



**2024  
Annual Conference**

Leading  
International  
Education  
at a Crossroads

# **Entrepreneurial Leadership in a Bureaucratic Environment**



# Presenters

## Entrepreneurial Leadership in a Bureaucratic Environment



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## SETTING THE STAGE

Entrepreneur: “one who organizes, manages, and assumes the risks of a business or enterprise.”

Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary, Merriam-Webster

In an institutional setting, entrepreneurship is an organizational “mindset that is opportunity obsessed.”

In Babson College’s definition of entrepreneurship

“The function of entrepreneurs is to reform or revolutionize.”

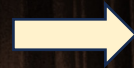
Joseph Schumpeter, political economist (1883-1950)



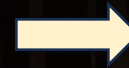


## SETTING THE STAGE

Experience



Creativity



Entrepreneurship

### Why creativity?

- Innate human trait (plasticity)
- Advancing humanity (innovation)
- Fun, entertainment

### Why entrepreneurship?

- Resource optimization
- Competitive advantage
- Adventure (human condition)





# Institutions don't innovate

People do.

People like you.



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# HE leadership job postings

**“a change agent,**

**bold visionary, entrepreneurial,**

**inspiring, innovative, financially astute.”**

Visionary is code for “we need to improve”

Transformational has very high rates of failure



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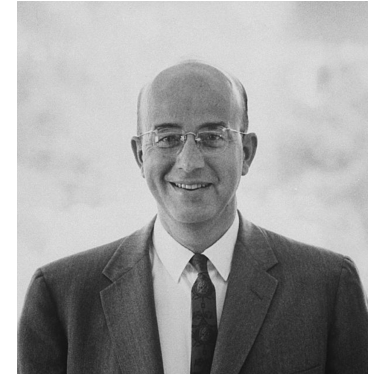


# Definitions

## An American University is...

*A series of individual faculty entrepreneurs held together by a common grievance over parking.*

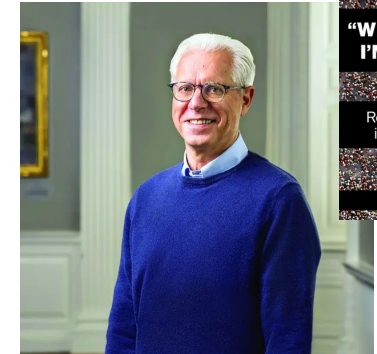
~ Clark Kerr, 1<sup>st</sup> Chancellor of UC Berkeley describing the American university, ~ 1960



## American Higher Ed is...

*An industry that ostensibly fosters growth and transformation in its students [that] cannot seem to change or transform itself beyond the **incremental**.*

~ Brian Rosenberg, president emeritus of Macalester College,  
*Whatever It Is, I'm Against It: Resistance to Change in Higher Education*, 2023



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# Why do we try to innovate?

- To improve (anything)
- To develop market opportunity (revenue growth, market share)
- To differentiate – essential in a market suffering from the sea of sameness
- To feel like we are making a difference – demonstrating our value as leaders



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# Can we innovate?

## Consider the Global Economy – Higher Ed vs. All Others

### Global Economy - *Fortune*

**1983 Top 5:** Exxon, General Motors, Mobil, Texaco, Ford

**40 years later:** Apple, Amazon, Microsoft, Pfizer,  
Disney (not even in top 100 in 1983).

### Higher Ed - *USNWR*

**1983 Top 4:** Stanford, Harvard, Yale, Princeton

**40 years later Top 5:** Princeton, Harvard, MIT,  
Yale, Stanford



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# The Anti-Entrepreneur Challenge

*A 2021 survey of chief academic officers  
at institutions of all kinds...*

*69% believe any new funds for academic programs  
will need to come from reallocation  
rather than new revenues.*

*~ 2021 survey conducted by Hanover Research and Inside Higher Ed*



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# Innovation = RiSC

**R**isk: Inherent risk of failure. Entrepreneurs do not always succeed. Risk of alienating an important group of stakeholders (internal or external).

**S**ignificant Scope: Has an impact department-wide or institution-wide.

**C**hange: Developing something new that does not currently exist (new process, new offering, new initiative).



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# Strategy requires tradeoffs

## Success means you won't/can't be all things to all people

*Most institutions are so worried about whom they won't attract that they never ask whom they are best situated to attract.*

~ Brian Rosengerg



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# The Challenge of Turnover

**CHE research:** The average length of an American university president's term of office dropped from **8.5 years in 2006 to 5.9 years in 2023.**

**Foundational knowledge** of international recruiting and enrollment:  
Your leadership does not understand the elements of global like:

- SEVIS data entry
- Cultural nuances across countries
- Price sensitivity per market



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# When do people adopt change?

