



**ELON**  
UNIVERSITY

Doherty Center  
FOR CREATIVITY, INNOVATION  
AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

## **2021 GCEC Awards**

### **Exceptional Activities in Entrepreneurship Across Disciplines**

### **“Elon’s Marketplace Under the Oaks”**

### **A Campus-Wide Initiative to Teach and Practice Entrepreneurship at Elon**

The Doherty Center’s

**MARKETPLACE**

Under the Oaks



**Alyssa Martina, Director**

**Doherty Center for Creativity,  
Innovation and Entrepreneurship**

**[amartina@elon.edu](mailto:amartina@elon.edu)**

**Nomination Submission**

**Clearly state the activities purpose, strategic goals, objectives and intended target audience.**

The Marketplace Under the Oaks, an initiative of the Doherty Center for Creativity, Innovation and Entrepreneurship, is designed to expand entrepreneurial activities and opportunities to non-traditional entrepreneurs across our campus of 6270 undergraduate and 800 graduate students. All students are welcome to be a part of the Marketplace whether they have a product or service, hobby or passion. We teach these students how to commercialize their creativity and bring their ideas to fruition.

Our overarching strategic goal is to introduce the “gospel” of entrepreneurship to any and all students at Elon, with a specific focus on students who do not have high tech/high growth ventures. We believe that all students have the creative spark to ideate and innovate and it is our goal to help them recognize their potential as creative entrepreneurs or “creativepreneurs,” as we refer to them. Some of our objectives include to helping students identify opportunities, matching mentors (alumni, community leaders and founders) with Marketplace students, creating various workshops that teach key business and startup principles, explaining principles such as pricing strategy, strategic marketing, social media and negotiation, offering pop-up shops, helping them earn revenue, providing small business counseling (by Center director Alyssa Martina) and teaching design thinking for innovative practice. The goal of these objectives is to meet each student where we find them and take them from where they are to where they need to be, moving them along the entrepreneurial spectrum.

On average, we gain one new student business each week and have seen no slowdown in pace since creating this initiative. Nor do we anticipate any letup as we welcome the incoming class with “side hustle” workshops.

**Explain how the center has been proactive in enabling entrepreneurship education opportunities for those who identify as a member of a traditionally underrepresented population.** We teach all interested students how to see themselves as an entrepreneur. Through the Marketplace, we have also launched the Black Entrepreneur Initiative (BEI), designed to attract any Black students at Elon who are entrepreneurs, interested in entrepreneurship or innovation or simply see themselves as creative and wish to learn more. The BEI is a pipeline for the Marketplace and many of our BEI students have products and services that they sell through the Marketplace. Other means of support include our signature events for Black students: Black Innovation Matters (now in its 4<sup>th</sup> year) and the Black network exchange, whereby we match Black students interested in innovation or entrepreneurship with local Black entrepreneurs.

We similarly seek out and support our female entrepreneurs. Beyond our campus-wide “W.E. Do! Women and Entrepreneurship” conference, now in its sixth year, we also actively engage and seek female students in other ways. These activities lead to a solid representation of female students in the Marketplace.

Another cohorts we target are Elon’s first generational college students and as well as students from our Odyssey program (which is comprised of a group of students of cultural, racial or socioeconomic diversity who demonstrate financial need). Many of Marketplace ventures are led by First Gen and/or Odyssey students. We also visit many student organizations and clubs

including the LBBTQIA center to encourage students to become engaged in the Marketplace. Because there is no fee or requirements to join this initiative (other than an interest in creativity), it is easy for all students to take part.

**Explain how the center has leveraged strategic partners from diverse backgrounds, resources and networks to develop a comprehensive program.** Partnerships are integral to our ability to effectuate the Marketplace Under the Oaks. We have partnered with Elon Dining (Aramark), to sell our student products at no markup and help us facilitate the pop-ups, and the Maker Hub, which often brings students to its space that are unaware of their startup potential.

We work closely with Elon Law School's Small Business Clinic, which provides law students to help students with entity formation and other legal matters and alumni affairs to identify workshop speakers and mentors.

