

annual
report

Entrepreneurship

UNI

University of Northern Iowa
Business & Community Services

99

Iowa Counties
with Business
Projects

IMPACT

2021

38

New
Student
Ventures
Launched

255

Jobs
Created by
New and
Growing
Ventures



4 5 2 4

K-12 and
Higher
Education
Students
Participate in
Entrepreneurship
Programs



5.1Mil

Capital Invested in Small Businesses

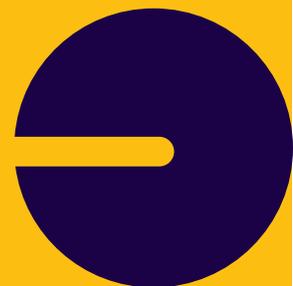


317

Total Businesses
Incubated
/41 added in 2021

73,538

Entrepreneurs Served via
IASourceLink.com



Welcome

From our director:

Entrepreneur and small business support are core to our Business and Community Services outreach programs at UNI. We are committed to meeting the needs of all types of businesses and entrepreneurial ventures as they work to *grow and prosper.*

We are excited to share some highlights and outcomes from the past year as a sampling of our business assistance. Special thanks to our team who continue to dedicate themselves to support and guide entrepreneurs across the state. Collectively, we are very optimistic about the future of small business formation and growth. Speaking of the future, please read about our Future Focus and some recent restructuring of business assistance programs on page 8.

Thanks also to our partners and collaborators. Iowa has become a very exciting place for entrepreneurs and small businesses because of the collective efforts of many.



Randy Pilkington, Executive Director,
Business and Community Services

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Find our podcast, [Building a Better Iowa](#), on your favorite listening platform for more entrepreneurship stories from BCS.



Randy Pilkington with
JPEC Director, Laurie Watje

UNI John Pappajohn Entrepreneurial Center Fosters Student Success

Last year's winter break was a little different for the students at UNI. Because of COVID-19 students were sent home for winter right after the Thanksgiving holiday and returned late January. The JPEC staff realized that their students needed connection during the six-week break and it was enough time to host another Early Founders Program. Ten student entrepreneurs participated in a virtual program which included weekly workshops and mastermind sessions as well as one-on-one meetings with their JPEC staff mentor.

"Throughout the program, I was able to further connect with mentors and peers to help grow my real-world business knowledge," says Jacob Kurt [**BUSINESS TEACHING AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP '24, INDEPENDENCE**], owner of Kurt Lawn Care. "Coming out of the program I feel more comfortable with my ability to understand business financials, marketing efforts and organization. I also gained a greater personal network. I look forward to putting what I learned in the program towards my business this spring. I truly believe the UNI JPEC fosters success and I am enthusiastic to continue

my entrepreneurial journey with the help of the UNI JPEC throughout my college career."

The winter session of the Early Founders Program wrapped up with an in-person, day-long workshop. Throughout the day, students led sessions such as "How to Pitch Like a Pro" and "Task Management and Organization". They were given opportunities to practice their elevator pitches in a collaborative environment and each student gave a final presentation. Six out of the ten student founders became tenants of the R. J. McElroy Student Business Incubator upon completing the program.

Participants of the 2020 Winter Early Founders Program include: AJ Reding-Liberal Studies, Aleah Vaske-Management and Marketing, Anna Gilbreath-Art Studio, Emma Slagle-Communications, Grace Hartnett-Digital Marketing, Isaiah Phillips-Marketing, Jacob Kurt-Business Teaching, Maddie Palmersheim-Digital Marketing, Miftar Pozhari-Finance, Stephanie Castaneda-Management. ■



Sarena Gerber [**BUSINESS TEACHING '24**], began her entrepreneurial journey through the Summer '21 Early Founder's Program. She entered the program with an idea. She worked with JPEC mentors each week to validate and test her idea as she worked to bring it to market. Combining her skills, passion, and dedication, Sarena continually pushed past comfort zones until her idea became a reality. Gerber created a floral business which provides workshops to teach making flower arrangements, "Through the Early Founder's Program I was able to work more with customer discovery to see if my concept was able to gain any traction and interest. Based on a combination of that and analyzing other aspects of my business model, I was able to validate the usefulness of my concept" remarked Sarena.

