

Executive Summary

Blueprint for Academic Excellence

McNair Institute

AY2020-2021

Highlights

The McNair Institute for Entrepreneurism and Free Enterprise at UofSC is entering its fourth year with financial support from the Robert and Janice McNair Foundation. The theme for this year is “Build on Momentum”. The Institute is leveraging the solid foundation that we have established in our courses, events, programs, and strong network of collaborators to expand our efforts in the following key areas: (i) education and support of entrepreneurs, (ii) entrepreneurial ecosystem development, particularly related to diversity and inclusion, and (iii) thought leadership related to entrepreneurship and free enterprise systems. Within each of these areas, the McNair Institute is driving successful initiatives to address all stages of entrepreneurship, from early ideation through the growth of a successful new venture.

Mission Statement

The McNair Institute for Entrepreneurism and Free Enterprise provides world-leading education and support related to entrepreneurial leadership and free enterprise. 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.

Vision Statement

The McNair Institute for Entrepreneurism and Free Enterprise at UofSC will be recognized, together with other McNair Centers, as the global leader in entrepreneurship and free enterprise education and support. Following the vision of Robert and Janice McNair, the Institute will empower a new generation of creative, productive leaders who will be positioned to enjoy the benefits of free markets, create jobs, and drive economic growth.

Values Statement

The McNair Institute teaches and models the principals of individual responsibility, free enterprise markets, and principled entrepreneurship. The Institute and its stakeholders focus on creating the greatest impact through dedication, teamwork, and leadership around initiatives in innovation, entrepreneurship, and free enterprise markets.

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Goals - Looking Back

No goals have been entered for this section.

Goals - Real Time

Goals for the McNair Center that are in progress for AY2020-2021

Goal 1 - Enhance education at UofSC by facilitating an appreciation for, and understanding of, entrepreneurship and free enterprise.

Goal Statement	<p>The vast majority of jobs that will be available to our students in 2030 haven't been invented yet. (85% according to a recent report from the Institute for the Future and a panel of 20 technology, business and academic experts from around the world). Understanding how to leverage innovation to create sustainable value (i.e. entrepreneurship and free enterprise) will be vital for the future success of our graduates. We are committed to providing cutting-edge, experiential course content, curricula, events, networks, and communications related to this critical area of entrepreneurship and free enterprise.</p>
Linkage to University Goal	<p>Attract, Inspire, challenge and enable our students to become innovative thinkers and transformative leaders.</p> <p>Assemble and cultivate a world-class faculty and staff.</p> <p>Cultivate a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive campus culture where every individual, regardless of background, has the full opportunity to flourish and thrive.</p> <p>Harness the power, attributes and institutional diversity of an integrated and interoperative university system that enhances access, success and affordability for every eligible SC student.</p> <p>Spur innovation and economic development through impactful community partnerships.</p> <p>Build teams that win with excellence and character.</p>
Alignment with Mission, Vision, and Values	<p>Driving an awareness and understanding of entrepreneurship and free enterprise is a fundamental component of our mission to develop a new generation of entrepreneurial leaders.</p>
Status	<p>Progressing as expected (multi-year goal)</p>
Action Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Continue to develop and support courses and a minor in entrepreneurship and free enterprise. <input type="checkbox"/> Continue to grow and develop the Living Learning Community focused on entrepreneurship and innovation. <input type="checkbox"/> Initiate, coordinate and support events and communications related to entrepreneurship and free enterprise. <input type="checkbox"/> Facilitate University-wide systems and processes for the sharing of best practices, education-oriented collaborations, and advanced knowledge in entrepreneurship and free enterprise for faculty and staff.

