned again. To ensure that the project progresses seamlessly in her absence, she has created highly detailed instructions for the other faculty members involved in the program. The instructions provide a comprehensive timeline, which outlines the estimated faculty time commitment required for each implementation phase. JoAnna discovered that the time commitment was greater than she initially anticipated and wanted to save the next person from experiencing her same frustrations. She has also included a potential rubric and recommended several improvements, including giving students time for revisions and feedback during class time. These measures will enable the project to continue successfully, regardless of JoAnna's departure.

Observations and lessons learned

Throughout the interview process, I gained valuable insights into the concept of entrepreneurship. One of the most notable observations was that entrepreneurship can be an innate skill for certain individuals, who may not even realize they possess the qualities of an entrepreneur. When I first approached JoAnna for this interview, she expressed doubts about her entrepreneurial abilities, after reminding her of some innovations I had witnessed her spearhead, she was able to recognize her own work as entrepreneurial.

Additionally, I learned that not all innovations need to be complex or expensive. JoAnna's "Skullfie" innovation, which cost less than $300, was able to solve a significant issue. However, it's also important to consider that the investment required is not always monetary. JoAnna mentioned that the innovation required a considerable amount of her time, which as an educator, is a precious resource. Therefore, finding time-saving measures can be just as valuable as identifying cost-saving measures.

Along with being an entrepreneurial educator it is important to be a compassionate educator. By compassionately approaching issues your students encounter, you're better equipped to identify potential roadblocks that might otherwise go unnoticed. A perfect example of this was demonstrated by JoAnna. Her attention to detail and genuine care for her students from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds enabled her to expertly foresee and navigate potential issues that might have otherwise hindered the success of the innovation. This level of empathy and foresight is essential for fostering an environment where students feel supported and empowered to succeed.

Finally, this interview reinforced the importance of developing a plan for the sustainability of innovations. JoAnna had initially planned to implement her innovation for several years but found herself handing it over to someone else after only implementing it once. Fortunately, she had taken the time to create detailed instructions for the next instructor, which ensured that the innovation would continue to be implemented even after her resignation from the program. As such, a solid plan for the sustainability of an innovation is crucial to its long-term success.

Appendix B-2.

Kima Enerson: Creating innovative learning experiences as a K-12 "maker educator"

Seth O'Bryan – Harley School, Rochester NY (2021)

Background information

Kima Enerson is the Maker Educator at The Harley School. Kima describes *maker education* to include projects that have a purpose with opportunities to investigate, create, unpack material learned in courses across academic disciplines. In her role, she works with grades all across the school from nursery to seniors, and she has her own classes in all three divisions of the school. In the elementary school, she teaches project based learning (PBL), in the middle school she has an elective maker course, and in the high school she teaches two electives, which usually are (1) Apps and Arduinos and (2) Fab Lab. She also collaborates with teachers on maker projects in their courses, especially in middle school science. Kima manages the makerspace and workshop and is a digital learning coach. It's amazing Kima does as much as she does in one school day.

She technically became a maker educator when she took the job at Harley five years ago, but she has had a maker mindset since her elementary school experience. For her, "science was not just science and math was not just math," instead the courses were connected and project based learning was at the core of how she learned when she was younger. However, like the experience of many students, in middle and high school academic disciplines became more separate with direct instruction as the common method of learning.

A significant job experience that shaped her instructional approach today was curriculum development in a summer science camp at Nazareth College. At the camp she developed project based units in energy, Harry Potter, and simple machines. The goal of the curriculum was to engage the students in science not out of a textbook. Before coming to Harley, Kima was an adjunct faculty member at RIT. They promoted collaboration across departments, and she appreciated the cross pollination. Between the two significant job experiences – the camp and RIT – she grew to appreciate designing education to mimic how the real world uses the content objectives in a course.

The Harley School's makerspace includes a traditional workshop with a chop saw, bandsaw, drill press, hand tools, and other various workshop equipment but also a project space that has room for students to spread out and build things with pipe cleaners, glue guns, and crafts material. The project space has a laser cutter and 3D printer.

When a friend approached her about the maker educator position, the friend told Kima, "this job was written for you." Kima said that since taking the job she realized "what I had known before was only the top surface of where maker ed is and what you can do (in maker education) and how it relates to education and engaging students in meaningful work".

The makerspace is the combination of the workshop and project space, and it is on the ground floor of the Commons. The Commons is both a building and a set of programs devoted to sustainability education and student leadership. Kima's work as a maker educator is well aligned with the Commons programs and has significantly moved the programs forward.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Kima was a vital member of the technology team that installed the infrastructure necessary for hybrid learning and then her primary role was to support teachers in how to use it on a technical side as well as with best practices for digital learning. She was more an academic coach than maker educator, although there is overlap between the two roles.

Key innovations and their value-added

In five years, Kima has engaged in a variety of educational innovations. The ones listed here are the ones she considered most significant.

Third grade community project. In this project, third grade students built three-dimensional model communities out of cardboard and other materials. Students had to research the meaning of community, create a design, and then build a model. Creating the three-dimensional model helped the students give more explanation to their ideas and working in groups strengthened their communication and collaboration skills.

Fourth grade biomimicry project. In this project, fourth grade students learn about the basics of biomimicry, identify an environmental issue that can be addressed through biomimicry, and design a solution using what they learned. The project promotes a stronger connection to nature, inspires students to think positively about solving problems, and

promotes communication and collaboration. Also, the process includes multiple steps of design and prototyping, as they learn how to adapt ideas when they do not initially work.

"Walk-in-cell" seventh grade project. The 7th grade science classes built a "walk-in cell" by having each student research a part of a human cell and then create a three-dimensional model of the part. Kima and the science teacher worked with the students to build one large cell the size of a tent using the parts the students made. Students were challenged to think deeply about their material and then have a brilliant visual to help them remember in the future about the parts of the human cell. The team effort of building one cell strengthened the relationship among peers and promoted students as experts.

"Tiny Shelter" project. Kima worked with middle and high school students collaboratively to build a "tiny shelter" for the homeless in Peace Village. The Tiny Shelter project has been a remarkable innovation. Kima has worked with students of different age groups to build a shelter together that meets the criteria for a shelter in Peace Village. It looks like a small house. When first starting the project, Kima had a long discussion with the students about homelessness in Rochester and why the Tiny Shelter was valuable and needed. Students engaged in a project that has meaning, connects to the world beyond the classroom, and has an outcome connected to people outside of Harley. Students have had to solve challenging problems like the best angle for the roof and how to make a window in the shelter. Students have had to learn from failure and stay committed to the project since other people depended on them. Most importantly, students have been empowered to believe that by working together, they can address community problems now.

In-depth story of an innovation: Renewable Energy unit

How the idea came about and was evaluated/refined

Kima highlighted the third grade Renewable Energy unit as one of her favorite innovations. When Kima first started at Harley, the third grade had a unit on renewable energy that focused on lessons about the basics of energy and then types of renewable energy. A former faculty member who had a role similar to maker educator would work with the class on one big solar project that was mostly a demonstration on using solar to power the lights in a room. In Kima's first year, she met with the teachers to learn more about the unit and what ideas they had for expanding it. She then met with the Commons Director to learn more about the technology related to renewable energy in the Commons. She identified three underutilized tools that could enhance the unit. First, a mobile solar charged battery pack. Second, an interactive display of data on the solar production in the Commons as well as energy consumption by circuit in the building. Third, the existence of technology in the building. Kima decided to include a tour of the technology as part of the unit. Once she developed a list of ways to enhance the curriculum, she met with the teachers to discuss how these ideas might fit into their curriculum. Lastly, she wanted the students to construct something that helped them understand how energy works, so she decided to have the students build their own wind turbines.

Kima had a basic plan after meeting with the teachers, and she did more research about what resources are currently available and what other schools do. This gave her a sense of whether she was on the right track for her project and whether it had been successful at other schools. If her ideas are different than what she finds in the research, she often meets with the Commons staff to discuss the concept. She evaluates whether she could not find anything comparable in her research because what she is doing is innovative or unlikely to succeed. The interactive touch screen with data is a unique teacher tool. She asked the third grade what they might want to learn about the building, and she used their questions to create a slide of data on the screen based on their interests. The enthusiasm to learn more about energy in the Commons gave Kima the confidence that the interactive data display would be a success. She also met with the Commons Director to talk through her plans for the Commons tour, and she sought his advice on what technology the students might find interesting. They agreed that the tour was a good balance of interactive parts and components that would involve a short presentation. Kima built a wind turbine herself to explore the student experience of building a wind turbine. When I asked her about advice for teachers interested in strengthening their maker educator skills, she said trying projects before having the students do them was very helpful. Besides helping her see what challenges the students might have with building the turbine, it informed her on how much time they would need to meaningful and safely engage in the project.

Planning and gather the needed resources

Kima set goals for what she hoped the students would accomplish in the renewable energy unit. Then she evaluated

what materials the students would need to build the turbines she imagined. She researched the cost of materials and set a budget for the project. She compared multiple companies in most cases to get both the best resources and limit cost. In terms of the wind turbines, she also looked at what material we already had and carefully evaluated how much more we needed. After Kima felt comfortable with her plan for the renewable energy unit, she again met with the teachers to get their feedback and also to see how it aligned with what they were doing in their classes. She also thought about possible ways her high school students can assist in the project, such as helping in the tour or being a second presenter with the data screen.

