

# STUDENTS LIVING **CARDINAL**, **GOLD** AND **GREEN**

The [Start Something Network](#) was implemented at Iowa State to provide students with support and resources designed to bring big ideas to life and develop their inner innovator and entrepreneur. Six Iowa State colleges have their own program, all of which are connected to the overarching initiative. Key features of the program include academic opportunities including project-oriented courses, student incubators, product development assistance and internships. There are regular networking and professional development opportunities as well.

## **Start Something College of Liberal Arts and Sciences: Innovation and Entrepreneurship**

In the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, students with a passion for innovation and entrepreneurship can get involved with the LAS Innovation and Entrepreneurship (I+E) Academy; a two-year experience available to students in all LAS majors. The program is led by Rebecca Runyon ('18 agricultural studies, '19 MS agricultural education), who provided the Live Green! team with a brief program summary. During the four semesters of the program, students are able to engage in online and face-to-face opportunities to facilitate their professional development and growth. The first year of the program includes weekly meetings with peers to develop skills like leadership, risk analysis, strategic communications and others.

To promote innovation and entrepreneurship, students meet monthly with their peers in their combined efforts to solve real world issues. Students receive one academic credit for each semester they are part of the academy.

Runyon noted that the skills students gain through the program are the same skills needed in achieving the [United Nations Sustainable Development Goals](#): leadership, risk and benefit analysis, financial planning and communication. The Sustainable Development Goals initially introduced by the United Nations in 2015 are a call to action for global partnerships, targeting “health and education, reduce inequality, and spur economic growth – all while tackling climate change and working to preserve the oceans and forests.” (United Nations). These are monumental challenges, but the Start Something program is empowering students to pursue solving them. All of the projects underway in the I+E Academy can be connected to at least one facet of sustainability (environmental, social or economic), and they all have the potential to make a positive difference at Iowa State and beyond.



Photo courtesy of Rebecca Runyon

In the second year of the program, students are matched with a mentor, with whom they meet monthly, who will guide them towards bringing their ideas to fruition. Students have the support of industry experts as they pursue their business or ideas.

## SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



Photo courtesy of United Nations

## Student Experiences

Whether a student has an existing business, like Jassma'ray Johnson, senior in Psychology and founder/CEO of [Simply Sámone](#), or an idea to make a reality, the LAS I+E Academy offers a pathway for success! When asked about how she has been involved with the program, Johnson shared several examples. "I have been enrolled in the LAS Innovation and Entrepreneurship Academy for the last two years, where I have grown my entrepreneurial mindset and been matched with a mentor. I participated and won first place in the College by College Pitch Off Competition in February 2022, and was accepted into Iowa State's Top Entrepreneurship Program, CYstarters, where I had all summer to grow my startup company and explore different business avenues."



Photo courtesy of Rebecca Runyon

Johnson is focused on empowerment through health and beauty products, but the student projects represented in the Innovation and Entrepreneurship Academy are as diverse as the United Nations Sustainable Development

Goals. While projects do not necessarily have to be connected to the students' major for them to participate in the program, that is certainly an option!



Photo courtesy of Simply Sámone

Tanya Ken, a sophomore in Computer Science, was drawn to the LAS I+E Academy because of the collaborative community of innovators and opportunities to connect with mentors and grow alongside equally motivated peers. During Ken's transition from India to Iowa State, she found herself wondering how she would run her organization [LakshyaShala](#), an educational technology organization that leverages education and empowerment modules to bridge the inequality gap in education and aid underserved students in stepping out of poverty.

In describing LakshyaShala, Ken said "What started as an online learning system [in 2017] for under-served students evolved into multiple separate technology modules that bring together all the stakeholders (NGOs, Corporates, Social Workers, and Government schools) who were otherwise working separately from each other.

For example, we created modules connecting companies with students after we noticed that talented children in underserved communities went unnoticed by corporations.



Photo courtesy of LakshyaShala

Hence, we developed the world's first talent branding module for school students, Talgram." There are currently 15 online modules targeted toward each stakeholder.

According to the LakshyaShala website, the modules connect non governmental organizations (NGOs) with kids in underprivileged and disadvantaged situations with professionals who can help them chart a course to a better future. "Students who need guidance, irrespective of where they're from can register on the app and be connected to people from several professions — doctors, engineers, IT professionals and so on.

**LakshyaShala**  
equality in education

Photo courtesy of LakshyaShala



Photo courtesy of LakshyaShala

They can then ask questions, almost like chatting on WhatsApp, and the experts will step right up and answer them."

