

The bottom line

HEI helps Hope students turn business ideas into reality

Allison Barnes
Guest Writer

The frosty weather did not stop the crowds from attending the student-led seminar, “Entrepreneurial Leaders and Student Start-Up Companies at Hope”, where students showcased the Hope Entrepreneurship Initiative and their blossoming companies on Saturday.

HEI is led by Dr. Steven Vanderveen, director of the Center for Faithful Leadership at Hope College and professor of management. HEI fosters new ideas, creativity and the approach for a successful entrepreneurship.

Vanderveen described the program by encouraging the audience to “imagine an education where you are at the center, the education is created around you, and you are able to pursue your own ideas.” This was exemplified through the seminar’s content—Hope’s own student entrepreneurship.

The seminar and discussion was led by Matt Rutter (’12), who showcased his project, MicroWML.org, a “web-based fundraising collaboration of West Michigan non-profits.”

“The Hope Entrepreneurship Initiative allows student entrepreneurs to gain real world experience and develop a wide range of skills,” Rutter said. “This is important because entrepreneurs change the way people think and act. Therefore, when Christians create businesses to glorify the Lord, we get to pursue a calling to serve in God’s redemptive work on earth.”

The student showcase was composed of Sam Wolffs (’12), Colleen Quick (’14), Kylen Blom (’12), Amy Hattori (’13) and Ziyi Liu (’12).

Wolffs is the founder of Thumbs Up Creations, which creates homemade wool mittens recycled by old wool sweaters. Wolffs began making mittens as Christmas gifts and it has

evolved into a growing company. Wolffs sells her creations online, in select stores, and through family and friends. Thumbs Up Creations and Wolffs have been featured in the New York Times.

Quick spoke about her non-profit business, Hope Grows, which teaches orphanages in Juarez, Mexico how to grow their own food through setting up sustainable gardens and teaches valuable life skills.

Quick said, “Hope Entrepreneurship Initiative helped move my idea for the kids into a reality.” Twelve Hope students will be traveling to Juarez, Mexico with Hope Grows over spring break.

Blom added, “Hope Entrepreneurship Initiative has been super supportive (of his company My Great Lake) and given me a good network to get people involved about what is going on.” Blom’s My Great Lake is a clothing company focused on capturing

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the memories of the great lakes through their clothing, with some of their proceeds going towards the Alliance for the Great Lakes. Kyle Blom will be presenting My Great Lake at 5 by 5, a presentation event with a potential to win \$5,000.

Hattori and Liu finished the seminar with their presentation

the Hope Entrepreneurial Initiative. Liu said, "I never thought I would start a business like this."

Hattori remarked, "Class with Dr. Vanderveen has been very helpful and he has been a great mentor to us at TWAH."

Attendee Amanda Porter ('15) commented, "It is an awesome thing that we get to

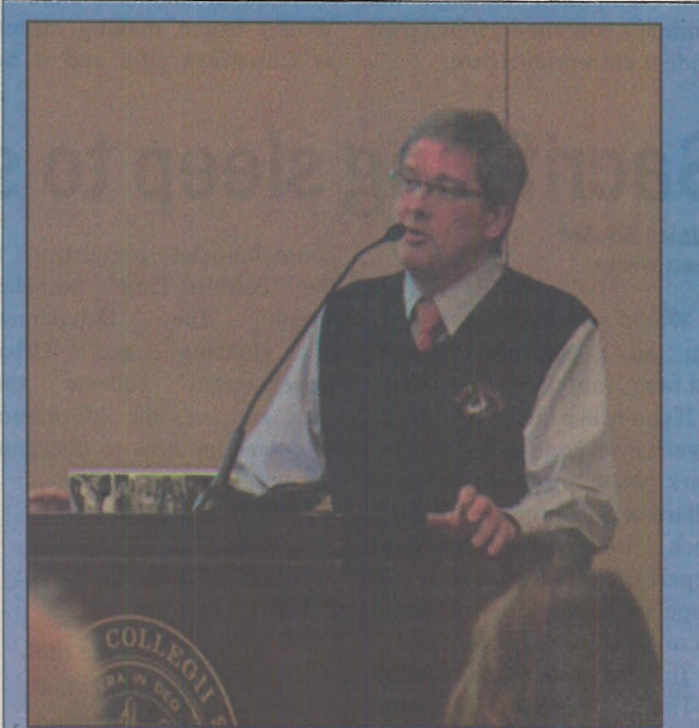


PHOTO BY ANN MARIE PAPARELLI

ALL ABOUT BUSINESS— Dr. Steven Vanderveen, a speaker at the Hope Entrepreneurs event.

on TWAH (Today I Wore at Hope) a community-based blog that encourages an outgoing, interactive approach with its viewers. The blog showcases a collection of daily photos of Hope College students and faculty. Hattori and Liu hope this blog encourages positivity and creates connections within the Hope community.

The seminar closed with an open round of questions and many positive remarks about

see everyday— there are so many facets of Hope College."

For additional information on these upcoming companies, visit the following:

- www.microwmi.org
- <http://thumbsupcreations.com/>
- www.mygreatlakeonline.com or on Facebook
- <http://todayiworeathope.com/> or on Facebook