

2024-2025 Annual Report

Summer Recap: July-August

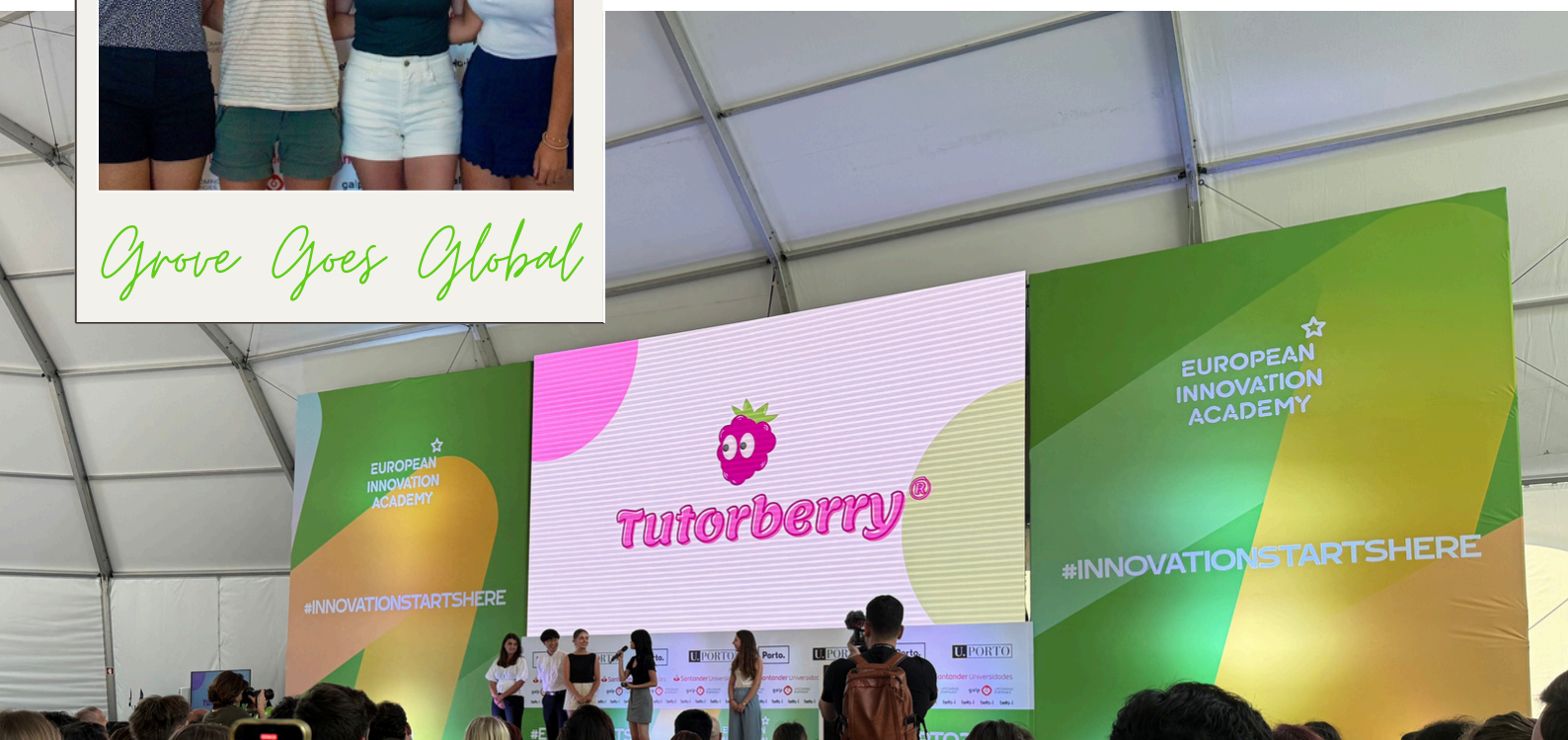
Christian Economic Forum (CEF)

In July 2024, the **Christian Economic Forum's Global Event** in Quebec City explored how faith and entrepreneurship can intersect in higher education. The Center for L.I.F.E. sponsored seven undergraduate students from five institutions (Calvin University, Cedarville University, Grove City College, Lipscomb University, and Miami University) to attend. These students engaged with faith-driven business leaders and investors tackling global challenges ranging from AI to food security. Grove City College was represented by **Andrew Coy '26**.



European Innovation Academy (EIA)

The European Innovation Academy (EIA) offers students a three-week immersion in entrepreneurial thinking and action in Porto, Portugal. In this fast-paced program, students join multi-cultural teams with peers from around the globe to design, build, and launch a business—start to finish—in just 21 days!



Practicing Entrepreneurship in Porto, Portugal



In 2024, four Grove City College students attended the full European Innovation Academy, and E+I Marketing + Operations Manager Logan Hammerschmitt '16 attended key events to learn more about the program. **Karis Mall '25, Leyla Zwolinski '27, Emily Haught '27, and Megan Dewing '26** each had the opportunity to join a team of students from around the globe for the duration of the three-week experience. One student, Karis, even had her own idea (an in-home art therapy program) selected by her peers to work on throughout the program.



Leyla Zwolinski '27 was part of the Tutorberry team (pictured above), which earned a spot among the Top Ten pitches at EIA. The team presented their idea to an audience of hundreds, receiving an enthusiastic response. Well done, Leyla—we're so proud of you!



Highlights: Our Biggest Year Yet!

Logan Hammerschmitt '16

E+I Marketing + Operations Manager



Emma O'Toole '23

E+I Community Manager



Yvonne J. English '97

**E+I Executive Director + EIR
Professor of Practice**



Lynn Bashew '84

E+I Program Manager



This year, our academic calendar was bursting at the seams with more events, competitions, and programs than ever!

After a whirlwind year, taking a moment to reflect reminds us just how many amazing experiences we've enjoyed.

Emma O'Toole '23, E+I Community Manager: One of my favorite memories is consistently witnessing the personal and professional growth of our students. I've had the privilege of supporting them through their internships and college journeys, watching their passions take shape and flourish. It is exciting to see the E+I Fellows program continue to expand its reach, engaging students from a wide range of majors and backgrounds and fostering a vibrant community of innovators and changemakers.

Logan Hammerschmitt '16, E+I Marketing + Operations Manager: One of my favorite memories from this past year, and perhaps from all of my time with E+I, was putting together a video to show our gratitude to President Paul J. McNulty, who announced he would retire at the conclusion of this school year. Looking back on the moments we shared with Paul and the support he has provided us over the years was emotional, and certainly made me proud to have worked under his administration.

Lynn Bashew '84, E+I Program Manager: As I reflect on this past year, I marvel at the amazing growth of E+I...from the increasing popularity of the E+I Fellows program to the number of alumni and friends involved in our student programs/competitions to our expanding E+I Team and to the increased recognition of E+I as a valuable resource to the entire campus community and beyond. E+I continues to serve in wonderful ways with hope for a bright future!

Yvonne J. English '97, E+I Executive Director and Entrepreneur in Residence: This year was all about momentum for E+I. In March, we welcomed Robb Myer as Assistant Director, and he's already making a big impact. My top highlights? The Wolverine Venture Battle (complete with Paul's ceremonial bobblehead!), another stellar year for our E+I Fellows, and launching Redemptive Pittsburgh with our first Pittsburgh Redemptive Business Lab in May. And trust me—we're just getting warmed up!

Mixing Things Up To Take E+I To New Heights



The spring semester marked a season of change for the E+I team. With Logan Hammerschmitt '16 relocating to Virginia and transitioning into the role of E+I Marketing + Operations Manager, we welcomed a new team member to help the Center continue to grow. We're thrilled to introduce our new E+I Assistant Director, Robb Myer!

Robb joins the E+I team after years of experience in the higher education and startup spaces. Perhaps most notably, Robb was a member of the founding team at NoWait, a company that was acquired by Yelp in 2017 for \$40 million.

"I'm excited to join the Entrepreneurship + Innovation team because I believe deeply in the transformative power of redemptive entrepreneurship to address what is broken in our world. I am eager to serve and equip students, alumni, and community founders who think differently about what, why, and how they create for others. I am deeply grateful for the opportunity to contribute to building a community around these principles and practices in the Pittsburgh ecosystem and beyond." - Robb Myer

Please join us in giving Robb a warm welcome as he becomes an integral part of the GCC campus community!



August Kickoff: E+I Open House

To kick off the fall semester, E+I held an open house in the Habbershon Family Innovation Zone. Students and faculty of all majors were invited to attend and learn about our offerings and programming while enjoying refreshments, community, and fun.



Students enjoyed the opportunity to spin the prize wheel for some E+I swag, and all in attendance got the chance to spin and win a prize!

The event drew a larger crowd than last year, demonstrating a growing interest in the Center for Entrepreneurship + Innovation programming.



Homecoming



venture VILLAGE

The always-popular Venture Village tent at Homecoming was a hit! Hundreds of alumni and friends filled the **1600 square foot tent** to chat with former classmates, learn about everything E+I has to offer, and explore the **12 student and alumni businesses** on display from the E-Commerce class and beyond. We have estimated that over **500 individuals** visited the tent, and the beautiful weather made for a wonderful experience for all!

Major Collaboration with STEM



SAFR CHALLENGE

PHYSICS INNOVATION COMPETITION
AT GROVE CITY COLLEGE



Partnering with **Dr. Shane Brower** of GCC's **Department of Physics**, E+I hosted the **3rd Annual SAFR Challenge**—a high-stakes competition challenging students to design innovative helmets aimed at reducing concussions in wheeled recreation. Teams put their creativity and engineering skills to the test, vying for cash prizes in a spirited and tightly contested event.

Bill Strickland

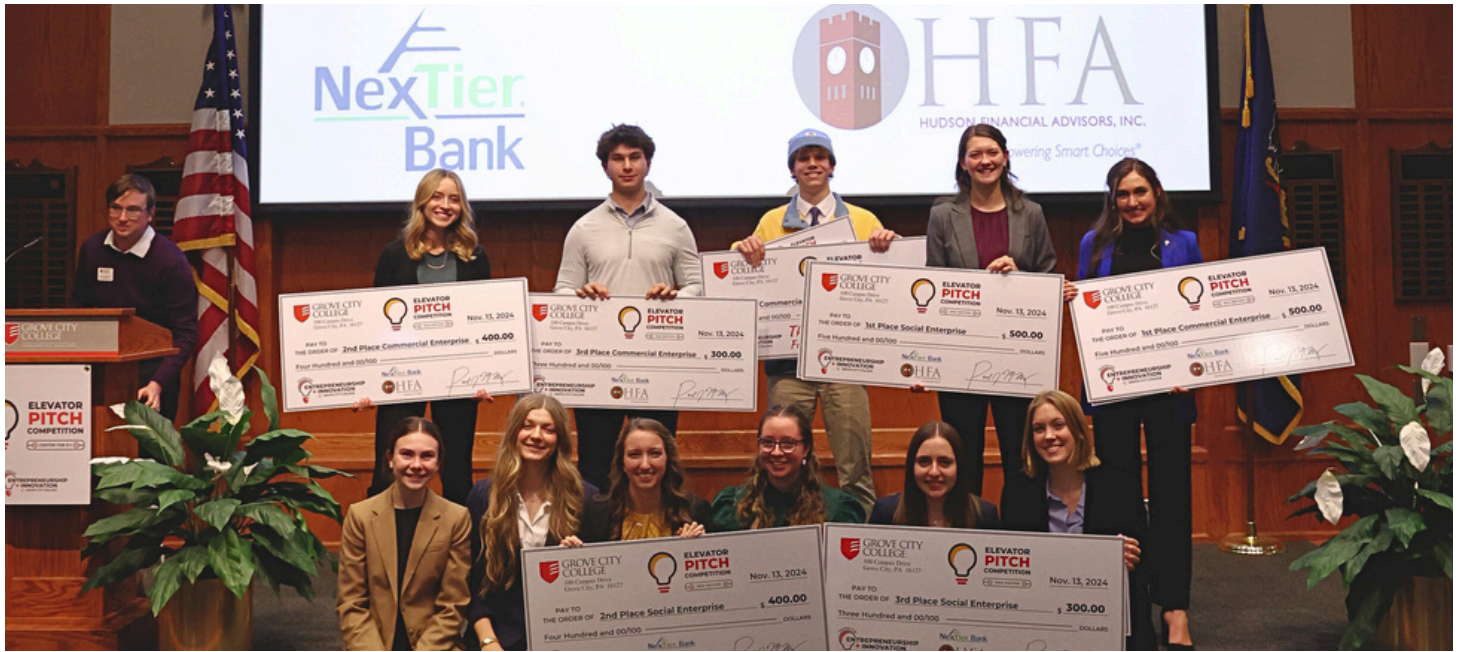
The Art of Leadership



RICHARD G. STALEY '62 **VISIONARY** ENTREPRENEUR SPEAKER SERIES

This fall, E+I welcomed **Bill Strickland**, world-renowned social innovator, MacArthur “Genius” Fellow, and Founder & Executive Chairman of Manchester Bidwell Corporation, for the **Richard G. Staley '62 Visionary Entrepreneur Speaker Series**. Bill recounted how, as a college student in Pittsburgh in 1968, he began teaching pottery to neighborhood youth as a way to keep them off the streets. That modest program became the seed for a network of award-winning arts and vocational training centers now operating across the U.S., Puerto Rico, Canada, and Israel.

