



Richard M. and Helen DeVos
Center for Entrepreneurship & Innovation
RECOLLECTIONS
2024/25 Impact Report

L. WILLIAM SEIDMAN CENTER

SEIDMAN
COLLEGE OF BUSINESS



GRAND VALLEY
STATE UNIVERSITY

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Message from the Director	2
Lakerpreneur Stories	3
77 Idea Lab	5
77 Idea Quest	6
Laker Outlet	7
LendGR Program	9
CEO Club	13
Entrepreneur in Residence	15
Beyond Borders	16
MVE-Lab	17
CEI Staff	21
CEI Advisory Board	24



A MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR



At the Richard M. and Helen DeVos Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation (CEI), we are passionate about empowering students and supporting Michigan entrepreneurs to drive innovation and startup growth within the community. Over the past year, we've seen exciting progress, particularly with programs like Idea Quest. This competition brings together students from various fields including business, engineering, computer science, health sciences, the arts, and more, to spark creativity, collaboration, and problem-solving. By fostering this blend of perspectives, we strengthen the culture of innovation on campus and equip students with the mindset needed to solve real-world problems and create meaningful change.

We're also proud of the growth of our Veterans Entrepreneurship Program. Through our partnership with Warrior Rising, we've expanded the program nationally, offering veterans the tools, mentorship, and resources to transition into entrepreneurship. We were honored when the Michigan Veterans Affairs Agency (MVAA) recognized our MVE Lab with the Innovation Award, a testament to our commitment to supporting veteran entrepreneurs in impactful ways.

Beyond the classroom, we are shaping the local business community. The LendGR program continues to connect talented GVSU students with local entrepreneurs to deliver tangible and market-based solutions. For our Lakerpreneurs, we launched the Laker Outlet, a pop-up shop across campus that gives student entrepreneurs hands-on experience selling their products, engaging with customers, and testing their business concepts in real time. These outlets have become hubs for creativity and innovation, providing valuable insights into the challenges and rewards of running a business.

Our students have also showcased their ventures at local, regional, and national pitch competitions, gaining funding, exposure, and connections to help them on their entrepreneurial journey. Whether through pitch events, hands-on learning, or one-on-one coaching, CEI is not just a resource, it is a launchpad for the next generation of leaders and changemakers. We're proud of our progress and excited for what lies ahead as we continue empowering students and supporting the growth of Michigan's entrepreneurial community.

A stylized white signature of Shorouq M. Almallah on a dark blue background.

Shorouq M. Almallah, MBA, MIS



LAKERPRENEUR HIGHLIGHTS

Celebrating GVSU and West Michigan Entrepreneurs



Michael Meadows
Protein Pints

Protein Pints: High-Protein Ice Cream with a Purpose, founded by best friends Paul Reiss and Michael Meadows. Protein Pints delivers 30g of protein per serving in a gluten-free, lactose-free ice cream without artificial sweeteners. Their journey began as college athletes searching for a tastier protein alternative, leading them to create a product they could not find in stores.

Now the highest-protein ice cream on the market, Protein Pints recently launched in 10 Meijer Supercenters and won first place at the Rice Business Plan Competition, securing \$250K in funding. Manufactured in partnership with MSU Dairy Store, they aim to expand nationwide and introduce new products. **Advice to entrepreneurs:** See opportunities, believe in your vision, and take action.

PROTEIN
PINTS



Maneeka Brown
Cakes By The Jar
2006 Graduate

Maneeka, a mother of three with five degrees, including one from Grand Valley, began her entrepreneurial journey in 2016 with a home-based business creating custom cakes.

After the disruption of COVID, she used the time to strategize and fully commit to her business, launching "Cakes by the Jar" in 2022. Initially focused on a healthcare career, her sons' summer bake sale inspired her to turn her baking talent into a business. Guided by faith, she found success through consistency and hard work.

Known for her diverse offerings and creative packaging, Maneeka aims to expand her business and mentor other entrepreneurs. **Her advice:** know yourself, practice self-care, stay consistent, and never give up.





Alyson & Mallory
Chartreuse Sisters
 2012 & 2017 Graduates

Chartreuse Sisters is a business founded by two sisters—one a pastry chef and the other handling beverages, communications, and marketing. They started in 2019, transitioning from film and theater backgrounds to pursue their passions for baking and coffee.

Beginning with home-baked goods and pop-ups, they built a loyal following through personal connections. Their biggest challenges were securing funding and renovating an abandoned building. They advise aspiring entrepreneurs to have a trusted partner, embrace change, and be patient through the journey. Their business is unique for its personal touch, with both sisters actively engaging with customers.

CHARTREUSE SISTERS



Carey Bisonet
Alpine Events
 2005 Graduate

The President and Owner of Alpine Events, based in Grand Rapids, MI, leads an event rental company providing tents, tables, chairs, linens, and table settings for corporate, wedding, and social events. Although entrepreneurship was not his initial goal, his experiences working for entrepreneurs after graduating from GVSU inspired him to purchase Alpine Events in 2015 and pursue business ownership.

Alpine Events stands out in a traditionally small, owner-operated industry with its focus on growth and expansion. The company now operates three locations across two states and recently acquired businesses in Ann Arbor, MI, and Winter Haven, FL, in 2023, allowing it to overcome seasonal challenges and retain staff year-round. Looking ahead, Alpine Events plans to expand further in the Ann Arbor/Detroit market, grow in Florida, and invest in team leadership development.

He credits GVSU for shaping his career path, offering valuable internships, a strong network, and lessons in personal growth through football. His passion lies in building businesses and unlocking the potential of the people within them.



STUDENT ACCELERATOR PROGRAM | 2020-2024

77IDEA LAB

The **77IdeaLab** is a startup accelerator designed to empower Grand Valley State University students with the tools, mentorship, and funding needed to turn their business ideas into reality. This hands-on, three-month program provides students with a structured roadmap for innovation and company launch, all within a single semester. Participants gain foundational entrepreneurship education, one-on-one mentorship from the program's entrepreneur-in-residence, and access to a dynamic network of workshops, mentors, and pitch competitions. Each team receives a \$1,000 grant, with opportunities to pitch for an additional \$5000 in early stage funding during the culminating pitch event. By connecting students to the greater entrepreneurial ecosystem, the 77IdeaLab ensures they are equipped to thrive beyond graduation.

