

Inside VT KnowledgeWorks



BecomeAlum Dreams, Plans, Realizes

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From **Z. Kelly Queijo**:

When **Jim McIntyre** and **Christina McIntyre** became partners in life through marriage, they had no idea they would find themselves partners in business. After all, they had established careers: Christina, a fourteen-year veteran of academic advising, serves as associate director of **Virginia Tech's University Honors** program, while Jim is founder of **McIntyre & Associates**, an Internet security consulting firm.



The couple launched Innovative Academic Solutions in 2006. In June of 2009, they released **BecomeAlum**, an online academic planning tool for college students. BecomeAlum guides college students through the complexities of meeting degree requirements. From freshman year through graduation, and even graduate school, BecomeAlum keeps students on track to meet their academic goals, helping them "Dream, Plan, Realize" - BecomeAlum's tagline.

"We are constantly amazed at how students use the program to create a truly unique and individualized plan that enhances their education," said Christina. "It's not just a one-plan-fits-all."

As an **Ironman** competitor, meeting goals is something close to Christina's heart. "There are certainly a lot of parallels to training and competing in an Ironman and being an entrepreneur. It's a risk. You're in it for the long haul. Endurance, perseverance, judgment calls, measuring performance and making adjustments - it's all an investment in yourself. Sweat equity certainly applies to both."

The couple discovered there are benefits to working and living together. According to Christina, "The great thing is that when one of us has an idea...that kind of 'Eureka!' moment, you don't have to wait until the next day to share your idea with someone." Jim joked that "having two companies resolves the question of what to do with the other 12 hours of a day."

With the development and launch phases of BecomeAlum behind them, they are building a strong user-base as more students and academic institutions sign up. The next business hurdle is to build a strong marketing and sales force. Jim admits that, when it comes to selling, the learning curve has been steep. "We're looking to involve others who have this expertise. Having an understanding of higher education, academic structure and the people is essential." Christina concurs, "Dream, Plan, Realize. It's

not just a pretty phrase for us.”

Virginia Tech students are invited to test drive **BecomeAlum**. They can sign up for **2 Weeks Free for VT**. This offer is open to **Virginia Tech** students. Other colleges, universities, or student organizations can **contact BecomeAlum** for information on how to get BecomeAlum going at their schools.

You're invited to become a fan of **BecomeAlum.com on Facebook**.

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