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*Leading the Way from Thought to Action*

### **DigitalBridges2.0 Business Boot Camp**

#### **Business education at Middlebury College? Yes!**

Following is the working description of our new start-up, the *DigitalBridges2.0 Business Boot Camp*. Under the current timeline, we will run a pilot session during January 2008. Ours is an ambitious undertaking, and delivering on that goal is going to be exceedingly challenging, but with the support we have received on campus, the wind is at our back. By late summer we will have created and staffed a curriculum and finalized the operational structure from whole cloth. To that end we are inviting the *BRIDGES* community to collaborate with us in crafting the business plan and then launching the pilot next January.

We need to help us shape and launch a program having potential to be an incredible differentiator for Middlebury College. Join *BRIDGES* at [www.digitalbridges20.net](http://www.digitalbridges20.net) today and become an active part of the process..

#### **A Unique Opportunity**

While business education and the liberal arts may complement one another in many ways, successfully integrating them into coherent curricula has been elusive at best. With its continuing commitment to a four-week January term, however, Middlebury College is perfectly positioned to finesse the oil-and-water realities of business and liberal arts curricula. An intensive, total-immersion business education program can be positioned in January, while the fall and spring terms continue focusing exclusively on the liberal arts, as we believe they should. By innovating a model that offers its students a unique opportunity for getting the best of both educational worlds, the DigitalBridges2.0 Business Boot Camp represents a powerful differentiator for College.

Middlebury's DigitalBridges2.0 Business Boot Camp will deliver the business background and soft and hard skills that highly-motivated Middlebury College students seek but that cannot justifiably be taught within the fall/spring liberal arts curriculum. The program will grant one winter term course credit. Students (sophomores through seniors) from any major who want a leg-up as they look forward to creating or securing employment in for-profit or not-for-profit enterprises after graduation will be welcome. A portfolio of winter and summer internships available only to them will be offered to Boot Camp alumni. While staffing the Boot Camp will be academic faculty, it will rely heavily on the active involvement of alumni, parents and friends of Middlebury College.

## **A Powerful Differentiator**

- Offering interested College and Monterey Institute faculty the opportunity to participate in a business education program that complements the liberal arts
- Leveraging the College's significant alumni base and alumni business opportunities to mentor students who hunger for business knowledge and experience
- Creating and branding an exceptional business program that helps land support from alumni, alumni-led businesses, and businesses and organizations interested in recruiting exceptional Middlebury students
- "The case should be ready to be made that this type of programming actually reduces the pressure on the core liberal arts curriculum to offer practical coursework. This one month WT program will enable students to pursue their majors and coursework of true interest while still hedging their (families') \$160,000 bets, which is currently what many may be doing by majoring or minoring in economics - whether they actually have a passion for the discipline or not. This winter term boot camp combined with a follow up internship will serve to both inform Middlebury students about their business options, and increase their competitiveness for professional postgraduate decision making. Some participating students may even have the epiphany that business is not for them, which is an equally valid outcome!" (Don Kjelleren, Senior Associate Director, Career Services, Middlebury College)

## **Mission**

The DigitalBridges2.0 Boot Camp will provide students with a foundation in business, innovation and entrepreneurship in a world where success is driven by innovation and taking and managing risk. We will give students experience with taking risk rather than passively assuming risk, and with experiencing innovation rather than just reading about it.

## **Positioning**

The DigitalBridges2.0 Business Boot Camp will complement the Tuck School of Business at Dartmouth's *Business Bridge Program* and Stanford Graduate School of Business' *Summer Institute for General Management*. Where these programs concentrate on the hard skills of corporate finance, accounting, spreadsheet modeling and general management, the DigitalBridges2.0 Business Boot Camp will focus on soft skills like business ethics, risk-taking, leadership, communication, sales and marketing and innovation. Indeed, the Boot Camp, especially when combined with a business internship, will make these students particularly attractive applicants to Tuck, Stanford and other programs.

## **Value Proposition**

The DigitalBridges2.0 Boot Camp will be designed with the specific goal of making students more capable and more successful when they emerge from college. Currently, as noted by Don Kjelleren, more and more students are entering the business world after graduation. While a liberal arts education is the best training for long term success, a rigorous exposure to specific business realities that helps tune the liberal arts mind is invaluable from the first job search and beyond.

Don Kjelleren, Senior Associate Director of Career Services at Middlebury College, reacted to the concept of the DigitalBridges2.0 Boot Camp, as follows: "Our Class of 2006

Senior Survey once again confirms ‘business’ as the *number one* destination of Middlebury graduates (education was second). We strongly believe in the concept of a ‘useful education.’ There is life after Middlebury and your proposal offers a non-threatening way of introducing what many of us feel is an essential element of a well educated individual. This program has the added value of making our students more competitive as they seek to take their place as “global leaders” in the marketplace of tomorrow. Business education can both inform and increase our graduate’s professional options...”