QUICK LOOK



46

NEW STUDENT
BUSINESSES CREATED

50

MENTORS INVITED



\$60K

DOLLARS AWARDED

77 Idea Lab Success Story



Chris Villaire

Villaire Financial
2024 Graduate

A graduate of Grand Valley State University, Villaire Financial founder from Macomb, Michigan, has always had a passion for finance. Inspired by his uncle, a financial advisor, he began investing at age 11 and earned his Series 65 license to launch his RIA in 2022. Despite challenges starting a firm at 19, he focused on helping young professionals and families understand their finances and prepare for the future. By targeting an underserved market and leveraging social media and referrals, he grew his business. For him, finance is about reducing stress and achieving security, advising entrepreneurs to stay grounded, find purpose, and avoid burnout.





AN EPIC QUEST TO FIND BIG IDEAS... THAT SOLVE EVERY LITTLE PROBLEM.

77 Idea Quest offers an exciting opportunity for GVSU Lakers from ALL MAJORS to turn their ideas into real-world solutions. Whether they are studying engineering, business, healthcare, or the arts, this competition challenges students to identify problems and propose innovative answers that can make a difference. Students gain valuable skills that set them apart in their career, while competing, collaborating, and innovating with peers from across disciplines. Showcasing their creativity and problem-solving abilities in front of faculty, mentors, and the community. Each college will award a \$500 College Innovator Award, and the top ideas will compete for up to \$3,000 in prizes. This is an opportunity for students to solve problems, make an impact, and drive innovation at GVSU.

QUICK LOOK

ENGAGEMENT ACROSS 7 DISCIPLINES

BROOKS COLLEGE OF INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES

COLLEGE OF COMPUTING

COLLEGE OF HEALTH PROFESSIONS

COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS AND SCIENCES

KIRKHOF COLLEGE OF NURSING

PADNOS COLLEGE OF ENGINEERING

SEIDMAN COLLEGE OF BUSINESS

130 STUDENTS ENGAGED

12 UNIQUE EVENTS AND WORKSHOPS

25 SPEAKERS, REVIEWERS,
JUDGES

\$13,000 DOLLARS AWARDED



LAKER OUTLET

STUDENT BUSINESS POP-UP SHOPS

Laker Outlet is a place where student entrepreneurs come together to sell products and/or services while promoting their businesses within the GVSU community. This allows students the opportunity to gain knowledge and experience in owning a business as well as receiving constructive feedback from peers.

AT A GLANCE



8

STUDENT BUSINESSES



\$3,876

TOTAL REVENUE



Qualia Parker
Qdiditt
General Business

Qualia Parker, a junior at Grand Valley, is the founder of **Qdiditt**, a home-based hairstyling and beauty supply business. After facing difficulties accessing hair products as a freshman, she created a business offering styling tools, hair oils, extensions, and more, making beauty essentials easily accessible for students.

Her entrepreneurial journey has taught her skills in time management, marketing, and customer relations. After participating in CEI's pop-up shop, she plans to expand her business and offer products permanently on campus.

Her advice to aspiring entrepreneurs: trust your vision, stay determined, and never let others define your limits.



Joshua Blaine
Felici
General Business

Joshua Blaine is the founder of **Felici**, a luxury streetwear brand that promotes happiness and self-expression through fashion. Combining his passion for creativity and style with a deeper mission, Joshua designed Felici to inspire others to master happiness and live fulfilling lives. The brand offers high-quality streetwear such as shirts, hoodies, and socks, featuring unique designs centered on positivity, freedom, and self-mastery. These meaningful pieces stand out by resonating with individuals seeking joy and personal growth.

Joshua's entrepreneurial journey has been both challenging and rewarding, teaching him to balance creativity with strategy while gaining inspiration from a supportive community. Participating in CEI's pop-up shop, which he discovered through social media and Sarah Abel, provided him an opportunity to connect with customers, showcase his brand, and

expand his reach. A standout moment was hearing a customer share how deeply they connected with the "Way of Bliss" design, reaffirming Felici's mission. The event also sparked collaboration opportunities, including a potential partnership with Javion Ward, the owner of Money Over Fame (MOF) brand.

The pop-up shop boosted Felici's visibility, strengthened customer connections, and provided valuable product feedback. It also taught Joshua the importance of storytelling to help customers connect with the brand on a deeper level, which he has since applied to his online marketing strategy. Moving forward, Joshua aims to scale Felici to a five-figure business, expand the product line, grow its presence locally and online, and collaborate with influencers and other brands. His advice to aspiring entrepreneurs is to stay true to their vision while remaining flexible, trusting the process, and learning from every challenge.



LENDGR CONSULTING SERVICES FOR BUSINESSES AND STARTUPS



LendGR is a technical assistance program offered by Grand Valley State University's Center for Entrepreneurship & Innovation. LendGR gives talented and skilled students the opportunity to apply their education at Grand Valley State University in a real-world setting to help and impact local businesses in West Michigan by providing tangible business solutions.

LendGR's mission is **to empower entrepreneurs** who lack the necessary access to resources and support by providing them **access to one-on-one technical consulting** to provide clear and **tangible deliverables to grow their businesses**.

