

**JOHN PAPPAJOHN  
ENTREPRENEURIAL CENTER  
Annual Report | FY 2021**

**INNOVATE.  
LEAD.  
SUCCEED.**

**IOWA**





## **OUR FACULTY BRING REAL-WORLD ENTREPRENEURIAL EXPERIENCE INTO THE CLASSROOM:**

Bob Walker, PhD (left), serves as CFO of Walker Homestead Farm and Winery. In his entrepreneurial finance class, he leads students through the exercise of selling a product or service with \$20 in startup funding. Walker is the inaugural winner of the Henry A. Johnson Entrepreneurship Teaching Award.

John Courtney (center), brings c-suite experience into the classroom, having spent five years as head of eBay's Asia Pacific operation based in Singapore.

After 25 years running her own business, Kimm Harris (right), now brings her expertise to teaching numerous entrepreneurship classes and facilitating ideation and pitch competitions on campus.

# INSPIRING INNOVATION

Access to talent, innovation, and resources are key elements in building a successful campus- and community-wide entrepreneurship program. At Iowa JPEC, we are fortunate to work with a cadre of outstanding entrepreneurial faculty, mentors, coaches, engaged alumni, staff, and innovative students and community members. Iowa entrepreneurs are making game-changing discoveries, have access to advanced prototyping equipment and services, and benefit from early-stage financial support to go from idea to enterprise.

We hope you are inspired by the impact of our programs and the accomplishments of our students, faculty, alumni, and community members.

Contact me at [david-hensley@uiowa.edu](mailto:david-hensley@uiowa.edu) to engage with us and help accelerate innovation and entrepreneurship across the globe.



**David Hensley**

Iowa JPEC Executive Director and Clinical  
Professor in Management & Entrepreneurship

## IN THE PAST 10 YEARS:

**46,114**

ENROLLMENTS IN IOWA  
JPEC COURSES

**2,323**

STARTUP COMPANIES  
SERVED

MORE THAN

**\$2.75M**

IN SEED MONEY AWARDED  
TO IOWA STARTUPS

# Iowa JPEC honors entrepreneurs and innovators



## **David Rodnitzky (99JD)**

Founder, 3Q Digital  
Alumni Entrepreneur of the Year Award

David Rodnitzky founded an online advertising agency, 3Q Digital, out of a coffee shop in Pacifica, California. He now focuses on company strategy, client satisfaction, and company culture.

"I was throwing things against a wall to see what would stick," Rodnitzky said about finding a job after relocating from Iowa to Silicon Valley.

For eight years after graduating from the University of Iowa College of Law in 1999, Rodnitzky managed online marketing campaigns at several internet startups.

In 2004, Rodnitzky started an online blog that became one of the most prominent publications about Google advertising. Four years later he founded PPC Associates, which was renamed 3Q Digital.

What began as a one-person consultancy in 2008 has grown into a company with a staff of 380, offices in eight locations on three continents, and company revenue of \$61 million. The company has developed several processes that have been adopted as industry standards in online advertising, including the Alpha Beta Account Structure and the Lin-Rodnitzky Ratio.

"Doing business the right way, treating people with respect, and having people recommend you to others because they like you and think you are a genuinely decent person has been helpful," he said. "All that is part of being an Iowan was a huge help in my career."



## **Patricia Miller (04BBA, 04BA, 04CER)**

CEO and Owner, M4  
Alumni Entrepreneurial Leadership Award

Driven by a goal-oriented timeline and a business-is-business approach, Patricia Miller set aside an emotional attachment when she purchased her grandfather's declining plastics factory in economically depressed Woodstock, Illinois.

Miller left a successful career in the biotech space to return to her manufacturing roots. She ran the company, M4 (formerly MATRIX4), like a startup, using everything she learned from her Fortune 500 career in marketing, her passion for entrepreneurship, and her creative eye for design to turn it into a new kind of factory. The culture standard at M4 is "make meaningfully," a phrase she trademarked.

"I didn't want to come here to make things; I wanted to make things meaningfully, and I wanted a culture and team that felt the same way," Miller said. "There was this perception that manufacturing is a dark, dirty industry that just pumps out widgets. We are creating a culture that what is being made on that machine matters in the world and here's why."

Sustainability and social purpose are priorities for M4, an independently female-owned and led organization. M4 has introduced more bio alternative materials and created Object Object, a platform that creates a dialogue of plastic and alternatives to plastic.

"This continuum of the journey is what I'm most proud of," Miller said. "What excites me is being a catalyst for change in a good direction. Driving a business ethically, responsibly, and sustainably is important to me."



