$6,200
COST PER STUDENT FOR THE
17-CLASS LAMP MANAGEMENT-
TRAINING PROGRAM
SOURCE: UC IRVINE EXTENSION

INSIDE INNOVATION

Program teaches corporate skills to research leaders

Training helps biomedical managers achieve their potential.

These students know they're different. But they're neither slow learners nor gifted youngsters—two categories of students who often attend special programs.

They're promising mid-level research managers at Orange County's biomedical companies. And now they, too, can attend special classes aimed at helping them succeed.

"People in research and technology are different," says Martin Wartenberg, lead instructor of the overall program, called the Leadership and Management Program for Technology Professionals, or LAMP. "They're a little smarter, more demanding and take nothing at face value."

But they're far from perfect. Scientists who are promoted into management positions can lack people skills, baffle co-workers by speaking in technical jargon and be clueless about office politics and budgets. That's where the LAMP program comes in.

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What’s the LAMP program?

The management training program called LAMP began at UC San Diego circa 1999 in cooperation with Qualcomm and Hewlett-Packard. The management of those companies wanted a kind of "mini-MBA" for technology leaders," says Martin Wartenberg, lead instructor of UC's version of LAMP, which stands for Leadership and Management Program for Technology Professionals.

Six years ago, the program expanded to UC and UC Santa Cruz. Since then, about 180 technology professionals from 75 companies have attended the UC version of the program, run by the school's continuing education division, UC Extension. The program costs $5,300 per student.

The biannual version of LAMP is in the middle of its second session, which will end in February; a third session is scheduled to begin in March.

For information about UC Irvine Extension's LAMP program, visit http://unxv.uc.edu/extension/lamp or contact Brian Breen, corporate sales manager, at 949-824-1841 or brennixuci.edu.

The biannual version of LAMP won't remedy Orange County's venture-capital shortage directly, but it should build the region's overall efficiency in managing biomedical research, which would indirectly help to attract funding. In evaluating a new venture as a potential investment, venture capitalists tend to look most intently at its management team, not at its scientific brainpower.

The program is aimed at remedying some of the typical challenges facing researchers who get promoted into managerial positions. These are similar to any manager's challenges—communication, finances, trust and team-building—but the culture of science and engineering adds its own particular variations.

The complications of technical subjects tend to affect researchers' relationships with managers, Wartenberg says.

OVERCOMING SKEPTICISM

"They're very peer-oriented. They don't care what the boss thinks. The boss doesn't know what they're doing. They're very sceptical." Because of that skepticism, the instructors and guest speakers in the course need to prove themselves.

Wartenberg, for example, could do that because he's a licensed engineer who formerly was an executive at Intersite Electronics in Aranis, a maker of missile-tracking systems that is now a subsidiary of LSI Communications.

The complexity of modern science is a challenge for managers who must lead project teams consisting of experts from several cutting-edge disciplines.

"You'd need to have seven Ph.D.s and have gone to school for 100 years in order to understand it," says Wartenberg, who teaches techniques for dealing with those in such situations.

Communication skills are a weak spot for many researchers.

"Scientists and engineers often don't like to make presentations," says Mike Lowery, 46, a director of chemistry at Advanced Medical Optics. His team focuses on developing polymers for intra-ocular lenses. "Technological people tend to leap heavily on jargon. They need to learn to speak in a language suitable for the audience," Wartenberg says.

To remedy that, one class that Wartenberg conducts includes a quiz-show style game that requires each student to explain a randomly chosen scientific term in plain English.

Lowery recalls that his task was to explain the Second Law of Thermodynamics, which describes the gradual level-up of temperatures and density throughout the universe—a condition measured in terms of entropy. Lowery's presentation was memorable enough to earn him the nickname "Entropy Boy." Lowery was one of 28 students who took the classes during the inaugural sessions last August and September.

Joe Jensen, 44, manufacturing project manager in Beckman Coulter's diagnostics division in Brea, says he is already better at public speaking after just one day of focusing on it during the LAMP program.

The program's focus on leadership skills was important for Jackie Lai, 35, a mechanical engineer at Edwards Lifesciences. She's the new leader of a small team that's developing a still-prototype new medical device.

"It gave me tools to work with," as a new team leader, she says. "I'm not just throwing it at them."

Several students said the most important day in the course was spent learning about companies' budgets and financial statements.

Budgets and finances are an important subject, as any reader of the Wall Street Journal will know.

Says Lowery: "We all live and die by our budgets, but we never university ever has a class called 'Budgets and Finance for Chemists.'"

Martin Wartenberg

Lead instructor of UC's LAMP program
Age: 42
Hometown: New York, NY
Lives: Also Veijo
Education: Bachelor of science in electrical engineering from the City College of New York, Licensed Professional Engineer.
Experience: Currently working for Zero Dusky in Carlsbad helping to develop online curriculum on leadership and project management. Instructor in project management and leadership at several UC campuses. Various technical and management positions with Interstate Electronics Corp. in Anaheim. President of Hartman Systems Corp.
Family: Married with two children and four grandchildren
Favorite work-related book: "It's Not the Big That Eat the Small...It's the Fast That Eat the Slow: How to Use Speed as a Competitive Tool in Business" by Jason Wenas and Laurence Maphus. "This book gets down to what is important in business in the 21st century—speed to market and distribution. It is very practical and can be utilized in any industry."
Favorite reading for pleasure: "The Hobbit" by J.R.R. Tolkien. "It's about a journey of adventure and discovery. It's my personal belief that life is about having adventures and discovering new things. We do our routine stuff to have something to do between the adventures, otherwise adventures become futile."
Favorite movie: "Bridge on the River Kwai" ("Overcoming adversity and innumerable obstacles to achieve the impossible."
Hobbies: Spending time with my dogs and my four grandchildren. (If my son accepts my application to be an assistant coach with our youngest’s Little League team, I will definitely cut back on work.)
Role models: Alfred Gumpes, the president of Interstate Electronics; and, as a small boy, the president of Figo International, and my immediate boss there, Richard Foster. They have always been my role models.

Tips for innovators:
- Don't get discouraged. Everyone goes through trials telling you why your ideas won't work.
- Innovation, as Thomas Edison said, is 99% perspiration. It is hard work and you just have to keep believing in yourself and keep doing what you need to do to accomplish your objectives.
- Go around, over, under and through opposition.

Tips for companies that want to be innovative:
- Follow the guidelines established for IDEO in Palo Alto by Tom Kelley, their president, who has founded the benchmark for innovation in industry.
  1. Create a climate for innovation (fun, interesting, changing) It's tough to be innovative while living and working in a "cube farm."
  2. Hire and staff projects with diverse backgrounds, interests and up-and-coming people. New people bring in new ideas.
  3. Make sure management doesn't get in the way of thinking of themselves as experts. Either the book The Ten Faces of Innovation" by Tom Kelley or the "60 Minutes" television report on IDEO would be a good place to start.