

INNOVATION & ENTREPRENEURSHIP

NEWSLETTER OF THE MUHLENBERG IINE PROGRAM



MUHLENBERG STUDENTS AT SOLTECH

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WHAT HAS THE INNOVATION AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP MINOR TAUGHT YOU?

Dermerkarsal Karbah (Dk) '20
Business Administration

Minors: Entrepreneurship, Sustainability Studies

"Throughout my years at Muhlenberg, I've attended the innovation challenges in the Spring, visited local startups, attended events with guest speakers, along with having dinners with Muhlenberg alumni that are entrepreneurs. What I've learned from all of these events is that entrepreneurship is a field that will continue to grow in the future. As technology progresses, there will be more opportunities for people to create businesses to meet the needs of the world's population. The only obstacles that have been made apparent are the limits of one's imagination. The success or failure of a business venture really depends on the level of effort that people are willing to invest".



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MEET THE NEW ENTREPRENEUR IN RESIDENCE: GREG HELLER- LABELLE

BY: ARIANNA TILLEY

Professor Greg Heller-Labelle is the new Entrepreneur-in-residence here at Muhlenberg. This past semester he taught two sections of Introduction to Innovation and Entrepreneurship. In the Spring, he will be introducing a new course at Muhlenberg: "The Business of Booze". Prof. Heller-Labelle earned M.B.A. from Lehigh University and B.A., B.S., and B.Phil. from the University of Pittsburgh.

INE: How did you get interested in entrepreneurship?

Heller-Labelle: My first experience with entrepreneurship as a discipline was at the orientation for my MBA program at Lehigh University. Dale Falcinelli, who ran the VentureSeries entrepreneurship program there, gave a pitch to us new students about how strange the people in the VSeries were, but that if we took a class, we might realize we were the same type of crazy.

The first class featured a brewery startup. I didn't know anything about startups, but I did know I cared about craft beverage, so I went up to him after, and demanded he let me in to the class. I was exactly the same type of crazy, it turned out. After that class, I badgered the guy who was starting the brewery into letting me buy him a beer. It was the first time I realized that there were legitimate careers outside of a traditional 9-5, and that in fact, you could make your own career.

INE: Was business and entrepreneurship always your dream?

Heller-Labelle: Nope. My first career was in nonprofit, and I moonlighted in politics.

INE: Who were some of your greatest influencers and what did they teach you?

Heller-Labelle: In high school, I had a math teacher named Laura Drum, who to this date was the hardest teacher I've ever had. She taught me how to learn, and her advice was always that I needed to study more and do my homework; she was right. I also had a history teacher, Robert Spahn, who taught me how to think, and warned me that people who read science fiction never get prom dates; he was right, too.



Greg Heller-Labelle

The single biggest influence on my academic life was G. Alec "Doc" Stewart, Dean of the University Honors College at Pitt. He was a physicist whose complete lunacy infused the UHC with a dynamic energy that was totally infectious. He believed in challenging yourself; if you were pre-med, he wanted you in a dance class;

if you weren't a writer, he wanted you in his physics class, where you'd struggle to get the most rewarding B- of your life. He wanted you in his physics class, where you'd struggle to get the most rewarding B- of your life. There was no virtue in doing things you already knew you could do, to Doc. He believed in "curiosity" and "human attainment" as the ultimate goals of our time on Earth.

I've had a great community of friends and supporters in the field, most notably Anthony Durante and Wayne Barz (now both of Ben Franklin TechVentures). Jeremy Cowan, founder of Shmaltz Brewing Co., also provided encouragement for the completely insane idea that I had to start a meadery.

At DreamIt Ventures' I had the privilege of working with then-managing partners Steve Welch and Kerry Rupp, two brilliant role models for how to stay relatively sane and still care about the important things while navigating the startup world.

INE: What advice do you hope to pass on to your students and other entrepreneurs?

Heller-Labelle: In the history of everything that worked there was a time when it didn't; every "good" idea required a whole bunch of thinking about "bad" ones; the first meaningful data point in a business is money from strangers; it is simultaneously necessary to fail, okay to feel badly about it, and important to try again; we can think entrepreneurially about things other than business; no one really knows what they're doing; that a large potential market is not a customer acquisition strategy; 99.999999 percent of successful entrepreneurs aren't white men from Silicon Valley, no matter what we see on TV; culture is the most important thing in any business; finally, that we are all in this together.

