

# ASSESSING THE LEARNING GOAL OUTCOMES OF AN INTERDISCIPLINARY ENTREPRENEURSHIP COHORT PROGRAM: A COMPREHENSIVE SURVEY APPROACH

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## ABSTRACT

*The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) states that the faculty is responsible for setting the learning goals of academic programs and monitoring their attainment, which can in part be accomplished through capturing insights from recent graduates. This paper follows this model by examining the learning goal outcomes of a unique cohort-based entrepreneurship scholar program at St. Mary's University. The program combines traditional classroom learning with extensive, practical out-of-class entrepreneurial experiences, both domestic and international. The underlying study in this paper encompasses a comprehensive survey of the entire program alumni population spanning nine years, capturing quantitative and qualitative data. The objectives of the study were twofold. First, the study set out to measure the achievement of the program's seven stated learning goals. Second, the study sought to determine the impact of the holistic program on the alumni's professional achievements. The study found very strong support of the achievement of the program's learning goals, particularly in the areas of leadership and communication abilities. The paper's contributions include the illustration of an innovative entrepreneurship education program and the provision of an approach to establish and assess learning goal outcomes.*

## INTRODUCTION

Consider the following three testimonials written in response to a survey by graduates of an interdisciplinary entrepreneurship cohort program, called the E-scholar Program:

*"All activities included in the E-scholars Program unveiled talents and defined aspirations that vaguely existed; every opportunity acted as a catalyst for realizing these talents and aspirations. The educational program for detailing what entrepreneurship is was great and provided the framework to make such goals a reality."*

*“The combined activities and opportunities that the E-scholar Program provided to me were beyond extraordinary. I was able to network with many local entrepreneurs and learn a great deal about success beyond the classroom.”*

*“The opportunities provided by the E-scholar Program gave me the motivation I needed to believe in my education and business vision. Being exposed to a variety of interactions with foreign and domestic business leaders gave the group a sense of identity and purpose for those of us who believed intently that creating products and services were not so in our distant future. Before becoming an E-scholar, I questioned my entrepreneurial spirit and abilities as a business leader. After the completion of the program, I knew that being an entrepreneur takes education, motivation, vision, and most of all guts. It takes the proper amount of self-confidence to stop being a follower and take part in the select few who create.”*

These are three, among several testimonials received in the results of a survey completed by E-scholar Program graduates, who participated in the one-year certificate program. For a comprehensive approach to our methodology, all students who participated in the Program over its nine-year lifespan received surveys. The primary purpose of this paper is to demonstrate that the E-scholar Program model successfully achieves the learning goals and mission set-forth by our School. Secondly, we want to determine the impact the Program has had on graduates’ professional achievements.

### **DESCRIPTION & HIGHLIGHTS OF THE E-SCHOLAR PROGRAM**

The Entrepreneur Scholars Program at St. Mary’s University in San Antonio, Texas, is a university-wide certificate program designed for all students, regardless of major. Beginning its 10<sup>th</sup> year of operation in the fall of 2013, the Program has included students from 18 different majors across campus: accounting, biochemistry, biology, corporate finance, criminal justice, electrical engineering, engineering management, English communication arts, entrepreneurial studies, general business, industrial engineering, international business, international relations, law, and marketing, along with multinational organizational studies in Spanish, political science, and psychology.

The curriculum consists of a carefully selected blend of traditional classroom learning with opportunities outside of the classroom that significantly enhance students’ entrepreneurship education. They complete two courses. The fall course, *Building World Class Ideas & Organizations* focuses creating a business concept, developing an elevator pitch, and testing the feasibility of the business model. The spring course, *Global Entrepreneurship* is devoted to examining their business ideas in a foreign country by taking an international business trip designed to expose them to a different culture and business environment, as well as to fully develop their business plans. E-scholar students have traveled to China, Mongolia, Dubai, South Korea, Scotland, Russia, Taiwan, Panama, Hong Kong, the Czech Republic and Poland.