The University of Iowa John Pappajohn Entrepreneurial Center is pleased to announce the recipients of its second annual Innovation and Entrepreneurship Honors. Winners were selected not only for their significant accomplishments in entrepreneurship and innovation, but also for their impact in their communities. Iowa JPEC recognized the 2020 and 2021 Honors winners at an event Oct. 8.



**Adam Keune (10CER), Alec Whitters, Ben O'Connor (09BSN)**  
Higher Learning Technologies (HLT)  
Young Alumni Entrepreneur of the Year Award

Disappointed he couldn't find an effective mobile learning solution when studying for dental boards, Alec Whitters created his own. The result, thanks to a collaboration between Whitters and fellow co-founders and high school friends Adam Keune and Ben O'Connor, was Higher Learning Technologies, which allows users to study anytime, anywhere on their smartphones.

Before the creation of HLT, flash cards lugged around in a large box was the study vehicle of choice. There have been more than 25 million downloads of HLT's application, and 2 billion practice questions answered. Ninety-nine percent of HLT's app users pass their exam. HLT offers triple-your-money-back if you use the product and fail the test.

"I think you could go as far as saying HLT was born out of Iowa JPEC and certainly wouldn't be here without it," Whitters said. "We believe we are just getting started."

HLT is the leading platform for mobile learning applications. In almost eight years, HLT has raised more than \$20 million in investment and grown to 50 employees. It has the No. 1 grossing educational and medical app in the Apple App and Google Play stores. By focusing on a mobile platform, HLT assures a user no longer needs a computer, books, and several notecards to prepare for exams.

"For three guys who were tooling around in a dumpy old apartment to be where we are today is exciting," said Keune, who is on the Iowa JPEC Advisory Council.



**Jessica Cole (08BBA)**  
President and CEO, Becker's Healthcare  
Young Alumni Entrepreneurial Leadership Award

Jessica Cole's motto of "good is never good enough" is a growth mindset that has produced big things at Becker's Healthcare in Chicago.

A health care media company, Becker's Healthcare specializes in multimedia, live events, and virtual events. The president and CEO is Cole, a native of Cedar Rapids, Iowa, who graduated from the University of Iowa in 2008 with a degree in marketing and management.

The company works with nearly 800 health care clients who invest their marketing, public relations, thought leadership, or sales enablement dollars with Becker's Healthcare. The clients can purchase webinars, banner advertising, custom content, or sponsor tables at live events.

Cole joined Becker's Healthcare in 2007 as one of three full-time employees. In 2009 it implemented a digital-first strategy and 14 years later, the company has a staff of 74, with 60 working in the Chicagoland area.

Cole credits her days as an undergraduate at Iowa for helping her provide guidance to employees and craft strategy for her company.

"When I think back to Iowa, the ability to do hands-on projects, case studies and working with various people in classes sticks out," she said. "You leave with a degree and with a ton of personal growth that carries into your professional life."

# Iowa JPEC honors entrepreneurs and innovators



**Michael Schultz, PhD, Frances Johnson, MD, Heyward Coleman**

Viewpoint Molecular Targeting, Inc.  
Iowa Innovator of the Year Award

In 2003, Michael Schultz got a phone call from a physician scientist who wanted to use alpha particle radionuclide therapy to treat cancer. Schultz had experience with the rare isotope, and that conversation eventually led to the creation of Viewpoint Molecular Targeting, Inc., five years later, while Schultz was a faculty member in the UI Department of Radiology.

In 2015, Schultz said the company had the “legs we needed” after participating in Iowa JPEC’s NSF I-Corps Workshop. He partnered with his wife, Frances Johnson, then a cardiologist at UI Hospitals & Clinics, and Heyward Coleman, to make an IV-injected pharmaceutical drug that promotes cancer detection and treatment.

“To make it into the clinic and enroll patients means that you have stepped through a series of important milestones,” Schultz said. “That is the point where the Food and Drug Administration says, yes, this looks like it is safe to go ahead and that is after developing a body of literature and data around what you are proposing to do.”

The drugs have been tested on humans at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota, with promising results.

“When you work for a long time to get something done, you are often recognized more from afar than at home where they have seen you slogging toward the goal,” Johnson said. “We have gotten a lot of support along the way from Iowa City and the University of Iowa community.”



**Jim Lewis (83BBA)**

Benjamin  
Venture School Business of the Year Award

Jim Lewis had a revelation in 2012 after years of promoting pharmaceutical brands to doctors. He could have enjoyed a comfortable living the rest of his life, but he thought he had a larger purpose.

“I woke up one day and realized I was on the wrong team,” Lewis said.

He wanted to put power in the hands of the people by creating a convenient, more meaningful relationship with customers, using data to drive that convenience.

