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University Summer Startup Accelerators Come To A Close

Most student entrepreneurs work around school demands, so weekends, break weeks, holidays and summer become valuable times to get things done. A few Universities are picking up on just how valuable summer is and introducing or improving their summer entrepreneurship offerings.

NYU's [Summer Incubation Program](#) (SIP) is organized by the school's [Entrepreneurship and Innovation Association](#). This summer SIP offered co-working space, weekly programming, team building, mentorship, and practice pitch rounds for over ten teams. These teams worked toward a demo day to grab a prize package with legal advice, fall workspace, and a paid intern.

The program attracted an interdisciplinary set of students from across NYU's schools and these entrepreneurs varied from business plan winners to rising sophomores.

The program is overseen by NYU Poly senior Derrick Hsiou and was inspired by Steven Kuyan, Assistant Director of the NYU-Poly Incubator Initiatives and NYU Alum. Kuyan reminds that business plan competitions alone aren't enough, but that students need "continuity and support beyond just the cash prize at the end." SIP's aim is to open new paths towards commercialization for student ideas that would have otherwise been abandoned.

The inaugural SIP company winner was Falcon Helmet Engineering. The six-person team has identified an empty market around the excessive number of sports concussions, and are using technology to build a minimal, but effective head guard. The teams' CEO, Mario Mercado, has 30 years of wrestling experience and their senior designer, Daniella Patrick, is applying her design skills to the market. Falcon could be another home run company for NYU.

There are other Universities in the "summer entrepreneur services" category, too.

Syracuse University has [Sandbox](#), where over 30

companies optimize the schools resources year round and are walked through the basics of incorporation through to product development and pricing. EIR John Liddy works closely with Syracuse's Economic Development Agency and engages alumni and Syracuse citizens to advise and support each startup. Syracuse has recently launched a minor in "Startup" which begins with assessing ideas, not creating business plans. And with Dev Box, Sandbox offers a way for student programmers to get paid to make alpha products for teams that cant find technical talent.

Northeastern's [IDEA Accelerator](#) is completely student run. Backed with alumni donations, IDEA gives out \$5-\$10k "gap" funding and prototype grants year round. IDEA is temporary home to 20-30 diverse companies, but supports over 90 companies- even if they're run by graduates. Startup resident Starielle Hope Newman of [Willō Cocktails](#) simply put, "I did all the work, but they gave me something to work *with*." She's received over \$10,000 in support over the past year and touts the community and mentorship to be first-class. Chris Wolfel, Northeastern student and IDEA's CEO, said this was the first year IDEA has run through the summer, and it was at its busiest.

The University of Chicago also launched the [Polsky](#) Summer Accelerator, offering separate office space for each of ten companies in the schools empty interview rooms. The quiet setting for each of the ten startups made community growth a bit hard, but certainly allowed for work to get done. The team at Polsky sat with each company on an ongoing basis to provide recommendations and connections to the school's broad network. Something as simple as offering space and stipends is a huge step in supporting University entrepreneurs.

The message to Universities? Start with something- anything. Listen to, or ask student entrepreneurs what they need. Space can be enough to get the ball rolling, and students are more than happy to have an external office and the chance to meet like-minded thinkers. Entrepreneurs are great at creating serendipity.

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