Students enrolled in the program are also required to use their entrepreneurial skills and knowledge in a social entrepreneurship project to fulfill civic-engagement and community service endeavors. For example, one year we partnered with City Year to develop a business plan for a free spring break camp for low-income children. We devoted approximately 400 hours of service to the project and provided City Year with a complete business plan for the camp, which was a huge success. The program has also completed community service projects to improve the lives of disadvantaged women re-entering the workforce and to help teach children about entrepreneurship and finance.

There are currently two other universities with E-Scholar Programs, the University of Portland, which initiated the first E-scholar Program in 1999 and the College of Saint Benedict/St. John's University. Each February we hold an E-scholar Student Consortium. The main event is an elevator pitch competition between the students. The students also engage in a collaborative 24-hour business plan project.

Each E-Scholar contributes \$2,500 to participate in the program, which is supplemented by proceeds from an event called the Forum on Entrepreneurship Breakfast Series, which typically provides \$25,000 per year to the cohort for domestic and international business trips. An E1 (first cohort) Program graduate states, "I realize how important the sponsorships are to the program, and how the program is such a vital part of the entrepreneurial community." We designate students by the year they participate in the program by the use of (E1)-(E10).

The true hallmark of the E-Scholar Program is that it overcomes common barriers to learning. These include the isolation of the classroom, limited expertise, cost, time, and rapid globalization (Envick & Padmanabhan, P., 2006; Anderson, Envick, & Padmanabhan, 2012). Students are exposed to other useful learning environments outside of the classroom; they are able to tap into the expertise of numerous business professionals besides their professors; the sponsorships provide the true means for them to engage in various educational business activities; linking two consecutive semesters together and utilizing the spring break for the international business trip provides more time for educational opportunities; and the international business trip allows students the chance to conduct business beyond their comfort zones, thus significantly strengthening their skills and confidence levels. One (E4) graduate asserts, "This program has opened my eyes to a whole new world and has related my degree to the business world."

Some of the E-scholar Program highlights are outlined below:

- 1) With the new cohort (E10s), 80 students will have participated in the program, representing 18 different majors from the Business School, the School of Science, Engineering, & Technology, the School of Humanities & Social Sciences and the Law School.
- 2) Faculty and students involved in the program have taken business trips to 10 different US cities and 11 countries outside the US.
- 3) Students have conducted five social entrepreneurship initiatives as a way to give back to the community, some projects spanning over two cohorts.

- 4) Some E-scholar students have or are currently providing executive leadership to our student-managed business, *Rattler Enterprises*. An (E5) student was CEO from 2008-2010, an (E7) student was CEO in 2011, an (E7) student acted as VP of Marketing in 2011, and an (E9) student served as CEO in 2012.
- 5) The E-scholar Program was featured in *The Texas Economy* on-line magazine for its unique approach to entrepreneurship education and its success.

The students, faculty, and the Program itself have achieved many national level accomplishments, as follows:

- 1) An (E6) and an (E7) student won 1<sup>st</sup> place in the Elevator Pitch competition at the *National Collegiate Entrepreneurs' Organization's* National Conference in 2008 and 2010 respectively. The (E6) student also won 1<sup>st</sup> place at the National E-Scholar Student Consortium in 2010. In 2011, an (E8) student took third place in the CEO's Elevator Pitch National Competition.
- 2) An (E3) won 1<sup>st</sup> place in the National E-Scholar Student Consortium Elevator Pitch Competition in 2007 and in 2008, with an (E1) student taking 2<sup>nd</sup> place in 2007.
- 3) Faculty members won the Distinguished Research Award from the *Academy of Entrepreneurship* for a pedagogical article they wrote about the hallmarks of the program.
- 4) Faculty members also received the *Douglass Award for Innovative Teaching* in recognition of the program from our university.
- 5) The University of Portland received the USASBE National Program Model Award in 2002 to expand the program to other universities (our university was part of this expansion), and in 2012, all three E-scholar Program universities were honored with this award.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Programs in entrepreneurial studies that have emerged over the last two decades are arguably the most potent economic force the world has ever experienced, Kuratko (2005) contends, as he further provides statistics regarding the growth-rates in the number of programs. While only a handful of entrepreneurship courses existed at universities in the 1970s, well over 2,200 courses in 1,600 schools offered courses and majors in 2005. And that number has likely grown since Kuratko's study. Kurtko's challenge in this paper was for entrepreneurship educators to provide "*complete academic legitimacy*" in the field of study.

