



UNIVERSITY OF
South Carolina



McNair Institute

For Entrepreneurism and Free Enterprise

Impact Highlights

2017 - 2024

Contents

Overview

A Gift to the Future	3
Message from USC President Michael Amiridis	4
Our Mission	5
Our Team	6
Letter from the Faculty Director	7
Review of 2017 – 2024	8

Flagship Initiatives 12

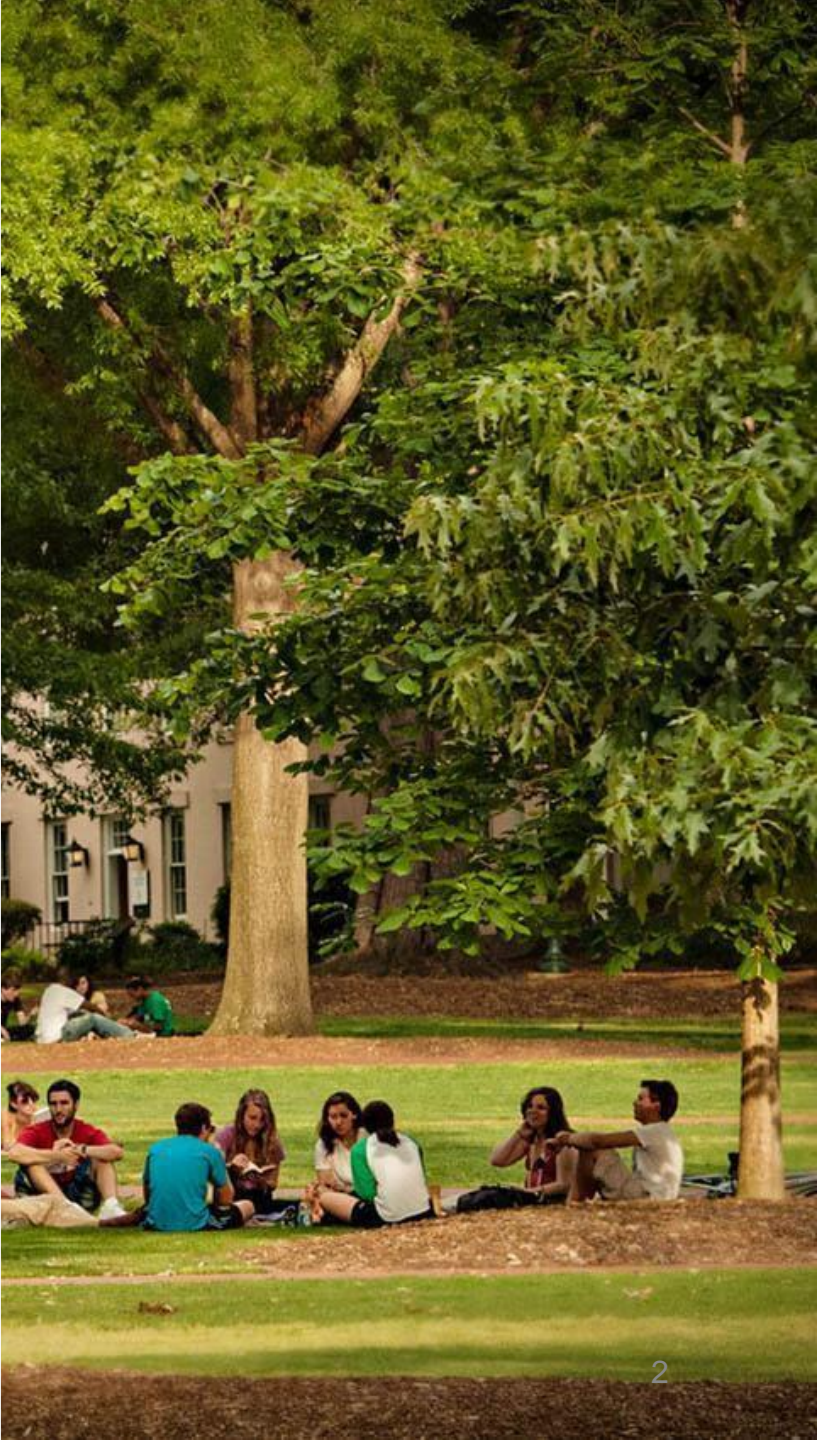
Advisory Councils	13
USC Entrepreneurship Network	18
USC Intercampus Alliance to Advance Entrepreneurism	20
Partnerships	22
McNair Entrepreneurship Minor	29
IDEA Living and Learning Community	35
Events	38
Online Support Platform	44
Connecting Students to Startups	48

Impact Summary 50

Plans for FY25 – FY35 53

Appendices 63

Appendix A: Selected Student Testimonials	63
Appendix B: Selected Partnership Testimonials	73

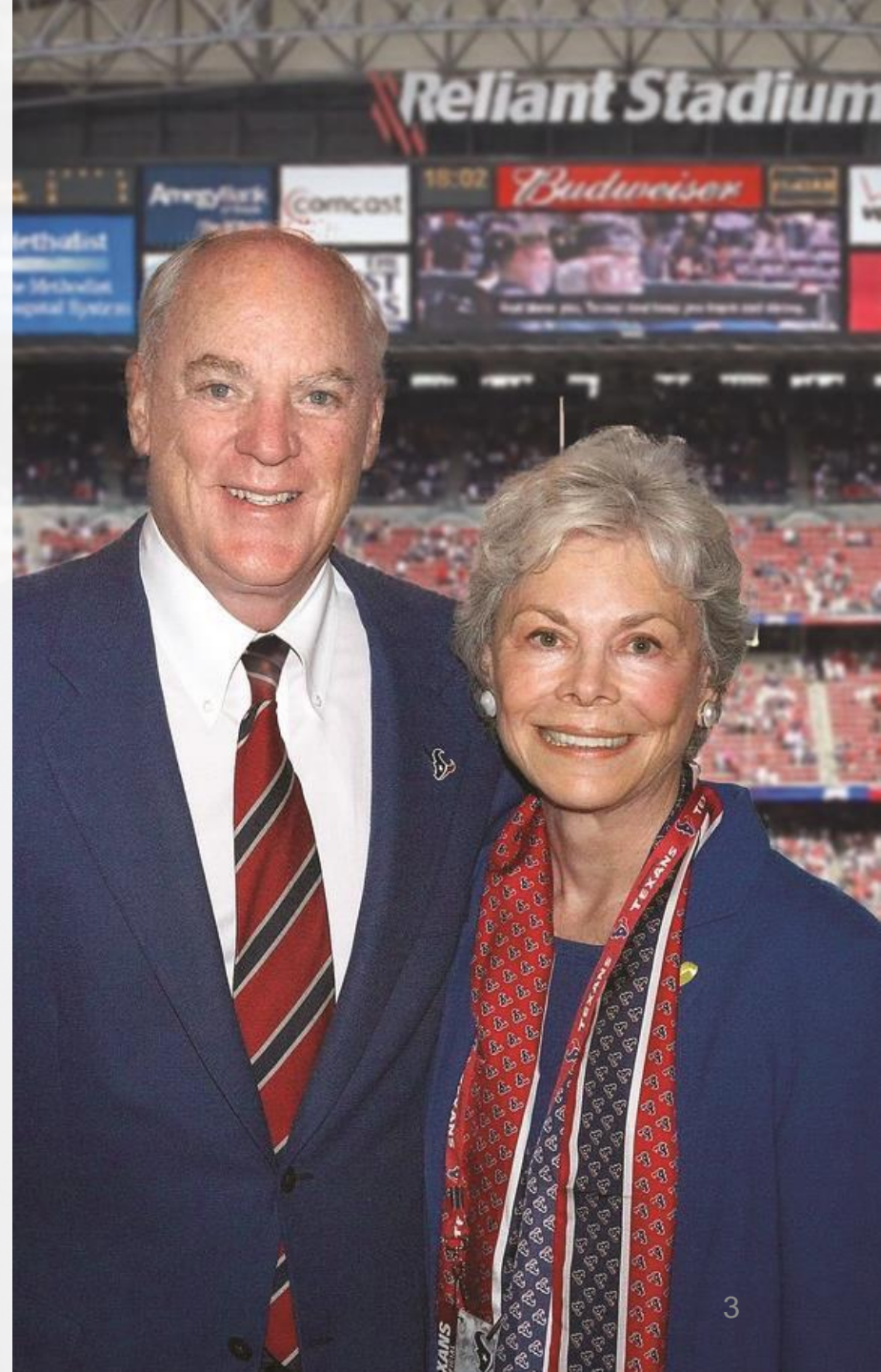


A Gift to the Future

The McNair Institute for Entrepreneurism and Free Enterprise at the University of South Carolina was founded in 2017 through the generous financial support of The Robert and Janice McNair Foundation and the McNair family. The Institute's goal is to educate young people in the foundations of entrepreneurial leadership and free enterprise — including teaching and modeling the principles of individual responsibility, limited government and principled entrepreneurship. The Institute provides education, support, and thought leadership in this field, with a focus on experiential learning and strong connections and collaborations among the University of South Carolina, other entrepreneurial support organizations, and the private sector.

The Robert and Janice McNair Foundation generously funds similar centers at multiple other universities across the nation. The McNairs have had a long commitment to developing a new generation of entrepreneurial leaders who have both the technical skills and the philosophical understanding of how the free enterprise system forms the basis of economic opportunity and prosperity for individuals in our country. Robert McNair was a psychology major at the University of South Carolina, where he served as student body president. His wife, Janice, is an alumna of Columbia College.

Robert McNair passed away in November 2018. He is deeply missed, but his passion for inspiring and educating future business leaders continues through the generosity of The Robert and Janice McNair Foundation, Janice McNair, and the McNair family.





“The University of South Carolina is committed to making innovation and entrepreneurship education available to our students, independent of their academic background. The McNair Institute for Entrepreneurism and Free Enterprise is leading this important effort under our overall strategic plan, empowering a new generation of creative, productive leaders. USC is deeply grateful for the support that the McNair Foundation has provided to enable this transformational initiative.”

- Michael Amiridis
President
University of South Carolina

Our Mission

The McNair Institute for Entrepreneurism and Free Enterprise at the University of South Carolina (USC) develops and empowers creative, productive leaders so that they may enjoy the benefits of free markets, create jobs, and drive economic growth. The mission of the Institute is to develop a new generation of entrepreneurial leaders who have both the technical skills and the philosophical understanding of how the free enterprise system forms the basis of economic opportunity and prosperity for individuals in our country. This includes modeling the principles of individual responsibility, limited government, and principled entrepreneurship. The Institute provides education, support, thought leadership, and ecosystem development in these areas.



Our Team



Dr. Dirk Brown, Faculty Director

Dirk is the founding faculty director of the McNair Institute for Entrepreneurism and Free Enterprise at USC and a faculty member of the international business department at the Darla Moore School of Business. He is a seasoned startup executive who spent much of his career in Silicon Valley developing, marketing, and licensing disruptive, proprietary technologies. He has founded and led companies in a number of market areas, including semiconductors, electronics, digital media, and consumer packaged goods. He holds over 25 patents and has written over 30 technical papers and journal articles. Dirk holds an MBA from San Jose State University, a Ph.D. (materials science) and M.Eng. (applied physics) from Cornell University, and a B.Sc. (Eng) in applied physics/electrical engineering from Queen's University in Canada.



**Kristina Hooks
Director of Operations**

Kristina joined the McNair Institute six years ago with business, government and nonprofit experience, including higher education, auditing, and retail. She holds an MBA from USC and an MPA from USC and the College of Charleston.



**Breanna Spaulding
Director of Ecosystem Advancement**

Breanna joined the McNair Institute four years ago with strong networking and entrepreneurship community-building experience. She holds a B.A. from Columbia College and an M.S. from Southern New Hampshire University.



