Entrepreneurship – in support of discovery

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Innovation and entrepreneurship education provide students with broader skills in communication, creativity, innovation, leadership and teamwork, which are labeled as the critical skills needed for all students in the 21st century, according to Dr Sun Hongyi, Associate Professor in the Department of Systems Engineering and Engineering Management.

Dr Sun is seeking to develop these skills at a global level. He helped develop CityU’s inaugural MOOC (Massive Open Online Course) programme, which was launched in September 2016. Titled “Foundation of Innovation and Entrepreneurship in
Another initiative is the launch by the Run Run Shaw Library and KTO of an online Entrepreneurship Guide in August 2016. The Guide provides practical information and tips on getting started in entrepreneurship, and is quite possibly the most comprehensive current resource in Hong Kong for young entrepreneurs. You can find the guide at: http://libguides.library.cityu.edu.hk/entrep

“These new schemes will enhance the overall strategic design of the entire ecosystem. We aim to provide seamless support for our young start-ups from the earliest stages to a relatively mature venture capitalist-funding stage,” Mr Ai adds.

Combined with the coaching and strategic guidance on offer through Innovation Commons, working space and an on-campus incubator system, CityU is fast becoming the place in higher education in Hong Kong for entrepreneurship.

Ecosystem 1, 2, 3
In addition, the drive to enhance entrepreneurship on campus has been boosted by a striking strategic initiative, the CityU Innopreneurship Ecosystem, which held its 1st birthday in September 2016. This ecosystem offers comprehensive support at all stages of an entrepreneurial pursuit, from skills enhancement and physical space for start-ups to financial support worth at least HK$6.5 million in total per year, plus additional investment capital for mature enterprises.

“The Innopreneurship Ecosystem is referred to as ‘i-i-1-2-3’,” explains Mr David Ai Chuan, Director of the Knowledge Transfer Office (KTO), who is playing a key role in advancing entrepreneurship at CityU.

The first “i” refers to Innovation Commons, which is a one-stop service centre for channeling all manner of information related to innovation and entrepreneurship to the entire campus community.

Not only are a variety of on- and off-campus resources available, students can also have access to assistance, friendship and mentorship through Innovation Commons.

Dr Sian Chan Sze-ling, Innopreneurship Officer of KTO, is stationed there to help out with enquiries from entrepreneurially minded students. “Entrepreneurship might be considered by some to be a lonely journey, but Innovation Commons makes sure that young entrepreneurs have help when it is needed,” Dr Chan says.

China”, the course encapsulates the essence of the work that CityU has been deeply involved in over the past academic year: discovery and entrepreneurship.

“Entrepreneurship education will provide students who may wish to start their own companies with basic concepts and skills that will help them to avoid making unnecessary mistakes and lower the risk, and shorten the time frame, in starting up their own venture,” explains Dr Sun, a former winner of the CityU Teaching Excellence Award who counts among his research interests technology and innovation management in Hong Kong and China.

Platform for change
One of the initiatives that CityU is promoting right now is the CityU Education Platform for Innovation and Entrepreneurship (CePIE), which is supported by the University Grants Committee (UGC) and CityU with the participation of The Chinese University of Hong Kong and The University of Hong Kong. CePIE serves as a platform for scholars, teachers, practitioners, and students in Hong Kong to share experience in innovation and entrepreneurship education.

“CePIE has organised seminars and workshops for students on how to start up new businesses, and also for teachers on how to teach creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship. CePIE has become a platform now for teachers from the mainland, Taiwan and Hong Kong. There are 84 teachers and 32 mentors from industry registered on the platform now,” Dr Sun says.
The second “i” refers to incubation, which is another key element. CityU has established a joint incubation system with Hong Kong Science and Technology Parks Corporation (HKSTP). The system enables CityU young entrepreneurs to utilise the many technological benefits that incubated companies enjoy at HKSTP’s Shatin location and new co-working space “Lion Rock 72” at InnoCentre in Kowloon Tong.

