

September 24, 2009

Dear Prospective YEA! Campus:

If you have received this letter, then you are considering the possibility of running the Young Entrepreneurs Academy (YEA!) at your college or university. I am writing to provide my enthusiastic endorsement of the YEA! Program, which has been making a positive impact on the lives of participating students since its creation in 2004 here at the University of Rochester, as well as having significant benefits for the University itself.

This Fall, Rochester is hosting its sixth successive (and undoubtedly successful) YEA! Class. The YEA! Program was developed by Gayle Jagel here at Rochester with support from the Kauffman Foundation as part of an effort to infuse entrepreneurship into the Program offerings at the University. The course, run here on campus, is offered to area middle and high school students who come once per week after school throughout the academic year. In the YEA! Course, participating students go through the entire process of developing a business idea and actually start and run their own business by the end of the program.

Students that participate in the YEA! Program realize a great many benefits from the Program, including self-confidence, leadership skills, public speaking, business skills, and the importance of relationships and networking skills. Achievement of those kinds of outcomes is, of course, consistent with our mission as an educational institution, but there also have been a great many direct benefits to our University that have come from hosting the YEA! Program. One substantial benefit relates to admissions. YEA! attracts high quality, self-motivated students. Hosting the Program means that those students come here to our campus once a week for a full year. Remarkably, almost half of all the students participating in YEA! here at Rochester that have graduated high school have applied to, been accepted at, and have matriculated at our University. The quality of these students is such that several of them were accepted directly into the Simon Graduate School of Business as part of our *Early Leaders* Program and will attend business school upon graduation from their undergraduate course of study. The demographics of the participants have also been quite diverse, with more than half of the participants to date consisting of under-represented minorities. Approximately half have been female and about thirty percent have been low-income.

YEA! also has proven to be a terrific way for local alumni to get involved with their alma mater. Rochester alumni have participated in a number of different capacities, including business mentors, guest speakers, investors, and more. This kind of involvement helps us achieve our mission to provide meaningful opportunities for alumni to remain involved with our school, and their experiences with the class have uniformly reflected well on the University. Not surprisingly, this has also presented opportunities to assist in meeting advancement goals.

As Dean of the Simon School of Business, I have been particularly pleased to see the level of involvement and interaction the Program has generated for the class with our local business community. Business and community leaders at the highest levels, highly successful entrepreneurs, and executives have all gotten involved in the program. They have all remarked on the unique nature of the program, as

well as the important ways in which it can benefit not only the student participants, but the greater community as well.

Finally, perhaps as a consequence of all of these other benefits, the University has received quite a bit of positive recognition from the local media as a result of hosting the program.

From the outset of the YEA! Program at the University, all aspects of the Program have been managed beautifully by Mrs. Jagel and her staff. As part of her responsibilities as the Director of the Office of Special Programs here at the University and for the past two program years as a stand-alone not-for-profit organization formed to bring the benefits of the YEA! Program to other schools, the YEA! Team has provided the oversight and support necessary to assure the program's success. The YEA! Team provides all necessary training for the classroom teacher, complete with detailed lesson plans and resources for their use. Additional information and training are provided for the Program manager who assists the teacher in all the administrative duties associated with the course. The Program materials are highly professional and detailed to a level such that new host institutions can begin immediately.

In addition, the YEA! Course relies extensively on community business people to share their experiences on a variety of topics related to launching and operating a small business or non-profit organization. However, in this respect, Mrs. Jagel and her team provide us with comprehensive support and detailed recommendations on ways to attract and obtain community support in the form of business mentors, guest speakers, potential investors and the like.

I have been very pleased to be associated with the YEA! Program and its success since its initial development here at the University of Rochester. I can certainly testify to its value not only for the participating students, but for our University as well. This Program is based on learning through experience. It's exciting; it's challenging; it's student directed. I firmly believe that the YEA! Program should be and will be welcomed by schools across the country. It represents the kind of change that is good for American schools and American students and I believe can have a revolutionary and positive impact on American business as well.

Please don't hesitate to contact me if I can be of any further assistance to you as you contemplate partnership with YEA!

Sincerely,



Mark Zupan
Dean