**Students will emerge from the Boot Camp armed with skills and experience that set them apart from their peers:**

- Concrete training and experience that will translate directly to better productivity during internships and post graduation careers
- A powerful differentiator on their resumes that will set them apart from other liberal arts graduates and help them compete for positions with premier companies in diverse sectors
- Hard business skills needed when choosing a career direction or conducting a job search
- A new way of thinking that will allow them to recognize and act on opportunities
- Access to mentors, alumni and internship opportunities reserved for Boot Camp alumni
- Student-led initiatives and projects that will immerse them in what it takes to manage, lead and succeed
- Network-expanding exposure to successful businesspeople and entrepreneurs

Additionally, as a model for innovation and entrepreneurship at Middlebury College, the Digital Bridges2.0 Boot Camp will contribute to an innovative spirit that will provide Middlebury students and alumni with a substantial competitive advantage in the market place.

To this end, student input and involvement in the process of developing the Boot Camp is important. As the Boot Camp evolves, students will play an active, vital role in shaping the Boot Camp and innovation and entrepreneurship on campus.

**Program Overview**

The high level of student interest and participation in DigitalBridges2.0 programs to date bodes well for a positive response to the DigitalBridges2.0 Boot Camp program. While the pilot envisioned for Winter Term 2008 will be limited to 25 students and a somewhat limited topical scope, our goal is to have the capacity to handle enrollments of at least 70-80 students each January.

**Calling all students.** As the only prerequisite will be demonstrating experience in quantitative thinking and analysis – for example having completed a course in music theory, a natural or physical science, any social science, math or computer science – we hope to attract students from every major across campus to the Boot Camp.

**Curriculum.** A broad based business basics curriculum that de-emphasizes the finance career options (though *not the core tools* of finance) will be combined with significant exposure to real world experience, especially risk taking and risk management, and avoid

concentrating solely on developing technical skill sets. The Boot Camp will include an 8:15-5:00 daily set of experiential-based tutorials and lectures, case study sessions and individual classes and seminars. The Boot Camp's curriculum will be dynamic and evolve annually to meet the needs of the students based on their feedback, the input of alumni and friends that changes in the business world. The immersion experience will stretch beyond classroom time to activities that include:

- Informal afternoon and evening small-group sessions led by alumni, parents and friends focusing on their specific businesses and business experiences
- Extensive use of case studies
- Executives-in-residence
- Virtual venture and business mentoring by *BRIDGES* venture coaches
- On-site visits to for-profit and nonprofit businesses and organizations
- Interview-skills-building sessions where students interview and are interviewed by Career Services staff, alumni, parents and academics representing a variety of business sectors
- Networking sessions
- A guaranteed business internship in the following summer and/or winter term chosen from a portfolio of opportunities to be created in collaboration with CSO exclusively for these students.

### **Modular Curricular Structure**

**Core Modules:** Taught in larger group lecture/presentation, followed by break-out case, simulation, and role-playing small group sessions. Topics that might be included:

- Leadership
- Business ethics
- Innovation and innovative approaches to problem solving
- Entrepreneurship (including social entrepreneurship and socially responsible enterprises)
- Strategic thinking, competition strategy and game theory
- Financial numeracy: Excel proficiency and modeling, accounting, corporate finance, and data analysis
- Psychology of markets
- Legal: contracts, ethics, copyright, trademark
- Public policy frameworks for the entrepreneurial economy.

**Skills Modules:** hands-on, case driven, small-group sessions. Topics that might be included:

- Oral and written communication strategy, including public speaking and presentation
- Sales
- Marketing
- Risk-taking and risk management
- Negotiation

- Innovation & innovative approaches to problem-solving - What really drives profitable innovation? Creating and keeping your idea stream full
- Public policy frameworks for the entrepreneurial economy
- Managerial skill-set building
- Organizational development
- Case interview skill-set-building
- Networking: CSO can deliver a ready to go networking module if appropriate to the curriculum – or a recruiter could – for example from McKinsey Consulting’s North American knowledge Center (in collaboration with Career Services)

**Informal sessions:** A flow of speakers, small-group session leaders and mentors who bring their real world experience with live companies to the program. Topics that might be included:

- Consumer products
- Systems economics
- Strategy/management consulting
- Personal care - including fashion and apparel
- Social entrepreneurship-socially responsible enterprises, venture philanthropy, NGO, nonprofit; careers in the common good
- Advertising/marketing
- Technology – including IT, including IT security and software
- Healthcare – including medical services and devices
- Retail
- Media/entertainment
- Energy
- Financial services
- Business-plan development
- Legal services/issues
- Human resources

### **Testimonials**

Date: Thursday, March 29, 2007 10:32 AM

The Boot Camp is a wonderful idea for the Middlebury students and the College itself. While I was at Middlebury I started my own business, but found very limited support from the College. My partner and I were all on our own. By developing a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship at Middlebury that draws on the strength of the students, faculty and alumni, we can provide anyone who is interested the foundation to allow him or her to chase their ideas without fear. Middlebury students are extremely creative and intelligent. Through Digital Bridges and this Boot Camp we will harness that power and really drive Middlebury to the next level. If done correctly, when people think of innovation and entrepreneurship in the liberal arts, they will immediately think of Middlebury.