The “1-2-3” aspect refers to the levels of funding on offer to the CityU community for entrepreneurial activities.

“We provide them with early support; and mid- and later stage funding, which means the students’ projects have support all the way through the entire entrepreneurship process, from initial stages and development through to seeking funding from venture capital investors,” explains Mr Ai, who has many years’ experience in investment, engineering, law, licensing, and patents, among others.

Spotting the next big thing
Mr Ai’s background reflects the direction that CityU is taking in promoting entrepreneurship. It is all very well to have a good idea, but to develop it requires a range of skill sets.

“Business people don’t necessarily know law, engineers don’t necessarily know about creative media, and so forth. The
Ecosystem, especially through the physical space of Innovation Commons, brings people from very different backgrounds to share ideas,” he says.

Another area that will be explored increasingly under the Discovery-Enriched Curriculum (DEC) and through other initiatives, according to Mr Ai, is a focus on evaluating ideas, not just coming up with new ideas. While it is important to focus on discovery and innovation in and of itself, not every student will be an Einstein.

“A lot of successful entrepreneurs succeed by identifying good ideas and then collaborating,” Mr Ai says. “Students need to be able to search databases of patents, for example, and spot great ideas that they can contribute to. Discovery and innovation is the guiding principle, but entrepreneurship is also about turning other people’s ideas into great ideas.”

Future plans
A number of new initiatives are in the pipeline, according to Mr Ai, and one that has just come into play is the Innopreneurship Mentoring Scheme launched in October 2016. So far 11 teams have been matched up with appropriate mentors. In addition, several CityU young entrepreneurial teams are now using the co-working space “Lion Rock 72” where they are excited to spark innovation and scale up their businesses.

Funding opportunities
CityU offers funding avenues and advice and assistance from initial conception to later stage development, such as how to interest venture capitalists. Innovation Commons supports the CityU community in creating and formulating innovative ideas, educates students about intellectual property, and nurtures their ideas in order to mature intellectual property and seek appropriate ways to protect it.

- Student Early Entrepreneurship Development Scheme (SEEDS), set up under the offices of the Provost and the Vice-President (Research and Technology), and administered by KTO, funds student projects that lead to new products or services and new intellectual property. It offers the first funding support for ideas to be nurtured into strong candidates for more substantive funding support later on.

- Technology Start-up Support Scheme for Universities (TSSSU), launched by the Innovation and Technology Commission, encourages university students, alumni and professors to start up technology business. Around 20 CityU technology start-ups initiated by our students, alumni or faculty members have received TSSSU funding.

- CityUE Investment Fund, established by CityUE Enterprises Limited, aims to provide funding support to start-up companies established by the CityU community, following a lead venture capital or an angel investor.

- The Student Contest Support Fund (SCSF) supports students’ participation in relevant contests/competitions. The fund helps to cover the cost of materials, registration fees, and travel subsidies for contests/competitions where they can present their innovative ideas or products.
系統工程及工程管理學系副教授孫洪義博士認為，創新及創業教育可培養學生多種技能，包括溝通、創意、創新、領導能力與團隊合作，這些都是21世紀學生須掌握的重要技能。

孫博士正致力從全球層面去發展學生上述技能。他參與策劃城大2016年9月首次推出的大規模開放式線上課程（MOOCs，又稱慕課），創設名為「中國文化與創新創業基礎」的慕課，內容體現了城大在過去學年發展的精髓：探索與創業。

孫博士曾榮獲城大傑出教學獎，其研究範圍包括香港及中國內地的技術及創新管理。他解釋說：「創業教育，就是向準備創業的學生傳授基本概念與技能，幫助他們在創立公司之初避免犯不必要的錯誤，以及減低風險、縮短時間。」

支援創新創業的平台
城大創新創業教育平台（CePIE）是現時大學推廣的措施之一，由大學教育資助委員會支持，參與其中的還有香港中文大學與香港大學。本港的學者、教員、業內人士及學生可在CePIE這個平台上交流創新及創業教育的經驗。