QUICK LOOK

69 STUDENT CONSULTANTS HIRED

230 COMPLETED PROJECTS

24 MAJORS REPRESENTED

\$100,602 INVESTED



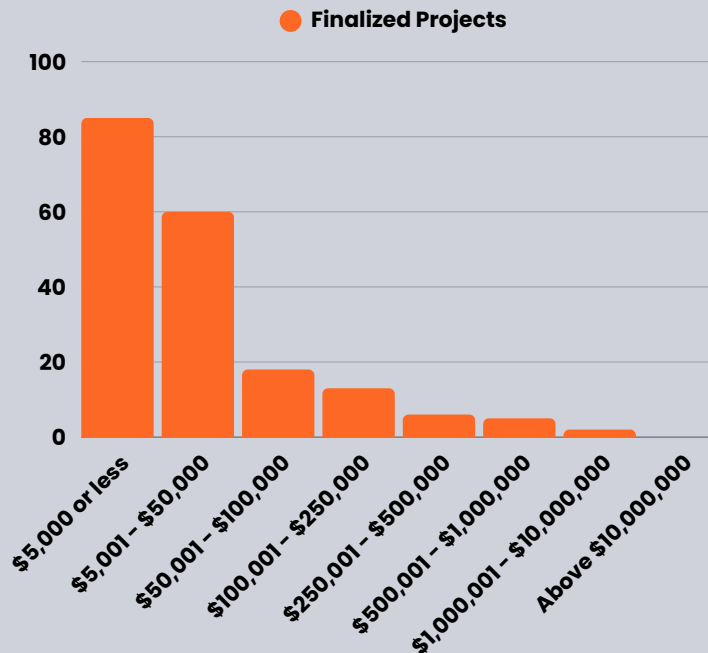
Jowei Yek
2024 Graduate

Student Consultant Testimony

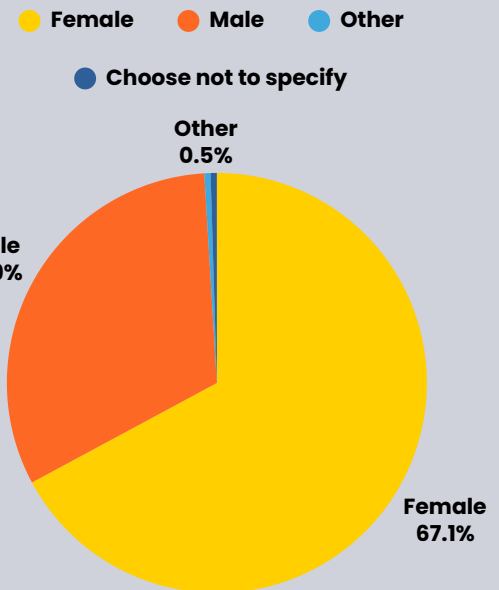
Becoming a LendGR consultant through my graduate assistantship at CEI was one of the most fulfilling parts of my role. I got to help Michigan entrepreneurs tell their stories, apply creative solutions to real business challenges, and mentor other students in creative communications. I worked with businesses across industries, but my favorite project was rebranding Gentleman's Hardware to Imprint Perfumery. The client's passion inspired me, and he trusted me to refresh the brand's name, look, and messaging.

Beyond marketing, overseeing other consultants helped refine my mentoring skills, while managing client applications strengthened my project management abilities. LendGR is the perfect place to put your skills to work outside the classroom while engaging with a community of entrepreneurs. Plus, CEI offers mentorship, professional development, and networking—everything you need to prepare for what comes next.

Revenue of Finalized Projects



Gender of Clients



What LendGR Clients say about the Student Consultants?

"I'm really happy with the help I received finding alternate sources of funding apart from just loans."

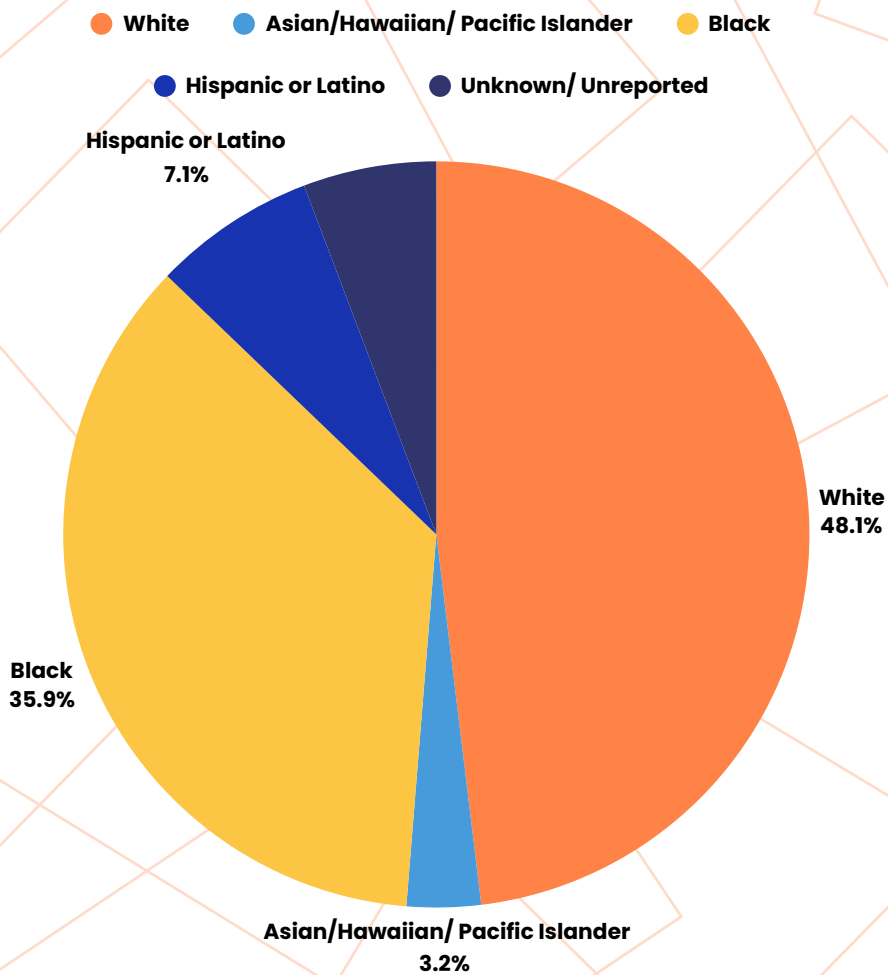
Program is amazing, Tatiana did such an amazing job capturing the vibe that I was looking for."

"Sophie was attentive, asked clarifying questions and exceeded my expectations. Her work boosted my confidence in my business and marketing. She provided me everything I asked for and more!"