Implementing and monitoring the initiative

In the days leading up to the renewable energy unit, Kima double-checked to make sure she had all the materials and talked to the teachers about the schedule. When the unit started, Kima asked the students many questions about what they knew and invited them to ask questions. She maintained this approach throughout the unit. Kima built in extra days for failure or opportunities for more extension. When she presented the interactive screen of data to the students, she wrote down their questions, researched the answers, and reported back to them the next time they met. During the wind turbine build, she had a fan and sensor to test the power output of the turbines. The students wanted to see the impact of the wind turbines in an authentic environment so she adapted her plan and took the students somewhere outside where they could test the turbines with natural wind. Students wanted to know what appliances their builds could power so she researched energy consumption of some appliances and then shared back with the students. After the students took the tour of the Commons, she made sure to reference what they learned in later lessons if students made a comment that connected to something on the tour. Kima also committed time at the end of the unit for reflection with the students.

Ensuring long term sustainability

Kima met with the teachers after the unit to get their feedback on how it went. She also carefully documented the lesson plans, materials list, and budget for future reference. Kima and the Commons team took pictures during the project and shared them with the marketing department as they often use Commons projects in their publications and social media. Kima put some of the best projects on display in the Commons lobby, and the admissions tours reference the projects in the lobby. Kima also takes notes on how her high school students could connect with the project in the future, and she expanded the collaboration of high school students in the renewable energy unit the following year.

Observations and lessons learned

A few characteristics came through in the interview that aligns with what we have heard from many entrepreneurs in the course. The following characteristics or strategies Kima mentioned and have stood out in the course:

1. *Willingness to take calculated risks and embrace the possibility of failure.* Our class is made up of a noticeable number of educators and physicians. Physicians can not let fear of failure impact their work. They must treat their patient using the knowledge they have and consistently take calculated risks as they know the reasons for selecting procedures and the possible ways a procedure or treatment can go wrong. This knowledge about what could go wrong cannot get in the way of them doing their best, and they also consistently learn about newer and more effective procedures from research. They get information directly about the research, and they are trained on how to interpret and analyze the research. Educators can choose to avoid trying instructional practices due to fear of failure or a situation being too challenging for them. They can consistently rely on practices they are familiar with and can choose to create situations they feel more in control of using instructional practices that might not align with what research says is the most effective practice for impacting student learning. Many educators do not value educational research or minimally read it. Kima embraces calculated risks, and she creates situations where students are at the center of their learning. While she might have an outcome in mind for a student project, she is willing to watch the situation unfold and build on the direction the student goes. She is willing to try new projects or use new tools if the research demonstrates they might positively impact student learning. The entrepreneurs we have studied prioritize student learning and embrace the research they read to help support them take calculated risks.
2. *Research, research, research.* Teachers and students observe the great work Kima does in the classroom with her

students. They don't see her spending hours at her computer researching best practices, learning about what other schools do, examining the cost of materials, and then trying out projects in her office. Entrepreneurs commit time and effort into researching best practices, competition, theory and knowledge underpinning a tool, idea, or concept.

3. *Collaborate with people you trust, seek people who you think have useful information, and treat everyone – regardless of age, race, gender, economic class, job – as someone who you can learn from and might help you.* Kima allows the students to be experts, and she collaborates with many teachers, parents, and her own personal contacts. Many of the entrepreneurs we read about talk about learning from a variety of community members and being generally inclusive in their process and their views on how their work impacts others. At the same time, while they learn from all, they also proactively seek out experts in their field as resources.

A consistent theme we heard in the course is that many entrepreneurs have a set of values, strategies for how they approach their work, and a culture they thrive in that they do not necessarily think about on a daily basis. However, these items are deeply embedded in how they approach their professional lives and taking the time to challenge the entrepreneurs to unpack their innerworkings is tremendously valuable and educational. I appreciated learning about the framework from which Kima approaches her work.

Appendix B-3.

Rebecca Mushtare: Creating story-telling workshops and exhibits for people with Alzheimer

Sarah McConnell – University of Rochester (2021)

Background information

Rebecca Mushtare is an associate professor who specializes in Web Design and Interactive Media in the Department of Art and Design in the School of Communication, Media, and the Arts at SUNY Oswego, a public liberal arts college in upstate New York. Rebecca is also the Associate Dean for the Division of Graduate Studies, and she served as the associate director of the Center for Excellence in Learning and Teaching at SUNY Oswego from 2015-2021.

Rebecca earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from SUNY Oswego and a Master of Fine Arts degree from Syracuse University. She taught at Marymount Manhattan College in New York City for six years. She found her current spot at SUNY Oswego in 2012, where she appreciates opportunities to innovate beyond the classroom.

As an educator, Rebecca aims to spark curiosity in her students and colleagues, effect positive social change, and make learning accessible, inclusive, and relevant.

Key innovations and their value-added

Here are some of the most notable innovations Rebecca engaged in:

Tea for Teaching Podcast: Rebecca and co-host John Kane launched this podcast in 2017 to interview guests about innovative practices in education, with episodes released each Wednesday. This podcast disseminates ideas about effective practices in higher education to part-time faculty at SUNY Oswego and teaching faculty in the local and broader education community.

Faculty Accessibility Fellowship Program: Rebecca, in collaboration with colleagues in the workgroup on accessibility practices, developed this university-funded program in which a faculty member from each of SUNY Oswego's four schools learn about improving accessibility in education. Rebecca facilitated this program three years ago and has since passed on program leadership to fellows. Participating faculty are equipped to improve accessibility in their own courses and serve as ambassadors to their respective schools. This program has also led to further development of the SUNY Oswego *accessibility webpage*, which provides information on a wide variety of asynchronous resources.

Vote Oswego: Rebecca collaborated with a political science faculty member, Allison Rank, to launch this voter registration and "get out the vote" campaign in which design students and political science students cooperate to develop a strategic communication plan involving social media and website design. This program promotes political engagement in the SUNY Oswego student body while helping participating students learn practical aspects of design application and demonstrating that their efforts can produce real, positive impacts in their community.

Recollection Project: This project promotes storytelling across generations (particularly with individuals with dementia) using objects as inspiration and starting points. Participants attend storytelling workshops, and the objects and related stories are compiled by design students into an exhibition that travels to senior centers in the region. Students gain experience with practical applications of design and—similar to the Vote Oswego project—see that their efforts can produce real, positive impacts in their community. The project also promotes sensory and narrative engagement in individuals with dementia and supports social connection across generations, especially with elderly populations who are often isolated.

In-depth story of an innovation: Recollection Project

How the idea came about and was evaluated/refined

This initiative was originally conceptualized in 2013 as a one-time project in which students in art courses would explore the experiences of individuals with dementia and their families, with the goal of introducing students to challenges that older adults face. An emeritus faculty member had been encouraging Tyler Art Gallery at SUNY Oswego "to do something on Alzheimer's." Eventually, the gallery director, Michael Flanagan, started bringing together people from different disciplines across the campus, professional artists with relevant experience, and people from the Alzheimer's Disease Association to develop the initial framing of the project.

The project components consisted of storytelling workshops, a design course for undergraduates at SUNY Oswego, and an exhibit to share with the community. In some of the storytelling workshops, participants (typically older adults

with dementia) brought familiar objects that reminded them of stories from their past and shared those accounts with the facilitators. In other workshops, groups of participants cooperatively created new stories inspired by objects presented by the workshop hosts. These stories were recorded for later sharing. Subsequently, in a fall semester course, students designed the exhibit to be shared with the community, including interactive displays with photographs of workshop participants, objects those participants chose to share, and the stories connected to these objects. The exhibit also included a walkway with strings suspended between the ceiling and floor with attached cards displaying photographs and quotes from participants.

The exhibit was displayed at Tyler Art Gallery at SUNY Oswego and the Syracuse Campus. There, it was seen by representatives from adult care facilities who requested that the exhibit be displayed at their locations. "Next thing you know," Rebecca reflected, "this exhibit that was meant for students traveled to a number of adult care facilities." At each location, the exhibit was received very positively by the residents, employees, and communities. After two years, the exhibit components became "dilapidated" from their repeated interactive use, and the exhibit could not be shared with the remaining facilities that had requested it. Rebecca was surprised by how well the idea of using objects to share stories as a means to establish inter-generational connection worked. In light of the positive impact on students, participants, and communities, Rebecca and her collaborators felt compelled to extend this initiative into a long-term project. "We tried something and were like, 'Oh, that worked. Oh, man, now we've got to do it!'"

Rebecca recognized the value of the exhibit to the care facilities where it was displayed. Residents and staff appreciated how the exhibit brought novelty to their spaces with interactive elements that engaged residents who were otherwise often isolated and withdrawn. There was such demand among care centers for the exhibit that its components became too worn to be shared further.

Rebecca also noted the value of the storytelling workshops. Participants appreciated having their stories elevated and shared in exhibits where their pictures and accounts were displayed in museum-quality photographs.

As an educator, Rebecca was struck by the value of the design experience and community engagement for the students in the course. The project challenged the students to design for real, physical spaces, incorporating accessibility features particularly for older adults. These design students became engaged with a health issue they wouldn't otherwise have considered.