Using a business philosophy of win-win-win, Lewis created Predictive Health Partners, which was rebranded and renamed Benjamin. Through an artificial intelligence engine, Benjamin shops for prescription savings, considering the individual’s insurance coverage, deductibles, copays, where they live, and where they prefer to shop. Benjamin sends alerts with up to 80% savings on out-of-pocket costs.

“Win is when you are helping the member save money,” Lewis said. “The second win is when at the same time you are helping the payer save money. The third win is when we get paid because they are both winning. That’s the kind of business model I’m interested in.”







**Anthony Piscopo (19BS), David Christianson**  
Hawkeye Surgical Lighting  
Student Startup of the Year Award

Medical student Anthony Piscopo and neurosurgery resident David Christianson identified and addressed surgeons' need for light, bright, and comfortable surgical eyeglasses.

The two built Hawkeye Surgical Lighting with Christianson taking the technical and Piscopo the entrepreneurial lead. When a surgeon shines a light toward a patient's brain or spine, the tumor lights up in a bright red color. This allows the surgeon to carefully remove the entire tumor.

"This technology to fluorescently visualize tumors is currently only available in big surgical microscopes," Piscopo said. "It has never been incorporated in a headlight before."

Until now.

Not only is the light brighter, lighter, and more comfortable than anything else available, but it can also be controlled in a unique, hands-free way.

"The thing that is novel is the way you are able to control it with your voice and body position," Christianson said.

**Margorie Gutierrez (21BA)**  
Enterprise Leadership Student of the Year Award

When the COVID-19 pandemic put numerous college students out of work — and low on food — Margorie Gutierrez donned her enterprise leadership hat and started a student food pantry for Kirkwood Community College's Iowa City campus.

Gutierrez, an immigrant from Peru and a first-generation college student, graduated from the University of Iowa in May 2021 with a bachelor's degree in enterprise leadership. During her time on campus, she received Iowa JPEC's John and Mary Pappajohn Entrepreneurial Scholarship, made the dean's list every semester, and participated in the IdeaStorm pitch competition.



**Alyssa Clayden (10MSW)**  
ABC'd Therapy & Consulting, LLC  
Student Startup of the Year Award

In 2019, Alyssa Clayden created ABC'd Therapy & Consulting to tackle a gap in mental health services for refugees and immigrants in Iowa. The company provides health care services and consults with businesses, educational institutions, and government agencies to increase the visibility of refugee and immigrant mental health needs.

"The most incredible component for me has been the willingness and trust the immigrant/refugee communities have put into me," Clayden said.

Clayden is a native of Murray, Iowa. She is pursuing a PhD in social work with a concentration in public health from the University of Iowa with an expected graduation date of May 2022.

The motivation for ABC'd was to serve more people in need, bridging gaps in insurance and at-home services, and to identify more people who need support. The business acknowledges the difficulties refugees and immigrants face in the United States and works with the client, their family, and community to make mental health and health services easy to understand and access.

"It has been an amazing journey, and I'm so grateful," Gutierrez said. "I have been taught all the tools I need to succeed. I just need to have faith in myself and the work I am going to do."

Gutierrez worked in student services while earning an associate degree at Kirkwood. She also worked with food distribution at the University of Iowa's food pantry and as its resource and advocacy coordinator.

Her vision is to morph the food pantry into a one-stop shop to supply whatever resources students need to complete their education.



# ACADEMICS

Iowa JPEC's entrepreneurship students represent every corner of campus, and our academic tracks offer any Iowa student a chance to learn to lead and innovate. Despite the ongoing challenges of COVID-19, students continue to gain valuable real-world experience through virtual internships, business consulting, guest speakers in online courses, and opportunities to connect with alumni mentors.

## 374

**STUDENTS COMPLETED BUSINESS CONSULTING OR INTERNSHIPS FOR IOWA BUSINESSES**

## 101

**DEGREE PROGRAMS AT IOWA ARE REPRESENTED BY STUDENTS TAKING ENTREPRENEURSHIP COURSES**

## SUCCESS IN EVERY FIELD

Iowa JPEC's six academic tracks allow any Iowa student to study entrepreneurship, regardless of their interests.

### Degrees:

- BBA Management, Entrepreneurial Management Track: Business students
- BA Enterprise Leadership: Liberal Arts and Sciences Students

### Certificates:

- Entrepreneurial Management: All Iowa students
- Technological Entrepreneurship: Engineering students
- Arts Entrepreneurship: Art students
- Media Entrepreneurialism: Journalism students





### **SAM ANDRUS (22BA) | LIBERAL ARTS STUDENT**

After six years in the Air Force, Andrus dedicated his college career to the guiding principle of “service before self.” On campus, he is the veteran constituency senator for the University of Iowa Undergraduate Student Government, serves as a career adviser for fellow student veterans, and works as a rhetoric teaching assistant. Off campus, Andrus runs a handyman service that employs two fellow student veterans and plans to open a law firm that specializes in serving veterans. “Pursuing a degree in enterprise leadership has allowed me to grow my business knowledge and expand my network with remarkable individuals,” he said. “Entrepreneurship is my passion; this program allows me to pursue my passion while applying the knowledge gained to real-world scenarios.”