孫博士說：「CePIE主辦了一系列研討會及工作坊，指導學生創業，同時培訓教員講授創意、創新與創業的技巧。CePIE服務兩岸三地的教師，目前已有84名教師與32名來自業界的導師在該平台註冊。」
「創新創業鏈」的實踐模式
為了推動校內的創業風氣，城大知識轉移處推出名為「創新創業鏈」的長遠發展措施，至2016年9月已成立一周年。這項舉措為創業者在各個創業階段提供全面支援，包括技巧培訓、提供辦公地點以及每年總額不少於650萬港元的財政資助，更會為成熟的創新企業提供額外的創投資金。

知識轉移處處長艾荃先生解釋說：「創新創業鏈的實踐模式是『i-i-1-2-3』。」他在推進城大創業教育上扮演重要角色。

另一項舉措是邵逸夫圖書館與知識轉移處合作，在2016年8月推出的網上『創業指引』。該指引為年輕企業家提供初次創業的實用資訊與提示，很可能是香港現時最全面的創業資源。「創業指引」的網址是：http://libguides.library.cityu.edu.hk/entrep。

艾先生補充說：「這些新計劃將全面提升整個創新創業鏈的長遠規劃。我們希望為年輕創業者在各階段提供無間斷的協助，由最初階段一直到獲得創業投資基金的較成熟階段。」

創意工作坊為學生提供輔導與策略指導，加上校內創業培育系統及協作空間，城大正迅速成為香港高等教育界的創業尖兵。
發掘下一個重大發現
艾先生的工作背景反映了城大推廣創業的方向。有好的創意固然甚佳，但要實現創意還需要一系列技能。他舉例說：「商界人士可能不懂法律，工程師可能不了解創意媒體。推出創新創業鏈，尤其是提供創意工作坊這樣的場地，可讓背景各異的人士相聚，分享創意。」

艾先生指出，通過「重探索求創新課程」及其他措施，大學將加強對意念的評估，而非只注重產生新意念。注重探索與創新固然重要，但畢竟不是每個學生都能夠成為愛因斯坦。

艾先生說：「很多成功的企業家都是首先發掘好意念，然後與人合作發展。例如，學生要學會搜索專利數據庫，從中發掘能夠加以發揮的好意念。探索與創新只是指導原則，要成功創業亦講求將別人的意念變得更好。」

未來計劃
艾先生表示，多項新舉措正在籌劃中。其中之一是2016年10月新推出的「創新創業導師計劃」。目前已有11個團隊與創業導師配對。此外，幾隊城大年輕企業團隊已進駐協作基地「Lion Rock 72」。見到創意火花迸發、業務蒸蒸日上，他們深感振奮。

獲取撥款的途徑
從初步構想到之後的發展階段，如吸引創業投資者，城大都會提供方法、建議與協助。創意工作坊支持師生校友的創意及構思，向他們講解知識產權、培育創新意念，使之得以成熟，並尋找適合方式以保護學生的知識產權。

• 「創意種子計劃」（SEEDS）由學務副校長室與副校長室（研究及科技）創立，知識轉移處管理，資助可產生新產品或服務及新知識產權的學生項目。該計劃為創新意念提供第一筆撥款，將其培育成更有實力的計劃，以期日後獲得更多撥款。

• 創新科技署推出的「大學科技初創企業資助計劃」，鼓勵大學師生及校友創立科技初創企業。約有20家由城大師生及校友創辦的初創科技企業獲得這項資助。

• 由城大企業有限公司成立的「城大企業投資基金」，會考慮追隨領頭創業投資者或天使投資者，向城大師生校友的初創公司提供資助。

• 「學生競賽資助基金」支持學生參加相關的比賽，協助支付參賽所需的材料費、報名費及旅費，使他們得以展示其創意或產品。