> "As an instructor, I was like, 'I want more of this!' Because my students were engaging with an important social and health issue they wouldn't have otherwise studied, because I'm in art and design; it's not part of our general curriculum. So this was important. But I also teach accessibility, and this was a great opportunity to teach that concept, but also in a physical space, and not just in virtual spaces, and to teach design for older adults. We're all going to age eventually, and our population is aging at a much faster rate than it had been previously, so thinking about designing all sorts of things for older adults is really important for designers, and just something that hadn't been really a strong part of our curriculum previously. So it kind of solves all of those problems."

The students also came to recognize their civic responsibility, and they were able to see in concrete examples how their design work impacted the community.

> "I also think it helps students recognize some of their civic duties and civic responsibilities. We often think about that in terms of voting, but it's really about making sure that our community can thrive, and contributing to that, and seeing their role as designers helping that – or even just seeing that their design work impacts a community – is really important to the work that we do training future designers."

All of these features align very closely with Rebecca's personal interests and vision, as well as the mission of SUNY Oswego, which—as a public institution—is committed to education and accessibility.

Rebecca worked with two other faculty members to transition this initiative to a long-term project. Michael Flanagan had extensive experience with object-based learning in museums and art programs, and Seeley Cardone had relevant experience as an art therapist.

As they considered the long-term feasibility of the project, Rebecca and Michael focused on obtaining financial support. The first iteration had been supported largely by funding secured by the gallery at SUNY Oswego. They also knew of various grant opportunities for initiatives in the arts and was able to draw on existing partnerships with care

facilities and aging-focused associations in the area. Confident in their ability to secure funds and equipment (though not all were secured yet), they decided to proceed with expanding this initiative into a long-term project.

Interestingly, Rebecca did not specifically discuss potential risks of this initiative. Rather, she focused on the project's feasibility and the value of the initiative in fulfilling unmet needs of the community while providing authentic design experience and community engagement for her students.

Planning and gathering the needed resources

Rebecca did not start out with a formal written plan for this project, particularly since she expected that the project would be a one-time effort. She put in writing what was required to obtain funding, and her team has since produced more detailed project records, largely for purposes of long-term sustainability if project leadership gets passed to others; but they still have not written out a "big, cohesive plan."

This project depends upon Rebecca teaching the corresponding design course to produce a new exhibit every other year, which relies upon Rebecca's availability and student interest. Exhibit production also requires follow-up work, completed in the spring and summer by student designers and a student photographer.

For equipment, the team initially relied on what they could borrow from their department. As the specific needs of the project have become clearer, they have started purchasing equipment specifically for the project.

The exhibit was initially displayed in the gallery at SUNY Oswego, which is housed by the Department of Art and Design and has some grant funding to support local projects. The exhibit later traveled to nearby adult care centers at the request of those facilities.

As they sought to extend this project beyond its first iteration, Rebecca and her team explored options for funding. The gallery had basic funding to support the exhibit and its initial travel. The team was later able to take advantage of funding for visiting artists and special projects, and to obtain a grant from CNY Arts. She noted that the relevant funding opportunities tend to be very focused in specific domains, which require niche knowledge or persistent searching to find.

Rebecca and Michael also knew they would need collaborators with relevant expertise for this long-term effort. They soon invited art therapist Seeley Cardone, who was ready to join the project immediately.

Rebecca emphasized the importance of pre-existing partnerships with local adult care facilities, senior centers, and communities for project management and follow-up.

> "I had a little bit of a relationship [with a local adult care center] already, and I was like, 'Hey, we're thinking about doing this project. Can we?' And because I had the relationship, we were able to [move forward]. I think it was in part because I had those relationships that we were able to do that … I think that's an important resource that is hidden, that wouldn't have been obvious."

Rebecca and her teammates also collaborated with a local expert on active aging, the Oswego County Office for the Aging, the Alzheimer's Disease Association, CNY Arts, and representatives from adult care facilities to brainstorm approaches that would be meaningful and interesting for their target population, methods to ensure that they were inclusive of people with dementia, and ways to implement these ideas in the spaces provided.

Rebecca reflected that while many resources needed to be secured for the project to succeed, they weren't necessarily all secured right from the start, and the team needed to make do with what they had.

> "Things kind of [went] like, 'this part's in place, and then this part gets done, and then this part gets in place and this part gets done.' If we waited for every piece to be in place, it would never have happened … Even the first [project iteration]: Did we really have funding? Not really. We just kind of did it. And we [were] totally low budget, hacking things together with basic supplies, and then went for some funding."

Much of the project's initial work relied upon Rebecca and her team members volunteering their time, before funding was secured and other collaborations were established.

> "If it's something new that we want to try, we just do it. We frankly volunteer a lot of our time because it's something we care about, and that's how the initial stuff gets done until we have more formalized relationships or funding streams."

Implementing and monitoring the initiative

Rebecca, Michael, and Seeley have gradually been clarifying and refining their roles in the project. Rebecca serves as

the creative director, responsible for the main design work with the students in her course. Michael focuses on figuring out how the exhibits will fit within the spaces at the gallery and adult care facilities. Seeley refines the objectives and methods used in the storytelling workshops. All three of them run the storytelling workshops together, accompanied by a student photographer to take pictures of participants and their objects. They have also recruited student employees to work during the summer, making final alterations for the displays designed the previous fall and taking photographs at workshops, all under Rebecca's supervision.

As the exhibit has traveled to different facilities, Rebecca's team has often had to improvise to overcome obstacles and find ways to improve the exhibit going forward.

> "So, you know, these are places that are not meant to be galleries, right? So we basically hacked our exhibit into these spaces so that they can have these interactive exhibits in these hallways, essentially, and community rooms; and we quickly learned that designing for older adults is different from designing for students, clearly. [The first exhibit] wasn't designed for older adults initially. Like ***The Pathway***, for example: residents of the adult care facilities would often pull [the cards] closer to them so they could see, and then it would rip because it was made out of paper. So we quickly found a solution. We used stretchy string so it's elastic now it can pull. We did all these adaptations and remediated the exhibit essentially so it would work for these residents and the staff, *et cetera*. And it was a hit."

She also commented on the iterative process of trying the exhibit out, realizing when things went wrong, obtaining the relevant materials to address shortcomings, and repeating the process.

> "These are some places where it would be helpful to have something that's more sustainable. [For example,] it would be helpful to get things printed on vinyl so it can be washed and sanitized. There are some things that we learned over time. Now it's like leveling up. Now we know we need funding for this because now we know we need these materials."

Overall, Rebecca sees this project as a success, because each component has value, and because there haven't been "any major disasters."

The project promotes deep learning with authentic design experience for students enrolled in Rebecca's class and for student interns. The students in the course compose written reflections that demonstrate the depth of their understanding, and the summer interns get real-world experience.

> "Same thing with the student interns who are doing some of the design work over the summer: They're working on a real project, really out in the world. They can see the fruits of their labor. It's not just some imaginary project that they're working on and putting in their portfolio – it's real, it's really tangible."

Rebecca's team has monitored the performance of their exhibits by observing how people interact with the display components, watching for where people seem confused, and noting where components break. They also talk with facility employees about the kinds of engagement they have noted at the exhibits, and ask about any complaints or suggestions. Fortunately, these employees consistently report that the exhibits have been worthwhile, they would opt to repeat them, and they would recommend the exhibits to others. The team then documents these observations for the next iteration of the project.

The team also evaluates the storytelling workshops using interviews and surveys to determine whether they are achieving their intended goals. Participants reliably respond that they would recommend these workshops to others. They also report that the storytelling techniques they have learned help them communicate with others in their families and communities, increasing the sense of connectedness across generations. Furthermore, employees at the adult care facilities where these workshops take place have shared that the workshops reduce isolation in the participants, which is especially important for individuals with dementia.

The team has modified portions of their project when they have not worked well. For example, they had hoped to make audio recordings of their interviews with workshop participants. However, they found that high-quality microphones intimidated their participants, and other recording devices like smart phones failed to capture variable speaking volumes, especially with background noise, as typically occurred in the recreation rooms of adult care facilities where they could meet. As a result, the team dropped the idea of collecting these recordings. More recently, though, new recording equipment has enabled the generation of transcripts in storytelling sessions.

Rebecca and her team members additionally monitor their own energy as they work on this project. So far, they have been very generous with their own time with this "labor of love." However, given the challenges facing teaching faculty, they find this kind of selfless investment unsustainable in the long run.

> "Part of it, I think, is just the nature of academia, a growing and increasing set of expectations for faculty members and staff members. Some of that has certainly drained us of some energy. … We're all having to decide whether this is something that we want to commit to, long-term, or if it's something that we need to step away from; and I think what's challenging is that we're having to have those discussions with ourselves. Is this something that we want to really continue or not? I think so, but it's a matter of: does it meet some of the other goals, and is there enough overlap with other things that I'm doing that it seems reasonable, with the expectations that an institution has of me as an associate professor, as someone who's hoping to go for full professor soon. These are all things that are important."

In addition to considering whether they might need to scale back the project, the team members are currently trying to streamline the work involved in this project by identifying the most appropriate people for each component, training others to take on project responsibilities, and creating protocols that make their existing work more efficient.

Ensuring long-term sustainability and/or bigger impact

Rebecca's team members have been reshaping their roles and considering how these contributions to the project will shift in the future. Seeley has taken on more of a leadership role, and Michael has focused more on communication with facilities. Michael is also planning to retire within the next couple of years. Rebecca intends to refine her involvement in the project, likely remaining involved in the design portion through her course, and contributing to project management, though she means to step away from the workshops since those are "not in my wheelhouse" and are "not the best use of my expertise on this project."

