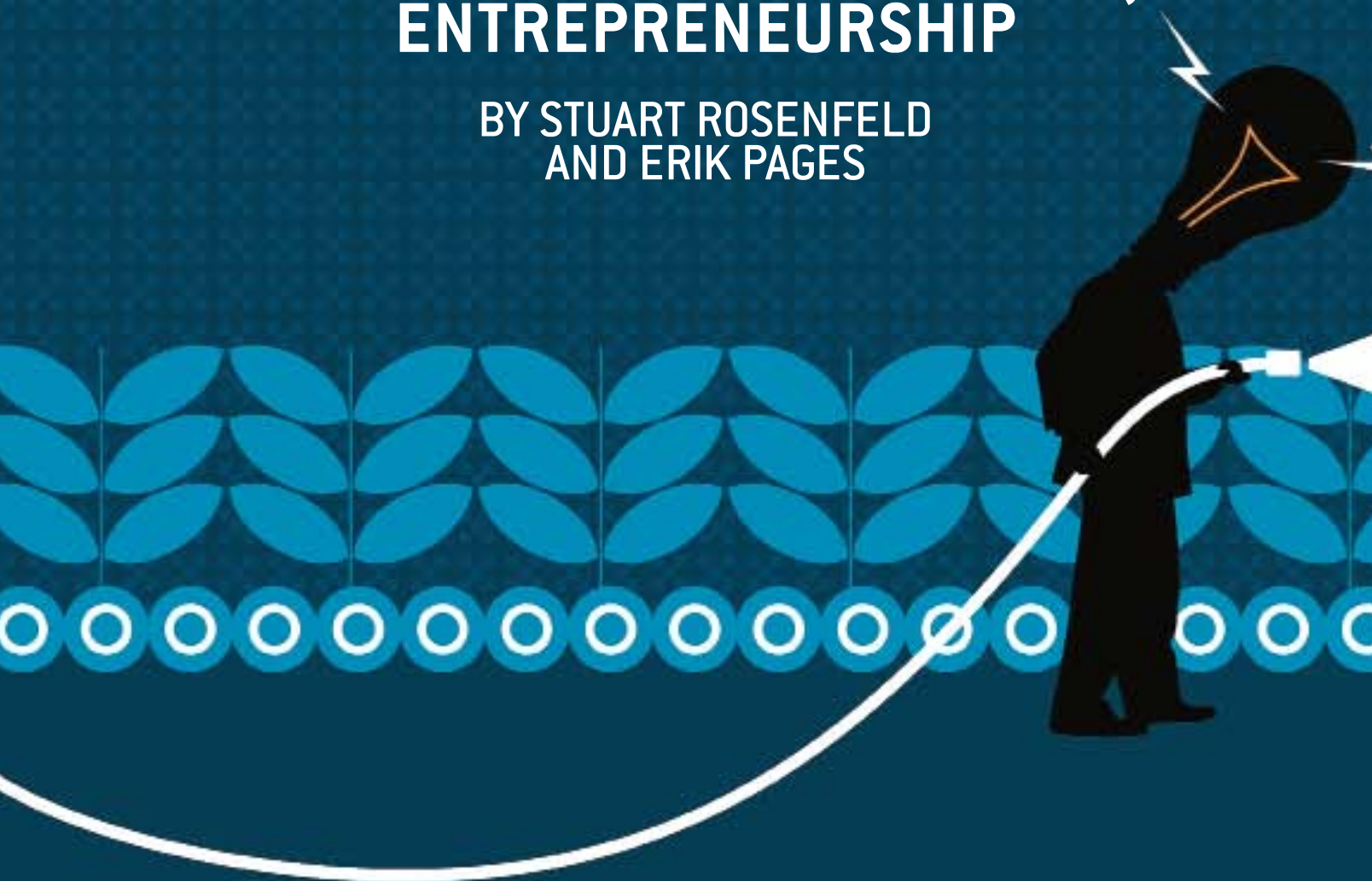


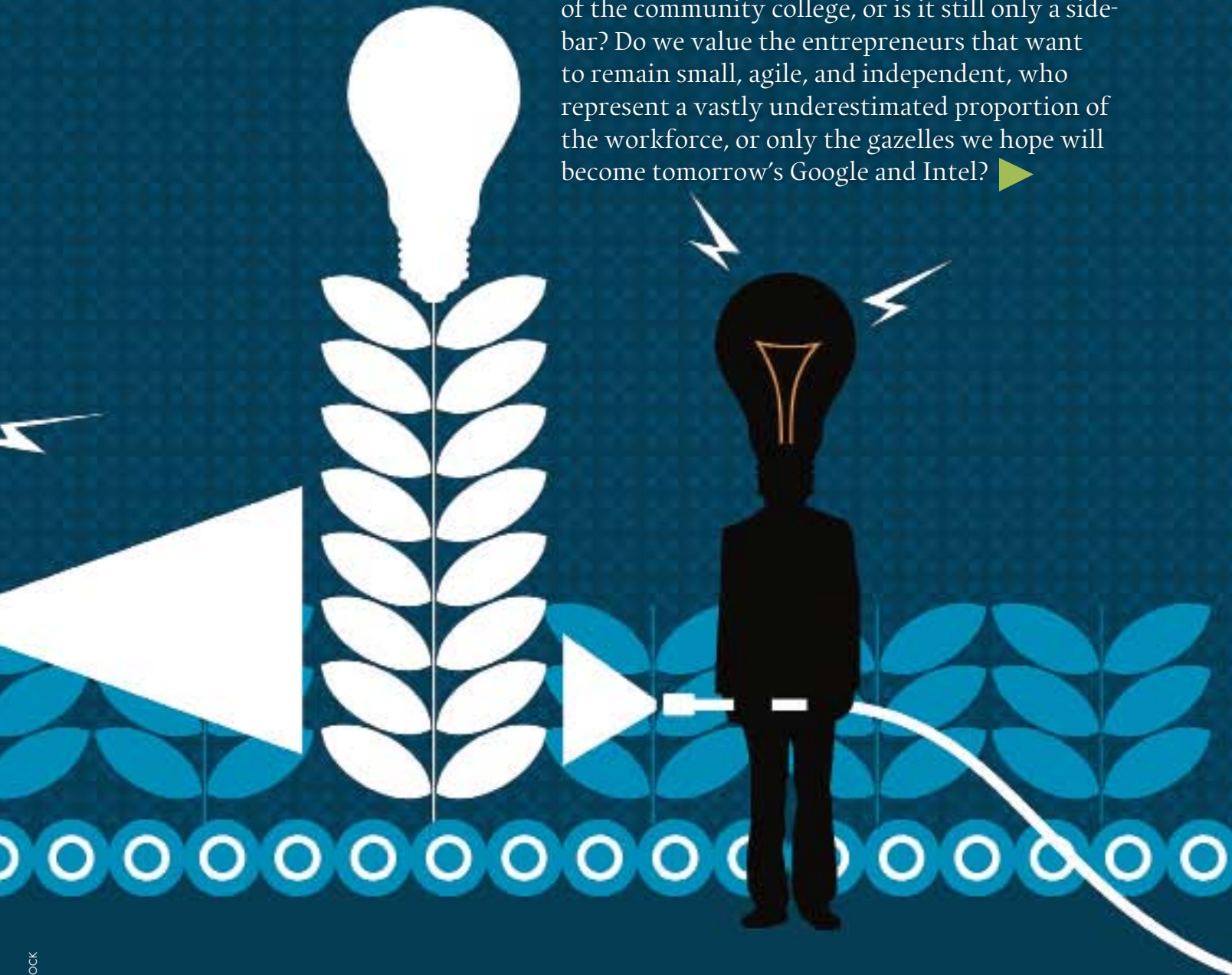
LESSONS IN SELF-MADE SUCCESS

PROGRAMS TEACH BUSINESS,
ENTREPRENEURSHIP

BY STUART ROSENFELD
AND ERIK PAGES



Everyone admires entrepreneurs, and every region aspires to become entrepreneurial. Whether community colleges should teach entrepreneurship today—or support entrepreneurs—is a non-issue. Colleges want students, graduates, faculty, and administrators to be entrepreneurial. Other countries marvel at, and work to emulate, America's entrepreneurial culture. But have we got it right yet? Is it really embedded into the culture of the community college, or is it still only a sidebar? Do we value the entrepreneurs that want to remain small, agile, and independent, who represent a vastly underestimated proportion of the workforce, or only the gazelles we hope will become tomorrow's Google and Intel? ►



Education, training, and economic development programs and success measures are still driven by employment, not by self-employment. Economic statistics generally exclude tracking the self-employed and miss many of the micro-enterprises. Yet some of the fastest growing and most popular career choices are in sectors dominated by family businesses and micro-enterprises—the media, design, hospitality, recreational, information technology, and food industries.

