



The Academic Entrepreneur: An Examination Of Factors That Influence Academic Entrepreneurialism Among Community College Faculty

Dr. John Paul Tabakian

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Public funding for community colleges has been steadily declining since the peak of funding in the 1970s. Surviving the constant threats of budgetary cuts has been a key motivating factor for community colleges to embrace academic entrepreneurialism. I examined the academic entrepreneurial pursuits of one California Community College (CCC) to understand those factors that encourage community college faculty to pursue academic entrepreneurial solutions. The purpose of this qualitative study is to examine factors that encourage academic entrepreneurialism among community college faculty. Specifically, I investigated three categories of factors that influence academic entrepreneurialism: individual, institutional, and environmental. Individual factors include demographic and background characteristics, including age, race, gender, academic training, and previous professional careers. Institutional factors include program offerings available for students, institutional reputation and history, institutional policies and practices, and academic and administrative leadership. Environmental factors relate to the peer influences of a campus that encourages academic entrepreneurial behavior of faculty. The significance of this study lies in the identification of factors that encourage academic entrepreneurialism among community college faculty, ultimately supporting institutional efforts to augment funding. I investigated individual, institutional, and environmental factors that encourage academic entrepreneurialism among community college faculty. Accordingly, the research questions identify key factors that encourage academic entrepreneurialism among community college faculty and explain how they facilitate faculty to engage in academic entrepreneurialism. The research questions that I evaluated in this study are: What individual, institutional, and environmental factors influence community college faculty to engage in academic entrepreneurialism? What is the relationship between faculty background, institutional, and environmental characteristics and the frequency and quality of academic entrepreneurialism among community college faculty? I found that all three factors are essential elements of academic entrepreneurialism among community college faculty. Individual, institutional, and environmental factors consist of people who are all pursuing their self-interest. This follows the tenets of rational choice theory as the study finds that self-interest influences faculty academic entrepreneurialism. The study argues that changes to institutional policies are the key determining factor to encourage academic entrepreneurialism among community college faculty. Institutional policies determine how a college functions and understands the interrelationship between individual, institutional, and environmental factors. Encouraging academic entrepreneurialism among community college faculty requires institutional policies that focus on the fundamental issue: recruiting, retaining, and evaluating community college faculty. The study offers suggestions for how to influence institutional policies that in turn encourage faculty academic entrepreneurialism by addressing the following areas: faculty job descriptions, faculty job announcements, evaluating faculty levels of academic entrepreneurialism, and offering entrepreneurial faculty financial incentives.

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