Colgate Makes!
A Side Quest for the disruptEd TIA Venture

What is a Side Quest?
disruptEd, as currently envisioned, has a 3-step plan that constitutes its critical path. Each step is enabled by the previous, and failure to complete one will make it very difficult to complete the next. While this plan is itself quite ambitious, our plans and goals go even further. These additional goals lie off of the critical path and can be considered secondary objectives. We like the grand ambitions and images conjured up by the idea of a quest, and see this venture as our quest. Thus, any additional or secondary goals are our side quests.

Background
Social norms tend to lag behind the external factors that shape them. For instance, we are only just beginning to deal with the social ramifications of the (by now long-standing) pervasive surveillance (and emerging sousveillance) that permeates modern life.

Since at least the 1950’s, rampant consumerism and marketing have led Americans down a path towards living sterile, bubble lives. We have grown ever more divorced from the means of production, be they industrial or agricultural. This trend was driven economically, as industrial techniques, economies of scale, and vertical integration of supply chains realized new efficiencies, lowering prices and raising standards of living.

Recently however, new technologies and trends have been disrupting the status quo (the paradigm of industrial agriculture, too-big-to-fail corporations, and one-size-fits-all production). Barriers to entry have been rapidly falling as new technologies allow small, distributed organizations to out-compete massive, centralized, corporations. Studies consistently show that workers in flatter companies, empowered with decision-making authority tend to be happier and more productive than their Dilbertesque counterparts.

Social and business norms have yet to acknowledge these changes, and even attempt to stymie them. Progress marches on however, and the trend towards distributed creation will continue.

The Problem
Although we are starting to transition towards a distributed economy, in which individual creators of stuff will be prized, we are still training and educating for the centralized economy, in which the access providers (middlemen) were prized.
A Solution
Like most of western society, we at Colgate live in a consumption culture. While many disparate elements needed for a creation culture exist on campus, they are scattered and separate. disruptEd intends to work with the University to unify these creative aspects in an effort to situate Making as a core component of the Colgate culture.

Our Plan

Step 1. Unify various student organizations in a Makers’ Coalition. Some candidate clubs might include (among others):

- Clay Club
- Crafters Club
- Green Thumbs
- Robotics & Engineering Club

Step 2. Establish a campus Makerspace that is open to all students with the assistance and cooperation of both the Makers’ Coalition and the University. Located within the Makerspace should be a wide array of various tools and equipment needed to Make a variety of diverse projects. Project types and typical equipment might include:

- 3d printing: 3d printers and scanners, filament extruders, CAD software
- Electronics: arduino pcbs, components, soldering stations, microchips
- Machining: CNC router, laser engraving machine, drill press
- Internet of Things: Raspberry Pi, XBee

Step 3. Lobby for the addition of a Make category to the Core Curriculum. Not only would this help prepare students for the real world, but it should help improve student wellness. Few things in life are as empowering, satisfying, and life-affirming than the successful completion of a creative project. It is worth noting that not all Maker products are physical; designs (for 3d printing) and code are just are creative and worthy as robots and quadcopters. Just like the Global Engagement Core requirement, a Make Core requirement would encompass many courses across the Colgate curriculum.

Challenges
Many of the individual elements needed for step 2 already exist on campus. However, bringing them together will have financial and liability ramifications for the University. Working with the administration to anticipate and address these issues will be crucial.

Step 3 will be an uphill battle. Hopefully, steps 1 and 2 will have gathered a robust and passionate group from the student body, faculty, and administration who can generate and sustain a meaningful conversation about modifying the Core Curriculum.