ALUNMI ENTREPRENEURIAL SPOTLIGHT: JANKI VANSIA OF OPTY



JANKI VANSIA DOING SOME MARKETING IN NYC

CREDIT: @JANKIVANSIA ON TWITTER

Janki Vansia graduated from Muhlenberg College in 2018 with a Bachelors in Business Administration and Management. Since leaving Muhlenberg, she has founded Opty. Opty is a business that specializes in using fiber technology to create cloths that make it easier for people to clean their glasses, whether it be for vision correction, blue-light filtering, or UV Ray deterrence. Vansia believes that cleaning glasses shouldn't be hard and wanted to create something for the public that makes that daily task easier.

Vansia actually never thought she would be an entrepreneur, but when the opportunity came, she went for it. Vansia recalls when she was walking down Academic Row and asked herself why she never wears her glasses, Vansia said that "the task to clean them is such a hassle, I'd rather not wear them". When Vansia went home for spring break, she decided to test out all the fabric in her home and when she found the type of cloth she was looking for, she developed and expanded on that to create her Opty Cloth.

It was and still is very important to Vansia that her customers are put first. Because of this passion for consumer first, Vansia started her company listing all the things she hates about cleaning her glasses and researching what people thought they were lacking when it came to cleaning glasses. Vansia said the easiest part of starting her business was social media and getting the word out there because all her college internships had to do with media and she enjoyed designing the packaging.

On the flip side, the hardest part for Vansia was marketing and showing people why they needed this product. Vansia said that she is not "giving you a good cloth, I am giving you a great cloth... glasses are medical devices and should be treated as such".

Vansia remembers Muhlenberg College, but especially Prof. Kyle David, Dr. Holmes- Miller, and Prof. Rita Chesterton as great mentors in starting her business. Vansia says that Prof. David, who loves to watch a product grow, was the person she went to with many of her questions. Vansia is also very grateful to Dr. Holmes- Miller for proof-reading her entire website and Prof. Rita Chesterton for their strategy conversations.

Having started and maintaining a business since leaving college, Vansia says that her business makes her value all the work other entrepreneurs put into their products to benefit others. Vansia wants all budding entrepreneurs to remember "Put the customer first...If you solve the problem great, but if you solve a problem that doesn't meet the solution that people need, there really is not a use for it". Vansia also found that understanding "Jobs to be Done Theory" by Clayton Christianson was helpful and might be helpful to other Business and Innovation and Entrepreneurship students as well as budding entrepreneurs. So, if you wear glasses or are interested in hearing more about Janki Vansia's story visit her website www.useopty.com.



ENTREPRENEURS ON CAMPUS: INTRODUCING MARGARET DELUCIA

Margaret Delucia is a Theatre Major with a Dance and Creative Writing double minor. Delucia started the "The Decluttering Project" in 2018, which is a mental awareness blog and craft store dedicated to ideas and things for de-stressing and promoting positive self-care and love. Delucia recalls herself as a very independent child, who liked to start projects on her own. For example, Delucia published her first piece of literature when she was 13 and has since continued to chase after ideas and start creating out of nothing. Recalling her start as an entrepreneur, Delucia says "I actually started it [the business] by accident. It was a really stressful week so I decided to make slime to destress... then, I realized I had a lot of it and I decided to post it on Etsy. People liked it so I began to make more and sell more."

Over the course of the last year, Delucia's business has grown, in fact it has grown so much that Delucia is looking to expand into other projects and crafts, developing new products. Delucia is passionate about promoting care and love for yourself. She wishes to leave Muhlenberg students and other budding entrepreneurs with this thought "Demand to be taken seriously, people will try to take advantage of you and you must be firm and strong in your choices and products". So, in short, if you find yourself a little bit stressed be sure to stop by The Decluttering Shop.



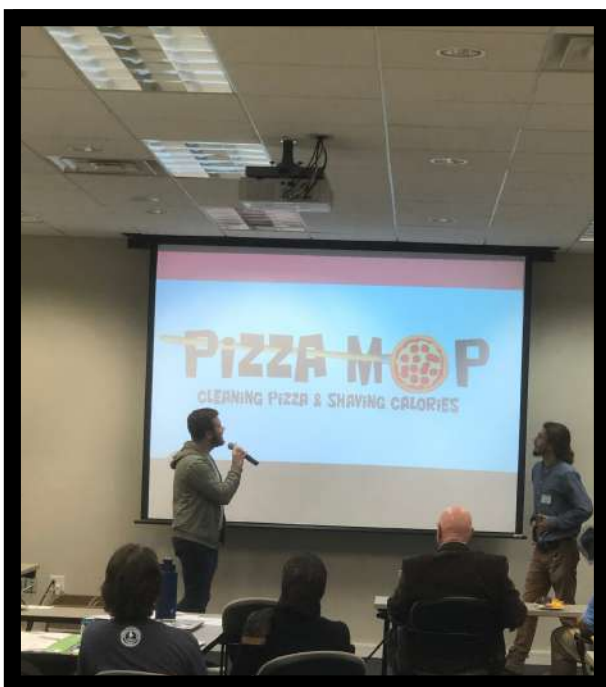
MARGARET DELUCIA

SHOP AND FOLLOW "THE DECLUTTERING PROJECT" HERE:

