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# Yearbook

## Fall 2024 - Summer 2025

Von Allmen Center for  
**Entrepreneurship**

 Gatton College of  
Business and Economics



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# PURPOSE, PILLARS & STRATEGIC MISSION

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The Von Allmen Center for Entrepreneurship (VACE) at the Gatton College of Business & Economics strategic mission is to provide an experiential learning opportunity for University of Kentucky students, staff, faculty, and the broader Kentucky region. VACE is well known for the Entrepreneurs Bootcamp, an online accelerator, **with the option to receive academic credit for any current student**. We empower Kentucky's entrepreneurs to develop the knowledge, skills, and resilience needed to start a business from the ground up, solve real-world problems, with the end-goal to utilize the experiential process to assist in launching sustainable businesses. VACE's purpose and pillars are outlined as follows:

- **Experiential Learning:** Spark entrepreneurial curiosity and provide experiential opportunities that begins with ideation, market analysis, financial modeling, pitch deck building, pitching to a large audience, meeting specific milestones, and networking in the ecosystem. Bootcamp provides this experiential component for all majors across campus, and is extended to anyone interested in starting a business for the first time across Kentucky. Bootcamp is not industry specific, and welcomes anyone with an idea or current business that has not been fully realized.
- **From Concepts to Startups:** Equips future founders with essential pitching skills, valuable networking opportunities, and practical financial modeling understanding to start a new business. This equips entrepreneurs to effectively present their unique value proposition to investors, secure seed funding from pitch competitions, or pursue grants from agencies like the Small Business Administration (SBA).
- **Support Startup Scale & Investment:** VACE's commitment to founders extends beyond Bootcamp. Actively helping identify capital for growth by expanding their access to funding opportunities tailored to their company's stage. This involves making strategic introductions to a range of financial partners, including local investment groups, banks, private equity firms, or directly with our advisory board.
- **Enhance Connectivity For Kentucky's Startup Ecosystem:** Build bridges between students, faculty, alumni, and industry experts by connecting entrepreneurs to the campuswide resources and infrastructure as listed in the Ecosystem Resources & Stakeholders section.



# ECOSYSTEM RESOURCES & STAKEHOLDERS

VACE cultivates a thriving entrepreneurial community for the University of Kentucky and the entire state by tapping into a wide range of campus and statewide resources. This includes assistance such as startup mentoring, volunteering as a guest speaker, judging pitch competitions, offering crucial access to services and grants, donating prize money, organizing regional networking events for entrepreneurs, helping access capital, involving various accelerator programs, and promoting small business loans. This robust ecosystem underscores the extensive infrastructure essential for building a dynamic entrepreneurial landscape that reaches far **beyond the classroom** and across Kentucky.






# CONCENTRATIONS OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP AT UK



## University of Kentucky: Focus Areas in Entrepreneurship


It is noteworthy that other units across the University of Kentucky offer entrepreneurial-related pathways for current students and beyond. Listed below is full list of these units and their focus areas.



### College of Communication & Information: Innovation and Entrepreneurial Thinking (iNet) Certificate



This **undergraduate certificate** provides interdisciplinary entrepreneurial educational opportunities and meaningful experiences to help students succeed in an entrepreneurial world. Students learn what it takes to be an entrepreneur and how to apply entrepreneurial thinking to their courses of study. Students are offered a continuum of learning opportunities to develop entrepreneurial skills and gain experience through the Innovation and Entrepreneurial Thinking programs. The program connects students to other students with entrepreneurial interests and to a network of innovators and entrepreneurial mentors, both at the University of Kentucky and in the local entrepreneurial community.



### College of Fine Arts: Creative Social Entrepreneurship Certificate

The **undergraduate certificate** in Creative Social Entrepreneurship offers a flexible and in-depth curriculum in an asynchronous, 100% online learning environment. Creative social entrepreneurship is a transdisciplinary field connecting creative, social, and entrepreneurial practices to improve the economic, environmental, political, and social well-being of society. There is high demand for creative professionals with creativity, originality, initiative, and innovation and entrepreneurship skills across nonprofit, governmental, for-profit, and start-up companies. As an emerging creative social entrepreneur, you will gain hands-on experience, engage with industry leading experts, and participate in transdisciplinary collaboration to become a visionary leader who uses creative talent to drive positive change and build a more sustainable and ethical creative and cultural sector.



# CONCENTRATIONS OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP AT UK (CONTINUED)

## College of Design: Design-Build Certificate

For undergraduate students at the University of Kentucky, the Design-Build undergraduate certificate offers a unique interdisciplinary opportunity to focus 15 credits of undergraduate study on Design-Build topics with a special emphasis on entrepreneurship and integrated project delivery. Centered on the studio learning environment, students will work in trans-disciplinary teams on applied learning opportunities that range from building science and digital fabrication research to community-engaged design and construction challenges across the Commonwealth. Students will select from a series of courses in Architecture, Engineering, and Business to customize their Design-Build certificate. The teams will have the opportunity to access expertise from across the University and the building profession to generate innovative and humane solutions to design problems.

## UK Innovate

UK Innovate at the University of Kentucky drives economic, societal and entrepreneurial growth by advancing research through commercialization, health care innovations, corporate partnerships, social innovation and economic development. Currently, there are four focus areas that make up the TRUST Hub housed under UK Innovate: Social Innovation, Community Health Innovation, Launch Blue (Entrepreneurship and Innovation Training and Development) and the Sustainable Futures Design Lab.

***Commercialization and Innovation Leadership Program*** (CILP): open to undergraduate and graduate students and offers a comprehensive and immersive experience for those interested in technology transfer and commercialization. Participants will gain foundational knowledge in academic technology transfer, as well as hands-on experience in the commercialization space. They will also benefit from professional development opportunities, including networking and resume-building workshops, while being mentored by experts in the field.

***Entrepreneurial Leadership Program*** (ELP): designed for graduate students and postdoctoral researchers who are working to turn their research innovations into startup companies. The program provides access to entrepreneurial mentors and experts in commercialization, as well as online learning content. ELP is a paid opportunity that supports students in accelerating the movement of university-based innovations into the marketplace.

# CONCENTRATIONS OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP AT UK (CONTINUED)

## College of Engineering: Scholars in Engineering and Management (SEAM) Pathway through Lewis Honors College

SEAM is a collaborative program between the Pigman College of Engineering and the Gatton College of Business that accepts both engineering and business applicants. The program offers cross-functional classes and activities that complement a student's chosen major. Ultimately this produces a pool of entrepreneurial-minded individuals and attractive, unique talent for potential employers nationwide. In their sophomore year, Entrepreneurship and Venture Creation (MGT 292), is required for students. This course is designed to offer a **concentration** and practical understanding of entrepreneurship and the new venture creation process. Throughout this course, real cases and real entrepreneurs (i.e. Entrepreneur-Mentors—EMs) are used to complement the theoretical discussions on entrepreneurship.

## Gatton MBA Program: New Venture Creation

The Entrepreneurship and New Venture Creation **concentration** is offered to candidates enrolled in the Gatton College of Business & Economics MBA program and delivers on the following core objectives: (1) understanding business opportunity identification, concept development and validation in an ever-changing virtual world, (2) practice hands-on development of a business concept, a business plan and perform a business pitch in a regional new venture competition, and lastly, (3) research in-depth financial principles to both familiarize and discover ways to fund, scale and manage a new venture/small business, including managing intellectual property. Candidates will have the option of taking all the entrepreneurship electives to complete the full concentration or can take any of the courses individually as an elective while enrolled in the UK MBA program.

The three elective courses that comprise this concentration are:

MBA 645: Entrepreneurship and New Venture Creation I

MBA 647: New Venture Finance, MBA 646: Entrepreneurship

New Venture Creation II (Capstone)



# FALL 2024 - SUMMER 2025: OTHER PROGRAMS & INITIATIVES



## Empowering Kentucky's Entrepreneurs Through VACE

VACE is dedicated to fostering entrepreneurship in Kentucky by offering a robust calendar of in-person events, such as pitch competitions and webinars. These initiatives provide unique educational and practical experiences for both established and budding business owners. VACE also supports counties where entrepreneurial guidance may be scarce, offering essential resources that complement traditional learning. Through our programs, participants gain access to a powerful network of mentors, ecosystem partners, and successful Bootcamp alumni. By utilizing VACE, individuals interested in startup creation will be **encouraged to pursue further education** in any of the various units offering entrepreneurial education at the University of Kentucky.

### Governor's School for Entrepreneurs (GSE)

Since its first year in 2013, GSE Summer Startup has graduated 1,258 high school students from more than 100 counties. Graduates have launched dozens of businesses in Kentucky and even filed patents. Program graduates are also eligible for scholarships at Kentucky colleges and universities. GSE and the University of Kentucky Gatton College of Business and Economics (UK Gatton) recently announced a three-year partnership that includes UK Gatton hosting the GSE Summer Startup program through 2027. All Kentucky students in grades 9–11 are eligible to apply for the Summer Startup program.

GSE is currently housed under the VACE Advisory Board with the goal to fundraise for future summer startup programs to support the student experience on UK's campus. GSE is managed by the Kentucky Education and Labor Cabinet and the Cabinet for Economic Development.