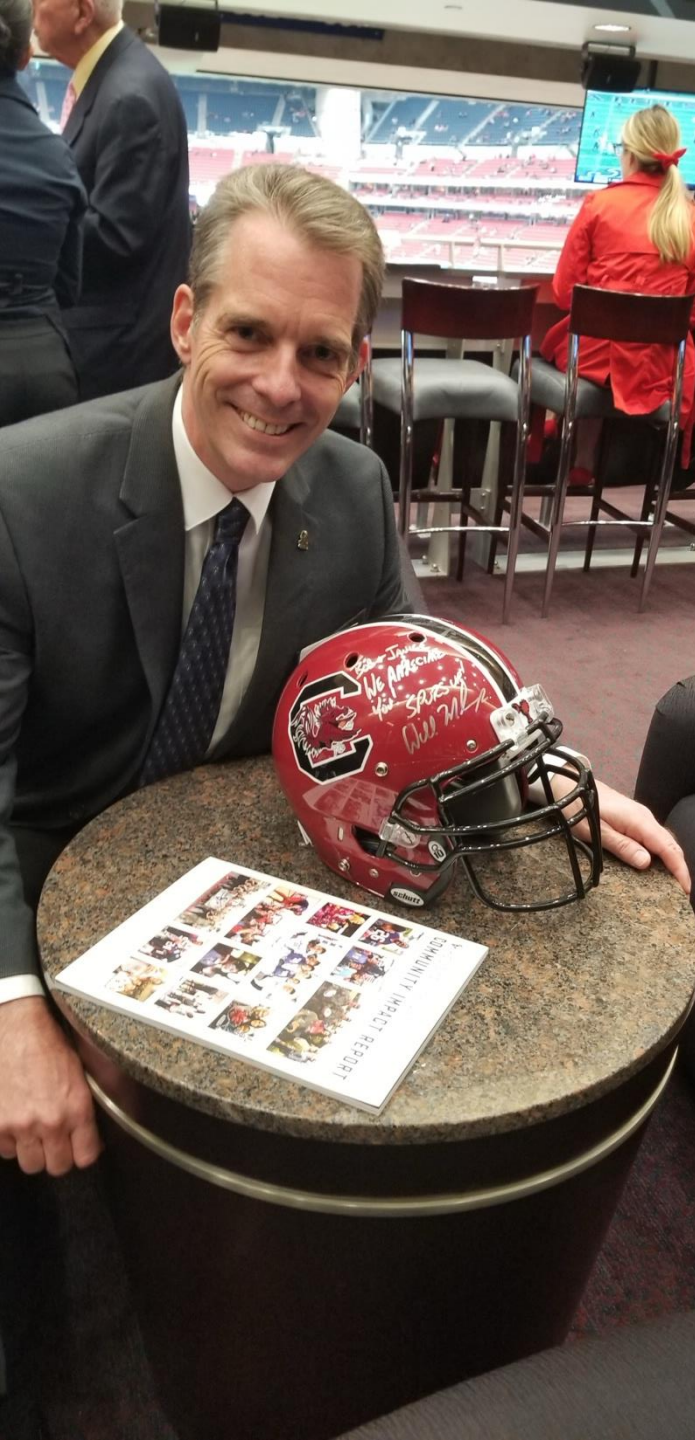
**Yaw Addei-Boadu
Project Lead – Startups support**

A graduate of University of South Carolina with a masters in engineering, Yaw is a co-founder of multiple startups and a leader with a passion for entrepreneurship.



**Sean Powers
Project Lead – Startups support**

A graduate of the University of South Carolina with a B.S. in Operations and Supply Chain and Marketing, and a 2023 Techstars Austin graduate, Sean has been involved with multiple ventures, including as Chairman of Copyt.



Letter from the Faculty Director

When I joined the University of South Carolina in 2011, it was one of the most pivotal decisions of my life. I had spent the previous two decades building startups in Silicon Valley as both a founder and executive. The transition to academia was a big one. I have never looked back. I knew that USC leads the country, and the world, in many areas of education and research, but I had no idea how incredibly inspired I would be working with some of the brightest minds and most dedicated people I have ever met. That being said, during my first several years at USC, entrepreneurship and free enterprise education was readily accessible only to a small number of select students, mostly at the business school. The support ecosystem for entrepreneurs in South Carolina was nothing close to what I was used to, and what I had taken for granted during most of my career. There were some impressive pockets of very energetic, entrepreneurial activity among various schools and colleges. However, these educational and support initiatives were isolated from most of the campus, and limited in their scope and depth, particularly for an institution with over 54,000 students and over 350 degree programs.

When Bob and Janice McNair approached USC to explore a center for entrepreneurship that would sit under the Office of the Provost and provide entrepreneurship education and support to all students at the University, it was the start of an incredible transformation for us. The McNair Institute for Entrepreneurship and Free Enterprise has strengthened communication and collaboration among the various schools, colleges, and campuses in the USC system and has driven scalable, university-wide, strategic initiatives. This has had an incredible impact on not only our students, but on the entire university and on the state of South Carolina. It has been an honor help establish this foundation. Through the McNair Institute for Entrepreneurship and Free Enterprise, USC is well positioned as a leader in entrepreneurial education and support and is well-positioned to empower a new generation of creative, productive leaders.

With Deep Appreciation and Gratitude,

Our Objectives and Approach

Our objective has been to promote as broadly and effectively as possible a rigorous understanding of, and a deep appreciation for, the unique and essential role that innovation, entrepreneurship, and free enterprise play in wealth creation and economic opportunity. Our focus has been on providing students the tools and understanding that will enable them to leverage innovation to create sustainable value in their careers, independent of their vocation. The aim is to empower a new generation of creative, productive leaders who will be positioned to enjoy the benefits of free markets, including creating jobs and economic growth. We were tasked with developing and facilitating programs, experiences, and educational resources to inspire and drive entrepreneurship within a free enterprise system as a catalyst for economic growth in the United States. This remains the overall objective today.

The original five-year strategic plan summary presented to The Robert and Janice McNair Foundation had large and broad objectives. We divided our planning into three areas: education, support, and thought leadership. We defined some immediate, high-impact initiatives to develop quick momentum in academic programing, case studies, mentorship, competitions, and real-world experiences. In parallel, we implemented a rigorous strategic planning process and initiated some longer-term initiatives to establish a sustainable foundation of education and support in entrepreneurship and free enterprise at USC. We completed a survey of existing programs and initiatives at USC to see how those might be supported and expanded. We also benchmarked against third-party rankings and best-in-class universities around the world. This survey and benchmarking also supported a core component of our strategy, which has been to establish strong, authentic partnerships to enable education and support at a much larger scope and scale than we would be able to achieve otherwise.



Accomplishments to Date

The timeline of our flagship initiatives is shown on the next page (**Highlights from 2017 – 2024**), followed by a summary of each of these initiatives. At a high level, we quickly recruited our core team and three support groups: (i) a Partnership Advisory Council made up of external advisors, (ii) a Student Advisory Council, and (iii) an Entrepreneurship Network of faculty and staff at USC. Within the first year, we piloted a course in entrepreneurship and free enterprise designed specifically to be accessible to all students at USC. In this first year, we also launched our trademarked McNair Innovation and Free Enterprise Summit and our McNair Student Entrepreneurship Showcase. We also began establishing a series of strategic partnerships and benchmarking best practices and key measurables. We subsequently expanded these efforts to support over 50 entrepreneurship events per year, a comprehensive entrepreneurship minor, an entrepreneurship Living and Learning Community, an online support platform for advising and mentoring entrepreneurs, a statewide student pitch competition, a startup internship program for students, a statewide intercampus alliance for entrepreneurship, and a network of over 100 advisors. Our courses, events, and support initiatives have engaged over 8,000 students and entrepreneurs. We have received national and international recognition for our work, and, in 2021, we were honored to be named one of the top four emerging entrepreneurship centers in the country by our peers in USASBE (the United States Association for Small Business and Entrepreneurship).

Highlights from 2017 - 2024

Focus Activities: Education, Support, Thought Leadership

Stages of Support: Inspiration, Education, New Venture Growth → Ecosystem Development

2017 - 2018

Seminal courses

Advisory Councils

USC Entrepreneurship Network

Partnerships

Entrepreneurship Events

McNair Innovation Summit

McNair Entrepreneurship Showcase

Surveys, Evaluation & Benchmarking

2018 - 2021

Entrepreneurship Minor Development → Launch

Entrepreneurship & Innovation

Living and Learning Community

Online Support (StartupWind)

SC Innovates Pitch Competition

Connecting Students to Startups

→ Growth Summit

2021 - 2024

Intercampus Alliance

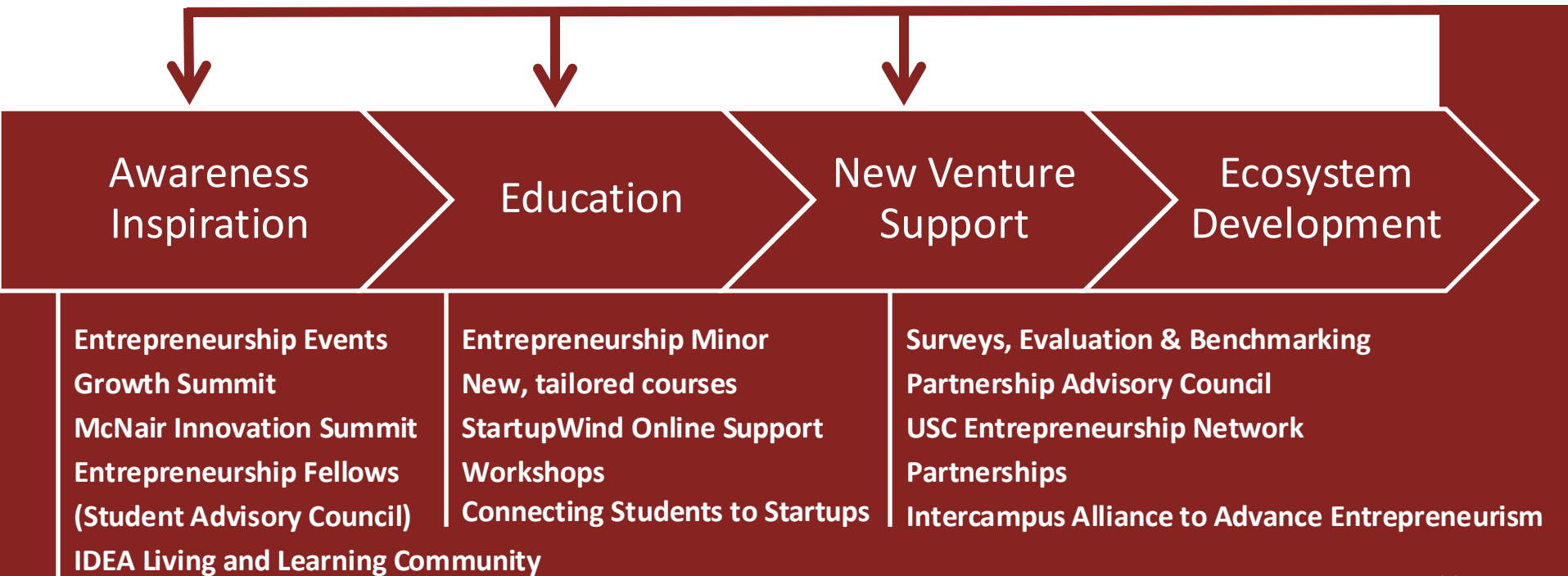
Advisor Network



Recognized as one of the top four emerging entrepreneurship centers in the country by USASBE.

Supporting the Full Entrepreneurial Journey

Our students and stakeholders come from diverse backgrounds and experiences. Some have had little or no exposure to entrepreneurship and free enterprise and "don't know what they don't know," whereas others are looking for very specific, specialized support for building their ventures. The McNair Institute has initiatives in place to support all stages of the entrepreneurial journey, from awareness and inspiration to education, support, and later stage growth and community involvement, as shown below.





FLAGSHIP INITIATIVES →

Advisory Councils

In its first year, the McNair Institute established three groups of advisors that provide a spectrum of insights and resources to support its mission: (i) an external Partnership Advisory Council, (ii) a student Advisory Council, and (iii) a USC entrepreneurship network of faculty and staff at USC to communicate and collaborate around entrepreneurship and free enterprise initiatives. These advisory groups have been very active and have had a strong, positive impact on the Institute and on USC overall.

Partnership Advisory Council

This is a group of about 20 external experts that primarily supports three key areas of the McNair Institute: (i) connectivity and credibility in the free enterprise and entrepreneurial ecosystem, nationally and internationally, (ii) partnerships and financing for our initiatives through their network of companies, organizations, and individuals, and (iii) strategic and tactical counsel in developing our programs, initiatives, and events around entrepreneurship and free enterprise education and support. The group participates in a number of calls with the institute leadership and meets in person once a year.





“The McNair Institute for Entrepreneurism and Free Enterprise has been extremely effective in connecting the University of South Carolina with the rest of our State. I’m honored to serve as an advisor to such a dedicated and highly collaborative organization. It has made an incredibly positive impact on a large number of people ... and the organization has the opportunity to make an even greater impact as more and more people are embracing entrepreneurship.”

