

The Founder Times

12/10/2025

iowajpec.org

Edition 2

THIS JUST IN:

JPEC'S Most Wanted



The University of Iowa's John Pappajohn Entrepreneurial Center is searching for donors and mentors who believe in building the next generation of leaders.

Across the University of Iowa campus, there is constant creativity. Students are not just studying; they are actively coming up with groundbreaking ideas with the potential to launch high-growth companies, transform industries, and bring sustainability to our communities. However, no great idea can be brought to life alone.

That's where you come in.

PG. 2

Student Success

University of Iowa student and entrepreneur, Taylor Myers, created The Opportunity Project in 2024. From starting in a classroom to navigating steps of creating a company through JPEC, Myers has learned what being an entrepreneur really means.

PG. 4



Upcoming events



Venture School

Tuesday, Nov. 18, 2025, 5:30-9:00 pm
UI Bioventures Center



Iowa JPEC Innovation and Entrepreneurship Honors

Wednesday, April 1, 2026, 2:00-4 :00pm
Old Capitol Museum

Get in contact

iowajpec@uiowa.edu

319.335.1022

21 East Market Street
PBB S160

JPEC'S Most Wanted



Listen online
iowajpec.org

Your Role in JPEC's Success

The John Pappajohn Entrepreneurial Center is looking for accomplished business leaders, University of Iowa alumni, and seasoned innovators. We invite you to formally join our mission to inspire, educate, and empower student entrepreneurs.

By investing your most valuable resources: your time, your expertise, or your financial capital, you directly participate in transforming raw student ambition into real-world, measurable economic and social impact.

Two Decades of Driving Economic Growth

For more than two decades, JPEC has stood as a central, driving force behind entrepreneurship education, high-impact innovation, and regional economic development across the state of Iowa.

Our nationally recognized programs have provided the foundational framework for thousands of students and community members, helping them to successfully launch sustainable startups, pursue impactful new ventures, and bring truly creative, market-ready solutions to life.

In the rapidly evolving business world, the need for experienced mentorship and reliable financial support has never been greater.

The Lasting Effect of Support

Every dollar and every hour you dedicate to JPEC creates a measurable, lasting ripple effect that extends far beyond the university.

Donor support directly funds startup seed grants, high-stakes pitch competitions, merit-based scholarships, and entrepreneurial internships that provide real-world business experience.

Mentorship provides students with crucial industry connections and the knowledge that can only be gained through guided expertise.

Together, these combined resources create far more than just successful, financially viable startups. They create confident, capable leaders with the skills, drive, and vision to strengthen Iowa's economy and enrich our communities.

The John Pappajohn Entrepreneurial Center is committed to more than simply teaching students how to dream big. We are dedicated to providing them with the tools, capital, and guidance to confidently build and execute those dreams.

If you are ready to invest in Iowa's future founders and cement your legacy in the state's economic landscape, visit iowajpec.org today to become a mentor, donor, or corporate partner.



Opportunities for Graduate Students with JPEC

 Listen online
iowajpec.org

Here at JPEC, we have programs specifically curated for graduate students, faculty, and staff seeking to launch a new business. Starting a new business is difficult, especially alone. That is why at JPEC, we offer entrepreneurial training, venture support, and connections with our vast network of experts to help your business succeed.

Venture School

If you are ready to launch a startup in Iowa or you are an established business leader seeking innovation, Venture School is your next step. Offered through JPEC, this program is equipped with hands-on learning and experimentation so that you can learn while building your business.

The Venture School program offers a unique, hands-on learning experience tailored to your entrepreneurial goals. Throughout the process, you will have the opportunity to engage with customers, partners, and competitors, while navigating the unpredictable nature of entrepreneurship.

Additionally, we make the program convenient for you, with state-wide hubs,

an extensive mentorship and networking pool, and real-world learning techniques that we implement to help you become a successful entrepreneur. Applications are open year round.

Scale Accelerator Program

After finishing Venture School, if your startup is of high potential, you can participate in the Scale Accelerator program. This elite program is the gateway to national recognition for your startup business. You will have access to CEO-level training, investment assistance, your own team of student interns, and more. By being admitted to the program, JPEC views your startup or idea as one that is deemed to be successful.

