

UF Entrepreneurship Faculty Fellows

Issue 1 | September 15 | 2015

Featured Fellow

Dr. Shirley Baker

Dr. Shirley Baker is an Associate Professor in the School of Forest Resources & Conservation, Fisheries and Aquatic Sciences program. She joined the Entrepreneurship Faculty Fellows in March of 2014. Dr. Baker explains, "The faculty fellows have been amazing. It's great to be able to bounce ideas off of people in totally different fields than mine. I believe that to truly have innovation, you need that outside perspective."



For her Fellows project, Dr. Baker is involved in developing and delivering a new upper-division course that explores the intersection of natural resources with entrepreneurship and innovation in a case-study based format. Students explore contemporary issues in marine science through participatory presentations and discussion. Case studies will examine the historical and scientific context of a problem and the entrepreneurial and innovative ways in which communities and businesses have responded to the problem. This course will serve as an elective for Interdisciplinary Studies Marine Sciences majors and could be considered for a core capstone course in the curriculum. The major, which debuted in Summer 2012, now has 40 students in CALS and 15 in CLAS and is rapidly growing.

Dr. Baker is spearheading her project because she believes an entrepreneurial mindset is critical in the stewardship of our natural resources. She explains:

"to solve our natural resource problems, we have to do it in new and innovative ways. Entrepreneurship and innovation are how we make leaps forward, and if we keep going the way we are now, we will not solve our problems in time."

Originally from the Pacific Northwest, she received her PhD in Marine Science from the College of William and Mary, Virginia Institute of Marine Science. Dr. Baker is the faculty advisor for the new CALS Interdisciplinary Studies track in Marine Sciences. She enjoys hiking and biking with her husband and triplet boys.

Coming Up...

- 1.) UF's Experiential Classroom— Best practices in teaching creativity, innovation, and entrepreneurship, September 17th-20th, 2015
- 2.) Global Consortium of Entrepreneurship Centers annual conference to be held at UF, October 29th-31st, 2015
- 3.) Faculty Fellows brown bag lunch events:
 - a. Wednesday, September 23rd, 12:15 – 1:30 pm
 - b. Wednesday, October 21, 12:15 -1:30 pm
 - c. Monday, November 23rd 12:15 – 1:30 pm
 - d. Wednesday, December 16, 12:15 – 1:30 pm

Dream > Believe > Create

The Fellows Program was created to foster and celebrate inter-disciplinary collaboration around creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship. We are focused on the role of entrepreneurial thinking and acting within any discipline or academic area on the University of Florida campus.

Our focus is the "entrepreneurial mindset", and how the talents, ingenuity and passion of faculty members can be used to affect innovative change. We see faculty innovations as a vehicle for transforming campuses, communities, disciplines and societies. The Fellows Program is a home for the "academic entrepreneur."



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What's an Academic Entrepreneur?

The term “academic entrepreneur”, which has come into vogue in recent years, is an intriguing (and misunderstood) notion. While some associate the term with faculty members who develop technologies and turn them into commercial ventures, this is an overly narrow conceptualization. Academic entrepreneurs are those who, as part of their work within a university, recognize and seize opportunity, innovate, leverage resources, and persist in creating new forms of value. They are change agents, difference makers – people who create a better future.

An academic entrepreneur can originate from literally any discipline or field of study. They are sociologists, doctors, artists, lawyers, engineers, social workers, accountants, biologists, historians, and everything in between. Their entrepreneurial contributions can certainly include technology commercialization, such as with the exciting work by Faculty Fellow Warren Dixon on a functional electrical stimulation cycling system for those with neurological disorders.

But they can also be responsible for:

- Redefining disciplinary boundaries;
- Introducing new schools of thought;
- Launching new political and social movements;
- Transforming how subject matter is taught;
- Affecting social change and development in the community;
- Changing how resources are actually used in society, how species are saved, environments are sustained, and life quality is improved;
- Developing and implementing new business models for how an academic unit is run and sustains itself financially and otherwise;
- Producing new forms of economic value in the private marketplace; and/or
- Creating new for-profit and non-profit ventures.

Importantly, academic entrepreneurship is more than invention or innovation – more than coming up with something new. Ultimately, it is about addressing the realities of implementation, overcoming obstacles and resistance and achieving “widespread” adoption of novel and different ways of thinking.

Consider some of our other Entrepreneurship Faculty Fellows. Jill Sonke is a recognized teacher and performer of dance. She is also a true pioneer in successfully advancing entirely new ways for patients in hospitals to recover from devastating illness through exposure to the arts. Or, consider Nancy Hardt from the College of Medicine. Nancy is making a real difference with her work to establish mobile outreach clinics that prevent bad health outcomes for kids in poverty.

There are those who might question the connection between entrepreneurship and the job security associated with tenure and working in an environment filled with rules and procedures. Yet, all entrepreneurs deal with constraints and some degree of adversity, and security is not what they seek. In actuality, the University of Florida is filled with academic entrepreneurs – people who combine imagination, passion, intellectual rigor, courage, and discipline in pursuing and capitalizing on the abundant opportunities that surround each of us.



“IF YOU CAN IMAGINE IT,
YOU CAN ACHIEVE IT.
IF YOU CAN DREAM IT,
YOU CAN BECOME IT.”

~ WILLIAM ARTHUR WARD