She sources her flowers from local growers as a way to invest back into her community while getting fresher, more unique bloom options. This past August, she held her first workshop and had over 10 participants. "The idea of these workshops is to give people the place to be creative and hands on. It is also a place to fellowship with one another and create stronger relationships..."

...I had people that sat next to each other as strangers and left as new friends." –SARENA GERBER

Images [clockwise starting left bottom]: flower workshop, Sarena Gerber [left] pictured with new friend, Winter Early Founders Program final workshop

Student Entrepreneurs

Anna Gilbreath [ART STUDIO, MARKETING '24] is the artist behind Anna Grace Creates. The brand began as an Instagram account used to document her artwork in high school.

Last winter, Anna joined the Early Founders Program. Her mentors challenged her to take her Instagram-driven commissions and turn Anna Grace Creates into a business. She purchased a throwing wheel and kiln and got started. Anna's beginning was not without struggles. Her Facebook page reads, "Yesterday was a hard one. I lost 75% of what I made this summer due to glaze issues in the kiln. Pottery is a craft full of heartbreak—I'm just sad to have it happen right before the pop up."

Three days later, Anna brought her "ruined" pieces to a pop up shop where she sold every piece! ■



"Anna Grace Creates is about timeless, purposeful and authentic handmade goods and by resisting the urge to live life in a hurry. I want each piece to reflect the joy of truly living in the moment"



Samantha Carpenter [GRAPHIC TECHNOLOGY, HUMANITIES ARTS & SCIENCE '22] took her interest in art and design and turned it into a business with the help of JPEC's Early Founders Program. During the program, Samantha has progressed in her design business and has since worked with a variety of clients—mostly local businesses from her home state of Illinois. Samantha's fearless attitude has accelerated the growth of Designs by Samantha and inspired energy in the summer EFP cohort. Designs by Samantha is a traveling graphic design business. ■

"The program has impacted me so much. I have reassurance that after graduation I will be using my degree and living my ultimate dream—traveling the United States and eventually, traveling across the world,"

—SAMANTHA CARPENTER ...ON THE IMPACT OF THE EFP

Life is Sweet

Lagomarcino's folds a fourth generation into their century-old family business

When you bite into Lagomarcino's chocolate, you'll find rich cream, bright mint or maybe even caramel. The excellence of their business is no accident—the Lagomarcino family has been perfecting their craft for over 100 years.

Founded by Italian immigrants Angelo and Luigia Lagomarcino in 1908, the shoppe originally offered ice cream sodas, malted milks, specialty sundaes and assorted food to everyone who passed through downtown Moline, Illinois. All the while, their family lived above the store so they could come down and help at a moment's notice.

"For not being an educated man, my grandfather coming to this country and doing what he did is pretty remarkable," said Beth Lagomarcino, member of the third generation of Lagomarcinos and co-owner of the Moline store. "He came from a town called Lagomarsino that has only 67 residents today."

Maintaining those traditions, the storefront's ice cream counter and restaurant have become an attraction over the years, transporting customers back to the early 1900s. Plus, creating a second storefront with an updated candy kitchen in Davenport in the 1990s helped spread Lagomarcino's chocolates and traditions to Iowa.

"The best thing you can do is be the best business you possibly can," said Tom Lagomarcino Jr., co-owner of the Davenport store and member of the third generation. "Number two is working with other businesses to make your downtown or historic shopping district the best it can possibly be. Third is being an active member of the larger community."

As the family's second generation folded into the business in the mid-1900s, so did fresh ideas. It was during this time that they perfected their candy-making skills and began to offer deluxe assorted chocolates. Thanks to Tom Sr.'s wife, Betsy, they were soon able to ship their products. Together, siblings Charlie, Mary, and Tom Sr., along with their cousin Joe Schenone and his wife Anita, spread Lagomarcino's candy and reputation for delectable sweets across the nation.