### Pitch Competitions & Events

Bootcamp founders participated in various pitch competitions throughout the 2024-2025 academic year featuring the PNC Wildcat Pitch Competition, PNC Innovation, Summit, SEC Pitch Competition, GSE Collegiate Pitch Competition, Startup Runway, Center for Clinical and Translational Sciences, Entrepreneurship Club (UK), Emerging Entrepreneurs Competition, and 5Across Pitch at Awesome Inc. VACE also speaks to various colleges about Bootcamp and becoming an entrepreneur.

Cash awards are also provided in Bootcamp based on the team's performances in each milestone. This year's prize money was made possible through a generous gift from Dr. Warren O. Nash, Jr. (UK Alum) and Janet Nash of Danville, Ky.

### Webinar Series: Where Are They Now?

VACE hosted seven webinars featuring startups that completed the Entrepreneurs Bootcamp online business accelerator. The series highlighted each founder's journey, how they overcame various challenges, the realities of raising capital, and where they are now.



From high school through college and into the business world, The Governor's School for Entrepreneurs (GSE) empowers the dreams of Kentucky students who have the grit, drive, and passion to be Bluegrass entrepreneurs and create jobs here.

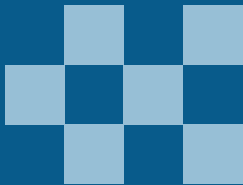
Kentucky was one of the first states in the nation to create a Governor's School for Entrepreneurs. Since the first class of 49 high school students in 2013, GSE has served more than 1500 students with our high school and collegiate programs.

GSE is an independent, non-profit 501c3. GSE student programs are free, thanks to strong partnerships with the Kentucky Education and Labor Cabinet and the Cabinet for Economic Development, along with support from private donors and public foundations.



GSE offers opportunities to both high school and college students. Programs include the GSE Collegiate Pitch Competition for college students and GSE Summer Program for high school students, grades 9-11.

GSE graduates are eligible for millions of dollars in scholarships from colleges and universities across the commonwealth. Scholarships are determined by each individual school. The best way to get up-to-date information about GSE-related scholarships is to contact the financial aid office at the schools listed on the website and ask specifically about their Governor's School for Entrepreneurs scholarship: [kentuckygse.com](http://kentuckygse.com)





The annual 2025 Collegiate Pitch competition, held at Thomas More University, provides a platform for student entrepreneurs to present their business ideas to a panel of judges, vying for crucial funding. This year's event featured a diverse array of concepts.

On March 1, 2025, the competition showcased the innovative talent emerging from Kentucky's universities, with University of Kentucky (UK) Von Allmen Center for Entrepreneurship (VACE) Bootcamp teams making a notable impression. VACE played a key role in preparing the Bootcamp teams for the competition. Five Bootcamp startups were selected to compete in the 2025 GSE Collegiate Pitch: DocAI, PRLZ Extracts, RAM Devices, NeuroVista, and HandyHat.

#### **Developed Track Winners**

First: Nuks Nootropics, University of Louisville - \$15,000  
Nicotine-free energy pouches with brain-boosting ingredients to combat fatigue and mental fog.  
Joe Crepps CEO, Tim Filliatreau, COO, Gerdhaus Olde Loohuis CTO

Second: Jet Ski 502, University of Louisville - \$7,000  
Jet ski rentals providing access to more water recreation options in urban areas.  
Golden Mashindi CEO, Arnold Moto CTO (Bootcamp grad and winning team)

Third (Tie): RAM Devices, University of Kentucky - \$5,000  
A wearable sensor-based device revolutionizing stroke rehabilitation with intuitive, real-time feedback on hand movement.  
Madison Bates, Founder

Third (Tie): Due Gooder, University of Louisville - \$5,000  
An app that uses AI to pull information and sync with a calendar to improve organization and time management.  
Nate Royal, Founder

\*VACE is an executive advisor for Due Gooder

#### **Exploratory Track Winners**

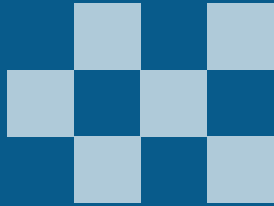
First: G&E Solutions, University of Louisville - \$5,000  
A sanitary portable shower for communities with no plumbing or electricity.  
Emmanuel Haynes and Golden Mashindi, Co-Founders

Second: HandyHat, University of Kentucky - \$4,000  
Headwear with a magnetic bill to hold small metal hardware while working.  
Wyatt Hensch, Founder

Third: PRLZ Extracts, University of Kentucky - \$3,000  
Producing all-natural, solventless cannabis options packaged in standard doses.  
Eli Gersony, Avery Nelson, Venkatesh Suryadevara, Co-Founders





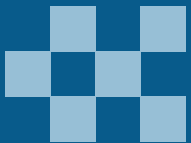




Some of Kentucky's most innovative high school students created business solutions for real-world problems and acquired skills that will serve them for a lifetime during the 2025 Governor's School for Entrepreneurs (GSE) Summer Startup Program. Students tackled challenges ranging from mental health to lithium-ion battery disposal to heart failure detection. GSE identifies, inspires, and empowers Kentucky's future innovators through its three-week Summer Startup program for high schoolers.

This year, 159 students completed the program in the largest single session in program history, held at the University of Kentucky Gatton College of Business and Economics June 22 - July 13. The intensive, hands-on experience builds entrepreneurial skills with lifelong impact — helping drive economic growth across the commonwealth by supporting the dreams of students passionate about creating jobs and businesses here in Kentucky. VACE spoke to GSE students about Bootcamp and encouraged applying.

"As an education-first administration, I am always excited to see what Kentucky's talented high school entrepreneurs come up with each year," said Gov. Andy Beshear. "Many past GSE participants have businesses today that grew from their experiences at this summer program. In just three short weeks, these students make connections and gain confidence that will follow them throughout their lives, and Team Kentucky is proud to support this investment in their future and the future of our commonwealth."

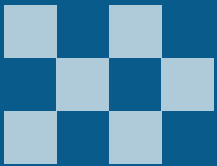


"GSE has changed my whole perspective on life, and it's changed my life for the better," said James-Anna Soto, a Glasgow High School student from Barren County and member of the Ever-Safe team. "GSE taught me lifelong skills I'll bring with me every day. I don't know where I'd be without GSE."

The 2025 Pitch Fest judges on Saturday were: Logan Jones, Partner and Co-Host at Middle Tech and Co-Founder of DevelopLex; Ameet Patel, Managing Principal and Founding Member at Thoroughbread Hospitality; Dana Bowers; CEO-Founder of Venminder; and Hunter Porter, VP of Leasing at BC Wood Properties and Principal Broker at True Line Real Estate. Sunday's judges were: Kezia Ramsey, Investment Officer at Monticello Banking Company; Marc Schuler, Tax Senior Manager at EY; LaDaya Kami Owens, Human Resources Business Partner at Home of the Innocents; and David Hasler, Founder and President at Breakthrough Solutions Consulting.











The Anderson Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation, housed in the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, Haslam College of Business, host the 2024 SEC Student Pitch Competition on October 17, 2024. With \$25,000 on the line, the SEC Student Pitch Competition provided a unique showcase for student entrepreneurs, pitting student teams representing each of the 16 Southeastern Conference universities against one another in a startup business pitch competition. In the all-day event, student teams presented their innovative businesses to a panel of judges to determine those most worthy of a funding investment.



The University of Kentucky was proud to be represented at the SEC Student Pitch Competition. Team HelperHat is led by Founder, Wyatt Hench. HelperHat is a patent-pending hat with a magnetic bill that helps DIYers and professionals securely and temporarily hold ferromagnetic hardware hands-free. Hench is a serial entrepreneur and University of Kentucky Engineering student pursuing his degree in mechanical engineering. He is a two-time founder and multi-competition business plan winner.

He is also a graduate of Entrepreneurs Bootcamp Online Business Accelerator led by The Von Allmen Center for Entrepreneurship, through the Gatton College of Business & Economics.

“Competing at the SEC Collegiate Pitch Competition in Knoxville was a great opportunity. Meeting top talent from every SEC school pushed me to elevate my game, refine my pitch, and build connections that matter. The experience sharpened my skills and gave me the edge to grow my business with confidence.” – Wyatt Hench, Founder and CEO of HelperHat



The 2025 Global Student Entrepreneur Awards (GSEA) is the premier global competition for students who own and operate a business while attending college or university. Nominees compete against their peers from around the world in a series of local and national competitions in the hope of qualifying for the Global Finals.

This year's competition was held on January 24, 2025, and is being held in Nashville, Tennessee at the Nashville Entrepreneur Center. The University of Kentucky was represented by three student teams that have been led and coached by The Von Allmen Center for Entrepreneurship (VACE) in the Gatton College of Business & Economics. Sarisha Lohano won 3rd place and \$500 for her company, DocAI. Additional UK teams represented included HandyHat (Wyatt Hench) and Maame Afrifa (NanoMed Adaptive Technologies).



Sarisha Lohano is a University of Kentucky Undergraduate student pursuing a career in the medical field, representing the Lewis Honors College, College of Medicine, and the College of Arts & Sciences. She is working on this startup with her brother and Co-Founder, Dushant Lohano, who is currently attending Phillips Exeter Academy High School. DocAI is a unique platform where patients can receive AI-generated videos based on input from their doctor's notes. The goal is to utilize AI text-to-video that generates personalized animated videos summarizing diagnoses, treatments, and post-appointment instructions. These videos will be sent to patients and families, ensuring clear understanding, promoting adherence, and enhancing overall healthcare engagement and satisfaction after discharge.