### **BAABA SAISIE (23BBA) | BUSINESS STUDENT**

Entering her third year at Iowa, Quad Cities local Baaba Saisie has dived into everything Iowa JPEC and the Tippie College of Business has to offer. Saisie is pursuing a double major in entrepreneurial management and finance with a certificate in international business with the hope of managing a venture capital firm to support socially conscious entrepreneurs. She works as an international business intern for Iowa JPEC and is a Black in Business ambassador, while participating in several student organizations. Saisie was named to Tippie’s Top 21 list this spring. “I joined the entrepreneurial business field to build my skills in the business/startup horizon,” she said. “While my focus was primarily on the studies, the Iowa JPEC has helped me build long-lasting relationships that will stay with me forever domestically and internationally.”



### **SUSHMA SANTHANA (24BSE) | ENGINEERING STUDENT**

With a dream of starting a medical device company to help pediatric cancer patients, Santhana is majoring in biomedical engineering and pursuing an entrepreneurial management certificate. Even with starting college amid a pandemic, she has pursued opportunities across campus. Those include serving as a family representative for Dance Marathon, working in the Orthopedics Biomechanics Lab at the University of Iowa Hospitals & Clinics, and joining the Society of Women Engineers. “Being an entrepreneurial management student has allowed me to learn about concepts and build connections that I normally would not as an engineering student,” she said. “I’m excited to take more entrepreneurship classes and build the foundation I need to start a company one day.”

## **REAL-WORLD EXPERIENCE GOES VIRTUAL**

Many of Iowa JPEC’s experiential learning opportunities pivoted to virtual options in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic.

- **Virtual summer internships:** building skillsets with Iowa-based or alumni-owned startups and businesses.
- **Business consulting projects:** tackling real-world problems for real companies across the state and across the ocean.
- **Alumni connections:** allowing students to plan for their first career move with support from experienced professionals.
- **Entrepreneurial student organizations:** building a student’s resume and keeping them connected through virtual events and speakers.



# STUDENT VENTURES

Our student ventures programs continue to bring students together from across campus to launch businesses and provide needed resources including mentorship, technical assistance, funding, office and co-working space in the Bedell Entrepreneurship Learning Laboratory, and much more. Our Founders Club program has become the Startup Incubator. With the change in name comes customized assistance and programming for students based on the stage of their business. The program continues to help students build in-demand skills and strong networks necessary to succeed as entrepreneurs.

## 11 OF 12

UI COLLEGES REPRESENTED  
BY STUDENTS PARTICIPATING  
IN IDEATION EVENTS AND  
ENTREPRENEURIAL TRAINING  
PROGRAMS

## \$319,250

IN SEED FUNDING AWARDED TO  
STUDENT BUSINESSES

## VIRTUAL PROBLEM SOLVING

Despite the pandemic, student innovators still solved problems and pitched ideas in the virtual realm. Our entry-level IdeaStorm pitch competition made a permanent transition to virtual video submission, recruiting a more diverse array of students to Iowa JPEC. The new Game Changer competition brought student teams together to tackle a sustainable development goal via video conference. After offering virtual training in summer 2020, the Hawkeye Summer Accelerator offered an in-person undergraduate program and a new online graduate program in summer 2021.





### **OPTIC ORIGIN | FOUNDER, THUY NGUYEN (22BS)**

Optic Origin, founded by University of Iowa student Thuy Nguyen, was one of the three \$5,000 winners at the 2021 Virtual John Pappajohn Student Entrepreneurial Venture Competition on April 28.

Optic Origin's 3D-printed technology and prescription-matching platform intelligently match patients to prescription glasses. The company's mission is to expand vision care opportunities to everyone and everywhere.

"Vision is involved in every aspect of life, enabling us to help patients with their mobility, independence, and educational achievements," Nguyen said. "It is rewarding to see the life-changing effects when patients regain their sight."

Nguyen, while working at an eye clinic, witnessed many underserved families who couldn't afford prescription glasses. These experiences inspired her to create a sustainable system to close that vision care gap. Optic Origin has partnered with the UI College of Engineering, eye clinics, and optical laboratories to make that vision come to life. After joining the John Pappajohn Entrepreneurial Center, Nguyen implemented the Business Model Canvas foundation to launch the platform.



