

# R·I·T



**Entrepreneurship  
at RIT**

## Entrepreneurship: The Next Big Frontier

Entrepreneurs are major drivers of economic growth. They combine original, imaginative ideas with creativity and a healthy dose of tenacity. They're resourceful, inventive, and ambitious. RIT is the one place where all your ideas—big and small—are transformed into reality.



**J**ust step onto RIT's campus and you'll feel the energy produced when inspiration and innovation combine. A unique mix of academic programs in business, science, technology, and engineering combined with strong programs in the liberal, design, and creative arts positions RIT as a hub of creativity and ingenuity.

For the future entrepreneurs it's a breeding ground of potential—potential ideas, potential products, potential solutions—just waiting for the right person with the vision and drive to move them forward.

When RIT's left-brain and right-brain students engage with an outstanding faculty, in a learning environment that encourages them to step out of the box and explore the heights of a business idea, the result is passionate thinkers and doers ready to leave their mark on the world.



**"Unlike other universities, RIT is grounded in applied, experiential learning. With our mix of academic programs in technology, engineering, design, and art, not only can we integrate an entrepreneurial experience for all of our students, we can help you build the actual prototype of a product, bringing your ideas to life."**

*Richard DeMartino,  
Director, Albert J. Simone Center for Innovation  
and Entrepreneurship*

# A Distinct Advantage

Choosing the right major and minor are just half of the fun at RIT. For budding entrepreneurs there is a unique combination of resources, programs, and competitions that gets ideas flowing and sets them on the path toward entrepreneurial success.

## The Albert J. Simone Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship

At the heart of entrepreneurship initiatives at RIT, the center promotes, nurtures, and expands innovation and entrepreneurship activities by supporting academic programs, hosting competitions, and providing commercial activities that integrate academic initiatives with applied business creation and commercialization experiences.

## The Center for Student Innovation

With a multidisciplinary approach, the Center for Student Innovation fosters the creation of innovative concepts and products that have the potential to become businesses. Students collaborate in teams to generate ideas that mature into products.

## Entrepreneurs Conference

The RIT Entrepreneurs Conference, an annual gathering of the brightest minds in business and entrepreneurship, provides educational sessions, activities, and many opportunities for participants to explore different aspects of the entrepreneurial journey. The 2010 conference focused on sustainability with keynote speaker Kevin Surace '85, chairman and CEO of Serious



**Kevin Surace**, an RIT graduate and *Inc.* magazine's 2010 Entrepreneur of the Year.

Materials and *Inc.* magazine's 2010 Entrepreneur of the Year. Surace's company received numerous accolades for creating green building materials. In November 2008, *Popular Science* crowned EcoRock, the company's environmentally friendly drywall, a best new product. The following September, *The Wall Street Journal* named EcoRock the most innovative environmental product of the year.

## Entrepreneurial Boot Camp

Can you pitch, plan, develop, and launch a Web startup in a weekend? RIT48 challenges you to find out. Created by Ian Mikutel and Greg Koberger, the entrepreneurial boot camp brings



together students from across campus to collaborate, receive coaching, and develop plans for their entrepreneurial aspirations. "RIT has a great computing school, great business school, great art school, and great engineering school," says Mikutel, who launched TheWiire.com, a Web startup that reviews Nintendo's Wii video game console, rates video games, and features news, product reviews, and podcasts. "That's all the diversity you need for any startup company. RIT48 is a great way to kick-start that. At the end, students can be proud of what they did in a short amount of time and hopefully it's incentive to keep going with a product."

## Student Incubator

An initiative that promotes student-led new venture projects, the Student Incubator allows students to gain credit for maturing multidisciplinary projects.

Located on the ground floor of Venture Creations, the incubator offers valuable insight from entrepreneurs, coaches, and mentors to assist teams in refining their business concepts as they develop ventures.