We partner with the Black Entrepreneurship Council to identify suitable mentors for our BEI ventures, and we collaborate with Beta Alpha Psi Honors accounting students to teach basic financial concepts and offers students the opportunity to build financial statements such as P&Ls and Balance Sheets. The Communications School's has a student chapter of the AIGA (American Institute of Graphic Arts) with whom we partner to help with design services for our student ventures.

We also collaborate with the Town of Elon for special events for our student ventures. This year, we are launching a partnership with the local Farmer's Market to create weekly pop-ups.

The Doherty Center's Advisory Board, comprised of professionals who have a special interest in innovation and entrepreneurship, works closely with the Marketplace to provide business advice to our students. Finally, Elon's student government association, collaborates with Marketplace students with its Acorn Fund, providing funding to many of our student ventures.

**Describe the multidisciplinary program and explain why the program is unique and/or innovative.** Marketplace Under the Oaks is targeting a segment of the student population who are often overlooked at other institutions because they don't fit into the high tech/high growth mold that many programs pursue. Our program welcomes all students regardless of their "technology" chops. Open to all students in all schools on campus, we are an inclusionary network of creatives, visionaries, artists and foodies, and everything in between. Our mission is to support every single one of our creative students every step of the way.

Because we are not a top-tier R-1 research institution, most of our student ventures are smaller in nature and geared more towards creative activities. We have determined that this is actually the "sweet spot" for us. Entrepreneurs come in all shapes and sizes and are at different places in their entrepreneurial pursuits; as a part of the Creator economy, Elon's creativepreneurs are learning important business skills and developing the growth mindset which is integral to entrepreneurship education.

**Provide a list of three to five specific achievements and/or related outcomes, with a brief explanation, that illustrate the Center's impact.** We went from approximately 20 ventures emanating mostly from the business school to over 52 ventures with less than half (43%) being business school students and even fewer, entrepreneurship majors.

Students who never saw themselves as entrepreneurial began to self-identify in a way that evinced a newfound confidence. One “Arts & Sciences” major who has launched her own small venture attended a business networking event and was extremely grateful for learning how to network with other business professionals.

Non-business students learned important topics and skills related to running a business. These included developing P&L statements, legal and IP terms, applying for LLCs, basic accounting and marketing skills, customer discovery, lateral growth, financial forecasting, negotiating contracts with vendors and suppliers, among many others.

Prior to the introduction of the Marketplace, the Acorn Fund funded seven ventures, all of which were led by white, male students from the business school. With Marketplace in place, the Acorn Fund this year funded nine ventures in which only three of them emanated from business school students. The rest were from other parts of campus (Arts & Sciences, Communications, Theater) and recipients included female and Black students as well as other identified diverse students.

Being selected as a Stanford University Innovation Faculty Fellow candidate based on this initiative has enabled me to develop the Marketplace into a model community of practice that can be replicated at other college campuses.

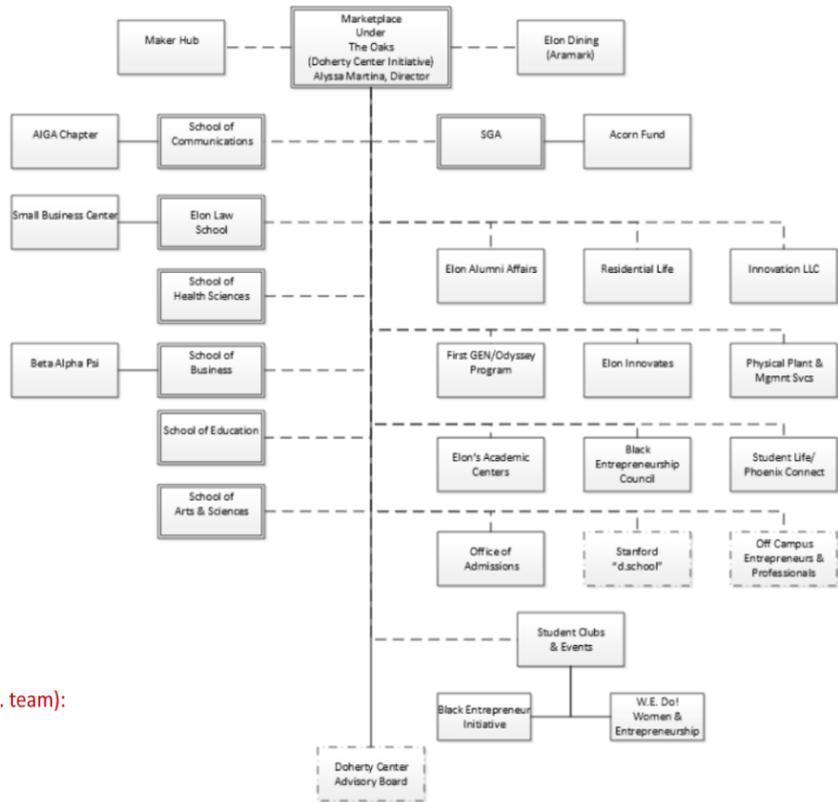
**Explain how this activity distinguishes the center from its peers.** Many entrepreneurship centers relish supporting high tech/ high growth student ventures. However, at Elon, because we are not an R-1 or R-2 research institution, there are no commercialization activities on our campus nor do we have an office for technology transfer. Moreover, our engineering and STEM programs, although beginning to grow, are still quite limited. Our vision for this initiative is to truly help these businesses thrive and survive on our campus, but as they move away from Elon to areas across the country, the world.