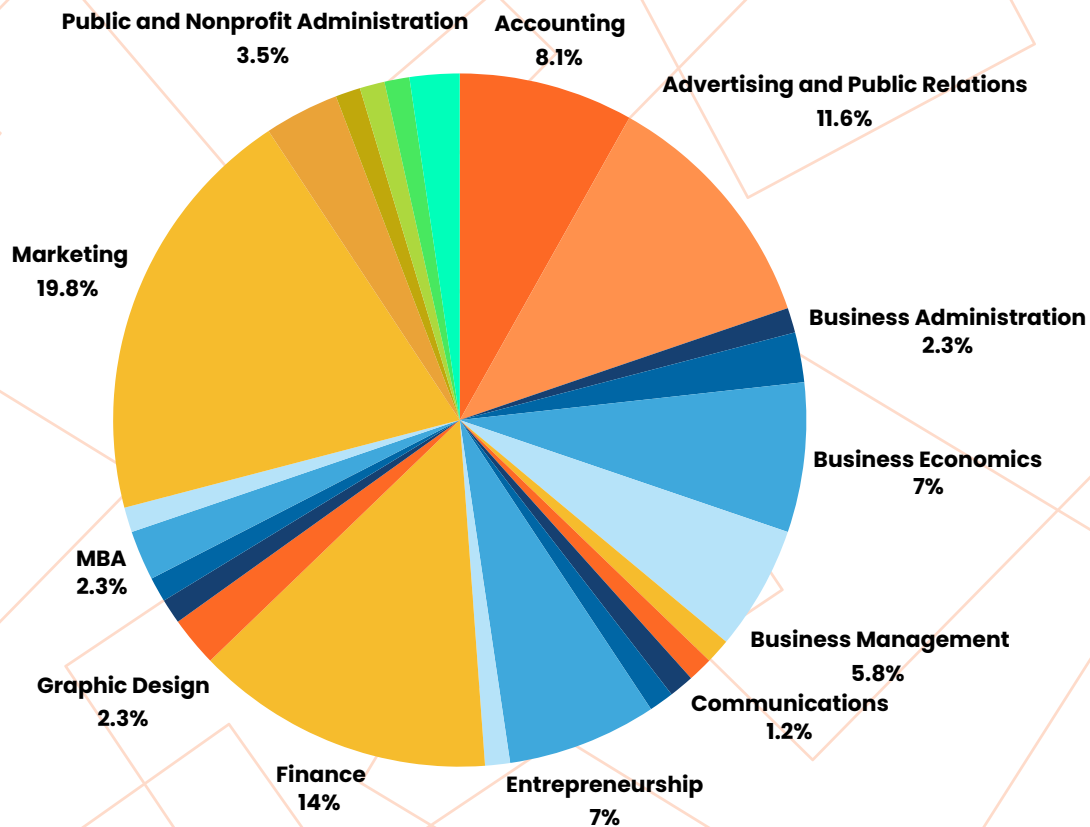
"Kennedy was amazing. She did an awesome job and was very professional."

"Jade was great and I'm so thankful for the help she was able to provide."

Demographic of Clients



LendGR's model of utilizing students as consultants has proven highly effective in providing tangible business solutions to underserved entrepreneurs while simultaneously equipping students with real-world experience. Over the past five years, more than 65 undergraduate and graduate students have collaborated with over 230 local businesses, delivering critical technical assistance in areas such as marketing, finance, and operations.



Student Consultants' Majors at a Glance



COLLEGIATE ENTREPRENEURS' ORGANIZATION (CEO CLUB)

What is the CEO Club?

The Collegiate Entrepreneurs' Organization at GVSU is a leading entrepreneurship organization that focuses on goal setting, accountability, and empowering students and community members to grow their businesses. The club has helped launch several student-run start-ups and offers support, knowledge, networking, and accountability to ensure success. Meetings feature industry leaders, discussions on relevant topics, exploration of local resources, and learning about innovative business concepts. Membership is open to all students, regardless of whether they have a business idea. The leadership team helps with ideation or connects members with existing teams.

AT A GLANCE



43

CURRENT MEMBERS



14

EVENTS/WORKSHOPS



289

ALUMNI



9

ACTIVE BUSINESSES



What is Idea Pitch?

The CEO Club has been organizing pitch competitions since 2005. Idea Pitch participants have 90 seconds to present their ideas to judges without using slides or props, encouraging them to articulate their vision clearly. The first-place winner receives an invitation to attend the CEO Club's Annual National Conference in Tampa, Florida. Prize money for this competition is given to those in first through third place totaling \$2500.



29

STUDENT PARTICIPANTS



\$2,750

TOTAL AWARDED



CEO Club's Annual National Conference

National CEO Club hosts an informative, action-packed national conference that attracts nearly 1,000 collegiate students from around the nation. During the three-day conference, attendees network with other entrepreneurial-minded students and listen to presentations from seasoned entrepreneurs, subject matter experts, motivational speakers, and fellow students who are making the transition from dreamers to doers.



ENTREPRENEUR IN RESIDENCE

Meet Zach!



Zachary Skogheim

Zach started his entrepreneurial journey during his first night of CEO club. He realized that entrepreneurship was the career path he had always wanted, but did not know it existed.

From the first meeting, Zach decided to change majors from biomed to business, and go all in on building businesses.

Now eight years later, and with multiple businesses, Zach runs a successful fitness business with multiple locations and more coming soon. In his free time, he acts as the Entrepreneur in Residence (EIR), mentoring students towards business success.

Zach has worn every hat within business and can help guide students towards their next best step.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM STUDENT MENTORING & ENGAGEMENT