The third generation of Lagomarcinos, Tom Sr.'s children, came into the business in the 1980s and 1990s. Beth took over management of the Moline store while her husband assumed the role of candy maker in retirement. Tom Jr. and Lisa, Tom and Beth's sister, opened the second location in Davenport.

"Our sister, Lisa, is more comfortable behind the scenes," said Beth. "She has been at the forefront of redesigning all of our boxes, and she is always on the lookout for new ideas for novelty chocolates."

"When I first came back 40 years ago, it was a little awkward," said Beth. "I had worked there as a child and then came back into the business working with some of the same people who had been there when I was a child. So things were a little challenging at first. I just took on more and more responsibility but being here enabled me to be at home a little more with our kids when they were young, so it worked out well. Our kids got to grow up in the store like we did."

"We were never pressured to join the business," said Tom. "Beth did many things to transition from the second gen-

eration to the next generation. When I came in, I realized there's no way we can keep making candy by hand. That's when we started buying equipment and the second location so we could begin growing the business."

All 10 of Beth, Tom and Lisa's children worked at both stores during their high school and college years. Presently, Beth and Terry's children, Katie and Daniel, are managers and represent the fourth generation to work in the business. Katie has never left the business, working while getting her business degree from Western Illinois University, and markets the business through social media and merchandising. Daniel returned several years ago, bringing technical aspects to the business like point of sale, inventory control and managing more wholesale accounts. They have both been instrumental in looking for new ways to grow the business.

While Lagomarcino's primarily serves its customers in the stores or online, community is a deeply-rooted value that shines through. The stores are involved with various local festivals, walk/runs, and bringing small businesses together to succeed.

In fact, Lagomarcino's won the James Beard Foundation Award in 2006 and was named one of America's Classics. According to the foundation's website, the award recognizes restaurants across the nation that have a timeless appeal and "serve quality food that reflects the character of their communities."

Additionally, hiring people with special needs is close to the third generation's hearts.

"That's what I went to school for. Beth is a former special education teacher and my sister Lisa worked at Handicapped Development Center years ago," said Tom. "We also hire high school kids for their first job, which is another level of community involvement. You're teaching kids how to work. And they are also working alongside people with special needs."

Lagomarcino's is a member of the University of Northern Iowa Family Business Program, housed in Business and Community Services. One service they utilized was the Family Business Program for succession planning. Dan Beenken, director of the program, meets with families individually and as a whole to work on succession in a way that is right for all parties.

"We knew the elephant was in the room but we were working so hard every day that we just kept pushing it back," said Tom. "Dan was instrumental in bringing the key players and family members together. Making us have goals and objectives. That was a huge weight lifted off of us because it brought in a third party who could objectively look at it and take the emotion out." ■



Beth, Katie and Daniel Lagomarcino manage the Moline store.



Images [clockwise starting top left]: Angelo in front of the original storefront, Angelo, Tom Sr., Luigia, Mary, and Charlie Lagomarcino, the business has been family-owned since its founding in 1908.



Community Contributions

The JPEC team continues to assist the Black Business Entrepreneur Accelerator (BBEA), a program of 24/7 BLAC, by providing strategic entrepreneurial training to the participating business owners. When the SBA announced the second round of PPP loans in the spring of 2021, it became evident that many of the businesses served by BBEA and 24/7 BLAC were struggling to complete the application due to the informal processes they used to track business financial transactions. As a result of this, a number of UNI faculty and staff along with the help of local and state resource providers held two PPP workshops to assist the business owners in completing their applications. Lindi Roelofse, took the lead to apply for a Veridian Community Engagement Fellowship Fund through UNI's Office of Community Engagements and successfully secured \$2,400 which was used to purchase ten Quick-Books software licenses. Nate Funke, a senior Accounting major and Entrepreneurship minor, led a student team that installed the accounting software and trained the business owners. The partnership with BBEA and the JPEC has provided students in a number of entrepreneurship courses