A recipient of the Goi Peace Award and more than 25 honorary doctorates, Bill has spent over five decades proving that beauty, hope, and opportunity can change the trajectory of a life. His story of transforming thousands of lives through education, culture, and dignity left the audience inspired to dream bigger and believe that the impossible is, in fact, possible.



18th Annual EPC

Our largest ever!



The 18th Annual Elevator Pitch Competition was enjoyed by all in attendance. Participation was high with **169 excited students** from **30 different majors** entering the competition. Then, **75 generous reviewers** helped to narrow the field to **19 incredible finalists** who went on to compete live for a shot at **over \$7,600 in prize money** thanks to the amazingly generous sponsorship of Hudson Financial Advisors and NexTier Bank. This year's judging panel was expanded to include **five judges**: Jason Burt '00 (Grove City College Office of Development), Lori Brinker '96 (Merrill Lynch), Dan Sumner (Westinghouse), Mitch McFeely (NexTier Bank), and Chris Camp (Fun Fore All). The judging panel selected the winners from each category (Commercial and Social Enterprise), but it certainly wasn't easy. In addition, there were several special prizes awarded. Dorene Powell awarded the Social Impact Prize on behalf of the Grove City Foundation (an affiliate of the Community Foundation of W. PA & E. OH), Jason Burt awarded the Hudson Financial Advisors Prize, and Daniel Thompson presented the Commercial Innovation Prize on behalf of the Thompson Family Fund. In a surprise revealed at the Finals, the Thompson Family Fund also provided funds to increase the prizes for all finalists.

The final round, held on November 13, 2024 in Sticht Lecture Hall, was so well-attended that an overflow room was required when **over 300 individuals** showed up to cheer on the finalists. A whopping **650 viewers** tuned in online, and **over 525 individuals cast their vote** for the Fan Favorite Prize!



Commercial Enterprise Winners

1st Place: Lauren Deleonardis '28
HandSong (\$750)

2nd Place: Audrey Karwowski '26
InSight (\$550)

3rd Place (Tie): Gavin Rhodes '28
Chameleon Boots (\$400)

3rd Place (Tie): Ian Martti '27
The Ball Marker Pen (\$400)



Commercial Innovation Prize

Gavin Rhodes '28
Chameleon Boots (\$500)



Social Enterprise Winners

1st Place: Sarah Karns '28
Play It Forward (\$750)

2nd Place (Tie): Eleni Kasianides '26
SproutRoute (\$550)

2nd Place (Tie): Karis Mall '25
Canvas Care (\$550)

3rd Place (Tie): Abigail Mason '25
First 3 (\$400)

3rd Place (Tie): Emily Haught '27
SocialPal (\$400)



Social Impact Prize

Sarah Karns '28
Play It Forward (\$500)



Hudson Financial Advisors Prize

Audrey Karwowski '26
InSight (\$1000)



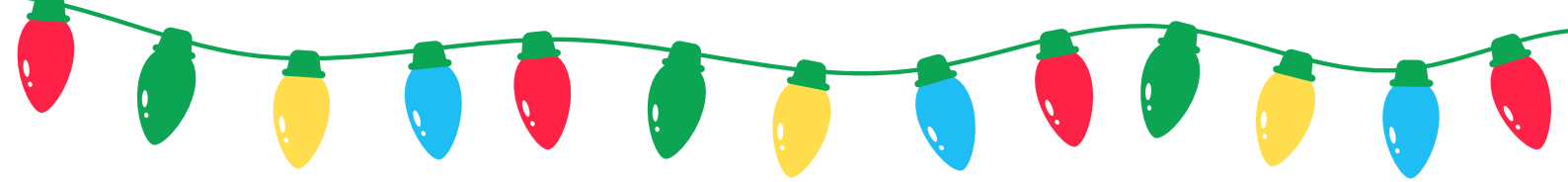
Fan Favorite

Gavin Rhodes '28
Chameleon Boots (\$125)



Sponsored by:





A Very Merry Christmas from E+I!

During a joyful Christmas season, we were able to distribute our Christmas cards (with artwork from GCC student Caleb Einolf '26) far and wide to raise awareness of E+I and to thank our supporters and partners. We are grateful for everyone who supports, contributes, or has been part of our programming over the past 20+ years!



E+I FOUNDERS

The E+I Founders program is **a unique subset** of our E+I Fellows cohort. Members of the E+I Founders program are some of **the most promising up-and-coming entrepreneurs Grove City College has to offer**, and, as such, the application process for this program is highly selective. Once approved, student founders **earn \$25 per hour** for an approved number of hours per week (up to 20 hours) **to work on their own startup**. This program is designed to alleviate the need for early-stage founders, who may be pre-revenue, to take on additional work just to keep the lights on at the company they are building. In the fall of 2024, the E+I Founders program selected one student founder to participate.



"This semester has been the most productive yet for Athletes After. When thinking back, I am astounded by the progress that we have made and the changes that have taken place. After the last three months, I am more excited and invigorated than ever to dedicate my time and energy to Athletes After in order to bring our platform to market and ultimately make our startup a success." —Max Muncy '25

Max Muncy '25, Co-Founder, Athletes After — As a co-founder of Athletes After, Max has spent the past three years building his startup to assist high school football players who want to play at the collegiate level but may otherwise not be recruited. Max's participation in the program allowed him to focus his attention on Athletes After without the distraction of another job, which has propelled the development of the company's proprietary website (www.athletesafter.com) forward. During the fall semester, Max and his team completed the website's development and beta tested their core products with prospective users. As a December 2024 graduate, this was E+I's last year coaching Max, and we are excited for him to go out and do great things!





Robb Myer, E+I Assistant Director,
Grove City College



Jordan Atchison, Chief Marketing Officer,
Corkboard Concepts



Rob Kunst '19, Manager,
Global Innovation Delivery, Protiviti



Ken Smith '84, Professor of Entrepreneurship,
Grove City College

In our VentureU Business Seminar Series, which is open to the entire campus, we were fortunate to be able to host experts from across several disciplines. This year, students learned about **AI Prompt Engineering**, **Digital Advertising and Attribution Models**, **The Importance of Time Management**, and **Startup Financial Projections**.



Praxis Activate 2025
New York City
FEBRUARY 21, 2025

Praxis Academy Activate

Prior to spring break, six students from Grove City College traveled to New York City to participate in Praxis Academy Activate, a one-day event for aspiring leaders seeking to create a redemptive vision and strategy for their vocation. Students were provided stipends to cover travel costs.

"I'm so grateful for the experience that going to Activate offered! It was really cool to see all these wonderfully successful entrepreneurs living out their faith in the way they operated their businesses. Hearing their stories and experiences inspired me to live out my faith more as I navigate the business world!" - Abby Bonaquist '27

E+I FELLOWS



 **FALL 2024 COHORT**

SPRING 2025 COHORT 



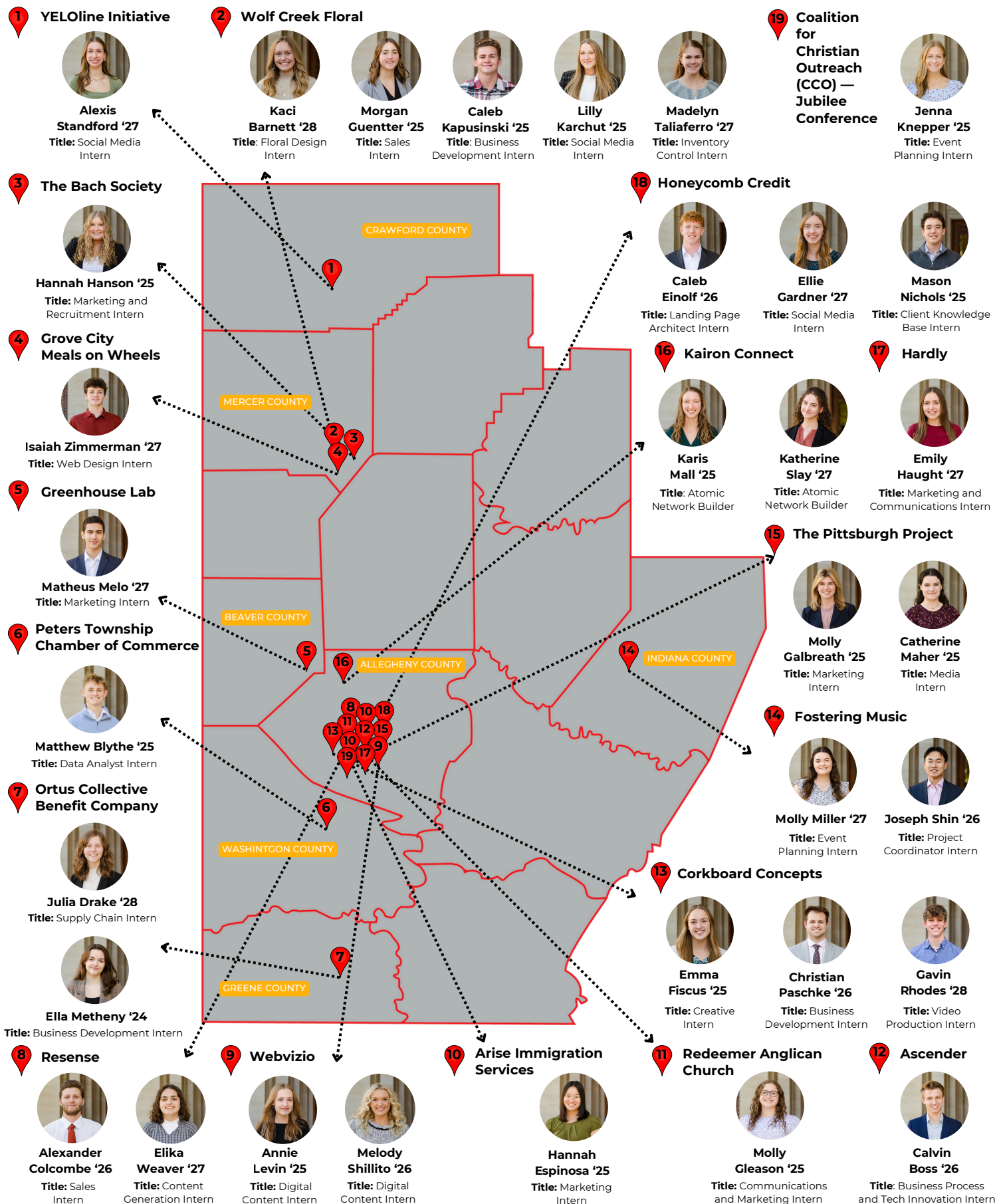
E+I Fellows: Up and Running... And We're Not Slowing Down!



During the academic year, the E+I Fellows program runs two separate cohorts. This year, **57 student fellows** partnered with **37 host organizations**, earning **\$25 per hour** and delivering outstanding results. Fellows served as social media coordinators, business development interns, software engineers, marketing associates, and in other mission-critical roles that helped their host organizations grow. The E+I Fellows program is made possible through the generosity of the **Richard King Mellon Foundation** and an **anonymous donor**.