32

Student
Businesses



53.8%

Services

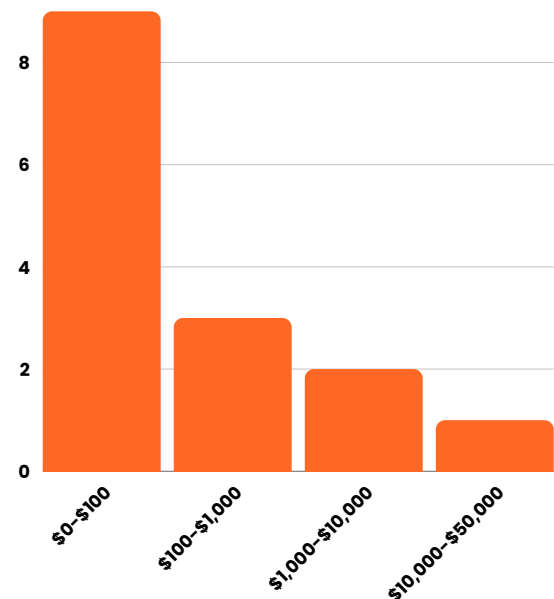


46.2%

Products



10 — **Revenue Earned** —

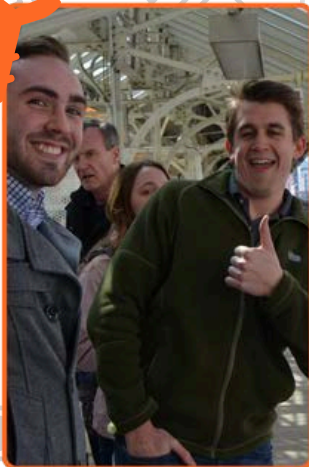


BEYOND BORDERS: EXPLORING ENTREPRENEURSHIP LOCALLY AND GLOBALLY

CEI is committed to expanding students' horizons by organizing immersive treks and journeys across Michigan, the U.S., and the globe. These experiences push students out of their comfort zones, exposing them to diverse cultures, business environments, and entrepreneurial ecosystems. Whether it's participating in the European Innovation Academy (EIA) in Italy, attending the ICSB World Congress in Germany, or engaging in digital innovation programs in Portugal, these opportunities provide hands-on learning experiences that go beyond the classroom. Closer to home, CEI leads entrepreneurial treks to Detroit and Chicago, where students explore thriving local ecosystems, connect with entrepreneurs and investors, and visit cutting-edge tech, health, and food accelerators and incubators. These experiences provide an up-close look at how different cities foster innovation and economic growth while allowing students to engage with real-world business challenges.

By stepping into unfamiliar environments, students learn resilience, problem-solving, and the value of diverse perspectives. From pitching ideas alongside international teammates to navigating Detroit's entrepreneurial hubs or taking the subway for the first time in Chicago, these journeys offer lessons that transcend business and entrepreneurship. And, of course, no trek is complete without savoring the local cuisine, whether it's deep-dish pizza in Chicago or trying new foods abroad; these shared experiences build camaraderie and cultural appreciation. CEI's commitment to global and regional engagement ensures that students don't just learn about the world; they experience it firsthand, equipping them with the skills and confidence to lead in an increasingly interconnected economy.

LAST 5 YEARS
250+ STUDENTS
12 JOURNEYS
4 COUNTRIES

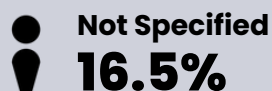
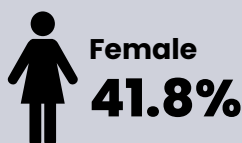
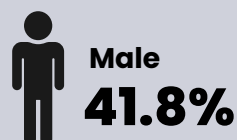


MICHIGAN VETERAN ENTREPRENEUR LAB



The Michigan Veteran Entrepreneur Lab (MVE Lab) at Grand Valley State University (GVSU) is a cohort-based accelerator designed to empower military connected individuals, including veterans, active duty, Guard and Reserve members, spouses, and dependents, with entrepreneurial education and resources. Rooted in discipline, training, and camaraderie, MVE Lab provides a structured, supportive environment where participants receive hands-on instruction in business planning, marketing, financial modeling, and pitch development. The 12-week program leverages the CO.STARTERS curriculum and includes mentorship from veteran entrepreneurs, pro bono legal support, technical assistance, and access to funding opportunities. Since its founding in 2018, MVE Lab has successfully run 14 cohorts, equipping veterans with the skills and connections needed to launch and grow their businesses.

Gender



Recognizing the growing need for veteran focused entrepreneurial training, MVE Lab has expanded statewide to reach more communities. In addition to its Grand Rapids base, the program has served veterans in Detroit, Ann Arbor, Muskegon, Battle Creek, and Traverse City through collaborations with local entrepreneur support organizations, co-working spaces, and community partners. MVE Lab also integrates arts-based initiatives to support veterans' well-being and creativity, working with organizations such as Has Heart and Healing in the Arts. Additionally, partnerships with incubators, local businesses, and funding organizations ensure continued mentorship and resource access beyond the program. As demand continues to rise, MVE Lab remains committed to strengthening Michigan's entrepreneurial ecosystem and providing military-connected individuals with the tools to successfully launch and sustain their businesses.