The study of entrepreneurship is now a part of the mainstream. The pedagogy is changing based on the broadening of entrepreneurship education by creating more interdisciplinary programs for non-business students, such as in the arts, engineering, and sciences. Kuratko (2005) further states that new and innovative approaches to teaching entrepreneurship must be developed. On a side-note, we began our E-scholar Program in the fall of 2004, open to all majors across campus and consisting of a significant number of out-of-class activities.

Evaluation of program effectiveness is not new. Deniston, Rosenstock, & Getting (1968) discuss this in the public health field, purporting that any program should have an overall objective with an end-result in mind, along with a combination of program activities that can be considered “sub-objectives.” There must be several sub-objectives combined with resources to support the performance of those activities. Even in mentoring programs for students, there must be perceived program effectiveness through a variety of activities and commitments (Allen, Eby, & Lentz, 2006). In their article on student learning outside of the classroom, Kuh, Lund, and Ramin-Gyurnek (1994) state that students should learn and develop in a holistic, integrated way as they engage in both academic and non-academic activities inside and outside of the classroom. A few outcomes they mention include self-confidence, practical competence, and interpersonal competence.

Katz (2003) discusses the presence of entrepreneurship courses in AACSB (The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business) schools. As these numbers grow, and entrepreneurship is seen as more mainstream, entrepreneurship programs must meet AACSB standards by demonstrating the academic legitimacy through the achievement of learning goal outcomes. The main objective of this paper is to demonstrate the success of the outcomes of the E-scholar Program’s learning goals, not only as they relate to the program itself, but in support the mission of our Business School, where the program is housed.

AACSB Accreditation Standards state that, “Learning goals say how the program demonstrates the mission, translating a more general statement of the mission into the educational accomplishments of graduates.” ([www.aacsb.edu/accreditation/business/standards/aol/learning\\_goals.asp](http://www.aacsb.edu/accreditation/business/standards/aol/learning_goals.asp), accessed May 2013). It further states that, “Students and recent graduates of degree programs can provide their insights into the strengths and weaknesses of the educational experience provided by the programs.” Since AACSB uses learning goals to translate the mission of a school to the educational accomplishments of graduates, we felt the best way to ascertain the learning goals for the E-Scholar Program was to survey all those who have completed the program. The focus of the survey was primarily aimed at our School’s learning goals, but we also added a few questions regarding their general career and educational achievements. AACSB states that, “Student learning is the central activity of higher education,” further stating that, “learning expectations derive from a balance of internal and external contributions to the definition of educational goals” ([www.aacsb.edu/accreditation/business/standards/aol/learning\\_goals.asp](http://www.aacsb.edu/accreditation/business/standards/aol/learning_goals.asp), accessed May 2013). Therefore, we felt that these external contributions would serve as a good catalyst to help us improve the program.

## **THE E-SCHOLAR PROGRAM & LEARNING GOALS**

The learning goals of the E-scholar Program are in-line with the themes and learning goals set by the Business School, where the E-scholar Program is housed and operated. The four themes of Ethical Leadership, Professional Orientation, Technical Excellence, and Global Awareness define our mission in the School. Not only do the activities the E-scholar students participate in outside the classroom provide the unique features of the Program, but they also serve to support the mission and learning goals of our School.



