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## The Right Places to Learn Entrepreneurship

By PAUL B. BROWN

Nearly 3,000 colleges offer classes in entrepreneurship, up tenfold in the last 20 years, according to the Kauffman Foundation, which is devoted to promoting “a society of economically independent individuals.”

So which school is the right place for those interested in starting their own companies?

Fortune Small Business spent seven months interviewing hundreds of entrepreneurs, professors, administrators, students and alumni to try to find out. The magazine [answers the question](#) this way:

It found that the best places to get an undergraduate education were Babson College, [Indiana University](#), [Syracuse University](#), the [University of Arizona](#), and the [University of Pennsylvania](#).

The best places for learning online were [Boston University](#), the [University of Houston](#) at Victoria, the [University of Wyoming](#), and Western Carolina University.

For cross-disciplinary studies, the choices were [Cornell](#), the [Massachusetts Institute of Technology](#), [Stanford University](#), the [University of North Carolina](#) at Chapel Hill and Wake Forest.

For graduate school, the top places were Babson, [Harvard](#), Indiana University, M.I.T., Stanford, Syracuse, the University of Arizona, University of California at Berkeley, the University of California, Los Angeles, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and the University of Pennsylvania.

The top choices for executive education were Babson, Harvard, Northwestern, Stanford, the [University of Chicago](#) and the University of Texas at Austin.

And for family business, the best places were Babson, Baylor, Kennesaw State University, Loyola of Chicago, Northwestern and the University of Texas at El Paso.

DOES PASSION TRUMP ALL? Maybe we have the whole approach to teaching entrepreneurship backward, [George Gendron](#) writes in Inc.

Instead of teaching the subject to business majors, who then go out and try to find a niche to fill, wouldn't it be better to offer courses to people who are passionate about a potentially commercial idea — no matter what their major — to give them the specific skills they need to turn their dream into a reality.

That is the approach Mr. Gendron, who founded the Innovation and Entrepreneurship Program at Clark University in Massachusetts, is taking.

“The guiding principle of the program is a belief that the entrepreneurial skills we traditionally associate with

certain discrete populations — engineers in Silicon Valley, for example — have become vital life skills for everyone in today’s globally competitive marketplace and rapidly changing culture,” writes Mr. Gendron who was the editor of Inc. for 20 years. “And so this undergraduate program was not designed to attract management majors, although we do get many of those students. Rather, we chose as our mission to complement a rigorous education in the arts and sciences.”

The school only offers a minor in entrepreneurship, meaning that students must take the majority of their courses in other disciplines.

“The goal is simple: to encourage these students to follow their passion, whatever that might be, but to marry those studies with a set of skills — from salesmanship to an understanding of the principles of market research to the ability to lead and work in teams — that will dramatically improve the likelihood that they’ll be able to create an economically sustainable life around that passion,” Mr. Gendron writes.

**FREE TO LOOK** You don’t need to take a course to benefit from the online learning available at the world’s universities. Just rummage around their Web sites.

For example the London School of Economics site has copies of [business plans](#) for companies that plan to offer everything from venture capital consulting to customized takeout pizzas.

**CREDENTIALS** The [article](#) is called, “Do you need a degree to be a successful business owner?” and the author, Jennifer Mattern of J.H. Mattern, a public relations firm, is quick to answer her own question with “obviously the simple answer is ‘no,’ because others have gone on to run highly successful businesses without a formal education.”

But Ms. Mattern makes an intriguing point.

“What I hear a lot of people say (usually kids who start businesses at home online, and who haven’t even finished high school yet) is that if so-and-so could do it without college (insert any ridiculously successful dropout entrepreneur here), so can anyone else. What they neglect completely is that the cases they cite are actually extremely rare. Banking on being the exception to the rule is very likely a large contributing factor to the overwhelming number of small businesses that fail within their first one to three years.”

**LAST CALL** Getting (a little bit) mad may actually help your thinking, according to Psychology Today.

While “strong physiological arousal has detrimental effects on cognitive functioning,” Wesley Moons of the University of California at Santa Barbara told Jennifer Garfinkel, in cases of moderate anger “people are motivated to think carefully about the information available to them.”

Apparently it’s possible to be a level-headed hothead.

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