

CELEB gives entrepreneurs boost: Beloit College program gives students taste of business

By Erica Pennington epennington@beloitdailynews.com | Posted: Tuesday, May 6, 2014 4:00 pm

This week the Beloit Daily News will be running a series of stories on students who have taken their ideas and turned them into business ventures thanks to Beloit College's Center for Entrepreneurship (CELEB).

Computer gurus, recording artists, bakers, clothing designers and artists are seeing grandiose dreams come to life on Grand Avenue.

The Center for Entrepreneurship in Liberal Education in Beloit (CELEB), includes Gallery ABBA, Coleman Labs, Maple Tree Studio, BATV and the Wise Foundation at 437 E. Grand Ave., in downtown Beloit.

"Here at CELEB students are starting out on their individually led ventures," said Director Brian Morello. "This is a place where they can be mentored, have space and funding for their projects to get started."

The thought process behind the center and philosophy of encouraging students to take control of their own projects began in the mid-1980s.

It wasn't until 2004, however, that CELEB truly began to take shape in downtown Beloit under the leadership of professor emeritus Jerry Gustafson.

"The whole idea is to get kids to care about what they are doing," Morello said. "It has worked."

After Gustafson's retirement from Beloit College, Morello, who is a Beloit College graduate and has years of success in business distribution, took over the program.

Entrepreneurship classes are held at the downtown Beloit facility, and students are able to apply what they have learned in class to create their own businesses or begin special projects.

"Their projects really take off when they get some help," Morello said, adding that approximately 10 percent of students use CELEB's resources at any given time.

At CELEB, students can self-select which of the resources they would most like to use, or many also migrate from one platform or "incubator" to another.

Student Ellery Addington-White Jr. has taken advantage of CELEB's opportunities to become better educated on how he can blend his interests into a business model.

“I really like the startup culture and computer science, but healthcare is probably the field I want to go into,” he said. “I’m looking for a way to tie the two together and help address the healthcare gap.”

Michelle Dillon, Brendan FitzGerald, Luke Bankord and Austin Hyatt are working together to build school spirit through designing T-shirts to be worn in the student section at sporting events.

All four are athletes and say that they saw a need for their CELEB project, HD T-Shirts, because there weren’t “Superfan” clothing options available for students to buy.

“CELEB has really helped me to find the tools needed to make our ideas a reality as opposed to it just being a concept,” Dillon said.

Whether big or small, Morello says students who stop by and use CELEB’s resources are given a head start on their ventures.

“What we are doing is really unique and we help students come away with an understanding of law, accounting and business strategy,” Morello said.

For more information on CELEB and its amenities for students, visit the website at www.beloit.edu/celeb.