

The same week that the United States and Peru signed their long-awaited free-trade agreement, I was speaking in Lima at the eighteenth annual Latin American Congress on the Entrepreneurial Spirit. Of course, the trade agreement was the headline news all week, promising new economic opportunity for 27 million Peruvians and giving a major political victory to the country's pro-growth government. The large conclave on entrepreneurship that I addressed, hosted by Universidad San Ignacio de Loyola (USIL), was also

rags-to-riches story. "I come from a middle-class family," he explains. "My father worked in a chocolate factory, which was taken over by the military in one of our earlier military coups, and he lost his livelihood. So I was only able to go to college because I was awarded a scholarship by Pacific University, a Jesuit college in Peru. Because of that, I had a dream early on to start a prep school to help poor but deserving kids get into college."

After begging and borrowing to get the required franchise fee, Terry was

could say that if we don't change all this poverty in Peru, the country can never succeed politically or economically. It was an easy choice for me, to devote the rest of my life trying to help good but often poor people help themselves."

Terry's educational ventures actually began when he founded a unique high school in Lima, a preparatory academy that served as an innovative alternative within the Peruvian education system to promote vocational and professional training. Terry describes the school's mission at that time as "being an educational

Reeducating Our Educators

BY LARRY FARRELL



It's the first step toward inspiring today's youth.

an apparent success, with participants attending from more than twenty countries. I soon realized, however, that the most interesting aspect of the week for me was not the conference or even the historic trade agreement—it was the hosting university. It is the most innovative, entrepreneurially focused academic institution I have ever come across.

USIL was founded fifteen years ago by Raúl Diez Canseco Terry, a Peruvian serial entrepreneur who brought to his country KFC, Pizza Hut, Chili's, and Starbucks. He also served as Peru's economic minister and, for three years, vice president. During a long interview with Terry, I learned that his is an authentic

somehow able to convince KFC to give him a chance to start up its Peru business. This proved to be a seminal event in his life, one that not only made him rich but also enabled him to become Peru's most notable "social entrepreneur" by fulfilling his youthful dream of helping poor people help themselves.

His social mission really took hold during a terrible flood, when he opened dozens of KFC free-food tents to feed victims. "I was working with poor people, and I saw two ways to go with my entrepreneurial success," he recalls. "The first way was to say that this is not my problem—poor people don't affect me one way or another. The second way, I

organization that enables enterprising young people to successfully perform in a competitive labor market." Expanding that concept to the university level, Terry founded USIL. With fourteen thousand students, USIL is Peru's fastest-growing college and is already recognized as one of Latin America's most prestigious private schools. Terry has also expanded his original mission statement to "preparing enterprising professionals for a globalized world."

The most innovative thing about USIL is its faculty. Every professor is required to imbue every student with the idea of seeing his or her education as an entrepreneurial possibility. The univer-

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sity's vice chancellor, Lourdes Flores Nano—a lawyer, political leader, and two-time presidential candidate—put it best: “We want professionals for a twenty-first-century Peru—graduates who are well acquainted with the national economy and who regard the world as the space where they will operate. This is why we emphasize entrepreneurship and management in all the educational programs we offer, whether it’s engineering, law, medicine, information technology, the humanities, or social work.”

The profound—and unique—thing going on here is who gets hired to teach the kids. The university has a teaching staff with vast entrepreneurial experience to complement their academic studies at the best universities in Peru and abroad. Not simply educators, they exhibit an enterprising mentality, along with solid ethical and moral training. It’s clear that Terry worries little about traditional pedagogical requirements. “We want entrepreneurially minded teachers who have hands-on experience in the fields they are teaching,” he says. “We want a faculty which is up to the challenge of training Peru’s leaders of tomorrow.”

So how do you get more teachers and schools like this up and running in your hometown? The sad fact is that educators like the ones at USIL couldn’t get hired to teach anything at most American high schools, let alone universities. They wouldn’t have the right “qualifications.” After all, we live in a world where any school with the word *vocational* in its title is looked down upon and where the vast majority of students are shuffled through high school and college without the foggiest idea of how they’re going to make a living.

Of course, we have isolated examples of universities that try to leverage the power of the entrepreneurial spirit. MIT, U.C. Berkeley, and lesser-known schools such as Babson College come to mind. But even these positive efforts are typically rear-guard actions coming from the entrepreneurship centers connected to the universities’ B-schools.

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In fact, most of the 350 university entrepreneurship centers that have sprung up over the past twenty years are completely cut off from the schools’ main student body. For example, I would bet my last venture-capital dollar that an integrated approach would never work at Harvard, where I went to business school. Not only is HBS, which runs an entrepreneurship program, across the Charles River and physically isolated from the main campus—it might as well be on a different planet as far as the main university’s academic culture is concerned.

That said, we do have the occasional pleasant surprise of a high school that actually tries to prepare its students for our modern entrepreneurial economy. My current favorite example is the en-

trepreneurship program created by Maynard Brown at the infamous Crenshaw High School in downtown Los Angeles. Brown, who graduated from Crenshaw himself, went to Cornell on a basketball scholarship, received his MBA there, and became a successful entrepreneur back in Los Angeles. As a part-time volunteer at his old high school, he was “overwhelmed by the students’ hunger for business and financial education.” He ultimately returned to Crenshaw as a full-time teacher to run the school’s entrepreneur-development program. Today, he is devoting his life to “giving his students the practical tools to fend for themselves.”

Brown recently introduced me to one of his prize students, Marquis Davis, who is the kind of young man who would transform, in one conversation, the most jaded view of what America’s inner-city youth can accomplish when taught practical skills along with a generous supply of entrepreneurial mentoring. Davis created a \$300,000 print-on-demand business. He started by printing McGraw-Hill textbooks after he flew to the company’s giant printing plant in Ohio, made his pitch, and got his initial printing contract—as a junior in high school! He’s living proof of a couple of Brown’s most famous slogans: “If you believe it, you can achieve it” and, “If you are self-employed, you’ll never be unemployed.” In a community constantly challenged by drug use, shootings, and underachieving schools, Brown and his students are beacons of light and hope.

But there are far too few Maynard Browns in American education.

So what to do? One possibility is to find enough Raúl Terry types in the country to start a thousand San Ignacio-type high schools and universities. But maybe a more practical approach would be to start reeducating our own educators on how they can start making a real difference in the lives of their students, particularly all those disadvantaged kids who really need an entrepreneurially minded mentor to rise above their gloomy circumstances. ☞