### **SPRAYER MODS | CO-FOUNDER AND CEO, HOLLY BENNETT (21BS)**

Holly Bennett is reducing herbicide costs for farmers up to 90% using the same type of technology that allows self-driving cars to detect stop signs.

Sprayer Mods' weed-detecting technology sets it apart from other pieces of agricultural equipment. Cameras mounted on a sprayer take pictures of the ground before feeding images to a computer. Then, a valve opens to apply herbicide only if the computer detects a weed. Because of the high costs of herbicides for wheat, Bennett said Sprayers Mods would be most beneficial for that market.

Bennett, who is from Ankeny, Iowa, earned a BS with a double major in computer science and mathematics from the University of Iowa in May 2021. She refined her idea through the Startup Incubator and the Hawkeye Summer Accelerator and was selected to represent Iowa against 12 other schools in the University Pitch Madness Competition.



### **DIABETES DIAGNOSTICS | FOUNDER, KELSEY DAWES (22PHD)**

Seeing a need for preventive medicine for diabetes, Kelsey Dawes and Diabetes Diagnostics used existing data sets to predict future onset of diabetes using saliva rather than blood tests.

"Once complex diseases set in, people will develop complications and the disease will not go away," said Dawes, a native of Van Horne, Iowa, who is pursuing a PhD in molecular medicine.

Dawes says using epigenetics, if powered correctly, can make a difference and improve medicine.

"It was a breath of fresh air to talk to business-oriented people," Dawes said. "Working that angle has given me a different perspective on the business of science. Medicine will not improve, nor will research be implemented into the clinic, if scientists cannot learn how to think like an entrepreneur."



# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

As a hub for entrepreneurship in the Hawkeye State, Iowa JPEC has continued to provide essential community training and support to ventures throughout the pandemic. Through startup grants and the Innovation Challenge, we have awarded more than \$385,000 in seed funding to support startups across Iowa and beyond. Additionally, we have provided business consulting services, entrepreneurial training programs, and access to student interns, many who worked in remote environments. In total, Iowa JPEC employees provided more than 1,200 hours in mentoring to community ventures in the past year.

## 233

NEW STARTUPS RECEIVED  
COMPREHENSIVE TRAINING  
AND SUPPORT

## 12,636

HOURS DEDICATED TO BUSINESS  
CONSULTING BY ENTREPRENEURSHIP  
STUDENTS-THAT'S MORE THAN 260  
HOURS EACH WEEK

## SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CENTER

For nearly 40 years, the University of Iowa America's Small Business Development Center (SBDC) has provided workshops, counseling, advocacy, and resources to small business owners in Cedar, Iowa, Johnson, Poweshiek, and Washington counties. This year the SBDC has continued to guide businesses as they navigate the ever-changing landscape of policies and pandemic-response programs, helping its clients see an estimated \$12.2 million in increased sales because of SBDC support.





## **THE STOCK CROPPER | BUFFALO CENTER, IOWA**

### **CO-CREATOR, ZACK SMITH**

With smaller land-owning farmers in mind, Zack Smith created The Stock Cropper, a mobile barn system where animals fertilize crops and crops feed animals.

The Stock Cropper barn and fencing functions within a model where crops and livestock are alternated throughout a field. Animals consume pasture and leave behind a rich mixture of soil where crops will be planted the following year.

Smith attended Venture School at NIACC in fall 2020. He took first place at the statewide Venture School Launch Day in June.

"I learned it is healthy to pivot, feel good about going in a different direction, and constantly doing discovery work," Smith said. "Those were things I didn't think about before I attended Venture School."



## **TRIGGER INTERACTIVE**

### **LE CLAIRE, IOWA**

#### **CEO, TYLER BROCKEL**

Annoyed by high prices of military-grade shooting targets used for professional training, Tyler Brockel formed Trigger Interactive, a consumer

electronics manufacturing company geared toward steel firearm target users.

A user attaches an electronic smart device to any off-the-shelf steel target, allowing the shooter to wirelessly interact with the target through a phone or tablet. The product benefits a variety of customers, including the military, law enforcement, and commercial shooting ranges.

At the advice of his SCORE mentor, Brockel attended the Quad Cities Venture School in 2018.

"Not only did I ask a lot of business questions, but I asked a lot of technical questions that helped from a development standpoint," Brockel said. "I had a lot of development specification and user preference questions answered."

Trigger Interactive won \$15,000 in the alumni competitions at Innovation Challenge in 2020 and 2021.



## **CONTINUUM AG**

### **WASHINGTON, IOWA**

#### **PRESIDENT AND CEO, MITCHELL HORA**

The mission of Continuum Ag is straightforward, says CEO and president Mitchell Hora, a seventh generation Iowa farmer.