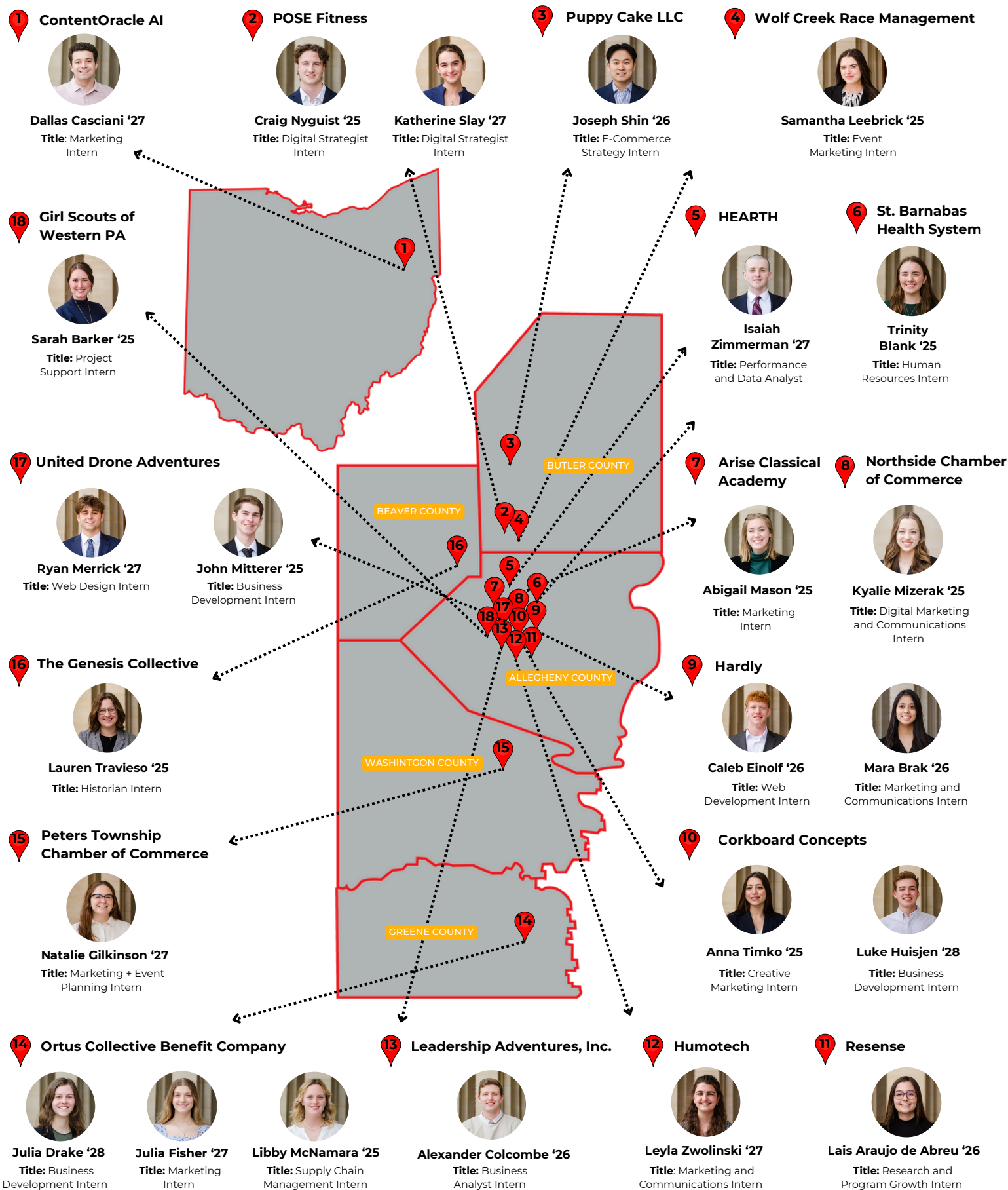
Host Organizations





The impact of the E+I Fellows program reaches far and wide in the Pittsburgh region, creating economic impact well beyond the city limits.

SPRING 2025 E+I FELLOWS IMPACT MAP



Fall + Spring Semester E+I Fellows Preview Night



During both the fall and spring semesters, we held a preview night for the E+I Fellows program. Students from across campus attended these fair-like career events for the E+I Fellows program to meet the host organizations for that semester and learn more about the opportunities available to them. The events were a huge success, and we cannot wait for the next one!



"I was incredibly impressed by the event in general and also the caliber of students. We know how many details and hours go into making an event like this happen, and we're really grateful for your efforts...and excited for the invitation to invest in a college student this fall!"

- Sarah Winkler, Coalition for Christian Outreach



A campus-wide reach



*Scan to learn more
about the program!*



Preview Night drew a large audience, with nearly **100 students** in attendance in the fall and **125+** in the spring to learn from the **various host organizations** participating in the program. Students had the opportunity to introduce themselves to the host organizations, make a great first impression, and grab the attention of those deciding whom to hire for each position. Host organizations raved about the phenomenal quality of interactions they had with students, and many emphasized how helpful the event was in assisting with their hiring decisions.



VentureLab + VentureLaunch

interest continues to be strong!

Throughout the course of the academic year, it has been clear that interest in coaching, mentorship, and expense reimbursement funding continues to be strong. With the program now operating under a rolling admissions model (which we implemented last year), teams of students joined these programs at various points throughout the year with the common goal of proving the merit of their business model and scaling their companies.



VENTURELAB is an idea feasibility lab designed to help students prove the validity of their ideas. Accepted teams include:

BALL MARKER PEN | A revolutionary and customizable way to mark a golf ball.

DESIGN + DEFINE | A digital marketing and design agency focused on redemptive businesses.

MULTIES | A redesigned tie for all professions, all ages, all backgrounds, and all men.

PASTRY PORT | A bakery specializing in unique pastries from around the world, such as the Portuguese Pastel de Nata.



VENTURELAUNCH is a program designed to help existing businesses scale and grow. VentureLaunch teams include:

ATHLETES AFTER | A company with the goal of fixing the broken recruiting system for high school athletes looking to make the jump to collegiate sports.

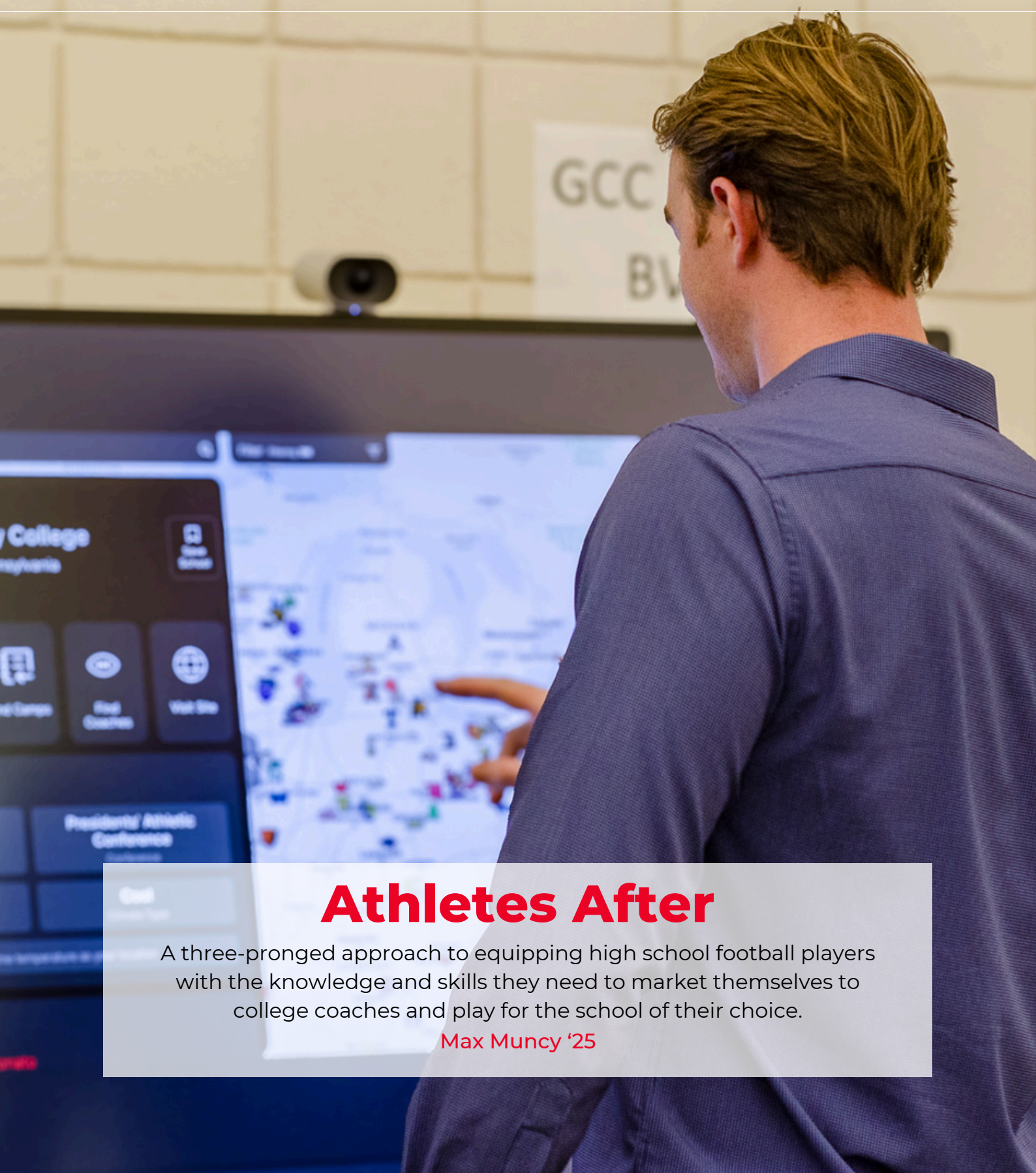
BRIGHTERRAE | A shop featuring hand-painted bibles, prayer journals, and other products.

NEXT UP SPORTS | A nonprofit that pays sports league fees for youth who cannot afford them.

THYMELY.AI | An AI software application designed to provide professors with insights into their classroom.



After several semesters of dedication, a few of these teams are now seeing their hard work pay off in exciting ways. We couldn't be prouder of their achievements so far—and we can't wait to see the incredible milestones still ahead for every team in these programs!



Athletes After

A three-pronged approach to equipping high school football players with the knowledge and skills they need to market themselves to college coaches and play for the school of their choice.

Max Muncy '25



Thymely.ai

A collegiate student insight platform designed to help professors better understand the effectiveness of their lectures and teaching methods.

Joseph Shin '26 | Liam Grossman '25



**BREAKING
NEWS**

 **thymely.ai**

Thymely.ai Upholds GCC Winning Tradition

Liam Grossman '25 and Joseph Shin '26, co-founders of Thymely.ai, participated in the Zingale Big Idea Competition hosted by Allegheny College. The team upheld GCC's tradition of strong showings on the national stage, taking home 2nd place in the final round of the competition and the \$7,500 cash prize that came with it!



BrighterRae

A shop with personalized Bibles, prayer journals, gospel tracts, and cards, equipping customers to lead others in the truth of God's Word.

Ellie Gardner '27



Next Up Sports

A nonprofit organization that covers league and equipment fees for young athletes who may otherwise miss out on the opportunity to play organized sports and experience the benefits they can provide.