The team hopes to bring three paid student interns on board as storytelling workshop facilitators. They are especially targeting students in art therapy since the workshops would provide attractive experience for them, and these students would likely already have more relevant knowledge and experience than the faculty currently running these workshops.

As they contemplate handing over portions of the project to other personnel, the team has been developing shared written documents detailing the project timeline, funding sources, and other logistics.

One significant challenge for long-term sustainability is maintaining funding. Rebecca commented that there are many funding opportunities to support novel approaches, but "things stop being new." The team has been exploring ways to maintain an edge of novelty in the project, for example, by developing a do-it-yourself kit for the project, and creating train-the-trainer sessions for leading storytelling workshops. They have also been searching for more sustainable funding options. One promising option is private sponsorship, though this may only support the project in the local area. In case they are not able to share their exhibits more broadly, the team has considered methods to share the project idea with other universities in order to employ it in their regions. The do-it-yourself kit, train-the-trainer sessions, and the recently launched project website would support this goal.

Observations and lessons learned

Two pieces of advice: At the conclusion of the interview, Rebecca particularly emphasized two points of importance to her: (1) an innovator should not wait for everything to be in place before beginning a complicated project, because all the pieces will never be in place at once, and the innovator will end up waiting forever; and (2) everything takes time, both in terms of time to come to fruition, and time invested—often volunteered—by the innovator(s).

A non-linear process: I had trouble clearly establishing boundaries between phases for this report. In particular, there seemed to be two cycles of phases for this innovation: one for creating and implementing the first iteration (which was intended to be a one-time effort), and one for the long-term version. Although I decided to focus on the long-term version and group the entire first iteration into the "coming up with the idea" phase, I second-guessed this decision many times, especially while assigning entrepreneurial practices. Beyond the multi-cycle nature of this innovation, elements from one phase appeared to creep into other phases (e.g., resource gathering appeared in the evaluating and implementing phases; and monitoring appeared in the long-term sustainability section and vice versa). This blending seems consistent with Rebecca's advice not to wait for all the pieces to be in place before moving on to the next step

of a project. Opportunities and resources often become available in their own time, and the innovator must balance preparation with going with the flow to some extent.

Blurring boundaries: I was impressed by Rebecca's knack for educational innovation beyond the traditional boundaries of a classroom. She seemed intrinsically driven to carry her vision into the community in order to effect positive social change, consistent with her overall vision. This was evident both in the initial iteration of the project and in how Rebecca felt compelled to pursue a long-term version of the projct to meet the needs and interests of the community ("Oh, that worked. Oh, man, now we've got to do it!"). In contrast, I tend to feel defined by the official borders of "my job" and "not my job;" but blurring boundaries like those could help spark ideas for value-adding initiatives.

Aligning effort with vision: I was also struck by the evidence of alignment between Rebecca's vision and her efforts. She articulated her vision clearly and concisely at the start of the interview, as if she had given extensive, dedicated thought to defining it. She also explicitly noted how the Recollection Project embodied features that were important to her and supported SUNY Oswego's mission. This underscores the importance of aligning one's efforts with their own vision and their organization's mission. The alignment with Rebecca's vision motivated her to launch and maintain the initiative, and the alignment with SUNY Oswego's mission increased the likelihood of organizational support. I don't think that I have a particularly well-defined vision of my own at this point, but I can see the value of having a vision for clarifying what is or is not worth my time and energy.

Innovate and step away: Finally, I appreciated hearing Rebecca share tough truths about the selfless giving that is often required to get initiatives off the ground (especially in academia), having one's energy drained by this kind of effort, and needing to consider stepping away or at least modifying one's involvement in the initiative they had started. I am coming to recognize that an individual's effort cannot be scaled up indefinitely, and it is a priority to avoid burnout, though this limitation hinders an initiative's need to grow. Rebecca seems to recognize that she is an innovator and that others may be better suited to pick up the projects that she launches. I'm not yet sure how much innovation will factor into my career, whether I am likely to generate more ideas than I can sustain myself. I tend to feel protective of my own ideas, and I marvel when others appear comfortable with handing off their creations for others to oversee. Whatever the case, I hope I can make appropriate decisions about the best uses of my time and the best interests of any initiatives I launch.

Appendix B-4.

Kathy Rideout: Increasing Diversity in the Workforce

Jennifer Ann Hoffman, MS, RN – University of Rochester School of Nursing (2023)

Background information

Kathy Rideout is currently working as a Professor of Clinical Nursing and Pediatrics at the University of Rochester (U of R). The University of Rochester School of Nursing (URSON) is a research-intensive university that has a tripartite mission of research, practice, and education. URSON has approximately 700 students, 20 tenured faculty, and 70-80 clinical track faculty. URSON has forty-nine educational programs registered with the New York State ranging from baccalaureate through doctoral programs. Since completing her term as Dean Kathy now holds the title of Dean Emerita. Her main role is working as faculty for the UR Career Pathways Program. This program supports U of R employees that serve in entry-level positions who are looking to advance into the LPN and RN roles by providing support with the college application process, mentorship and financial support.

Kathy began her career as a Registered Nurse in 1979, graduating from Nursing Indiana University of Pennsylvania with her BSN. Kathy began working in Pennsylvania as a pediatric Nurse, working for four years on pediatric units and critical care units. In 1983, she graduated with her Master's in Science (Nursing Care of Children) from the University of Pittsburgh, where she transitioned into the role of Case Coordinator, Pediatric Nurse Practitioner from 1984-1985. Kathy also worked as a Clinical Nursing Instructor for Indiana University of Pennsylvania. In 1986 she moved to Rochester, N.Y., where she began working for Children's Hospital at Strong as a Pediatric Advanced Practice Nurse as well as working for the URSON as a Lecturer/Senior Associate. Over the years, Kathy rose in the ranks in her position as a Nurse Practitioner, in roles such as Care Coordinator and Pediatric Nurse Practitioner Ostomy Specialist. At URSON, Kathy also advanced her career as an Adjunct Associate Professor and then to an Assistant Professor after graduating with her Doctorate of Education in Curriculum and Teaching at the UR Warner School for Education and Human Development. In 2005, Kathy became the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, where one of her most important innovations began while serving in this role. In 2011, Kathy assumed the role of Interim Dean of the URSON and, in 2012, became Dean and Associate Professor of Clinical Nursing. In 2013, Kathy was promoted to Professor of Clinical Nursing and Pediatrics as well and was appointed Vice President of the University of Rochester Medical Center. Kathy has worked for URSON for a total of thirty-seven years.

Kathy also has a number of accolades to her name. Kathy currently has fourteen publications and has presented sixty-nine presentations at numerous conferences, local speaking engagements, and universities. Kathy has also mentored numerous undergraduate and graduate students and served on countless clinical, academic, and administrative committees. Lastly, Kathy has received twenty-one honors and awards over the course of her career.

Key innovations and their value-added

Among the major accomplishments of Rideout's tenure:

Center for Employee Wellness. Created and expanded the UR Medicine Center for Employee Wellness (CEW), which was inspired by the vision of Kathy's predecessor Dr. Pat Chiverton. The expansion helped increase revenue for URSON. URSON nurses and staff manage this program and serve fifty-five employers in New York State through programs such as biometric screens that examine a person's blood glucose level and cholesterol level to help promote heart health and chronic condition management programs. The CEW also provides N95 FIT mask testing to employees and for students from local colleges. The CEW also manages another business line, Passport Health, started by Dr. Pat Chiverton and serves the community with immunizations and education prior to traveling to foreign countries.

Increasing diversity in the workforce. Kathy worked on developing groundbreaking diversity initiatives that led the school to be recognized as a six-time winner of the *Insight into Diversity* Health Professions Higher Education Excellence in Diversity Award (HEED). These initiatives included multiple programs to support a diverse student population, recruitment of faculty from underrepresented groups, and creation of the URSON Council for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion.

School of Nursing expansion project. Worked diligently on a 20,000 sq foot, $15 million vertical expansion tower at

Helen Wood Hall. This added three more floors to the URSON, supporting more advanced technology and equipment to advance the academic innovation initiatives at the URSON. The new expansion includes a twenty-bay skills lab, four simulation rooms with a one-way mirrored window for observation from the control room, eight experiential learning rooms that serve as multi-functional instructional rooms, four clinical learning rooms that enhance the realism around standardized patient and clinical nursing student interactions and two-room to accommodate alternate reality and virtual reality technology.

In-depth story of an innovation: Increasing Diversity in the Workforce

How the idea came about and was evaluating/ refining

Kathy has been dedicated to the U of R for over 35 years as an academic leader, an educator, and a nurse practitioner. At the time of this innovation, Kathy was the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs. Kathy has had a clear passion for increasing diversity in the workforce and had already made some strides in this area. As a nurse practitioner, it was clear to her and demonstrated in the research that "*the outcomes of patient care were better if individuals are cared for by a diverse workforce*." In 2008 the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJ), in collaboration with the American Association of Critical-Care Nurses (AACN), developed a new program, New Careers in Nursing (NCIN) and launched a call for program proposals. This provided a $10,000 grant/per student that would cover tuition and other expenses (room and board, books, etc.) to help increase diversity in the workforce. This call for proposals was a perfect fit for the URSON, and it already was a topic that met Kathy's passion.