"We want to help a million farmers profit from soil health."

Hora founded Continuum Ag in 2015 while studying agronomy and ag systems technology at Iowa State University. Four years later, he attended Iowa JPEC's Venture School at North Iowa Area Community College (NIACC). A soil health data company, Continuum Ag helps farmers by factoring biology and carbon into their management system.

"As farmers look to adopt more sustainable ag practices, they need to understand the biology," Hora said.

At the 2021 Cisco Global Problem Solver Challenge, Continuum Ag won a fourth runner-up award (out of more than 1,700 applications). The long-term goal for Continuum Ag is to partner with a company that will take it to a global scale and be able to reach that million-farmer target.

**The Jacobson Institute** is the branch of Iowa JPEC that focuses on K-12 outreach to help contribute to the development of future problem solvers, leaders, and innovators.



**51,394**

K-12 STUDENTS IMPACTED THROUGH JACOBSON INSTITUTE PROGRAMMING

**644**

TEACHERS NATIONWIDE USING BIZINNOVATOR STARTUP AND STEM INNOVATOR® CURRICULUM IN THEIR CLASSROOMS

#### NEW STEM INNOVATOR® PORTFOLIO

STEM Innovator® introduces NEW STEM EdTech solution to measure workforce and college readiness, helping people practice and develop skills and mindsets needed to succeed.

### Essential Skills:

- ✓ *Adaptability*
- ✓ *Collaboration*
- ✓ *Communication*
- ✓ *Grit*
- ✓ *Critical Thinking*

# YOUTH INNOVATION

The Jacobson Institute launched its BizInnovator Startup entrepreneurship curriculum nationwide in August 2020, reaching 12,756 high school students from 41 states. For a second straight year, STEM Innovator® was named a STEM Scale-Up Program for Iowa educators by the Iowa Governor's STEM Advisory Council. In those two programs combined, 303 high school students from 14 states earned undergraduate credit from Iowa JPEC.



States with youth participating in Jacobson Institute programs



States with active BizInnovator Startup and STEM Innovator® teachers

BIZINNOVATOR  
STARTUP

STEM  
Innovator

KID  
Innovator

Innovator  
Competition





#### **DIANE FICKEL | JACOBSON INSTITUTE K-12 INNOVATOR AWARD**

Diane Fickel of West High School in Iowa City, Iowa, is the inaugural recipient of the Jacobson Institute K-12 Innovator Award. This award is given to an educator who is actively teaching in a K-12 education system and has dedicated significant time and talent to build the innovative and entrepreneurial spirit in youth.

Fickel has been an integral part of our youth entrepreneurship education initiatives. With 43 years teaching experience, Fickel participated in the first-ever Iowa JPEC entrepreneurship training program for high school educators in summer 2000. Fickel quickly became a “go-to” leader in how to create an engaging and hands-on entrepreneurship program. Over the years, she has been the lead instructor for our local entrepreneurship camps, participated in grant programs geared to expand STEM innovation and entrepreneurial thinking, and most recently is a key contributor to our BizInnovator Startup Curriculum Design Team. Since its launch in August 2020, BizInnovator Startup has been adopted by entrepreneurship educators in 41 states and is garnering rave reviews as engaging, hands on, and student centric.

Excellent teachers are at the heart of every good educational initiative. We are proud to honor one of Iowa’s entrepreneurship education champions.

## **INNOVATOR COMPETITION**

In FY2021, The Jacobson Institute Innovator Competition awarded \$6,750 of seed capital to K-12 entrepreneurs.



#### **FATOU YELI KOUROUMA CEO/FOUNDER, JARABI FITNESS | TEANECK, NEW JERSEY | WINNER, FALL 2020 INNOVATOR COMPETITION**

“I am grateful for the opportunity to participate in this wonderful initiative [the JI Innovator Competition] showcasing one of my true passions, Jarabi Fitness. Growing up, I saw a major issue. The girls and women around me were less likely to work out. I decided to use African prints to create workout outfits that excite women to work out. Launched in June 2020, Jarabi Fitness uses uniquely designed African Print activewear to encourage women and young girls to reach their fitness goals in style.”



#### **DASIA TAYLOR SCIENTIST, INVENTOR, ENTREPRENEUR IOWA CITY, IOWA WINNER, SPRING 2021 INNOVATOR COMPETITION**

As a high school senior, Dasia Taylor developed a beet extract suture that changes color if an infection is present. The original purpose of the invention was to decrease the number of surgical site infections in developing countries. The discovery has been featured on the Ellen DeGeneres Show.