NSF I-Corps

On the other hand, if you are looking for a short-term program, we offer a three-week version of Venture School, NSF I-Corps. It is designed to help faculty, staff, and students develop ideas to begin the startup process. If you have research that you are ready to turn into a business, this is for you. The workshop process gives you an introduction to entrepreneurial ideology and helps you apply it to your research.

The goal is to leave the workshop with your research turned into a business idea that will be viable in today's market. At the end of the workshop, you are encouraged to apply to the national NSF I-Corps program, where you will be eligible to get up to \$50,000 in funding for your startup.

For any student, faculty, or staff member who is pursuing a business idea, you have the option to apply for a business consulting team or for student interns through JPEC. We are here to offer support throughout your entrepreneurial process.



 Listen online
iowajpec.org

Q&A with JPEC Faculty

What advice would you give to students considering getting involved with JPEC for the first time?

My advice is simple: *just do it!* There are so many ways to get involved—through events, classes, speakers, or simply by connecting with instructors. Start asking questions, meet people, and explore what's available.

–**Kimm Harris**

Associate Professor of Practice
Management & Entrepreneurship

What are the key skills or mindsets students develop through JPEC that help them succeed after graduation?

It starts with the entrepreneurial mindset—something EVERY organization seeks in their employees/team members. Second—professionalism and maturity; students in the Iowa JPEC program will have developed stronger communication, listening, and networking skills that will be highly valued by employers, investors, and other professionals. Third, how to apply innovation and creativity in all situations—making them adaptable and focused on creating value in everything they do. Finally, confidence to step outside their comfort zone to engage, learn, and take calculated risks.

–**David K. Hensley**

Clinical Professor and Assistant DEO in Management & Entrepreneurship
Department, Tippie College of Business

Student Success Stories

Taylor Myers

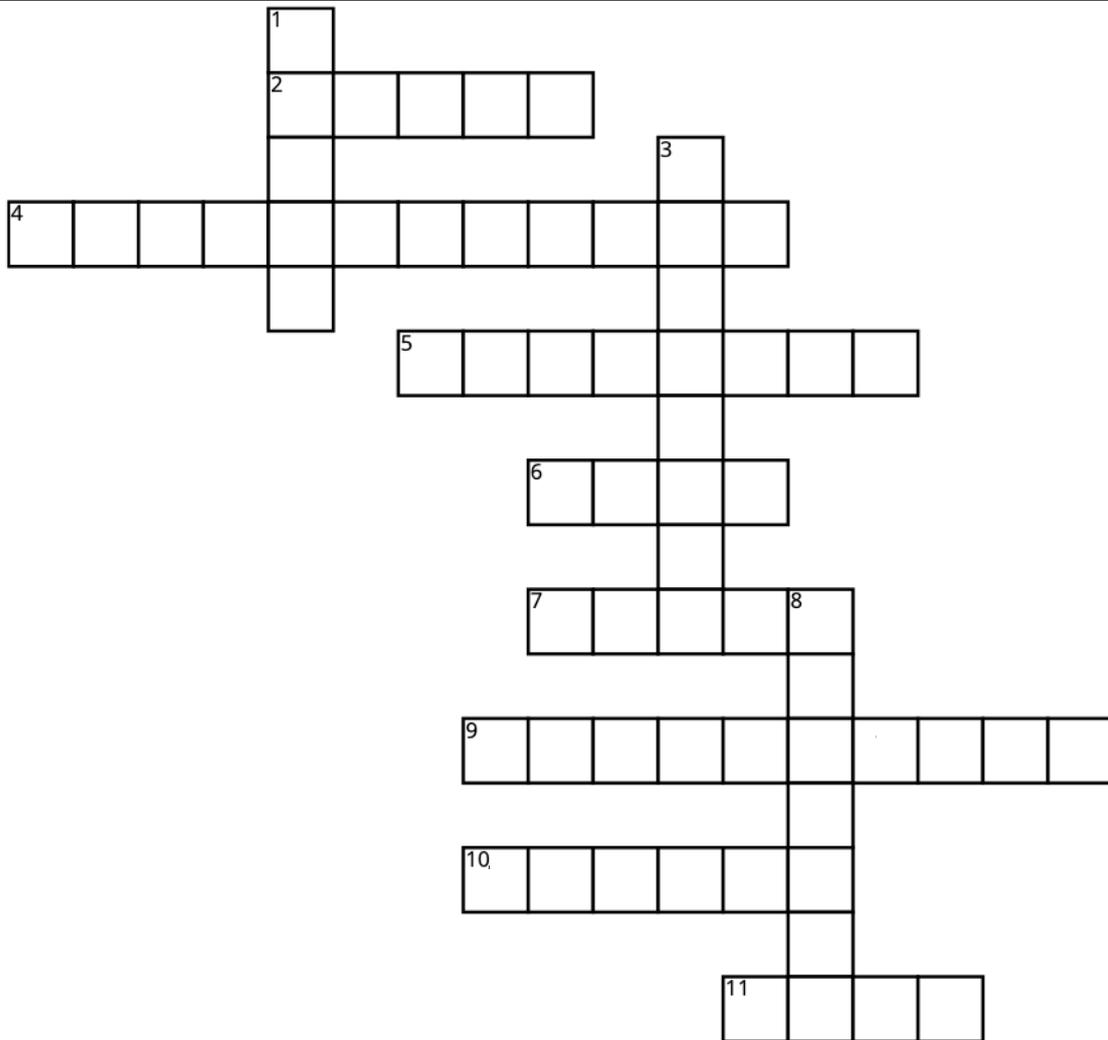
The Opportunity Project is an innovative platform that uses AI assessments of students' skills and interests to highlight professional and academic routes. JPEC student, Taylor Myers, created The Opportunity Project in October 2024 after Professor Joseph Sulentic encouraged Myers to participate in a pitch competition where eventually she won third place. By continuing her research, Myers created her company to show students that they are able to do what they love. She quickly discovered that the need was huge. When she talked to people, she learned that many students felt lost, and many adults regretted choosing careers for money over passion.

