

The Founder Times

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iowajpec.org

Edition 1

THIS JUST IN:

JPEC'S Most Wanted



There are entrepreneurs loose in Iowa City, and at the University of Iowa's John Pappajohn Entrepreneurial Center (JPEC) we have one mission: to find and empower the next generation of founders. Our most wanted? Students with ideas who are ready to turn vision into action.

At JPEC, entrepreneurship isn't a distant dream. It's a lived experience. The center has built a reputation as one of the Midwest's leading hubs for student innovation, offering the tools, funding, and mentorship needed to take ideas from classroom concepts to real-world ventures.

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Opportunities With JPEC

At The University of Iowa's John Pappajohn Entrepreneurial Center, you have the opportunity to develop and grow your entrepreneurial skills, so you can turn your dreams into reality. Whether you have an idea or want to contribute your skills to a team, there is a place for you at JPEC. You will have access to funding, coaching, and mentorship designed to help students from all majors across campus. Find out more about our specific opportunities for undergraduates on page 3.

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Upcoming events



Innovation Challenge Undergraduate

Monday, November 17, 2025 9:00am to 3:00pm
Bedell Entrepreneurship Learning Laboratory (BELL)



Innovation Challenge Awards

Wednesday, November 19, 2025, 5:00pm to 7:00pm
MERGE
136 South Dubuque Street, Iowa City

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JPEC'S Most Wanted



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JPEC alumni have gone on to launch companies, lead industries, and bring innovative ideas to communities across the country. What starts as a spark on campus often grows into a career-defining journey.

If you're a University of Iowa student with an idea or an interest in innovation, JPEC wants you. The center offers programs for every stage of the entrepreneurial journey, from early exploration to full-scale launch.

Whether you want to launch a startup, join a growing company, or bring innovation into your future career, JPEC helps you build the entrepreneurial mindset that makes it possible.

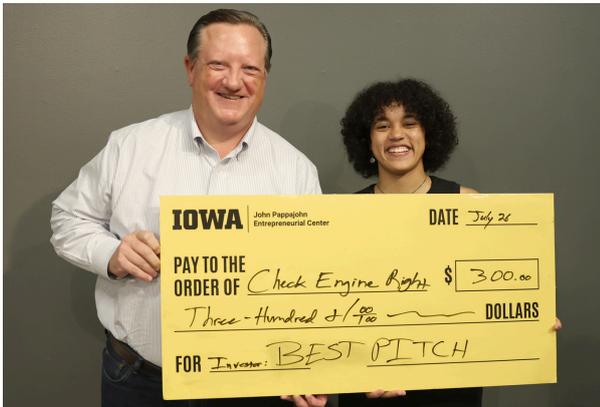
We offer University of Iowa students Hands-On Experience, Mentorship & Networking, and Funding & Competitions because it's not about waiting for the "right moment", it's about creating it.

Think you have what it takes? Visit iowajpec.org to learn more, sign up for programs, or pitch your next big idea.



Bet you didn't know... Java House started through JPEC

Tara Cronbaugh, founder of Java House in Iowa City, began her journey with JPEC at the University of Iowa as one of its earliest students in fall 1993. As a 20-year-old senior majoring in business, she enrolled in John Buchanan's entrepreneurship class within the Tippie College of Business, where she first developed her coffeehouse concept into a formal business plan. This class, part of JPEC's foundational programming, provided the structured framework for her idea, inspired by her travels to California coffee shops.



Undergraduate Opportunities with JPEC



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The University of Iowa JPEC offers countless opportunities for student ventures and creation through its many programs. If you are interested in starting a business, joining a team of founders, or looking for mentors, this is the place for you.

Academics

There are two pathways for undergraduate students to learn about entrepreneurship and become involved in JPEC, the first being academic. You can get a BBA in Entrepreneurial Leadership or a BA in Management on the Entrepreneurial track to study entrepreneurship. The classes are curated for student learning and real-world application of the skillset needed for entrepreneurship.