“As a child, I always knew that I would change the world,” Taylor said. “I didn’t know how or when, but it was always in the back of my mind. Growing up in a family of entrepreneurs, I gained valuable skills on how to handle business endeavors. These specific skills came in handy when I began to tap into my STEM research. Today, I continuously find myself at the intersection of STEM and entrepreneurship — I wouldn’t have it any other way.”

Taylor entered The University of Iowa as a first-year student in fall 2021.

**The Institute for International Business (IIB)** partners with Iowa JPEC on international entrepreneurship education and outreach activities.



# INTERNATIONAL OUTREACH

31

ENGAGED WITH BUSINESS LEADERS IN  
31 COUNTRIES THROUGH INTERNATIONAL  
OUTREACH AND TRAINING PROGRAMS

8

ENGAGED WITH EIGHT UNIVERSITIES  
ABROAD IN CENTRAL ASIA, CARIBBEAN,  
AND SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA



Bryan Forero (Senior, BBA Entrepreneurial Management, International Business Certificate, and Spanish Minor) presents work he completed during an internship with the U.S. Commercial Service Office in Des Moines, Iowa, centered on Foreign Direct Investment in the state of Iowa. This year, 25 students completed international consulting projects, and 12 students completed international business internships.

In a year when international travel came to a halt, IIB continued its outreach mission and offered University of Iowa students with opportunities to engage constructively and inclusively in a global business environment. For the fifth year, IIB hosted 25 African leaders for a Mandela Washington Fellowship program, this time in a virtual format. Program alumni completed a 20-hour, in-depth virtual leadership training program as part of the IIB's commitment to continue to engage and strengthen its network of business professionals in emerging markets. UI students had an opportunity to intern and consult for Iowa companies working globally, the U.S. Commercial Service, and companies in Sub-Saharan Africa.



2021 Mandela Washington Fellowship, Iowa Cohort



## **ATEM ERNEST LEFU, AGROHUB INTERNATIONAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP IMPACT AWARD**

The Institute for International Business (IIB) awards the International Entrepreneurship Impact Award to an alumnus who has participated in an IIB entrepreneurship program and made outstanding accomplishments in their community. This year we honor **Atem Ernest Lefu** (Mandela Washington Fellowship 2019 Iowa Cohort), serial agri-tech entrepreneur and Agro-Hub founder from Cameroon.

Agro-Hub is one of the fastest growing agri-tech startups in West and Central Africa. The company creates markets for smallholder farmers through innovative technologies across food value chains. They work with more than 61,000 farmers across 300 communities, focusing on the cassava value chain, helping cassava farmers increase production and productivity while creating processing factories that buy cassava directly from farmers.

The company has built five small semi-automated processing factories for 15 communities and two small mobile processing factories for 50 communities. It is establishing the largest processing unit in Cameroon that will serve more than 5,000 farmers. The company has generated another branch called Njangi Finance that provides financing directly to farmers by pre-investing in their farms and giving them farm insurance to help boost production and productivity and provide a constant supply of cassava roots to the factory.

## **VIRTUAL OFFERINGS DURING THE PANDEMIC:**

**Fall 2020** – Two seven-week Leadership Challenge virtual trainings for Institute for International Business alumni

**Winter 2021** – Virtual International Entrepreneurship Summit

**Spring 2021** – Virtual Venture School Training for Business Faculty in Ethiopia and Kazakhstan

**Summer 2021** – Virtual Mandela Washington Fellowship

**Summer 2021** – Virtual African Innovators Internships for Tippie students

**Fall/Spring/Summer** – Virtual consulting projects with African companies for University of Iowa students



# FEATURED ALUMNI BUSINESSES



**JOHN SLUMP (08BBA)**  
CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER,  
SURGICAL INNOVATION ASSOCIATES  
AND EDGE SURGICAL

Slump launched his career as an entrepreneur and Chief Financial Officer (CFO) as a student at the University of Iowa by co-founding Corvida Medical with Jared Garfield (09BBA) in 2008. They started the company after Slump's sister was diagnosed with cancer, and they realized health care workers handling chemotherapy medications were suffering from serious health consequences from toxic

exposure to the drugs. He served as CFO for more than a decade, raised \$35 million in funding, and sold a majority interest to private equity investors who more recently did a deal with Fresenius Kabi.

From 2011-15, Slump contemporaneously served as co-founder and board member at Farapulse Inc. (formerly Iowa Approach). There, he worked with University of Iowa Assistant Professor of Internal and Cardiovascular Medicine Steven Mickelsen, MD, to negotiate a license agreement with UIRF and to raise millions of dollars in investment capital to further develop Mickelsen's novel approach to treating atrial fibrillation, the world's most common form of irregular heart rhythm. Boston Scientific (NYSE: BSX) acquired Farapulse in a deal valued at more than \$400 million earlier this year.

