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L³Cs In The University - The Time Has Come

by Michael J. Zimmer

The L³C may become an important vehicle for transitioning new business models for colleges and universities. Many universities are trapped seeking to provide economic development, community assistance, technology transfer, incubator development for new companies, and new job banks for the community and recent graduates. Bureaucracy, mission focus and funding constraints make the educational mission a challenge in these areas of service. Instead, an L³C vehicle could attract by that structural choice foundation, private capital and corporate resources. The L³C offers a new vehicle for advancement of social enterprise missions that are ill-suited for a pure university environment. For example, a consulting firm has been discussed for graduate employment as part of a major business school. An energy technology transfer unit is under discussion to promote commercialization of university R&D outside of the current technology transfer and research office paradigm. A university considers a special job-training institute blending its resources with the local community college, labor unions and employers. All of these initiatives would be established into a social enterprise vehicle like an L³C to capture the “profit with a conscience” behind the idea. Students benefit from new jobs prospects, and academic barriers are removed to better performance. New sources of capital attraction can arise. Better public-private partnering occurs. Faculty is empowered outside the classroom is the quest for a new business model.

Change is Necessary

Why, because the current university model is choking, not nurturing professional development while deteriorating into a pedigree problem, with an arms race wrapped around sports development, cost escalation and capital attraction with little academic purpose. These academic preferences are rooted in vanity and identity, not stewardship, execution and results. A change is even more warranted as tuition rates skyrocket and job prospects dwindle – as we have failed to properly invest in ourselves and the true academic mission. Most academics dwell on how effective education costs are in terms of time and money. The more critical question is this; how much is the education worth to the student, and to their professional development – the critical value propositions to the stakeholder. Clearly, fresh ideas, better

communications and broader skills are necessary for students to effectively adapt to the changes brought by technology, globalization, economic duress and market transformation. More attention has been spent the last decade on BCS and conference alignments than academic transformation of business models in our universities.

That model can change built on the L³C, entrepreneurial and applied learning strategies centered in transformation sponsored by social enterprise. This not a new branding initiative that mirrors corporate America. Why? Because the academic community cannot nurture and thrive in the middle of a society that is failing – as to mission, goals and leadership. The void of political, corporate leadership must be filled with a new brand of transformative academic leadership. Heterogeneous faculty, innovative actions and thinking and new business models reflect a message that the university is dynamic and receptive to change, not a mere protector of the status quo. Applied learning, teamed in the marketplace, using innovative practices, and methodologies with integration by stakeholders will make the difference in the future for the successful college and university.

New Business Models Under L³C

This social enterprise approach will shift the status and academic profile and the “associative goods” in the education process (the personal attributes, characteristics of other customers who are purchasing the same product or services) to a more sustainable set of performance norms. The L³C can foster that result through applied learning centered in writing, communication, personality and character development in which the student is grounded in analysis and reasoning. That foundation in the L³C academic unit will foster better competencies such as teamwork, communication, sophisticated decision-making, emotional intelligence, leadership, and decision-making (grounded in empirical data and analytics). As big data doubles in volume every two years that focus on analytics and reasoning will be essential to synthesize that data into valuable products and services under any degree program.

ACD believes as academia undergoes transformation and the search for new business models, it needs reassessment based on market reality not by the faculty, but the ultimate

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stakeholders, who are the students served. Innovations and new techniques through L³Cs will need open evaluation with fresh eyes to promote that change and new service orientation.

Absent these changes, there will be a dubious market for colleges and universities grounded in the business models of the past centered solely in pedigrees with escalating costs – through popular social content run in multiple media sources, based on aptitude tests, brands and BCS and NCAA tournament results. Nothing special will evolve nor more occur for the college or university than the current society of excesses grounded in declining value and quality – with an ever escalating consumer price.

The L3C in colleges and universities should be explored as a tool to bridge that performance gap into the 21st century.

For More Information Regarding the L³C Visit Our Website:

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