Achievements

- Curriculum Development and Support: Taught or advised entrepreneurship-related courses at both the undergraduate and graduate level across the College of Arts & Sciences, the College of Pharmacy, the Moore School of Business, the College of Engineering, the School of Nursing, and the Honors College serving >185 students. Served as an advisor for 7 Honors College theses and wrote 13 comprehensive letters of recommendation for students applying to various entrepreneurship-related graduate programs. Successfully completed a USC Creativity grant from the Center for Teaching Excellence (CTE) to create design thinking-based content incorporating diverse creative arts to materially impact a broad range of courses. Subsequently awarded a CTE grant to enable the COLA 298 entrepreneurship course to be taught fully online leveraging this content. Continued to secure letters on concurrence for the Entrepreneurship Minor and worked on the structure of the minor within UofSC.
- Entrepreneurship and Innovation Living Learning Community (LLC): Launched this LLC with 38 students selected from a pool of over 300 applications after 3 recruiting events. Having offices located in the residence hall enabled the McNair Institute staff to build strong relationships with all the students. 21 of the students took the LLC's specially designed, linked courses and were very closely engaged with the entrepreneurial ecosystem at UofSC. In addition to meetings, office hours, snack breaks, and other smaller events, the McNair Institute ran 10 larger programs for the LLC resulting in 144 more comprehensive student engagements. Published 9 newsletters which were well received by the students and had a >50% open rate. Based on the success of this first-year pilot, received approval from University Housing and the Office of the Provost to double the size of this LLC to ~100 students for the 2020-2021 academic year. Received and reviewed >1,000 applications for these 100 positions.
- Events and communications: Ran and collaborated on a number of ~~events~~ related to entrepreneurship and free enterprise serving an aggregate of >2,000 students, faculty, staff and others. Our main student-focused event of the year, the Entrepreneurism and Free Enterprise Showcase, featured Steve Forbes and drew a crowd of ~375 people.
- Harmonizing meetings, systems, and processes: Hosted a series of ~~meetings~~ to coordinate the sharing of best practices, collaborations, and advanced knowledge in entrepreneurship and free enterprise for faculty and staff including two university-wide Entrepreneurship Harmonizing meetings.

Resources Utilized	Partnered with other academic units such as the Moore School and the Center for Teaching Excellence as well as McNair Institute advisers and other organizations to provide sufficient instructional capacity and support. Received sponsorships and gifts totaling \$48,500 from The Center for Teaching Excellence, the Kennedy Pharmacy Innovation Center, and the Young America's Foundation for course development, academic support, and events.
Goal Continuation	Ongoing.
Goal Upcoming Plans	<p>Curriculum: Establish a minor in entrepreneurship.</p> <p>Living Learning Community (LLC): Double the size to ~100 students and continue to drive demonstrable engagement from Entrepreneurship and Innovation Living Learning Community members.</p> <p>Harmonizing meetings, systems, and processes: Continue to codify key concepts, and objectives, and best practices for entrepreneurship education to facilitate a collaborative curriculum in entrepreneurship and free enterprise. Implement collaboration systems and processes.</p> <p>Events and communications: Run and collaborate on events related to entrepreneurship and free enterprise, including an annual Entrepreneurism and Free Enterprise Showcase.</p>
Resources Needed	Our upcoming plans will require expanded partnerships with, and support from, other academic units and organizations such as the Office of the Provost and University Housing as well as with McNair Institute advisers and other organizations. We will solicit sponsorships for many of our initiatives and work within the budget that those sponsorships allow.
Goal Notes	We are approaching an education in entrepreneurship and free enterprise holistically. An awareness of, and appreciation for, the importance of entrepreneurship and free enterprise is driven through compelling and inspiring events and communications. The Entrepreneurship and Innovation Living Learning Community, the Entrepreneurship Club, the McNair Student Advisory Counsel, and other engaged peer groups help drive an experiential, extra-curricular experience that reinforces this. We ensure that our students have access to world class academic instruction accessible to any major and any year, and reinforce the academic training with advice, mentoring, and experiential learning with real startup companies and seasoned practitioners.

Goals - Real Time

Goal 2 - Inspire and support entrepreneurial activity at UofSC.

