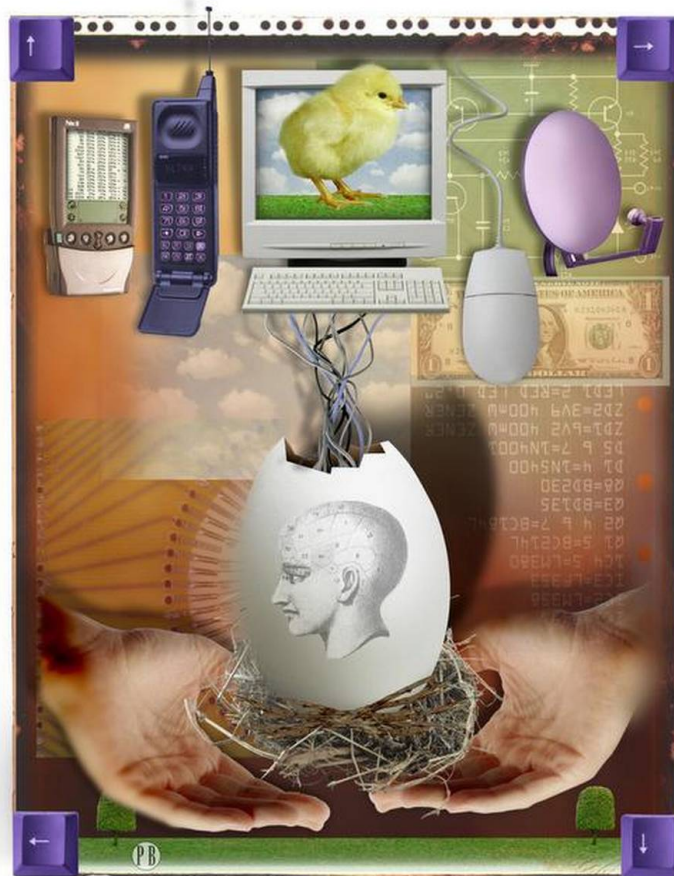


Miami Dade College's Idea Center will create successful mindset

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PHILIP BROOKER/MCT

We've all heard that familiar blanket assessment at some point in our lives: "You've either got it or you don't."

It might have rung in your ears on an athletic field, stung you in a classroom or dampened your confidence in a work environment. Granted, most of us don't have Michael Jordan's athleticism or Einstein's smarts, but, nonetheless, most of the time that mantra of "you've got it or you don't" is dead wrong. And contrary to popular opinion, it's off the mark when it comes to innovation and entrepreneurship.

Miami Dade College (MDC) and Knight Foundation are about to prove it with the introduction of the Idea Center at MDC. Entrepreneurship is a skill to be learned, and one that finds its expression in every aspect of community life. Through our partnership with Knight Foundation, which has committed \$2.1 million toward the development of the Idea Center, and Babson College, one of the nation's leading entrepreneurial institutions, we're introducing entrepreneur-focused programming that will span the curriculum, cultivating ideas and entrepreneurial ventures in a full range of business and social endeavors.

I've spent more than 40 years in a college environment with students who might not have had Harvard credentials at the start. But in fact, many MDC students have transferred to Harvard and other top flight universities, and countless others have become leaders of every major industry and public sector in our community.

The Idea Center will offer that same supportive environment, the same spirit of possibility to young entrepreneurs. The Idea Center will be an education-focused accelerator where students and young business leaders can test and refine ideas and budding ventures alongside seasoned and dedicated faculty and entrepreneurs.

We're creating an entrepreneurial mindset and infusing it across the full scope of MDC's curriculum. Entrepreneurial energy comes from a myriad of disciplines, from business and science and technology to the arts, humanities and more. In a community in which small business is the essential economic driver, entrepreneurs of every stripe have the opportunity to elevate the quality of life for everyone. The entrepreneurial mindset then becomes as important as educating for specific jobs.

We live in one of America's leading-edge communities. We are a young and diverse amalgam, too often hampered by a lack of economic opportunity. But dynamic ideas — and needs — exist in every neighborhood, and the Idea Center's programs can open a doorway of possibility.

Programs in the works include the Idea Factory, in support of novice innovators; the Startup Challenge, which will host a lively competition among new innovators and provide initial support to the winners; Phase II Ventures, offering a resource for students already engaged in small business ventures that are ready for the next level; and the Lean LaunchPad, providing students the chance to test new products and gain direct input from customers.

The Idea Center will also be home to the CREATE Accelerator (Center for Research and Transformative Entrepreneurship), supporting students and aspiring entrepreneurs in moving their ideas to market and sustaining successful businesses.

Students will also have direct contact with industry leaders who become mentors and models in the entrepreneurial process. The Idea Center will be guided by a 21-member board of advisors from South Florida and across the nation. Many got their start at Miami Dade College, among the more than 2 million strong since 1960, many of whom will serve as a rich resource for the Idea Center.

“You’ve either got it or you don’t” is not a phrase you’ll hear at the Idea Center. Together, Miami Dade College and Knight Foundation are opening a doorway of immense possibility for young entrepreneurs, young people with the spirit and creative talent to take our neighborhoods and our community to the next level.

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