- T K Bradford

Partnership Advisory Council Member

President, Bradford Group of Companies

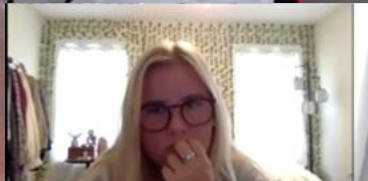
Student Advisory Council

This council consists of about 15 USC students who support three key areas of the McNair Institute: (i) influence and knowledge of the student population at the University of South Carolina, (ii) new and innovative thinking in the entrepreneurship and free enterprise fields, and (iii) strategic and tactical counsel on developing our programs, initiatives, and events around entrepreneurship and free enterprise education and support. A subset of these students have been extremely dedicated and active, and our plan is to evolve this advisory council to a student Entrepreneurship Fellows program in collaboration with the USC Entrepreneurship Club and the Faber Entrepreneurship Center at the Moore School of Business.





Students join the Student Advisory Council by invitation only. Specific, well-defined initiatives are pursued each year. Minimum time commitment → Graduation cord





“Being a member of the Student Advisory Council for the McNair Institute for Entrepreneurism and Free Enterprise has been a life-changing experience for me. It has given me a much deeper understanding about how the world really works, the importance of individual responsibility, and a sense of agency as I develop my own career plans. It has been incredible to work with such inspiring and passionate peers, faculty, and staff.”

- Emma Blair
Former Student Advisory Council Member
Public Relations, Advertising, and Applied
Communications Major

USC Entrepreneurship Network

The McNair Institute initiated comprehensive, in-person working sessions twice a year for all the faculty and staff at USC engaged in entrepreneurship and free enterprise education or research. These sessions are regularly attended by 40-50 faculty and staff from almost all the colleges and schools that USC. We initially called these “USC Entrepreneurism Harmonizing” meetings. They focused primarily on (i) communicating about entrepreneurship and free enterprise courses and events in the different schools and colleges and (ii) exploring potential synergies. The group has grown to over 150 faculty and staff interested in this area, and we now call it the “USC Entrepreneurship Network,” including an “Intercampus Alliance to Advance Entrepreneurism.” The two sessions each year have catalyzed several additional working groups and collaborations, and these report back to the larger group both in the bi-annual working sessions and online. We have expanded our discussions to include system-wide initiatives in curriculum, pedagogy, research, partnerships, and extracurricular experiences for our students. The trust and collaboration we have established within this network set the stage for much more unified entrepreneurship strategic planning, communication and collaboration at USC. This is the foundation for the “Entrepreneurship @ USC” growth initiative in our forward-looking, five-year strategic plan.





USC Entrepreneurship Network meets in person twice each year.



USC Intercampus Alliance to Advance Entrepreneurism

With financial support from the South Carolina Department of Commerce, we initiated an **Intercampus Alliance to Advance Entrepreneurism**, consisting of the main Columbia campus, the Palmetto College (USC's online campus), and each satellite campus (Aiken, Beaufort, Lancaster, Salkehatchie, Sumter, Union, and Upstate). This group is very active and meets several times a year online and in person.

This has led to much stronger collaboration among all USC campuses in education and support of entrepreneurship and free enterprise, benefiting USC students, faculty, staff, South Carolina citizens, and state and local entrepreneurial ecosystems. The following are some examples of the activities of this group:

- Courses in entrepreneurship and free enterprise attended online by students at remote campuses;
- On-campus, in-person meetings rotating to a different USC campus each semester;
- Access to a broader network of combined advisors, mentors, and resources;
- Collaborative events statewide with increased participation and networking; and
- Stronger programming through shared resources and best practices.





“The McNair Institute has been instrumental in fostering a vibrant entrepreneurial ecosystem across the USC System. By facilitating collaboration among USC System faculty and staff, the Institute has created a unified platform that is enriching students’ educational experience while boosting entrepreneurial activities throughout South Carolina. The Institute’s initiatives play a crucial role in nurturing a new generation of entrepreneurs who can make a real impact on the state’s economic landscape.”

- Sanela Porča, Ph.D.
USC Intercampus Alliance Member
Executive Director
USC Aiken Pacer Center

Partnerships

A core tenet of the McNair Institute's strategy is to establish and manage effective partnerships to scale our impact. Our initial partnership focus was with the various entrepreneurship initiatives in the schools and colleges at USC. However, this rapidly expanded to a much larger number of partnerships both within the university and outside the university. The following two pages highlight some of the more than 100 organizations with which we have partnered in over 350 programs and events.

In order to manage our relationships and activities with such a large number of partner organizations, we have implemented an online customer relationship management system. We track engagements with over 5,900 people, including more than 1,700 students, 330 alumni, 360 entrepreneurship-related faculty and staff, and 560 community partners. We also track information about more than 1,210 organizations and we are widely recognized as a key connector between USC and the broader entrepreneurial community.



"The McNair Institute has served as a role model for other schools throughout the state. It has served as a baseline, as a model. It has built a lot of momentum, interest, and participation, not only here locally but across the state."

- Nancy Conwell
Manager - Innovation & Ecosystem
South Carolina Department of Commerce

Select Partnerships with USC Colleges, Schools, Divisions and Offices

Schools & Colleges

- South Carolina Honors College
- College of Arts & Sciences
- College of Education
- College of Nursing
- College of Pharmacy
- College of Hospitality, Retail and Sport Management
- College of Information and Communications
- College of Social Work
- Molinaroli College of Engineering and Computing
- School of Medicine Columbia
- School of Medicine Greenville
- School of Music
- Darla Moore School of Business
- Joseph F. Rice School of Law
- Arnold School of Public Health

University System Campuses

- USC Upstate
- USC Aiken
- USC Beaufort
- USC Lancaster
- USC Sumter
- USC Union
- USC Salkehatchie
- Palmetto College

University Offices and Divisions

- Office of Economic Engagement
- Office of Distributed Learning
- Office of Civil Rights & Title IX
- Office of Development
- Office of the General Council
- Office of Institutional Research, Assessment, and Analytics
- Office of the Vice President for Research
- Technology Commercialization Office
- Career Center
- Communications and Marketing
- Community Engagement
- University Advising Center
- Veterans and Military Services
- Alumni Association
- Division of Student Affairs and Academic Support
- Division of Research at the Darla Moore School of Business
- Division of Academic Affairs and Provost
- Thomas Cooper Library
- Office of Access and Opportunity
- Leadership and Service Center



“The impact of the McNair Institute and its programs have been quite significant for many aspects of what we do at our school. By knowing about entrepreneurship and innovation, students can participate in economic development, create new companies, and take ideas to reality.

The McNair Institute provides a forum where students can work on real life problems, work with industrial leaders, participate in competitions, and learn creative problem solving - all of which have allowed our students to achieve much higher levels of success.

And those higher levels of student success has further resulted in increasing our school’s reputation in that our students are perceived of higher level of potential employees, therefore bringing more employers to us, and further enriching our entire curriculum.”

- Rohit Verma
Dean, Darla Moore School of Business
University of South Carolina

Select Partnerships with Student Organizations, Centers, and Institutes

Centers, Institutes, and Programs

- Center for International Business Education and Research
- Center for Marketing Solutions
- Center for Sales Success
- Center for Teaching Excellence
- Center for Applied Innovation and Advanced Analytics
- Center for Applied Business Analytics
- Center for Teaching Excellence
- Enterprise Risk Management and Insurance
- Big Data Health Science Center
- Operations and Supply Chain Center
- McNAIR Aerospace Center
- Faber Entrepreneurship Center
- Kennedy Pharmacy Innovation Center
- Folks Center for International Business
- Artificial Intelligence Institute of South Carolina
- Institute for Extreme Semiconductor Chips
- Rule of Law Collaborative
- SmartState Program
- Graduation and Retention Network
- IdeaLabs
- University 101

Student Life

- Student Success Center
- Housing
- New Student Orientation
- Gamecock Entertainment
- Student Health and Well-Being
- Rhodos Fellows (Innovative and Creative Design Community)

Student Organizations

- Carolina Entrepreneurship Club
- Carolina Consulting Club
- Carolina DECA
- The Fashion Board
- Pan African Student Association
- SOU Professional Fraternity
- AKPsi Professional Fraternity
- Phi Chi Theta Professional Fraternity
- DSP Professional Fraternity
- Black Business Student Association
- Net Impact
- American Marketing Association



“Meeting Katherine, Dirk, and Bre helped me open my eyes. I didn’t realize I had an interest in entrepreneurship. I thought I would just get desk job and do what people told me to.

The McNair Institute opened my eyes to opportunities, to the possibility to be more and do more. I always thought that the ‘path’ was to go to school and get a job. But I realized that I could make a new path instead of following what was given to me.”

- Amiah Morton

McNair Student Advisory Council Member
University of South Carolina

Select Relationships Outside of the University of South Carolina

Research and Academic Institutions

- Rice University
- Cornell University
- Stanford University
- Berkeley, University of California
- Purdue University
- The Citadel
- Clemson University
- Babson College
- Midlands Technical College
- Lyon Business School
- Columbia College
- Fraunhofer Society
- Montpellier Méditerranée Métropole
- The Chinese University of Hong Kong
- College of Charleston
- University of Aruba
- Benedict College
- Coker University
- Francis Marion University
- Furman University
- Winthrop University
- Medical University of South Carolina
- City University of Hong Kong
- ESSEC Business School
- Houston Baptist University
- FGV EGAPE
- University of Mannheim
- George Mason University

Incubator, Accelerator, and Training Programs

- Y Combinator
- The Iron Yard
- Charleston Digital Corridor
- The Harbor
- The Carolina Biotech Group
- TechStars Austin
- Plug and Play
- South Carolina Small Business Development Center
- The Creative Coast
- IT-ology
- Innovate Intervention Incubator
- Founder Space
- Boyd Innovation Center, GrowCo
- USC / Columbia Technology Incubator



Additional Select Relationships Outside of the University of South Carolina

Policy and Economic Impact

- South Carolina Department of Commerce
- South Carolina Research Authority
- South Carolina Chamber of Commerce
- Foundation for Economic Education
- Deloitte
- Gartner
- South Carolina Bio
- RedSky
- Young America's Foundation
- Bureau of Economic Analysis, US Dept. of Commerce
- City of Columbia Economic Development

Mentoring, Networking, and Development

- Dig South
- Savannah River National Laboratory
- Intel
- South Carolina Council on Competitiveness
- IBM
- Nephron Pharmaceuticals Corporation
- Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation
- Fluor
- JPMorgan Chase & Co.
- Bloomberg
- Converge

Investor Networks

- VentureSouth, Upstate Carolina Angel Network, Keiretsu Forum, Angel Capital Group, South Carolina Angel Network, other Angel Investment groups
- US Venture Partners, Venrock, other Silicon Valley firms
- Samsung Venture Investment, Google Ventures, other corporate investment groups
- Sequence Financial Specialist
- Four Bridges Capital Advisor
- Capital A Partners
- FoundersX Ventures



McNair Entrepreneurship Minor

Course Development

Our very first initiative was to develop and launch an introductory course in entrepreneurship and free enterprise with the College of Arts and Sciences, accessible to all students at the University of South Carolina. Our first cohort included male and female students from all levels (freshmen through seniors), including mature students. Students in this initial course were majoring in subjects as diverse as computer science, biology, business, and art. To exercise our key pedagogical tenets of flipped classroom, experiential learning, and distributed learning, we had each of the students work with a different, real startup. The students viewed and read materials online, we exercised the concepts and frameworks in class, and the students applied what they learned in helping the real startups. To scale the course, we have since modified it to allow students to work on their own projects in teams. This course is still being taught today (as ENTR 201) and is extremely popular. In partnership with the School of Music, we expanded this to a course sequence to support the core of our Entrepreneurship Minor: ENTR 201, ENTR 301, ENTR 401 and ENTR 501. We also helped develop several specialty entrepreneurship courses in healthcare, pharmacy, music, engineering, the food industry, nursing, and international business.



Student Feedback

Anonymous student surveys for our core entrepreneurship courses show scores of 4.5 or greater on all course metrics. This is on a scale of 1-5 in which 5 is the best. Student feedback on our entrepreneurship courses has been extremely positive. Some testimonial excerpts are shown below and more extended student testimonials provided in **Appendix A: Selected Student Testimonials**.