Goal Statement	Developing new ideas into sustainable ventures is almost always incredibly difficult and complex. It is also the driving force behind our nation's economy. Companies that are fewer than 6 years old have been creating essentially all of the net job growth in the United States for decades (according to data from the U.S. Census Bureau). We are committed to building a strong ecosystem and support network for entrepreneurial activity at UofSC both directly and through our faculty, staff, alumni, domain experts, advisers and others who encourage, inspire, and sustain our entrepreneurial community.
Linkage to University Goal	<input type="checkbox"/> Educating the Thinkers and Leaders of Tomorrow <input type="checkbox"/> Assembling a World-Class Faculty of Scholars, Teachers, and Practitioners <input type="checkbox"/> Spurring Knowledge and Creation <input type="checkbox"/> Building Inclusive and Inspiring Communities <input type="checkbox"/> Ensuring Institutional Strength, Longevity, and Excellence
Alignment with Mission, Vision, and Values	Supporting entrepreneurial leaders is a key component of our mission.
Status	Progressing as expected (multi-year goal)
Action Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exercise scalable systems and processes to support entrepreneurs from early ideation through new venture formation and growth. • Grow, manage, and support a world class adviser network for our entrepreneurs and other stakeholders. • Facilitate compelling online content to engage and inspire a broad range of students, alumni, and other stakeholders. • Collaborate with and support other entrepreneurship organizations to leverage synergies.
Achievements	<p>StartupWind platform pilot: Demonstrated the ability to aggressively support new ventures online from ideation through funded new ventures, including online advising and mentoring from alumni and others, within the guidelines established by Information Technologies, the Office of Equal Opportunity Programs, Title IX, Enterprise Risk Management and Insurance, UofSC Legal Counsel, the Career Center, the Alumni Association, the Office of Economic Engagement, Residence Life and others. This will make many other initiatives much more scalable, accessible, and compelling moving forward. Hosted 9 cohorts with a total of 344 students and 44 advisors. There were 160 ideas submitted from which 90 business model canvases and 28 business plans were created. Ran two competitions through the platform: The COVID-19 Ideas Challenge and the Blockchain Entrepreneurship Challenge. Received extremely positive feedback from both the contestants and the judges for those challenges. Many partners leveraged the platform with support from the McNair Institute, including the UofSC/Columbia Technology Incubator, SC Small Business Development Centers, SCRA, Faber Entrepreneurship Center, SC Blockchain, Rozalynn Goodwin/Liberty Fellows Project, Georgetown Innovation Center, and the Beaufort Digital Corridor.</p> <p>Initiated a regular newsletter that has been well received with a mailing list of over 1,500 recipients.</p> <p>Provided support to, and strengthened relationships with, a number of entrepreneurship and free enterprise-focused organizations including the Faber Entrepreneurship Center, the Kennedy Pharmacy Innovation Center (KPIC), the USC-Columbia Incubator, 1 Million Cups (Kauffman Foundation Initiative), Digital Health Southeast (DiHSE), the South Carolina Research Authority (SCRA), the South Carolina Department of Commerce Office of Innovation, the Young America's Foundation, the Foundation for Economic</p>

	Education, and others.
Resources Utilized	McNair Institute resources were heavily leveraged in collaborated with our many partners. We leveraged a \$60,000 grant from the S.C. Department of Commerce for our work with the StartupWind online platform.
Goal Continuation	Ongoing.

Goal Upcoming Plans	Grow the scalable, online StartupWind platform at UofSC to support entrepreneurs from early ideation through a growing new venture. Continue to engage a community of advisers that are willing to support entrepreneurs through a scalable, online platform. Continue to strengthen relationships and engagements with other synergistic organizations through a range of collaborations.
Resources Needed	In addition to ongoing support from UofSC and the McNair Foundation, the McNair Institute will need additional funds to support software licensing fees and administration of new online tools. These funds are anticipated to come from grants and contracts.
Goal Notes	Supporting entrepreneurs is inherently "hands on" and labor intensive. UofSC has a strong network of faculty, staff, alumni, domain experts, advisers and others who can support our entrepreneurial community. We have started to have a major impact on entrepreneurship at UofSC by implementing scalable systems like StartupWind, together with scalable processes that allow us to efficiently connect advisers and other resources with entrepreneurs and aspiring entrepreneurs. The entrepreneurial ecosystem of UofSC can be complicated to navigate for students and entrepreneurs that are new to the area. With strong relationships across UofSC, the State of South Carolina, nationally, and internationally, the McNair Institute is in a strong position to help UofSC entrepreneurs optimize the evaluation, development and growth of their new ventures.

Goals - Real Time

Goal 3 - Increase the worldwide reputation of UofSC as a thought leader in entrepreneurship and free enterprise education and support.

