

Docking Station Assists Creators at Purdue

The 2010 Academy Award-winning movie *The Social Network* brought to the masses the story of a college entrepreneur – Mark Zuckerberg, the creator of Facebook. A number of other businesses created on college campuses, or by college-age students, have had a significant impact on Americans today. Dell, Google, Yahoo!, Reddit, *Time Magazine* and Napster all make that list.

That’s the hope for the Purdue Research Foundation (PRF): that the next “big” business will come from a Purdue University undergraduate or graduate student.

Enter the Docking Station, a project resulting from a partnership between the PRF, Frontier Communications and the Burton D. Morgan Center for Entrepreneurship.

The Docking Station, located in the Chauncey Village neighborhood near Purdue’s campus, provides student members (who pay \$50 per semester to use the space) with access to a powerful communication network, which includes high-speed broadband Internet courtesy of Frontier. They also can take advantage of meeting spaces with conference tables, casual working areas with desks and coaching assistance.

Joe Hornett, senior vice president, treasurer and COO of the PRF, points to assistance from Purdue’s Office of Technology and Commercialization with getting students the help they need with intellectual property matters.



The Docking Station in West Lafayette provides student members with a place to gather and vet ideas. Richard Cosier, the Avrum and Joyce Gray Director of the Burton D. Morgan Center for Entrepreneurship, speaks with GreyMob Art Director Garrett Curry (left) and GreyMob Owner and Creative Director Jason Tennenhouse (Purdue Research Foundation photos).

“On any college campus, there are fairly well-heeled, knowledgeable students. Knowledgeable in the classroom settings, but not necessarily in practical aspects of bringing products – particularly of intellectual value or unique value – to the marketplace,” he notes.

While the Docking Station is still in its infancy, the increased emphasis on student entrepreneurship at Purdue is making a difference, Hornett affirms. In 2008-2009, there were 218 students that filed for patents. In 2012, that number has already risen to 355.

“Activities going on around campus appear to have met with some success, and those numbers would indicate students are indeed interested in entrepreneurship and business formation,” he states. “There are success stories across the United States of inventions that have taken place in dorm rooms, not necessarily in classrooms where students are clustered together. ... This is just a natural progression in trying to ensure that entrepreneurship takes place in the earliest learning experience at Purdue, all the way to the faculty that are moving those technologies to the marketplace.”

As the PRF also oversees the Purdue Research Park – a network of four business incubators around the state – starting (or continuing) to build a pipeline of fresh entrepreneurial talent is important.

“It’s another step in trying to provide a full continuum of entrepreneurial support to anybody associated with Purdue interested in moving in those arenas,” Hornett adds.

As students begin to return for the fall semester, Hornett and the PRF look to see more members. There are currently about 30.

“It will be interesting to see the challenges and opportunities that arise this coming fall when the Docking Station is a little more well known and, we believe, a lot more active,” he declares.



INFORMATION LINK

Resource: Joe Hornett, Purdue Research Foundation, at www.prf.org