While it is important to understand the entrepreneurial mindset, all majors are encouraged to join JPEC! Our team is always looking for students with ideas, and if you don't have an idea, we still want you. JPEC is all about collaboration, learning, and applying your skills to real-world ventures.

Student Incubator

Our other opportunity is a program directly through JPEC, called the Student Incubator. It is open to all undergraduates and all majors. Whether you are an engineering, biology, or communication major, if you have an idea for a business or you want to start the creative process, then this is the program for you. The student incubator provides seed money, mentors, coaches, and everything else you need to start a business. Currently, there are 60 student teams that have businesses because of the incubator program. You don't have to have an idea; you just have to be willing to take that next step.

Startup Games

Still not convinced? Join Startup Games! It is a weekend retreat where students from all over campus work in teams to create business ideas and compete for over \$2,500 in cash prizes. During this event, you have the opportunity to team up with other students, get hands-on experience with entrepreneurship, and network with mentors and local entrepreneurs. If you don't have an idea, there is always a team that wants your skills to help bring the idea to life. If you are interested in entrepreneurship but unsure of where to start, this is the perfect opportunity for you!

There is so much opportunity for learning, collaboration, and growth within JPEC. We want you to succeed and we are committed to working with you and helping you secure all resources needed to launch your business. SO take that next step and join JPEC so you too can become a founder of the next generation.

QUIZ!

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Find out what type of entrepreneur YOU are!



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Q&A with Joshua

Looking back, what personal or professional growth have you seen in yourself since starting this venture?

I've got smarter and more mature I would say.

How has your time with JPEC shaped the way you approach entrepreneurship and leadership?

Showing me its not a solo game but it's a community that is all there to help you and vice versa.

When you first joined JPEC, what were your goals or expectations?

I wanted to meet likeminded people to learn from and get a base knowledge of how to grow and scale a business.

Learn about JPEC's history - pg. 8

Student Success Stories

Joshua Cohen

Joshua Cohen is one of four founders of SeatStock, a student ticket marketplace company. Launched by University of Iowa students, SeatStock has spilled into seven other major schools including Penn State and Indiana. Cohen says that launching SeatStock at Ole Miss in 2024 put into perspective the amount of traction it has gotten and that it "was not just a product for Iowa students but nationwide."

A major factor for creating SeatStock was University of Iowa's John Pappajohn Entrepreneurial Center (JPEC). JPEC had been a huge help in the startup of the business, even just giving them office space to work in was huge said Cohen. "The mentorship through the BELL was great as well as meeting successful entrepreneurs who just want to help others and see us succeed."