People shift their position only when they are uncomfortable with where they are now  
(burr in the saddle)



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# Incremental

far less exciting, less respected,  
more practical, AND high rate of success (over time)



# Needed = PLOTTI

**P**erseverance

**L**eadership through to execution (progress despite team changes)

**O**rganizational plan (that can withstand team changes)

**T**eam alignment around goal(s)

**T**imeline (that will not fall apart when extended...we all know it will be extended)

**I**nternal comms

(people behave better, stick to a plan, feel team aligned, when they feel informed)



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# Reactive Entrepreneurship

**FINANCIAL trouble...**

**Focus on MARGINS & REVENUE CREATION before looking at costs**

**Beat the COMPETITION...**

**INNOVATE through Testing, Sampling, Piloting**



Examples of

# Internationalization-Driven Entrepreneurship

**The illusion of REVENUE:**

- International Student & Scholar Housing

**The illusion of COST CONTROL:**

- Intensive English Programs in the 2010s

**The challenge of hiring PERSONEL:**

- Temporary & flexible outsourcing options

**MARGIN**





Examples of

# Internationalization-Driven Entrepreneurship

**The Risk of CREATIVITY:**

- **Global Engagement Program & the ROI of Trust**

**The Risk of the SINGLE BELIEVER:**

- **Countercurrent Investment in China**

**Creative use of data to inform strategy:**

- **Targeted scholarship packages for recruitment and study abroad**

**Creative use of travel (Middle East):**

- **Building internal allies**

**RISK**



# RISK does not warrant SUCCESS

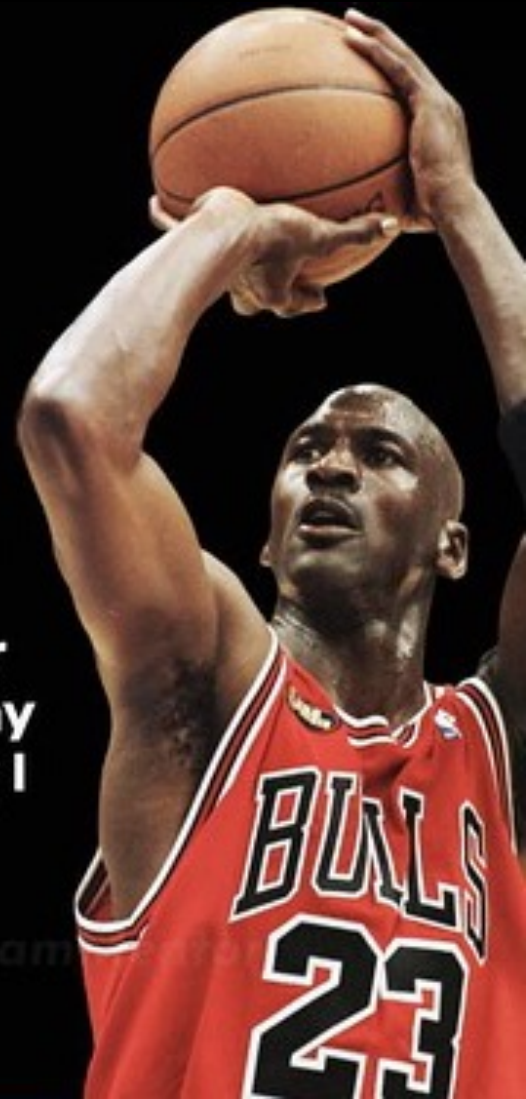
Entrepreneurs fail  
most of the time



I've **missed** more than **9000** shots in my career. I've lost almost **300 games**. **26 times**, I've been trusted to take the game winning shot and missed. I've **failed** over and over and over again in my **life**. And that is why I **succeed**.

BasketBall player  
Michael Jordan

@Gram



Examples of Endangered

# Internationalization-Driven Entrepreneurship

## **Bureaucracy & Risk Aversion:**

- Perception of Equality in Large Organizations
- Taxes and Death [of Entrepreneurship]
- Human Resources & Turnover Spirals

**FAILURE**





# Internationalization areas ripe for innovative change

## Lower Resource

- **Alumni** – engagement in international student recruitment
- **Career services** – employer relationships and real student connections
- **Lead nurture** communications/processes that lead to conversions
- **Leverage your tech** more effectively (could include use of AI, but be careful here)

## Higher Resource

- **Market access** – strategic approach to different regions globally (recruitment & partnerships)
- **Scholarship models** – funding targeted growth (recruitment & study abroad)



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# Pathways to Success in Internationalization-Driven Entrepreneurship

**Try.** Brainstorm, pilot, adjust, improve, repilot, retry.

**Copy.** There is no copyright in higher education's administrative practices.

Accept that **it's just YOU (or a few)**  
but find the **POWER CENTERS.**

Accept that you already work in a  
**HIGH-RISK SETTING...**



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## Pathways to Success in

# Internationalization-Driven Entrepreneurship

- Demonstrate on a small scale to establish proof of concept (incremental change)
- Figure out how to do things in a “situation of constraint”
- Identify the influential power centers at your institution (named and unnamed)?  
How do they use their power?

**Outcome:** power centers are impressed with SIO and recognize the need to change



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Taking risks is a decision as much as it is a consequence of working in international education.





Please complete  
the session eval

(and keep being that durable, powerful tug)



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