

# NEWS RELEASE

Wilfrid Laurier  
University



## **Brightspark joins Laurier in search for next e-commerce winner**

*Internet incubator targets MBA students for the next 'bright spark' on the Internet*

**For Immediate Release**

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**Contact: Cynthia Keeshan**  
**Media Strategy Director, Brightspark**  
**(416) 488-1999 ext. 245**  
**ckeeshan@bspark.com**

**or Michael Strickland**  
**Media Relations Officer, Laurier**  
**(519) 884-0710 ext. 3070**  
**mstrickl@wlu.ca**

WATERLOO – Canada's leading full-service Internet incubator will conduct a first-of-its-kind idea hunt at Wilfrid Laurier University for MBA candidates who demonstrate the 'bright spark'. On Thursday, April 6<sup>th</sup>, MBA candidates in a new e-commerce course offered by The Laurier School of Business and Economics will present their new-economy dot-corn business plans to Brightspark's founding partners, who hope to find the next Internet success story.

Acting on its mission to develop and nurture Canadian Internet entrepreneurs, Brightspark founders will review the top three ideas to emerge from a series of presentations by the MBA candidates. Brightspark's three principals – former Servicesoft founder and CEO Mark Skapinker, WinFax inventor Tony Davis and technology dealmaker and lawyer Richard Nathan – will evaluate the presentations and assess their market potential.

"Brightspark is always looking for new and innovative ideas that challenge traditional business models, which can be successfully grown into great companies or concepts," said Brightspark senior business architect Sean Hutchison. "We believe that Canadian universities like Wilfrid Laurier – with the strength of its MBA program – offer a unique resource for tapping into the talent and creative thinking we are seeking."

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With the rapid adoption of e-commerce, traditional business models are put to the test and challenged. The MBA program at Laurier recognized this evolution and is devising courseware that develops leaders with the particular management skills crucial in adapting to this rapidly changing and complex global environment.

Laurier's new *E-Commerce Marketing* course provides a solid foundation to understand e-commerce, and investigates the implications of the Internet and technology on traditional business. Gordon McDougall, marketing professor with The Laurier School of Business and Economics, will team teach the undergraduate version of this graduate e-commerce course with Brightspark's Hutchison.

#### **About Laurier's MBA Program**

The Laurier School of Business and Economics was the first school in Canada to offer a one-year MBA program. The program's integrated curriculum introduces – and more importantly show the relationship between – the functional areas of strategic management, marketing, financial management, organizational behaviour, operations management, economics, accounting and business decision modeling.

The Laurier School of Business and Economics is one of Canada's largest business schools with over 2500 undergraduate students and course offerings in Waterloo, Toronto and Brantford. The MBA program will be offered at the Toronto campus beginning May 2000.

#### **About Brightspark Inc.**

Brightspark, who in the short time since its launch late last year, has distinguished itself from the pack of venture and startup catalyst firms with its incomparable industry experience and savvy. Founded in November 1999, Toronto-based Brightspark boasts an accomplished trio of seasoned veterans at the helm:

- Mark Skapinker was the co-founder and President of Delrina. Most recently he founded and is currently Chairman of Servicesoft Technologies – an Internet software company focused on online customer service software solutions;
- Tony Davis invented WinFax and founded Internet startups Lanacom and Delano. Lanacom was subsequently sold to BackWeb (NASDAQ:BWEB) and Delano debuted at a record high on the NASDAQ in mid-February (NASDAQ:DTEC); and
- Richard Nathan, technology deal-maker and lawyer and the former co-chair of the Technology Business Group at Osler, Hoskin & Harcourt LLP, one of Canada's leading law firms.

Brightspark employs a strong technology view, with emphasis on mentoring and a robust network of contacts and resources, to boost Canadian start-ups striving to get innovative products and services to the Internet market in an accelerated Internet time frame. Brightspark provides everything from development and technology consulting and services, marketing and creative assistance, competitive research, legal, accounting and business development support and services, to the requisite office space, administrative support and network infrastructure expected in a productive incubator environment.