

GCEC Award Nominaton:

Outstanding Student Engagement & Leadership
(Schools with 5,000 students or less)

Loyola University New Orleans
Center for Entrepreneurship and Community Development

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LOYOLA
UNIVERSITY
NEW ORLEANS

**CENTER FOR ENTREPRENEURSHIP
AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

Nomination:

The Center for Entrepreneurship and Community Development at Loyola University New Orleans works to train students and community members within the Loyola family (students, faculty, staff, alumni, and parents) in building new, scalable businesses capable of reaching the size and scope necessary to drive the local economic and community development. Through the creation of a combination of traditional and innovative entrepreneurial programming, the leadership team and students that work with the Center have created a community that strives for excellence in social entrepreneurship, a goal that aligns with Loyola's Jesuit mission of working toward social justice.

Loyola University New Orleans is a small and tight-knit campus which prides itself on its fascinating, offbeat, friendly, and diverse mix of individuals. Across campus, over 51% of undergraduate students and over 35% of graduate level students represent ethnic minorities, and over 65% of students identify as female. This sets the stage for students to define who they want to be, and how they want to, in the words of St. Ignatius, "go forth and set the world on fire." In that context, the Center for Entrepreneurship and Community Development seeks to actively work toward the growth of student-led ventures and organizations through a variety of scalable programming.

Student engagement has grown significantly since the re-launching of the Center after the COVID-19 pandemic, thanks in part to Center-led campus-wide initiatives and programming. This year's edition of the Side Hustle Expo, for example, featured fifty-six students from all five colleges on campus and a full slate of different majors, including everything from music industry studies to nursing, theater arts to marketing, journalism to international business and beyond. Students showcased the ways they are making extra cash to support themselves while in school for a juried event with the winners getting a scholarship provided through a grant secured by the Center.

Campus-wide student engagement doesn't stop there: this year's Wolf Pack LaunchU, a 10-day intensive training program which equips up to 20 teams of entrepreneurs with strategies for customer and market validation, garnered nearly triple the applications of its inaugural program. Wolf Pack LaunchU connects not only the participating ventures, but the entire campus community with leaders from the New Orleans entrepreneurial ecosystem to create further scalability for the Center's ventures and the city's entrepreneurial growth as a whole.

In addition to these key programs, the Center hosts the monthly innovate.LOYNO speaker series, bringing together a wide range of majors and students from across campus to learn more about the movers and shakers in the business and entrepreneurial communities in New Orleans. Featured speakers this year were as diverse as the student body at Loyola, including everyone from NASA engineers and innovators in the field of glass recycling at Glass Half Full to founders of t-shirt companies, health centers, solar power non-profits, and more.

During the 2022-2023 academic year, a tight-knit group of like-minded and entrepreneurial students from a variety of backgrounds and majors worked together to re-launch the Entrepreneurship Club (now known as Startup LOYNO), which had been dormant since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic forced students off-campus in the Spring semester of 2020. The leadership team within the club has developed and executed plans for a speaker series to bring young alumni and scalability-focused speakers to campus to focus on developing their businesses as well as to engage in ideation for social justice minded ventures, such as working in partnership with the student-run Environment Club on the Rebuilding New Orleans project, which seeks to ideate, develop, and create solutions for tackling the climate crisis that continues to affect Louisiana and the Gulf South.

Throughout the the academic year, the variety of programming produced and hosted by the Center created nearly 1,250 unique engagements with students and community members across Loyola's diverse campus, a nearly 300% increase over the previous academic year. Those students aren't limited to the College of Business, either - in fact, nearly 65% of the students that attended events or participated in programming presented by the Center were from one of the four other colleges on Loyola's campus. Center and Club leadership collect and maintain data that keeps track of not only numbers of participants, but also their major, minor, and areas of interest, which further allows Center and Club team members to develop programming that engages a wide variety of students, faculty, staff, and community members.

The Center's reach doesn't stop there - beginning in 2021, Loyola's Center for Entrepreneurship and Community Development began a partnership with Junior Achievement of Greater New Orleans, working to promote and engage high school students in entrepreneurship training and workshops. With events like the Young Entrepreneur's Forum at New Orleans Entrepreneur Week (which brought over 200 high school students from the region to hear from young entrepreneurs and alumni) and hosting the Trust Your Crazy Ideas Challenge (a high school pitch competition featuring teams from across the state of Louisiana and offering over \$80,000 in scholarships to the winning teams), Loyola's partnership with Junior Achievement is working to grow the entrepreneurial ecosystem from the ground up.

Appendix

“As a student who has participated in several competitions and workshops at the Center for Entrepreneurship and Community Development, I can confidently say that the experience at Loyola specifically has been transformative and invaluable. The faculty and staff are highly knowledgeable and supportive, always willing to go the extra mile to help students like myself succeed in the entrepreneurial world.

Being a participant and winner in the Side Hustle Expo encouraged me to also take part in the Wolf Pack LaunchU program. I’m always amazed at the amount of effort put forth by the staff. From mentorship programs, to workshops, to networking events, they have all been instrumental in my entrepreneurial journey. Additionally, the entrepreneurial community at Loyola is incredibly supportive and fosters a spirit of innovation and collaboration.

Overall, being a part of the entrepreneurial program at Loyola has been marked by enriching experiences in programming and entrepreneurship. I have gained valuable skills, knowledge, and a network of supportive individuals who have played a pivotal role in shaping my professional development. I wholeheartedly recommend the entrepreneurship program at Loyola to anyone seeking a well-rounded community of business owners.”

Jayda Martin

LOYNO Class of '25

First Place, 2023 Side Hustle Expo

Team Member, 2023 Wolf Pack LaunchU Startup Bootcamp + Pitch Competition

"Startup LOYNO, the entrepreneurship club at Loyola University New Orleans, has helped me learn from individuals in a field, grow as a person, and connect with other individuals and professionals. The programming that I have helped to develop been a part of this year has been amazing for other students as well as for myself because of this. Programs such as the innovate.LOYNO speaker series and the Side Hustle Expo have increased my knowledge on different business sectors and have helped me to grow in my business venture as well. The faculty members are one of the best resources we have in the entrepreneurship club because of their help and patience. Due to this I am grateful to be a member of the entrepreneurship club at Loyola!"

Ileanna Calcano

LOYNO Class of '24

President, Startup LOYNO