Global Index

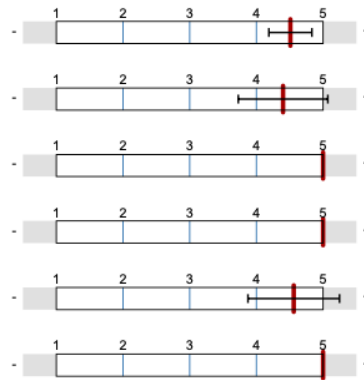
. INSTRUCTOR EVALUATION (Part I)

. INSTRUCTOR EVALUATION (Part II)

. OVERALL INSTRUCTOR

. COURSE EVALUATION (Part I)

. OVERALL COURSE



“...sparked a drive in me that I was unaware existed...”



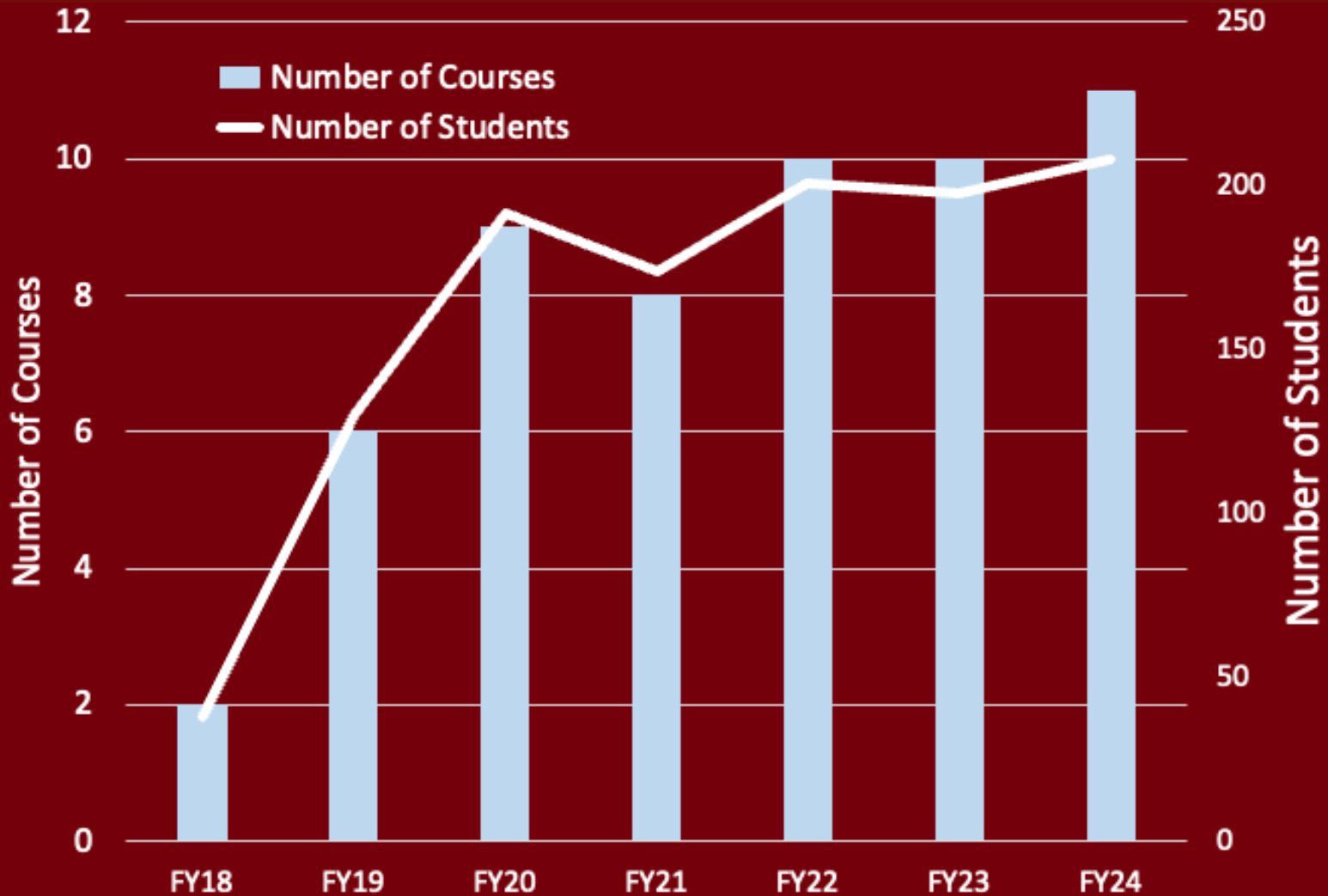
“...no course nor professor has taught me more practical business knowledge ...”



“...isn't afraid to push the boundaries of how to create the next generation of entrepreneurs....”



This chart shows the growth in courses we have directly developed and/or taught, now educating over 200 students each year. This is in addition to our support of entrepreneurship courses taught by various schools and colleges at USC educating several hundred more students each year.



Entrepreneurship Minor Curriculum

The USC McNair Entrepreneurship Minor was approved by the USC Board of Trustees in the Spring of 2022. It is designed to be accessible and relevant to any student, independent of their area of study. The minor is highly interdisciplinary and includes over 60 courses, from 5 different schools and colleges, that students can take to get credit for degree. This allows students to tailor the minor to their specific areas of interest. The McNair Institute ENTR courses are particularly popular, and we are developing more ENTR courses in specific focus areas.

To get the minor, students must complete (i) one introductory entrepreneurship course, (ii) one of the courses on financial management, (iii) one of the applied entrepreneurship courses, and (iv) three of the approved electives related to entrepreneurship and free enterprise.

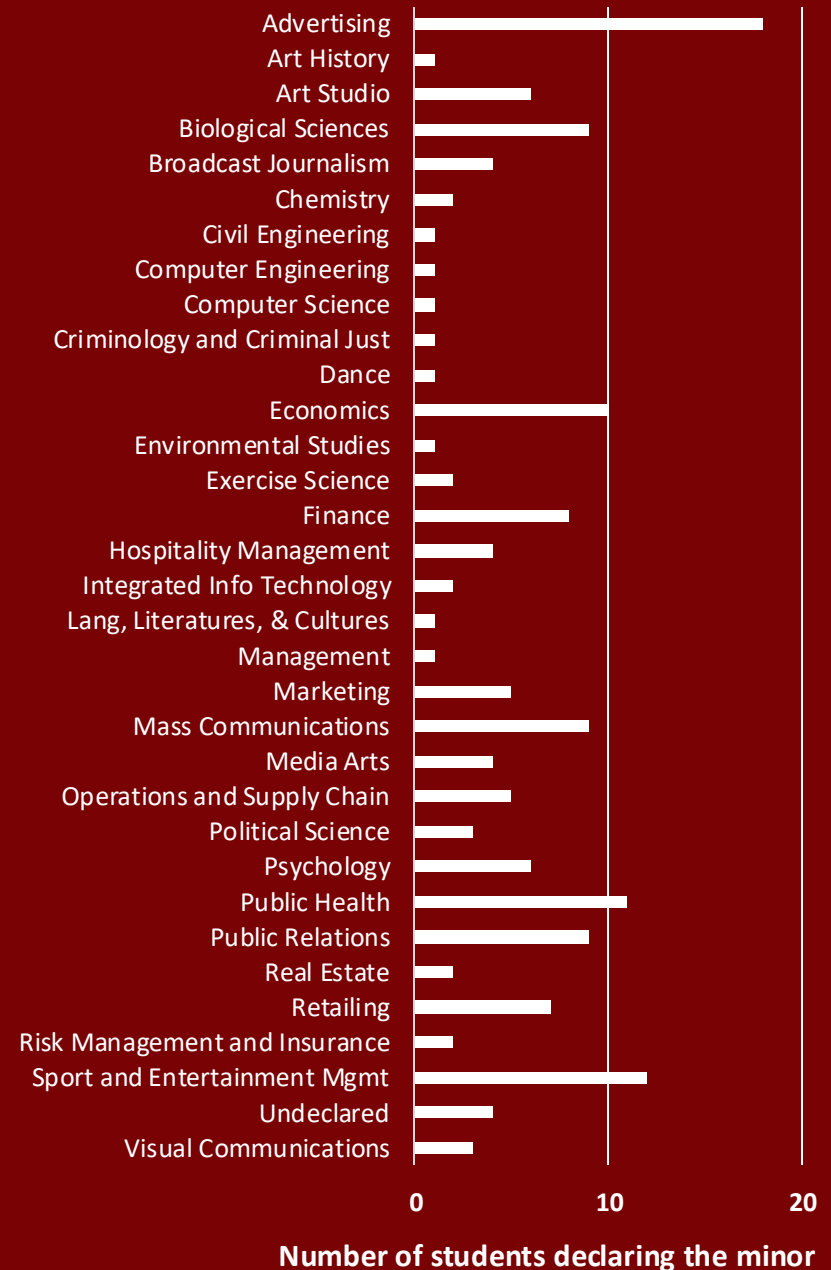
The minor requires 18 credit hours. A typical, full-time course is equivalent to 3 credit hours, so a typical requirement is 6 courses (or 630 hours of entrepreneurship education).

Course	Title	ENVR 331	Integrating Sustainability
Intro Entrepreneurship		ENVR 531	Sustainability Management and Leadership Strategies
Select one of the following:		GEOG 569	International Development and the Environment
ENTR 201	Entrepreneurism and Free Enterprise	IBUS 301	Introduction to International Business
MGMT 373	Entrepreneurship and New Venture Opportunities	IBUS 402	International Marketing
MUSC 580	Music & Arts Entrepreneurship	IBUS 424	Exporting and Importing
Financial Basics		IBUS 429	Comparative Innovation Systems
Select one of the following:		ITEC 242	Business Communications
ENTR 301	Startup Finance, Legal Structures, and Business Systems	JOUR 202	Principles of Advertising and Brand Communications
ACCT 222	Survey of Accounting	JOUR 331	Social Media Marketing Strategy
MUSC 582	Music and Money	JOUR 333	Public Relations for Nonprofit Organizations
JOUR 499	Special Topics	JOUR 348	Creative Thinking and Problem Solving
Applied Entrepreneurship		JOUR 440	Leadership and Internal Relations Management
Select one of the following:		JOUR 451	Freelancing for Creative Professionals
ENTR 401	Applied Entrepreneurship	JOUR 499	Special Topics
MGMT 473	Developing and Launching New Ventures	JOUR 521	Interactive Communication Strategies
Electives		JOUR 533	Public Relations Management
Select three of the following:		MGMT 371	Principles of Management
ECON 224	Introduction to Economics	MGMT 374	Strategic Human Resource Management
ECON 303	The International Economy	MGMT 376	Employee Engagement
ECON 311	Issues in Economics	MGMT 401	Negotiation and Conflict in the Workplace
ECON 321	Intermediate Microeconomic Theory	MGMT 402	Managing Teams in the Workplace
ECON 503	International Trade Economics	MGMT 403	Leadership in Organizations
ECON 504	International Monetary Economics	MGMT 406	International Human Resource Management
ECON 505	International Development Economics	MGMT 474	Executing Strategy in New Ventures
ECON 506	Labor Economics and Labor Markets	MGMT 479	Applications in Entrepreneurship and New Ventures
ECON 508	Law and Economics	MKTG 350	Principles of Marketing
ECON 531	Health Economics	MKTG 351	Consumer Behavior
ENGL 468	Digital Writing	MKTG 352	Principles of Marketing Research
ENTR 501	Independent Study in Entrepreneurship	MKTG 445	Sales Strategy
ENVR 231	Introduction to Sustainability Management and Leadership	MKTG 448	Data Science for Business Decision-Making
		MKTG 457	Introduction To Sales
		MKTG 460	Product and Brand Management
		PCAM 205	Foundations of Leadership
		PHIL 324	Business Ethics
		POLI 215	Introduction to Leadership Studies
		SPTE 380	Sport and Entertainment Marketing
		SPTE 440	Sport and Entertainment Business and Finance
		SPTE 444	Sports and Entertainment Event Management

McNair Entrepreneurship Minor Impact

The USC McNair Entrepreneurship Minor has been extremely popular among a broad range of students. The minor has been declared by 156 students representing the 33 different majors, as shown to the right.

Our pedagogical focus on flipped classroom, experiential learning, and distributed learning has dramatically strengthened the connection between our students and the broader entrepreneurial ecosystem. In our core courses, outside speakers, advisors, projects, and real-world experiences represent over 30% of the learning experience on average. We also provide courses in non-traditional formats to make them as broadly accessible as possible. Specifically, we collaborate with USC's Graduation and Retention Network to provide online, compressed Wintermester versions of the courses and are working on introducing a "Minor in a Summer" series in which we are piloting online versions of our courses for the Summer Session. The core entrepreneurship courses are typically at full capacity, and we are very active in engaging and training adjunct faculty, who are often seasoned entrepreneurs from our advisory network, to help meet student demand.