Brent Sonnek-Schmelz '98, President, Desra Holdings, LLC and

VP-Business Development Potion, Inc.  
Monmouth Beach, NJ

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Date: Monday, March 19, 2007 8:48 AM

I have reviewed your “Boot Camp” introduction document. I think what you have set about to achieve is both excellent and challenging (for both you and the students).

The suggested curriculum is rather complete with one exception. I will strongly recommend a topic around business ethics. Particularly when one gets in to areas of risk and risk management, more often times than not, people can be challenged or compromised on ethical grounds.

It will seem that students might get more out of this course if they had already taken the Tuck Business Bridge, Stanford B-School program, or equivalent. That might be impossible however to sequence it that way given the requirements of Tuck, Stanford, and other schools for admission to these special summer courses.

Lastly, relative to this quote from your document, “This winter term course combined with a follow-on business internship will likely be far more impressive to most of our employers than will pure economics coursework. ” (Don Kjelleren, CSO)” (I couldn’t agree with this more).

Al Spinell, EVP, Project Development, Rentricity  
New York, NY

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Friday, March 16, 2007 4:29 PM

Dear President Liebowitz,

I am writing to you on behalf of the newly formed steering committee on Social Entrepreneurship established by David Hopkins '06.5 and Professor Jon Isham. As you know, we are trying to establish a path for students that integrate the academic study of social entrepreneurship and time spent abroad participating in socially entrepreneurial projects with graduate work in social entrepreneurship, possibly at Monterey.

We are still in the early stages of planning, and so I am actually writing to you in support of Professor Michael Claudon's proposal for a winter semester business program because we feel that it could become a vital part of our own endeavor.

We have been trying to find ways for students to study business before their time abroad so that, even as juniors, they will be able to engage socially conscious projects with a entrepreneurial mindset and not just as "charity work." A winter term business program will accomplish this without infringing on students' regular liberal arts education.

We have strong student interest in our project and will likely be able to provide the proposed business program with a good number of engaged and dedicated students. In addition, it is becoming apparent that we absolutely need something like this business program to exist at Middlebury for our own endeavor to be successful. As our project develops we will love to talk to you about our work and our plans.

Peyton Coles '08.5, Middlebury College  
Middlebury, VT

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Thursday, March 15, 2007 9:18 AM

My most clear response to this draft course outline is simply to ask if I can somehow qualify for the course. I would love to take this course as it would welcome already really bright kids to use their wonderful brains in real world business issues...

I was a religion major at Middlebury who was taught to think well and battle my way in a world with people a great deal smarter than me. I believe that your Boot Camp would assist in preparing the hungry Midd student to think beyond the digits to the more human elements that impact the balance of risk-taking and reward.

I would be honored to participate in your Boot Camp if you feel that I could lend anything to the Midd gang...

Thanks for the opportunity to take a look at your Boot Camp plans.

Roy E. Heffernan, Chief Operating Optimist, Life is good, Inc.  
Boston, MA

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Thursday, March 08, 2007 11:21 AM

...Middlebury Solutions Group (MSG) is also very useful to the Vermont business community. The premise of MSG is that young Vermont companies are paired with undergraduate consulting “teams” so that the companies receive valuable strategic advice and the students gain real-world research, analysis and strategic skills. The finished product is an end of semester Saturday “Boot Camp” where the businesses and their student teams present a “pitch” (essentially a synopsis of the key points of the company’s strategic plan) to a room full of local and regional business advisors.

In five short years, MSG has become an established “brand” in Vermont with a pipeline of company applicants vying for a spot each semester. We often refer novice entrepreneurs to this program and it is a testament to the quality of the work the students do, combined with the screening efforts undertaken in selecting participant companies, that more than half of all the MSG “clients” remain in business today, far greater than the national average survival rate for young companies. To the extent that the entrepreneurs have good experiences through MSG with College students and faculty, these companies go on to be ambassadors of good would for Middlebury in the broader business and professional world of not only Vermont, but indeed the global economy.