Elon University prides itself on experiential learning, noting that “Students learn best, and more deeply when they apply what they are learning by putting ideas into action through firsthand experiences.” These students are taking everything they have learned either in the classroom or through our workshops and directly using their knowledge in their businesses. They see firsthand what works and what doesn’t work, allowing them to have this “trial” period of their companies as a learning process before moving on to the next steps post-graduation. The student business owners can speak with their customer base face-to-face through our pop-ups, see firsthand how to talk with customers, adjust pricing strategies, see what their customer-base values are, and so much more! Their involvement within Marketplace Under the Oaks is truly the epitome of experiential learning.

Our vision for this initiative is to truly help these businesses thrive and survive on our campus, and as they move away from Elon. We are trying to create a niche in the entrepreneurship academia and nurture small scale entrepreneurship. We value teaching our students to learn and embrace the skills and creativity to have successful creative ventures. We also feel that this is in alignment with the Ice House curriculum. It also helps us serve under-represented students at Elon who do not see themselves as being entrepreneurial. For them, this is a wonderful opportunity to see their potential!

# Appendix 1

## Marketplace Under the Oaks: Partners, Collaborators & Pipelines



Doherty Center Staff (includes MPUO. team):  
 Alyssa Martina, D.C. Director  
 Kim Phipps, D.C. Program Coordinator  
 Plus 8 amazing D.C. Student Interns

## Appendix 2

# Marketplace Under the Oaks

"Marketplace Under the Oaks has provided an incredible plethora of resources for small businesses for students, alumni, and faculty. Their love for the Elon Community is clearly evident in that they have provided so many opportunities and created strong partnerships for small businesses like myself and asked for nothing in return. **They truly are there to help Elon's small businesses thrive. Working with the Marketplace under the Oaks through the Doherty Center has been one of the best experiences I have had in my time at Elon.**"

Founder of The Travelin Teacher, Caroline Durham '23

"I hope that partnerships between Elon and student businesses can continue into the future. This is exactly the kind of thing I was looking for when I started my business and couldn't find. The fact that we have it now is amazing!"

Founder of Climate Change Apparel, Matthew Mitten '21



**Elon University** @elonuniversity · 28.04

What a beautiful day on campus today! And to top it all off, student entrepreneurs were participating in a Marketplace Under the Oaks pop up, and it was Food Truck Wednesday!



3

24



An example of a student who has benefited is Caitlin Naughton, a sports management major and communications minor and owner of *Catie's Creations*, a jewelry business created during the pandemic. Since October, Caitlin has seen a 94% increase in revenue attributed to the efforts of Marketplace Under the Oaks.

## Latest

NEWS | 08/13/2021 2:49pm

### [CDC votes to recommend booster vaccines](#)

The Centers for Disease Control voted today to recommend extra vaccines for immunocompromised individuals.

NEWS | 08/12/2021 1:20pm

### [Redistricting data for NC released](#)

The United States Census Bureau is set to release redistricting data for North Carolina from the 2020 Census on Aug. 12. Legislators in the North Carolina General Assembly will use Redistricting data to redraw congressional districts, state senate districts and state house districts.