BBEA Cohort II Graduation Celebration

the opportunity to engage with some of the most respected Black entrepreneurs in the Cedar Valley. As a result, students have gained an understanding of what it means to be a part of an interconnected multi-cultural entrepreneurial ecosystem. ■

Pandemic Doesn't Stop Small Business Growth

After a year that saw COVID-19 displace normalcy, the UNI Small Business Development Center (SBDC) was pleasantly surprised that entrepreneurs and small business owners were still exploring opportunities to launch and grow their enterprises. During the 2021 fiscal year, at least sixteen small businesses launched with the help of the customized, no-cost small business support program hosted by the University.

This state and federally-funded program offers one-on-one business consulting and technical guidance to entrepreneurs, start-ups and small businesses in a nine-county region of Northeast Iowa. Two hundred and ninety small businesses in Black Hawk, Bremer, Buchanan, Butler, Chickasaw, Fayette, Grundy, Howard and Tama Counties worked with the center on a range of business issues.

"While we expected there would be significant demand for financial assistance due to the impact of COVID, that was a relatively small percentage of the client requests. Instead, a surprising number of entrepreneurs were launching new businesses, including several in the battered food and beverage industry," shared SBDC Regional Director Amy Dutton.

The October '20 launch of The Ragged Edge Art Bar & Gallery in Cedar Falls came amid increased COVID case counts and uncertainty. By kicking off with a reservation-only model, first-time business owner and SBDC client Kendra Wohlert was able to provide a comfortable, capacity-controlled experience for her guests. Her approach to hand-crafted cocktails and curated art sales from local



creatives was an early success. After just six months in business, she received recognition from the Iowa Tourism Office and Travel Federation of Iowa for a second place win in the Outstanding Retail Experience category.

Dutton explained "Starting a business is a challenge even in the best of times, but taking the leap during a disrupted market is even more difficult. We believe that the help of business services like the SBDC makes a huge difference to our small business community."

That opinion isn't just conjecture, as seen in the 2019 annual report from America's SBDC. During the prior year, the average U.S. business saw annual sales growth of 4.1 percent while the average SBDC client's annual sales growth was an estimated 13.4 percent.

Housed in the John Pappajohn Entrepreneurial Center on the UNI campus, the SBDC welcomes client inquiries from their service area. More information about the program can be found at <http://iowasbdc.org/uni> ■

Advance Iowa: Succession Planning

There are 20 million businesses in the US. According to a survey commissioned by Advance Iowa in 2018, 80% of them are looking to exit or transition their business in the next 10 years. However, in spite of the desire to transition ownership, only 20% of the owners have a written succession plan in place. Advance Iowa offers services supporting Iowa business owners' desires to learn more about ownership transition options and develop actionable strategies to make the successful transition a reality. Not only can these transition opportunities be great for younger Iowans who wish to own a business, it also means more Iowa businesses staying in Iowa. This is necessary to help sustain and grow our local economies - a win for everyone.

“By starting to think about the succession plan years in advance, we have time to build a strong relationship with the client and really get to know them,”

—PAUL KINGHORN, DIRECTOR OF ADVANCE IOWA

With a proper succession plan in place, years before you are even considering exiting your business, you have time to implement growth inducing strategies. Advance Iowa is here to be your teammate throughout the process and our services and programs are just what your business needs to increase the bottom line.

Cruiser Electric



Joe and Dawnica King

Owned and operated by Joe and Dawnica King, Cruiser Electric is an electrical company located in Ankeny, Iowa. Joe found himself interested in this industry since he was younger

which led him to attend Northwest Iowa Community College where he received his degree in Electrical Technologies. From home remodels to custom home construction, tenant build-outs to new commercial buildings; Joe, Dawnica and their team at Cruiser Electric pride themselves on handling any electrical need the customer might have. Their growth over the years has allowed them to hire technicians who specialize not only in installation, but with upgrades, repairs and replacements.