\$230,000

STARTUP GRANTS INVESTED



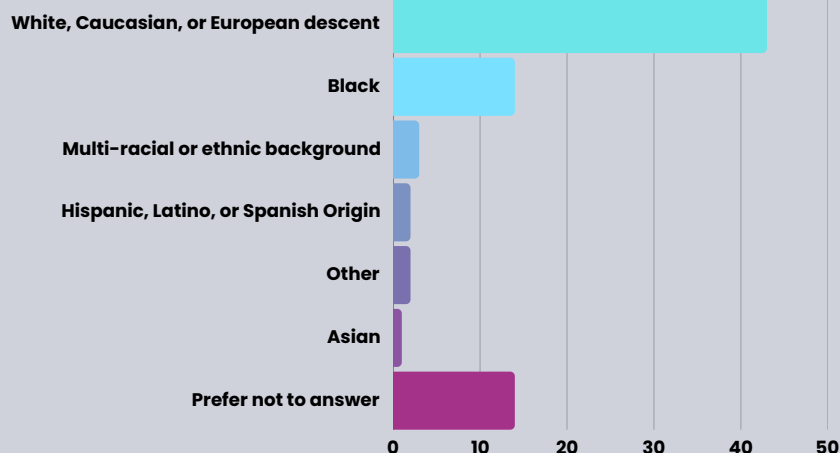
14

COHORTS SINCE 2018



GRAND RAPIDS, DETROIT,
BATTLE CREEK AND TRAVERSE CITY

Race



AT A GLANCE



65%

GRADUATES REMAIN
IN BUSINESS



\$3.5 MIL

GROSS CAPITAL
INVESTMENT



200

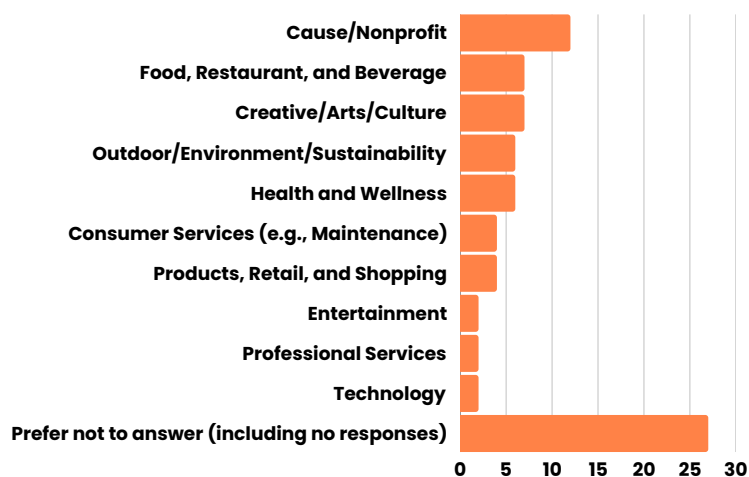
VETERANS &
MILITARY FAMILIES



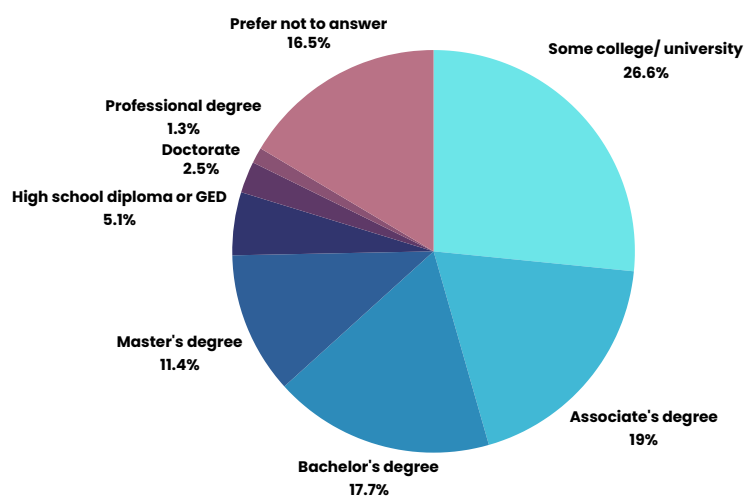
\$781,463

GROSS ANNUAL SALES

Industry



Education



MVE-LAB SUCCESS STORY

Graduate's startup takes top prize at veterans pitch competition

By Brian Vernellis | Image Credit - Photos by Kendra Stanley-Mills

A 10-week journey for a cohort of veterans, current service members and their spouses participating in a small business accelerator program came to a close on May 13.

Members of Cohort 13 in the Michigan Veteran Entrepreneur-Lab, a program of the Richard M. and Helen DeVos Center for Entrepreneurship & Innovation, gave their final pitches to a panel of judges, family and friends at the L. William Seidman Center as part of the MVE-Lab's Pitch and Showcase.

At stake for the seven entrepreneurs was \$20,000 in seed funding for their startups.

By the end of the night, it was Spencer Scarber and his startup, *Emergency Medicine Innovations*, taking home the coveted \$10,000 first place award as determined by the judges. Emergency Medicine Innovations develops portable cold storage technology and containers suitable for transporting blood or plasma without worry of contamination.

"The big issue is that our troops are dying out in the field," Scarber said. "People aren't getting the blood or medication they need here and pharmaceutical companies are losing a lot of money, \$35 billion to be exact, because they can't keep things cold."

Scarber, an airman first class in the Michigan Air National Guard and a 2022 graduate of Grand Valley with a degree in mechanical engineering, said the inspiration for his invention came from his time as an EMT technician prior to enrolling at Grand Valley.

"Having something that's a grab-and-go factor, that's where the idea came from, but it really just blossomed into determining what customers need."

-- Spencer



"During my clinical rotations, one of the things that I noticed was the big beefy coolers that we have, and they're bolted to the inside of the ambulance," Scarber said. "So, if you arrive at a car crash, there's no easy way to lug this thing directly to the scene of an incident."

"Having something that's a grab-and-go factor, that's where the idea came from, but it really just blossomed into determining what customers need."

Scarber's technical advisor at EMI is a former professor of his, Sanjivan Manoharan, associate professor of mechanical engineering.

"If you ask any student who has had him or even anybody who's heard of him, he is hands down one of the best professors at Grand Valley," Scarber said.

"During my senior year, I did an independent study under him and we performed some computational fluid dynamics to really make sure that our technology was as good as we said it was."

Scarber's winning idea embodies the approach to entrepreneurship that Michael Hyacinthe, the lead instructor with the MVE-Lab, viewed with each cohort.

"Veterans are very community focused, so a lot of their solutions are based on problems that they've experienced themselves or they've known someone in service that experienced an issue," Hyacinthe said.

"Just seeing the passion and the joy as they figure out how to solve their own problems by themselves, but also serving other veterans who are going through those same problems, makes it very rewarding." ■



GVNEXT



CENTER FOR ENTREPRENEURSHIP & INNOVATION STAFF



SHOROUQ ALMALLAH

Director, Richard M. and Helen DeVos Center for Entrepreneurship & Innovation, GVSU

Shorouq is a nationally recognized leader in entrepreneurship, social innovation, and intrapreneurship in higher education. As Director of GVSU's Richard M. and Helen DeVos Center for Entrepreneurship & Innovation (CEI), she drives high-impact programs that foster entrepreneurial mindsets and economic mobility. She also chairs the Board of Directors for the United States Association for Small Business & Entrepreneurship (USASBE). Shorouq has led transformative initiatives like the Michigan Veteran Entrepreneur-Lab, LendGR micro-consulting, and FinLit, a digital learn-and-earn platform for high school students. Under her leadership, CEI has earned national and statewide recognition, including the AACSB Entrepreneurial Spotlight Challenge award. Named one of the 50 Most Influential Women in West Michigan, she is deeply committed to inclusive entrepreneurship and empowering future leaders. A lifelong learner, she holds multiple degrees from Indiana University and an MBA from Grand Valley State University.



MICHAEL HYACINTHE

MVE-Lab Lead Instructor and Ambassador

Michael Hyacinthe, a U.S. Navy veteran and former Seabee combat warfare specialist, served around the world before becoming a serial entrepreneur focused on social impact. He co-founded Has Heart, providing creative outlets for veterans, and founded Wimage, a children's media company that produces educational content. As CEO, he launched Wimee's Words, a children's TV show airing on PBS in Michigan, soon expanding to NYC and LA. Recognized as an INC 30 Under 30 entrepreneur and a Lakeshore Innovator of the Year honoree, Michael believes in the power of creativity to heal and educate. Originally from the Bronx, he now lives in Grand Rapids with his family and is a proud GVSU graduate.