Myers credits JPEC as her greatest source of support. "Not only have they connected me with the right people, but they have given me a space to build, a community to bounce ideas off of, and they've opened the doors to events, networking, and even marketing assistance that I don't think I could've found/done on my own" Myers said in regards to JPEC's help.

The moment she knew her project was working wasn't when she made a sale, but rather when she saw her company's AI tool in action. "If this helps one person find joy or success in their future, then I have done my job." With moments of success also comes moments of failure, Myers says she "learned that the only way you fail is by giving up." Myers combated those feelings of giving up with pivoting, changing, and adjusting to discouragement to come out stronger.

Looking back, there has been space for personal and professional growth in the past year for Myers. The most important personal growth for Myers was letting go of the pressure to build a "multi million dollar company" and be in the mindset of helping others. Her focus shifted from making money to making a difference. Myers says it's just as important to know she has created something that just sits on the internet and helps one person a year. She says she "started this to change the world, and that starts with a single person."

Entrepreneurial Crossword



Across

- 2. The person who created a business
- 4. A person who organizes and operates a business
- 5. A business that sells products to consumers
- 6. A new concept or solution
- 7. Uncertainties entrepreneurs accept when starting a venture
- 9. The period when a startup is developed and supported

10. A financial gain after costs are subtracted

11. The hub for entrepreneurship education and outreach at the University of Iowa

Down

- 1. A common way to measure revenue
- 3. An organization that sells goods or services
- 8. A newly formed business



An Startup's Resilience

Jonathan Brown's story

 Listen online
iowajpec.org

The journey of a startup is often marked by late nights, learning curves, and setbacks.

The story of Archaneon Supplements, which aimed to "up the game" by designing "top-tier supplements for gym rats who deserved the highest of quality," is a prime example of this.

Their passion to become the best version of themselves and frustration with the current supplement market ignited their entrepreneurial spark. But passion alone doesn't guarantee success.

University of Iowa Junior Jonathan Brown, a member of the Archaneon team, said the greatest initial hurdle isn't the competition or the market, it's the internal challenge of managing a new lifestyle. Something that he said led to setbacks and failures on their journey. However, the same setbacks led to the group's success.

"Failure is one of the most important parts of the process. If I could fail over and over again, I would, and I would fail fast," Brown said, "Failing is the best way to learn. If you never fail, how will you ever progress?"

To get the most out of failure, an entrepreneur must embrace it. When asked what he would change if he had to start over, Brown said he would fail faster and fail more.