While attending the Goldman Sachs 10,000 Small Businesses Program (a program for which Paul Kinghorn

serves as a faculty member), Dawnica learned about the programs and services offered within the center. The service of particular interest to her was the center's succession planning services. “During the workshop, Paul explained that UNI has the tools to put together a valuation for your company to give you a more clear idea of what to expect when it comes time to exit. We thought that would be a perfect opportunity to reach out,” says Dawnica. After the first meeting, company financials were provided and the Advance Iowa team began working on their valuation.

Once the valuation was completed, Joe and Dawnica met with the team to review the valuation. “They really made sure we understood where the numbers came from, answering any questions we had. The number actually came out higher than what we thought it was going to be. You could tell that Advance Iowa put effort into assessing different valuation methods and making sure the numbers were accurate. It was very helpful for us to

In addition to succession planning services, Advance Iowa also provides facilitated services, resources, and programming that assist small and mid-sized firms in the key areas of innovation, strategic growth, leadership development and business education.

ADVANCE IOWA SERVICES AND PROGRAMS

Business Valuations

Business Ownership Transition

Alternative Owner Structures

Strategic Planning Services and Technical

Peer Learning Groups

Workshops and Seminars

Networking Events and Activities

see where we were in the past, where we are now, and where we could be” said the couple.

Determining the valuation of a business is only one step in preparing a company for and its owners for a successful transition. The Advance Iowa staff works to educate owners on how to plan for a successful transition from their business, regardless if it occurs in the near future or is planned for some time in the future. Working as a team with these owners, business continuity and transition plans are created that help owners control the answer to these three important questions: To whom would they like to sell their business, How much they would like to sell the business, and when would they like to sell. According to Kinghorn, “Regardless of how old one is or the lifecycle stage of their business, it's always a good time for business owners to ensure that there is a plan in place that delivers the maximum wealth from the operation for all their hard work and sacrifice.” ■

Forward Focus

UNI Entrepreneurship and Business Assistance Programs Reorganize

Business and Community Services (BCS) programs have always taken great pride in adjusting and adapting at the speed of business. As our entrepreneurship programs have grown to serve diverse types of businesses and entrepreneurs, we realized the need to restructure and rebrand to clarify and grow our services. Our new structure provides a more streamlined and organized approach for Iowans looking for assistance. At the same time, this restructure will provide more focus to specific entrepreneurs and mid-size business growth.

UNI's John Pappajohn Entrepreneurial Center / The UNI JPEC team is looking forward to serving not only student entrepreneurs but small businesses and startups across Northern Iowa. By adding the state-wide IEDA sponsored IASourceLink and the Small Business Development Center to the JPEC's program offerings, we've more than doubled our staff and are ready to explore new and innovative ways to provide resources to entrepreneurs, startups, and small businesses.

This fall, the state-wide JPEC network will launch Venture Mentoring Services at each of their centers, which will allow us to provide a structured group mentoring opportunity for our entrepreneurs and local business leaders. We are currently exploring the needs of our rural businesses as well; with the assistance of the USDA, we will develop strategic and timely resources specifically for that audience through a pilot project.

We continue to demonstrate the value of entrepreneurial education to the UNI student body. A number of our entrepreneurial courses are being considered to be included in UNI's General Education Program. Outside of the classroom, our students are excited to use our new center location which features an innovation lounge, large-screen TVs, whiteboards, and ample space for networking, collaboration, and development of their ventures.

By consolidating early stage and small business resources

and programs under one umbrella, the UNI JPEC is well-positioned to continue to innovate and improve upon the resources and services available to our Iowa entrepreneurs.

Advance Iowa / It's an unusual time for today's small and medium enterprises. Operational challenges such as workforce issues, supply chain disruptions and changing customer behaviors all work to challenge sales growth and increase pressure on the bottom line. Added to this, is the unprecedented phenomenon of aging business owners who shortly will have to transition the ownership of their company (two-thirds of all businesses with at least one employee are owned by a baby-boomer¹).