Goal Statement	The field of entrepreneurship is being developed rapidly on a global scale as new ventures and free enterprise markets play an ever more important role in national wealth creation and job growth. The talent, ideation and competition in entrepreneurship education and support is undeniably distributed across the globe. UofSC is well positioned as a recognized leader in this space through its compelling offerings, cutting-edge initiatives, and national and international relationships and partnerships.
Linkage to University Goal	<input type="checkbox"/> Educating the Thinkers and Leaders of Tomorrow <input type="checkbox"/> Assembling a World-Class Faculty of Scholars, Teachers, and Practitioners <input type="checkbox"/> Spurring Knowledge and Creation <input type="checkbox"/> Building Inclusive and Inspiring Communities <input type="checkbox"/> Ensuring Institutional Strength, Longevity, and Excellence
Alignment with Mission, Vision, and Values	By continually providing globally-recognized thought leadership in the space, the McNair Institute will help develop the strongest possible entrepreneurial leaders.
Status	Progressing as expected (multi-year goal)
Action Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to engage and facilitate world class partnership boards to advise and support entrepreneurship and free enterprise initiatives at UofSC. • Expand and strengthen partnerships with a global network of institutions to ensure UofSC is on the forefront of entrepreneurship and free enterprise education and support. • Continue to host meetings and events that position UofSC as a clear thought leader in entrepreneurship and free enterprise.
Achievements	<p>Continued to actively engage the McNair Partnership Council of 25 seasoned entrepreneurs and advisors. In addition, spoke with over 100 alumni and entrepreneurship leaders excited to support UofSC entrepreneurs, setting the stage for a robust, diverse, and vibrant support network.</p> <p>Continued to actively engage the McNair Student Advisory Council of 15 students who committed at least 10 hours of service to our efforts and were strong advocates for entrepreneurship and free enterprise education and support at UofSC.</p> <p>Strengthened ties and collaborated on course content, teaching methods, entrepreneurship support, and ecosystem development with a number of national and international organizations in the United States, Asia, Europe, the Caribbean, and South America.</p> <p>Hosted a number of meetings to position UofSC as a clear thought leader in entrepreneurship and free enterprise. Posted an online course on Intellectual Property in collaboration with StartupWind and Draper University.</p>
Resources Utilized	Primarily McNair Institute resources with some external support.
Goal Continuation	Ongoing.

Goal Upcoming Plans	<p>Define and engage Partnership Board working groups to support our initiatives in a more focused and sustained way.</p> <p>Continue to leverage the Student Advisory Council in specific initiatives, particularly in ing student awareness and engagement in events, communities, clubs, and initiatives.</p> <p>Refine our partnership strategy with national and international organizations at that optimizes both the strength and reputation of UofSC in entrepreneurship and free enterprise education and support.</p> <p>Host meetings and events to position UofSC as a clear thought leader in entrepreneurship and free enterprise, including the invitation-only, annual McNair Innovation and Free Enterprise Summit.</p>
Resources Needed	Primarily McNair Institute resources with some external support.
Goal Notes	<p>An engaged group of seasoned practitioners, domain experts, and students of entrepreneurship and free enterprise helps the McNair Institute focus its efforts on the most impactful initiatives. Bringing a diverse group together to provide input from a wide range of perspectives has helped to ensure that the Institute is capturing a fully inclusive, cutting-edge, optimized perspective for its strategic planning. Engaging on a global scale, in a very focused and strategic way, has enabled us to optimize both the strength and reputation of UofSC in entrepreneurship and free enterprise education and support.</p>

Goals - Looking Ahead

Goals - Looking Ahead

No goals have been entered for this section.

Programs or Initiatives

Effective Programs or Initiatives

List your most effective programs/initiatives toward fulfillment of mission.

- University-wide, entrepreneurship harmonizing meetings.
- Entrepreneurship and Innovation Living Learning Community (LLC).
- McNair Entrepreneurship Showcase.
- StartupWind online entrepreneurship support platform.
- Curriculum development to enable online, flipped classroom and asynchronous learning.

Program Launches

List any programs/initiatives that were newly launched during the Academic Year or any programs/initiatives you would like to launch in the coming year(s). Describe the program/initiatives, provide financial requirements (including additional staff), and Academic Year in which you would launch. What key performance indicators are you utilizing to track the success of this program?

We have initiated a migration of our core Entrepreneurism and Free Enterprise Course to be taught fully online.

Program Terminations

List any programs that were newly terminated or discontinued during the Academic Year. Provide justification as to why the program was discontinued

N/A

Program Rankings

List any nationally ranked or external recognition during the Academic Year. For each, provide the formal name of the program followed by the name of the organization that issued the ranking, the date of notification, effective date range, and any other relevant information.

N/A

Initiatives and Fees

Initiatives

Describe any new initiatives your unit will need for the coming year.

Fees

List any new or changed fees that your unit has implemented or had to take on in the last academic year.

Community Engagement

Community Perceptions

Describe how your unit assesses community perceptions of your engagement, and how the unit assesses the impact of community engagement on students, faculty, community and the institution. Provide specific findings.