While the courage to fail must come from within, the support to manage those setbacks is equally important. The John Pappajohn Entrepreneurial Center (JPEC) provides essential support for student entrepreneurs.

"Most of their help was behind the scenes, but those things are sometimes what matters most. JPEC was our backbone, supporting us through every phase of our journey," Brown said.

Providing space, mentorship, and capital for failure is what allows student entrepreneurs to test, break, and rebuild their ideas without taking on the full cost of a market failure.

"The best advice I can give to someone looking to start their own entrepreneurial venture is to stop waiting. Stop waiting to sign up with JPEC, stop waiting to share your idea. It may seem like an impossible task at first, but once you start, the progress will happen faster than you think. If you have an idea right now, go sign up. Go turn that idea into reality," Brown said.



Bet you didn't know... Unbreakable Female Athlete started Through JPEC

Jaecee Hall launched Unbreakable Female Athlete in 2022 as a UI student-athlete and scaled it through Iowa JPEC's mentorship, free legal/tax guidance, and the Bedell incubator. She won \$4,000 at the 2023 Innovation Challenge (undergrad non-tech category) and was named Undergraduate Student Startup of the Year. JPEC support helped turn her TikTok-viral T-shirt into a global brand with international sales and media features.

Meet the Team

 Listen online
iowajpec.org



Dana Rupe
Director

Dana Rupe, an entrepreneurial leader with more than 20 years of experience launching and scaling businesses, has been named director of the University of Iowa John Pappajohn Entrepreneurial Center (Iowa JPEC) in June 2025.

Rupe, a native of Eddyville, Iowa, brings a strong track record building and scaling apparel and sports brands. Her portfolio includes founding and leading ventures such as the women's activewear brand Alex + Abby and Daden Group, an apparel licensing vehicle for the industry. Rupe also co-founded Valley Apparel, which became a key licensing partner with adidas, for the National Football League (NFL), Major League Baseball (MLB), the National Basketball Association (NBA), and more than 300 collegiate teams. After the company was acquired by adidas, she served as vice president of their team division, leading product development, international sourcing, and sales.

At the University of Iowa, Rupe recently served as an adjunct instructor, teaching social media marketing for fashion and lifestyle brands in the School of Journalism and Mass Communication. A frequent guest lecturer and mentor, she is dedicated to creating experiential learning opportunities that connect students with the real world of entrepreneurship.

Rupe holds a Master of Science degree in textiles and clothing from Iowa State University and a Bachelor of Science in fashion merchandising and consumer studies from the University of Arizona.



Janice Baldes, Director,
Startup Incubator

Janice Baldes is director of the Iowa JPEC Startup Incubator. She was the founder and CEO of BAGOLITAS, a direct sales company that redefined women across the United States through the handbag they carried. Baldes is an established entrepreneur, trained leadership and life coach, active member of the corridor ecosystem, and passionate about entrepreneurship. It is her greatest joy to help.

As Director of the Iowa JPEC Startup Incubator—a key program within the University of Iowa's JPEC that supports early-stage startups through resources, coaching, and acceleration—Janice Baldes leads efforts to nurture innovators from ideation to launch. She oversees incubator tracks, including summer programs that culminate in Demo Days where participants pitch to investors and stakeholders. Baldes serves as a coach for high-profile events like IdeaStorm, the university's annual student pitch competition, providing guidance on business model refinement, pitching skills, and market validation.

Her work emphasizes experiential learning, collaboration across the entrepreneurial ecosystem, and integrating classroom instruction with hands-on mentoring to help students, alumni, and community members realize their entrepreneurial goals. She frequently engages in public outreach, such as discussions on how entrepreneurship enriches personal and professional lives, as highlighted during Global Entrepreneurship Week.



John Pappajohn Entrepreneurial Center

Steps to Success



Turn Ideas into Execution with JPEC



University of Iowa JPEC is here to help you every step of the way. If you do not know where to start, start here. Reach out to us at any time, whether you have an idea or not.

We are here to help, and we want you to become a founder of the next generation.

1. Start the creative process by identifying a problem within your community.

2. Create a proposition. What are you offering? How will your idea help people?

3. Conduct market research. Understand your target market and figure out what sets you apart from your competitors.

4. Secure funding. Determine your start-up costs and see what resources there are to help you.

5. Join UIowa JPEC, we will help you launch your start-up business in Iowa!