## Venture Creations/ RIT Business Incubator

Venture Creations is a business incubator that provides assistance in evaluating business opportunities, developing business plans, and offering mentoring and guidance to new ventures. It also features low-cost office space and shared administrative resources such as wireless Internet, a conference room, copy and mail rooms, and electronic security.

One company housed at Venture Creations is making an impact on the medical community and beyond. When Richard Doolittle, director of biomedical sciences, and Paul Craig, professor of chemistry, were looking for assistance in developing a software package for use in their Human Visualization Project (HVP), they turned to Colin Doody and Brian Johnstone, who created a prototype that allowed for rapid 3-D visualization of different organs in the human body. Inspired by its success, Doody and Johnstone saw an opportunity materialize and launched Darkwind Media. The company recently developed Luster, a new platform for 3-D design that takes two- and three-dimensional assets and integrates them to produce a single scene display in real time.

## Speaker Series

The Entrepreneurship Speaker Series invites leading entrepreneurs to share their experiences and views in business and entrepreneurship, as well as lessons

learned along the way. The series has hosted major names in entrepreneurship, including Terry Matthews, chairman of Mitel and an entrepreneur who has launched more than 90 businesses, and Bela Musits, founding managing director, High Peaks Venture Partners, L.P.

## SHARK TANK

### Quarterly Competition

In three minutes, students make the pitch for startup capital by convincing investors that their concepts are worth thousands of dollars in seed money. Last year the Shark Tank, a quarterly student competition, funded a breakout idea that has

the potential to become a major asset in the medial community. Information technology major Phil Sacchitella developed an iPhone app that functions as a medical monitor in disaster areas and war zones where large medical equipment is inaccessible.

### Entrepreneurs Hall

Entrepreneurship at RIT is a lifestyle that cultivates your ideas and generates a spirit of ingenuity. In Entrepreneurs Hall, you'll live in a residential community that combines entrepreneurship courses, unique entrepreneurial co-ops, business

Named one of *Inc.* magazine's 20 Cool Business Incubators

mentoring, and 24/7 access to the Student Incubator. It's the perfect place to generate ideas, test the waters, and try your hand at maturing a business concept.

The program blends students from diverse academic programs in a team-based environment where they can develop new businesses and commercialize technology concepts. As projects mature, students are assigned an alumni/business mentor who offers guidance and advice.

Students selected for Entrepreneurs Hall have access to exclusive perks—leadership retreats and special course work—all of which count toward a minor in entrepreneurship.



## the College Driver

The New School of Car Review

**Corey Mack**, a mechanical engineering technology major, and business partner **Zeid Nasser**, a mechanical engineering technology/journalism major, pitched an expansion project at Shark Tank for their successful website The College Driver ([www.thecollegedriver.com](http://www.thecollegedriver.com)). The site provides automotive news and reviews from the perspective of a college-aged driver. Mack and Nasser receive new vehicles from manufacturers to test and have 20,000 unique visitors to their website each month.

# A Hub of Innovative Ideas

Entrepreneurship at RIT is more than selecting a program of study that teaches entrepreneurship. Here, students learn, live, and experience entrepreneurship firsthand.

## A Competitive Advantage

Whether you are majoring in business, science, engineering, design, technology, or the creative arts, we encourage you to bring your innovative ideas to RIT to take advantage of the entrepreneurial resources at your disposal.

A benefit few entrepreneurial programs can duplicate is our ability to not only foster your ideas, but help you create a prototype of the product or service you want to build your business around. Our academic programs and classroom

projects are built around this philosophy. Our balance of programs in technology, engineering, art, and design means you have the ability to see your project come to life as you learn to build your business.

Beyond the classroom, resources for the budding entrepreneur are plentiful and provide students with the tools, skills, and mentoring that challenge them to commercialize new products and launch new business ventures.

We have the courses and resources waiting for your innovative ideas!