“I am incredibly impressed with the way the McNair Institute is educating young people in entrepreneurship and free enterprise. The students get a deep understanding of the way free enterprise works and the importance of principled entrepreneurship. I am honored to support such a dedicated and impactful organization.”

- Lasenta Lewis-Ellis
Adjunct Professor of Entrepreneurship
McNair Institute for Entrepreneurism and
Free Enterprise, University of South Carolina
President & CEO, LLE Construction Group

IDEA Living and Learning Community



In 2019, the McNair Institute partnered with the Office of the Provost and the Office of Residence Life to establish an Entrepreneurship and Innovation Living and Learning Community, now known as the IDEA Community. This initiative allows incoming freshmen interested in entrepreneurship to live together in a residence hall, where a faculty principal maintains an office and organizes extracurricular programming and resources to enrich the student experience at USC.

The IDEA Living and Learning Community champions an “entrepreneurship for everyone” culture at USC, while promoting overall student success through direct support, advising, mentoring, and informal interactions with faculty, staff, students, other campus organizations, and the entrepreneurship ecosystem. The community has high overall engagement numbers with the average student attending about eight events per year, in addition to dropping into the faculty principal's office and common areas of the residence hall for informal discussions. McNair Institute Director Dirk Brown served as the initial faculty principal of this community and built up the community over four years prior to recruiting a new faculty principal, professor David Cutler, to serve for a three-year term.

The IDEA Living and Learning Community has been extremely popular and has seen thousands of applications for fewer than 200 spaces available. Due in part to the popularity of this community, the McNair Institute is partnering with the new faculty principal, David Cutler, and the Vice President for Student Affairs and Academic Support, Rex Tolliver, to work on an entire residence hall dedicated to innovation and entrepreneurship.



The IDEA Living and Learning Community engages in a number of highly interdisciplinary, entrepreneurial activities and events throughout the year.





"The IDEA (Innovation, Design, Entrepreneurship, Action) Living and Learning Community has been life-changing for involved residents. As entrepreneurship faculty, we have a much greater impact when engaging students both inside and outside of the classroom, directly addressing their interests. I am grateful to the McNair Institute for starting and building this collaborative effort alongside the Office of the Provost and the Office of Residence Life at USC."

- David Cutler
Faculty Principal,
IDEA Living and Learning Community
Distinguished Professor,
Entrepreneurship & Innovation
University of South Carolina

Events

The McNair Institute for Entrepreneurism and Free Enterprise organizes, hosts and/or supports over 50 events per year (and reached a record of 91 events in the 2022-2023 academic year). The large number of events optimizes both the number of students we can impact as well as the extent of our impact on individual students. In addition to organizing our flagship event, the McNair Entrepreneurship Showcase (now part of a larger Growth Summit and attended by over 100 students), we collaborate closely with several organizations on National Entrepreneurship Week events, the bi-annual USC Student Side Hustle Showcase, New Student Orientation events, the SC Innovates statewide student pitch competition, and dozens of other programs and events on and off campus. A key tenet of our event planning is to connect students with inspiring leaders in business, entrepreneurship and free enterprise. We ensure that speakers are available for networking, and often meals, with the students who attend the events. Some of the speakers who were particularly engaged with our students include publishing executive and politician Steve Forbes, IBM Fellow Rachel Reinitz, International Trade Commission Chairman Scott Keiff, former SEC Chairman Troy Paredes, authors John Wolpert and Dave Knox, former White House Policy Advisor for Entrepreneurship & Innovation Ashley Bell, Apple Computer Photojournalist Doug Menez, MCD president and CEO John Simpkins, serial entrepreneur and filmmaker Stephany Zamora, and many others.



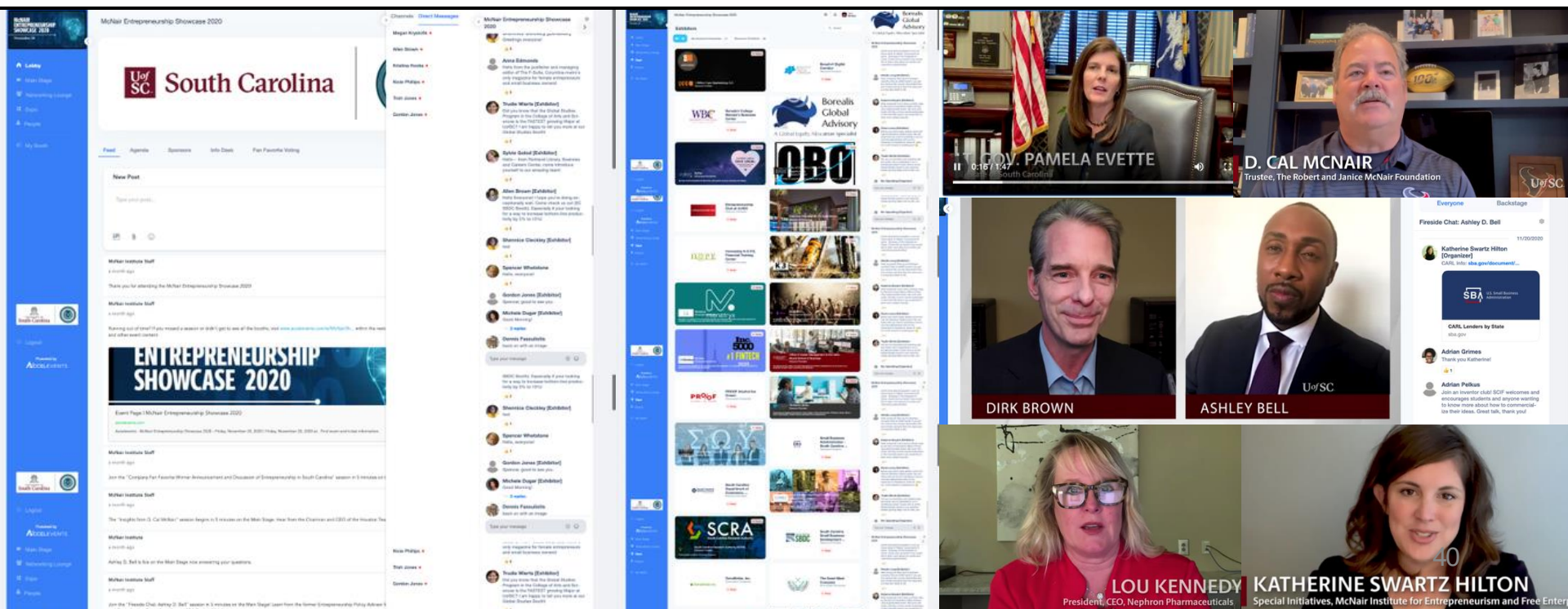
Entrepreneurship Showcase at the Growth Summit

The Entrepreneurship Showcase has been a McNair Institute flagship event since the founding of the Institute. This event spotlights students and their businesses. It is designed to connect our students with the broader entrepreneurship community, allowing both groups to learn from and benefit each other. We have organized the event in various formats and partnered with several organizations to enhance its impact. During the pandemic, we were able to host the event in a hybrid format to accommodate social distancing requirements while still enabling a strong networking experience. Starting in 2021, we have incorporated the Entrepreneurship Showcase into a broader Growth Summit in partnership with local organizations SoCo, GrowCo, and Guhroo. The Growth Summit is now an anchor event for the South Carolina entrepreneurship community and connects students, entrepreneurs, and the community to each other. As part of this partnership, we have curated a Startup track of sessions specifically designed for our students and others in the ideation phase of their business journey, while also facilitating sessions for more experienced entrepreneurs and business leaders. This broader scope has grown our reach and increased the impact of our efforts.



Leadership in Online and Hybrid Events

We didn't pause our events during the COVID-19 pandemic; instead, we quickly transitioned to an online format. Our 2020 showcase had over 200 attendees and, in addition to our in-person events, we continue to run several events, courses, and workshops in online and hybrid formats. This has the advantage of both engaging a broader number of attendees and facilitating a wide range of speakers. Our reputation in running effective online and hybrid programs has led to requests for us to facilitate lectures, panels, webinars, and workshops on this topic from the Mercatus Center in Arlington Virginia, the University of Aruba, the Global Consortium of Entrepreneurship Centers at events in Florida and Texas, among others. This has reinforced our leadership position in providing online support to entrepreneurs through StartupWind and other platforms.



McNair Innovation and Free Enterprise Summit™

From 2017–2019 we hosted an invitation-only, trademarked McNair Innovation and Free Enterprise Summit at Wild Dunes Resort in South Carolina, attended by 100 senior executives, government leaders, private equity partners, academic experts and other leaders interested in the future of entrepreneurship and free enterprise. We stopped organizing this event during the COVID-19 pandemic and have not restarted it due to resource constraints and our focus on events that engage a larger number of students. However, we still receive regular inquiries about this event, which was extremely popular. We view this event as a strong opportunity to connect our students with a broader range of inspiring thought leaders and build recognition for the McNair Institute as a thought leader in this space.



INNOVATION &
FREE ENTERPRISE
SUMMIT



SC Innovates Statewide Student Pitch Competition

SC Innovates is a statewide student pitch competition that the McNair Institute co-founded with Furman University and Coker University in 2021, with financial support from the South Carolina Department of Commerce. The concept of building a pitch competition that included multiple colleges and universities was completely new. In our first year, we managed to get thirteen different colleges and universities to contribute some of the prize money along with in-kind contributions of time and other resources. We are now up to sixteen colleges and universities participating in this competition each year. The competition has produced great ideas and new businesses. When the competition first started, there were a little over 100 participants. By its third year, there were over 200 participants. We are excited about the growth of this event, the excellent work of the students who are competing, and the experience and exposure they gain. We are also excited about the positive impact it has had on the relationships among the academic institutions in South Carolina. The day-to-day collaboration among academic, entrepreneurship leaders across the State has been greatly strengthened through these kinds of statewide events.



16 partner schools educating 133,000 students



Side Hustle Showcase

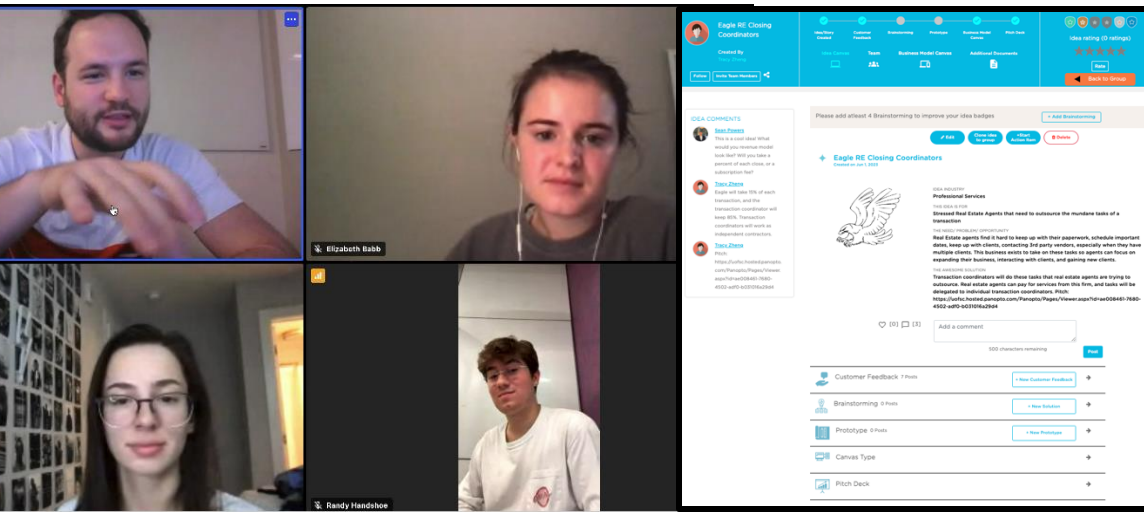
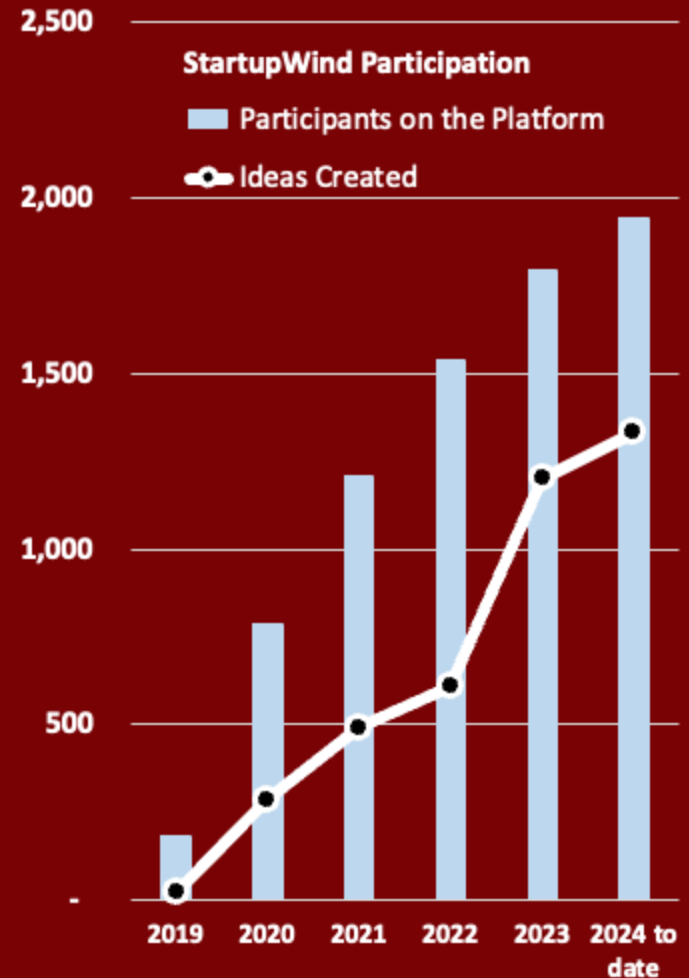
The Side Hustle Showcase was created to inspire and empower students who have a side hustle (part time business that they run). Nationwide, 35-40% of full-time college students have a side hustle to generate income while they are at school. The goal of this initiative is to provide an opportunity for student entrepreneurs to come together, get to know one another, access resources, and sell their products and services. This event serves over 30 students generating over \$8,000 in revenue. We have held this event in different settings on and off campus to determine the venue and formats that work best for our students. Each time we have hosted this event, it has been well attended by both student entrepreneurs and consumers, with extremely positive feedback. We have explored a number of partnerships for this event, including the Faber Entrepreneurship Center at the Moore School of Business, and Student-Made, a national organization that promotes and support student entrepreneurs. We have been evaluating online platforms to further assist students with web-based sales, in-person sales, and business management. This has been an enormously successful initiative with a lot of potential for growth and increased impact.