"I am so grateful for this experience and am excited about the future of our company, DocAI. I want to thank all the incredible people, mentors, and judges that have helped me along the way. A special thanks to The Von Allmen Center for Entrepreneurship for their coaching and allowing me to explore the potential of DocAI through the Bootcamp online Accelerator. We are thrilled to be in Bootcamp 2.0 and looking forward shaping a new era of healthcare by building AI innovations." - Sarisha Lohano





Startup Runway turns the funding gap faced by founders into an onramp. Finalists have had rounds led by firms from Canaan Partners to Microsoft, Techstars, Valor, Floodgate and more.

Investor introductions helps promising founders meet first investors. This exclusive program creates relationships with angels and VCs that make a significant difference in how fast startups get funded.



Ten founders from across the country were selected to pitch at Startup Runway's 30th Edition and a chance to win a \$10,000 grant! The competition took place on March 6th at Science Square in Atlanta. The finalists were able to network with investors, while getting quality feedback for their startups. The University of Kentucky was represented by VACE Bootcamp Founder and current student, Sarisha Lohano

This mission is supported by the National Science Foundation (NSF) America's Seed Fund, American Family Insurance Institute for Corporate and Social Impact, NCR Voyix Foundation, Cox Enterprises, and Georgia Power Company.

"Being selected as a national finalist for Startup Runway was an honor. Presenting to the incredible panel of judges and founders was a great experience, along with meeting so many other innovative startups and investors. VACE has also supported me throughout my entrepreneurial journey in developing the skills I need to move DocAI forward." - Sarisha Lohano, University of Kentucky Undergraduate, College of Medicine and Lewis Honors College

"Sarisha has been a strong leader in the Lewis Honors College, where she has served as a member of the Honors College Ambassador Team (HCAT) for the past two years. She's given dozens of tours and "pitched" the value of Honors to prospective students and their families. We've been delighted to help defray the cost of her participation in several pitch competitions, and are thrilled—but not at all surprised—by her success. We look forward to watching her post-college career unfold." - Dr. Pearl James, Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, Lewis Honors College



REGISTER TO ATTEND: [WWW.STARTUPRUNWAY.ORG](http://WWW.STARTUPRUNWAY.ORG)

**STARTUP RUNWAY 30** | **NSF** | **America's SEED FUND** | **March 6, 2025**  
@ Portal Innovations ATL

*Congrats Finalists!*

 <b>DUVALL SMITH</b> OyuAI	 <b>KENDRA KOCH</b> Divergently	 <b>SAVALAS COLBERT</b> HeartBeat Fam	 <b>DOUGLAS WILSON</b> SyncPop	 <b>BRYCE FOLSOM</b> eLife Technologies
 <b>KABLAN KADJO</b> Wearer Lab	 <b>SARISHA LOHANO</b> DocAI	 <b>ERICA EVANS</b> Blood Rheology Solutions	 <b>YASH VAGAL</b> Curanostics	

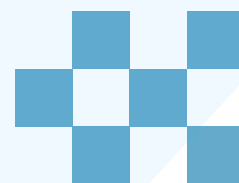
**COX ENTERPRISES** | **AMERICAN FAMILY INSURANCE INSTITUTE** | **Georgia Power** | **NCR FOUNDATION** | **V**





The 20th Annual Clinical Center for Translational Science (CCTS) Spring Conference was held on April 1, 2025 in the Central Bank Center. The Von Allmen Center for Entrepreneurship (VACE) in the Gatton College of Business and Economics hosted its 8th annual 1-minute poster pitch competition. This year's conference theme is "Pioneering Pathways: Innovative Trial Design in Translational Science."

The CCTS Conference also hosts Research Days for the Colleges of Dentistry, Health Sciences, Medicine, Nursing, Public Health, Institute for Biomedical Informatics, and the Department of Internal Medicine. The VACE Research Poster Pitch Competition is one segment of the conference that highlights University of Kentucky innovations by having 22 researchers pitch their posters in 1-minute for a chance to win prize money towards their groundbreaking work.



"Being asked to help judge the 2025 Von Allmen Poster Pitch competition at the CCTS Spring Conference was an incredible opportunity. It was inspiring to see such a wide range of ideas and research being shared. The participants did a fantastic job of simplifying complex topics and making their work accessible. It was clear that a lot of thought and effort went into each presentation, and I feel lucky to have had the chance to be a part of it." – Madison Bates, University of Kentucky PhD Candidate in BioMedical Engineering, Founder of RAM Medical Devices

"Judging the pitch competition is one of the highlights of the conference. Researchers get to present their work in a way that provokes thinking and inspiration in how their outcomes can be translated outside academia." - Kendra Hargis-Stenzel, Director of Innovation Talent Development, Launch Blue





# Emerging ENTREPRENEURS PITCH COMPETITION



On June 12, 2025 two of VACE's Bootcamp entrepreneurs were selected out of a large pool of Kentucky founders to participate the newly formed competition called the "Emerging Entrepreneurs Pitch Competition" hosted by Women Leading Kentucky and the Women's Business Center of Kentucky. Madison Bates and Faraneh Fathi were two out of three startups selected to pitch.



Madison is the visionary founder of R.A.M. Devices, LLC, an innovative MedTech startup dedicated to transforming stroke rehabilitation. With a strong foundation in biomedical engineering and neuroscience from the University of Kentucky, Madison has channeled her expertise into developing cutting-edge wearable sensor technology. Her company creates real-time tools designed to meticulously monitor hand function, ultimately leading to significantly improved patient outcomes for stroke survivors.

Faraneh Fathi, Co-Founder of NeuroVista Innovations (additional founders include Sajad Vahedi, Samaneh Rabienia Haratbar, Dr. Guoqiang Yu from the College of Engineering. NeuroVista Innovations focuses on revolutionizing neurological imaging by developing a portable, high-resolution, and AI-powered imaging system.



Their technology, Time-Resolved Laser Speckle Contrast Imaging (TR-LSCI), enables real-time blood flow monitoring and aims to be a more affordable and accessible alternative to traditional imaging methods like MRI and CT scans. Madison won first place and \$5,000 at the competition, while Faraneh took home third place. Both founders were featured on Fox56 news and recognized for their groundbreaking work by Devanny King, the Executive Director of the Women's Business Center located in Lexington, KY.

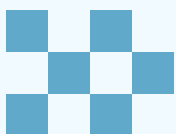
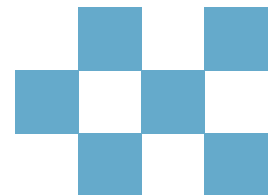


# INNOVATION SUMMIT



The Gatton College of Business and Economics was pleased to announce its continued collaboration with PNC Bank to present the 2025 PNC Innovation Summit, "Funding Innovation – The Art of Startup Fundraising," on March 26, 2025. Now in its fifth year, the PNC Innovation Summit provides UK students with insights into the startup arena and real-world challenges unique to early-stage organizations, while delivering opportunities for attendees to learn from and connect with distinguished business leaders and alumni.

"All of us at PNC recognize the crucial role innovative entrepreneurs fulfill in fueling Kentucky's economic growth, creating local jobs, and developing novel solutions for companies and individuals," said Kristen Byrd, PNC regional president for Kentucky. "We look forward to joining UK students for the fifth annual PNC Innovation Summit, a dedicated time to learn from entrepreneurship experts, and the PNC Wildcat Pitch Competition, a forum for encouraging rising entrepreneurs as they share their visions for new ventures."



#### Summit speakers:

- John Reinhart, CEO, Founder, Board Member, Investor and Advisor for National Institute on Aging, specializing in Age Tech and Digital Health
- Shane Hadden, Deputy Chair of Students, Senior Lecturer, Gatton College of Business and Economics
- Jon Chait, Lecturer, Gatton College of Business and Economics
- Destin George Bell, CEO, Card.io (VACE Bootcamp alum and Shark Tank winner)
- Silas Deane, Former VP, Tyler Technologies
- Pang Hartman, VP, Frogdice





## PNC Wildcat Pitch Competition

More than 20 student-entrepreneurs showcased their innovative ideas and business savvy during the 2025 PNC Wildcat Pitch Competition Sat., April 26, 2025, the University of Kentucky's Gatton College of Business and Economics. This full-day competition allowed University of Kentucky student teams to pitch their business plans to judges for a chance to win a total of \$20,000 in prize money.

The competition was divided into an undergraduate division and a graduate division and was judged by a multi-disciplinary panel. Judges for the final round included Austin Foreman, Business Banking relationship manager, PNC Bank; David Hasler, founder/president, Breakthrough Solutions Consulting; and George Ward, chair, Economic Development Collaborative, University of Kentucky. "This competition provided a platform for our region's rising entrepreneurs to demonstrate the creativity, innovation and problem-solving prowess necessary for developing solutions to real-world challenges," said Foreman. "All of us at PNC look forward to following the trajectory of these talented students and their ventures."

