

# Freedom to Jump

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## *How entrepreneurship is transforming liberal arts at McPherson College*

In September of 2010, McPherson College had a “big idea” – that the classic concept of liberal arts was intimately tied to the modern idea of Entrepreneurship. The faculty and staff then started to weave the concepts of entrepreneurship across the curriculum and student life, regardless of a student’s chosen major. The idea is called “Freedom to Jump”, and it transcends any one department, giving students the room to experiment and explore – while still landing on their feet. McPherson College students discover that the only failure is the failure to learn.

“This isn’t just another project,” President Michael Schneider said. “This is recasting our mission to make it matter today; to make it relevant in the 21st century.”

Here’s how the concept has played out since it started:

- **Horizon Fund.** Great ideas can get off the ground with just a little investment. To that end, the college introduced the Horizon fund in September 2010 to provide up to \$500 to students who want to pursue a great idea. In its first year, the fund awarded grants to one out of every 10 students at McPherson College. About half have been successful or seen significant progress. Many of these ideas would never have started without the college’s investment in its students.  
<http://blogs.mcpherson.edu/entrepreneurship/horizon-fund/>
- **Global Enterprise Challenge.** In just 10 days in November 2010, six teams of five students each at McPherson College were challenged to come up with a plan for a self-sustaining social venture in Haiti. The college sent one team to travel to Haiti in June 2011 to adapt their idea to needs on the ground. The challenge returned in November 2011, with a destination of Panama. The project was one of ten featured events selected by Kauffman Foundation’s Global Entrepreneurship Week USA.  
<http://blogs.mcpherson.edu/entrepreneurship/category/gec-haiti/>
- **Entrepreneurship Fellow and Entrepreneurship Director.** McPherson College hired **Dr. Betsy Gatewood** of Wake Forest University as its Entrepreneurship Fellow. Gatewood is a leading expert on entrepreneurship in post-secondary education, and at McPherson College will develop programming, train faculty and generate resources for entrepreneurship. **Dr. Kori Gregg** is the college’s first full-time entrepreneurship director, overseeing the entrepreneurship initiative. Dr. Gregg established the Mid-America Entrepreneurship Hall of Fame and the Entrepreneurial Institute at Butler Community College. A **\$1.2 million anonymous gift** to the college made Dr. Gregg’s hiring possible, as well as faculty training and curriculum development.  
<http://www.mcpherson.edu/news/index.php?action=fullnews&id=2189>
- **Transformative Entrepreneurship Minor.** Faculty are already introducing entrepreneurship in their regular curriculum, and, as of fall 2011, students have the option to add a “transformative entrepreneurship” minor to their degree – giving them a leg up when they enter the workforce. It consists of three core courses on entrepreneurship and three courses selected by the student across disciplines.  
[http://www.mcpherson.edu/academics/entrepreneur\\_minor.php](http://www.mcpherson.edu/academics/entrepreneur_minor.php)
- **Jump Start Kansas Competition.** In February 2012, the college expanded the concept to high school students in Kansas with “Jump Start Kansas”, offering a \$5,000 grant and scholarships to the young entrepreneurs who came up with the best new commercial idea and *another* \$5,000 grant to the best non-profit idea.  
<http://www.mcpherson.edu/news/index.php?action=fullnews&id=2240>

Dr. Ken Yohn, associate professor of history, has had a front-row seat to watching “Freedom to Jump” develop at the college – serving on both the Horizon Fund committee and the Global Enterprise Challenge judge panel. Yohn realized early in the process the potential entrepreneurial education holds.

“This is a tool for someone who wants to put shoes on a child,” he said. “This is for someone who wants to start a community theatre. This is for someone who wants to organize a neighborhood garden. That’s the real meat and bones of entrepreneurship. At first, it was ‘neat.’ Now, I view it as essential.”