## Undergraduate Minors

- Entrepreneurship
- Digital Business

## MBA Concentrations

- Entrepreneurship
- Digital Marketing
- Product Commercialization
- Technology Management

## Master's Degree

- Innovation Management



### Ryan Kelly

Since completing the Building a Web Business course, Ryan Kelly's website, college-warehouse.com, has been recognized as a Top 50 website for freshman advice by eCollegeFinder. The site grew out of his course work for the class, which Kelly describes as teaching students "everything you need to know about starting a business online." Kelly has taken his newfound Web skills and launched a second startup. "By using the skills I acquired in class, I was able to discover a new niche and develop my newest website, TweetCeekr.com," he says. TweetCeekr uses Twitter feeds to tailor streaming information—from news, reviews, and entertainment to deals and sporting events—to users depending on which city they are in.



### Elishia Ortiz

Elishia Ortiz is a multitasker. The new media marketing major holds a part-time job, is completing an internship at a top advertising agency, and, in her spare time, runs Young&Fit Forever, a company she established before arriving at RIT. Young&Fit offers an exercise DVD and fitness classes for children ages 3 to 13. "I joined Entrepreneurs Hall to get a better understanding of how I can advance my business and to meet other students who have a passion for entrepreneurship."



**Steve Shapiro** is the force behind Digsby, a social media application that manages e-mail, instant messaging, and social networking accounts seamlessly in one application. Shapiro, a 2004 information technology graduate who is currently pursuing his MBA, developed the idea for Digsby in an entrepreneurship class. "I took advantage of all RIT had to offer, from the entrepreneurship class, resources through the Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship, office space at Venture Creations, and even hiring co-op students as employees," says Shapiro. Digsby launched in March 2008 and quickly found admirers from *The Wall Street Journal* and *Laptop* magazine to *PC* magazine, which listed it among the "Best Free Software of 2009." Since its launch, Digsby has grown to more than 1 million users.

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### On the Cover

**Top:** Before enrolling at RIT, Elishia Ortiz, a marketing major, launched a fitness business aimed at keeping children healthy.

**Center:** The Center for Student Innovation brings together students who hail from the university's diverse assortment of academic programs to launch innovation and entrepreneurial projects.

**Bottom:** Corey Mack, a mechanical engineering technology major, has developed a system to convert intermodal shipping containers into low-cost, sustainable housing.

# Forging New Paths

RIT is on the forefront of important entrepreneurship initiatives that are pushing the frontiers of business, technology, and society.

## Deaf Entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurship is the embodiment of empowerment and independence. No group desires these attributes more than the 4 million deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals in the U.S.—nearly half of whom are unemployed. RIT and NTID are pioneering leaders in the research and creation of programs that promote deaf entrepreneurship. Partnering with the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation, the Deaf Entrepreneurship Initiative empowers the deaf community to embrace entrepreneurial opportunities on the path to success.

## Digital Entrepreneurship

New technologies are dramatically changing the face of our society and our economy. These new digital opportunities

are the basis for Digital Entrepreneurship.

Our research and course work explore and define this dynamic field. Courses like Digital Entrepreneurship and Building a Web Business involve creating and advancing business ideas. We've had many student projects advance to become ongoing ventures. Both courses serve as natural complements to our traditional entrepreneurship courses.

Our online community, DigEnt (<http://digent.rit.edu>), has grown to more than 700 individuals, including students and faculty from universities, entrepreneurs, venture capitalists, and other interested experts. It has achieved national recognition from the New Media Consortium's Horizon Report as an example of a collaboration effort. RIT plays an active role in advancing the current state of

knowledge while developing the next generation of digital entrepreneurs.

## Social Entrepreneurship

Social entrepreneurs envision a better world. It's all about producing measurable results by solving social problems. Socially and environmentally minded students see their ideas take shape and positively impact the community. By encouraging social entrepreneurship, new pathways to success generate social value, bettering the community as a whole and making a powerful impact on the world.

RIT promotes and values diversity within its work force and provides equal opportunity to all qualified individuals regardless of race, color, creed, age, marital status, gender, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, national origin, veteran status, or disability.

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