### Undergraduate Track Winners

1st Place - AFO Cyber, LLC. (\$5,000) | College of Engineering

2nd Place - Trace On (\$3,000) | College of Engineering

3rd Place - LYPD (Lexington Youth Product Development) (\$2,000) | College of Design

### Graduate Track Winners

1st Place - FlowTech (\$5,000) | College of Engineering

2nd Place - NeuroVista Innovations (\$3,000) | College of Engineering

3rd Place - RAM Devices, LLC. (\$2,000) | College of Engineering





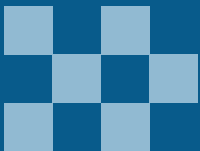
The University of Kentucky Entrepreneurship Club hosted their Startup Pitch Competition on Thursday, November 14th at 5PM in Woodward Hall, Gatton College of Business & Economics. The event featured 6 participants with 5 judges compiled of local entrepreneurs and leaders. A prize pool of \$1,000 was awarded by VACE to fund 3 winners. VACE is also the faculty advisor for the club.

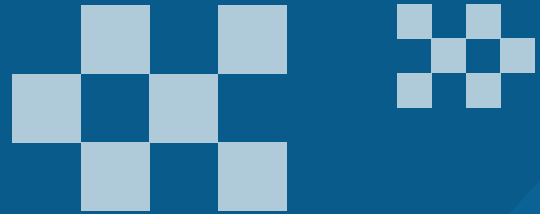
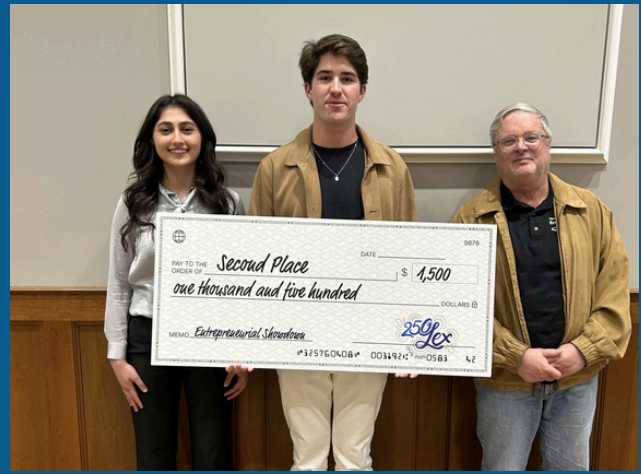
"Our pitch competition was a great opportunity for eClub to connect with student entrepreneurs studying and working in various fields. It was a pleasure to be work with VACE to support the participants with prize funds and feedback from successful entrepreneurs from Lexington. We look forward to future events like the pitch competition that will help inspire and develop all club members and aspiring entrepreneurs at UK!" - Finn McCormack, Entrepreneurship Club Treasurer

1st place (\$500): "FlowTech", the innovative blood flow and oxygen monitoring technology led by Faezeh Akbari, Fatemeh Hamed, and Pegah Safavi! All team members are PhD candidates that represent the the Department of BioMedical Engineering, Pigman College of Engineering at The University of Kentucky.

2nd place (\$300): "DocAI", the startup that's revolutionizing patient discharge with innovative video technology led by siblings, Sarisha Lohano with Dushant Lohano! Sarisha Lohano is a Lewis Honors College undergraduate student, pursuing medicine in the College of Medicine at the University of Kentucky. Dushant Lohano is a high school student at Phillips Exeter Academy.

3rd place (\$200): "HelperHat", the hat with hands-free help when you need it, led by Wyatt Hench! Wyatt is a Mechanical Engineering undergraduate student at the Pigman College of Engineering, University of Kentucky. HelperHat is a graduate of the VACE Online Bootcamp Accelerator. f Business & Economics.





On Tuesday, April 16, 2025, student entrepreneurs from the University of Kentucky, Transylvania University, Bluegrass Community and Technical College, and Fayette County Public Schools presented their innovative ideas at the 250LEX Entrepreneurial Showdown at the Transylvania University Campus Center.

The event is part of 250LEX, a citywide celebration of Lexington's 250th anniversary. Throughout 2025, the initiative is hosting a yearlong series of events highlighting the city's history, culture, innovation and community spirit. Each month focuses on a different theme—from Lexington's equestrian heritage and bourbon legacy to its vibrant arts, sports, and entrepreneurial ecosystem.

Judges for the event featured:

- Destin George Bell, UK graduate & Bootcamp Alum, 2024 Shark Tank Contestant
- Dr. Demetrus Liggins, FCPS Superintendent
- Sandy Nott, Toyota, VP of Administration
- Andrew Jefferson, Kentucky Sports Radio



Two University of Kentucky startups from The Von Allmen Center for Entrepreneurship Bootcamp Accelerator, in the Gatton College of Business & Economics, represented the Big Blue Nation. Wyatt Hench, Founder of Handy Hat, a magnetic-brimmed hat designed to hold small metal hardware such as screws or nails, making it easier for users to work hands-free on DIY or construction projects. Hench is a mechanical engineering major from the College of Engineering. He won 2<sup>nd</sup> place and \$1,500 in the competition.

"Had a fantastic time at the 250LEX Entrepreneurial Showdown! I'm grateful for all the support, encouragement, and thoughtful feedback on Handy Hat. Feeling energized and inspired—forward!" – Wyatt Hench

"Competing in the 250LEX Showdown was such an great experience! It was incredible to connect with other passionate entrepreneurs, share the vision for DocAI, and receive meaningful feedback. I'm so thankful for all the support!" – Sarisha Lohano

# A

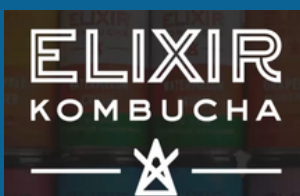
# KENTUCKY ANGEL

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## I N V E S T O R S



The Kentucky Angel Investors Network (KYAN) is a virtual network of investors that brings new ventures and investors together across the Commonwealth. Monthly online meetings provide investors access to early-stage deal flow on a statewide basis. Below is a list of companies that have come through KYAN's monthly meetings (Fall 2024 through Summer 2025).





# EDUCATIONAL WEBINAR SERIES

## Webinar Series: Where Are They Now?

VACE hosted seven webinars featuring startups that completed the Entrepreneurs Bootcamp online business accelerator. The series highlighted each founder's journey, how they overcame various challenges, the realities of raising capital, and where they are now.

## Fall 2024



Brittany Harris serves as the Co-founder and Chief Marketing Officer of RaveOn Sports. She leads marketing programs, fosters brand excellence, business development, and nurtures sports influencer relationships alongside securing valuable sales sponsorships. RaveOn Sports is the catalyst for a new era of fan engagement. The platform is a dynamic fusion of technology and passion, designed to bridge the gap between athletes, teams, leagues, and their devoted fans.



Dr. Tyler Barzee is the Founder of Bourbon Shrooms, and also serves as an Assistant Professor and leader of the Barzee Bioprocess Engineering and Fermentation Lab at the University of Kentucky. His research lab focuses on the applications of microbiology and engineering to produce sustainable fuels, food ingredients, fertilizers, and other bioproducts. Bourbon Shrooms seeks to transform stillage into gourmet edible mushrooms.



# EDUCATIONAL WEBINAR SERIES

## Fall 2024 (continued)



April Spellman serves as the Chief Design Officer at Compleat3D. Located inside The Cornerstone Building, Compleat3D is committed to breaking down the obstacles that can hinder the integration of 3D printing into your business. With customized training and maintenance solutions, Compleat3D ensures that your 3D printers operate seamlessly, allowing you to print smarter and save money. Enhance your expertise and keep your 3D printers running smoothly with their top-notch training.



Maame Abena O. Afrifa is the Founder of NanoMed Adaptive Technologies. She is a University of Kentucky PhD Candidate in the Biomedical Engineering Department. NanoMed Adaptive Technologies is developing a skin patch that will deliver drugs in a more efficient way using a novel design that will assist patients suffering with inflammation. This tunable system would have the potential of delivering FDA approved drugs to the compromised sites topically and transdermally.

Madison Bates is the Founder of R.A.M Medical Device Co. She is a University of Kentucky PhD Candidate in the Biomedical Engineering Department. R.A.M. seeks to become a medical device manufacturing company, with their first product being a sensor glove to track hand movement for functional assessment in stroke patients. Currently, two prototypes have been produced and a third version of the glove is in development. Further validation studies with neuro-typical human participants are underway.

# EDUCATIONAL WEBINAR SERIES

## Spring 2025

### BOOTCAMP ACCELERATOR STARTUPS: WHERE ARE THEY NOW



WEBINAR  
FEBRUARY 11  
12:00 PM - 1:00 PM

**CAROLYN ROSE BENEDICT**  
CEO & Founder of Cultivate Recovery

Gatton College of  
Business and Economics

Von Allmen Center for  
Entrepreneurship



Carolyn Rose Benedict recovered from substance use disorder and recognized the current standard of care was not effective for many people afflicted with the disease of addiction. Motivated to change and impact this space, she opened Rose Recovery: a sober living house for women, in Louisville where a new model of care began to develop. She later expanded services by establishing Cultivate Recovery Center to serve as CEO and director of programming. She completed her MBA at the Gatton College of Business & Economics in May 2023, won prize money in the Bootcamp Online Accelerator, and received top awards various pitch competitions throughout Kentucky and beyond.