The McNair Institute partners closely with a wide range of entrepreneurs, economic developers, for-profit and not-for-profit corporate executives, academics, public servants, service providers and consultants. The Institute drives a large number of interactions between the broader community and our students, faculty and staff. These include experiential learning programs, internships, mentoring relationships, project collaborations, and other similar engagements. The McNair Institute records both the quantity of community engagements as well as the quality. In this past academic year, the McNair Institute documented 225 student engagements with the entrepreneurial community that were directly enabled by our team. The Institute facilitating events that resulted in more than 2,000 individual engagements within the entrepreneurial community. Survey feedback and other direct feedback indicates that these engagements were of the highest quality and had a significant impact. The quantitative engagement metrics and anecdotal feedback and testimonials have all been extremely strong and we continue to focus on community engagement as a key element of our strategic plan.

Collaborations

Internal Collaborations

List your Unit's most significant collaborations and multidisciplinary efforts that are internal to the University. Details should be omitted; list by name only.

Educational content and pedagogy collaborations with the College of Arts & Sciences, Darla Moore School of Business, Faber Entrepreneurship Center, Center for Marketing Solutions, College of Engineering and Computing, College of Nursing, College of information and Communications (School of Journalism and Mass Communications as well as School of Library and Information Science), School of Music, School of Law, College of Pharmacy, Kennedy Pharmacy Innovation Center, Arnold School of Public Health, College of Social Work, South Carolina Honors College, Center for Teaching Excellence, Rhodos Living Learning Community for Information, Design, and Computing, and others.

Ecosystem development and event collaborations with the Office of the Provost, Office of Economic Engagement, Technology Commercialization Office, Alumni Association, Career Center, University Housing / Residence Life, Information Technologies, the Office of Equal Opportunity Programs, Title IX, Enterprise Risk Management and Insurance, Office of Communications and Public Affairs, UofSC Legal Counsel, SC Entrepreneurship Club, Business Fraternities, McNair Institute Student Advisory Council, and others.

External Collaborations

List your Unit's most significant collaborations and multidisciplinary efforts that are external to the University. Details should be omitted; list by name only.

Educational content, pedagogy, ecosystem development and event collaborations with South Carolina Research Authority (SCRA), Department of Commerce Office of Innovation, USC-Columbia Incubator, Harbor Accelerator (Charleston), Next Innovation Center (Greenville), Richland Public Library, Foundation for Economic Education (FEE), United States - China Intellectual Property Institute, Clemson University, Medical University of South Carolina (MUSC), The Citadel, Midlands Technical College, Stanford, Cornell, New York University, City University (Hong Kong), Chinese University of Hong Kong, University of Aruba, ESSEC Business School (Singapore Campus), University of Mannheim (Germany), Escola Brasileira de Administração Pública e de Empresas (Brazil), University of Auckland, EMLyon (France), Tech City Cayman Islands, McNair Institute Partnership Council, Digital Health Southeast, Open Source 101, Women's Business Center of South Carolina, and the McNair Centers at Houston Baptist University, University of St. Thomas, Rice University, Northwood University, and others.

Experiential learning collaborations with Bloomberg, Prudential, IBM, Nephron Pharmaceuticals, East Agile (Vietnam), Consensys, and others.

Campus Climate and Inclusion

Campus Climate & Inclusion

Activities the unit conducted that were designed to improve campus climate and inclusion.

The courses, curricula, and events developed and run by the McNair Institute are specifically design to be inclusive and compelling to students from a wide range of personal and academic backgrounds. We also include within our events activities and discussions specifically on the topic of diversity and inclusion.

The McNair Institute continues to recruit a diverse group of people to support our efforts in the Student Advisory Counsel, Partnership Counsel, Academic Harmonizing Group, Living Learning Community (LLC), and other groups and initiatives that we run. According to feedback from the students, our focus on diversity within these core groups has helped to create a welcoming environment for people from a broad range of different backgrounds.

Concluding Remarks

Weaknesses and Plans for Improvement

What is your unit struggling with? What plans do you have to overcome the weakness that you have faced in the next academic year.

The McNair Institute has a small team and only one of the team members (the Faculty Director) has been with UofSC for more than two years. The McNair Institute has received strong administrative support from the Office of the Provost but does not yet have systems and processes in place to effectively utilize University systems for our own Institute administration. There is a strong push to put in place systems and processes that will enable the McNair Institute to run effectively and efficiently.

