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Young Entrepreneurs to Inspire Students to Create Their Own Jobs

Statewide conference helps soon-to-be grads navigate the shaky job market and start their own business

On February 25th, Launch '10 will seek to inspire students, faculty, and economic development leaders to create their own path during one of the worst economic downturns in 80 years. The annual conference geared towards advancing entrepreneurship education in South Dakota includes keynotes, exhibits, workshops, and question-and-answer sessions with young entrepreneurs. Students will brainstorm with business professionals and meet like-minded students through networking events while faculty learn to integrate innovative and creative thinking within their respective disciplines.

The conference's keynote features addresses from Extreme Entrepreneurship Tour (EET) speakers, Sheena Lindahl and Arel Moodie; two highly accomplished young entrepreneurs set to discuss the challenges of starting a business and how they turned an idea into success. Dr. Kay Palan, the Associate Dean for Undergraduate Programs at Iowa State University (ISU) will also be on hand to discuss entrepreneurship education at the college level. Palan coordinates the university-wide entrepreneurial studies minor and chairs ISU's Entrepreneurship Supervisory Committee while being an active case writer in the areas of marketing strategy and entrepreneurship.

EET provides practical advice not just for business school students but those interested in creating their own opportunity. Whether they've studied philosophy or computer science, the Extreme Entrepreneurship Tour encourages students to think like a savvy business owner and apply an entrepreneurial mindset to whatever career they choose.

Sheena Lindahl and Michael Simmons started the Extreme Entrepreneurship Tour after they graduated from college in 2006 as a way to connect America's top young entrepreneurs with students and encourage them to enter the business world.

"We've learned that 6 or 7 out of every 10 high school and college-age students would like to start a business of their own," Lindahl says. "However, when we talked with some of these students, we realized that many of them needed inspiration and support to achieve this dream. That's how we came up with the idea for the tour."

The Extreme Entrepreneurship Tour has held over 120 events throughout the country and has attracted more than 500 people at tour events. The organization has received the Innovation Award from the National Association of Development Organizations and the Program of the Year award from Northern Michigan University. Lindahl and Simmons have both received numerous business awards: Lindahl was named by Business Week as one of the country's top

25 entrepreneurs under 25 and Simmons received entrepreneur of the year awards from the National Foundation for Teaching Entrepreneurship, Fleet, and the National Coalition for Empowering Youth Entrepreneurship.

This will be the 5th annual event for the Launch conference, which is committed to helping students, faculty, and economic development leaders succeed in the changing economy. The day's events begin at 8:30 am and end at 3:15 pm and will be held at Dakota Wesleyan University.

Attendees can register at: www.dwu.edu/SDLaunchConference or call 800-952-3562 or 605-665-4408. Waived registration fees for faculty and students are available for a limited time through the South Dakota Experimental Program to Stimulate Competitive Research (SD EPSCoR). Visit the Launch website to learn more.