**Table 1: E-scholar Learning Goals Outside-of-the-Classroom**

<b>Out-of-Class-Activities:</b>	<b>Mission Theme*:</b>	<b>Learning Goal**:</b>
<b>Forum on Entrepreneurship Breakfast Series (off-campus)</b> help organize and coordinate each event network with 250+ business professionals hear advice and success stories from speakers	PO & TE	T; CA CA EBK
<b>Goelz Speaker Series (on-campus)</b> hear advice and success stories from speakers	PO & TE	EBK
<b>Collegiate Entrepreneur Organization Conference</b> over 80 workshops and seminars to attend network with over 1,200 students, faculty, and entrepreneurs compete in the largest elevator pitch competition in the nation	PO & TE	EBK CA CA; CTS
<b>San Antonio Entrepreneurs' Organization Event</b> interact with successful entrepreneurs in the local community	PO & TE	CA; EBK
<b>Service Learning Project</b> use entrepreneurship skills to help local non-profit organizations	EL, PO & TE	L; EA; CTS; CA; T; EBK
<b>National E-scholar Student Consortium</b> compete in an elevator pitch competition develop a business plan on a team with students from other schools	PO & TE	CA; CTS T; CA; EBK; CTS
<b>International Business Trip</b> learn about business environment and culture of the destination test the business concept in that business environment hear advice and success stories from foreign entrepreneurs  interact with students from foreign universities and business professionals participate in business tours and cultural tours	PO, TE & GA	UNGA EBK; CTS; UNGA EBK; UNGA  CA; UNGA EBK; UNGA
<b>*Mission Theme Legend:</b> PO = Professional Orientation TE = Technical Excellence EL = Ethical Leadership GA = Global Awareness	<b>** Learning Goal Legend:</b> T = Teamwork CA = Communication Abilities EBK = Essential Business Knowledge CTS = Critical Thinking Skills L = Leadership EA = Ethical Awareness UNGA = Understand Nature of Global Economy	

*Table 1: E-scholar Learning Goals Outside-of-the-Classroom* outlines these activities and ties them directly to our four-themed mission statement and seven learning goals for our School. These activities provide an important arena to synthesize and integrate material

introduced in the classroom. This is especially true on their domestic and international business trips, as they provide “real-world” ways to test their business plans in an unfamiliar environment, as well as develop a more sophisticated and pragmatic view on both professional and academic matters discussed in the classroom. The holistic nature of the program also allows students to earn an E-scholar Program Certificate by successfully fulfilling the obligations of both the in-class and out-of-class activities.

### **PROGRAM CERTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS & OUTSIDE-OF-THE-CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES**

This section describes the requirements for the E-scholar certificate, the professional code of conduct, and the outside-of-the-classroom activities outlined in *Table 1*.

#### **Certificate Program Requirements**

All students admitted to the E-scholar Program are eligible to earn an E-scholar Certificate. This academic certification appears on their transcript, and they are distinguished at graduation with an E-scholar sash. To earn the certificate, an E-scholar must meet all the following requirements, along with abiding by the program’s professional code of conduct (outlined in the next section).

- 1) Earn a B or higher in the fall course
- 2) Earn a B or higher in the spring course
- 3) Attend and participate in the Forum on Entrepreneurship Breakfast Series during the fall and spring semesters
- 4) Attend the Goelz Speaker Series during the fall semester
- 5) Attend and participate in the National CEO conference in the fall semester
- 6) Participate in and contribute to the E-scholar service learning project during the academic year
- 7) Attend the local EO24 event during the fall semester
- 8) Attend and participate in the National E-scholar Student Consortium during the spring semester
- 9) Attend and participate in the international business trip during the spring semester

Making the program an official certificate program truly enhances it by allowing us to incorporate rigor into the program as well as highlight the accomplishments of the students who excel the program by meeting all of the requirements both in and outside of the classroom. If they fail to complete the standards required, they do not earn the certificate, so it gives them something to work towards from the beginning of the fall semester to end of the spring semester.