Key Issues

Identify key issues or potential challenges your unit will encounter this coming year and the steps you plan on initiating.

Entrepreneurism and free enterprise education and support is inherently a "high touch" activity requiring significant time spent with each student or entrepreneur. The McNair Institute still struggles with optimizing the allocation of its limited resources, and particularly the time allocation of its staff, to provide the most impact for the largest number of stakeholders. This is being addressed by (i) putting in place more scalable online systems like StartupWind that allow us to leverage a larger group of advisers and partners more effectively, and (ii) implementing processes that streamline the connection of entrepreneurs and aspiring entrepreneurs to a range of resources. This will enable the McNair Institute staff to spend more time on high-value support activities and initiatives.

Quantitative Outcomes

Explain any surprises regarding data provided in the quantitative outcomes modules throughout this report.

N/A

Cool Stuff

Describe innovations, happy accidents, good news, etc. that occurred within your unit not noted elsewhere in your reporting.

We continue to be excited about the open and collaborative relationships among the various schools, colleges, and organizations at UofSC and elsewhere. We are also excited that our reputation for thought leadership in the fields of entrepreneurship and free enterprise continues to grow both within UofSC and more broadly.

We were honored to be asked to serve on the sub-committees addressing two of the UofSC Strategic Priorities in A Path to Excellence: The Best Students and Community Partnerships. This was a lot of work but well worth the effort. We have also been asked to advise and speak at many events at UofSC as well as nationally and internationally. This includes the McNair Institute's first meetings in Brazil (at the request of the Moore School of Business) where we addressed the graduating class of the prestigious International Business Education Alliance (IBEA) and collaborated on entrepreneurship and innovation curricula with the partner institutions for that program from France, Singapore, Germany, Brazil and the U.S.

The curriculum we are developing and teaching, in collaboration with our entrepreneurship colleagues from the various schools and colleges at UofSC, continues to get incredibly positive feedback from the students. This feedback remained remarkably encouraging even after pivoting to an online model due to the COVID-19 pandemic (see feedback examples below).

In addition to our curriculum collaborations with the various academic units, we have been extremely active in collaborating with a broad range of student groups, including the Entrepreneurship Club, the Gamecock Consulting Club, the Business Fraternities, our Student Advisory Council, and the Entrepreneurship and Innovation Living Learning Community. With a focus this past year on more directly supporting individual students, we shifted our sponsorship model away from broadly sponsoring events run by our partners to providing scholarships to individual students to attend those events. The feedback from the students was

amazing (see testimonials below).

The best news for the McNair Institute has been the enthusiastic affirmation from freshmen to Master's-level students.

Here is some feedback on our courses:

"This was easily one of my favorite classes as a UofSC graduate student. Lectures were highly customized and adapted to the needs of the class, and were always filled with engaging discussions and plenty of real world, first-hand examples. The semester project of vetting a potential new business venture helped tie all the classroom concepts together, and even culminated with a mock VC pitch to real investors!" - Ken Alford, Master of Science in Innovative Technology and Entrepreneurial Engineering Student

"The experiences and knowledge gained from this course were imperative in my transformation from a wide-eyed freshman, to a sophomore ready to dive into the business world. This course presents real world practical business knowledge in a way that is informative and highly engaging. It is second to none." Jimmy Marshall, Student and Member of the Entrepreneurship and Innovation Living Learning Community

"[This] has been one of the classes that I've enjoyed and learned the most from in 4+ years at USC, and probably also one of the most impactful on my personal growth and career. As a professor, Dirk was not only engaging but taught the material in such an engaging way that even three hours felt like it wasn't enough. The conversations in class were so through provoking and rich that every time I left with something to think about for the week. As a grad student in my last semester of college and an international student, finding a job after graduation was in the top of my list of priorities for the summer. Now I work with SCRA with their Innovation division and have a position secured after December, and I can confidently say my experience with the class project and being knowledgeable about everything that was discussed in class was what really set me apart from other applicants and got me the job. Thought-provoking, engaging, and bold. Those are the words I would use to describe Dirk, and his class was nothing short of amazing!" – Andre Calderon, Master of Science in Innovative Technology and Entrepreneurial Engineering Student