NEWS | 08/11/2021 11:55am

### [Masks reinstated for beginning of semester](#)

NEWS | 08/10/2021 8:17pm

### [Board of Aldermen approves Equality Resolution](#)

NEWS | 08/10/2021 2:18pm

### [The City of Burlington announces next chief of police](#)

LIFESTYLE | 08/03/2021 12:17pm

### [The Women's Network to launch chapter at Elon University](#)

NEWS | 08/02/2021 9:53pm

## Elon students turn hobbies, passions into small businesses

From apparel to jewelry and more, Elon University students and alumni are partnering with Marketplace Under the Oaks to turn their passions into businesses

By [Claire Schoenfeld](#) | 3/12/21 4:16pm



Photo by [Ellis Chandler](#) | Elon News Network  
The Marketplace Under the Oaks pop-up shop that took place outside of Clohan Dining Hall.

Giving clothes a new life is how Elon University senior Lindsey Patterson describes her small business Faded Front Door. Patterson takes thrifted clothes and upcycles them through bleach dying, embroidery, cropping and much more.



Patterson is just one of over 40 Elon University student and alumni entrepreneurs who have a small business with the [Marketplace Under the Oaks](#) network — an initiative created in partnership with the Doherty Center for Creativity, Innovation, and Entrepreneurship, Elon Dining and The Maker Hub to help former and current Elon student "entrepreneurs, creatives, and visionaries" as well as faculty and staff launch their small businesses.

### [Board of Aldermen hears preliminary ADA self-assessment findings](#)



Patterson said the idea to start her small business came from her own experience completing a remote internship in August 2020, where she learned about waste created by the fast fashion industry and through her existing love for thrifting and upcycling clothing.

She hopes to be an eco-friendly business by reducing the waste that comes from the textile industry through repurposing thrifted garments as well utilizing environmentally conscious packaging as she is able to grow her business to being a fully e-commerce business.

"I just applied for the Acorn Fund through the Doherty Center so I can make a full e-commerce website and move from Instagram to a more professional service" Patterson said. "There's also a company that does compostable and recyclable packaging that I really want to order from."



Credit: Casey Clifton

Products from one of our top selling student entrepreneurs, Soniyah Robinson.



# MARKETPLACE UNDER THE OAKS

at Fountain Market

**WELCOME TO THE FOUNTAIN MARKET SHOWCASE OF MARKETPLACE UNDER THE OAKS!**

This case was founded in 2021 to celebrate and promote Elon University's entrepreneurs and creatives!

All businesses within this case are current Elon students, but Marketplace Under the Oaks as a whole promotes and supports all Elon business owners: those that sell products, services, and visionaries alike! Along with this case, we help with marketing & promotional materials, pop-ups, 1 on 1 counseling, and more!

Every few weeks, our inventory within the case will rotate, so be on the lookout for new products soon!

If you're interested in a product within the case, make sure to let the cashier know so you can make your purchase! (Yes, you can use meal dollars and Phoneix cash!)

Don't see something you like right now in the case? Feel free to scan the QR code on the student's info sheet and purchase directly from their websites or social media accounts!

Interested in being apart of Marketplace Under the Oaks?  
Email [marketplaceundertheoaks@gmail.com](mailto:marketplaceundertheoaks@gmail.com) today!







# IGNITING THE CREATIVE SPARK OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP

*Celebrating the creative class of student entrepreneurs*

By Alyssa Marina, J.D. MBA  
Director of the Doherty Center for Creativity, Innovation & Entrepreneurship, Elon University  
Faculty Innovation Fellows Candidate

Muhammad Yunus, founder of Grameen Bank, emphasized the notion that we are all entrepreneurs. The creative spark which animates entrepreneurship is something that most people possess, albeit often unknowingly.

As many researchers now acknowledge, however, creativity is a human quality that exists in all of us but is often stifled rather than encouraged. So the disconnect between creativity and entrepreneurship has ensued for too long.

Instead, the image of Mark Zuckerberg is too often evoked whenever one thinks of the scrappy college entrepreneur toiling away in his or her dorm room and coming up with a lightning bolt innovation. This notion is outdated and out of touch with the reality of many of today's creative class of entrepreneurs. Ventures may vary from high tech to low tech to no tech and still represent viable entrepreneurial ventures. At many universities, university entrepreneurial centers recognize that entrepreneurs come in all shapes and sizes and animate and support any number of unique student ventures.

