

CAS Connect

COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

Couple helps fuel innovation, entrepreneurship

In our increasingly competitive global economy, students need a strong interdisciplinary foundation to ensure their future success. Alumnus William “Bill” Graber ('65 mathematics) and his wife, Mary Lynn, recognize the vital necessity of training students to successfully navigate a quickly changing economic landscape.

Bill (right) and Mary Lynn Graber are longtime supporters of student scholarships and innovative programs at WSU. Bill is a member of the WSU Foundation Board of Governors and a former member of the WSUF Board of Trustees. He also served on the boards of visitors for the College of Sciences and the Department of Mathematics.

From his early career in the financial division of General Electric to his retirement as senior vice president and CFO at McKesson Corporation, Bill enjoyed a long and esteemed career in business while maintaining strong ties to WSU.

“WSU gave me the foundation and the start for my long business career,” Bill said. “Mary Lynn and I would like to help provide that opportunity for other deserving students.”

The Grabers provided the initial gift to the Entrepreneurial and Innovation initiative directed through CAS. Their generous support laid the groundwork for an enterprising, collaborative, interactive, and creative new program that equips students with cross-disciplinary skills and business experience.

Now in its second year, the Scholarly Knowledge, Innovation, and Leadership Development (SKILD) at WSU program provides students with opportunities to develop their leadership skills through entrepreneurial thinking and project planning.

SKILD fellows and interns work in interdisciplinary teams with WSU faculty to develop innovative products and services derived from their WSU-based research. The students apply their disciplinary critical-thinking, problem-solving, and communication skills while gaining real-world experience in the prac-

tices and protocols of technology-focused business.

To-date, SKILD at WSU interns have provided the WSU Office of Commercialization with more than 40 opportunity assessments for WSU research products. Of these, SKILD interns led development of the initial business cases for two WSU spinout companies.

“This is significant,” said Brian Kraft, director of CAS Business Development and the SKILD at WSU program. “Two out of 40 represents a 70 percent increase in startup frequency relative to traditional technology transfer processes—way ahead of the curve.”

You can help support innovation and entrepreneurial development at WSU by making a gift of any amount online or by contacting Valoree Gregory, CAS director of development, at 509-335-4556 or vgregory@wsu.edu.



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