MATT LARSON

Affiliate Faculty of Instruction-Management

Matt Larson has an extensive background in banking, business consulting, project management, and higher education. Previously, Matt owned bookkeeping/payroll, vending, technology consulting, and crowdfunding businesses. As a consultant, he has worked with multiple start-ups and businesses while coordinating a local inventor's network and volunteers his time with Start-Up Weekends. Matt's entrepreneurship journey continues with his development of an open source mobile platform. In addition, Matt is the Co-founder and COO of CampusStarter, a crowdfunding platform for college entrepreneurs. CampusStarter received outside investment and support from eMerge Xcelerate, a start-up accelerator in Grand Rapids, MI and was acquired by Hubhub a London based crowdfunding company in June of 2016. He is a graduate of Western Michigan University with degrees in Finance, Master of Arts in Career & Technical Education, and a Master of Business Administration.



JADE MALLETT
Graduate Assistant

Jade Mallett, a graduate student from Atlanta, Georgia, is pursuing a M.S. in Communication with a focus on Public Relations at Grand Valley State University. She earned her B.A. in Communications, specializing in Multimedia and Digital Communications, from Savannah State University in 2023. Her entrepreneurial journey began in high school, where she self-taught makeup and piercing techniques. At Savannah State, she launched Enhancing Hands, her makeup artistry brand, worked on fashion shows, photoshoots, and events. Passionate about her craft, she also mentors young women in the art of makeup, recognizing its transformative power.



KEN MIGUEL-CIPRIANO
LendGR Program Manager

Ken Miguel-Cipriano, an immigrant from Peru and longtime Southside resident, attended the University of Michigan, where they first experienced an entrepreneurial ecosystem. Ken is the Director of Public Agency at the West Michigan Center for Art and Technology (WMCAT) and has worked in government, startups, and design agencies. Passionate about big data, process improvement, and art & design, Ken spends their free time biking for Strava KOMs, riding the Rapid buses, or watching films at Studio Park. Their greatest claim to fame is pitching an idea to Reddit co-founder Alexis Ohanian in an Ann Arbor bar in the early 2010s.



VALERIE PALMER
Office Coordinator, Richard M. and Helen DeVos Center for Entrepreneurship & Innovation, GVSU

Valerie is the Office Coordinator for the Seidman College of Business Outreach Centers, supporting directors for the DeVos Center for Entrepreneurship & Innovation, the Family-Owned Business Institute, and the Koeze Ethics Business Initiative. She manages daily operations at CEI, including working with student employees, scheduling, event planning, and handling finances. Valerie has been with GVSU for over 10 years, previously serving as the Student Life Assistant in the Office of Student Life and as Officer Coordinator in the Dean's Office at Seidman College of Business. She holds a bachelor's degree in advertising and public relations and a master's in communications from GVSU. In her free time, Valerie enjoys reading and spending time with her husband and three sons.



ZACHARY SKOGHEIM
Entrepreneur in Residence

Zach has been an entrepreneur for the last 8 years and has worked on a wide variety of businesses, including tech, apparel, and fitness. A CEO club alumni and current gym owner in downtown Grand Rapids, Zach loves solving problems and deciphering next steps for people on their entrepreneurial journey. Whether you're looking for venture capital or want to make money from your business tomorrow, Zach is here to help!



TIM SYFERT

Senior Clinical Affiliate of Practice-Management

Tim Syfert teaches entrepreneurship and small business management, international business, and organizational strategy at Grand Valley State University to both undergraduate and graduate students. Tim has over 25 years of business experience in key strategic roles at Timex Watch Company, Haworth, Royal Consumer Business Products, Sherwin Williams, Roadway Express Trucking Company, and Johnson Controls. His work at these companies resulted in several domestic and international patents for many products that are currently in production around the world. As a designer and business consultant, Tim has helped inventors and start-up companies develop new products, expand product portfolios, and launch new business ventures. He is currently developing his own new venture, blending alcohols for use in sangria. Tim has a bachelor's degree in business from Oklahoma State University, a masters in business administration in strategic planning from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institutes Lally School of Management and Technology, and a doctorate in organization development from Capella University.



TYLER WAY

MBE-Lab Co. Facilitator and Communications Specialist

Tyler began his entrepreneurial journey as a freshman at GVSU in 2005, starting a custom sneaker and apparel brand from his dorm room. After earning a B.S. in Advertising & Public Relations with a minor in Entrepreneurship in 2009, he continued his creative business, working with clients like LeBron James and Phil Knight. In 2010, Tyler met fellow GVSU grad and Navy veteran Michael Hyacinthe, leading to the creation of Has Heart, a project pairing veterans with designers to share their stories through art. After opening Has Heart Coffee Shop in Grand Rapids in 2017, Tyler worked as a Footwear Designer at Wolverine Worldwide. He and his wife later launched a nomadic creative agency, traveling across the U.S. until relocating to Grand Rapids in 2023.

CENTER FOR ENTREPRENEURSHIP & INNOVATION ADVISORY BOARD



JOHN BURMEISTER

Senior Vice President | Business Banking Market Manager – Huntington National Bank

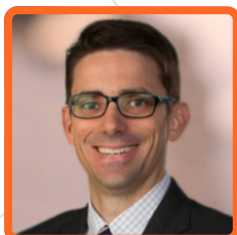
John Burmeister is the Senior Vice President and Business Banking Market Manager for Huntington National Bank in the Greater Grand Rapids Area. John has been in the banking industry for over 20 years, holding various positions in the Bank. A graduate of Central Michigan University, John lives and plays in Holland, Michigan, with his three kids and wife Kim. Professionally, he has experience in the Consumer and Business Banking segments. He specializes in commercial lending and helping business owners with their financial needs and goals.



SHANNON COHEN

Owner and Founder – Shannon Cohen, Inc.

Shannon is the founder of Shannon Cohen, Inc., an award-winning strategist, innovator, and leader with 18 years of experience in philanthropy and community development. Recognized as one of the "50 Most Influential Women in West Michigan" by the Grand Rapids Business Journal in 2018, Shannon also serves as an adjunct faculty member at GVSU. She is passionate about empowering leaders to create transformative change in their communities. Recently, Shannon launched Tough Skin, Soft Heart, a movement focused on helping overextended leaders navigate the emotional, mental, and physical challenges of making a difference.