For most all of these entrepreneurs, it is their initial first-hand exposure to the caliber of the College and its offerings. In addition, students gain experience in analyzing the complexities inherent in young companies and they must translate their analysis into cogent advice to their client then “sell” their client on the merits of their ideas. This experience would serve the students (and their eventual employers) well when they enter the work force.

We have read the descriptive materials Michael has provided for an innovative winter term business Boot Camp. We heartily endorse the idea and have offered to help in any way that we can be supportive.

Cairn Cross, Managing Partner and Charlie Kireker, Managing Partner,  
Fresh Tracks Capital LLC  
Middlebury, VT

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Thursday, March 01, 2007 3:06 PM

...Susan (Walker) and I ... get it, are both on board, and have long observed the need for this type of practical intervention in the outcomes available here. I think that you have struck the right academic/real world balance in your proposal to date – again, ultimately to a measurable benefit of our students.

Our Class of 2006 Senior Survey once again confirms “business” as the *number one* destination of Middlebury graduates (education was second). We s believe in the concept of a “useful education.” There is life after Middlebury and your proposal offers a non threatening way of introducing what many o feel is an essential element of a well educated individual. This program has the added value of making our students more competitive as they seek to take their place as “global leaders” in the marketplace of tomorrow. The exposure presented by the boot camp can both inform and increase our graduate’s professional options...

The case should be ready to be made that this type of programming actually reduces the pressure on the core liberal arts curriculum to offer practical coursework. This one month WT program will enable students to pursue their majors and coursework of true interest while still hedging their (families’) \$160,000 bets, which is currently what many may be doing by majoring or minoring in economics - whether they actually have a passion for the discipline or not. This winter term boot camp combined with a follow up internship can serve to both inform Middlebury students about their business options, and increase their competitiveness for professional postgraduate decision making. Some participating students may even have the epiphany that business is not for them, which is an equally valid outcome!”

Don Kjelleren, Senior Associate Director for Career Services, Career Services Office  
Middlebury College

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Don has said it all beautifully. I would only reinforce what he says about overall management skills being valuable to students with a wide variety of career interests--something we would look forward to marketing to those with a Careers in the Common Good bent.

Keep us posted; let us know how to help.

Susan Walker, Associate Director, Career Services Office  
Middlebury College

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Thursday, March 08, 2007 1:52 PM

As I see it, this jewel (of a winter term program) will not only offer undergraduates a unique business experience, hence differentiating them among their peers, but also offer the College a potentially "brandable" differentiator.

As an entrepreneur and employer, I look forward to hiring liberal arts graduates who have the broad knowledge and creativity that colleges such as Middlebury provide. At the same time, having some practical skills and experience -- or even better, some knowledge of necessary business practices -- would be a marked improvement that could reduce the amount of training that small businesses like mine (that can not afford training programs) must provide.

Additionally, such a program would ideally prepare young visionaries in terms of the specific skills and practices needed to start and grow a business or a nonprofit. I started my first company one month after graduation (an aerial photography service out of Middlebury) and found myself pricing, invoicing, book-keeping, selling, and marketing to a territory that encompassed Vermont, New Hampshire, upstate New York, and Western Massachusetts. The "Boot Camp" currently under consideration would have exposed me to disciplines that are critical to success, and about which I had no knowledge. Even a brief exposure to the areas such as sales and marketing and the opportunity to see and interface with businesses and their leaders -- which the Boot Camp program would offer -- would have made all the difference in helping me know where to turn...

For economics majors, this program will be a "no-brainer." For other majors, the Boot Camp could provide a much needed knowledge and credibility builder as they look for employment or attempt to realize their own entrepreneurial visions. For alumni, who continually grow their own networks and businesses, the program could provide valuable connections to each other, the community of graduating students, and the college and its faculty.

Nicolas Boillot '87, President/Co-Founder, Hart-Boillot, LLC  
Waltham, MA

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Wednesday, February 21, 2007 12:45 PM

This is very exciting stuff. I know that there are many in the faculty ranks, who would find the introduction of such a course to be threatening, but as someone who has had to acquire many of the skills you mention in the real world along the way, rather than as preparation for my career this is a gift!

I would really emphasize the case study approach. I've seen it work and I've heard from many friends who struggled and later thrived with this methodology during their business school years.

I also think that it would be great to have an executive in residence for each week during the 4 week course. I think there are all kinds of benefits to this - mostly to the students, but also from a fundraising standpoint. I think this would be a win/win.

Lastly, although this is a probably part of your plan - I would emphasize the importance of presentation skill development. As one who has had highs and lows doing presentations, I think this is a critical skill that doesn't have a natural home in a liberal arts curriculum.

Let me know how I can help you with this effort.

David Donahue, Associate Vice President College Advancement Operations  
Office of College Advancement, Middlebury College

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