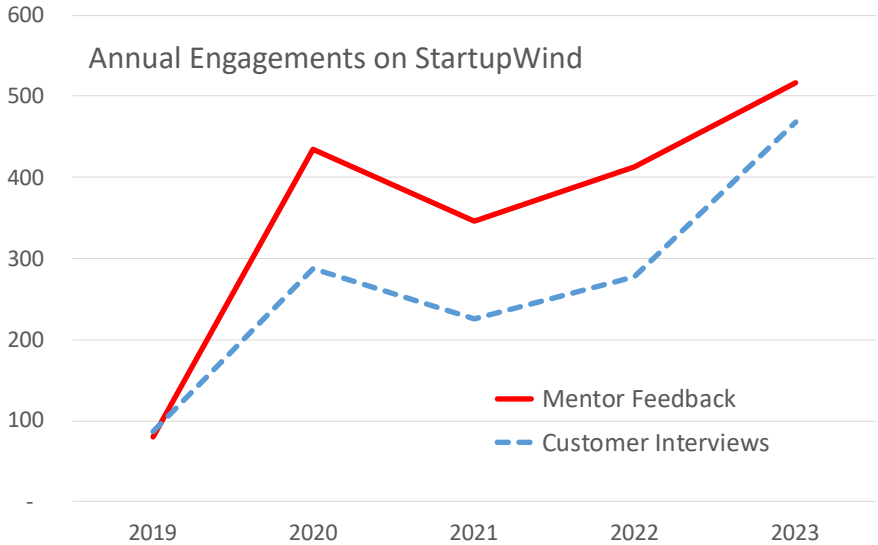
Online Support Platform

In partnership with the South Carolina Department of Commerce, the McNair Institute established a program in 2019 to connect our students, and our local entrepreneurs, with regional, national, and international resources using an online support platform called StartupWind. An entrepreneur can upload their idea and any supplemental information onto the platform within minutes. We then use StartupWind to help the entrepreneur (i) develop a team if needed, (ii) support design thinking interviews and data to evaluate aspects of the idea, (iii) develop their business model canvas, pitch deck and other collateral, (iv) provide online courses, and (v) connect them to advisors and mentors. In addition to supporting the development of more than 1,300 new venture ideas, we have run 19 entrepreneurship competitions and supported 35 entrepreneurship classes on the platform.

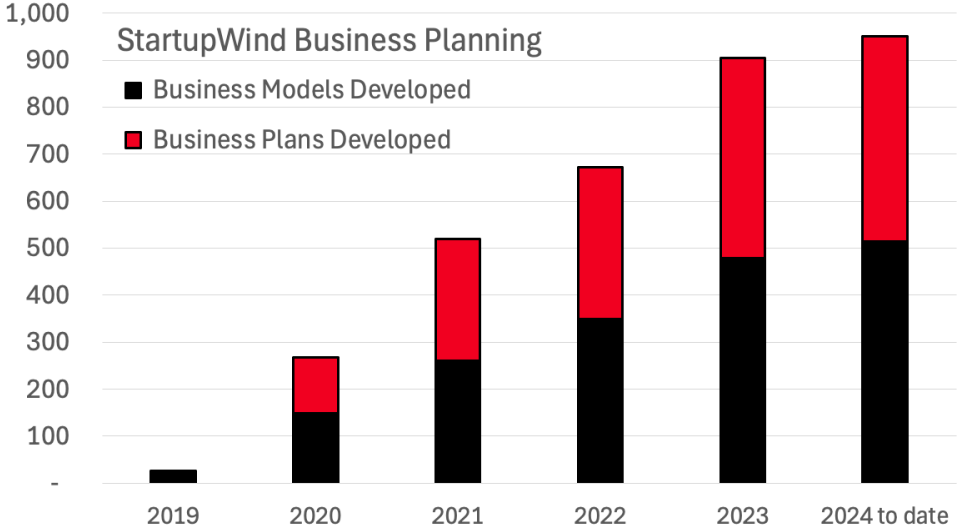
We have grown to over 1,900 participants on the platform who have created over 1,300 ideas.



StartupWind Online Support Platform Metrics



The level of activity on our online support platform has been high. Once we connect entrepreneurs with advisors and mentors through the platform, they engage both on the platform and directly in person or through phone calls. In addition to the engagement activity outside the platform, entrepreneurs have documented in the platform over 1,350 customer interviews, and mentors have documented over 1,850 instances of mentor feedback over the past four years.



Our support of over 1,300 new venture ideas have led to the development of more than 500 business model canvases and more than 430 business plans. Several of the entrepreneurs we supported have gone on to secure funding. Some have grown their business to profitability and at least two have sold their companies.



"I can say with a high level of confidence that, if not for the faculty and staff of the McNair Institute for Entrepreneurism and Free Enterprise, I would not have started my company. They gave me the foundational knowledge that was necessary for me to be successful in my business and, more importantly, gave me the push and the mentorship that made me feel confident to move forward."

Lanford Holloway
CEO and Founder, TerraStride
Acquired by GSM Outdoors in 2023

Lanford Holloway started TerraStride as a class project in Dirk Brown's class and, with the support of the McNair Institute for Entrepreneurism and Free Enterprise, pursued the project as a startup and continued building the company after graduation. The company was sold for several tens of millions of dollars in 2023.



“The McNair Institute’s online support for entrepreneurs has been an incredibly valuable resource to our State, particularly in helping early-stage entrepreneurs develop their ideas and business plans. The McNair Institute has been instrumental in helping young entrepreneurs get 'investment ready' by connecting them with educational resources, tools, partners, advisors and mentors. We look forward to further expanding our relationship, and we very much appreciate the help that the McNair Institute for Entrepreneurism and Free Enterprise is providing to entrepreneurs in South Carolina.”

- Bob Quinn
Executive Director
South Carolina Research Authority

Connecting Students to Startups

We began this initiative in 2021 with support from a grant from the SC Department of Commerce. A primary goal is to establish internships for students with startup companies. The internship systems and processes at the University of South Carolina were historically set up to facilitate internships primarily with large companies. The McNair Institute became one of only two non-academic unit partners of the USC Career Center to focus specifically on facilitating student internships with startups. Within the last three years, we have placed over 60 student interns with startups, and five of our students have been offered full-time post-graduation job opportunities because of their internships in this program. Our relationships with local startups have enabled dozens of guest lectures and over 4,200 hours of experiential learning for our students. We plan to build upon the success of this program and expand the number of events and other activities connecting our students to startups.



START UP MATCH UP
THURSDAY SEPT. 2
4-7 PM

STUDENT INTERNSHIPS

SONOCO PAVILION | DARLA MOORE SCHOOL OF BUSINESS

presented by
University of South Carolina

growco EclubSC

sponsored by
South Carolina Department of Commerce

48



“The McNair Institute has been a driving force in connecting the resources of the University of South Carolina with the entrepreneurial community in our State. Among many other contributions to entrepreneurs in South Carolina, the McNair Institute does an amazing job of connecting USC students with real startup companies. This has had an incredible impact both on the growth of our startup companies and on the learning of USC students, strengthening the entire entrepreneurial landscape of South Carolina.”

- Rick Finch
Executive Director
USC-Columbia Technology Incubator



IMPACT SUMMARY

Impact Overview

Since its founding in 2017, the McNair Institute for Entrepreneurism and Free Enterprise has had an enormous impact on the University of South Carolina. Below is a summary of some key accomplishments to date.

Awareness & Inspiration – Events and Community Development

- The **Entrepreneurship Showcase** has evolved into student participation in an annual Growth Summit.
- The **McNair Innovation and Free Enterprise Summit** established USC as a global thought leader in entrepreneurship and free enterprise.
- We lead or support over 50 other entrepreneurship events per year.
- We have established a student Carolina Entrepreneurship Fellows program with over 20 active student fellows.
- We established and built up an innovative **IDEA Living and Learning Community** to better engage students outside the classroom.

Education – Curriculum and Pedagogy Development

- We established the first interdisciplinary **Entrepreneurship Minor** at USC and developed eight new entrepreneurship courses designed to be relevant and accessible to any student at the University. Through the Intercampus Alliance, some courses developed for one campus are now available to students at multiple campuses.

Key Metrics

> 50 Events Per Year

> 130 Students at each annual Entrepreneurship Showcase Event

> 400 Students per year in courses developed by or supported by the McNair Institute

> 260 Students per year taught directly by McNair Institute staff

>156 Students have declared the McNair Entrepreneurship Minor

>33 different academic pathways are represented by students who have declared the McNair Entrepreneurship Minor

New Venture Support

- Our **StartupWind Online Support Platform** is being used to support dozens of startups. It has also been used to support student projects in 35 classes at USC and 19 business plan competitions.
- The **Connecting Students to Startups program** facilitates over 15 student internship with startup companies in a semester. This program is positioned for strong expansion with several partners across the State.

Ecosystem Development – Partnerships, Connecting Resources

- The McNair Institute **Partnership Advisory Council**, **Entrepreneurship Network**, and **Intercampus Alliance to Advance Entrepreneurism** each meet twice per year and have provided excellent feedback and advice, stronger communication and collaboration between faculty and staff engaged in education and research in entrepreneurship and free enterprise, and more impactful contributions by USC to the entrepreneurial ecosystem in South Carolina.
- Partnerships with over 100 organizations nationally and internationally have positioned USC as a strong leader in entrepreneurship and free enterprise education and support.
- The McNair Institute for Entrepreneurism and Free Enterprise was recognized as **one of the top four emerging entrepreneurship centers in the country** by a vote of our peers through the United States Association of Small Business and Entrepreneurship (USASBE).

Key Metrics

StartupWind Online Support

- > 1,900 participants
- > 1,300 ideas created
- > 500 business models
- > 430 business plans
- > 1,350 customer interview
- > 1,850 feedback instances

Connecting Students to Startups

- > 15 internships per semester

USC Entrepreneurship Network

- > 150 Faculty and Staff

Intercampus Alliance

- > 8 Campuses and Palmetto College

- > 100 active relationships with other organizations supporting entrepreneurship and free enterprise.