Dalton Foore '25 | Dylan Lane '25

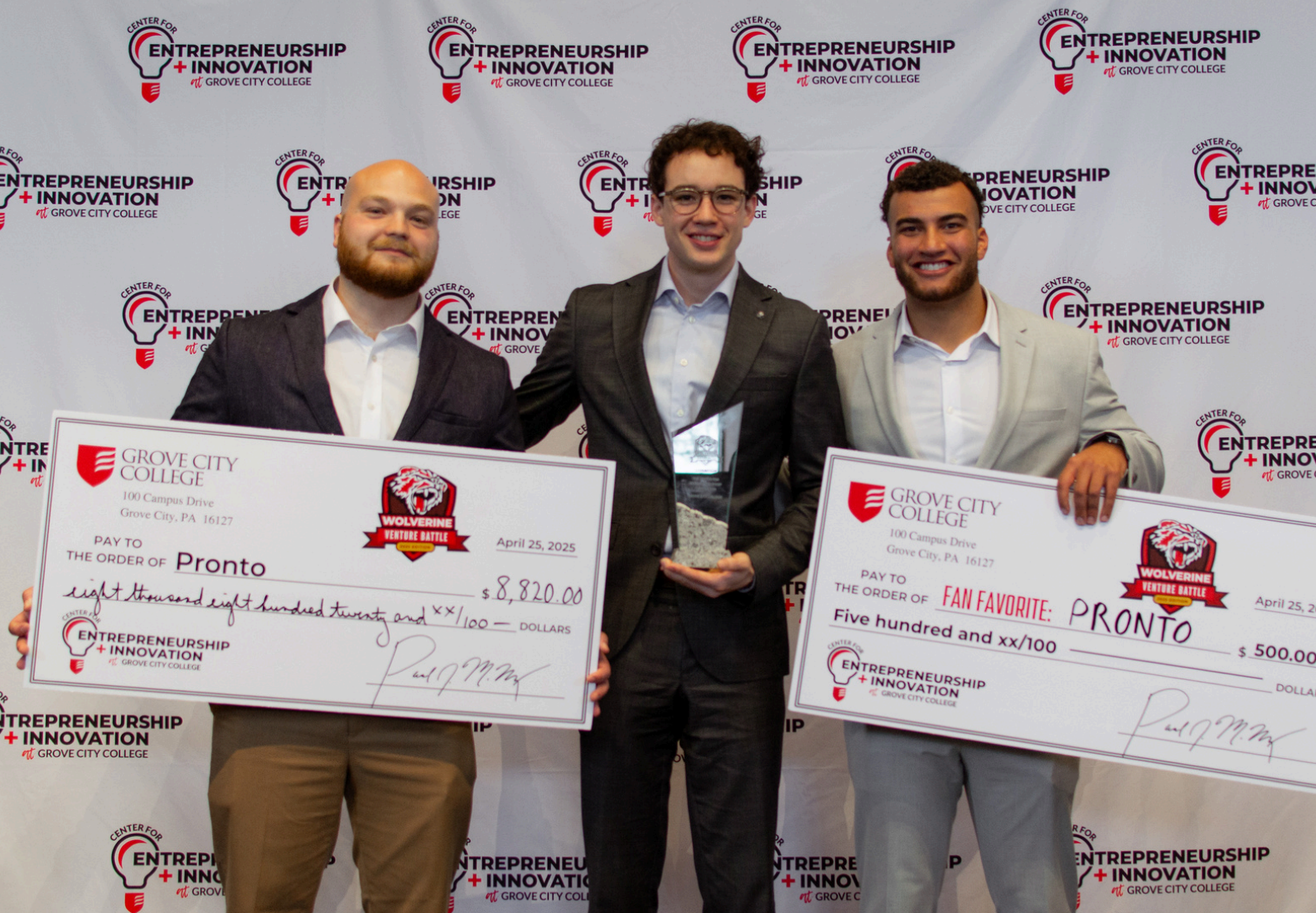


The Wolverine Venture Battle (WVB) simulates the real world by allowing teams to compete for prize money by showing their progress toward proof of concept.

April 25, 2025

STICHT AUDITORIUM

WVB PRESENTATIONS + WINNERS



Pronto Wins Big

In a field of seven competing teams, Pronto was crowned Wolverine Venture Battle Champion.



A fitness supplement company that delivers convenient, single-dose pods of pre-workout, creatine, BCAAs, and electrolytes—designed for use with Keurig machines or shaker bottles—and distributes through direct sales, e-commerce, and gym and retail partnerships.

Oliver Schwarz '25, Christian Royer '26, and Mason Nichols '25

1 \$9,320 in cash won!



WVB PRESENTATIONS + WINNERS



CAREOT—\$7,050

A secure, multi-faceted app disguised as coupons that provides essential information, tangible resources, and personal support to women seeking to leave their abusers.

**Aliyah Shelatz '25, Eleni Kasianides '25,
and Jack Henne '25**

GREAT FRONTIERS—\$6,200

Creates outdoor adventure boxes to encourage kids to explore God's creation and spend time away from screens.

**Sarah Karns '28, Jonathan Steen '28,
Emily Williams '28, and Kaitlyn Kuscevic '28**



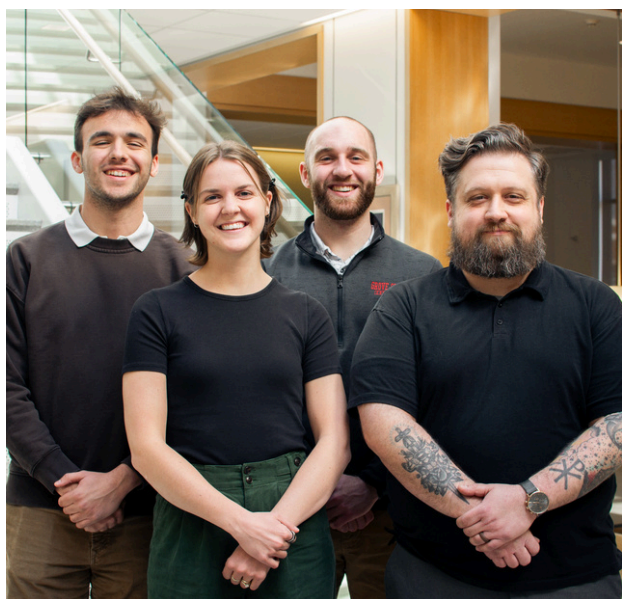
JOURNEYWELL—\$6,170

A food delivery travel service for people on the go who want easy access to healthy, personalized food wherever life may take them.

Caroline Dawson '25 and Craig Nyguist '25



WVB PRESENTATIONS + WINNERS



AGORA INITIATIVE—\$2,270 + \$1000 HUDSON FINANCIAL ADVISORS AWARD

A model and service that invites churches to invest in local communities by seeding redemptively minded businesses rooted in the needs of each community in order to foster relationships that lead to church plants.

Isabele Crouse '26, Sam Hogue '25, Austin Garrett '25, and Ryan Miller '25

MOM—\$2,320

An app that connects Christian moms who need reliable advice to experienced moms in a Godly community.

Lauren DeLeonardis '28, Mara Brak '26, and Anna Scott '27



LACEY'S LOVE AND PAWS—\$1,170

An event that functions like an auto show, but instead with dog breeders, adoption agencies, related vendors, food trucks, and mini shows.

Jonathan French '25



Wolverine Venture Battle

Highlights



KEY STATS



- **Packed house** in Sticht Lecture Hall
- Over **\$38,000** awarded in cash and in-kind prizes
- **20** student participants across 7 teams
- **17** judges for the final round
- **51** Round 2 reviewers

LIVESTREAM STATS

- **387** unique users during finals
- **418** votes for Fan Favorite



This year's competition was a thrilling showcase of entrepreneurial talent, with every team earning substantial prize money. Finalists from the freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior classes delivered pitch-perfect presentations that wowed the audience and left judges with the nearly impossible task of deciding prize allocations. The energy was electric, the competition fierce—and every team rose to the occasion!



Our Generous Sponsors



WOLVERINE DONORS

The Habbershon Family

Tim '81, Grant '06, Meredith '07,
Jonathan '09, and Natalie '11

John '68 + Betsy Bawn Charitable Foundation (Pittsburgh Foundation)

The Pentz Family

Mark '81, Cheri '79, Michael '06, Yvonne '06

The Kiska Family

Stan '85, Deanna '87, Evan '20, and Lauren

Susan (Peshek '81) + Peter Durfee '80

Elizabeth (Smith '81) + Peter Hanley

Dan Creston '81

Laura (Koller '11) + RJ Fryan '08

Roberta + Allen '64 Geyer

Lori (Shoemaker '96) + John Brinker

The Passaro Family

**Winifred (Williams '77) +
Chris McGee '77**

IN-KIND SUPPORT



CIRDEC Consulting, LLC



The Amazing WVB Judges



RJ Fryan '08

Kind Special Alloys US
Lake Park Tool and Machine
CEO



Darrin Grove '91

Truefit
Founder + CEO



Tim Habbershon '81

Fidelity Investments
Managing Partner



Rick Newton '86

Newton Institute
Founder



The Amazing WVB Judges



Ben Tobias '19

ServiceNow

Support Account Manager



Paul Passaro

Brown-Locy Advisors

Partner



Bill Powers

IQ Inc.

Engineering Manager



Winifred McGee '77

The University of Scranton SBDC

Business Consultant



The Amazing WVB Judges



Kyle English

**The Community Foundation of
Western PA and Eastern OH**
Executive Director



Dave Kuraguntla '05

Alio
CEO



Don Tharp

Hudson Financial Advisors
Founder + President



Tim Daigle '84

AXIA Consulting
Senior Business Advisor



The Amazing WVB Judges



Patrick Colletti
CoSage
CEO



Lori Brinker '96
Merrill Lynch
Senior Vice President



Dan Reed
Praxis
Partner





The Amazing WVB Judges



Jonathan Graber '16
Graber Supply, LLC
Owner + President



Andrew Graber '19
Tyrone Building Supply
Owner





Thank You

Sending out a special thanks to the **51** Round 2 reviewers who helped select our finalists and make the Wolverine Venture Battle possible.



Jordan Atchison

Frances Baldwin

Chris Botting '83

Scott Brainard '76

Allison Braund-Harris

Mark Brody '83

Brian Coy

Craig Creaturo '92

Dan Creston '81

Brad Dearborn '78

Steve DeCaspers '98

Benjamin Demers '19

Jay DiNucci '87

Andrew Ellison

Kim Ford '72

Michelle Gerwick

Curt Given '84

Brian Gongaware '92

Glenn Grossman

Victoria Hassett '12

Michael Hemmerlin '97

Darcie Herron '93

Lindy Hitzel '19

Edward Huttenhower '76

Melissa Jacobs '92

Bob Keller '73

Beth Lepore '96

Evan Lowe '89

David Mannion '78

Wendy Marshall '81

Paul Marshall '78

Lauren Marts '10

Scott McDowell '87

William Messner '96

Trey Miller '95

Robin Parsons

Michael Pentz '06

Mark Pentz '81

Amy Petro

Patricia Premick '84

Keith Reagan '06

Steven Roman '96

Pamela Rossi-Keen '99

Charles (Bob) Scott '72

Barbara Shultz '95

Cameron Suorsa '21

Allyson Sveda '88

Jack Thomas '89

Steve Wickman

James Will '98

Sarah Winkler '08

Introducing... **redemptivepittsburgh**

BUILDING VENTURES FOR HUMAN FLOURISHING.

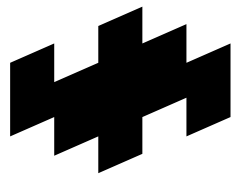
As part of our work to catalyze redemptive entrepreneurship in the region, the Center for E+I became a founding partner of Redemptive Pittsburgh, a community of entrepreneurs, builders, funders, and connectors learning about and practicing redemptive entrepreneurship, as well as a Founding Catalyst Sponsor of the Redemptive Pittsburgh Ecosystem Fund in partnership with Waynesburg University. Redemptive Pittsburgh's offerings currently consist of three main pillars: Redemptive Imagination Tables, Redemptive Labs, and the Redemptive Pittsburgh Fund.

REDEMPTIVE IMAGINATION TABLES

Pittsburgh Redemptive Imagination Tables are gatherings at homes or restaurants in the region that include intimate, guided conversations based on the Praxis Redemptive Framework and how we can advance the practice in the Pittsburgh Startup ecosystem. Tables are intended for founders, funders, builders, mentors, and innovators, and no previous experience with Praxis and the Redemptive Frame is required to participate.



DESIGNED BY



PRAXIS





Pittsburgh Redemptive Entrepreneurship Labs are two-day curated events where like-minded founders and mentors explore what it looks like to build a redemptive venture. The Redemptive Lab experience is designed for founders' specific needs and opportunities — generating experience-based insights and discussions about how to apply the redemptive frame to what we build, how we build, and why we build, sharing vision presentations, and getting 1:1 mentoring from experienced venture builders. After the Lab, founders leave with fresh ideas, practical tools, new relationships, and critical feedback from peers and mentors.