ERIK DALY

Attorney at Law – Miller Johnson

Erik Daly is a corporate attorney at Miller Johnson, specializing in mergers and acquisitions, joint ventures, corporate financing, restructurings, and securities law. Practicing since 2007, he has been recognized by Chambers USA for Corporate/M&A and named a "Rising Star" by Michigan Super Lawyers from 2014–2017. He is also listed by Best Lawyers for M&A and Securities Law and was named Grand Rapids Lawyer of the Year for M&A in 2020. Erik serves on the boards of Special Olympics Michigan, the West Michigan Sustainable Business Forum, and the Friends of the East Grand Rapids Library.



CARLA HENDON

Director, Supplier Diversity & Indirect Procurement – Meijer

Carla Hendon is the Supplier Diversity & Indirect Procurement Director at Meijer, with over 30 years of experience in supply chain management. From 2009 to 2020, she played a key role in developing and sustaining Meijer's indirect procurement organization, leading two major restructures, the launch of SAP Ariba in 2017, and transforming supplier management and procurement processes. Before Meijer, Carla held various roles at Chrysler, including global sourcing, logistics, supplier development, and strategy. She has worked with Fortune 500 companies, small businesses, nonprofits, and government agencies on supply chain initiatives. Carla holds a BA in Production Operations/Supply Chain Management from Eastern Michigan University and an MS in Economics and Finance from the University of Detroit.



LUCIANO HERNANDEZ
CEO, Spirit Fire Lights

Luciano is a West-Michigan entrepreneur and graduated from Seidman College of Business at Grand Valley State University. He worked at the Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation as a student and was on the leadership team for CEO Club. After graduating, he worked at Corewell Health Innovations/Ventures (formerly Spectrum Health Innovations) as an intrapreneur and has since been running his company, Spirit Fire Lights.



JILL HINTON WOLFE
Founder - Combat Canines, LLC

Jill Hinton Wolfe, a U.S. Army vet and founder of Combat Canines, LLC, is a writer, entrepreneur, activist, and avid outdoorswoman who is visually impaired. She was named 2022 Student Veterans of America's Advisor of the Year and received the 2022 Mira fellowship. In 2021, she won the Michigan Veterans Affairs Agency's Veteran Educational Advocate of the Year award and served as GVSU's Veteran Entrepreneur in Residence. Jill has worked in corporate marketing, PR, and as an Army intelligence analyst. She is also Vice Chair of the Kent County Veterans Services Advisory Board and a lifetime member of the American Legion, VFW, and Women Veterans Alliance. Jill lives in Grand Rapids, MI, with her family and guide dog, Hannah.



MEAGAN MALM
Principal - Michigan Capital Network Ventures

Meagan Malm is a Principal at Michigan Capital Network Ventures (MCN) in Grand Rapids, Michigan. She holds a business degree from the University of Michigan, specializing in Strategy and Entrepreneurial Studies. After graduating in 2018, she received the Raoul Wallenberg Fellowship, conducting research in Tanzania on mobile micro-financial tools. Meagan joined MCN in 2020, where she oversees investment operations, portfolio management, and fundraising. She serves on the Michigan Venture Capital Association Talent Committee and the Photonicare Board of Directors. Meagan is a University of Michigan Hopwood Award winner, Ross School of Business Carson Scholar, and Fulbright Scholar.



KIM PASQUINO
Partner - Wakestream Ventures

Kim Pasquino is a Partner at Wakestream Ventures, a venture capital firm based in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Currently, Kim sits on the board of the Michigan Venture Capital Association. She sits on the boards of the following companies: Shoulder Innovations, Inductive Intelligence and Allie Burke, and is a board observer for Modalyst and Work Truck Solutions. Kim has a background in marketing, sales, and business development, and has strong relationship development skills. Prior to her seven years of experience in venture investing, she operated a business she launched and later sold.

**RAVI PATEL****President of GVSU C.E.O. Club**

Ravi Patel is a sophomore at the Seidman College of Business, pursuing a B.B.A. in Finance and Economics. His entrepreneurial journey began in high school through DECA, where he discovered his passion for business creation. Ravi won first place in the 2023 GVSU CEO Club Idea Pitch Competition and currently serves as President of the GVSU CEO Club, working to foster entrepreneurship on campus. His goal is to grow the club and engage more students in GVSU's entrepreneurial community.

**DONALD PATON****Partner – Retired, Datacomp Corp**

Donald Paton, a member of Grand Valley's first graduating class in 1967, was elected the first class president and has remained active in alumni boards, including serving as Alumni Association President for five years. Along with his wife Diane, a fellow alum, he established three scholarships at GVSU to emphasize the importance of giving back. After earning graduate credits at Western Michigan University, Don taught history, government, and economics at Coopersville High School for 10 years. In 1992, he co-founded Datacomp Appraisal Systems, the largest provider of manufactured home valuation reports, retiring as Executive Vice President in 2004. Don has also worked in insurance, medical, real estate, eldercare, and manufactured housing industries.

**RYAN VAUGHN****Leadership Coach, Inside Out**

Ryan Vaughn is an executive and leadership coach for entrepreneurs. His mission is to help entrepreneurs develop into their full potential as leaders and human beings. Prior to serving as a coach, Ryan founded and served as CEO of three companies over 15 years, the third of which he scaled into a market leader with 11 million users across 45 states. Ryan has raised over \$20m from leading VCs, built teams of over 100 world-class employees, and acquired or integrated nearly a dozen companies as part of market roll-ups. He's an avid writer, meditator, reader, athlete, father to two boys, husband, and adventurer. Ryan holds a MA in Communications from Grand Valley State University and a BFA in Creative Writing from Western Michigan University.

Thank you for your continuous support!



We could not do what we do without donors like you – thank you for believing in our mission and helping us make a positive impact on GVSU students as well as the entrepreneurial community.

Thank you!

Give Now!

The Richard M. and Helen DeVos Center for Entrepreneurship & Innovation (CEI), in the Seidman College of Business, is dedicated to developing best practices in entrepreneurship education and community engagement that enhance and impact the creation of new ventures and opportunities. Want to help us make an impact on more students and those in the entrepreneurial community? Give today!



**GRAND VALLEY
STATE UNIVERSITY**
RICHARD M. AND HELEN DEVOS
CENTER FOR
ENTREPRENEURSHIP & INNOVATION

**KEEP THE
CONNECTION
STRONG**

