

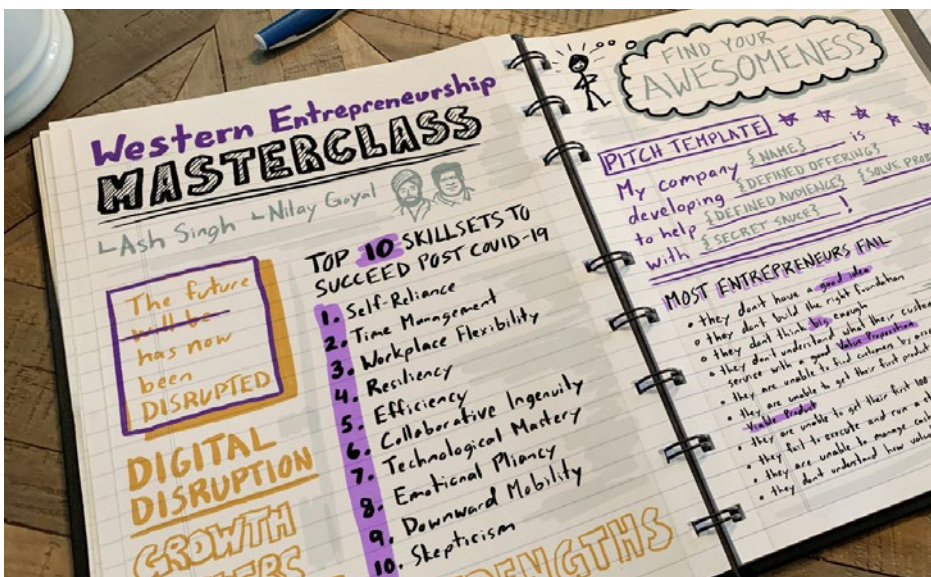
Ivey Entrepreneur

www.ivey.uwo.ca/entrepreneurship

Free virtual masterclass readies thousands of entrepreneurs for future

Jason Winders

The economy may be partially sidelined, but not everyone is sitting idly by waiting for the world to reopen. More than 2,000 Western community members from around the world registered for a six-week virtual masterclass made available for free by Western Entrepreneurship and the Ivey Business School.



ARTWORK CREATED BY FRANK NEUFELD NEUFELDDDESIGNS.COM

It is a success story, organizers say, that stands as a tribute to the campus' entrepreneurial spirit – even in the most difficult of times.

"This feels like a launch of a new business," said Eric Morse, Special Advisor to the

President and Director of Entrepreneurship at Western. "It is an entrepreneurial response to the challenges we are all facing. It was a tight window in which to make this happen. This has been an exciting response by the university."

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InstituteBuzz



InstituteBuzz
By **Eric A. Morse**
Ron and Nancy Clark Chair in Entrepreneurship
Special Advisor to the President and Director of Entrepreneurship
Executive Director, Pierre L. Morrisette Institute for Entrepreneurship

From a worldwide pandemic and economic lock-down, to the outpouring of emotions in protests for justice and equality across the United States, Canada, and beyond – the world has changed dramatically since the last time I addressed you through our Newsletter.

Having spoken to entrepreneurs across Canada, I have heard many of the struggles and difficult decisions they have had to contend with during this season. And when the COVID-19 crisis hit, I wanted to ensure that we were there for our students, alumni and entrepreneurship community.

We rallied our team together to create and collate a host of online resources, and made them easily accessible. We launched a number of new initiatives, including podcasts, expert opinions, internships and weekly webinars on topics relating to entrepreneurship that have been growing more popular with each passing week. We currently engage well over three thousand individuals a week in our programming (not web hits) and hope to raise that number to over five thousand by the time we hit the fall term.

Additionally, we launched a major campus-wide initiative to provide students, alumni, faculty and staff, the opportunity to go through the journey of building a start-up through our course, Master the Entrepreneur Skillset. The course was offered at no cost and over 2700 people responded to the offering. It was an opportunity to do something for our community and it has been rousing success; elevating entrepreneurship across Western.