Redemptive Labs are designed by Praxis and hosted locally by a licensed Labs Team. The Pittsburgh Labs team is led by E+I's own Professors Yvonne English and Robb Myer. The two-day event brought together nine like-minded early-stage entrepreneurs and eleven accomplished professional mentors to explore what it looks like to build businesses and organizations that serve others – and a greater purpose. For more about Redemptive Pittsburgh, please visit RedemptivePittsburgh.com.



Strategic Planning Session



On April 25, 2025, just hours before the much-anticipated Wolverine Venture Battle, WVB judges and E+I donors gathered for a forward-looking strategic planning session. The meeting offered an exclusive behind-the-scenes look at E+I's work and sparked valuable conversations about bold new initiatives for the future.

These alumni and friends of E+I offered invaluable insights that will help shape our next strategic plan, launching in the 2026–27 academic year. This was only the first step—more conversations, surveys, and planning sessions are coming soon. Keep an eye out for your chance to help shape E+I's future!



E+I Fellows invites organizations to apply for no-cost interns

GROVE CITY, Pa. (Aug. 16, 2024) – Does your community-spirited non-profit, small business, or startup need a little help but lack the funds to hire a student intern? An innovative Grove City College Center for Entrepreneurship + Innovation (E+I) program might just have the solution to your problem!

The E+I Fellows program provides paid student interns to regional organizations and businesses at no cost. The Center for Entrepreneurship + Innovation is now taking applications from organizations in the Pittsburgh region that would benefit from having highly driven interns placed at their organization free of charge.

“We are looking for host nonprofit and commercial entities that have a positive impact regionally through social innovation or economic opportunity but lack resources to hire traditional interns or employees to increase capacity and continue to grow. Under the E+I Fellows program, hosts get help creating a detailed project plan to maximize the value of the placement for both the organization and the students involved,” said Emma O’Toole ’23, E+I community manager and organizer of the E+I Fellows program.

The deadline for host organizations to apply for the fall 2024 cohort is Friday, August 23. Students can apply for the positions beginning on September 5 after meeting their prospective employers at an E+I Fellows Preview Night. Program and application information for interested organizations is available from The Center for E+I at gccentrepreneurship.com/host-organizations. Call 724-458-2591 for more information. E+I Fellows is funded by a grant from the Richard King Mellon Foundation and an anonymous donor who supports the goals of the program.

Last spring, the program placed 17 Grove City College students with 10 different host organizations in the Pittsburgh region. They helped small startup businesses, some of them launched by their fellow students, and community-oriented organizations in Mercer, Beaver, Butler, and Allegheny counties. Their jobs ran the gamut, from data entry to film production to social media to sales.

“The E+I Fellows program is a unique opportunity for current students to hone their skills, build their résumés, and support amazing organizations vetted by E+I,” said Yvonne J. English ’97, professor of practice and executive director of E+I. “Students will also gain an appreciation of the problems and issues faced by nonprofits, startups, and small businesses locally and will contribute by strengthening the regional economy and advancing the common good in the surrounding area.”

Organizations being unable to hire interns or employees to help increase capacity often leads to understaffed organizations that do not reach their potential, overworked employees at risk of burnout, or shutting down the organization altogether. This directly affects regional economic prosperity as well as decreases the economic opportunities among residents.

“My experience with the E+I Fellows program allowed me to apply what I learned in my class in a real-world business setting. I learned the importance of being vocal in a business setting, especially when sharing ideas, as well as effective audience research, and the essential role small businesses play in the community. This experience has solidified my interest in pursuing public relations and marketing consultation for small businesses after graduation,” said Emma Rossi, ’25, fellow for Sidetracks Board Game Club, LLC.

“Our nonprofit, The Genesis Collective, reached out to E+I for our social media management needs because I knew we’d be getting someone who was thoughtful with a solid work ethic in a Grove City College student. What we got was far greater than that,” said Pamela Rossi-Keen ’99, executive director of The Genesis Collective. “Our intern was prepared, responsive, and did a fantastic job of putting the pieces of our story – both our historic story and our current people and programs – into a narrative that increased our social media engagement by several hundred percent. Our E+I Fellow delivered on every requirement we laid out at the beginning. The program was thoroughly managed, and communication was consistent and effective with the program staff, as well. We won’t hesitate to apply to participate again, and we were so pleased that we are now trying to hire our fellow independently,” she said.

Area nonprofits, startups to benefit from E+I Fellows Program

GROVE CITY, Pa. (Aug. 29, 2024) – Twenty regional nonprofit and commercial entities have been selected to host Grove City College students in the E+I Fellows program.

Interest was strong and the response to the call for host organizations was overwhelming with 116 organizations applying for student assistance.

"We received an impressive response from excellent companies across the region, demonstrating how impactful and needed this program is for local organizations. In fact, we were able to double the size of our spring 2024 pilot program cohort. We surpassed the number of applications from the pilot program only a few days after the application period opened," said Emma O'Toole '23, E+I community manager and organizer of the E+I Fellows program.

E+I Fellows is an innovative initiative from the College's Center for Entrepreneurship + Innovation (E+I) that provides paid student interns to organizations and businesses in the Pittsburgh region at no cost. E+I will pay interns \$25 per hour and place them with nonprofit and commercial entities that have a positive impact regionally through social innovation or economic opportunity but lack resources to hire traditional interns or employees to increase capacity and continue to grow. The program was piloted in the spring and 17 student interns worked with 10 regional businesses, 3 of which were student-founded organizations.

In addition to the interns' labor, hosts get help creating a detailed project plan to maximize the value of the placement for both the organization and the students involved. The E+I Fellows program is funded by a grant from the Richard King Mellon Foundation and an anonymous donor.

Grove City College students interested in applying for an internship can meet with prospective employers at Preview Night from 6 to 7:30 p.m. on Sept. 5 in the Morledge Great Room of Rathburn Hall on campus. Students from all majors will be considered and student applications will be accepted between Sept. 5 and 13. For more information about E+I Fellows, visit gccentrepreneurship.com/ei-fellows-program/

The organizations selected to host E+I Fellows are:

- Arise Immigration Services – Helps those in need navigate the immigration system.
- Ascender – An incubator and co-working space.
- Corkboard Concepts – A digital marketing agency.
- Fostering Music – Provides musical instruments and instruction for those in foster care.
- Greenhouse Lab – A social impact incubator.
- Grove City Area Meals on Wheels – Delivers nutritious meals to the aging and convalescent community.
- Hardly – Software for career support service providers.
- Honeycomb Credit – Helps small businesses acquire fair capital for growth.
- Kairon Connect – Improves social intelligence through better social media.
- Ortus Collective Benefit Company – An online retail collective of mission-driven businesses.
- Peters Township Chamber of Commerce – Promotes, advocates, connects, and educates local businesses.
- Pittsburgh Project – Shares hope, empowers youth, and builds community in economically disadvantaged neighborhoods.
- Redeemer Anglican Church – A small Pittsburgh-area church plant.
- Resense – Creates innovative and reminiscent engagement tools for individuals living with dementia and their care partners.
- The Bach Society of Grove City – A nonprofit choral community choir.
- The Coalition for Christian Outreach – An interdenominational campus ministry.
- Wallaby Walls – Offers customers customizable wallpaper.
- Webvizio – A visual feedback collaboration and productivity platform for websites.
- Wolf Creek Floral – Creates strong and lasting memories through floral design.
- YELOnline Initiative – A faith-based ministry to the incarcerated.

To learn more about the selected host organizations above and the positions they will offer, visit gccentrepreneurship.com/fall-2024-ei-fellows-host-organizations/. Startups, small businesses, and nonprofits interested in applying for the Spring 2025 cohort can visit gccentrepreneurship.com/future-interest-form/ to join the interest list.

Renowned social entrepreneur Bill Strickland to deliver Staley lecture

GROVE CITY, Pa. (Oct. 25, 2024) – Bill Strickland, a world-renowned social innovator and founder and executive chairman of Manchester Bidwell Corporation, will discuss “The Art of Leadership” during the Richard G. Staley ’62 Visionary Entrepreneur Speaker Series, a program of Grove City College’s Center for Entrepreneurship + Innovation’s (E+I).

The lecture at 7 p.m. on Oct. 30 in Sticht Lecture Hall in the Staley Hall of Arts and Letters is free and open to the public. It will be livestreamed at gccentrepreneurship.com.

“Bill Strickland has an incredible story that has inspired millions of people around the world. He is an accomplished social entrepreneur and a gifted storyteller who has dedicated his life to changing the lives of underserved populations starting in Pittsburgh and now around the globe. This is an event that you won’t want to miss,” said Yvonne J. English ’97, professor of practice and executive director of E+I.

For more than 55 years, Strickland has been an innovator in the service of providing underserved people with learning and healing environments that inspire hope and shatter expectations for what they can achieve. As a college student in 1968, Strickland founded Manchester Craftsmen’s Guild to give the youth of his neighborhood a place to learn pottery as a safe alternative to the streets. In 1972, he assumed leadership of a struggling building trade school and combined the operations under one roof. Over the years, other operations were added, including five-time GRAMMY-winning MCG Jazz, one of the longest-running jazz subscription series in America. Today, Manchester Bidwell Center serves hundreds of under-resourced youth and adults every year in a host of vocational training and arts disciplines, including culinary arts, medicine, photography, and digital imaging.

Since founding MBC, Strickland has guided the creation of more than a dozen centers. What started as a few pottery wheels in a basement in Pittsburgh has become a constellation of world-class vocational training and cultural enrichment centers in the United States, Puerto Rico, Canada, and Israel.

Strickland is the recipient of a MacArthur Fellows “Genius” grant and has been awarded the Goi Peace Award, as well as more than 25 honorary doctorate degrees. His work transforming lives has been the subject of four Harvard Business School case studies to date. He is the author of “Make the Impossible Possible” with Vince Rause and is the subject of a forthcoming documentary film produced by Wayfarer Studios.

E+I’s Richard G. Staley ’62 Visionary Entrepreneur Speaker Series brings experienced entrepreneurs to campus to share their insights and wisdom. Each semester, E+I, which strives to promote an entrepreneurial culture across the College, hosts successful business leaders whose compelling stories of success and failure have inspired and enlightened our audiences and provoked thought and stimulated conversation.

This series was endowed in 2013 by Richard G. Staley ’62 to enable E+I to bring guest speakers to campus to explore topics related to entrepreneurship and innovation. Mr. Staley founded Flavor House, Inc., a leading developer and manufacturer of unique flavors used by many well-recognized brands. He received the Jack Kennedy Memorial Alumni Achievement Award in 2019, an award presented annually since 1964 to alumni who have had distinctive success in their fields.

Nineteen student pitches rise to the top and make the finals

GROVE CITY, Pa. (Nov. 6, 2024) – The Center for Entrepreneurship + Innovation (E+I) at Grove City College will hold the final round of the annual Elevator Pitch Competition (EPC) at 7 p.m. Nov. 13 in Sticht Lecture Hall of the Staley Hall of Arts and Letters on campus.

Nineteen teams of students will pitch their concepts for a commercial or social enterprise to a panel of professionals in this final round for the chance to win prize money and, perhaps, turn their ideas into reality. These pitches were gleaned by a panel of reviewers who evaluated 169 student pitches in the first round of the competition.

This year saw a significant increase in the number of entries over last year and the highest total in the past five years. Thirty different majors were represented by those who entered the competition which is open to students of all majors.

“The unprecedented number of entries this year illustrates the boundless creativity and innovation of the next generation,” said Yvonne J. English ’97, professor of practice and executive director of E+I. “We invite you to the EPC Finals where you’re sure to become inspired by how our finalists aim to shape a brighter future for us all.”

The EPC finals event is free and open to the public. It will also be livestreamed at gcentrepreneurship.com. The competition is named for the frequently used term, which means “tell me about your new venture within the time it would take to ride up an elevator.” Students have just two minutes to present their ideas, which can be at any stage of development.

