The Path to Social Entrepreneurship at Mount Holyoke College

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Entrepreneurship and liberal arts colleges are often seen as polar opposites. Many times, entrepreneurship is associated with professional schools that strive to prepare students in one specific profession, unlike liberal arts institutions that focus on providing a broad knowledge and developing a diverse range of skills. However, within the past few years, liberal arts institutions have started to embrace and develop an entrepreneurial spirit within the student body. Specifically focusing on Mount Holyoke, a liberal arts college, this project aims to examine the rise of entrepreneurship in a socially driven community. Social entrepreneurship is one of the ways in which entrepreneurship has found a home within the Mount Holyoke College community and curriculum. This research focuses on how the college has framed entrepreneurship to fit within the school’s overall mission. Moreover, this study examines the tools and resources that Mount Holyoke offers in preparing future generations of socially conscious entrepreneurs. As a result, social entrepreneurship has created a new and unique way of engaging liberal arts students by putting theory into practice.

I conducted both in person and over the phone interviews to demonstrate this unique path of entrepreneurship in a liberal arts institution. There are two groups of interviewees. The first group consists of faculty and staff members and the second group consists of current students and alumni who have founded companies. Qualitative data analysis and inductive research methods were used. Findings of this research will be useful to both students and faculty. For students, this research offers knowledge of the types of resources available on campus, which they can use in their start up endeavors. This research also offers insights that faculty can use in developing future courses and programs in entrepreneurship.