Skandalaris Center for Interdisciplinary Innovation and Entrepreneurship

The Skandalaris Center for Interdisciplinary Innovation and Entrepreneurship has a threefold-mission:

1. Attract the maximum possible number of students, faculty and alumni from all disciplines into the interdisciplinary innovation and entrepreneurship funnel.

2. Provide high quality, venture-specific, practical entrepreneurial training to all.

3. Provide access to early stage seed capital to the most promising Washington University entrepreneurs and innovations.

The center accomplishes this through a series of co-curricular programs beginning with IdeaBounce®, which is both a website and an event. Students may post ideas on the IdeaBounce® website and get connected to the network of creators, inventors, investors, business people, service providers, customers, mentors and others who can help transform ideas into reality, create value and bring inventions to market.

In addition to virtual connections on the website, people meet and begin to help advance ideas at free, fun, fast-paced IdeaBounce® events. The agenda includes two-minute pitches from pre-selected idea “bouncers,” the announcement of winners, a reception for all and a private lunch for the winners and judges only.

All are welcome to hear ideas, and events typically include an “open mic” portion. Judges represent venture capital firms, incubators, faculty and other local entrepreneurs. They select winners based on the clarity of the presentation, the passion of the bouncer and the request for help — as the purpose of the event is to get people to connect and help each other.

Bouncing your idea is just the beginning — Skandalaris Center follow-on programming opportunities include workshops, individual mentoring sessions, and business plan competitions.

Training for students is also offered through Skandalaris programming including our pre-orientation program and our subsidized summer internship program, and our affiliations with student groups including IDEA Labs, The BALS Group, and The Entrepreneur and Venture Capital Association.

Startup (W)U is the center's pre-orientation program for first-year students offered every August before classes begin. Whether planning to major in art, science, engineering, business or the humanities, students will experience the journey from idea to venture. Participants will also explore the entrepreneurial community around Washington University and St. Louis through site visits and networking with innovative leaders. Most importantly, students will learn the value of interdisciplinary collaboration and discover how much a group of passionate people can accomplish in a few short days.

Every summer, the Skandalaris Center subsidizes 25-30 undergraduate student internships at local commercial and social venture startups. Students work at their ventures Monday-Thursday for 10 weeks during the summer. On Fridays, students participate in activities organized by the Skandalaris Center, including visits to St. Louis neighborhoods, site visits to startups, and meetings with local entrepreneurs. On Friday afternoons students return to campus and work in interdisciplinary groups on their own ideas or on challenges presented by the ventures where they are working. Both the pre-orientation and internship programs are designed to immerse students in the entrepreneurial culture on campus and in the larger St. Louis community.

While the Skandalaris Center does not list courses for academic credit, each school at Washington University offers entrepreneurial courses, from Design Thinking for Science, Engineering, Business and the Liberal Arts (ARCH 376), offered through the Sam Fox School of Design & Visual Arts, to From Concept to Market: The Business of Engineering (Engr 324) offered through the School of Engineering & Applied Science.

Please contact the Skandalaris Center for additional information about academic course work or co-curricular programming.

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