## **Professional Code of Conduct**

All E-scholars are expected to abide by the professional code of conduct (PCC), as it provides the foundation for all behavior in the program. It also provides a sense of unity and common vision. Furthermore, the PCC provides an image of the program and the university to others, such as other students, faculty, staff, and business professionals. The student agrees to abide by the program's PCC, which includes three components: interpersonal skills, initiative, and dependability. They are described below:

### *Interpersonal Skills:*

This includes the attitudes, behaviors, attire, gestures, manners, words, and tone of voice used towards other people. Other people include, but are not limited to, professors, other students, staff, guest speakers, and/or other business professionals.

### *Initiative:*

This includes the energy, thought, and care put forth towards completing a task or project. Direct supervision may not always be available, and one must act independently to accomplish an objective. Without initiative, procrastination and missed opportunities occur, which ultimately lead to poor performance.

### *Dependability:*

This includes being honest, reliable, and on time. People who are not dependable waste other peoples' time and can also waste other resources. In the workplace, behaviors related to being dishonest, unreliable, and late can be very expensive to the organization and can even lead to job loss.

Students are provided with specific behavioral examples related to the program that illustrate each of the three components of the PCC to ensure they understand them and agree to comply with the PCC. The outside-of-the-classroom activities outlined in *Table 1* are described below:

## **Forum on Entrepreneurship Breakfast Series**

Students in the E-scholar program have the opportunity to hear the advice and success stories from several high-profile entrepreneurs and business executives through the Forum on Entrepreneurship Breakfast Series, which is a partnership between the university and the local business community. We host four breakfasts per academic year with an average of 280 business professionals attending each one. The purpose of the Entrepreneurship Breakfast Series is to advance entrepreneurial activities in the area and promote the development of student scholarships. Past speakers have included: Michael Dell, founder of Dell; Herb Kelleher founder of Southwest Airlines; and Ed Whitacre, former CEO of GM & ATT&T. The proceeds from the breakfasts provide scholarship money in the amount of \$25,000 per year to the E-scholar Program to help fund domestic and international business trips.



### **Goelz Speaker Series**

The Goelz Speaker Series occurs each fall semester. Twelve entrepreneurs and other business executives are invited to a reception each week where they interact with students. After the reception, they share their stories and words of advice with the students. Entrepreneurs and executives who have participated include Hope Andrade, Texas Secretary of State and entrepreneur; Bill Greehey, Chairman of the Board of NuStar Energy LP, and NuStar GP Holdings, LLC, and former Chairman of the Board for Valero Energy Corporation; and Red McCombs, founder of Red McCombs Automotive Group co-founder of Clear Channel Communications, and former owner of the San Antonio Spurs and Minnesota Vikings.

### **Collegiate Entrepreneurs' Organization' National Conference**

The Collegiate Entrepreneurs' Organization (CEO) is a premier student entrepreneurship organization with chapters at over 200 colleges and universities. Their mission is to inform, support and inspire college students to be entrepreneurial and seek opportunity through enterprise creation. The E-scholars travel to the National Conference each fall. They participate in all required activities, which includes submitting an application for the Elevator Pitch Competition. The conference provides students the opportunity to network with approximately 1,200 other students, faculty, entrepreneurs and other business executives. Over 80 outstanding entrepreneurs and business leaders also share their advice and expertise with attendees during several concurrent sessions and keynote addresses on topics such as launching a new venture, technology, marketing, and finance, among several other topics relevant to nascent entrepreneurs.

### **San Antonio Entrepreneurs Organization Event**

EO24 is an event held by the Entrepreneurs' Organization that celebrates and spreads entrepreneurship around the globe for 24 hours. Local chapters host events that focus on innovation, knowledge sharing, and real-time learning to help drive economic growth in 42 countries. From chapter to chapter, EO members share their entrepreneurial wisdom around the world to inspire and support the next generation of entrepreneurs. Each year this half-day event is held in November for our E-scholars. The event consists of a keynote speaker, a panel discussion, and round-table discussions with several EO members, so that the E-scholars can interact in a more informal manner with all of the entrepreneurs at the end of the event.