Evaluating whether the initiative is worth pursuing

Kathy states that "*I thought it was worth taking a chance because we had grant money to support it, so it wasn't going to be a financial hardship*." Increasing diversity in the workforce was already such a passion of Kathy's. Kathy and the director of the Accelerated Bachelor's for Non-Nurses (APNN) program at the time already considered applicants' backgrounds when reviewing candidates for the nursing program and about how that student could add to the diversity of the school and the healthcare workforce. The Dean at the time, Pat Chiverton, already had formed a "Dean's Advisory Council for Diversity, as diversity and inclusion was also a passion of hers. After Pat stepped down as Dean, this council was transitioned into the URSON Council of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion with staff, faculty, and students all serving on the council.

Kathy talks about the tripartite mission of the school and how diversity was a long-standing commitment. With the development of a new strategic plan, the URSON made this commitment visible in its graphic representation of the URSON mission and vision. "*We talked about we're more than a tripartite mission, you know, it was really four parts, and at the end, we agreed that we have still the three-part mission of research, practice, and education, but DEI encircles all of it, so it wasn't a separate mission, it was really the foundation from which each of those missions' proceeds.*"

Kathy also describes how URSON was very financially secure at the time to proceed with this innovation. Kathy and I talked about how this would not "sink the ship" by proceeding with the initiative.

Kathy also states, "*It could possibly tell us something, and so I think that's what the value of pilot work is all the time you know it's going to give you some information, it's either going to say this idea sucks or this is worth continuing forward and so with each grant application it would be reaffirmed that this was worth keeping and to keep going.*" The URSON became only one of five schools across the nation to be awarded the grant all seven times it was offered.

Planning and Gathering Resources

There were a number of key structures that needed to be put into place before they could begin implementing their initiative. First, there were a number of support services that needed to be put into place, so for example, Kathy states that the student advisors were all personally selected. Having the support of the Dean and CFO was a critical part of the innovation. The CFO, especially, was a large part of this project to ensure they could match funds. In the first year, they decided to match the grant funds of $10,000. The following year they were about to doubled the amount being matched to $20,000. Kathy also recruited Dr. Patrick Hopkins, APNN co-director, to work with her on the project, which she states was critical. Kathy had such a demanding role at URSON and already needed support to make sure everything was taken care of. The URSON director of admission, Elaine Andolina was enthusiastically involved as well, and everyone played a role in helping to write the grant proposals and implement the program initiatives.

Implementing and Monitoring the Initiative

In the beginning, the scholars were selected from the traditional application process for the school. Roughly a year in, they developed a separate application for RWJ/NCIN scholars to help formalize the process by which students were selected. This included the students giving detail, such as how they would contribute to the diversity of the workforce.

They also enlisted the support of Elaine Andolina to select the RWJ/NCIN scholars. Kathy and Patrick both had been part of the development from the beginning and were so close to the project that they felt they needed to have someone else select the scholars, so Kathy and Patrick did not meet the scholars until they began the program.

Kathy and Patrick met with the RJW/NCIN scholars once a month for mentorship as part of the mentor and leadership curriculum provided by the RWJ Foundation. During Year 2 of grant funding, the RWJ Scholars led the development of a student support program – Center for Academic and Professional Success (CAPS). Kathy supported the URSON investment of significant financial support into CAPS for student success services that provided writing tutors, math tutors, and sessions on study skills and time management skills; at one point, they were investing a quarter of a million dollars annually into the program. It became clear to them that it was critical for current students to have mentors. So RWJ/NCIN scholar graduates helped develop and implement the Near Peer Mentorship Program, serving for the first several years as the mentors themselves.

Kathy states, "*One nice thing about having a grant is it keeps you accountable. These were annual awards, but then every quarter, you had to produce a report, so that kept us on target to know what the initiatives were and to know the student's progression. So, we had very clearly written reports, and then you had to do an annual summary at the end of the grant so we had all the information.*" Kathy also talks about that because the innovation was grant-supported, everything was constantly monitored, and as outcomes were clearly in a positive trajectory, there was no question about applying for the next round of grant funding.

When I asked Kathy for more detail about what indicated a positive trajectory, she stated, "*It is the stories that each one of these individuals had that then kept you going. Kept propelling us forward; we were really seeing that lives are being changed for individuals that would not have had that opportunity before.*"

Kathy shared the following story: "*I think it was the success and the stories like the first student from Cuba who wrote about how he physically paddled a boat from Cuba to three different islands then landed in Miami at age eighteen. He then went to LPN* (Licensed Practice Nurse) *school, then got his BS degree in biology, and then he heard about this program, and so you know… he moved to Rochester to be a RWJ/NCIN scholar.*" Kathy also shares how this student, after graduation, went on to graduate school to receive his MS degree as a Pediatric Nurse Practitioner (PNP) and Neonatal Nurse Practitioner (NNP), his Doctor of Nursing Practice and is currently serving as a URSON faculty member.

Lastly, while monitoring the initiative, Kathy states, "*It wasn't just changing their lives, but it was creating them to be leaders to change others' lives.*"

Ensuring Long-Term Sustainability

There were a few factors that helped keep this initiative long-term sustainable. One was that they made this such an intricate and foundational part of URSON that it would be pretty difficult to undo. Secondly, there was a large market of applicants applying to this program, and URSON was very financially secure. Lastly, the successful history of the program and terrific outcomes, including ninety-one student scholars with close to 100% NCLEX pass rates, led to its long-term sustainability. Kathy estimates that twenty-five to thirty of those scholars have become faculty for URSON or are currently faculty.

After being awarded the grant all seven years in a row (one of only five schools in the country to accomplish this), the RWJ/NCIN program concluded. However, because URSON had already been matching twice as much as the grant, they were able to create the Dean's Diversity Scholars Program that currently continues the original initiative, just without funding from the grant. The CAPS program also still continues to help all current students, and a Dean's Diversity Fellowship was created to support former scholars to advance and receive their Doctorates financially. URSON also received the Health Professions Higher Education Excellence in Diversity Award (HEED) for six consecutive years, recognizing the accomplishments of the school's DEI commitment.

Observations and lessons learned

After conducting this interview, I think it takes several things to initiate value-adding innovations in education successfully. I think one of the foundational attributes the entrepreneur needs to have is passion. Kathy began this initiative close to 15 years ago, and you can still hear that passion and fire for this innovation as she spoke about it. Kathy spoke about a passion developing over time that goes straight to your core, not one you can just jump into.

The importance of building a team and one that is just as passionate about the innovation as you are. It's so easy to try to do everything yourself. However, there can be many moving parts that need to be addressed, and you can't do it all yourself. The success of the innovations can truly rest on bringing in the right people.

The importance of how the initiative aligns with a number of things. How does it align with your own passion, align with the passion and vision of others, especially stakeholders such as Deans and faculty, and how does it align with the mission of your school or organization? Kathy's innovation did not only just align with everyone's vision; it became foundational in the school's mission, and it encompassed everything the school believed in.

I learned more about the importance of piloting an initiative and that you will learn something either way. Maybe even where you can rework things to bring even more value to the innovation.

Now, not every initiative will have the stability this one did. However, having a grant and the school being very financially stable really helped to develop this initiative with the care that it needed in order to be successful. Could this have been as successful if it weren't for the money to match and even double the grant money? To have the finances to develop and expand the CAPS program to support the students in their education and studies.

Along the lines of having the right people, even though this may be your initiative, having mentors and people that can direct you and support you is huge. No one can ever know it all, and building support and connections are something I think many successful entrepreneurs learn how to do.

I think the grant they had helped as well. Not just about the financial support it provided but the continuous monitoring. The grant kept all involved accountable and kept the program on track. I think any innovation can be successful if everyone is on the same page, tracking success along the way and remaining accountable; the grant provided that in this initiative. Worthwhile for entrepreneurs to note that if they don't have a grant, how will they keep themselves on track and accountable?

To hear the stories of not only how the students' lives were changed but how they passed it forward and the impact they would make on others' lives. That is an innovation that adds value in unimaginable ways. This interview and discussion have most certainly added value to my thinking and learning.

Appendix B-5.

Bonnie Rubenstein: An innovative counselor educator

Maggie Dorgan – Rochester City School District (2023)

Background information

Bonnie Rubenstein is a State University of New York at Brockport graduate with a bachelor's degree in Psychology, CAS in Educational Leadership, a Master's in Counseling, and an EdD in Counseling and Human Development from the University of Rochester. Bonnie currently works as a Professor and the Chair of the Counseling and Human Development program at the University of Rochester Warner School of Education and is the director of the Urban Teaching and Leadership program. Previously, Bonnie was an active member of the Rochester City School District (RCSD). She wore many hats in both urban and suburban settings as she was a counselor, head of counseling for two decades, assistant principal, and she worked as a substitute administrator later in her career.

Bonnie also has a background in grief and loss, and trauma-informed response research. Through conducting home interviews to analyze themes of parental separation and divorce:

"*It became apparent that divorce resulted in not only loss of the non-custodial parent but losses of residence, community, rituals, routines, sense of childhood, and organized social activities. This has led over the years of research and clinical scholarship on the impact of grief and loss and the response of educators to these issues.*"

Another research interest involves increasing counselors' ability to serve English Language Learners and students with interrupted formal education. As stated previously, Bonnie's focus is on equitable approaches to education.