America's rural schools once embodied the entrepreneurial dream program, vocational agriculture. It included all the skills necessary to run a business enterprise, since that's what most of the graduates intended to do; rather than just learning to grow food or raise livestock, students also learned about finance, marketing, distribution, and management. Manufacturing, too, was highly entrepreneurial through the first half of the 20th century when it was still dominated by networks of small specialty companies. But those opportunities were overshadowed by

the narrower skill sets required to meet the growth needs of mass production.

The demand for and value of entrepreneurship programs increasingly is apparent. With so many factory jobs now outsourced, with opportunities emerging in new sectors, and with values changing, community colleges can help the country get back to its entrepreneurial roots. As the prospects for a stable single career with one company gradually disappear, young people are recognizing that their futures will depend on their ability to be creative, innovative, flexible, and entrepreneurial. The data are quite compelling.

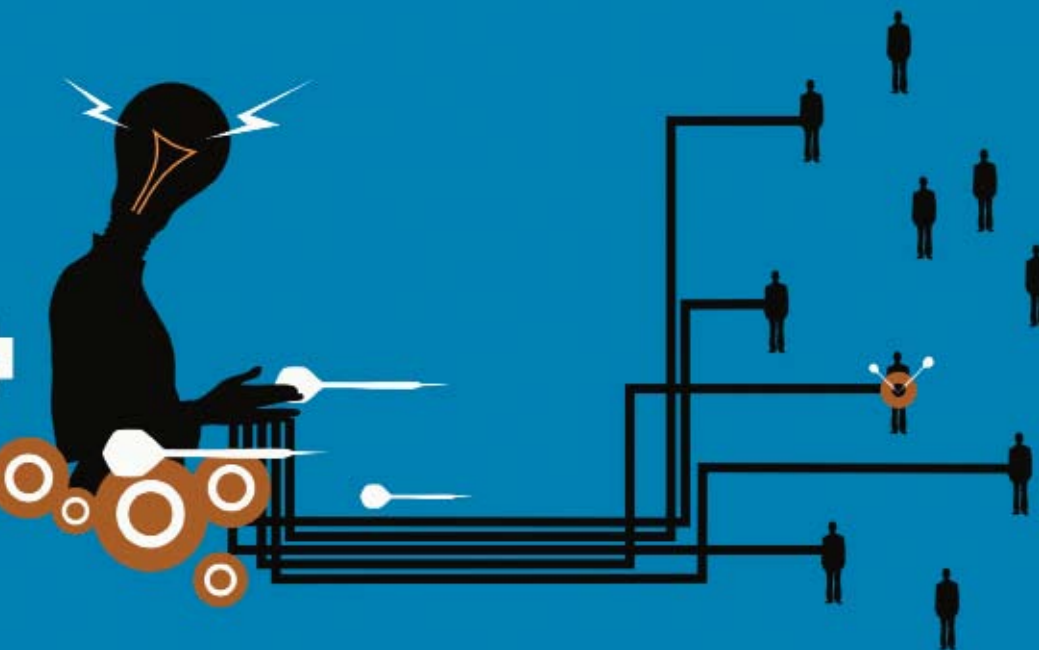
- Six in 10 Americans express interest in starting a business;
- Seven in 10 American high school students hope to start a business one day;
- One in 10 Americans is in the process of planning for a new business venture.

Many of the emerging creative sectors that are more resistant to globalization are dominated by new, small companies and self-employment

that is left out of nearly all regional economic analyses. Nationally, the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS), a project of the U.S. Census Bureau, reports that as few as 12 percent of people earn their living as self-employed entrepreneurs. But that figure is more likely as high as 20 percent due to secondary and unreported employment.

