

# UF Entrepreneurship Faculty Fellows

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## Featured Fellow

### Ann Christiano

Professor Christiano is the Frank and Betsy Karel Endowed Chair in Public Interest Communications and a Professor in the Department of Public Relations. Before joining the University of Florida, she directed communications for The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's Vulnerable Populations portfolio. She joined the Faculty Fellows in August of 2015.



Ann came to UF to develop a curriculum, connect practitioners, and find and share science that can enrich the practice of public interest communications. She describes her field as using the tools of public relations and journalism to create positive social change. Ann notes, "Establishing this field, and being in an academic institution, feels far more entrepreneurial than I expected it to. This is a new idea, and building the field depends on the investment of time, passion and credibility by a wide range of 'investors'. Yes, we need people and organizations to invest actual money to help us grow this discipline. But the investment of effort and credibility by people working in the field is almost more valuable. When foundations and leaders direct others to look at what we're building at UF, and urge them to get involved, it carry us much further than an infusion of cash."

In thinking about the role of entrepreneurship in her work, Ann offers a valuable perspective: "To me, being entrepreneurial means earning your place at the table. Once news outlets commanded huge audiences and could broadcast a message. That world is changing, and we're finding is that they have to earn every pair of eyeballs that attends to a story or a message. Overcoming this challenge requires us to innovate every day. We have to find the best stories, the most compelling content, and connect with people in new ways." She concludes,

*"Being entrepreneurial means finding those new solutions, and being willing to break free from what's expected."*

Ann is also the Director of *frank*, a community of public interest changemakers dedicated to using strategic communications to serve the greater good. The frank2016 annual conference will be held in Gainesville from February 23-26.

## Coming Up...

- 1) Faculty Fellows monthly lunch conversations:
  - a. Wednesday, December 16, 12:15 – 1:30 pm (Law School)
  - b. Tuesday, January 19, 12:15-1:30 (conversation with Anne Stokes)
- 2) Entrepreneurship and the Social Scientist, Dec. 2, 3-5 pm, FLG 0206
- 3) Big Idea Competition Intents to Compete due on December 15, 2015
- 4) frank2016, Feb. 23-26
- 5) April 1, Women's Entrepreneurship Symposium



## Imagine > 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 Entrepreneurial \_\_\_\_\_? (*engineer, artist, doctor, sociologist, farmer, etc.*)

At a recent Fellows lunch held in the College of Engineering, two intriguing questions were asked, "How do you conceptualize an entrepreneurial engineer?" How is it different from a traditional engineer?" And to these we could add "Why does it matter?" The same questions could be applied to dancers, social workers or those in biology.

An entrepreneurial engineer is not necessarily an engineer who launches a business, although it would be exciting if every engineer started something. Rather, it is an engineer who adopts an entrepreneurial mindset, and applies this mindset to his/her professional life (and perhaps his/her personal life as well). An entrepreneurial mindset is both attitudinal and behavior---a way of thinking and of acting. Attitudinally, it involves the individual who sees themselves as:

- an agent of change in their environment
- alert to opportunities everywhere
- imbued with healthy dissatisfaction (there is always a better way)
- take ownership of problems
- a creative problem solver
- tolerant of failure

Behaviorally, the mindset concerns an action orientation (Just Do It!). It is an ongoing willingness to:

- experiment with new approaches
- demonstrate tenacity and perseverance
- bootstrap, leverage and do more with less
- act in guerrilla ways
- continually adapt
- creatively mitigate risks surrounding anything new

This mindset might lead to the starting of new for-profit and non-profit ventures, but it can also lead to successful implementation of process and product innovations in virtually any context (large companies, government agencies, a university, a church, etc.). The entrepreneurial engineer, then, is one that demonstrates this mindset in the way they continually recognize and act upon opportunities within the engineering profession---the ways in which they take responsibility not simply for coming up with innovative solutions, but for doing what is necessary to implement and sustain novel solutions.

The challenges can certainly be different in infusing the entrepreneurial mindset into engineering versus journalism or some other field. With engineers, perhaps the challenge is more about getting students to engage in more divergent thinking and not simply following existing processes, rules or traditions. Maybe the challenge with communications students are of a different nature.

But these are challenges that should be a critical element of contemporary education and pedagogy. It matters because, in an age of dynamic, complex and threatening change, careers are no longer associated with one organization over a fairly linear lifetime. Rather, we must consider models that allow for nonlinear, discontinuous, flexible career paths and reflect evolving personal needs, the desire for self-direction, changing family structures, increased mobility, and novel employee-employer relationships, among other factors. In such circumstances, the entrepreneurial mindset becomes the individual's ultimate source of sustainable competitive advantage.



*Elif Akcali, Engineering; Shirley Baker, Forest Resources & Conservation; Trevor Boyer, Engineering; Ann Christiano, Journalism & Communications; Warren Dixon, Engineering; Nancy Hardt, Medicine; Griff Jones, Education; Forrest Masters, Engineering; Edward Schaefer, Fine Arts; Daniel Sokol, Law; Jill Sonke, Fine Arts; Catherine Striley, Public Health/ Medicine; Marko Suvajdzic, Digital Worlds Institute; Michael F. Weigold, Journalism and Communications; Kristin Weitzel, Pharmacy; William Winter, Medicine*

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

~ WILLIAM ARTHUR WARD