### BOOTCAMP ACCELERATOR STARTUPS: WHERE ARE THEY NOW



WEBINAR  
FEBRUARY 25  
12:00 PM - 1:00 PM

**WYATT HENCH**  
CEO & Founder of HelperHat

Gatton College of  
Business and Economics

Von Allmen Center for  
Entrepreneurship



Wyatt Hench is current student at the University of Kentucky, pursuing his undergraduate degree in Mechanical Engineering. Wyatt is a Bootcamp graduate and the CEO and Founder of HelperHat. His startup company aims to make organizing tools easy and seamless by wearing the "HelperHat." Wyatt has won several awards, pitch competitions, and continues to fundraise for his startup. Join this to listen to Wyatt's story, how he started the business, developed a manufacturing plan to scale the company, and where he is now after completing Bootcamp.

### BOOTCAMP ACCELERATOR STARTUPS: WHERE ARE THEY NOW



WEBINAR  
MARCH 4  
12:00 PM - 1:00 PM

**CAMRON BROWN**  
Serial Entrepreneur  
Forbes Next 1000 Honoree

Gatton College of  
Business and Economics

Von Allmen Center for  
Entrepreneurship



Camron Brown is the founder of Counter, a fintech company that addresses the challenges of disability insurance claims by eliminating elimination periods. The idea for Counter came from Camron's personal experience in 2021 when they lost the ability to walk due to Chronic Inflammatory Demyelinating Polyradiculoneuropathy (CIDP). His entrepreneurial journey is complemented by a strong commitment to social impact. Camron's leadership, paired with their personal experience and dedication to improving the disability claims process, drives Counter's mission to provide financial support and ensure fairness for people on disability or FMLA leave.

# ENTREPRENEURS BOOTCAMP ACCELERATOR

## FALL 2024 - SPRING 2025

### Overview

Ready to turn your idea into a thriving business? The Entrepreneurs Bootcamp is the University of Kentucky's premier online accelerator, empowering first-time founders to feasibly assess and validate their concepts, develop winning business models, and gain the practical experience essential for a successful startup launch.

### Who Can Participate

The Entrepreneurs Bootcamp Online Business Accelerator welcomes Kentucky-based students, faculty, staff, and alumni within The University of Kentucky, the local community, and other higher education institutions across the state.



### Academic Credit & Certificate of Completion

Currently enrolled students have the option to take Bootcamp for academic credit. It is offered under four (4) different elective course codes outlined below which apply to Gatton College of Business Majors and all other majors at The University of Kentucky. A certificate of completion is awarded to all participants that complete Bootcamp.

- B&E 396 (undergraduate) - Currently enrolled undergraduate Gatton College of Business students
  - Section 201 - Monday Bootcamp 1.0
  - Section 202 - Thursday Bootcamp 1.0
- B&E 650 (graduate) - Currently enrolled graduate Gatton College of Business students
  - Section 201 - Thursday Bootcamp 1.0
- EXP 396 (undergraduate) - Experiential credit for all undergraduate majors
  - Section 201 - Monday Bootcamp 1.0
  - Section 202 - Thursday Bootcamp 1.0
- EXP 650 (graduate) - Experiential credit for all graduate majors
  - Section 201 - Thursday Bootcamp 2.0 (only offered in Spring semester and to those that placed in the top 5 in Fall semester Bootcamp 1.0)
  - Section 202 - Monday Bootcamp 1.0



# MEET THE FOUNDERS

Fall 2024 | Bootcamp 1.0



Omar Brown | NARM  
College of Nursing | Grad Student

NARM (Nutritional Aid and Resource Map) Network is a software service that reduces food insecurity.



Tim Toews | Grump Dad's Hot Sauce  
Community | Winchester, KY

Grump Dad's Hot Sauce company sources local peppers to create flavorful hot sauce combinations.



Nicole Murphy | An Ancestor's Touch  
University of Kentucky | Staff

An Ancestor's Touch produces eco-friendly wooden wick candles that bring warmth into every home.



Max Stocker | Bear Box  
College of Business | Undergrad

Bear proof products for the outdoor enthusiast and adventure seeker.



John Morrill | Creator College  
College of Business | Undergrad

Social medial content management agency and one stop shop for client engagement and brand growth.



PRLZ Packaging  
College of Business & Engineering  
University of Kentucky | Co-Founders, Undergrad

Redefining packaging for the cannabis industry. Led by Avery Nelson, Eli Gersony, and Venky Suryadevara.

# MEET THE FOUNDERS

Fall 2024 | Bootcamp 1.0



Lane Jones | 1Pack  
College of Communication | Undergrad

1Pack seeks to manufacture customizable travel gear with multi-purpose pockets and inserts.



Nnaemeka Okafor | Zation  
College of Engineering | Undergrad

Software tool that delivers robust data management, engagement promotion, and community building.



FlowTech | College of Engineering  
Co-Founders, PhD Students

Biomedical tech startup developing wearable devices to revolutionize neurological and cardiovascular diagnostics. Led by Fatemeh Hamed, Pegah Safavi, and Faezaeh Akbari.



Sarisha Lohano | DocAI  
College of Fine Arts | Undergrad

Novel software that uses the power of AI to make the discharge process easier for patients.



Austin Hirtzel | TriStacker  
College of Design | Undergrad

New children's toy designed to last for generations while helping save the environment.



Nieta Wigginton | My Baby Barks  
Community | Lexington, KY

Consulting service for personalized parties and pet products for your fur babies.



Amy Tilley | SweatXFitness  
Community | Lexington, KY

Developing software that customizes workouts using client fitness data.

# MEET THE FOUNDERS

Spring 2025 | Bootcamp 1.0



Isaac Garang | Alaar Enterprises  
Community | Lindsey Wilson College

Based in South Sudan, focusing on addressing the critical need for affordable entertainment and hospitality.



Maximillian LeDoux | Project 502  
College of Business | Undergrad

Tackling food insecurities by partnering with KY businesses and the communities they serve.



Sheng Tong | ARENEX  
College of Engineering | Faculty

Engineered exosomes to deliver CRISPR components for personalized, therapeutic in vivo gene editing.



Azra Smock | Deductly  
Community | Paul Laurence Dunbar  
High School

Cloud-based payroll deduction platform built to simplify operations for businesses.



Bash Stevens | Russell Creek Farm  
Community | Lindsey Wilson College

Sustainable farming methods that help manage waste and produces healthier cattle.



Ryan Sarhan | Bourbon Kings  
College of Engineering | Graduate

Board game centered around the art and science of bourbon production.



# MEET THE FOUNDERS

Spring 2025 | Bootcamp 1.0



Zhong Yang | Asalight  
Community | University of Louisville

A low bandwidth communication device that is cheaper, small, and designed for the average consumer.



Casey Faulconer | Streamline Swim Shop  
Community | Lexington, KY

Building a traditional brick and mortar swim store that sells apparel and equipment in Lexington.



Caleb Marsh | Style Within  
Community | Lindsey Wilson College

Helping the fast fashion industry by building a sustainable clothing brand.



Larry Montgomery | Peak Performance Sports  
Community | Lindsey Wilson College

New sporting goods store focused on providing affordable athletic equipment to young athletes, primarily aged 14 to 24.



Taylor Harvey | Kentucky Heritage Tours  
Community | Lindsey Wilson College

Travel company focused on offering curated, all-inclusive tour experiences throughout the state of Kentucky.



Troy Churchill | Sole Runners  
Community | Lindsey Wilson College

Eco-friendly footwear brand dedicated to creating high quality, stylish, affordable and sustainable shoes.

# MEET THE FOUNDERS

Spring 2025 | Bootcamp 2.0



Omar Brown | NARM  
College of Nursing | Grad Student

NARM (Nutritional Aid and Resource Map) Network is a software service that reduces food insecurity.



Sarisha Lohano | DocAI  
College of Fine Arts | Undergrad

Novel software that uses the power of AI to make the discharge process easier for patients.



Nicole Murphy | An Ancestor's Touch  
University of Kentucky | Staff

An Ancestor's Touch produces eco-friendly wooden wick candles that bring warmth into every home.



FlowTech | College of Engineering  
Co-Founders, PhD Students

Biomedical tech startup developing wearable devices to revolutionize neurological and cardiovascular diagnostics. Led by Fatemeh Hamed, Pegah Safavi, and Faezaeh Akbari.