The market has spoken, and community and technical colleges are responding. We are in the midst of a revolution in new thinking and new approaches to teaching entrepreneurship at all levels of the educational system. This shift in thinking makes sense in terms of providing critical skills for students and potential students. It is also critical to stimulating local economic activity.

If you trace the history of any well-known business cluster (e.g., biotechnology in San Diego; furniture in Tupelo, Miss.; or log homes in Montana's Bitterroot Valley), you'll find a small group of entrepreneurs who grew and spawned new entrepreneurship.



The Institute for Virtual Enterprise (IVE) is an initiative of the City University of New York (CUNY) housed at Kingsborough Community College in Brooklyn. The program uses simulated business experiences to teach entrepreneurial education. It's based on the concept of the "practice-firm," a teaching tool first used in Europe to help students understand business and financial principles. Under IVE, the original concept has evolved into an interdisciplinary, technology-driven financial literacy simulation/program. Its students develop and manage global entrepreneurial, virtual enterprises in an online business environment, trading their goods and services in a closed global economy with participating firms and students in every corner of the world. The learning environment includes IVE's proprietary technology "backbone," the Market Maker, which features a virtual bank, credit card, e-commerce system, and stock market (www.ivefinancial.com). See <http://www.ive.cuny.edu>.

Table 1. Self-Employed in Selected Sectors

NAICS	Sector	Percent Self-employed
512	Motion Picture & Sound Recording	17.0
54131	Architectural Services	21.0
54132	Landscape Architecture Services	46.6
5414	Specialized Design	57.7
5415	Computer Systems Design	20.0
71	Arts, Entertainment, & Recreation	33.4

Source: North American Industry Classification System

Community Colleges React

Colleges' varied responses to this changed environment range from offering basic classes in Small Business or Entrepreneurship 101 to providing technical assistance for new business owners and operating new business incubators. Leading institutions recognize that there are few limits to the possibilities.

Initiatives can take multiple forms; they can operate as for-credit or non-credit. They can provide a formal certificate or a terminal degree, or operate simply as a freestanding workshop or training course. Johnson County Community College (JCC) in Overland Park, Kan., offers all these options and more. JCC has offered an associate degree in entrepreneurship since 1992 and has operated a local Small Business Development Center since 1983. More recently, JCC has added entrepreneurship components and a certificate to more than 50 on-campus career programs in areas as diverse as baking, nursing, information technology, and marketing.

North Iowa Area Community College in Mason City, Iowa, has taken the lead in helping to solve one of the major impediments to starting a business: the cost of health insurance. Through the Helping Entrepreneurs Launch initiative at North Central Iowa, the college helps provide health insurance to local residents who plan to start their own business.

To date, there is no consensus on the "best way" to support entrepreneurship, but rather an array of ideas that reflect local preferences and needs. Some colleges create self-contained courses and programs aimed at generic entrepreneurial competencies, some embed the skills into occupational programs, and others create real or simulated enter-

prises as learning environments.

Creating Degree Programs: A small number of colleges offer entrepreneurship as a degree program that aims to produce future business owners. The National Association for Community College Entrepreneurship at Springfield Technical Community College in Massachusetts—a school that has devoted significant resources to entrepreneurship—has offered an associate

degree in entrepreneurial studies since 1998 that complements the college's vast array of entrepreneurial activities and services.

Integrating Skills: The "embedded" approach assumes that entrepreneurship is a fork on a career path that begins with employment—a job where students acquire the skills they need to one day make it on their own. To support this notion, entrepreneurial skills and habits are integrated into the curricula of other occupational programs, addressing problems typically encountered by new and small-business owners.

Simulating Enterprises: A third approach, developed in Europe as the European Practice Enterprise Network, uses a virtual enterprise and takes a gaming approach to entrepreneurial education. New York's Kingsborough Community College and its Institute

"We are in the midst of a revolution in...new approaches to teaching entrepreneurship at all levels of the educational system."



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for Virtual Enterprise is an innovative product of that program. Similarly, a program called Learning through Simulated Information Technologies, funded by the National Science Foundation, uses the virtual enterprise to teach entrepreneurial skills for information technology companies.