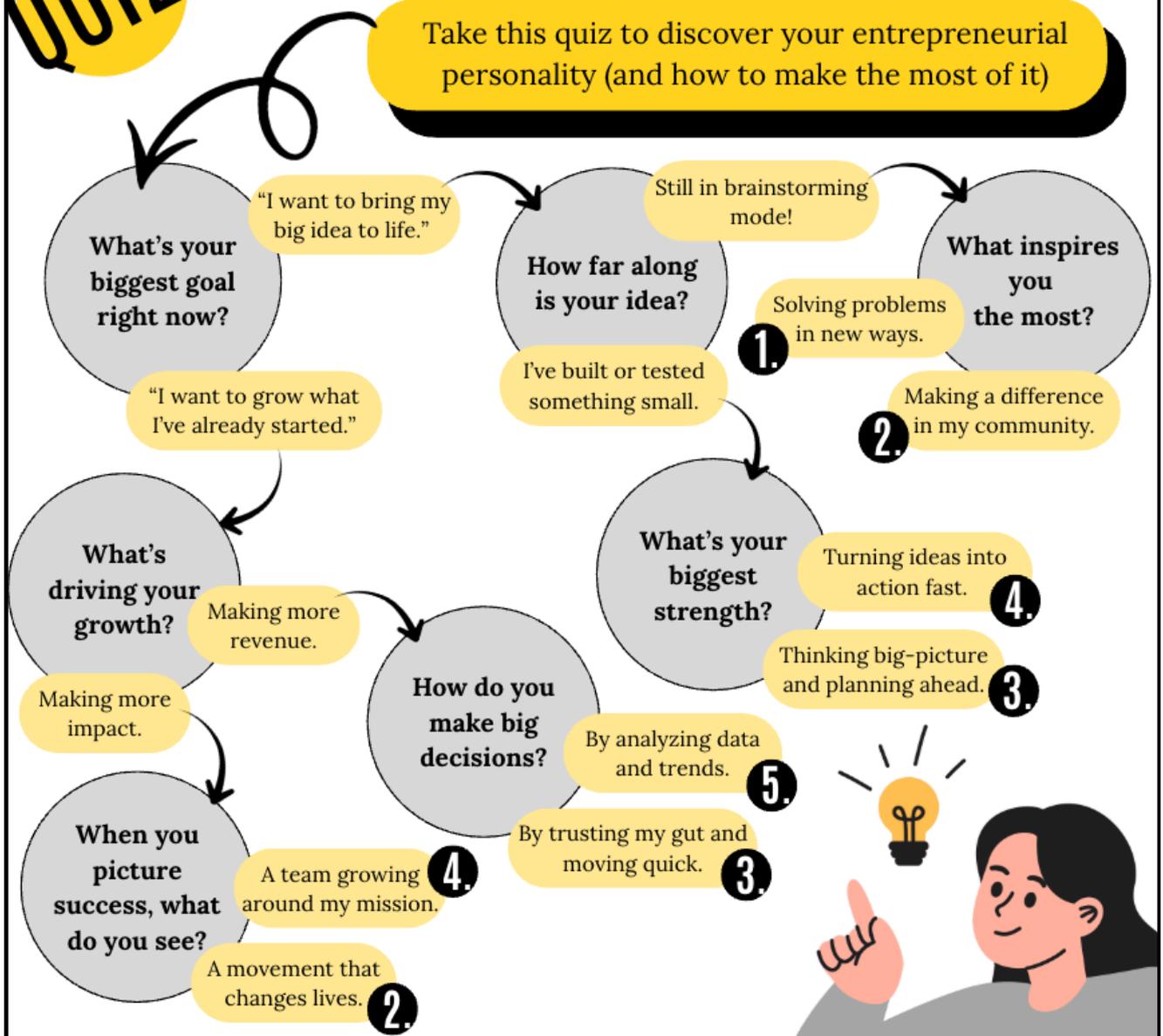
With great success comes challenges, which the boys surely faced. One big challenge for Cohen was the coding aspect of the business.

"Building teams, since I don't code, I needed to find an engineer to join us and it took forever but we stayed persistent and found Brandon who's an excellent engineer and great person. Someone who now I consider a good friend as well"

When asked about advice for other students thinking about creating a startup business, Cohen says to "be disciplined and don't give up, there will be a lot of things that go wrong in the beginning more than things will go right but if you have a vision for the startup you can move past the obstacles."

QUIZ! What Type Of Entrepreneur Are You?

Take this quiz to discover your entrepreneurial personality (and how to make the most of it)



- 1. The Innovator**
 You're fueled by ideas and creativity. You thrive on exploring what's next. Focus on validating your ideas early and finding partners who complement your skill set.
- 2. The Social Entrepreneur**
 You care deeply about people and purpose. You build businesses that make an impact. Just remember: profit fuels purpose, so don't shy away from strong business models.
- 3. The Hustler**
 You make things happen. You learn by doing and never back down from a challenge. Be sure to balance speed with strategy so your efforts scale sustainably.
- 4. The Visionary**
 You see the big picture and inspire others to join in. Double down on leadership and communication – your ideas take off when others believe in them too.
- 5. The Strategist**
 You're methodical and data-driven. You plan before you leap and know how to execute efficiently. Stay open to risks and creativity (that's where your next breakthrough lies).



How to Overcome Failure



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Have you ever thought about starting a business but decided not to because you were afraid of failure? If you have, you are not alone. Failure is something everyone experiences, whether it's school, work, or personal goals. Nobody starts as an expert, especially when stepping into something new and unfamiliar. At JPEC, failure isn't something to fear but instead something to learn and grow from.