PRLZ Packaging  
College of Business & Engineering  
University of Kentucky | Co-Founders, Undergrad

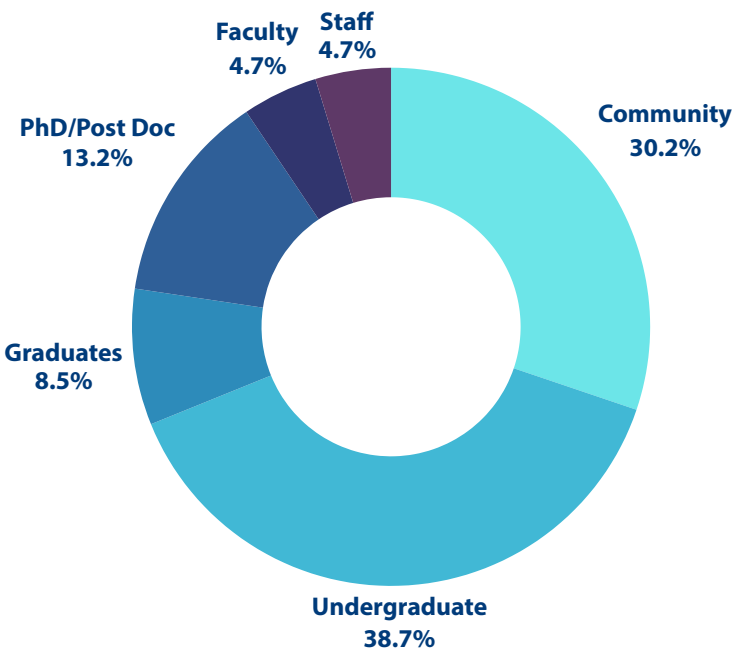
Redefining packaging for the cannabis industry. Led by Avery Nelson, Eli Gersony, and Venky Suryadevara.

# FINAL DATA

## FALL 2024

### Team Representation

\*Community represents non-UK affiliated entrepreneurs



### Winning Teams

\*Prize money is based on funds available

#### Monday Section (1.0)

\$1,000 - PRLZ Packaging  
\$1,000 - NARM  
\$1,000 - An Ancestor's Touch  
\$1,000 - Zation  
\$1,000 - FlowTech  
\$500 - 1Pack (Director's Award)

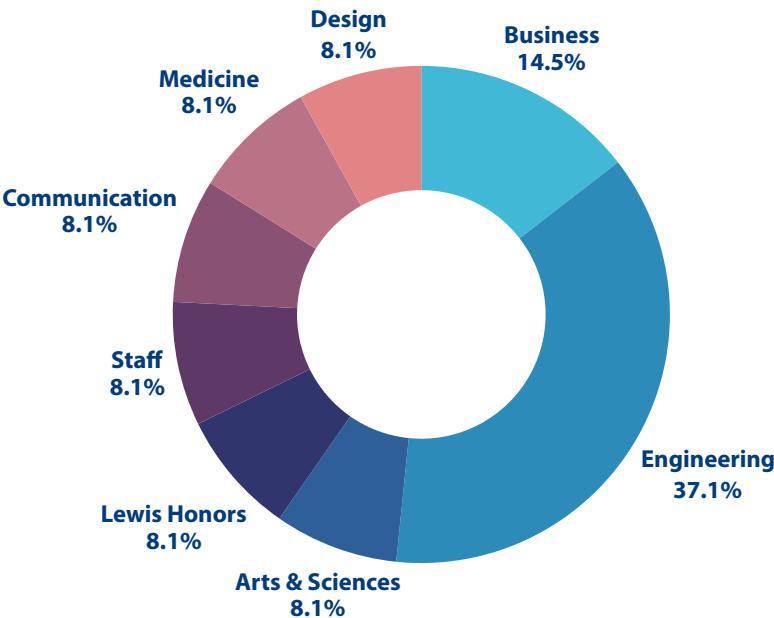
#### Thursday Section (1.0)

\$2,000 - SweatXFitness  
\$1,000 - DocAI  
\$1,000 - TriStacker



### UK Teams Represented By College

\*Community data not applicable



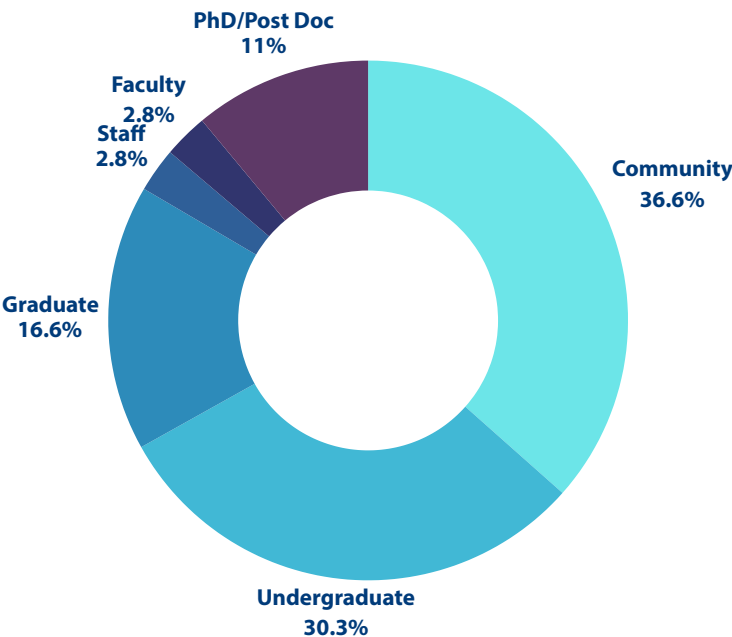


# FINAL DATA

## SPRING 2025

### Team Representation

\*Community represents non-UK affiliated entrepreneurs



### Winning Teams

\*Prize money is based on funds available

#### Monday Section (1.0)

- \$1,000 - Alaar Enterprises
- \$1,000 - Bourbon Kings
- \$1,000 - Deductly
- \$1,000 - ARENEX
- \$1,000 - Russel Creek Farms
- \$500 - Project 502 (Director's Award)

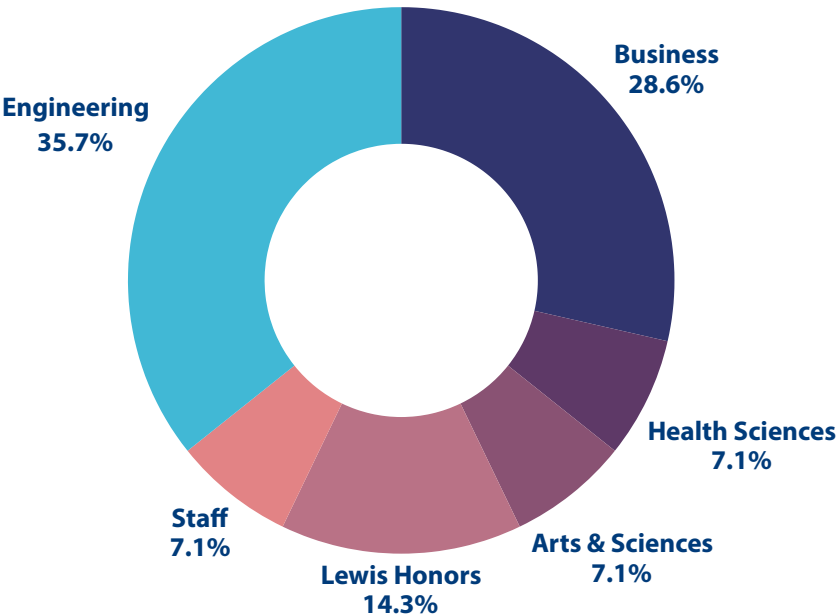
#### Thursday Section (2.0)

- \$2,500 - An Ancestor's Touch (Grande Prize)
- \$1,500 - FlowTech (Runner Up)
- \$500 - NARM (Director's Award)
- \$500 - DocAI (Director's Award)
- \$500 - PRLZ Packaging (Director's Award)



### UK Teams Represented By College

\*Community data not applicable



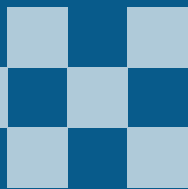
# IMPACT STATEMENTS



"Bootcamp 1.0 was our launchpad , an intense, fast-paced crash course in real-world entrepreneurship that pushed us to test our ideas, talk to customers, and build a business model that could actually work. It wasn't just theory, we were treated like real founders, expected to hit milestones, pitch our vision, and think like CEOs. Then came Bootcamp 2.0, where things got even more real. With personalized coaching and weekly pressure to deliver, we refined our strategy, sharpened our pitch, and gained the momentum we needed to take our startup to the next level. These programs didn't just teach us how to start a business, they showed us how to be entrepreneurs." - *Flowtech, Co-Founders Fatemeh Hamedi, Pegah Safavi, and Faezaeh Akbari, College of Engineering, Biomedical Engineering PhD students, University of Kentucky*



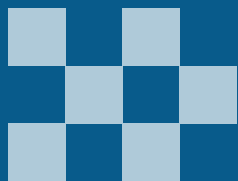
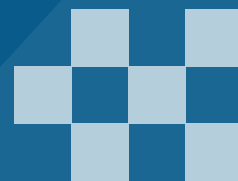
"I have had the opportunity numerous times to engage with participants in the Von Allmen Center for Entrepreneurship (VACE) Bootcamp 1.0 and 2.0 and provide an overview of SBA programs and services. This is important information to share with small business owners and aspiring entrepreneurs as they launch their businesses. SBA appreciates its engagement with the cohorts and the role VACE plays to strengthen Kentucky's entrepreneurial ecosystem." - *Michael Ashcraft, Kentucky Small Business Administration (SBA) District Office, Senior Area Manager, Economic Development Specialist*



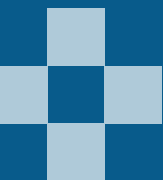
"Participating in Bootcamp 1.0 and 2.0 has been essential to not only helping PRLZ develop our business but giving us the platform to meet/work with others who have given us invaluable direction." - *Venky Suryadevara, Co-Founder of PRLZ Packaging, Gatton College of Business & Economics, Accounting & Finance Undergraduate, University of Kentucky*

