

Entrepreneurial Spirit Ignited at McMaster University: Dr. Darren Burke Inspires Students in New Kinesiology Course



Hamilton, Ontario Oct 12, 2023 ([Issuewire.com](https://www.issuewire.com)) - When it comes to entrepreneurship, there's learning by doing, and then there's teaching by doing. At [McMaster University's Department of Kinesiology](#), Dr. Darren Burke, the department's first industry professor, is leading the way. In a groundbreaking new entrepreneurship course, he's not only teaching students but also launching his third company. Under Dr. Burke's mentorship, 46 enthusiastic students are turning their passions and ideas into mock companies, gaining invaluable real-world experience.

Dr. Burke is passionate about sharing his knowledge with students, even offering a peek into his work-in-progress pitch to investors. "It takes a lot of guts to be a start-up founder," he notes. "Most people don't realize the amount of time and effort that's involved. It's not like a job with defined roles and responsibilities. It's everything that comes before there are jobs with defined roles and then all of the things that follow once you scale your business."

While Dr. Burke did not come from a family of entrepreneurs, he credits his father's strong work ethic as

an influential factor in his own entrepreneurial journey. "My dad's work ethic definitely got passed along," says Burke. "I couldn't have founded companies without it."

Interestingly, entrepreneurship wasn't on Dr. Burke's radar during his student years or early tenure as a professor at [St. Francis Xavier University](#). He relished the academic freedom and the opportunity to explore innovative ideas. However, he later saw the potential to commercialize his research and transformed it into a successful line of sports nutrition products for professional and Olympic athletes. The experience led him to launch his first company and eventually step away from academia to focus entirely on his business.

Burke's debut company grew into an industry leader with revenues exceeding \$20 million. After selling the company in 2013, he devoted five years to his family and traveling before co-founding a sustainable agricultural technology company with NHL Forward, [TJ Galiardi](#). Now, he's pioneering a venture that leverages microbial fermentation to transform [cosmetically rejected farm produce](#) into probiotic-rich new food.

In addition to his new business venture and teaching commitments, Dr. Burke serves as the entrepreneur-in-residence at [Saint Mary's University](#). His involvement with the university's entrepreneurship center has significantly expanded opportunities for training, consulting, events, student projects, and skill development programs.

Gianni Parise, who has witnessed the surge of interest in innovation and entrepreneurship among Kinesiology students, is eager to replicate similar success within the department. He states, "We're seeing growing interest in innovation and entrepreneurship among our students. Enrolment in Burke's entrepreneurship course doubled after the first class, surpassing the cap of 40 students."

The Kinesiology department's forward-thinking plans include the establishment of a collaborative makerspace, designed to empower students with technology and equipment for hands-on learning and exploration. Parise adds, "These kinds of spaces are typically found in Engineering departments to promote innovation and the commercialization of ideas. We believe that Kinesiology can do the same and give our undergraduate and graduate students amazing opportunities to foster their entrepreneurial spirit." Dr. Burke will play a pivotal role in bringing this vision to life in the coming year.

Parise, who has shared a longstanding friendship with Dr. Burke since their PhD days, is excited about his return to academia. "We had similar interests and collaborated on a research project. We've been friends ever since. It was amazing to watch Darren make the move from academia to business. We're thrilled to have Darren return to the university and show students what's possible."

Dr. Burke is already earning high praise from students, including fourth-year kinesiology student Cara Pecos, who hails from a family of successful entrepreneurs. She remarks, "I think there's immense value in learning from someone who's successfully created and run a business. I don't have any immediate plans to launch a company, but through this course, I've been generating business ideas around my interests in research and rehab science. We've already had opportunities to bounce our ideas off Dr. Burke during class, which has been incredibly helpful. It's a very discussion-based course, which I love."

Dr. Burke's message to his students and the world is clear: "I hope the students realize that they too can be entrepreneurs and have the confidence and courage to start their own business or join an early-stage company. It's far from easy, but the opportunities are endless, and the rewards are incredible."

Written By Jay Robb

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About Dr. Darren Burke:

[Dr. Darren Burke](#) is an accomplished entrepreneur, industry professor, and inspiring mentor. With a successful track record in founding and growing businesses, he is committed to nurturing the entrepreneurial spirit in students. Dr. Burke's wide-ranging experience spans the worlds of sports nutrition, sustainable agricultural technology, and microbial fermentation, with a vision for transforming food production.

About McMaster University:

McMaster University, located in Hamilton, Ontario, is a renowned institution committed to providing exceptional education and fostering innovation across various academic disciplines. The university's Department of Kinesiology is dedicated to offering forward-thinking programs that prepare students for the future of their chosen fields.

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