The goal of the Elevator Pitch Competition is to teach students to communicate effectively and allow their charisma and positive characteristics to shine through in just a short pitch. This year’s finalists are:

Commercial Enterprise

- Chameleon Boots – Gavin Rhodes ’28 (Entrepreneurship); flexible kids' snowboard boots
- GermGone – Kaitlyn Kuscevic ’28 (Entrepreneurship); software that tracks how long fast-food/restaurant employees wash their hands
- HandSong – Lauren Deleonardis ’28 (Entrepreneurship); a visual music app for the deaf and hard of hearing
- InSight – Audrey Karwowski ’26 (Entrepreneurship); a hat that helps people with visual impairments "see" through sensors and vibration-based feedback
- Pack Llama – Charlie Cratty ’27 (Applied Science and Engineering); custom backpacks
- Parts TRKR – Owen Gasser ’26 (Entrepreneurship); an AI-based platform that helps find, track, and evaluate the price of aircraft parts
- Sweet Shape Sheet – Elena Tylka ’28 (Finance); a baking sheet made specifically for cut-out cookies
- The Ball Marker Pen – Ian Martti ’27 (Supply Chain Management); a 2-D golf ball marker
- Trail Beacon – Truman Eichler ’28 (Entrepreneurship); a network of physical trail markers that connect to users’ mobile devices and provide information about weather and trail conditions, adaptive navigation, and SOS capabilities

Social Enterprise

- CanvasCare – Karis Mall ’25 (Entrepreneurship), Kaitlyn Kuscevic ’28 (Entrepreneurship) Julia Fisher ’27 (Entrepreneurship); online art therapy for children who've experienced trauma
- Crafted Connections – Mia Campagna ’25 (Marketing), Ellie Gardner ’27 (Entrepreneurship); Leyla Zwolinski ’27 (Entrepreneurship); Emily Haught ’27 (Entrepreneurship); bridging generations through meaningful crafting
- Ekklesia – Luke Huber ’28 (Entrepreneurship); an online Christian marketplace that both connects businesses with buyers and supports and promotes Christian enterprises
- First 3 – Abigail Mason ’25 (Design and Innovation); a childhood development app that equips parents to understand their child’s needs during the formative learning years
- Kickstand – Craig Nyquist ’25 (Entrepreneurship); pre-approved gifts for nurses and caretakers
- Play It Forward – Sarah Karns ’28 (Entrepreneurship); a nonprofit organization that provides sports equipment to families who can't afford it
- Ryppl – John Bauer ’25 (Computer Science); a community-driven platform designed to instill basic habits to create lasting benefits

- SocialPal – Emily Haught '27 (Entrepreneurship); a digital pen pal app for persons with special needs
- SproutRoute – Eleni Kasiandides '26 (Entrepreneurship and Management); community resource management of fresh produce to benefit local needs
- Wild Game Givers—Cayden Testa '26 (Entrepreneurship); connecting hunters with the hungry population in Mercer County

"This year, more than ever before, the best of the best teams rose to the top and made the finals," E+I Campus Director Logan Hammerschmitt '16 said. "It's going to be a tough job for the judges to select the winner of each category. The Elevator Pitch Competition is a great opportunity for students to hone their public speaking skills and I'm excited to hear each student present the pitch that they have spent so much time preparing."

Elevator Pitch Competition Judges will award cash prizes for first (\$500), second (\$400), and third (\$300) place and the audience will weigh in to determine the winner of a \$100 Fan Favorite award. Additionally, two special prizes will also be awarded: a \$500 Social Impact Prize by the Grove City Foundation; and a \$1,000 prize provided by Hudson Financial Advisors, a new sponsor of the EPC. Other sponsors include NextTier Bank, and the Grove City Foundation.

Students step up to meet SAFR Challenge

GROVE CITY, Pa. (Nov. 12, 2024) – The Center for Entrepreneurship + Innovation (E+I) and the Department of Physics at Grove City College announced the winners of the third annual SAFR Challenge, which tests students' skills in physics innovation.

The SAFR (Strain and Force Reduction) Challenge tasked teams of students with developing and creating stylish but functional concussion-prevention headgear for wheeled recreation. The challenge began as a lab exercise in Physics Professor Dr. Shane Brower's Fundamentals of the Universe class at Grove City College and is now in its third year as an on-stage pitch competition, allowing students to use their classroom learning to solve real world problems.

This year's initial phase of the challenge took place in a lab overseen by Brower and fellow Physics Professor Dr. Glenn Marsch. The second phase was the collaboration with E+I, which elevates the impact of the lab by providing students with an opportunity to present their final product in a public forum to qualified experts in science and innovation. E+I exists to provide students of all majors with practical skills and hands-on experiences that prepare them to innovate and succeed in their chosen field.

Fifty-four students in the initial phase of the competition were split into nineteen teams. Their headgear was judged on a combination of criteria including appearance, level of comfort, practicality, and the quality of the group's presentation. The top eight teams qualified for the final round.

The finalists faced off on October 24 and were judged by Dr. Timothy Homan, Interim Dean of the Hopeman School and Professor Chemistry, Dr. Mark Fair, Professor of Mechanical Engineering and Physics, and Professor Tim Sweet, Chair of the Department of Entrepreneurship and Associate Professor of Entrepreneurship.

"Every year, this project brings together students from a broad array of academic disciplines in a collaborative effort to address a real-world problem. This not only helps them better comprehend the physics of preventing head injuries, but also gives them a window into how their specific discipline factors into the solution. And the collaboration with E+I gives students access to the resources and expertise necessary to take their ideas from concept to reality." Brower said.

The winning teams were:

- First Place (\$100 each) – ForceField: Audrey Karwowski '26 (Entrepreneurship), Jax Welsh '25 (Design and Innovation), Ellie Kaynor '25 (Elementary Education)
- Second Place (\$75 each) – Helmet Haven: Iris Kiehl '28 (Accounting), Alexa Puckett '25 (Special Education with Elementary Education)
- Third Place (\$50 each) – Critter Caps: Jenna Knepper '25 (Design and Innovation), John Hake '26 (Communication Arts), Chance Rains '26 (English)

"Watching students step outside their comfort zone and presenting in a low-pressure environment is always fun," said Logan Hammerschmitt '16, campus director for E+I. "The added element of potentially winning prize money makes for an exciting and positive experience for participating students."

Need an intern but can't afford one? An E+I Fellow may be able to help

GROVE CITY, Pa. (Nov. 21, 2024) – Does your community-spirited nonprofit, small business, or startup need a little help but lack the funds to hire a student intern? An innovative Grove City College Center for Entrepreneurship + Innovation (E+I) initiative just might have the solution to your problem.

The E+I Fellows program provides paid student interns to regional Pittsburgh organizations and businesses at no cost. E+I will pay selected students \$25 per hour and place them with organizations that have a positive impact through social innovation or economic opportunity but can't increase capacity or continue to grow without some help. In addition to the interns' labor, hosts get help creating a detailed project plan to maximize the value of the placement for both the organization and the students involved.

E+I is now taking host applications from regional organizations and businesses that would benefit from having highly driven interns placed at their organizations free of charge. The deadline to apply for the spring 2025 E+I Fellows cohort is Dec. 20. Program and application information is available at gccentrepreneurship.com/host-organizations. Call 724-458-2591 for more information.

The Fall 2024 program placed 33 students with 19 different host organizations. Students helped small businesses, startups, nonprofits, and churches in Allegheny, Beaver, Crawford, Greene, Indiana, and Mercer counties. Their roles ranged from supply chain management, web design, sales, event planning and data analysis. The upcoming spring 2025 timeline is an eight-week internship, starting in mid-February and ending in April. Positions can be fully remote, hybrid, or in-person, as determined by the host organization's needs. To be eligible, a host organization must be within two hours of Pittsburgh.

"We were successful in scaling our program, and we are excited to continue the momentum of growth into the spring. We are seeing the fruits of our labor, as organizations are grateful to receive help for much-needed projects that fall to the bottom of their to-do lists. They leave the program in a better spot and have tangible plans and results to continue in the future," said Emma O'Toole '23, E+I community manager and organizer of the E+I Fellows program. The program is funded by a grant from the Richard King Mellon Foundation and an anonymous donor.

"The E+I Fellows program gave us much-needed help at a pivotal point in our startup's growth. Our intern did high quality work from day one. She was able to contribute ideas and launch campaigns that we'll be benefiting from for years to come. I am so pleased with this experience, and my cofounder and I are very grateful to be part of it," said Allison Braund-Harris, cofounder of Hardly, a career development hub.

Elevator Pitch Competition breaks records

GROVE CITY, Pa. (Dec. 6, 2024) – Grove City College students took home more than \$7,600 in prize money in the recent Elevator Pitch Competition (EPC) hosted by the Center for Entrepreneurship + Innovation (E+I).

“Thanks to our extremely generous title sponsors, Hudson Financial Advisors Inc., NextTier Bank, and the Grove City Foundation, as well as our surprise donor, the Thompson Family Fund, the finalists walked away with more money than we’ve ever awarded in this competition,” Yvonne English, ‘97, E+I Executive Director, said. “Our students inspired and convinced over 300 people that they are going to do great things in the world.”

The annual event challenges students to quickly and effectively make the case for an innovative idea for a business to potential investors. The ideas for commercial or social enterprises can be at any stage of development.

Student competitors had just two minutes to make their cases and convince the judges their ideas had both merit and the potential to turn a profit. That tight timeclock and the annual competition’s name come from the idea that an effective entrepreneur can pitch an idea in the time it would take to ride in an elevator with a potential investor.

Freshmen Entrepreneurship majors took home the top prize in both divisions of the competition. Lauren Deleonardis ’28 took first place for the Commercial Enterprise category. Her pitch for Handsong, a visual music app for the deaf and hard of hearing, won her a \$500 cash prize.

Sarah Karns ’28 secured the top spot for the Social Enterprise category, along with the \$500 prize, with her presentation for Play It Forward, a nonprofit organization that provides sports equipment to families who can't afford it.

In the Commercial Enterprise division, Audrey Karwowski ’26 took second place and a \$400 prize for InSight, a hat that helps people with visual impairments "see" by using sensors and vibration-based feedback. Third place resulted in a tie between Gavin Rhodes ’28, who pitched Chameleon Boots (flexible kids’ snowboard boots) and Ian Martti ’27 with The Ball Marker Pen (a 2-D golf ball marker). Both claimed a \$300 prize.

Second and third place prizes in the Social Enterprise division were shared as well. A team consisting of Karis Mall ’25, Kaitlyn Kuscevic ’28, and Julia Fisher ’27 pitching CanvasCare (online art therapy for children who have experienced trauma) tied with Eleni Kasiandides ’26 and SproutRoute (a community resource management tool for fresh produce to benefit local needs) for second place. Each of these teams won \$400. Third place – and a \$300 prize – went to Abigail Mason ’25 and her pitch for First 3 (a childhood development app) and Emily Haught ’27 and SocialPal (a pen pal app for people with special needs).

Other prizes were awarded during the Elevator Pitch Competition as well:

- Fan Favorite (\$125) – Chameleon Boots. This award is determined by an audience vote.
- Social Impact Prize (\$500) – Play It Forward. Dorene Powell, president of the Grove City Foundation, an affiliate of the Community Foundation of Western Pa. and Eastern Ohio, selected the winner, which was deemed to have the greatest potential for impact in the local community.
- Commercial Innovation Prize (\$500)– Chameleon Boots. This award was presented by the Thompson Family Fund to the team determined to have the greatest commercial viability.
- Hudson Financial Advisors Prize (\$1,000) – InSight. This award was presented by EPC sponsor Hudson Financial Advisors Inc.

In addition, the Thompson Family Fund, represented by Daniel Thompson ’12, awarded cash prizes as a surprise bonus to all the student finalist teams, with \$250 going to first place winners, \$150 for second place, \$100 for third place, \$25 for the Fan Favorite, and \$75 to all remaining finalist teams.

“Watching these students get up in front of the largest crowd we’ve ever had for this event and pitch their hearts out was an honor,” E+I Campus Director Logan Hammerschmitt ’16 said. “Honestly, it’s easy to get emotional when a student nails a pitch they have worked so hard to develop, and this was true of this year’s competition more than ever before. I’m proud of every student who got on that stage; it takes a lot of courage to do so!”

Karwowski was the top money winner, with her pitch for InSight netting a total of \$1,550.

The competition's judges were: Don Tharp, Hudson Financial Advisors Inc.; Chris Camp, Fun Fore All; Lori Brinker '96, Merrill Lynch; Mitch McFeely, NexTier Bank; and Dan Sumner, Westinghouse.