Ken's involvement with the I+E Academy helped her assess what steps needed to be taken to grow her organization. It also taught her about the importance of viewing failure as a learning opportunity rather than a negative experience, which is something innovators and entrepreneurs are extremely likely to experience at least once. Through participation in the I+E Academy, Ken is able to work with passionate students from other disciplines on solving large-scale problems. The diversity in backgrounds is extremely beneficial for brainstorming solutions, which may combine ideas from different majors or disciplines. Students' mentors are also available throughout the entire process to provide additional resources and support.

Collaboration is a key component of the I+E Academy, and this can be seen through the mentorship opportunities available for students as well as the opportunity to team up and together on products.

Olivia Spader (freshman in biochemistry) and Cody Gadberry (junior in public relations) got involved with the Start Something program to make a difference. Their business addresses the lack of support for young adults struggling with long-term illness by providing reliable information and a sense of community support. They are excited to have a positive impact on the world around them and look forward to seeing the difference that their cohort members' businesses make as well. After sharing their experiences struggling with long-term diseases and the stress it put on their families, they decided to develop a business that would support students in positions similar to their own



Photo courtesy of Rebecca Runyon

"Innovation and entrepreneurship are all about collective impact - I'm not asking my students to change the entire world," Runyon noted, "I'm asking them to change the world of one target audience. The world is changed, and a collective impact is made, one innovative product, one organization, one service, and one person at a time."



Photo courtesy of Rebecca Runyon

### Getting Involved

This newsletter represents only a few of the fantastic projects happening throughout the LAS Start Something Program- the Program has doubled in size between its first and second year with nearly 20 passionate students focused on bringing their ideas to life.

Students that are interested in getting involved with the I+E Academy can do so in a number of ways. There is an application form on the [Start Something website](#); for more detailed questions, students can email the Start Something LAS director (Rebecca Runyon- [runyon@iastate.edu](mailto:runyon@iastate.edu)) or visit the program's office in room 2231 of the Student Innovation Center. The program is also active on Instagram: [@lasinnovate](#).

Coming up this month is a unique opportunity for hands-on experience: the College-by-College Pitch Off, where students can pitch their existing or potential business/idea. To learn more about the competition and registration, visit the [event page on the ISU Pappajohn Center for Entrepreneurship website](#). Pitch competitions begin on February 13 (with the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences) and culminate in the College-by-College Pitch Off Finale on February 23.

# COLLEGE-BY-COLLEGE PITCH OFF

**FEB**  
**13**

**COLLEGE OF AG & LIFE SCIENCES**  
3-5 P.M.  
STUDENT INNOVATION CENTER  
ROOM 3231

**FEB**  
**14**

**COLLEGE OF VET MED**  
4-5:30 P.M.  
VET MED BUILDING  
ROOM 2532

**FEB**  
**15**

**IVY COLLEGE OF BUSINESS**  
3-5 P.M.  
STUDENT INNOVATION CENTER  
ROOM 3231

**FEB**  
**16**

**COLLEGE OF ENGINEERING**  
3-5 P.M.  
STUDENT INNOVATION CENTER  
ROOM 3231

**FEB**  
**20**

**COLLEGE OF DESIGN**  
3-5 P.M.  
STUDENT INNOVATION CENTER  
ROOM 3231

**FEB**  
**21**

**COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS & SCIENCES**  
3-5 P.M.  
STUDENT INNOVATION CENTER  
ROOM 3231

**FEB**  
**22**

**COLLEGE OF HUMAN SCIENCES**  
3-5 P.M.  
STUDENT INNOVATION CENTER  
ROOM 3231

**FEB**  
**23**

**COLLEGE-BY-COLLEGE PITCH OFF  
FINALE**  
2-5 P.M.  
SICTR LAUNCH PAD

**ALL 7 COLLEGES • 2 CATEGORIES • 28 CASH PRIZES**  
**\$25,000 IN CASH AWARDS**  
**TOP 2 IN EACH CATEGORY ADVANCE TO THE  
COLLEGE-BY-COLLEGE PITCH OFF FINALE**

Photo courtesy of ISU Pappajohn Center for Entrepreneurship

The Start Something College of Liberal Arts and Sciences program is dedicated to preparing students to tackle real-world issues; regardless of your year in school or prior entrepreneurship experience, there is a place for all LAS students in the Innovation and Entrepreneurship Academy!