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Entrepreneur Wants to Foster Student Creativity

\$100,000 Pledge Will Fund Center, Degree Program

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The “play hard” aspect of Brian J. McIntyre’s business philosophy is found in the center of his company’s Columbia Gateway office suite, where a foosball table and a scooter beckon employees to take a break.

The “work hard” part of McIntyre’s credo is scrawled on a display board in his office, where a recent conversation with a client led him to draw an organizational chart that looked positively algebraic.

McIntyre, the founder of two local firms devoted to human resources technology, thinks fast, talks fast and enjoys the challenge of turning a notion into a moneymaker. Lots of other people want to make their ideas pay, said McIntyre, and they ought to have a chance. They will, as the result of \$100,000 McIntyre has pledged to Howard Community College to launch an Entrepreneurial Center this fall.

If the college’s aspiring entrepreneurs believe enough in themselves, “60 to 70 percent of their capability is already there,” McIntyre said. “We can fill in the gaps.”

McIntyre’s five-year pledge, announced this month, came after HCC officials decided to promote entrepreneurship. But they were not certain exactly how to do that during this time of lean budgets and cutbacks.

“Probably we would not be doing this right now without [McIntyre’s] support,” said Ron Roberson, vice president for academic affairs. “His timing is excellent.”

McIntyre’s gift will enable the college to develop a two-year associates’ degree program called “Entrepreneurship and Creativity.” It will become part of the school’s core course offerings this fall and be available to even students intending to major in other fields.

“I think they will be curious about the subject,” Roberson said. “Students will want to see themselves as entrepreneurs.”

The classes likely will go beyond traditional lectures and include simulations, such as designing new products for a fictitious firm.

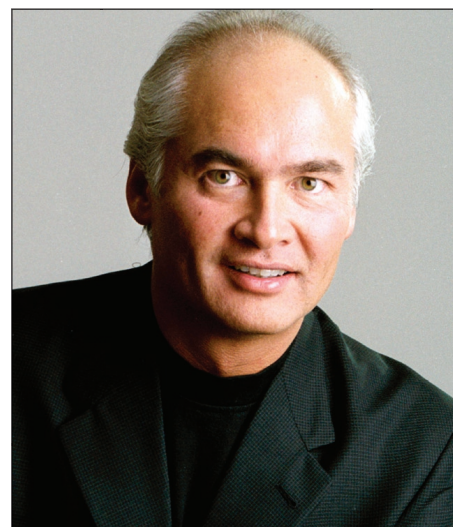
“I’m a firm believer in simulations as an educational tool,” said Roberson, who recently participated in a Red Cross training where he played the role of emergency shelter manager in a mock disaster. “It allows [people] to think creatively.”

The center also will offer training and online resources to local businesses. For the nonbusiness person, such as the aspiring artist or musician, the center, said Roberson, will try to answer the question, “What would I need to know to survive?”

That’s a key question even for those such as McIntyre, who has long been comfortable adapting the latest computer technology to traditional business operations such as administering payrolls and benefits, developing and recruiting staff and evaluating business vendors.

After working for three human resources firms in the Baltimore-Washington area, McIntyre struck out on his own in 1995. His firm, Working Concepts, focused on helping larger companies update and make the best use of their human resources software systems.

When he started Working Concepts, said McIntyre, 45, there was not a lot of local support for entrepreneurs “who had great ideas but really needed some help with balance sheets and financial statements.” He risked everything and made mistakes, but Working Concepts’ eventual success attracted one of McIntyre’s former employers, New York-based Towers Perrin, which bought the company in 2001 for an undisclosed amount.



WorkStrategy founder Brian J. McIntyre

Last year, McIntyre launched WorkStrategy, which tailors leading human resources software such as Kronos and PeopleSoft for companies ranging from 500 to 5,000 employees. McIntyre said WorkStrategy consultants also show businesses how to streamline their operations.

“Sometimes it’s just changing habits,” he said.

As he has climbed in the business world, McIntyre also has pursued philanthropy. He funds six scholarships at the New Jersey high school he attended, and in 2002 he started a Columbia nonprofit organization to mentor individuals who want to launch businesses.

For inspiration, he has looked to his mother, who arrived in the United States from China in 1950 and went on to raise six children with her Irish American husband, teach at two universities and a high school, start two nonprofit organizations and write a book.

“My mom’s a real entrepreneur,” McIntyre said.