In an effort to help creative entrepreneurs, the Doherty Center for Creativity, Innovation, and Entrepreneurship at Elon University has embarked on one aspect of this initiative called "Marketplace Under the Oaks" to celebrate its creative class of student entrepreneurs on campus. At the core of my work in the Faculty Innovation Fellows program and as the Director of Elon's Doherty Center, I am leading a three prong, multi-year initiative focused on three groups of entrepreneurs, a) Black Students/Students of Color; b) the "Creative Class" of Students; and c) Low tech startups. By doing so, I hope to support the non-traditional but ever relevant entrepreneurially driven students.

By promoting creative small businesses, students are encouraged to grow and thrive under this "tent" of the new Creator economy. Celebrating these students as "creativepreneurs" the Doherty Center is focused on finding ways to support Elon students through their entrepreneurship and creative endeavors. This initiative helps all students explore their creative selves and explore what opportunities can be pursued as a result.

By building a community of student creatives, it offers the opportunity for students to sell products through pop-up stores with an actual visual showcase of their work product for purchase. This initiative allows students to take smaller risks in creating student businesses where they can pursue dreams of being an entrepreneur without the high tech/high growth metrics that are attached to traditional technological ventures. It also allows all students to embark on this creative journey and breaks down barriers across campus by connecting students with a common creative spirit.

Marketplace is a holistic effort, embracing not only a student showcase but also promotion of student businesses through social media and news outlets, pop-up events, guest speakers and workshops, networking opportunities, business counseling, and introductions to professionals. Although a part of Elon's Love School of Business, Doherty Center works closely with Elon Law School and professors across campus including Elon's engineering, STEM and communications programs to help the students advance their businesses.

Students at Elon are seeing the value of this initiative. As Sarina Abraham '21, founder of "Get Stoned," a jewelry company, stated, "Marketplace Under the Oaks' true purpose is to help students build and develop their businesses. It's a great resource and has helped my business grow and get the word out."



Credit: Camp Capital

Students are enjoying the opportunity to reawaken their creative instincts and develop side-hustle businesses while on campus. Caroline Durham '23, Elon student and owner of the Travelin' Teacher noted that, "Marketplace Under the Oaks has provided an incredible plethora of resources for small businesses for students, alumni, and faculty... They truly are there to help Elon's small businesses thrive. Working with the Marketplace under the Oaks through the Doherty Center has been one of the best experiences I have had in my time at Elon."

"We understand that many in our network and those considering joining in on all of the fun may not necessarily have products or services for sale but are still entrepreneurial at heart. We still want to include them to amplify the work that they are doing regardless of whether they have a product or service to sell," stated Claire Bach, Doherty Center scholar intern and the student co-founder of Marketplace Under the Oaks.

Stephen Hawthorne '21, co-owner of clothing enterprise "Good to See You" values the importance of this new initiative. "The Doherty Center's Marketplace Under the Oaks' has allowed my company to market in ways not accessible before. The Doherty Center and Alyssa Marina have provided great guidance in helping us grow our company. They assisted us in financial support through the Acorn Fund, provided legal guidance, and more. We are extremely grateful for the entrepreneurship program here at Elon and the 'Good to See You' team hopes to continue to utilize these resources on campus to grow our company!"

Plans to expand on the Marketplace framework include a small venture fund specifically directed to Elon's creativepreneurs. This fund would provide grants to student creatives who wish to launch a small

business as well as underrepresented students of Color and low-tech ventures on campus.

While the Doherty Center still works with students who have high-tech startups with one-on-one business counseling through the Center's "Start-Up Shop," the ability to also include student creatives in casting its net has been extraordinarily gratifying and validates that the Creator economy has a strong role in entrepreneurship and at Elon.

This Marketplace initiative has been an integration of creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship, which fits into the mission of the Center. It has been a joy to work with these students, and their ventures, all driven by the creative "side hustle" concept of entrepreneurship. Finding this unique way to meet the needs and passion of Elon students has been extremely rewarding and an important way to celebrate the nature of entrepreneurship that underscores the creative spark in everyone.