PLANS FOR FY25 - FY35

The Decade Ahead

In its first seven years, the Institute has transformed the landscape of USC and set in place a strong foundation of educational programming, support systems, partner networks, and thought leadership. Our focus has been on developing a new generation of entrepreneurial leaders who have both the technical skills and the philosophical understanding of how the free enterprise system forms the basis of economic opportunity and prosperity for individuals in our country.

***The University of South Carolina
will be broadly acknowledged as one of the global leaders
in education and support of entrepreneurship and free enterprise.***

Our strategic plans will continue to leverage scalable systems, processes, and partnerships to enable customized education and support in entrepreneurship and free enterprise for every student at the University of South Carolina. We are dedicated to transforming the educational experience of our students and inspiring them to live their biggest lives.

Alignment with the USC Vision

The University of South Carolina has defined a vision statement, in three parts, that explicitly include many of the core tenets of entrepreneurship for students, faculty and university operations.

Our Students Change the World for the Better – Using their knowledge to build a better future.

In support of this part of the vision, the McNair Institute has been instrumental in complementing the various academic programs at USC in two important ways: (i) providing education, frameworks, tools, case studies, and support on how to leverage domain expertise acquired in the classroom to build sustainable value in a business, and (ii) providing experiential learning opportunities for students to exercise their knowledge outside the classroom while they are still in school.

Our Faculty and Staff are Innovators – Bringing ideas and solutions that advance the state, nation, and world.

The McNair Institute hosts several interdisciplinary forums, including the Entrepreneurship Network and the Intercampus Alliance to Advance Entrepreneurism. We help faculty and staff innovate, not just to advance their specific field of expertise, but to solve real problems in the state, nation, and world.

Our Institution is Committed to Operational Excellence – Redesigning operations and enhancing service delivery for faculty, staff, students, and the community.

The McNair Institute has implemented online systems and processes that enable mentoring, advising, and networking for entrepreneurship at scale, while maintaining rigorous, personalized education and support based upon the specific needs of the student, faculty member, staff member, or entrepreneurial venture.



“Access to entrepreneurship and free enterprise education is more important today than ever before. Because of this, the McNair Institute for Entrepreneurism and Free Enterprise is one of a very small number of centers at USC that sit centrally under the Office of the Provost. This facilitates its mission of supporting all schools and colleges at USC and enables more comprehensive, university-wide initiatives and programs. The McNair Institute team has greatly enhanced communication and collaboration across our campus, and with several external partners, significantly expanding the scope and scale of entrepreneurship education and support at USC. The McNair Institute has been an important and inspiring leader in this area for USC and for South Carolina.”

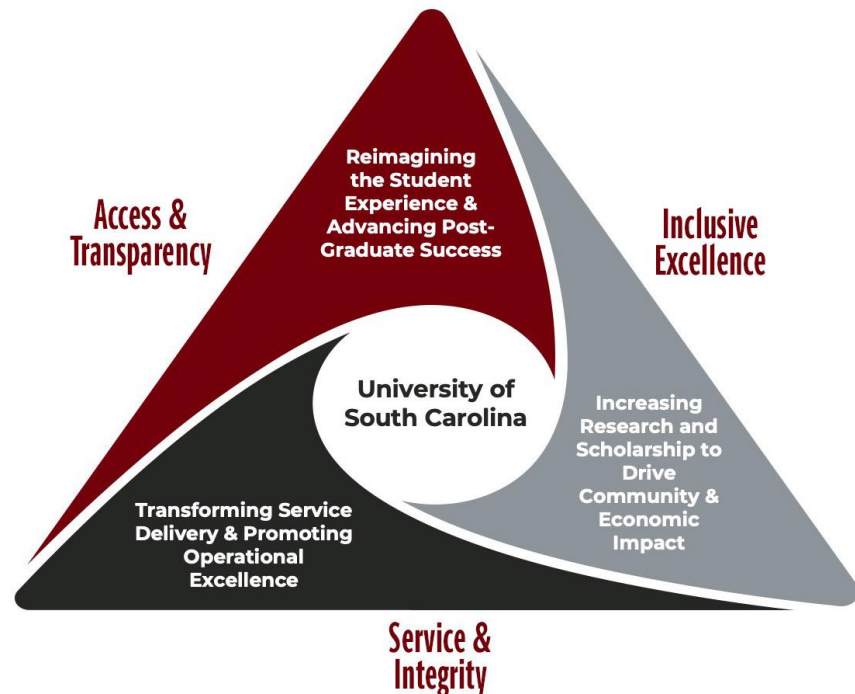
- Donna Arnett
Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs
and Provost
University of South Carolina

Alignment with the USC Strategic Priorities

The University of South Carolina has defined three strategic priorities: (i) Student Experience, (ii) Research and Scholarship, and (iii) Service Delivery.

The main focus of the McNair Institute is on **reimagining the student experience and advancing post-graduate success**. USC expands on this priority as follows: “We empower USC undergraduate and graduate students to pursue purpose-filled careers and become global citizens and life-long learners by providing them access to affordable, high-quality academic and experiential learning opportunities.”

USC’s signature initiatives for this priority of the student experience include fostering access and belonging, empowering diverse students, supporting student and teaching excellence, and driving post-graduate success. These are all broadly recognized as key outcomes of the work done by McNair Institute. By providing our students with both the technical skills and tools of entrepreneurship, and the philosophical understanding of how the free enterprise system drives economic opportunity, we develop and empower productive, highly successful citizens and leaders.



In reimagining the student experience at USC, we constantly seek out and incorporate feedback from our Entrepreneurship Fellows, IDEA Living and Learning Community members, recent graduates, and others to enhance our initiatives and programs. We also advance post-graduate success through events, ongoing advising and support of alumni, and other initiatives both in person and through our online support platforms. Our academic programs closely align with broader USC initiatives supporting diverse student backgrounds, critical thinking, and more applied, experiential learning in curricular design. By providing a core competency in entrepreneurship and free enterprise, we set our students up for stronger success in any field.

The McNair Institute initiatives have also been instrumental in **transforming service delivery and promoting operational excellence**. We have redesigned processes, services, curriculum, and pedagogy to improve the accessibility and impact of our education improve the accessibility and impact of our education and support for entrepreneurs. Our courses, advising, mentoring, and support are available both online and in-person, and accessible to any student at USC.

We have also **increased research and scholarship to drive community and economic impact**, largely through connecting students and faculty with businesses. The experiential learning for students and the academic research of faculty is enhanced at the same time that we facilitate entrepreneurship tools, system, processes, and best practices in supporting real companies, helping them to solve their problems and optimize their growth.



Alignment with the USC Organization

The McNair Institute for Entrepreneurism and Free Enterprise reports into the Office of the Provost, along with the deans of each of USC's 15 schools and colleges and 9 academic administrators. In its leadership of entrepreneurship and free enterprise initiatives at USC, the McNair Institute (i) runs several, individual events and initiatives, (ii) supports many focused initiatives run by partner organizations, such as the Faber Entrepreneurship Center in the Darla Moore School of Business and the Kennedy Pharmacy Innovation Center in the College of Pharmacy, and (iii) serves as a bridge between the various academic and non-academic organizations at the university to facilitate collaborations for much larger, university-wide programs and collaborations, such as the McNair Entrepreneurship Minor and the USC Entrepreneurship Network.

In facilitating these larger, collaborative initiatives at USC, the McNair Institute has established strong systems, processes, and trusted relationships with organizations and individuals both across the USC system and outside of the university. The McNair Institute at USC is now in a strong position to formalize more comprehensive communication and collaboration systems. This will enable the university to align and leverage its resources, and those of partner organizations, to provide a much larger impact for our students and other stakeholders. *We are not aware of any other university system that has established as strong or as broad a foundation for collaboration and support in the field of entrepreneurship as USC.* Under the leadership of the McNair Institute for Entrepreneurism and Free Enterprise, USC is poised to dramatically expand the scale, scope, and quality of its entrepreneurship education and support, and become broadly acknowledged as a global leader in this field.



"The USC Office of Economic Engagement serves as the central hub where industry leaders, researchers, entrepreneurs, and government officials come together to engage with the university. We connect businesses of all sizes with the robust resources of South Carolina's flagship institution, fostering innovation, driving economic development, and supporting workforce growth across the state. In close collaboration with the McNair Institute for Entrepreneurism and Free Enterprise, we facilitate dynamic connections among entrepreneurs, students, faculty, and staff. The McNair Institute's exceptional programming, especially for early-stage entrepreneurs, perfectly complements our wider economic engagement initiatives, creating a strong foundation for South Carolina's entrepreneurial ecosystem."

- Stephen Cutler
Vice President for Economic Development
and Dean of the College of Pharmacy
University of South Carolina

A Decade of Opportunity

The McNair Institute has set the following ten-year goals 2035:

1. **Every undergraduate student** at USC will graduate with an understanding of the important role that entrepreneurship and free enterprise play in the **economic prosperity of our country**;
2. At least **3,000 USC students** each year will be supported in some way by the McNair Institute directly, through advising, mentoring, networking, or otherwise connecting to the startup ecosystem;
3. At least **2,000 USC students** each year will take an entrepreneurship class;
4. At least **300 USC students** each year will graduate with an entrepreneurship minor;
5. We will scale to support at least **500 active new ventures** at a time through workshops, accelerator programming, networking, helping to secure funding, talent, anchor customers, etc.;
6. We will establish a University-wide communications and collaboration infrastructure named "Entrepreneurship @ USC"; and
7. We will be recognized as a global leader in the education and support of entrepreneurship and free enterprise, addressing all stages of the entrepreneurial journey from awareness to inspiration, education, support, and long-term growth.



APPENDICES

Appendix A: Selected Student Testimonials

The feedback from the students on our entrepreneurship courses has been overwhelmingly positive both in anonymous surveys and in written testimonials.

Amelia Leahy, Management Major

"Prior to taking Dr. Brown's class, I did not know much about entrepreneurship or free enterprise. However, I can confidently say that Dr. Brown has been the most passionate and impactful professor that I have had thus far at Carolina. He has sparked a drive in me that I was unaware existed, as I am now pursuing a major in Management with a concentration in Entrepreneurship. Outside of the classroom, Dr. Brown has provided me the wonderful opportunity to be a part of McNair Student Advisory Council, where I have been able to grow both personally and professionally. The initiatives that Dr. Brown and the McNair Institute for Entrepreneurism have been taking are meaningful and valuable, and we are just getting started. It has been a true privilege getting to learn from someone so dedicated in this field."

Ross Buchan, Economics Major

"Dr. Brown's class has impacted the way I think about my own future more than any other class I've taken in college. His class opened my eyes to a world of opportunity, and I truly feel that Dr. Brown has given me tools to enter into this world with confidence and navigate it with success."



Harrison Engoren, Computer Science Major and McNair Scholar

"Out of all my classes at USC, Dr. Brown's class taught me the most. He shared his experiences with us, brought in guest speakers, and gave us the opportunity to connect with a local startup. Working with a startup afforded me the rare opportunity to apply concepts I learned in lectures to a real-world scenario. Without taking any prior business classes, Dr. Brown was able to help me understand the foundation necessary to start and run a company in today's competitive environment."

Julia Williams, Global Studies Major

"Dr. Brown's class not only opened my eyes to what entrepreneurship is, but has also provided me with once in a lifetime opportunities that will help me greatly in future endeavors. Through meeting many successful entrepreneurs and gaining real-life experience in the classroom, his class has given me valuable insights about business beyond the classroom. Dr. Brown has not only had a tremendous impact on my views of entrepreneurship and what it means to take classes through USC's McNair institute, but has also affected my views on what makes a great professor. Since stepping into his classroom on day one, it was evident that he will go great lengths to get his students engaged in what they are learning about and will help them one on one when they are struggling."





Alexandre Eldredge, Design Major

"Dr. Brown's course was nothing short of ground-breaking for me. Wrapping up my senior year, I still had a huge amount to gain from the class. As a non-business major, the access Dr. Brown's course gave me to the McNair Institute and entrepreneurial thinking has granted me tools I apply weekly at the very least. Entering my professional career in an entirely non-entrepreneurial manner, I still find countless ways to apply practices learned from Dr. Brown that will forever mark my processes - minimally viable products and Kanban especially - throughout my days. Additionally, a boundless benefit was Dr. Brown's penchant for including guest speakers and outside events. Through these, I not only increased my exposure to entrepreneurial minds but greatly enhanced my networking and interpersonal skills."



Janay Vacharasin, Biology Major

"Dr. Brown isn't afraid to push the boundaries of how to create the next generation of entrepreneurs. He uses innovative teaching that enhanced learning real world entrepreneurship. It's the most daring class I had, but one of the best classes I've had! He challenged the constraints of the definition of a classroom, which greatly strengthened our learning. I loved being able to connect with actual entrepreneurs in the community!"