# IMPACT STATEMENTS

"The Bootcamp Accelerator has given me incredible insights into the business world and provided me with the opportunity to craft and practice my very first startup pitch!" - *Dr. Sheng Tong, Associate Professor, F. Joseph Halcomb III, M.D., Department of Biomedical Engineering, University of Kentucky*



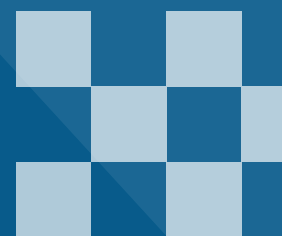
"Bootcamp 1.0 and 2.0 was a transformative experience which gave me the resources and connections to begin to take my startup from an idea to reality. The mentorship and structure from Bootcamp helped me refine my pitch and gave me confidence to perform well in pitch competitions. Bootcamp also helped immerse me into a community of entrepreneurs that I can learn and grow from." - *Sarisha Lohano, Lewis Honors College, Medical Student in the College of Medicine, University of Kentucky*



"The VACE Bootcamp drastically helped in improving my business knowledge, as well as my pitch readiness and performance. I 100% recommend it to any aspiring entrepreneurs." - *Azra Smock, Founder of Deductly, Paul Laurence Dunbar High School*

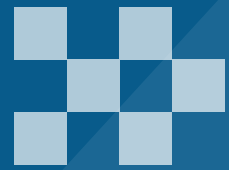


"Bootcamp was exactly what I needed to take my board game from an idea to reality. The feedback on my Kickstarter launch strategy was super valuable, and the program's structure motivated me to develop my prototype into a polished, playable game. Connecting with guest speakers and other entrepreneurs each week brought a great energy to the meetings and I loved seeing the other participants' pitches evolve over the course of the Bootcamp." - *Ryan Sarhan, College of Engineering, Biosystem Engineering Graduate student, University of Kentucky*





# IMPACT STATEMENTS

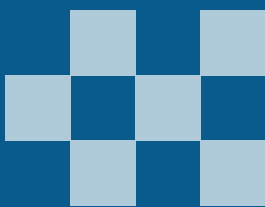


"Bootcamp 1.0 provides current and aspiring entrepreneurs the opportunity to share, practice, and perfect pitches for their business concepts while learning more about major entrepreneurial concepts through interaction with seasoned entrepreneurial professionals." - *Linda McKinley-Grider, Center for Entrepreneurship at Lindsey Wilson College, Instructor of Business*



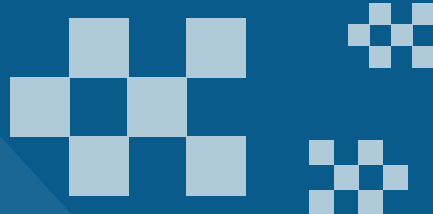
"Through the VACE Bootcamp, I had the opportunity to engage directly with, and learn from, our community's entrepreneurial leaders. It strengthened both my understanding and drive to grow as an entrepreneur myself." - *Maximillian LeDoux, Founder of Project 502, Gatton College of Business & Economics, Business Administration and Finance Undergraduate, University of Kentucky*

"The Von Allmen Center Bootcamp truly impacted me in ways I didn't expect. As one of the top five winners, receiving the \$1,000 prize was a blessing, but even more valuable was the knowledge, support, and inspiration I gained from the experience. The workshops, mentorship, and speakers helped me sharpen my vision, improve how I communicate our mission, and think more strategically about long-term growth. Since completing Bootcamp, Alaar Enterprise Ltd. has grown significantly, reinvesting in our existing operations, launching a gas station project as part of our long-term infrastructure plan in South Sudan. Bootcamp gave me the tools and confidence to take bold steps like this." - *Isaac Garang Duop, Founder & CEO, Alaar Enterprise Ltd., Undergraduate, Lindsey Wilson College*



"The Bootcamp 1.0 and 2.0 experience provided our team with an incredible wealth of resources, mentorship, and hands-on support that helped us take real steps toward building our business. We wouldn't be anywhere close to our business goals without the experience, guidance, and confidence gained throughout the program." - *Avery Nelson, Co-Founder of PRLZ Packaging, Gatton College of Business & Economics, Marketing Undergraduate*

# ADVISORY BOARD



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# Donate Today



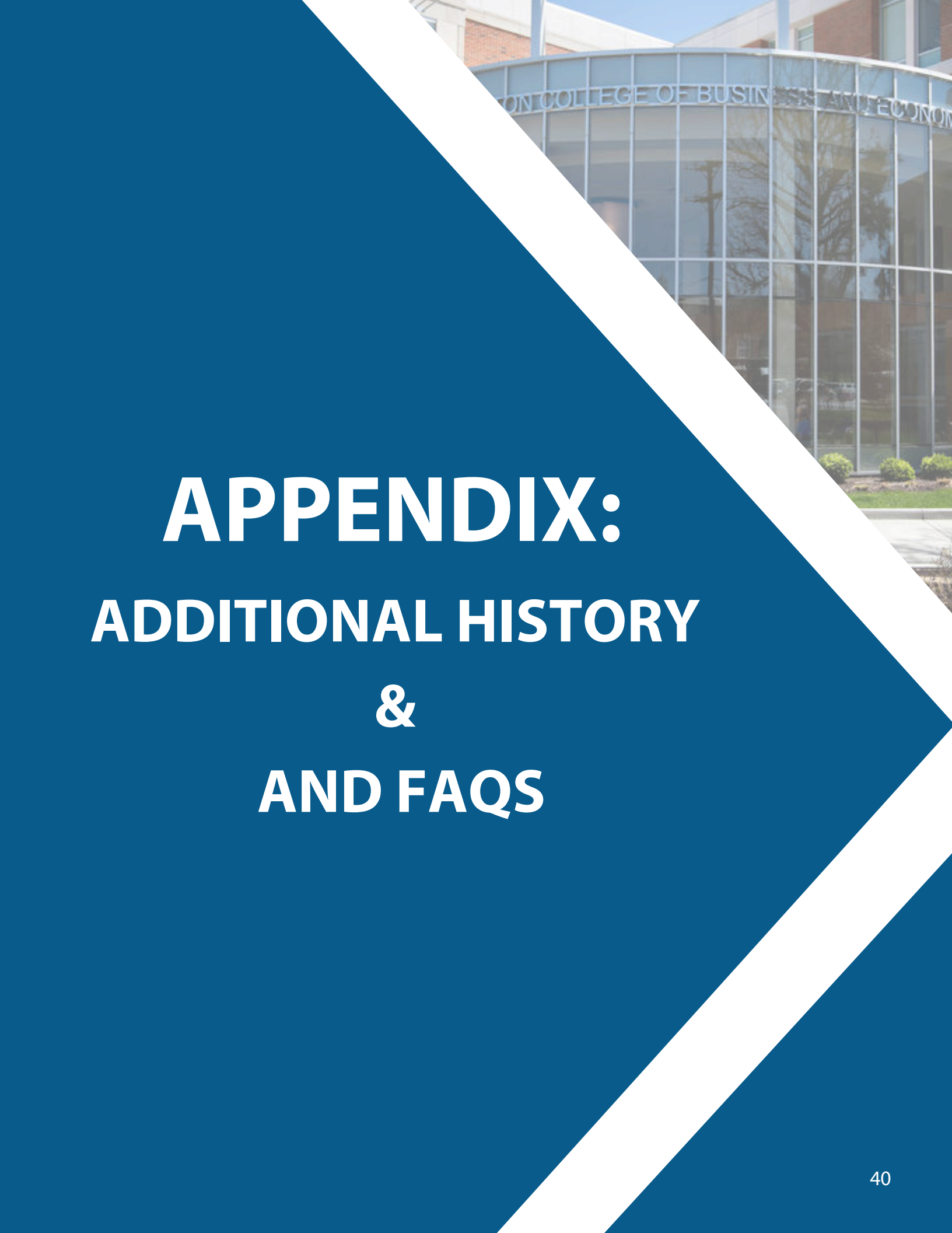
At the University of Kentucky, we believe in the transformative power of entrepreneurship. We're actively building an ecosystem that offers practical experiential learning while sharpening the skills and confidence of future business leaders. These opportunities create vital networking engagements with successful UK alumni founders across Kentucky, further expanding the Commonwealth's thriving startup community. By investing in entrepreneurship at UK, you're not only empowering the next generation of visionary leaders, but also inspiring future Wildcats to elevate their academic experience.

 Gatton College of  
Business and Economics

Von Allmen  
**Center for Entrepreneurship**

[vace.uky.edu](http://vace.uky.edu)





# **APPENDIX: ADDITIONAL HISTORY & AND FAQs**

# VACE HISTORY: ENDOWED BY THE VON ALLMEN FAMILY

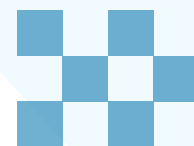


VACE was formed in 2006 through an endowment generously gifted by the Von Allmen family. Doug Von Allmen, born in 1941, was the Founder and Chairman of Beauty Alliance Inc, a company built from the acquisition of 20 separate beauty supply distributors. After graduating from the University of Kentucky in 1965 with a degree in Accounting, he started his business career as a certified public accountant with the national firm of KPMG Peat Marwick.