Volunteer reviewers in the first round of the competition were: Kayla Armstrong, Frances Baldwin, Chris Borders '07, Mark Brody '83, Jeff Bucklew, Chadwyck Cobb '14, Brian Coy, Craig Creaturo '92, Dan Creston '81, Brad Dearborn '78, Steve DeCaspers '98, Benjamin Demers '19, Heather Dickison, Brian Dutton, Ruth Entwistle '07, Dean Faklis, Sondra Fisher '82, Collin Foster '12, Sandra Frederick, Kristy Gales, Michelle Gerwick, Curt Given '84, Glenn Grossman, Steven Guo, Michael Hemmerlin '97, Darcie Herron '93, Eric Herstine '75, Lindy Hitzel '19, Melissa Jacobs '92, Ashley Johns, Haley Kahle '16, Bob Keller '73, Matthew Lee '98, Sharon LeJeune '89, Beth Lepore '96, Marjorie Loresch '10, Lauren Marts '10, Drew McCandless '84, Heidi McDowell, Mitchell McFeely, Alan Mesches '71, Brian Mezey '03, Liam Morris '08, Elisabeth O'Brien '16, Lou Palumbo, Robin Parsons, Autumn Patterson, Michael Pentz '06, Max Polec, Patricia Premick '84, Keith Reagan '06, Tiffany Rice '18, Steven Roman '96, Bob Scott '72, Alissa Sgro '96, Barbara Shultz '95, Stephanie Slezak, Michael Smelko, Thomas Smith '62, Steve Solman '96, Cameron Suorsa '21, Allyson Sveda '88, Ann Thomas '93, Jack Thomas '89, Daniel Thompson '12, Christopher Tobias, Sheila Weatherly '03, Carlee Webb '99, Steve Wickman, James Will '98, Lesley Winfield '92, James Woehlke '76, Stephen Wong '10, Lara Wozniak, and Brett Yusiewicz.

eCommerce students reach charity fundraising milestone

GROVE CITY, Pa. (Jan. 20, 2025) – Grove City College students passed a milestone recently in their ongoing effort to raise money for charity as part of an Entrepreneurship class that teaches students how to create, market and sell products online.

The donations are the proceeds of businesses that students started in an eCommerce course taught by Yvonne J. English '97, professor of practice and executive director of the College's Center for Entrepreneurship + Innovation (E+I). In the class, students learn about the essential components of a successful online enterprise, in part, through working in teams to design and operate their own digital businesses during the semester.

Over the past eight years, the annual effort has raised thousands for charities in the region and around the world. This fall's efforts brought the total across the \$30,000 mark, bringing it to exactly \$30,893.42.

"It is amazing that our industrious students have donated over \$30,000 to serve our local community while learning about e-commerce in my class. It truly has been a win-win scenario, and I'm incredibly proud of what this class has achieved over the past eight years," English said.

Each team raised an average of \$1,111.89 for their charities this year, breaking the previous record of \$1,072 set in the fall of 2022.

This year's student eCommerce businesses, and their charity partners, were:

- The Little Things – Josh Elverson '26 (COO), Robert Hershey '26 (CFO), Tobias Leithart '26 (CMO), and Mason Nichols '25 (CEO). Curated jewelry of subtle beauty and meaningful impact. Partnered with Living in Liberty, a non-profit organization fighting against human trafficking and exploitation.
- Victory & Truth Co. – Bella Costa '26 (CMO), Kaitlyn Kuscevic '28 (CEO), Aidan Nosal '26 (COO), and Antonio Sanguigni '26 (CFO). Handmade banners with Bible verses and phrases that inspire faith and provide uplifting messages for homes, dorm rooms, churches, and ministries. Partnered with Shared Hope for Orphans Worldwide, a nonprofit that helps orphans around the world by providing them with food, shelter, and education.
- LICKD Energy Strips – Julia Fisher '27 (CMO), Owen Gasser '26 (COO), Caleb Kuechly '26 (CEO), Craig Nyquist '25 (CFO). Oral caffeine strips that are a healthy, quick, and effective alternative to sugary, poisonous, over-caffeinated energy drinks. Partnered with the Shepherd's Crook Orphan Ministry, a nonprofit that helps with the adoption process of children in foreign countries, specifically children with disabilities.
- Simple Slurps – Andrew Coy '26 (CFO), Ella Medairy '26 (CMO), Emma Rossi '25 (COO), and Christian Royer '26 (CEO). Drinkware that allows the customer to show support for what they are passionate about. Partnered with the Ugandan Water Project, a nonprofit that is providing safe, accessible drinking water to communities in Uganda.

The student businesses were featured at Venture Village during this year's Homecoming celebration but focused their efforts on digital sales. Over the last eight years, eCommerce businesses have generated \$50,376 in gross revenue.

Grove City College's Entrepreneurship program, which includes both the academic Department of Entrepreneurship and the Center for Entrepreneurship +Innovation (gccentrepreneurship.com), which serves students of all majors, is recognized as a national model for other colleges and universities by the United States Association for Small Business and Entrepreneurship. The Department of Entrepreneurship is part of Grove City College's Winklevoss School of Business.

E+I Fellows aid regional businesses, nonprofits, startups

GROVE CITY, Pa. (Feb. 14, 2025) – Eighteen regional nonprofit and commercial entities have been selected to host Grove City College students in the Spring 2025 cohort of the E+I Fellows program.

Interest in the Entrepreneurship + Innovation (E+I) program was strong and the response to the call for host organizations was overwhelming with 76 organizations applying for student assistance.

"With each cohort, the E+I Fellows Program continues to gain momentum, with more applications and a growing list of local organizations eager to get involved. It's incredible to see how our host organizations leave the program not only in a stronger position but also set up for long-term success. The lasting impact of our interns is helping businesses, nonprofits, and startups thrive for months and even years to come," said Emma O'Toole '23, E+I community manager and organizer of the E+I Fellows program.

E+I Fellows provides paid student interns to organizations and businesses in the Pittsburgh region at no cost. E+I will pay interns \$25 per hour and place them with nonprofit and commercial entities that have a positive impact regionally through social innovation or economic opportunity but lack resources to hire traditional interns or employees to increase capacity and continue to grow.

Since the spring of 2024, the program has provided 75 internships while supporting 40 regional businesses across nine counties in the Western Pennsylvania region, with some businesses participating in multiple cohorts.

In addition to the interns' labor, hosts get help creating a detailed project plan to maximize the value of the placement for both the organization and the students involved. The E+I Fellows program is funded by a grant from the Richard King Mellon Foundation and an anonymous donor.

A record-setting 120 Grove City College students met with prospective employers at Preview Night on Jan. 23 in the Morledge Great Room of Rathburn Hall on campus. Students from all majors applied for internship positions.

"Preview Night was an inspiring experience for me. I met various organizations and talked to different people from diverse work backgrounds, which allowed me to tune up my conversation and networking skills. I am so glad I got the opportunity to go," said Jared Schellin '25, a Management major from Catonsville, Md.

The organizations selected to host E+I Fellows this spring are:

- Arise Classical Academy — a University-Model® classical Christian school for 9th-12th grade students in the Sewickley area
- ContentOracle AI — building AI-powered SAAS plugins for CMS systems like WordPress and Shopify
- Corkboard Concepts — a digital marketing agency
- Girl Scouts of Western PA — leadership development organization for girls in kindergarten through 12th grade
- Hardly — software for career support service providers
- HEARTH — North Hills Affordable Housing — provides housing for mothers and children overcoming homelessness and domestic violence
- Humotech — creates wearable machine technology including advanced prosthetics, exoskeletons, and mobility devices
- Leadership Adventures, Inc. — enables organizations to accelerate business results through people
- Northside Chamber of Commerce — promotes, connects, and supports the growth of Pittsburgh's Northside businesses
- Ortus Collective Benefit Company — an online retail collective of mission-driven businesses
- Peters Township Chamber of Commerce — promotes, advocates, connects, and educates local businesses
- POSE Fitness, LLC — a fitness technology company utilizing AI to analyze exercise form to prevent injuries
- Puppy Cake, LLC — creates high quality cookie, cake, and ice cream mixes for dogs
- Resense — creates innovative and reminiscent engagement tools for individuals living with dementia and their care partners
- St. Barnabas Health System — offers senior care living and support services
- The Genesis Collective — provides accessible art experiences and support for Beaver County creatives
- United Drone Adventures — provides drone soccer programs to local schools to foster STEM career interest
- Wolf Creek Race Management — managing endurance events to inspire movement and achieve goals

Startups, small businesses, and nonprofits who may be interested in applying for the Fall 2025 cohort can visit gccentrepreneurship.com/future-interest-form to join the interest list.

Record-breaking Wolverine Venture Battle prize pool at stake

GROVE CITY, Pa. (April 11, 2025) – Thanks to generous donors and sponsors, the 2025 edition of Grove City College's Wolverine Venture Battle (WVB) boasts the largest prize package in the history of the venture competition sponsored by the Center for Entrepreneurship + Innovation (E+I.)

Seven teams will compete for the cash and in-kind prizes at 1 p.m. Friday, April 25 in Sticht Lecture Hall in the Staley Hall of Arts and Letters on campus. The event is free and open to the public. It will be livestreamed at gccentrepreneurship.com/wolverine-venture-battle.

"We have a record-breaking prize pool with over \$38,000 being awarded at this year's Wolverine Venture Battle. There are some truly outstanding teams competing, and this year's event is shaping up to be one of the most exciting competitions yet," said Yvonne J. English '97, E+I executive director.

The venture pitch contest is one of E+I's tentpole events. Open to students from all majors, the WVB provides invaluable experience for aspiring entrepreneurs and a crucial test for their business ideas, which can be at any stage of development.

Each team will have eight minutes to make their case and another six to field questions from a panel of accomplished judges who will divvy up the prize pool by "investing" in the teams they think made the best pitch.

To make it to the finals, teams survived a rigorous evaluation by independent reviewers who scored the teams' pitches based on criteria such as their solution to a real problem, their forecasted costs and revenue, and their unfair advantage.

Seventy-two students from 11 different majors and every class year entered 25 teams in the first round of the competition.

The WVB finalists are:

- Agora Initiative — Isabelle Crouse '26 (Biblical and Religious Studies--BARS), Austin Garrett '25 (BARS), Sam Hogue '25 (BARS), Ryan Miller '25 (BARS) — Inviting churches to invest in local communities by seeding redemptively-minded businesses and fostering relationships leading to church plants.
- Careot — Jack Henne '25 (Entrepreneurship), Eleni Kasianides '25 (Entrepreneurship and Management), Aliyah Shelatz '25 (Entrepreneurship) — A secure, multi-faceted app disguised as coupons that provide essential information, tangible resources, and personal support to women seeking to leave their abusers.
- Great Frontiers — Sarah Karns '28, Kaitlyn Kuscevic '28 (Entrepreneurship), Jonathan Steen '28 (Entrepreneurship), Emily Williams '28 (Entrepreneurship) — Creates outdoor adventure boxes to encourage kids to explore God's creation and spend time away from screens.
- JourneyWell — Caroline Dawson '25 (Entrepreneurship), Craig Nyquist '25 (Entrepreneurship) — A food delivery travel service for people on the go who want easy access to healthy, personalized food.
- Lacey's Love and Paws — Jonathan French '25 (Entrepreneurship) — An event that functions like an auto show, but with dog breeders, adoption agencies, related vendors, food trucks, and mini shows.
- Mom — Mara Brak '26 (Design & Innovation), Lauren DeLeonardis '28 (Entrepreneurship), Anna Scott '27 (Design & Innovation) — An app connecting younger Christian moms with experienced moms in a godly community.
- Pronto — Mason Nichols '25 (Entrepreneurship), Christian Royer '26 (Entrepreneurship), Oliver Schwarz '25 (Entrepreneurship) — A fitness supplement company delivering convenient, single-dose pods designed for use with Keurig machines or shaker bottles.

In addition to the judges' allocations of prize money, teams will vie for two additional prizes: The Hudson Financial Advisors prize (\$1,000) and the Fan Favorite Award (\$500 determined by texted votes from those watching the competition live and online).

This year's judicial panel includes experienced entrepreneurs, founders, CEOs, and a variety of professionals and alumni. They are: Lori Brinker '96, Patrick Colletti, Tim Daigle '84, Pete Durfee '80, RJ Fryan '08, Andrew Graber '19, Jonathan Graber '16, Darrin Grove '91, Tim Habbershon '81, Dave Karaguntla '05, Winifred McGee '77, Rick Newton '86, Paul Passaro, Bill Powers, Dan Reed, Don Tharp, and Ben Tobias '19.