As we transition to the new normal, I am convinced that entrepreneurs will play a leading role in reigniting our economy, creating jobs and building a better future. To that end, we will continue to find new ways to help our students, alumni and the entrepreneurial community pursue their entrepreneurial dreams, strive for true equality, and help fuel the Canadian, and global recovery.

ACCELERATOR ALUMS RALLY ROUND COMMUNITY DURING COVID-19

Michelle Stanescu & Shanthal Perera

The pandemic has deeply impacted communities across Canada and around the world. Medical professionals have been stretched to their limits, supply chains disrupted, and jobs and livelihoods snuffed out. Our entrepreneurs from the Western Accelerator have stepped up to do what they can to support Canadians through this crisis. From donating products to front-line workers to pivoting their business models, here's how our Western Accelerator alumni are assisting during COVID-19.*

Working for Community

We live in a world of misinformation, and during a pandemic, inaccurate information can be hazardous. Accelerator alumna Sana Mungroo recognized this issue early on. Through her venture Chatitude, Sana partnered with over 20 Members of Provincial Parliament (MPPs) to develop informational websites for Ontarians. Using Chatitude's integrated platform and conversational AI chatbot, MPPs were empowered to create online sites that helped residents easily navigate accurate COVID-19 information.

Founder of Ascend Applications, Ryan Kelly, recognized early on that some Canadians are at a higher risk of contracting COVID-19 due to their health, social and economic circumstances. This realization inspired him to create The Atrium Project, a portal that connects community volunteers to vulnerable at-risk individuals that require assistance to weather the pandemic.

As of June 2020, The Atrium Project has over 200 volunteers and is expanding to Toronto and Ottawa. Ryan is optimistic that people will continue to utilize his platform post-pandemic, as the importance of helping our vulnerable neighbours is not unique to COVID-19.

With the growing importance of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), Erika Oakes of apparel brand Os & Oakes, ran two campaigns to help provide PPE to front-line workers. Through her buy-one, give-one beanie campaign, Os & Oakes donated

175 beanies to front-line workers. Not wanting to stop there, Erika also created fabric masks and facilitated a community campaign that gave 400 masks to healthcare workers.

Refueling Medical Professionals

In Canada and around the world, healthcare systems are overwhelmed. Right now, our

front-line healthcare workers are doing all they can to help COVID-19 patients and minimize the spread of the virus. Even though times are tough for small businesses, our alumni Josh Barr, Amar Gupta and Josh Reding have stepped up to donate products to fuel the front-line.

Josh Barr and Amar Gupta of brüst donated over 7,500 bottles of their protein-packed cold brew coffee to hospitals across the Toronto area. Designed initially as a protein drink to help athletes recover between training sessions, the unique combination of protein and caffeine was a quick solution to give hospital staff an extra boost of energy for long, stressful days.

Additionally, Josh Reding of MakerBars joined the «Fuel the Front-line» GoFundMe campaign with BioSteel Sports Nutrition, nomz, and BIO RAW. The campaigns goal is to fuel nurses and front-line workers with



healthy energy snacks. Four weeks into the drive, the campaign has delivered 15,000 servings to ICU and Emergency teams at Toronto General Hospital, St. Michael's Hospital, and Mount Sinai Health System.

Innovating Business Models to Address COVID-19

For many businesses, the realities of COVID-19 meant possible extinction. Over the past two years, Jenessa and Madison Olson made headlines with their clothing rental venture, STMNT. In March, the Olson sisters were on the brink a significant deal with a large Canadian retailer when the coronavirus hit. Overnight the rental industry was put on hiatus.

Quickly coming to the realization that their industry wasn't coming back anytime soon, they saw a unique opportunity to innovate. They researched and learned that their Ozone equipment (previously used to clean STMNT clothing) could be repurposed as a disinfectant to decontaminate workplace surfaces. With Ozone being highly effective at neutralizing bacteria and viruses, they quickly pivoted their business model and formed a new company Clearzone, a cleaning service to sanitize workspaces. Their venture has now grown to four franchises in Ontario and Alberta.