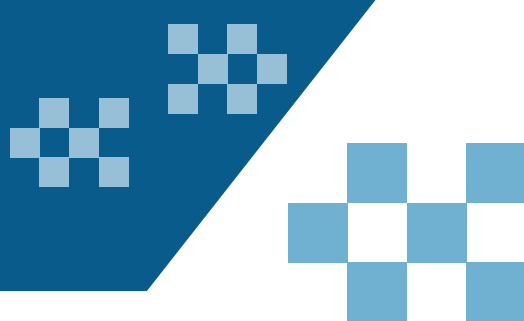
Before he began acquiring businesses, he was the financial officer with two publicly owned companies, Horace Mann Educators Corporation and Volkswagen Insurance Company. He is a member of the UK Carol Martin Gatton College of Business and Economics Alumni Hall of Fame. The college's Center for Entrepreneurship and School of Accountancy are named in honor of Von Allmen and his wife, Linda. Douglas Joseph Von Allmen was inducted into the Hall of Distinguished Alumni on May 13, 2005.

## **The VACE Yearbook**

The Yearbook provides an annual overview of the many programs, events, and partners needed to support entrepreneurs at the University of Kentucky, including community entrepreneurs. The Yearbook was initiated in 2023 to showcase the importance of partnerships and change makers needed to assist early stage startups in the entrepreneurial journey and outside the classroom. Entrepreneurship takes a village and VACE recognizes the stakeholders necessary to help founders as they have varying needs at different stages of growth.



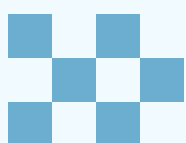
# VACE HISTORY: LINDSEY WILSON COLLEGE



VACE joined forces with Lindsey Wilson College, located in Columbia, KY, to ignite the entrepreneurial spirit in students seeking to start businesses in the Bluegrass. This collaboration began in 2021, combining the expertise of both institutions to assist and educate future founders across the state through the Entrepreneurs Bootcamp Online Accelerator, offered through VACE.

Through this partnership, students, faculty, and community members can access resources such as:

- Mentorship: Experienced entrepreneurs and business leaders guide aspiring innovators.
- Webinars and Training: Skill-building sessions on topics like business planning, marketing, and fundraising.
- Statewide Networking Events: Opportunities to connect with potential investors, partners, and customers throughout Kentucky.
- Kentucky-based Programs: Support for early-stage ventures with resources like office space and seed funding.

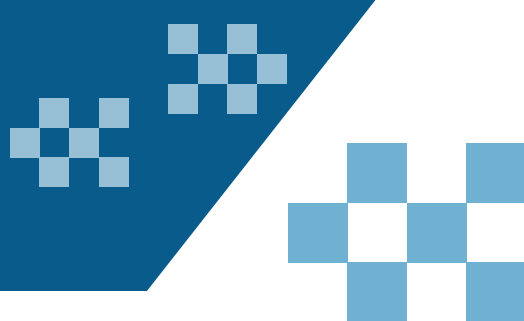


"The relationship with the University of Kentucky Von Allmen Center for Entrepreneurship has provided Lindsey Wilson College's students with the opportunity to have access to a wide range of valuable resources and to interface with other aspiring entrepreneurs like themselves coupled with seasoned entrepreneurs across Kentucky, and by doing so, has provided them challenges which have helped them gain more knowledge and confidence to pursue their business concepts." - Linda Grider, School of Business and Communication, Lindsey Wilson College

The future of this partnership is bright. By fostering a growing culture of entrepreneurs seeking to launch businesses in Kentucky and providing the necessary tools and resources, The Von Allmen Center and Lindsey Wilson College are empowering the next generation of business leaders and strengthening skills for students as they enter the workforce.



# VACE HISTORY: UNIVERSITY OF THE CUMBERLANDS

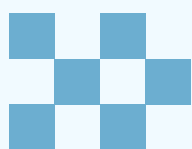


## University of the Cumberland hosts Entrepreneurship Competition

June 2019 - Students in the Hutton School of Business engaged in an Entrepreneurship Competition modeled after the popular show “Shark Tank” during the spring semester. Students formed into teams to develop business plans and associated pitches to present during the competition. As part of the preparation process, students worked to identify business needs in various markets throughout the world, developed a business idea to meet those needs and formulated a robust and sound business plan to present to competition judges.

The winners of this year’s competition were Matthew Castner, (senior; Cocoa Beach, FL) and Caleb Dixon (senior; Pine Knot, KY) with a business plan for “Peak’s Pools,” a pool-service company they plan to locate in Central Florida.

The second-place winner of the competition was Renato Skoko (senior; Siroki Brijeg, Bosnia) with a business plan for “Summer Soccer Camp.” The third-place winners of the competition were Jennifer Stein (junior; Louisville, KY), Jared Kilgore (junior; Berea, KY) and Hampton Clark (senior; Athens, GA) with a business plan for “The Lane,” a bowling alley and restaurant.



Several campus and community business leaders graciously agreed to volunteer their time and serve as judges for this year’s competition. The judges were Dr. Chris Leskiw, Vice President for Academic Affairs at Cumberland; Dr. Anita Bowman, professor of Health, Exercise, and Sport Science at Cumberland; Mr. Michael Sharpe, Regional President at Forcht Bank; and Mr. Noah White, London, Kentucky City Councilman, owner of The Video Guy, and realtor with Sallie Davidson Realtors in London, Kentucky.

“We are extremely proud of the work of our students through this year’s HSB Entrepreneurship Competition and Mini-Boot Camp,” Dr. Jake Brock, Assistant Professor of Accounting and Faculty Coordinator of this year’s competition. “Their stellar efforts in developing prospective business plans and promoting those plans through their pitches to the competition judges highlight their incredible talents, business acumen, entrepreneurial spirit and capacity for professional leadership. We are exceedingly thankful for Dr. Nash and the partnership of the Von Allmen Center, as well as the investment of time and energy by our competition judges.”

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQS)



Q: What is Experiential Learning?

A: Experiential learning is an engaged learning process whereby students “learn by doing” and by reflecting on the experience. Experiential learning activities can include, but are not limited to, internships, practicums, field exercises, study abroad, accelerators, or studio performances. Experiential learning programs can stimulate academic inquiry by promoting interdisciplinary learning, civic engagement, career development, cultural awareness, leadership, and other professional and intellectual skills.



Q: How does VACE measure success as it relates to experiential learning for Bootcamp?

A: Bootcamp is a full semester with weekly immersive sessions. Success in Bootcamp is measured through qualitative outcomes based upon meeting the milestone requirements, evolving and refining the pitch based on feedback in the milestones, meeting with assigned mentors, developing the MVP, completing a financial projection model for the business, and executing a clear value proposition in a specified industry/market. Attendance is mandatory heavily monitored. Missing more than three sessions results in automatic dismissal.



Q: Are participants required to create companies after completing Bootcamp?

A: No. The purpose of Bootcamp is to establish the groundwork to help entrepreneurs decide if forming a business is right for them. The Bootcamp sessions, along with networking opportunities, gives a broader perspective of “what it takes” to be a founder and CEO.



Q: Is VACE an academic department, or part of a department in the Gatton College?

A: No, VACE is not an academic department nor does it fall under a specific department in the college. VACE was endowed in 2006 and formed as a stand-alone center for entrepreneurship.



Q: Does the Gatton College of Business offer entrepreneurship as a degree or minor?

A: Currently, the University of Kentucky does not offer a degree or minor in entrepreneurship. Please review the concentrations of entrepreneurship listed in the Yearbook.

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQS)



Q: Why is Bootcamp a good starting point for entrepreneurs to explore launching their business ideas?

A: Bootcamp offers a structured environment for discovery, providing resources, mentorship, and networking opportunities. It help startups refine their business models, connect with potential investors, and gain valuable insights from experienced mentors, helping their chances of securing funding and achieving sustainable growth.



Q: Can entrepreneurs work with VACE if they are not participating in Bootcamp?

A: Yes, VACE is happy to work with anyone that may not be able to commit to the intensity of Bootcamp. This can be on a rolling basis, or as-needed by the entrepreneur.



Q: Can GSE or high school students enroll in Bootcamp?

A: Yes, Bootcamp is open to all high school students in Kentucky seeking to launch a business for the first time. GSE and high school students are considered “community” entrepreneurs until they become college students.



Q: Is GSE part of VACE?

A: No, GSE is a stand-alone program operated by the Kentucky Education and Labor Cabinet. In April 2024, per the Dean’s office, VACE was designated as the college’s pipeline to receive GSE donations, while broadening support from the advisory board.



Q: Does VACE help raise capital for startups?

A: Depending on the stage of the company, VACE will connect founders to the appropriate groups that can help navigate the next phase of raising capital. VACE has a small pool of prize money (less than \$5,000) available to startups that place in the top 5 in Bootcamp.



Q: Does VACE provide support to entrepreneurs or startups outside of Kentucky?

A: No, VACE does not support entrepreneurs or startups beyond Kentucky.



Q: Can I work with VACE to start my business if I’m not a UK employee or current student?

A: Yes, VACE works with entrepreneurs beyond UK and the classroom setting. Anyone seeking to start a business in Kentucky is welcome to work with us.



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