"I never imagined myself as much of an entrepreneur until I took class with Dr. Dirk Brown. Suddenly my eyes were opened to the many ways that entrepreneurial thinking could help me to get ahead in all aspects of my future career in sport and entertainment management. I'm so grateful to have learned the value of intra-entrepreneurship and how to truly leverage myself as an invaluable member of a company." - Kenzie McCarter, Sport and Entertainment Management Major and Member of the Entrepreneurship and Innovation Living Learning Community

"As a freshman in college, I would never have had the access to the area's most accomplished entrepreneurs and great minds without The McNair Institute and Dirk Brown's class. I learned so much through listening to both success and failure stories and received valuable advice in both entrepreneurship and life that most people pay thousands to hear. I am so grateful for the connections made and the lessons learned, for they will carry on to the rest of school and the chapters after that." - Maggie Siciliano, Student and Member of the Entrepreneurship and Innovation Living Learning Community

"As a mechanical engineering major, this class is outside of the usual kind of class I'd take, but I think it really would be worthwhile for any major. We learned so many different things about starting a business, and Dr. Brown's unique experience coming from an engineering background was absolutely fascinating to learn from." Breanna Spruell, Mechanical Engineering Student

"Dr. Brown's real-world application and enthusiasm for the content made the course informative and engaging. I highly recommend taking a course taught by Dr. Brown at UofSC." Matthew Philpott, MBA Graduate 2020

"The course was one of the most impactful in my curriculum for the MS in Innovative Technology and Entrepreneurial Engineering. Being in a classroom with instructors that know their stuff and have actually lived it makes all the difference."

-Witt Bauknight, Master of Science in Innovative Technology and Entrepreneurial Engineering Student

Here are some testimonials from students to whom we provided support to attend conferences and events:

“By attending events through the generosity of the McNair Institute at UofSC, I learned about various topics pertaining to entrepreneurs such as owning your story, connecting your personal brand to your company and what’s next in technology in SC! ... As a pharmacy student who is interested in owning my own business this experience was invaluable for my professional development!” Alexis Caronis, Pharmacy Student

“UofSC has been an amazing place to learn because of its people from diverse backgrounds. Personally, being from India, I have considered the opportunity of studying abroad to get a global exposure and better understand how to start my own enterprise at some point in future, which will positively impact and influence communities. I am extremely grateful for all of the McNair Institute support and for being part of my growth story!” - Bhanuprakash Kosaraju, Mechanical Engineering Graduate Student

“I have always tried to have an impact on people’s lives while making a change; this is the main reason why I am currently working on an App.... I luckily got to know about this opportunity from the McNair Institute [i.e. support to attend events] which will empower me as a woman in today’s world while helping me network and expand my social circle for tomorrow’s workday.” – Constanza Bruno, Student

“As a PhD student focused on higher education, I am particularly interested in the role colleges and universities play in reaching our most underserved and under resourced areas (e.g. rural communities). The lack of technology infrastructure across our state makes the ability to provide an equitable education experience for all of our students a real challenge. Additionally, I am passionate about providing students numerous experiential learning opportunities and learning about new businesses is one way to help me network to facilitate those experiences. I sincerely appreciate the McNair Institute’s support to attend the SC Summit on IT.” – Theresa Harrison, Education Graduate Student

“Attending the 2019 Growth Summit on behalf of the McNair Institute for Entrepreneurship and Free Enterprise at UofSC was an amazing experience. Learning skills and tips on how to effectively run and grow a business was very inspirational and beneficial to me as a person that is at the very beginning stages of thinking of ideas for potential businesses. Even being in the same atmosphere with some of the best and most innovative thinkers in the community was eye-opening for me.... I am thankful to the McNair Institute for Entrepreneurship and Free Enterprise at UofSC for offering me the opportunity to attend. This is an experience that I will not forget!” - Josh German, Business Student

“As a young woman, born and raised in Columbia, South Carolina, I feel that it is my duty as a student and citizen to educate myself The women present at this [McNair-sponsored] summit and the topics they covered are definitely something not to miss if I want to be a future leader. This is a great opportunity to learn about the field of business, and the impact that women have in paving the way. This opportunity helped me to get tips on networking and equip myself with the tools to empower others in the future. Being in the presence of business-driven individuals sparked a fire in me to pursue my dreams to one day be called their colleagues.” Patricia Stansberry, Pharmacy Student

“Attending [McNair-sponsored events] not only helped me meet even more young motivated individuals but it also allowed me to learn how to work with these individuals to help make a positive difference in this community.” Asia Clark, Student