In addition to faculty coaches, a group of volunteer professional mentors helped the teams prepare for battle. They are Chris Botting '83, Steve DeCaspers '98, Benjamin Demers '19, Melissa Jacobs '92, Trey Miller '95, Pamela Rossi-Keen '99, and Allyson Sveda '88.

WVB sponsors include: Hudson Financial Advisors, Inc.; St. Louis Arch Angels; IQ Inc.; Graber Supply and Build; Fun Fore All; Newton Institute; Trufit; The Habbershon Family (Tim '81, Grant '06, Meredith '07, Jonathan '09, and Natalie '11); The Passaro Family; The Kiska Family (Stan '85, Deanna '87, Evan '20, and Lauren); Elizabeth (Smith '81) Hanley and Peter Hanley; Laura (Koller '11) and RJ Fryan '08; Lori (Shoemaker '96) and John Brinker; Dan Creston '81; Susan (Peshek '81) and Peter Durfee '80; The Pentz Family (Mark '81, Cheri '79, Michael '06, and Yvonne '06); Winifred (Williams '77) and Chris McGee '77; Roberta and Allen '64 Geyer; John '68 & Betsy Baun Charitable Foundation (Pittsburgh Foundation.) In-kind sponsors are: Sisterson & Co., LLP, Pittsburgh Web Design, and CIRDEC Consulting, LLC.

Contenders for the finals were evaluated by: Jordan Atchison, Frances Baldwin, Chris Botting '83, Scott Brainard '76, Allison Braund-Harris, Mark Brody '83, Brian Coy, Craig Creaturo '92, Dan Creston '81, Brad Dearborn '78, Steve DeCaspers '98, Benjamin Demers '19, Jay DiNucci '87, Andrew Ellison, Kim Ford, Michelle Gerwick, Curt Given '84, Brian Gongaware '92, Glenn Grossman, Matthew Hackworth '97, Victoria Hassett '12, Michael Hemmerlin '97, Darcie (Waltermire) Herron '93, Lindy Hitzel '19, Edward Huttenhower '76, Melissa Jacobs '92, Bob Keller '73, Beth Lepore '96, Evan Lowe '89, David Mannion '78, Wendy Marshall '81, Paul Marshall '78, Lauren Marts '10, Scott McDowell '87, William Messner '96, Trey Miller '95, Robin Parsons, Michael Pentz '06, Mark Pentz '81, Amy Petro, Patricia Premick '84, Keith Reagan '06, Steven Roman '96, Pamela Rossi-Keen '99, Charles (Bob) Scott '72, Barbara Shultz '95, Cameron Suorsa '21, Allyson Sveda '88, Jack Thomas '89, Steve Wickman, James Will '98, and Sarah Winkler.

GCC students take second place in Big Idea competition

GROVE CITY, Pa. (April 22, 2025) – A pair of Grove City College students took second place at Allegheny College's 2025 Zingale Big Idea Competition.

Senior Liam Grossman (Computer Science and Data Science) and junior Joseph Shin (Data Science) took home a \$7,500 prize for their pitch for their AI-powered venture Thymely.ai, which provides insights for professors to make timely adjustments to their classes by collecting and compiling survey data from students via an easy-to-use and cost-effective platform.

The team is part of the College's VentureLab program, which is managed and sponsored by the Center for Entrepreneurship + Innovation (E+I). VentureLab helps the Grove City College campus community explore and develop new ventures based on their own original concepts. It serves as a valuable starting point for innovation and enables aspiring innovators to gauge the feasibility of their ideas.

"The competition was an amazing opportunity to pitch our idea, get feedback from industry experts, connect with other innovative teams, and receive funding for future growth. Of course, none of it would be possible without the support of the E+I team whose feedback and encouragement were instrumental in our success," Shin said.

"The E+I team is so proud of the Thymely.ai team. They came up with an idea, interviewed potential customers, built a prototype, and won \$7,500 in the matter of weeks," said Yvonne J. English, E+I executive director. "We're also very thankful to Allegheny College for sponsoring a competition that allows college students from around the country to compete for lucrative prize money and valuable feedback."

The competition, hosted by Allegheny's Center for Business and Economics, challenges students to pitch innovative business or social venture ideas in a professional setting before a panel of alumni entrepreneurs, business leaders, and venture capitalists.

Twenty-four student teams representing seven colleges and universities (Allegheny College, Grove City College, Franciscan University, University of Chicago, University of Southern California, Westminster College, and PennWest Clarion) gathered at Allegheny College for the competition. A team from the University of Chicago took first place.

"The Zingale Big Idea Competition is an incredible showcase of student innovation," said Chris Allison, entrepreneur-in-residence at Allegheny College. "The diversity of ideas, the professionalism of the presentations, and the students' drive to make a difference were truly inspiring."

Wolverine Venture Battle pays off for Pronto, other teams

GROVE CITY, Pa. (May 2, 2025) – The 2025 Wolverine Venture Battle (WVB) judges gave the largest share of a record \$38,000 prize pool to a team of Grove City College students who pitched their plan for a fitness supplement company.

Pronto, a venture conceived by Entrepreneurship majors Mason Nichols '25, Christian Royer '26, Oliver Schwarz '25, and Finance and Economics major, Marcos van Tienhoven '25, was the big winner at the annual venture pitch competition sponsored by the Center for Entrepreneurship + Innovation (E+I.)

The students' proposal for Pronto, a fitness supplement company that delivers convenient, single-dose pods designed for use with Keurig machines, earned \$8,820 from the judges and the \$500 Fan Favorite Award determined by the audience at the April 25 competition.

"This year's competition is the most prize money, sponsors, and judges yet, and, in talking to our generous supporters, that's because they want to encourage and equip the next generation in their quest to build a better world and serve the common good," said Yvonne J. English '97, E+I executive director. "It was an exciting and inspirational day for all, and we are so very proud of our students."

Six other finalist teams competed in the WVB and split the rest of the prize pool, which included in-kind business services in addition to cash. They, and their winnings, are:

- Careot: \$7,050— Jack Henne '25 (Entrepreneurship), Eleni Kasianides '25 (Entrepreneurship and Management), Aliyah Shelatz '25 (Entrepreneurship), and Jackson Welsh '25 (Design & Innovation) — A secure, multi-faceted app disguised as coupons that provide essential information, tangible resources, and personal support to women seeking to leave their abusers.
- Great Frontiers: \$6,200 — Sarah Karns '28 (Entrepreneurship), Kaitlyn Kuscevic '28 (Entrepreneurship), Jonathan Steen '28 (Entrepreneurship), and Emily Williams '28 (Entrepreneurship) — Creates outdoor adventure boxes to encourage kids to explore God's creation and spend time away from screens.
- JourneyWell: \$6,170 — Caroline Dawson '25 (Entrepreneurship) and Craig Nyquist '25 (Entrepreneurship) — A food delivery travel service for people on the go who want easy access to healthy, personalized food.
- Agora Initiative: \$2,270, plus \$1,000 Hudson Financial Advisors Award — Isabele Crouse '26 (Biblical and Religious Studies--BARS), Austin Garrett '25 (BARS), Sam Hogue '25 (BARS), and Ryan Miller '25 (BARS) — Inviting churches to invest in local communities by seeding redemptively-minded businesses and fostering relationships leading to church plants.
- Mom: \$2,320 — Mara Brak '26 (Design & Innovation), Lauren DeLeonardis '28 (Entrepreneurship), and Anna Scott '27 (Design & Innovation) — An app connecting younger Christian moms with experienced moms in a godly community.
- Lacey's Love and Paws: \$1,170 — Jonathan French '25 (Entrepreneurship) — An event that functions like an auto show, but with dog breeders, adoption agencies, related vendors, food trucks, and mini shows.

The Wolverine Venture Battle provides invaluable experience for aspiring entrepreneurs and a crucial test for their business ideas, which can be at any stage of development. Each team had eight minutes to make their case and another six to field questions from the judges.

Seventy-two students from 11 different majors and every class year entered 25 teams in the first round of the competition.

The WVB judicial panel included experienced entrepreneurs, founders, CEOs, and a variety of professionals and alumni. They are: Lori Brinker '96, Patrick Colletti, Tim Daigle '84, Kyle English, RJ Fryan '08, Andrew Graber '19, Jonathan Graber '16, Darrin Grove '91, Tim Habbershon '81, Dave Karaguntla '05, Winifred McGee '77, Rick Newton '86, Paul Passaro, Bill Powers, Dan Reed, Don Tharp, and Ben Tobias '19.

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For a recording of the final pitches and awards, visit gccentrepreneurship.com/wvb-finals.

For many finalists, the competition marks the culmination of their journey through an entrepreneurial ecosystem created and managed by E+I. For others, it's just the beginning of their journey through E+I's robust entrepreneurial support system. Either way, the prize money and in-kind services may help these teams fuel their commercial and social ventures.

E+I leads Redemptive Pittsburgh, holds first lab for founders

GROVE CITY, Pa. (June 24, 2025) – The Center for Entrepreneurship + Innovation (E+I) at Grove City College is the driving force behind Redemptive Pittsburgh, a new regional initiative that aims to develop a venture-building ecosystem dedicated to the idea of redemptive entrepreneurship.

Their work began in earnest last year with the introduction of Redemptive Imagination Tables in the region. These gatherings at homes or in restaurants are built around an intimate, guided conversation based on how participants can advance the practice in the Pittsburgh startup ecosystem. Tables are intended for founders, funders, builders, mentors, and innovators, and no previous experience with redemptive entrepreneurship is required to participate. Three such events have already occurred, including one larger event on the Grove City College campus.

The work of Redemptive Pittsburgh deepened last month with the introduction of the first Pittsburgh Redemptive Business Lab. The two-day event brought together like-minded early-stage entrepreneurs and accomplished professional mentors to explore what it looks like to build businesses and organizations that serve others – and a greater purpose.

"The lab helps entrepreneurs become deeply formed as leaders who guide their ventures to become more effective and more redemptive in their impact as they seek to address the major issues of our time," E+I Executive Director Yvonne English '97 said.

The kickoff event brought together the inaugural group of founders for a dinner and lodge night at the historic Boggs Mansion in Pittsburgh thanks to the generous sponsorship of The Gather Company, founded by Evan Addams '10 and Dan Croce '08. The first evening of the program was designed to encourage fellowship and build connections between founders like Grove City College alumnus Luke Gilligan '24, who began his business Resense as a student.

The following day, the founders headed to the Regional Learning Alliance in Cranberry Township and were joined by a group of curated mentors from across the spectrum, including alumnus Dan Croce '08 of Birgo Capital, E+I Assistant Director Robb Myer, English, and Dan Reed, a core team member of Praxis, the organization that designed the Redemptive Labs template being followed by Redemptive Pittsburgh and other similar labs throughout the world. The second day's programming was designed for the founders' specific needs and provided opportunities to generate experience-based insights and discussions about how to apply the redemptive frame to their ventures through a deep dive into the Redemptive Frame led by English, group discussions, founder pitches, and one-on-one sessions with the mentors. Founders left with fresh ideas, practical tools, new relationships, and critical feedback from peers and mentors.

Redemptive Pittsburgh is a movement of volunteers with the shared goal of advancing redemptive entrepreneurship by supporting founders, funders, and innovators motivated by their faith to address the major issues of our time. Future plans include additional Imagination Table events, additional Redemptive Business Lab cohorts, and other potential programming as needs are identified and developed throughout the region.

Redemptive entrepreneurship, according to Praxis, is "love in organizational action: following the pattern of creative restoration through sacrifice, integrated across leadership, strategy, and operations in venture creation, innovation, and funding." The concept has been embraced by the Center for Entrepreneurship + Innovation, which encourages and empowers Grove City College students of all majors to stretch their entrepreneurial muscles outside of the classroom.

Redemptive Pittsburgh is funded by the Redemptive Pittsburgh Ecosystem Fund, which is led by the Redemptive Pittsburgh Catalyst Partners, a group that includes E+I and the Waynesburg University eHive.

The Center for Entrepreneurship + Innovation (E+I) creates and facilitates experiential learning activities and events centered on entrepreneurship and innovation for the entire student body, regardless of major.



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