Key innovations and their value-added

Across the many roles she has played, Bonnie has focused heavily on advocating for and listening to her students and their communities. At RCSD, she implemented college- and career-readiness programs and comprehensive school counseling programs for 34,000 students district-wide and supervised 91 school counselors. Bonnie initiated district-wide SAT and PSAT days where students were able to take these two college readiness exams. Bonnie noticed that there was a lack of attendance due to transportation issues, work conflicts, and other life events happening on the weekends for her students. She was able to start an SAT Day after connecting with College Board and Adam Urbanski. During SAT days, Bonnie proposed that Seniors were taken on college tours to local colleges to help them get a feel for what they would like to do or where they would like to attend in the fall if they were to stay local. Bonnie is also one of the main people who advocated for more school counseling positions and added services within the Rochester City School District.

In her current role as a Professor and Program Chair, she focuses on training the next generation of school counselors, and on instilling passion in her students so that they can become systemic change agents in their schools. Her focus on equity and access in her teachings provides aspiring counselors with tools to reduce the effects of environmental and institutional barriers that impede student academic success. In her courses, students are asked to analyze data elements and explore issues of equity. The systemic barriers that restrict urban school students' access to and acquisition of educational achievement, especially for traditionally underserved groups is a topic of discussion in almost all her courses today.

In-depth story of an innovation: SAT DAY

How the idea came about and was evaluated/refined

When Bonnie was the director of counseling for Rochester City School District, she partnered with the College Board and was able to form an agreement that all our kids need to take the SAT all juniors and seniors. Bonnie recalled RCSD being the first urban district to not charge scholars for the exam. This was 20 years ago. Bonnie states:

"*The kids would not come on Saturday because they had part-time jobs or they slept in, lack of transportation, or it was a cold, rainy October day. I said if we're gonna use the PSAT for diagnostic purposes that even the SAT, you know, we got to get the kids while they are in school… we have to give them access. It's not equitable because it's not there. They don't have money to sign up for it. So anyways, so we were the first urban district I believe, to offer the PSAT during the week on Wednesday, with at no cost, were the kids.*"

Bonnie noticed that not all students were able to attend SAT days set up through the college board. She recognized that not all parents could get their child to the testing site due to their work schedule or their child's schedule conflict with their own job. As a result, there was less turnout for exams. Another issue was payments and how these students who worked to support their families or themselves might not have had the money to spend on this exam. However, Bonnie understood from her experience in her pursuit of her master's and EdD, school officials and staff members have an opportunity to reduce the effects of environmental and institutional barriers that impede student academic success, and that is how she initiated this innovation. It was clear to her that the number of students going to college was rising, therefore the amount who want to attend but may not have the resources was also climbing at a similar rate.

Planning and gathering the needed resources

Relationships with people within the district seemed to support this developing initiative. Bonnie claims, "*Not only do you have to collect data, but you have to have relationships*". She had a good relationship with the Board of Education and with the College Board. She had served on the New York State Board of the College Board, so she knew a lot of people there. On a local level, Bonnie teamed up with the head of the Rochester Teachers Association, Adam Urbanski, whom she initially partners with to bring more counselors into the district to support students before problems became worse without anyone knowing. It's all about networking. Outside of this, Bonnie was able to provide data to the board– the attendance taken for PSATs and SATs on Saturdays. Data was also derived from the College Board and SAT test scores.

"*We realized the kids were not coming in on a Saturday to take these tests because as I said, they have part-time jobs, or their parents work their jobs on the weekends, or you know, no transportation, no money to sign up for them, to cold, rainy October day. So, we looked at the data, and we said, oh my god, we got to do it during the day. I think it was it was a no-brainer, because who could argue with this, right? We needed to get the College Board to give us a contract where the cost was minimal to the school district.*"

Once the school was provided this information, Bonnie was given the go-ahead to connect with the college board and gather information and testing tools for a school SAT day.

Implementation and monitoring the initiative

At the time of implementation, Bonnie was still the director of counseling in the district. Bonnie was able to secure a contract with the College Board and begin SAT testing in schools on a Wednesday during the Fall and again in the Spring. Teachers of these students who were taking the tests were assigned as proctors for the morning periods to support each testing room. Bonnie understood that the school would need to staff these SAT days and that using teachers and staff members to proctor the exam would be the most cost-effective, cost-reducing way to make sure this initiative was profitable for the district. The schools were able to utilize classrooms for testing in a wing of the school where there would be no interruptions, and bells would be turned off to limit distractions as well. Any student in any other grade who would not be participating in SAT or PSAT day would be involved in an alternate activity. While the activity was at the school's discretion, Bonnie and Central Office must approve of the activity. Seniors who had already participated and were starting to apply for college were able to go on college tours, and those in the lower school were able to do activities in the auditorium, gymnasium, or on field trips.

Ensuring sustainability and/or growth

This initiative began in 2004 and ran for eight years under Bonnie's supervision. And while Bonnie has been out of the city school district's central office since 2012, this initiative continues today, allowing any student to take the SAT for free during their time at school in the Rochester City School District. Not only has this increased attendance, but this also allows students to access a college acceptance that they might not have received if this day did not exist.

I asked Bonnie how she feels about her initiative and how it impacts students today.

"*Our mission is to transform lives and make the world more just and humane, and so offering these you know, resources to kids who don't have resources, really does transform lives and make the world more just and humane.*"

Bonnie's goal was to make sure every child had the opportunity to go to college and she knew that this was an opportunity the district wouldn't turn down as there are already issues of attendance and graduation rates at stake. She was able to pinpoint a vital piece of the puzzle that was missing for RCSD and the students it serves. She was able to make it low-cost for the district, at $13 for each student at the time of the initial implementation.

"*I always talk about the cartoon with the little kid. There's a big ladder. And there's a big wall. And there's a kid that has*

a lot of resources, a lot of family support, and so on. So of course they can get over the wall. And there's a kid who has the short ladder. So, I'm always for the kid who has a short ladder and giving them the resources to get over the wall."

Monitoring occurs through attendance on days that the SAT is offered, as well as comparing scores from in-school test dates, versus out-of-school dates. Surveys are also distributed by the district to track how helpful families feel this service is to them. Bonnie made sure that she connected with people she knew within the central office, the board of education, and the college board at all levels to make sure that there were enough people to support and understand the need for this program.

Observations and lessons learned

After working with Bonnie as a professor for two and a half years now, I have come to realize she is one of the most considerate, and driven professionals that I have worked with. She has done nothing but dedicate her time to the greater Rochester community since she started as a school counselor at one of the suburban schools. While I knew that she did great things as a professional during her time at the Rochester City School District, I was unaware that she was the reason why I had to sit with test mods during the SAT school day during my practicum hours. This initiative not only serves thousands of students, but it allows them to apply to college if they choose to do so. It also takes things off their parents' plates in terms of getting their students to school on a day other than a weekday and keeps money in their pockets. While Bonnie did not talk about how money was secured to pay for each child, or what risks she saw in this program, it helped me to understand that she was confident in what she was doing and that those details from 19 years ago meant nothing in terms of supporting her students. If there is one thing, I will always remember about Bonnie is that she puts others before herself all the time, and she is always prepared to listen to "her students". She will always find a way to support someone. Bonnie embodies a true entrepreneur who is fearless and is not afraid of risks when it comes to supporting something she believes in. It is true that communication is everything, and that data speaks for itself. It is important to be able to back your hypothesis and resolution with data like Bonnie did with the SAT school day. It is also so important to utilize your resources to minimize cost, and in times to seek support about how effective the initiative is.

Appendix B-6.

Carol St. George: Developing an externally-funded reading program for disadvantaged elementary students

Allison Yerger – University of Rochester (2021)

Background information

Professor Carol St. George has a decades-long history as an educator. Although she may not have always recognized it, her journey as an educator has been filled with substantial endeavors that were entrepreneurial in nature. Starting her career in 1974, she taught elementary school grades of kindergarten, third, fourth and fifth in the Greece Central School District. The district had, at the time, about 13,500 students, with 13 elementary schools, three middle schools and 3 high schools. During her years as a classroom teacher, she held many various leadership positions in her school building and district. She was recruited to become a teacher on special assignment (TOSA) and served as one of only three full time release district mentors for all newly hired teachers to the district. She was personally responsible for mentoring ten new teachers yearly helping them with all aspects of teaching such as planning and implementing lessons, assessment, classroom management, communicating with families and negotiating district policies and requirements, and supporting all other expectations of new teachers. Her goal was to first, help and support the new teachers assigned to her and second, get them "invited" back after their first year, while also having them want to return to the classroom after their first year. Another responsibility was to provide professional development for all faculty, staff, and administrators in the district, for example Basic literacy In-Service Courses. Being a mentor to new teachers and professional development provider led to her pursuing her EdD at Warner School of Education. While working in the district as a TOSA, she served as an adjunct professor at Warner School, Niagara University and The College of Brockport. After graduating with her doctorate, she was hired full time at Warner as Director of Reading and Literacies and a professor in Teaching Curriculum and has held this position since 2009.

Key innovations and their value-added

Throughout her robust career as an educator, Dr. St. George has successfully implemented a number of entrepreneurial innovations. For example, while working as a third grade teacher, Dr. St. George initiated a collaboration between her students and the local nursing home. Aware of the all too common issue of senior loneliness and the benefits of introducing children to different walks of life, Dr. St. George knew that this innovation would add value to all involved by building connections and offering students a unique cultural learning opportunity. For the entire school year, students and nursing home residents were paired, communicated daily or weekly through letters, and participated in monthly face-to-face activities. This developed strong bonds and relationships between the pairs. Students also interviewed their older partners and compiled a book as a culminating gift. Writing grants to get transportation required for the visits, getting funds for snacks, book publication, and materials for crafts, and arranging for volunteer help were some of the necessary parts of the success of the initiative. Many lives were positively affected from the collaboration.