Guidelines for Effective Programs

As community college entrepreneurs test new ideas and approaches, some important guidelines for effective programs have emerged:

Apply Industry Context: Each industry, and each business proposition, is unique. And most aspiring entrepreneurs don't view themselves as entrepreneurs. They view themselves as HVAC technicians, artists, or Web page designers. As a result, they view training through this lens. They learn more, and are more effective entrepreneurs, when the realities of their industry or

Creative Arts Entrepreneurship Certificate Program: Creative professionals, musicians, designers of all kinds, writers and visual artists all share one thing in common: they tend to work on a freelance basis, so an understanding of basic business practices is essential. The Northern California New Media Center headquartered at Mission College in Silicon Valley, Calif., surveyed 50 businesses and 150 students to identify needs and interests in entrepreneurship for students of creative disciplines. Using that information, they developed a Creative Arts Entrepreneurship Certificate program, a first in the California Community College system. The courses cover finance, copyrights, salesmanship, presentation techniques, and portfolio preparation. The business information is narrowly tailored for creative professionals, and course materials will be available to all interested colleges in the state.

their business become part of the learning experience. It's even better when their instructors are former entrepreneurs themselves. Businesses in the media arts, for example, are likely to be project-oriented, require flexible schedules, and be based on personal relationships. A manufacturer, in contrast, has to know more about marketing, product design, and investments.

Use Multiple Modes of Delivery:

There is no "one best way" in entrepreneurship education. Different tools and techniques work with different types of learners. In this instance, instructors should be entrepreneurial, testing different approaches and curricula. Many potential entrepreneurs are unable to participate in traditional classes because they often hold full-time jobs and seek out specific skills as opposed to a general degree or certificate. For this reason, distance learning potentially holds great promise.

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Facilitate Networking: Entrepreneurs build strong businesses through networking. Strong college programs are constructed in the same way. Faculty and students must get engaged in the activities of the local business community—participating in the Chamber of Commerce, interning with local businesses, and providing services, such as marketing support, to area firms. The alumni associations of Future Farmers of America are an example of a long-term support network whose success could translate to other sectors. Other increasingly important networks are global, helping students connect to non-U.S. markets, partners, and sources of innovation.

Go Outside the Classroom: North Carolina's Council for Entrepreneurial Development (CED) operates according to the mantra: "For Entrepreneurs, By Entrepreneurs." This phrase keeps CED focused on its core mission: helping entrepreneurs help themselves. Effective college programs operate in a similar manner. The end goal is to help entrepreneurs build strong businesses. If the student receives a degree or certificate along the way, that's all the better. But the primary goal is to launch successful and sustainable enterprises. That often requires that the college act entrepreneurially by operating small business centers, as North Carolina's community colleges do, or hosting such centers, as many other community colleges do.

Introduce New Measures of Success: One major impediment to larger investments in entrepreneurial education is the employment- and employer-driven outcome measurement requirements of most funding programs. Assessment is based on factors such as new business starts, investments, business success rates, longevity, and new wealth creation. Success is not easily measured in the short term. Building entrepreneurial businesses takes time and patience, and longitudinal data are needed to assess the value of entrepreneurship programs.

People often ask the rhetorical

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"There is no 'one best way' in entrepreneurship education. Different tools and techniques work with different types of learners."