Slump joined SIA in 2018 and has raised \$16 million in private investment and National Cancer Institute funding for an implantable device aimed at helping mastectomy patients. In September 2020, Slump also joined EDGe Surgical, a medical device company focused on orthopedic surgery instrumentation. Slump continues to serve as CFO of both emerging growth medical device corporations.

**JON LENSING (20MD)**  
CO-FOUNDER, CEO, OPENLOOP

Jon Lensing co-founded OpenLoop (originally called Apollo) as a web-based platform to streamline the process for hiring clinicians to work at different hospital systems. After experiencing exponential growth in the early months of the pandemic, OpenLoop has pivoted to focus on the growing demand for telehealth, aligning with 15 telehealth companies that need to recruit and onboard clinicians. After participating in the inaugural cohort of the TechStars Iowa accelerator in 2020, Lensing secured \$3 million in seed funding by April 2021. Lensing, who was recently named to the *Forbes* Next 1000, aspires for OpenLoop to provide care to all 42,000 zip codes in the United States.



## JOHN AND MARY PAPPAJOHNS SUPPORT



Iowa alumnus John Pappajohn is the president of Equity Dynamics Inc., and Pappajohn Capital Resources in Des Moines, Iowa. Upon graduation from the University of Iowa in 1952, Pappajohn, a consummate entrepreneur, was involved with several entrepreneurial projects. He became a full-time venture capitalist in 1969 and has been involved in more than 100 startups and 50 IPO's and has served as a director in more than 40 public companies. In 1996, John and Mary Pappajohn changed the trajectory of entrepreneurship and economic development in the state of Iowa by creating John Pappajohn Entrepreneurial Centers at the University of Iowa and four other educational institutions across Iowa. Their vision to ensure that all Iowans – from college students to community members – have access to high quality

entrepreneurship education and support has led to the creation of new ventures and high quality jobs across the state of Iowa and the world. Additionally, the Pappajohns have supported multiple philanthropic causes at Iowa including the John Pappajohn Business Building, the Pappajohn Pavilion at the University of Iowa Hospital and Clinics, the John and Mary Pappajohn Clinical Cancer Center, the Pappajohn Biomedical Discovery Building, and the Pappajohn Education Center in Des Moines. They have also provided significant financial support for student scholarships. Iowa will be forever grateful for their tremendous support.

### MERLE JUNIOR VOLDING (49BSC)

1923 –2021

Merle Junior Volding was raised on a farm near Crystal Lake, Iowa. After serving in the military during World War II, Volding married Marian Wieland and attended the University of Iowa under the GI Bill. He graduated in 1949 with a degree in accounting. In 1972, Following a successful career with IBM and Recognition Equipment, Inc., Volding founded BancTec, Inc., an international computer hardware/software company. Volding served on the Iowa JPEC Advisory Council from 1999 to 2013. In addition to supporting Iowa JPEC's Volding Business Plan Competition, he frequently returned to campus to speak to classes and meet with students. We will remember him fondly for his endless kindness, commitment to supporting student entrepreneurs, and trusted council.



## IOWA JPEC ADVISORY COUNCIL

A special thank you to all those who volunteer their time to help support Iowa JPEC and its programs.

Tom Bedell  
John Buchanan  
Al Bunte  
Tara Cronbaugh  
Jared Garfield  
Jay Greenzweig  
Ron Kaminski  
Adam Keune

Rob Kincaid  
Josh Krakauer  
Kevin Krause  
Roby Miller  
Tom Niehaus  
John Pappajohn  
Ravi Patel  
Brad Phillips

Anne Price  
Dan Rehal  
Nick Rhodes  
Don Schoen  
Dennis Sparks  
Nicole Strait  
Zac Voss  
Laura Westercamp

# IOWA

*"If I can do it, you can do it."*

-John Pappajohn

## John Pappajohn Entrepreneurial Center



[Facebook.com/Entrepreneurship.at.iowa](https://www.facebook.com/Entrepreneurship.at.iowa)  
[Twitter.com/iowajpec](https://twitter.com/iowajpec)  
[Linkedin.com/school/iowajpec](https://www.linkedin.com/school/iowajpec)  
[Instagram.com/iowajpec](https://www.instagram.com/iowajpec)

**IOWAJPEC.ORG**

### **JOHN PAPPAJOHN ENTREPRENEURIAL CENTER**

108 John Pappajohn Business Bldg., Ste. S160  
Iowa City, IA 52242-1994

P: 319-335-1022 | [iowajpec@uiowa.edu](mailto:iowajpec@uiowa.edu)