

### **Assignment #3 “Meet Your Mentor” Reflection- Sarah McLean**

The only other business course that I have ever taken was grade 9 typing; taking a master’s level course on ventures in learning technologies has been a challenge. However, for me, completing a venture pitch for my third assignment has been the most satisfying aspect of the course.

Initially when I started thinking about assignment #3, I assumed that I would do a venture pitch on an educational innovation that I created with some educational scholarship money, called “LaboraTREEs”. These are online decision trees that give students feedback and help them work through the procedural details of a lab protocol. I was thinking “this will be obvious- who wouldn’t see the value in investing in better ways of preparing our students for the lab?” However, with one sentence from my instructor, “it may be an innovation- but venturizing is the tough part”, I slowly began to realize that creating a venture pitch for this innovation would be challenging. I went back to the drawing board. I’m not sure how I came up with the idea of social networking between students and alumni, but the idea for “Meet Your Mentor” was likely borne out of my own experiences. My students often think that the only viable career option with a science degree is medicine. Many of my previous students who have gone on to a variety of interesting careers, and always strive to have these little vignettes available for my current students when they are feeling frustrated about their medical school prospects.

There are a few reasons that I think the “Meet Your Mentor” idea is better than the LaboraTREE idea. First of all, it is more broad. Any student in any discipline would likely be able to see the benefit of “meeting” with someone who has successfully gone through their program. By being more broad with my idea I am opening up the size of the market and appealing to far more potential customers. Secondly, I think that with the ongoing issues of student academic stress and achievement the “Meet Your Mentor” venture would help many more individuals in much deeper ways. Finally, I was able to find a lot more literature to support my idea of alumni-student partnerships as a form of mentorship than I was able to find for my LaboraTREEs idea.

That being said, there are certainly some weaknesses to this pitch. I shared my idea with a few of my colleagues, and they highlighted the fact that universities can often be very protective of their alumni information. Would a higher education institution “trust” a third-party business to act with integrity with their alumni? Furthermore, I recognize that not all students would be interested in developing a mentoring relationship with an alumnus. Some students likely already have great mentors in their lives such as family members, employers, or coaches. Furthermore, my business venture is also contingent on alumni wanting to be willing participants in this venture; while I am confident that there are alumni who would enjoy being a mentor, I am uncertain as to how much “buy-in” I would have. Therefore, even before introducing this innovation I would likely have to promote the idea of alumni mentorship with a large campaign at the university, which may add more cost than anticipated to my business venture.

Overall, this assignment has been instrumental in helping me hone my ideas into tangible next steps. I really enjoyed creating my elevator pitch and venture pitch videos, and

am considering reaching out to the entrepreneur office on my campus to share my idea. Coming from someone whose previous business skills amounted to typing 70 words per minute, this assignment has been a great stretch exercise and certainly made me re-evaluate my business potential.