Blog: <https://thedeclutteringproject.blog/>

Etsy: <https://www.etsy.com/shop/TheDeclutteringShop>

Instagram: @margaretdelucia



ETHAN RUOFF '21 PITCHING THE PIZZA MOP AT THE 3-DAY STARTUP

3- DAY START-UP

Muhlenberg Innovation and Entrepreneurship students attended the 3-Day Startup conference at Shippensburg University this fall. 3-Day startup is a hands-on opportunity for budding creators and inventors to gain the experience of starting a company through workshops with experienced mentors, organizers, and panelists.

Our students, along with students from Lafayette, Shippensburg, and California University of Pennsylvania spent three days developing ideas to pitch to a panel of local entrepreneurs. As part of the experience they were required to go out into the community and do real customer discovery. Muhlenberg team members, Jordan Curtis '21 and Ethan Ruoff '21, along with team members from other schools developed a prototype and pitched "The Pizza Mop". After customer discovery, they realized that Pizza shops were not their target customer, but rather those individuals who love the kind of unique products sold in "As Seen on TV" stores. This shift impressed the judges who stated that real entrepreneurs know when to pivot.

DINNER (OR LUNCH) WITH AN ENTREPRENEUR

These visits are made possible by a generous donation by Bill Miers '49.

SOLTECH

In October, Muhlenberg students had the opportunity to meet with CEO, Paul Hodges and CMO Chris Clark co-founders of SolTech Solutions. SolTech is a state-of-the-art company specializing in LED lighting to enhance plants & flora in interior design.

Students were able to tour their offices, located in the Pi Incubator space, and enjoy some pizza with the founders afterwards. Paul and Chris spoke of how SolTech went from an idea that they had in college to a successful business. Students asked questions about startup marketing, supply chain issues, and how to run a successful Kickstarter campaign, among other topics.

According to Emily Sinensky '21, "What was really unique about SolTech Solutions was that it brings together entrepreneurship, sustainability, and interior design. I really enjoyed exploring the Pi Incubator in Bethlehem, and learning how SolTech was founded and what their next big moves are going forward."

YOURWAY

Our November "Dinner with an Entrepreneur" trip was to YourWay transport located right outside of Allentown. Gulam Jaffer '97 is a Muhlenberg alumnus and the founder and President of YourWay. YourWay is an integrated bio-pharmaceutical supply chain that works in creating primary and secondary packaging for time and temperature-sensitive clinical drug products and biological samples. Our trip included a tour of the company, as well as dinner with Mr. Jaffer. Students were able to learn directly from Mr. Jaffer how he started YourWay while a student at Muhlenberg and grew it into the multi-national business that it is today. Sitting around the table with Mr. Jaffer allowed our students to connect directly with his passion for business. His story and energy inspired our students and made them realize that it is never too soon to start and that something small can grow into something much larger than you may imagine.



BYOB (BE YOUR OWN BOSS) ENTREPRENEURSHIP CLUB EVENTS

ICE CREAM SOCIAL

This year, Innovation and Entrepreneurship students, faculty, and staff started off the semester with a bang. The BYOB club hosted Entrepreneurship faculty, minors, BYOB club members, and prospective minors alike for some ice breakers, ice cream, information about the program, its teachers, and club, and MORE ice cream! It was a true joy to see some returning faces, some new faces, and get the chance to start of the semester with great energy.



BYOB STUDENTS GETTING TO KNOW EACH OTHER AT THE ICE CREAM SOCIAL

START-UP VALLEY

This past Halloween-eve a several of our INE students had the opportunity to attend Start-Up Valley. Start-Up Valley was a Factory event, where the students got the opportunity to network and speak with local business community members, investors, and entrepreneurs. The evening showcased quick-fire pitches from local entrepreneurs who were competing for a \$1,000 grand prize. We truly enjoyed spending time with all our INE students at this event.

PET INNOVATION CHALLENGE

One trait of the Muhlenberg faculty, staff, and students, is our love of pets. This semester, Muhlenberg students attended the Pet Innovation Challenge at the Factory in Bethlehem. The Factory is a food and pet product incubator that recently opened in a renovated factory.

Students were invited to watch pitches from 10 real startups in the pet vertical. From cat treats made from lab-grown lab meat to "smart" kitty litter boxes, students had the opportunity to listen to real entrepreneurs pitching for real money. As the college with the most students in attendance we won a lunch back at the Factory in December!