

# Schlegel series kicks off

Canada's tendency to coast on its commodities is a "formula for failure"

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STAFF WRITER

Last night, students and faculty alike gathered in the KPMG Atrium of the Schlegel Centre to hear Andrea Mandel-Campbell, a seasoned Canadian business journalist and author, who was the first of four speakers to be featured this year in the "Innovation & Entrepreneurship Speaker Series."

Speaking about her latest book, *Why Mexicans Don't Drink Molson: Rescuing Canadian Business from the Suds of Global Obscurity*, Mandel-Campbell described it as "asking the question of why it is that Canada, despite its resources, despite its status as a G8 country ... why it is that we have failed to produce very many home-grown multinational companies, why it is that we have done so poorly when

it comes to marketing and branding, why we have such a low profile in international markets, why we have failed to embrace international markets, and why that's important."

The book looks into Canada's history to answer the tough questions about Canada's mediocre sense of entrepreneurship and innovation.

Using Molson brewery as an example, Mandel-Campbell claimed that many Canadian businesses have failed to aggressively take on global markets due to inadequate self-confidence, a lack of enthusiasm, government protection of Canadian industries - which actually hinder such businesses - and a lack of focus on the branding of a distinctly Canadian identity.

"What little the world does know about us, is that we do have a reputation for good beer ... So if there

was one thing I think we could have gone out and done, it was beer," Mandel-Campbell said. "[We] should have and could have been a world leader."

"We have to acknowledge the problem, and that's part of the challenge. There needs to be a lot of attitudinal adjustments in terms of embracing global markets as a good thing, embracing entrepreneurship as a good thing, and having the confidence in ourselves that we can go out there and compete against anyone out there."

She argued that the sense of identity as Canadians is merely deficient, that when defining ourselves as Canadians, we define ourselves by what we are not: we are not American.

"Branding is about identity," Mandel-Campbell explained. "It's really hard to brand a product or



Greg McKenzie

**BREWING IDEAS** - Journalist Andrea Mandel-Campbell speaks at WLU.

service when our own identity is washy-washy."

"We have to start thinking about things from a slightly different perspective ... We've never been strong on branding of any kind, and we don't seem to understand that actually marketing and branding is part of innovation; it is a critical part of it in fact."

When asked what one piece of advice she would give to students

looking to build a stronger Canadian corporate presence in the international sphere, Mandel-Campbell said to "always challenge and question when people tell you the way things are and the way they should be. The thing is that Canada is actually a fabulous place to do business."

"Rather than seeing the obstacles, see the opportunity."

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