

seminar

Preparing Impactful Engineers and Innovators through Entrepreneurship Education and University Technology Commercialization (TTC)

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abstract

Graduating with technical proficiency is important to engineering students' success beyond the university. However, there is a growing national emphasis to expand engineering practice by incorporating innovation, entrepreneurship, and interdisciplinarity into both student and faculty experiences. To support this effort, my work integrates research and practice to enhance students' and faculty members' ability to impact society as interdisciplinary, well-rounded technology leaders and innovators. In this presentation, I describe a multiple-case study approach in which I explored engineering faculty members' experiences with university technology transfer and commercialization (TTC) activity. Through interviews with faculty, deans and TTC personnel at three land-grant institutions, I have identified supports and barriers present in the university TTC system. This study also connects faculty TTC activity to educational practice by identifying ways that faculty members use their own TTC activities to teach students essential entrepreneurial concepts. My work is framed by systems theories and methodologies that provide a useful lens in research, teaching and design to understand, communicate and enhance students' and faculty members' ability to solve real-world problems and add value to our society. These same frameworks shape both my future research goals and my teaching interests.

biosketch

Cory Hixson is currently a National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellow and PhD Candidate in Engineering Education at Virginia Tech. His professional and research interests include exploring and improving entrepreneurship/innovation education pedagogy, technology commercialization and entrepreneurship in academia and industry, and the policies that influence both engineering education and innovation.

Cory was selected as an inaugural participant in the Rising Engineering Education Faculty Experience (REEFE) where he served as a visiting faculty member at Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology. During REEFE, his primary activities included the development of an assessment plan for the use of entrepreneurial case studies in senior design courses and continued work on the Innovation Canvas, a tool he co-developed for teaching design, entrepreneurship, and systems thinking in an integrated fashion. Cory is currently a founding partner of Inside Out Innovations—an innovation consulting company— where he enhances business leaders' ability to make informed decisions regarding innovation initiatives.

Prior to attending graduate school, Cory worked as both a professional engineer and high school educator. He earned his B.S. in Engineering Science from Penn State University in 2007, graduating with honors, and his M.S. in Industrial and System Engineering from Virginia Tech in 2014.

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