Starting a University

Starting a University is an exciting venture for all involved. To find the financial support and the staff for something that for years was only a distant dream is so exhilarating that people can lose track of practical considerations.

For some start-up University, the passions can run so strong that they can make leaders unaware of similar experiments that have been tried and failed.

The logistical difficulties of starting a University are not unique. The people I have talked with about it have all reported that it is a bureaucratic nightmare. No matter what a University's mission, the questions are the same: How will we induce faculty members to come? How will we arrange the dormitories? What will the gender ratio be? How can we ensure that all of these new students and professors buy into the mission? What should the handbook say? But few institutions bother to consult others outside of their niche.

It is hard to tell how new Universities are going to turn out. It is hard to make sure that everyone involved has the same vision from the start. It is hard to turn sheer enthusiasm and a pioneering spirit into a workable model for higher education.

Like most complex, ambitious businesses, starting a University is not for the risk-averse. Having solid financial connections is essential, as is the ability to smoothly navigate the complex paperwork associated with the launch of an institution of higher learning. We have to expect our academic journey to take us through the badlands of funding, licensing, accreditation, faculty recruiting -- and then there is the matter of finding and keeping students. Good marketing is as important to a University as are course offerings, and if that is not frightening enough, any number of variables can make or break a University at the onset of its operation and down the road.

Instructions:

1. Conduct a feasibility study to determine whether or not there is a need for another University in your geographic, subject or viability areas by gathering data, taking surveys, getting recommendations from experts in the field, then analysing this data to reach conclusions on how to best fill the void you have found.

2. Develop a business plan that includes a working budget, timelines, licensing and charter requirements, accreditation standards, faculty guidelines and marketing plans. Don't be shy about asking people in the field for their recommendations. You will get terrific advice and

avoid pitfalls by walking in the footsteps of those who have already been down this path.

3. Raise funds. Few enterprises in our capitalistic society can be jump started without adequate funding. Assuming your bank account is not the entire source for your school's funding, raise capital by borrowing from investors, getting loans and/or grants earmarked for higher education from the government. This task is time consuming and laborious. Hiring a person to do nothing but identify and obtain cash is a great idea.

4. Establish governance by drafting a mission statement, setting policies, outlining personnel needs, establishing admissions parameters and determining how much facility you will need. Decide early what disciplines your faculty members should encompass. Technical schools require programmers. Arts and science-based universities will need academics from disciplines like history, sociology, anthropology, geography, economics and other specialties to cover

all bases.

5. Contact your Education Ministry to learn what licensing requirements are necessary for your University's launch. Most probably they will require you to submit curricula before they issue a license. If you choose not to get a license, you may operate a University but you may not call yourself a degree-granting facility.

6. Research and acquire technology to run both the school and technology-based classes. Launch a website immediately.

7. Hire faculty and/or recruit adjunct professors. Adjuncts typically have full-time jobs and teach to make extra money or to enhance their credibility. They are compensated according to the number of courses they teach and are rarely offered benefits. Staff instructors require salaries, benefits, office space and other perks.

8. Charge faculty with the responsibility of writing your curricula if you do not already have this critical step in place. From lesson plans to measurable objectives, curricula writing classes are required for education majors at universities and faculty members are most comfortable teaching curricula they author. Encourage sharing among your faculty to team build and share ideas.

9. Graduate your first student! This is a requirement for getting accreditation for your school. Regional accreditation commissions, funded and operated by the Department of Education, will help you through this process. Typically, the accreditation process takes a year or two to complete and will cost at least £25,000, so keep the chequebook handy.

10. Put into place a monitoring system to keep operations, student recruitment, faculty evaluation and school operation on track. Assess strengths and weaknesses on a regular

timetable and make adjustments as necessary.

11. If, after reading these notes, you conclude that you still want to open a University but do not have the time or resources to do the job yourself, do not despair. There are companies across the globe that specialize in opening schools for other people. The most credible ones are expensive -- they require a piece of the action for every step necessary to get the place up and running. They also know every nook and cranny of the process so you'll get your money's worth. The quickest way to find these folks is to do an Internet search and do not forget to get !their references