Another fantastic innovation story comes from alumnus Reid Thornley of Aquatell. When the COVID-19 crisis hit and dwindled N95 and surgical mask supplies, a need for reusable PPE arose. Reid responded to this challenge by partnering with scientific experts Rob Brunet, Dr. Housyn Mahmoud, and Ronald Hall. Together they created SteriSpin™, a solution for mask decontamination. Using multi-layered disinfection of UV light and Ozone, their solution can kill coronavirus strains like SARS and other harmful pathogens on N95 and surgical masks. This disinfectant technology gave front-line healthcare workers the option to reuse personal

protection equipment, which helped reduce shortages and waste generated by disposable masks.

Supporting Families During COVID-19

The concept of social distancing was a real challenge for founder Zach Havens of Miistro.com, who's company relied on connecting local music teachers with eager music enthusiasts.

When the crisis hit, Havens decided to give away free online lessons for a month. "We just saw it as a cool way to serve families and give our teachers an opportunity to do some good," said Havens.

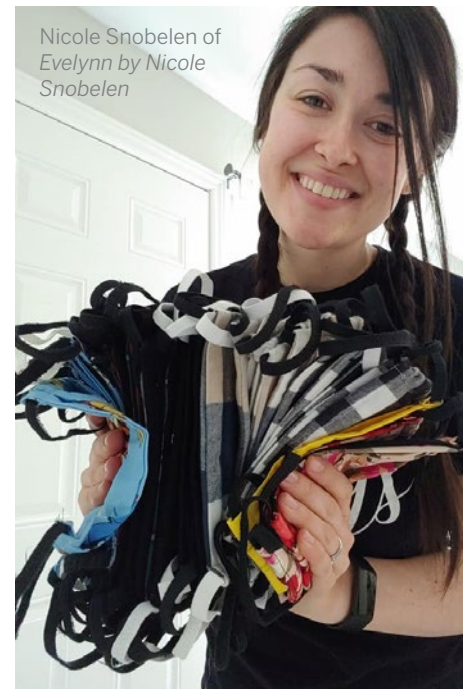
The positive response from students and teachers has prompted Havens to incorporate online music lessons as a primary part of his business post-COVID-19. Additionally, by converting his platform to allow online lessons, Havens opened up his venture to new partnerships. Miistro.com is now partnered with the Southwestern chapter of the YMCA, offering Y-members discounted virtual music lessons.

Similarly, the new COVID-19 restrictions have had significant impacts on people's mental health across Canada. Accelerator alumnus, Morgan Rosenberg, founder of Resili (formerly Supports Health), opened up his mental health platform for all Canadians - free of charge. Resili is a mental health app, bringing leading mental health science to Canadians through simple skills.

Resili is also partnering with SME employers throughout Canada to offer pay-what-you-can mental health, resilience and stress workshops via Zoom for their employees.

Last (but certainly not least), our incredibly talented alumna, Nicole Snobelen of Evelyynn by Nicole Snobelen, has given back to our community. In the first few weeks of COVID-19, Nicole quickly sewed

Nicole Snobelen of Evelyynn by Nicole Snobelen



and donated over 150 cloth masks to St. Francis Advocates essential workers.

However, Nicole's generous spirit did not stop there. Every year Nicole donates her time and expertise to The Abby Fund charity, a yearly fashion show that uplifts the spirits of sick children by designing their dream princess dresses and superhero outfits. However, due to physical distancing restrictions, this year's June fashion show was cancelled.

Ever persistent, Nicole found another way to give back to the foundation. She developed an exclusive, one of a kind clothing collection, where all of the profits were donated to The Abby Fund. Within a few hours, the collection sold out, and a large amount was raised for the foundation.

*Since 2017, students and alumni have participated in the Western Accelerator to pursue their entrepreneurial endeavours. Our accelerator program runs three cohorts each year and is made possible through the support of our community sponsors: Libro Credit Union and StarTech.com.

IVEY ENTREPRENEUR PODCAST

Visit go.ivey.ca/entrepodcast

The Ivey Entrepreneur, will take listeners through the many aspects of being an entrepreneur from tips & tricks, to managing high growth, to family businesses. Our latest episodes include Josh Domingues of Flashfood, Greig Clark of College Pro Painters, and a power panel on high-growth with Anton Rabie of Spin Master, Debbie Fung of YogaTree and Eric Brass of Tequila Tromba.