The Advance Iowa staff is excited for the challenge in helping these business owners, managers and employees apply sound business principles to their operations, gain the new skills necessary for future success, connect with other service providers and peers all of which will lead them to a brighter more successful future.

UNI Family Business Program / Family owned companies represent about 90% of all firms and they are a critical component of Iowa's economic landscape. Yet, they operate in uncertain times facing multiple challenges. The UNI Family Business Program, now a standalone program, has a team dedicated to serving Iowa's family owned businesses and helping them thrive. We provide consulting, peer learning, conferences, events, and networking opportunities to engage and strengthen Iowa's family-owned businesses.

Family businesses face unique opportunities and challenges and they attempt to move from one generation to the next. We connect them to leading family business experts as well as peers and service providers to create an environment where they can all share and thrive. Helping family businesses succeed and pass the business to the next generation is important for all regions of Iowa! ■

¹ <https://www.exitplanning.com/2016-business-owner-survey-report>

IASOURCELINK

Powered by the UNI JPEC, IASourceLink works hand in hand with the Iowa Economic Development Authority to provide quality education and resources to Iowa's small business and startup community. Our network of 390+ nonprofit resource organizations provide business-building services; we facilitate the linking of these resource organizations to one another and to established, emerging and start-up small businesses.

In early 2021, IASourceLink launched a modernized website with an improved guide-style format, and additionally published five business "how-to" guides to assist business owners with starting, funding, growing, innovating, and exiting. Each offers step-by-step guidance on the five business topics, and directly connects readers to webpages of Iowa-based resource providers with expertise on the given topic. IASourceLink's "Start a Business

Guide" has been most successful, as it outlines the startup process, e.g., how to write a strategic business plan, choose a legal business structure, register with the state, and secure necessary licensing. Looking forward, IASourceLink will re-examine each guide to keep content fresh and relevant for small business owners and entrepreneurs. To view IASourceLink's small business guides, visit www.iasourcelink.com/guides ■

Collaborations and Partners

Each year, University of Northern Iowa works closely with the other Regent institutions and local, state, and federal agencies on collaborative projects. The following programs are a sampling of these collaborations:

Cedar Valley Collaborations

24/7 BLAC

Cedar Falls CAPS Program

1 Million Cups Cedar Valley

Launch Cedar Valley

Grow Cedar Valley

Waterloo Career Center

Junior Achievement of Eastern Iowa

Statewide Collaborations

America's SBDC Iowa

JPEC Collaborations

Iowa Economic
Development Authority

Technology Association of Iowa

Iowa Association of Business and Industry

Iowa Rural Development Council

Awards and Recognition

**Lindi Roelofse, Anton Reiter, Gail Bunz, Jim Kelly,
Laurie Watje, and Rick Seeley**

USASBE Third Place Winner of the Entrepreneurship Experiential Exercises Competition with Improvisational Entrepreneurship and the Modern Library

Laurie Watje

Board of Regents 2020 Staff Excellence
Award Recipient

Rob Sales, '21

Regional Entrepreneurs' Organization Global Student
Entrepreneur Award

Maddie Palmersheim, '21

1st Place Annual UNI Entrepreneurs Elevator Pitch
Competition and represented UNI at National
CEO Conference

Virgo Represented UNI as 2021 eFest Finalist competing
in the Schultz Entrepreneurship Challenge

College of Business 2021 Student Entrepreneur of the Year

Isaac Hackmann, '21

MAC Impact 2021 Student Business of the Year



Maddie Palmersheim and Isaac Hackmann at the
College of Business Award Ceremony.

Entrepreneurship at University of Northern Iowa



JPEC Staff from left to right: Lindi Roelofse, Maddie Palmersheim, Bart Schmitz, Amy Dutton, Patrick Luensmann, Laurie Watje
Not pictured: Randy Pilkington, Kyle Coogler, Sophie Troxell

Advance Iowa Staff from left to right: Paul Kinghorn, Janell Crow, Sydney Anderson,

Family Business staff from left to right: Katie Kries, Daniel Beenken / Not pictured: Jayne Kielman