Failure is often a misunderstood concept. It can be easy to see it as a negative reflection of who we are, but in reality, it's just a part of the process. Every entrepreneur, creator, and innovator has faced setbacks in their journey. What separates successful people from the rest is that they know how to respond when they do fail.

Shift Your Perspective

The first step in overcoming failure is to change how you view it. When something doesn't go as planned, it's natural to feel disappointed. Labeling yourself as a "failure" after one setback can prevent you from seeing the bigger picture.

Failure does not define who you are, it refines you. It's an opportunity to identify what didn't work, make adjustments, and grow stronger for the next attempt at your goals. At JPEC, students are encouraged to embrace failure as a stepping stone toward success. Every mistake offers valuable feedback that can help guide your next steps.

Process and Persevere

Another key to overcoming failure is learning how to process it in a healthy way. It is normal to feel frustrated, upset, or uncomfortable in situations where you feel like a failure. The important thing to remember is to not get stuck in that mindset. Reflect on what happened, understand why it happened, and use that knowledge to improve.

Remember, progress isn't a straight line. People who achieve great things are ones who often fail the most, but never give up. Remind yourself failure isn't final, it's feedback.

Quick Tips



Set Goals



Ask for Feedback



Learn From Mistakes



Acknowledge Hard Work



Remind Yourself Why You Started

Meet the Team

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Adam Keune JPEC Executive Director

Keune became the second executive director in the history of Iowa JPEC in August 2024. The dynamic and visionary executive has extensive experience in building and scaling companies, driving growth, and leading diverse teams.

A native of Cedar Rapids, Iowa, Keune attended Kirkwood Community College in 2005-06 before transferring to the University of Iowa, where he studied business and entrepreneurship from 2006-10.

After graduating, Keune's involvement deepened when he co-founded Higher Learning Technologies (HLT) in 2012, crediting JPEC for its instrumental role in launching and scaling the EdTech company, which grew to serve 30 million users worldwide.

He rejoined JPEC formally in 2018 as an advisory board member, offering mentorship through programs like the Venture Mentoring Service, and escalated to Entrepreneur-in-Residence in October 2023, where he developed innovative acceleration initiatives for high-potential startups.

This culminated in his appointment as Executive Director in August 2024, allowing him to give back by expanding JPEC's impact on student and faculty ventures, including launching the Hawkeye Venture Fund to provide funding and mentorship. Keune has described this full-circle path—from student to leader—as a way to deliver the same opportunities he received, emphasizing JPEC's role in fostering Iowa's entrepreneurial ecosystem.

Key responsibilities include directing mentorship programs like the Venture Mentoring Service, launching the Hawkeye Venture Fund (a new investment vehicle providing seed funding and guidance to high-potential ventures), and enhancing acceleration tracks for startups in tech, biotech, and social impact.

Keune prioritizes hands-on support, such as pitch competitions (IdeaStorm) and incubator cohorts, while serving on advisory boards to connect UI talent with investors. His goal is to make JPEC a "full-circle" hub, helping entrepreneurs from ideation to scaling, much like it did for him and founders like Tara Cronbaugh of Java House.

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JPEC Through the Years

Excellence from the first founders

John Pappajohn was an entrepreneur and venture capitalist raised in Iowa who was dedicated to keeping entrepreneurship flourishing in the state.

In 1996, John and Mary Pappajohn donated \$1.5 million to the University of Iowa to establish the John Pappajohn Entrepreneurial Center (JPEC).

Along with the University of Iowa's JPEC, he also funded entrepreneurial centers at four other Iowa universities.

Since then, the University of Iowa JPEC has awarded 3.15 million dollars to Iowa startups, along with playing a part in over 2,500 Iowa startups.

JPEC has helped so many individuals over the years. One of the most prominent businesses they have had a part in was

The John Pappajohn Entrepreneurial Center is a catalyst for entrepreneurship in Iowa and is ready to teach and support innovators!

Time to make your mark!



What's your BIG Idea?

