Entrepreneurship in the Classroom

New programs give students valuable experience

The entrepreneurship climate on both the School of Mines campus and throughout Black Hills area communities has never been so kind to students.

Would-be student entrepreneurs have more opportunities than ever before to turn their dreams into reality.

At the School of Mines, entrepreneurship begins in the classroom. Through the educational process, students are brought into the world of entrepreneurship.

In one of these courses, Mechanical Engineering 262, students behave as companies for the semester. They are divided into groups, where they come up with a product. They then start a patent search and pursue the basic elements that are needed for company success, such as manufacturing, design and business, and financial and marketing plans.

“These students evolve throughout the semester to the stage that, if they wish, after the semester they are ready to pursue an investor group,” Dr. Vojislav Kalanovic, chair and professor of the Mechanical Engineering Department, said.

Kalanovic, an entrepreneur himself, has a company that is associated with the school, Control Systems Technologies. Kalanovic believes that faculty efforts like these can also benefit the students. By providing faculty with entrepreneurship experiences, they can pass this knowledge to students to help foster their own entrepreneurship future.

“This would provide students the opportunity to work on projects at both graduate and undergraduate levels,” said Kalanovic. “This opens up an opportunity for students and faculty to have their entrepreneurial dreams come true.”

Once students have a grounding in entrepreneurship education, they can put their knowledge in action during a senior design project.

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Dr. Vojislav Kalanovic
Professor and Chair,
Mechanical Engineering Department

According to Dr. Dale Skillman, an assistant professor in the Mechanical Engineering Department and a Small Business Innovation Research Coordinator, senior design is a way for students to enter the entrepreneurship world.

One way for students to do so is to partner with an outside business. In the past, senior design projects have been a vehicle for companies to accomplish some of their business development.

“This facilitates educational opportunities for students as they work on real industrial projects,” said Skillman. “These are real companies that are in business that need something done, and they come to the School of Mines to have a senior design team spend a couple hundred engineering man hours on their project.”