MARKETING ENTERPRISE

David Bagley, Enterprise Unit, University of Central Lancashire, Preston, United Kingdom PR1 2HE
Tel 011 - 44 - 1772 0 993864 Fax 011 - 44 - 1772 - 992918.

This paper covers the background and impact of the Enterprise in Higher Education program at a teaching university in the UK (University of Central Lancashire). Government funding of $1,500,000 was obtained for a 5 year project intended to improve the long term employability of graduates by developing "enterprising graduates with a knowledge of the world of work". The project funding is from September 1991 to August 1996.

By the end of the funding period students should:

- have a positive attitude towards Enterprise activity
- have developed personal transferable Enterprise skills
- be better informed about employment opportunities, aims and challenges and make better career choices
- be better prepared to contribute to, and take responsibility in their professional and working lives.

Four strands of activity were defined comprising:

- student involvement
- employer involvement
- curriculum development
- staff development.

Each year, members of the University were invited to bid for funding for innovative projects. This produced over 200 bids of which about 70 have been funded at a cost of $400,000.

Some examples of Enterprise funded projects are:

1) Students in the Lancashire Business School have produced a materials pack which is distributed to all students on business programs. The pack, which is accompanied by a promotional video, is designed to help students to develop their Personal, Academic Vocational and Enterprise skills and was developed as part of their assessed program.

2) A group including marketing and computer science students have formed a business with Enterprise support. They have had considerable success marketing educational software.

3) Management Faculty have developed a simulation exercise based upon the management of a hospital which is used as a key assessment for graduating majors in management.

4) Opportunities have been created for students to gain credit for learning undertaken in their place of work as well as on campus.

By the end of the funding period in September 1996, students on all courses at University of Central Lancashire will have been affected by the Enterprise project. A large number of students will undertake live projects to an agreed brief for a client organisation, work based learning will be much more in evidence and available to students, portfolio methods of assessment will be used widely across the University. Employers will be engaged much more closely in the work of the University and in kind contributions from employers will have amounted to over £1 million. Teaching, learning and assessment methods have changed dramatically with a much stronger emphasis upon student centered learning and more practical assignments incorporating the assessment of personal transferable skills.

Reaction to the project from students has been extremely favourable. Undergraduates are well aware of the difficulties they will face in the labour market of the future and they are grateful for any assistance in developing an edge over competitors for jobs. Employers too recognise the success of the project as do many of the teaching faculty.

Furthermore, the proportion of University of Central Lancashire graduates remaining unemployed six months after graduation has been falling, counter to the national trend. It is difficult to impute causality but it is strongly suspected that our focus upon employability has been a factor in this trend.

Nevertheless, as in USA some employers continue to complain about lack of relevance. The author suggests that some reasons for this are conflicting needs of employers in different industrial segments and a lack of sophistication among some employers together with a continuing lack of relevance in some areas of higher education.