Adam Miller, Finance and Marketing Dual-Major

"Dr. Brown's Entrepreneurism and Free Enterprise course was the most eye opening and formative course I have taken at the University of South Carolina. From the illuminating, energetic lectures to meaningful assignments and projects, this class challenges each student to create, think differently, and apply each lesson through experiential learning. I am excited to take the knowledge I gained from this course and apply it to my growing career in a positive way."

Jeanee Bourque, Fine Arts Major (Painting)

"Dr. Brown's class taught us many useful skills for our future use in business that can be used as an entrepreneur or a small business manager. I liked the way we learned skills and then applied them with members of the USC Co-op Incubator program."

Christian Cecere, International Business and Real Estate Dual-Major

"In my 4+ years at USC, between both the undergraduate and graduate levels, no course nor professor has taught me more practical business knowledge than Dirk Brown. He does a fantastic job of translating his impressive collection of real-world business experience to an academic environment. Dirk's passion for entrepreneurship is quite evident, and he does a great job at cultivating this within his students. Dirk is more than happy to use both his and the McNair Institute's resources to support and involve students in entrepreneurial activities to the fullest extent possible. He is a major asset of USC and I am thankful to have crossed paths with him during my time here."





Chandler Kellogg

International Business and Management Major

Entrepreneurship Focus and Data Analytics Concentration

"Reflecting on my time at the University of South Carolina, the McNair Institute for Entrepreneurism and Free Enterprise played a pivotal role in shaping my entrepreneurial spirit. The mentorship and support I received from the McNair Institute provided me with the tools and guidance to start my growth marketing agency, hotbutton.io, and an electronics repair business, Green Screen Repairs. These experiences ultimately led to my recognition as the Young Entrepreneur of the Year by the Small Business Development Center. The McNair Institute was instrumental in helping me build the confidence and practical knowledge needed to launch these ventures successfully. Being part of this transformative initiative not only helped me realize my potential as an entrepreneur but also empowered countless others to pursue their passions and create meaningful change."



Sydney Brookshire

International Business & Supply Chain Major

South Carolina Honors College

Co-President of the Entrepreneurship Club.

"I truly would not be where I am today without the McNair Institute. Coming in as a first-semester freshman, I wasn't quite sure about my major, my career path or what kind of clubs I wanted to join. When I got an email over the summer saying there was a new class called "COLA 298: Entrepreneurism and Free Enterprise," and I thought to myself 'Entrepreneurship? That sounds interesting!' I dropped University 101 and signed up for Dr. Dirk Brown's class. To this day, COLA 298 has been the most eye-opening course I have ever taken. It changed my perspective on business, what I wanted to do with my life, and my passions.

That semester, I rushed a business fraternity, got a position on the executive board of Entrepreneurship Club, developed a relationship with one of my biggest mentors to this day (through COLA 298), and have attended numerous events through the McNair Institute. Taking Dr. Dirk Brown's class was my first step to a successful college career, and I now serve as the President of Entrepreneurship Club. I have also started another organization on campus with a friend of mine, and I cannot wait to see what the future holds! I can confidently say that my passions, excitement about changing the world and making a difference were initiated and developed through the McNair Institute."

Eileen Meccay Nimmer
International Business Education Alliance

"My experience working with Dr. Brown has been nothing less than exceptional. His expertise in entrepreneurship and vast knowledge of different markets and industries encourages the students he works with to push beyond their personal and professional boundaries to prepare them for their careers ahead. I have learned more from him in a single course than I would have thought possible."

Trevor Moxley, Finance Major and History Minor

"Dr. Brown's course was the perfect course to help me learn about entrepreneurship. I thoroughly enjoyed the way that Dr. Brown incorporated theoretical frameworks, interactions with real startups, and his own substantial, real-world experiences with startups to create a truly dynamic and well-rounded class. After completing his course, I asked Dr. Brown to serve as my Honors Thesis Director. He consistently provided strong support and deep insights as well as guiding me to several events and initiatives of the McNair Institute for Entrepreneurism and Free Enterprise."





**Travis Ward, Finance Major and History Minor
Professional Masters Of Business Administration**

"Dr. Brown's course was one of those rare courses that allowed me to learn through practical application rather than just theoretical interpretation. Dr. Brown's teaching style and assignments allowed students to solve real-world problems using their own understandings of how to apply course materials rather than a simple "right" or "wrong" answer. The lessons learned from Dr. Brown's course will stay with me much longer, and be more practically applied in my professional career, than any learned responses to pass an exam or write a paper in my academic career."



Mallory Jones, International Business and Accounting Major

"Working with Dr. Brown on my Senior Honors Thesis helped introduce me to entrepreneurship, which is something we rarely talk about in my business classes. His guidance and knowledge helped provide me with a more well-rounded business education at the University of South Carolina and gave me the tools to explore potential business ideas I may be interested in in the future."

Sarah Cole

Student, Advertising Major & Entrepreneurship Minor

“Throughout my time at USC, I’ve taken courses with the McNair Institute that have significantly impacted my experience as a student.

My favorite course was Introduction to Entrepreneurship. I got introduced so many new ideas I never considered. The coursework and instructors inspired me to pursue a path in entrepreneurship, and the McNair Institute truly served as a stepping stone to my entrepreneurial future.”



Maggie Siciliano

Master’s Candidate, Darla Moore School of Business

“I was fortunate to be in the IDEA community while under the McNair Institute. As a freshman in the IDEA Community, right away I was put in a group of like-minded people, which was a great advantage for me.

There’s nothing at USC that has the same reach, the same faculty involvement, the same career path support in starting your own business as the McNair Institute.

I was able to start my own business consulting other companies in marketing and branding. A huge part of being able to do that was the McNair Institute and the infrastructure and support they provided.”





Nick Hayden

Sports & Entertainment Management Major

"As the former President of the Entrepreneurship Club at the University of South Carolina, which worked closely with the McNair Institute for Entrepreneurism and Free Enterprise, I had the unique opportunity to witness firsthand the program's commitment to fostering true entrepreneurship. Unlike many university programs that can become mired in bureaucracy and create barriers for student entrepreneurs, the McNair Institute actively fostered innovation and resourcefulness. Under Dirk Brown's leadership, the Institute provided invaluable opportunities, from consulting with tech startups to supporting student-led hackathons and introducing us to accomplished entrepreneurs. These experiences equipped me and club members with the practical skills necessary to overcome real-world challenges. Now, as the founder of Explore ATX, a tourism startup in Austin, I credit much of my entrepreneurial success to the McNair Institute's commitment to fostering true innovation and resourcefulness."

Appendix B: Selected Partnership Testimonials

Audrey Korsgaard, Ph.D.

Senior Associate Dean for Research and Academics

Darla Moore School of Business, University of South Carolina

“The McNair Institute is crucial to what we do here in the Darla Moore School of Business. They help connect our students with students in other disciplines that have products or technologies that they are trying to launch, which gives us this great opportunity to build collaborations.

It’s the only institution that spans the entire University. Entrepreneurs are like cowboys - they like to go out and do things on their own. The McNair Institute is the wrangler. It gives an overarching framework which allows them to communicate and coordinate with one another and leverage all these individual assets we have here at USC.”

Ehsan Jabbarzadeh, Ph.D.

Associate Professor. Chemical & Biomedical Engineering CEC

Director of Entrepreneurship and USC NSF I-Corps Site Program

University of South Carolina

"The McNair Institute for Entrepreneurism and Free Enterprise is an incredibly powerful resource for all students, faculty, and staff at USC. We are excited to be collaborating closely on several key initiatives."





Kasie Whitener, Ph.D.
Co-Director, Faber Entrepreneurship Center
University of South Carolina

“The McNair Institute has been pivotal in helping us see entrepreneurship as a viable course of study not just for business students, but for students in every academic discipline. They brought the Entrepreneurship Minor campus-wide, enabling students in areas such as dance, music, and pharmacology to see themselves as potential business owners.

They help our students envision what it’s like to work for a business, even if they are not business-people. We see their influence in all our students across all academic disciplines.”



Jeff Savage, Ph.D.
Co-Director, Faber Entrepreneurship Center
University of South Carolina

“The Faber Center has benefited a lot having the McNair Institute here. While the Faber Center focuses specifically on the students at the Business School, the McNair Institute has a University and state-wide vision. This helped us have a wider impact for our students.

It helps us to have a wider sense who helps us have a wider impact and contribute to the State and the students.”

Andrea Tanner, Ph.D.
Associate Dean, USC South Carolina Honors College
University of South Carolina

"The McNair Institute for Entrepreneurism and Free Enterprise has collaborated aggressively with students, faculty, and staff from across the University to dramatically increase the understanding of entrepreneurship and free enterprise. This has been a game changer for USC."

Taylor Harding, Ph.D.
Dean of the School of Music
University of South Carolina

"The impact of the McNair Institute is profound. We used to not have many connections across campus or to the external ecosystem, but McNair gave us this beautiful umbrella of everything entrepreneurship. McNair knit together everything entrepreneurial on campus through their resources and ethos.

They have advanced the study and experience in all of the colleges and outside the colleges, and statewide."





Gerald McDermott, Ph.D.
Department Chair, International Business
Darla Moore School of Business
University of South Carolina

“Entrepreneurs are essential to the evolution of global value chains. We interact with the McNair Institute in multiple ways, especially in curriculum and the value we’re giving to students in our undergrad and masters programs.

The McNair Institute is the fundamental, organizational engine in USC’s entrepreneurship ecosystem. What’s unique about it is that it cuts across multiple schools and departments. Without the McNair Institute we wouldn’t be coming together and coordinating all the different facets of entrepreneurship.”



Dick Kawooya, Ph.D.
Interim Director & Associate Professor
School of Library and Information Science
University of South Carolina

"Dirk Brown and his team have had an amazing impact on the students and faculty at USC. The McNair Institute for Entrepreneurism and Free Enterprise has quickly become one of the most important resources on campus."

David Cutler, Ph.D.
Distinguished Professor, School of Music
School of Music Director of Entrepreneurship
University of South Carolina

"The McNair Institute for Entrepreneurism and Free Enterprise, under Dirk Brown's leadership, has been an incredible driving force for collaboration at the University of South Carolina. Bridging entrepreneurial initiatives from areas as diverse as business, engineering, nursing, and my discipline of music, it has provided a platform for idea sharing, relationship building, and amplifying impact.

The McNair Institute has really created a culture where entrepreneurship doesn't belong to any one college or a department, but to the entire university. More recently, they have been emphasizing reaching out across the state to other institutions and universities so we can transform how we how we serve our students across the university system. What has been so amazing about having the McNair Institute is connecting with people from all over to figure out how we bring all these worlds together."





Chad Hardaway, JD, MBA
Director, Technology Commercialization Office Deputy Director,
Office of Economic Engagement, University of South Carolina

"The McNair Institute for Entrepreneurism and Free Enterprise provides extraordinary insights and strong support for our students and faculty who are interested in commercializing their innovations. The McNair Institute has quickly established itself as a key resource at USC."



Patricia H. Fabel, Pharm.D., BCPS
Executive Director, Kennedy Pharmacy Innovation Center
Associate Professor, Clinical Pharmacy & Outcomes Sciences
University of South Carolina

"The McNair Institute for Entrepreneurism and Free Enterprise has provided outstanding input and support to the Kennedy Pharmacy Innovation Center, to our Pharmacy students, and to faculty across USC. Dirk Brown serves on our advisory committee. Having him come in and consult has been really helpful for our students. Dirk and his team have touched over 25% of our student population, which is pretty significant considering that, prior to that, those students would not have had much exposure, if any, to business principles, innovation principles, and entrepreneurship."

Lee Macilwinen
Director, SC Launch
South Carolina Research Authority

“The McNair Institute has been a key part of the growth that we’ve seen in the State of South Carolina for entrepreneurs. We’re talking about high-tech, high-growth entrepreneurs. I’m saying that because they provide the impetus to the students to go out and either start new ventures or do internships with companies to get real life experience in addition to what they learn in the classroom.

The McNair Institute is who we work with to engage with entrepreneurial students whether they want to start their own company, or want to learn how to create innovation in established companies.

We’ve seen incredible growth due to the work of the McNair Institute.”

Carrie Darby
Founder & Director of Operations
Carrie Vine's Homemade Treats Ltd. Co.

“The focus of the McNair Institute in building relationships between small businesses and the University has given us the opportunity to serve students and provide them with experience in how to start and run their own small business.”





UNIVERSITY OF
South Carolina