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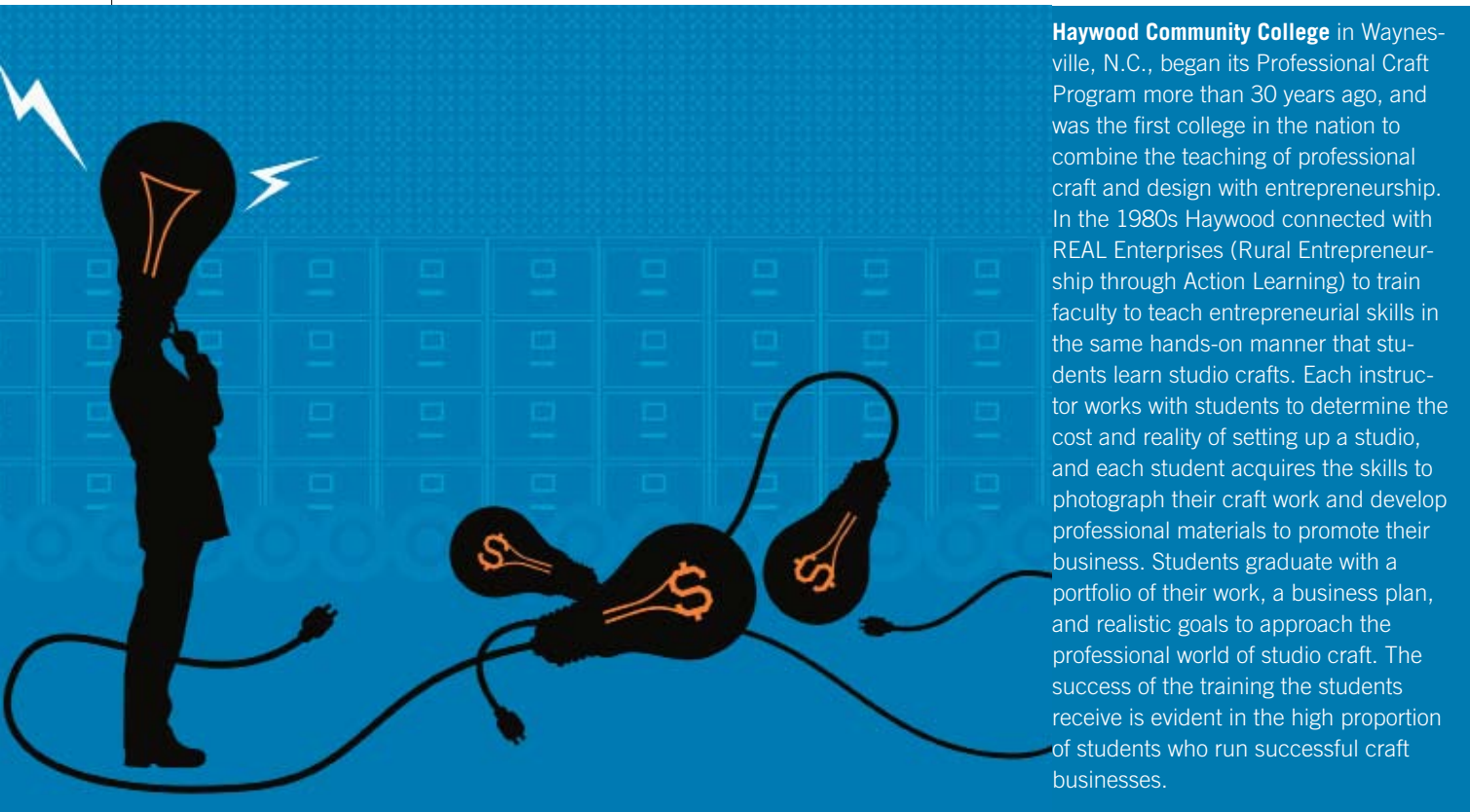
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Haywood Community College in Waynesville, N.C., began its Professional Craft Program more than 30 years ago, and was the first college in the nation to combine the teaching of professional craft and design with entrepreneurship. In the 1980s Haywood connected with REAL Enterprises (Rural Entrepreneurship through Action Learning) to train faculty to teach entrepreneurial skills in the same hands-on manner that students learn studio crafts. Each instructor works with students to determine the cost and reality of setting up a studio, and each student acquires the skills to photograph their craft work and develop professional materials to promote their business. Students graduate with a portfolio of their work, a business plan, and realistic goals to approach the professional world of studio craft. The success of the training the students receive is evident in the high proportion of students who run successful craft businesses.

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question, "Are entrepreneurs born or made?" From the community college's perspective, the correct answer is "both." Colleges will see "born" entrepreneurs—those who always had the fire in their bellies—and "made" entrepreneurs—laid-off factory workers or retiring boomers embarking on a second or third career. There is no such thing as a typical entrepreneur or a typical community college entrepreneurship program. Community college leaders must design programs that are responsive to local business needs and that capitalize upon local business strengths and competencies. As entrepreneurship becomes a way of life for more Americans, it will become a way of life for community colleges, too.

STUART ROSENFELD is founder and principal of *Regional Technology Strategies, Inc.*, a North Carolina-based non-profit dedicated to workforce and economic development. Erik Pages is president of *EntreWorks Consulting*, an economic development consultancy in Arlington, Va.