Another innovation that Dr. St. George ventured was a year-long collaboration with her fourth grade class and anthropology, music, education, and art students from The College of Brockport. Dr. St. George and the college students designed a curriculum around the Inuit community in Anaktuvuk Pass, Alaska. Through her network of local professionals, Dr. St. George was made aware of the anthropology class and was able to secure their partnership. All the curriculum subjects, such as math, science, social studies and language arts centered around the history, geography, culture, legends, animal habitats, and overall culture of the Alaskan region. Much of this new curriculum material was made by Dr. St. George herself in order to keep costs down. The students had video calls with children in the area through a platform called 'CU-C me.' Using video calls helped to save on transportation costs. Through the year, the 4th graders rewrote familiar stories placing them into Inuit life and culture. Musicians came to teach the children Inuit style drumming, artists came to help them make Inuit style masks and dancers helped the students perform their Inuit stories. The entire project was presented at Scholar's Day at the college. For many students and parents who accompanied them, it was their first experience on a college campus. Dr. St. George recognized the lack of hands-on cultural education in the existing curriculum. This initiative added value to the students' education by providing a multi-sensory, comprehensive and fun way to learn and experience a different culture and way of life.

Recently Dr. St. George became involved in a grant that partners her with doctors at the UR medical school. They

are currently working on an app to be used by pregnant and new mothers that will have medical information and information about supporting literacy learning pre-birth. Dr. St. George believes, and research supports, that literacy is a major contributor to health and well being, therefore, this innovation adds value to the expecting mothers by enhancing their ability to support their own and their child's health and well being.

According to Dr. St.George, her most successful long-term initiative is Project READ, a privately funded literacy intervention program designed to support Rochester City School District's (RCSD) student literacy learning and Warner teaching candidate's ability to be outstanding literacy professionals. Project READ has been in place for over 10 years. Reading and Literacies master's students, other U of R and Warner students, and volunteers provide strategic literacy intervention to targeted RCSD students at first grade and middle/high school. Dr. St. George goes with her Warner students into the school to provide support and model best teaching strategies. She also teaches a weekly seminar for the Warner literacy interns to help support their work with the children assigned to them. Through data relating to test scores and graduation rates, the need for literacy support in RCSD is clear. Project READ adds value to students, teachers and RCSD as a whole by providing literacy intervention to teachers and students in need.

In-depth story of an innovation: Project READ

How the idea came about and was evaluated/refined

Dr. St. George first had the idea for Project READ when in 2008 a woman who volunteered in a first grade classroom at RCSD #36 was concerned that a teacher was considering retaining 16 of the 21 first grade students rather than sending them on to 2nd grade, because the students were very behind in their literacy development. This woman, who is not an educator, knew that retention was not a good idea and came to Warner as a school of education to see what could be done for these children. The Dean at the time asked Dr. St. George if she thought she could help. With one TA and a handful of her friends who volunteered, Dr. St. George went into the classroom and offered literacy support to the students. This was in January. By May, twelve of the sixteen students were able to move onto 2nd grade, one student went to special ed, and three others moved out of the school. This means that 75%of the targeted students were successfully moving on with their peers to 2nd grade. Inspired by this success, Dr. St. George decided to pursue her idea of Project READ as a long-term initiative that each year would support children in similar situations, leveraging her graduate literacy students.

Planning and gathering the needed resources

In order to develop Project READ, funding needed to be secured to support stipends for the literacy students and provide tuition credit for the supporting seminar instituted to provide the students with training and support as they implemented the literacy intervention. Private funding was also used for salary and materials. Dr. St. George created a written plan for the program describing the targeted aims and a structure for Warner students' time commitment. This plan was used as the basis for a proposal to help secure the needed funding. Fortunately, a private funder provided the money that was needed to support the project for the first three years. Dr. St. George, interns, and volunteers provided the necessary human skills resources.

With the financial and human resources assured, Dr. St. George was able to move forward with her plan and little refining of the original idea was needed. The next step in preparing to launch the innovation was getting the targeted elementary school's buy-in. The school leaders needed to agree to having literacy support for their students. Based on the success of the RCSD #36 class, the school administration was very agreeable. However, an additional important component was gaining the support of the classroom teachers. As a veteran classroom teacher herself, Dr. St. George knew that support stemming from outside the district was not always helpful or wanted, and she recognized that no one wants to feel that they are being judged or evaluated by outsiders. Building trust with the classroom teachers was essential so that they would welcome the innovation and share their students. This trust was gained by reaching out to the teachers and having open conversations that addressed their concerns. The combination of Dr. St. George's literacy expertise, personal experience as an elementary school educator, and delicate interpersonal skills made her the ideal leader for this entrepreneurial innovation.

Implementing and monitoring the innovation

Now that the necessary resources had been accrued and buy-in from the school and teachers had been established, it was time to implement and monitor the innovation. Literacy growth needed to be measured to provide evidence that

the intervention work was successful. This was accomplished through the use of district standardized testing along with literacy assessments and observational notes that the interns and volunteers created. The classroom teacher's perspective was also a valuable tool in monitoring the success of the program. Each year in order to monitor the innovation and its long-term sustainability, Dr. St. George considers the collected quantitative data provided by the testing results, the qualitative data provided through teacher feedback and volunteer and intern notes, while taking into account the students' emotional/social needs, the Warner interns' needs, and remaining access to funding.

Ensuring long-term sustainability and/or bigger impact

Project READ has been very successful and is currently in its 12th year of implementation. Every three years Dr. St.George has submitted a request to the same local foundation to continue to support the project, and so far has continued to receive funding. At some point in the process School #36 closed, but she was able to move the initiative to other schools in the same urban district (elementary School #33 and a middle school, the East Lower School).

Value added by this initiative

Since the program's launch, it has brought over a hundred Warner students into classrooms to gain experience working directly with students. Hundreds of RSCD students have had their literacy supported by Project READ. These students benefited from participation in the program in a multitude of ways. At School #33, 100% of the students were observed to have gained confidence in their own abilities as students, especially as literacy learners. Data from NWEA and Fountas & Pinnell running reading records indicates that participating students showed improvement in reading, some showing dramatic growth. On average, when compared to their peers who did not receive the intervention, Project READ students often made twice as much progress during the same period, generally at least one full year of reading growth. This dramatic progress enabled the students to catch up to their peers and successfully complete first grade on par and often exceeding their peers. Increased student engagement was demonstrated by improved attendance, especially on days when students worked with interns, classroom teachers reported improved behavior and classroom participation. At East Lower School, students also made progress on their reading goals, though it is difficult to pinpoint each individual's progress using this year's focus of classroom support. Dr. St. George, literacy interns and classroom teachers believe that Project READ helped lead to the success demonstrated by improvement in the end of the year state ELA testing scores when compared to the previous year. Reading and literacies Interns themselves also benefited greatly from Project READ. Over the years, more than a hundred of interns have worked collaboratively in the schools with district teachers and administrators to support student literacy learning and gained real life experience. Interns were engaged in administering assessments such as running reading records, analyzing data, problem solving, designing and implementing individualized lessons, attending and providing professional development, communicating with families, and providing materials for home support. As a result, the interns have developed excellent skills as reading teachers and literacy specialists and have been highly sought after for employment. The vast majority of these interns have chosen to work as reading specialists in urban settings, many currently in the RCSD. Although Dr. St. George predicted that her innovation would be a success and positively impact many lives, she could not have foreseen all of these indirect benefits of her entrepreneurial endeavor.

Observations and lessons learned

As I continue my journey towards becoming a school counselor, many themes have become transparent. One of these themes is the importance of mentors. Reflecting on the reasons as to why I chose to enter the school counseling field, I am reminded of the many individuals who have made an imprint in my life by providing support and guidance. Although the inspiration and encouragement that these role models offered me was not always verbal or even intentional, the behaviors they modeled are characteristics that I strive to embody to this day. Perhaps someday I will fill this role for a future student, however, today I continue to look to those who I perceive as leaders for direction. After completing an interview with Dr. Carol St. George, a veteran educator and true entrepreneur, I feel fortunate to have had the opportunity to learn from such an established professional. I now have a deeper understanding of the entrepreneurial skills that educators use to act as agents of change and my desire to enter the education career field myself has been amplified.

Through this interview, I have gained insights into the process of initiating value-adding innovations in education. Looking at Dr. St. George's innovations, I can see that identifying areas that are in need of support is the first step

towards being able to add value. It is Dr. St. George's knowledge of the essential role that literacy plays in living sustainable and fulfilling lives and her awareness of the lack in literacy support within the RCSD that led to her creation of Project READ and partnership with UR medical school. Project READ started with a group of volunteers who had the goal of helping students graduate a class grade. Through this initial group's good intentions, evolved a long-term sustainable program that has benefited countless lives. I see now that groundbreaking innovations do not always require substantial financial investments. A team of determined volunteers can be the key factor in an innovation's success. Entrepreneurial educators do not generally aim to produce revenue. Their innovations produce positive life changes. The education industry is ultimately about improving children's lives. Although human determination can be a leading factor in this pursuit, as Dr. Carol St. George's innovations show, a vast entrepreneurial skill set ranging from using data to evaluate a program's effectiveness to establishing buy-in can also be required to produce successful value adding innovations.