For more online resources, visit ivey.ca/entrepreneurship



The Master the Entrepreneur Skillset course is designed to introduce its students to the tools and mindset required to succeed as an entrepreneur. Material is delivered via video lecture, as well as through a range of online tools, including 'ask an expert'-style webinars with Western faculty and alumni entrepreneurs.

The six-week course was made freely available (all tuition and fees waived) to the Western community.

It was the right tool at the right time, stressed Ash Singh, HBA'04, Master the Entrepreneur Skillset course instructor.

"Western cares about Canada. We care about economic recovery. But not all of us are nurses or doctors or grocery store cashiers – all those amazing people on the front lines," he said.

"But there are things entrepreneurs can do to be ready. We do not have to wait around. We recognize that once things settle down, there is going to be a need for us. So, instead of watching Tiger King, we are taking time now to upskill ourselves and think about our responsibilities as job-creators in Canada."

The first course cohort of 430 students launched on April 23 with a workshop that generated 280 potential startups. On May 5, a second cohort launched – only with five times as many people.

Morse called the numbers "incredible" – 1,033 alumni, 575 students and 126 faculty and staff, from 36 countries, with business partners and friends also welcome to join. All told, 2,430 people signed up for the course – a number that topped the maximum Zoom limit allowed by an already upgraded license with the popular video-conferencing software.



Our Webinar series spotlights Ivey and Western alumni who are eager to share their lessons learned and entrepreneurial journeys with the community. Visit us online for our archive and a list of upcoming webinars.

"We broke Zoom," Morse laughed. "It's one of those things where you're so excited about it and you start getting notes from the president, your board chair, your dean, your alumni all saying they are excited – then you start to think, 'OK, this better work now.'"

But it has worked – and well – because the campus had invested time and energy in the project for years.

Since 2015, the Pierre L. Morrisette Institute for Entrepreneurship at Ivey has partnered with Singh to give would-be Western entrepreneurs an experience of building a venture within a weekend, turning raw ideas into viable ventures within 48 hours.

Singh's curriculum was developed during his time at the INSEAD Business School in Singapore, where he had relocated after

selling his first startup at age 22. Today, the course has been taught in 18 countries, with more than 200 sessions.

At Ivey, the course has only ever been offered in person. But Morse saw opportunity in taking it virtual.

For three years, Western has been investing in an online platform to deliver the course online. That platform was completed six months ago – just in time for its first test during a global pandemic.

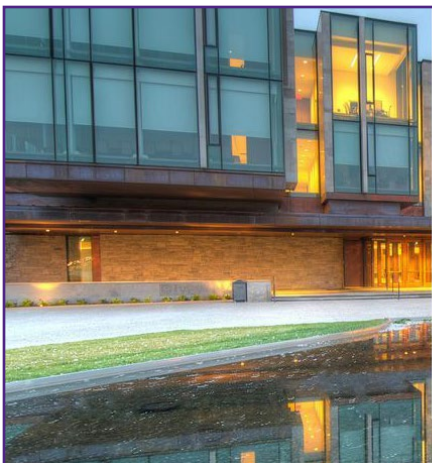
So when the world's businesses shut down due to COVID-19, Morse knew entrepreneurs would be key to reopening the economy – and this course would be key to getting them ready.

Singh has been excited to be part of this real-time response to a global challenge.

"I have never seen a response quite like this. We have more than 2,000 people getting together to increase their entrepreneurial confidence in hopes they can be job creators for Canada. It's a very powerful thing," he said. "This shows me there is a beautiful conversation to be had about Western caring about Canada's prosperity.

"We are in some interesting times right now. The way everything came together for this course is a true sign of the spirit of Western and Western Entrepreneurship."

The success will lead to future cohorts, Morse said, perhaps two or three more, including one focused on incoming students.



MY HOPE IS THAT YOU LEARN WHAT YOU ARE AWESOME AT. I BELIEVE EVERY SINGLE PERSON ON THE PLANET IS AWESOME AT SOMETHING. MY HOPE IS THAT IN THIS PROGRAM, YOU WILL LEARN WHAT YOU ARE AWESOME AT.

ASH SINGH