### **Service Learning Project**

The E-scholars are required to use their entrepreneurial skills and knowledge in a service learning project to fulfill the community service requirement. For example, one year we partnered with City Year to develop a business plan for a free spring break camp for low-income children. We worked with Dress for Success to help them streamline their operations

to fulfill their mission to improve the lives of disadvantaged women re-entering the workforce. We have also partnered with KPMG for a camp to help teach children about entrepreneurship and finance. And this past year, the E-scholars engaged in a fundraising activity for the Wounded Warrior Project.

### **E-scholar National Consortium**

Each spring we hold an E-scholar Student Consortium with two other universities that have E-scholar programs. The main event is an elevator pitch competition between all the students (approximately 40). They also engage in a collaborative 24-hour business plan project. Each team, which is comprised of students from all three universities, must choose a current trend and develop a business plan to address a need in the marketplace related to that trend. They only have one full-day to develop the plan and present it to a panel of judges the following day.

### **International Business Trip**

During the spring semester, the E-scholars devote their spring break to test out their business ideas in a foreign country. We have traveled to China, Mongolia, Dubai, South Korea, Scotland, Russia, Taiwan, Panama, Hong Kong, the Czech Republic and Poland. Students conduct business meetings with industry professionals in their destination country including entrepreneurs, investors, and other business executives. The E-scholars also interact with students from colleges and universities in the area and take cultural tours to broaden their horizons. After they return from the trip, they must fully develop their business plans for their destination country by utilizing all of the information that they acquired during their trip, which spans approximately 10 days.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The primary research objective of this study was to assess the learning goal outcomes of a unique cohort-based entrepreneurship program at St. Mary's University. The study's secondary objective was to determine the impact of the program on its alumni's professional achievements. In order to address these objectives we decided that a quantitative survey approach was the most optimal research design since it would best measure the outcomes of specific learning goals, while allowing for open-ended questions to be included to provide some qualitative data for a more in-depth understanding.

The survey was administered utilizing SurveyMonkey. The entire E-scholar alumni population (N=70) was subsequently contacted electronically and encouraged to participate. Prospective respondents were guaranteed anonymity in order to enhance the response rate and minimize bias (i.e., to encourage honest and accurate responses). We received 21 usable responses, which equates to a response rate of 30%. This response rate was deemed to be acceptable and representative of the entire population, as well as across the different cohorts.

The survey instrument consisted of eleven questions designed to measure the learning

goal outcomes of the E-scholar Program, as well as to collect pertinent demographic data. The questions included a series of 5 and 7-point Likert scales and open-ended questions.