Appendix C.

Opportunity Evaluation Tool (2013)

Raffaella Borasi – University of Rochester (2013)

*You can download this Opportunity Evaluation Tool HERE.

Quick Screening: Respond to the questions based on your knowledge/ "gut instincts" and identify what kind of data you would need to verify and expand upon your assumptions. ***Phase I*** (if Quick Screening is positive): Respond to the "Phase I Questions" after having collected some data/ done some additional research

Brief description of the proposed initiative:

Phase I. Potential value of the initiative:

- A. What potential benefits could this initiative provide to your organization if successful?
- B. What are potential limitations/ drawbacks of this initiative?
- C. What main need(s) is this initiative addressing? How important are these needs to our organization/mission?
- D. How does this initiative fit with our mission and current strategic plan (if any)? What specific component(s) of the mission/ strategic plan would it address?

Phase I Questions

1. ***What additional information would be critical to address some of the previous questions? How could you effectively gather that information?***
2. ***How could the initiative be modified to increase potential benefits and/or decrease limitations?***

Summary evaluation:

1. Not valuable
2. Some value, but low – probably not worth it
3. It has value, although marginal to our mission
4. Of definite value – worth exploring
5. Of high value, central to the mission – pursue if at all possible

Additional comments:

Phase II. Market opportunities of the initiative:

- E. Is there a demand for the products/services that this initiative will generate? Are there changes in the environment that may have affected the equilibrium in the market place and, thus, create a new opportunity that this initiative can address?
  -
- F. Who are the potential "end users" who would benefit from the initiative? Do we think that there is dissatisfaction with the existing products/services or new needs that have emerged that could create a demand for what we are proposing? Do we think that end users would perceive the new product/service provided by the initiative as having a significant new value that exceeds competing offerings in the market?
  -
- G. Who would be willing to pay for the products/services?(i.e., who would be the "customers")
  -
- H. Who are the potential competitors? Are the competitors unable to serve the customers in this particular area?
  -

***Phase II Questions*:**

1. ***What additional information would be critical to address some of the previous questions? How could you effectively gather that information?***
2. ***How could the initiative be modified to increase its appeal and/or make it stand out compared with the competition?***

Summary evaluation:

1. (We think) there is very limited market for this initiative
2. (We think) there is some demand for the proposed product/service, but not clear who the customers are and how they could be reached OR whether we can compete with our potential competitors
3. (We think) there is some demand for the product and potential for us to attract customers, and we are comparable to other potential competitors
4. (We think) there is a clear demand for the product and potential for us to attract customers (but not clear if they would pay as needed for these services)
5. (We think) there is clear demand for the product and potential for us to attract customers, and reasons to believe that customers will be willing to pay for it

Additional comments:

Phase III. Capacity to implement the initiative:

- I. What kind of person is needed to lead this initiative? Who could do that, and how could this person be secured for this project?
- J. What people resources would be needed to implement this initiative and why (i.e., what are the key qualifications for the tasks required)? How much of their time would the initiative take?
- K. Are these key players available to work this initiative? i.e., if already working within the organization, are they willing to do it and what will they have to give up in order to do this? if not, can they be hired or can their collaboration be secured otherwise (and how)?
- L. What facilities, infrastructures or other resources would the initiative require? Do we have them? If yes, how would their use affect the rest of our operations? If no, how could they be acquired or their used secured?
- M. Who would we need to secure as collaborators for the success of this initiative? Can we secure their collaboration, and if so how?

***Phase III Questions*:**

1. ***What additional information would be critical to address some of the previous questions? How could you effectively gather that information?***
2. ***How could the initiative be modified to make it more "doable"? Are there opportunities to partner with other organizations that could provide some of the resources we may be missing?***

Summary evaluation:

1. We do not have and cannot identify the necessary personnel/structures to implement the initiative
2. We have (or have identified) the necessary personnel/structures to do it, but they are not available at the moment
3. We have (or have identified) the necessary personnel/structures and there is willingness for their use, although at the expense of other important projects
4. We have (or have identified) the necessary personnel/structures to do it and we have found a way to devote them to the proposed project
5. We have access to excellent personnel/structures to do it and the project will create synergy with other existing projects

Additional comments:

Phase IV. Financial viability of the initiative:

- N. What potential revenues or cost savings, if any, could the project generate? Under what circumstances? What do we expect the revenues/ cost-savings to be overtime?
- O. What "marginal costs" (one-time start-up and on-going) would this initiative add to our existing operations? Under what circumstances? What use of existing structures/ services/ personnel would it require, and how would that affect the rest of our operations?
- P. Do we expect the revenues to be greater/less than the expected costs? Under what circumstances/at what point in time would we "break even"?
- Q. How could we secure funding for start-up costs and/or continuing costs?

***Phase IV Questions*:**

1. ***What additional information would be critical to address some of the previous questions? How could you effectively gather that information?***
2. ***How could the initiative be modified to decrease costs? What could make it more appealing to potential funders?***

Summary evaluation:

1. Too costly – out of reach
2. Possible only if we can secure additional/external funding to support it
3. Could be covered within our current operating budget or existing grants, but at the expense of other important initiatives
4. Expected revenues will at least off-set costs and we can secure the necessary resources for start-up costs
5. Likely to generate substantial net revenues and we can secure the necessary resources for start-up costs

Additional comments:

Phase V. Potential risks of the initiative:

- R. What could we lose if we embark in this initiative and it is not successful (sink-the-boat mistake)? Under what circumstances and how likely is that to happen?
- S. What could we do to minimize sink-the-boat risks?
- T. What could we lose if we do NOT embark in this initiative (missing-the-boat mistake)? Under what circumstances and how likely is that to happen?

***Phase V Questions*:**

1. ***What additional information would be critical to address some of the previous questions? How could you effectively gather that information?***
2. ***How could the initiative be modified to decrease and/or better control for potential risks?***

Summary evaluation:

1. The risks and implications of not being successful are too big for us to take
2. There are considerable risks if we fail, but we may be willing to take them under certain circumstances
3. The risks and implications of failing are balanced by those of not embarking in the initiative
4. The risks and implications of not embarking in the initiative out-weigh those of failing in the initiative AND/OR we have good strategies to minimize sink-the-boat risks
5. Sink-the-boat mistakes are minimal/easy to address AND missing-the-boat mistakes are significant/worthwhile

Additional comments:

Phase VI. Timeframe for the initiative:

- U. How much time do we have to take advantage of the opportunity to engage in this initiative? Does the initiative (or part of it) need to be implemented before a certain date or event in order to be effective? Would there be any advantages to waiting?
- V. How much time would it take us to get ready to implement the initiative?
- W. Do we have enough time to respond to the opportunity of engaging in this initiative? What is the "margin for error"?
- X. What is the right time for us to take on this initiative?

Phase VI Questions:

1. ***What additional information would be critical to address some of the previous questions? How could you effectively gather that information?***
2. ***How could the initiative be modified to improve its timing and/or to ensure we can take advantage of its window of opportunity?***

Summary evaluation:

1. We do not have the time necessary to respond to the opportunity to engage in this initiative
2. We may be able to respond to the opportunity to engage in this initiative timely, but is not be the right time for us to do it
3. We can respond to the opportunity to engage in this initiative timely, but at the expense of postponing other important projects
4. We can respond to the opportunity to engage in this initiative timely without sacrificing other priorities
5. We can respond to the opportunity to engage in this initiative timely without sacrificing other priorities and we have a competitive advantage for doing so at this particular point in time

Additional comments:

Phase VII. Comparative value of the initiative:

- Y. What are alternative ways to address the same need(s)? Are any of these alternatives a better choice than the proposed initiative?
  -

- Z. What will we have to put aside if we decide to do this project, given our limited resources ("opportunity cost")? That is, are there other projects we may have to drop in order to pursue this initiative? How would the value of these projects compare with that of the proposed initiative?
  -

- **Phase VII Questions:**

1. **What additional information would be critical to address some of the previous questions? How could you effectively gather that information?**
2. **How could the initiative be modified to decrease its "opportunity costs"? Do any of the alternative considered suggest ways to improve on the original idea?**

Summary evaluation:

1. We clearly have better uses for the same resources
2. We have better uses for the same resources at this point in time, although different circumstances (or modifications in the project) could change this evaluation
3. This initiative competes with other important projects for the same available resources
4. The initiative will not require sacrificing other major priorities
5. The initiative will not require sacrificing other major priorities and we cannot think of a better use for the same resources

Additional comments:

Summary evaluation:

- I. Potential value of the initiative: 1 2 3 4 5
- II. Market opportunities of the initiative: 1 2 3 4 5
- III. Capacity to implement the initiative: 1 2 3 4 5
- IV. Financial viability of the initiative: 1 2 3 4 5
- V. Potential risks of the initiative: 1 2 3 4 5
- VI. Timeframe for the initiative: 1 2 3 4 5
- VII. Comparative value of the initiative: 1 2 3 4 5

OVERALL DECISION:

1. DROP – not worth pursuing
2. POST-PONE & RE-EVALUATE – it may be worthwhile to pursue under different circumstances, but not now
3. DO IF POSSIBLE – worth doing, but only under the right circumstances (ex: dedicated funding; assignment of resources to competing projects; etc.)

4. DO – worth doing now (even if it were to be at the expense of other projects)
5. MUST DO – it is one of the best things we could do now

Overall comments: