

# CREATING Entrepreneurs

## *Donald McNeely Center for Entrepreneurship Celebrates 10 Years* By Dana Drazenovich

Entrepreneurs are a different breed, says McNeely Entrepreneurship Center director Terri Barreiro. They embrace ambiguity and risk as they tenaciously pursue opportunity.

And cultivating entrepreneurially minded students takes a different brand of education, which is why the McNeely Center was founded a decade ago.

The center provides a total-immersion entrepreneurial experience for students of all majors, plenty of whom launch ventures while still in school with the guidance of faculty and experienced mentors.

In this way, Saint John's and Saint Ben's are almost a breed unto themselves, drawing prospective students and giving graduates an employment edge.

The best way to celebrate the McNeely Center's first decade is with the success stories of its alumni and students. Here are three worth toasting.

### ***New Company, New Fuel*** **Nicholas Novak '10**

Nicholas (Nick) Novak '10 found himself with an exciting dilemma last year. He had the chance

to buy a company with financial and social promise but also existing debt.

Oh, and its success relied on training America to use a new fuel.

"I reached back out to the McNeely Center, and this was a huge benefit to me," says Novak, who had been an accounting major and Entrepreneur Scholar.

Within hours, McNeely Center director Terri Barreiro connected him to Pat Maxwell '66, the center's executive-in-residence. Maxwell told Nick that what he was doing was very exciting and then helped him think through his next steps.

Novel Energies, as Novak and his business partner renamed their venture, is off to a strong start. "We are always learning. We're growing. We're actually expanding on a national level."



Novel Energies retrofits vehicles to run on compressed natural gas, installs natural-gas fueling stations and also provides consulting services.

Novak sees the social benefit, a McNeely Center hallmark, in natural gas.

"The main reason I'm passionate about this is because it's new, it's a chance to educate people and it's an opportunity to honestly decrease our dependence on oil," Novak says.

### ***Cleaning Up***

#### **Ben McDermott '11**

Once it was tedious for companies using Salesforce.com



management software to find duplicates in their system. Now they have an app to do that, thanks to Ben McDermott '11 and 1771, the Minneapolis-based venture he started in May.

McDermott teamed with developers to build the Cleaner application for the Salesforce.com platform, followed by 1771's Saver, Scanner and Dragger apps. "These applications are large-enterprise utilities that add value to Salesforce," he explains.

McDermott was working for a marketing firm last spring when he discovered that Salesforce had its own app store. "The opportunity I

saw was in the number of Salesforce apps out there. Fewer than 2,000 applications are offered to companies that use the cloud software. In contrast, the iPhone app store has more than a million apps, so this is kind of the toddler phase for the Salesforce AppExchange.”

McDermott, an art major and Entrepreneur Scholar, had launched a company as a student as part of the team that created Campus2Canvas, which hires artists in China to create oil paintings of Saint John’s and Saint Ben’s.

“Probably one of the most important things is just the ability to get started,” he says. “It was easy for me to see this opportunity and act on it because I had already gone through many of these steps before.”

### **Healthy Business**

#### **Ryan Wojciechowski '14**

If the campus becomes a little healthier, Ryan Wojciechowski '14 will meet one of his business goals.

Wojciechowski recently introduced Saint John’s and Saint Ben’s to Johnnie Fitness, a venture he launched through the McNeely Center’s Entrepreneur Scholars program.

Johnnie Fitness provides student and faculty clients a team of student nutritionists, health advisers and personal trainers to create individualized wellness and training plans.

Wojciechowski conceived the idea in Terri Barreiro’s social entrepreneurship class and took advantage of the center’s mentor and alumni networks as he developed his business plan.

“They give you a fresh perspective, especially because the McNeely Center recruits people from different backgrounds.”

He got a loan through Saint John’s Student Development and started testing the program in November.

Wojciechowski, a management major, sees tremendous value in



the supportive environment the McNeely Center offers, which Barreiro calls the trampoline system.

“We are allowed to experiment and try things,” he says. “They might fail, but the risk doesn’t necessarily fall on yourself, which I think enables people to push their limits and maybe try things they normally wouldn’t.”

Johnnie Fitness lives up to its social entrepreneurship definition. “For me it’s more than just a business,” Wojciechowski says. “You’re really changing lives.”

*Dana Drazenovich is a former journalist and public relations writer who teaches CSB/SJU communication and first-year seminar classes.*

## **The Donald McNeely Center for Entrepreneurship**

### **ENTREPRENEUR SCHOLARS**

A three-course certificate program: Creating World Class Ventures, Global Entrepreneurship and Entrepreneurial Apprenticeship as well as travel to Silicon Valley and China.

### **EXPLORERS**

Explore venture ideas through the center’s resources, with coaching from the center director and faculty and consulting with alumni and mentors. The center also offers a student-venture loan fund.

### **OTHER COURSES**

Courses for student-run-venture managers and social entrepreneurship and a revised entrepreneurship basics course.

### **EXECUTIVE-IN-RESIDENCE**

A seasoned and accomplished business leader on campus 20 to 25 days a year to provide advice, mentoring and group discussions.

### **MENTORS**

Alumni and friends of the schools lend their expertise to students who are designing or implementing a new venture.

### **ENTREPRENEUR LUNCHEONS**

Luncheons five times a year at the Minneapolis Club for alumni entrepreneurs and professionals.

### **ENTREPRENEUR AWARDS**

Celebrating influential and successful alumni entrepreneurs as well as social entrepreneurs who exemplify the center’s mission of creating social value in addition to economic opportunity.

For more information, go to [csbsju.edu/Center-for-Entrepreneurship.htm](http://csbsju.edu/Center-for-Entrepreneurship.htm)