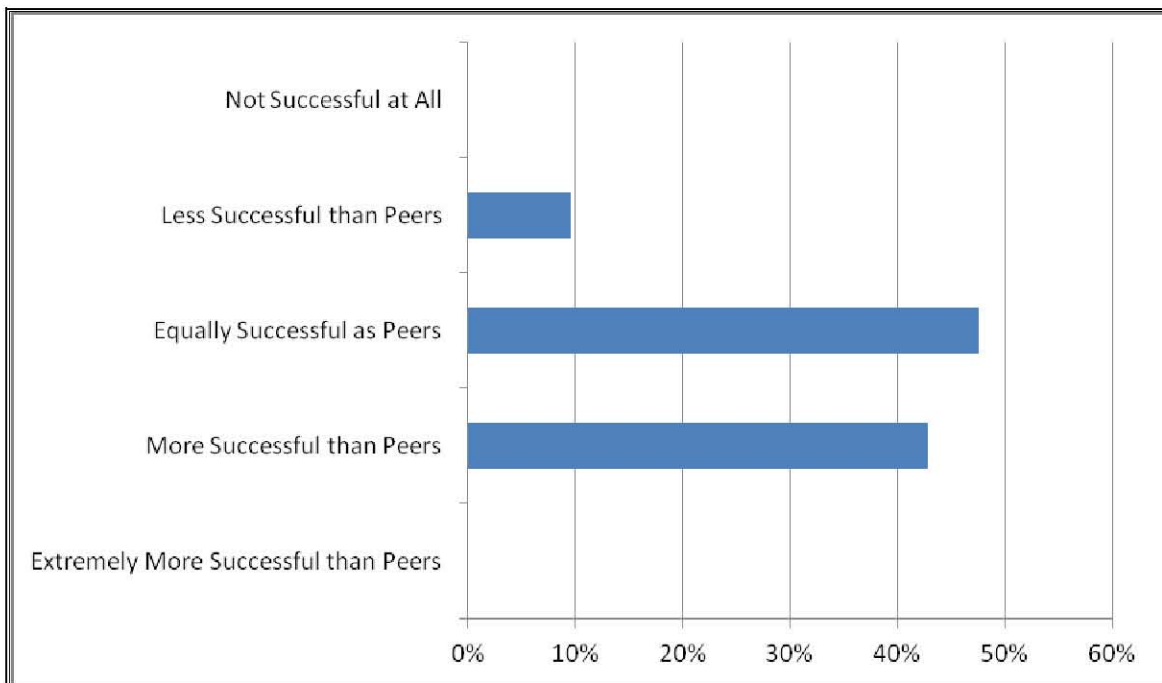
## RESULTS

Before delineating our findings related to the study's primary research objective of assessing learning goal outcomes, it is insightful to first illustrate the key achievements of the alumni respondents, thereby addressing our secondary research objective. The survey asked the Program alumni to indicate their following accomplishments with six months of graduation (see Table 2). As can be seen in *Table 2: Accomplishments within Six Months of Graduation*, over 85% of the E-Scholar alumni respondents obtained a job, started a business or got accepted into graduate school within six months of graduation. The six respondents in the "other" category explained that they were still in school (n=2), in a full-time volunteer position, awaiting graduate school, searching for a job, or traveling.

*Table 2: Accomplishments within Six Months of Graduation (n=21)*

<b>Accomplishment</b>	<b>Number of Responses</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Obtained a Job	11	52.38%
Started a Business	1	4.76%
Got Accepted into Graduate School	6	28.57%
Other	6	28.57%

A second indicator of the Program alumni's professional achievements was obtained through a survey question asking respondents to rate their success at this point in their career, entrepreneurial endeavor, or graduate schooling, utilizing a 5-point Likert scale. As can be seen in *Figure 1: Respondent Self-Assessment of Success*, over 90% of the Program alumni regard themselves as being equally or more successful than their peers.

**Figure 1: Respondent Self-Assessment of Success (n=21)**

The study's primary research objective of assessing the learning goal outcomes of the E-scholar Program was achieved by asking alumni to evaluate the impact of the program on the attainment of the seven learning goals (refer back to Table 1), through a series of 7-point Likert scales. Specifically, the survey asked the following question: *"In comparison to your peers, to what degree do you believe the E-scholar Program (disregarding other programs and courses) helped put you in a better position to understand and/or excel at each learning goal using the following scale:"*

- 1=Not at all
- 2=To a slight degree
- 3=To a somewhat stronger degree
- 4=To the same degree (neutral)
- 5=To a moderately better degree
- 6=To a much better degree
- 7=To an exceptionally better degree

*Table 3: Assessment of Learning Goals* illustrates the results of the question. The respondents strongly believed that the Program better prepared them to understand and excel at the seven learning goals relative to their peers, as evidenced by the high mean scores

ranging from 5.76 to 6.48. Thus, the findings suggest that the Program attributes and intrinsic experiences led to enhanced learning goal outcomes.

**Table 3: Assessment of Learning Goals (n=21)**

<b>Learning Goal</b>	<b>Mean (scale of 1-7)</b>
Teamwork	6.00
Communication Abilities	6.43
Essential Business Knowledge	6.38
Critical Thinking Skills	5.86
Leadership	6.48
Ethical Awareness	5.76
Understanding the Nature of the Global Economy	6.33

The respondents reported many success stories. Two graduates are currently operating their own companies, while two are planning to launch new ventures this coming year. Another is successfully expanding the family business after the death of the founder. Many are employed by companies such as Johnson Control, Inc., Bloomberg, AT&T, Hard Rock Café, Walt Disney Company, Ernst & Young, BP, Energy Solutions International, and Valero Energy Corporation. The Program's graduates are located from coast to coast, with two located in California and one in Washington D.C., while at least two others are living and working outside of the U.S., with one in South Korea and one in Tanzania. Some are currently advancing their education by being enrolled in Dental School, Pharmacy School, and Law School, while others have already earned advanced degrees, with one receiving a Masters Degree in Science in Biotechnology, one completing an MBA, and one receiving an MS in Accounting.

## CONCLUSIONS

AACSB states that the faculty is ultimately responsible for defining and monitoring the learning goals of a program. Faculty members may incorporate the ideas and insights of students and recent graduates into the strengths and weaknesses of a program ([www.aacsb.edu/accreditation/business/standards/aol/learning\\_goals.asp](http://www.aacsb.edu/accreditation/business/standards/aol/learning_goals.asp), accessed May 2013). This was our goal with this study, along with demonstrating the overall achievements of those who have been through the E-scholar Program. While AACSB considers surveys as indirect measures, it states that "such surveys can alert the schools to validate curricular guidance and maintain external relationships," which we feel is very important with the E-scholar Program.

A few testimonials about the E-scholar Program were provided in the introduction section of this paper. Other testimonials from our qualitative data include:



*“The exposure to business practices and individuals who operated successful businesses was paramount. It is difficult for a case study or a classroom application to show you how to be prepared for the ‘real’ business world. The E-scholar Program afforded me the opportunity to immerse myself in an entrepreneurial atmosphere and truly got my creative juices flowing, which allowed me to retain more information as a visual/hands-on learner.”*

*“The E-scholar Program has provided me with the skills necessary to start my own business. I have even been recognized by the city due to the E-scholar Program.”*

*“Public speaking gave me the chance to step out of my comfort zone, allowing me to gain a more confident attitude. Ultimately, that led me to network more often and more efficiently. Without this opportunity, I would have never reached out to my current employer.”*

*“The E-scholar Program provided me many important experiences necessary to expand my professional networking skills. This has allowed me to meet the right people at the right time, who have opened doors for me.”*

In keeping with AACSB standards, “Learning goals should be set and revised at a level that encourages continuous improvement in educational programs.” It further states that, “by measuring learning, you can evaluate students’ success at achieving learning goals, which can be used for improvement efforts.” ([www.aacsb.edu/accreditation/business/standards/aol/defining\\_aol.asp](http://www.aacsb.edu/accreditation/business/standards/aol/defining_aol.asp), accessed May 2013).

Based on the results of our study, the success stories, and the testimonials provided by the participants, we feel quite successful in achieving the learning goal outcomes, not only for the E-scholar Program, but in supporting the mission of our School. This study also shed light on a couple of learning goals we need to enhance in the program - Ethical Awareness and Critical Thinking Skills. By adding activities specifically related to these areas, we can strengthen the Program for future cohorts, such as the incoming 10<sup>th</sup> cohort starting in the fall of 2013. Each year, we work together to make improvements to the E-scholar Program. The results of this study not only prove that our continual efforts to make advancements to the program have been successful, but it also shows where we still need to make some progress.

As others before us have said (Pascarella, 1980; Endo & Harpel, 1983; Terenzi & Wright, 1987; and Kuh, 1995), and we also contend, contact between students and faculty, as well as others beyond the classroom is essential for student learning. Fostering feelings of affirmation, confidence, and self-worth contribute to knowledge-acquisition and overall career development for students. We have strong evidence that we are helping our students achieve these goals through the E-scholar Program model and beyond, and we plan to continue making improvements to the program each year. We also feel that we are living up to Kuratko’s (2005) challenge to entrepreneurship educators to provide “*complete academic legitimacy*” in entrepreneurship education.

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