

Leap 2021
College of the Canyons



Student Sustainability Initiative Incubator (SSII)
Business Plan

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Executive Summary: Student Sustainability Initiative Incubator (SSII)

The Student Sustainability Initiative Incubator (SSII) is an Idea space where students come together to connect and develop sustainable solutions for community problems.

Opportunity

We currently have an unmet want among students who are inspired to action by the realities of environmental issues. When these students seek to develop their own solutions, we as a college do not yet have a streamlined and readily accessible way for them to turn those ideas into realities by collaborating with other members of the campus community. We have the opportunity to better serve our students and further strengthen our college's role as a necessary steppingstone for students on their educational and career pathways.

Solution

The Student Sustainability Initiative Incubator (SSII) seeks to create a space to grow ideas into action. Bring together entrepreneurial students in an incubator space which provides resources and tools to foster their ideas, encourage network building, and guide these students toward launching their own initiatives.

The SSII space will not only bridge the gap between student's ideas and building them into reality but will also provide a common space for developing friendships. Students will have a place to meet like-minded peers to deepen their connection to the campus community. This sense of belonging will, in turn, bolster their confidence and academic success.

Among SSII's services and resources available for students will be a shared workspace for collaborative meetings, developmental workshops, topical discussions and founder's lunches.

Market

The primary market served by the SSII is the student population at College of the Canyons. These are students with the spark of ingenuity and are looking for the space, resources and community which will allow them to further substantiate their ideas into reality.

We seek to attract active, non-traditional students and those looking to get into the workforce quickly yet prepared securely for their chosen field or vocation. The students who will be drawn to the SSII will be motivated and engaged, with a solution or identified problem that they want to actively solve. Other students will be drawn to SSII to contribute to the solutions developed by their peers.

The secondary beneficiaries of the SSII are community members and companies for whom we are fostering future employees and partnerships. When the next generation of entrepreneurs is supported, we strengthen the futures of local businesses and organizations.

The tertiary entity to benefit from the SSII would be College of the Canyons itself as we seek to boost the rate of positive outcomes for our students through higher student retention, academic achievement and career placement.

Competition/ Proven Model?

No competition among local community colleges. Many local colleges have degrees or certificates in entrepreneurial/business pathways but do not provide a center which can guide students of any major, at any point in their education toward developing their ideas. While degrees and certifications have their strengths, students do not always have the time, need, or interest in completing a degree in business. We know that successful businesses do not necessarily require a business degree /certificate to be held by their founder(s).

There are many similar centers/services offered at UCs and CSUs, SSII will help COC outpace other community colleges, while raising our student services/resources to the standard of many UC/CSUs. SSII will capture the fresh ambition for our students allowing the equitable chance to get their ideas/solutions off the ground regardless of if they start at a 4-year or a community college.

Growth Strategy

SSII will enter the market space of the campus community through partnership with Civic Engagement. We will engage with students with digital messaging and reach out on an individual basis to community members to secure guest speakers and partnerships.

Team

A front desk/technician paid as a short-term or permanent part-time will be necessary to serve as the face of the on-campus SSII center. They will maintain resources within the space, answer SSII correspondence, and arrange guest speakers and events. This position will be needed from Phase 1.

As the center begins to accrue students, we predict the need for guides or mentors. Such a role could be filled much like the role of a tutor by a current COC student with related interest or coursework who will provide business plan assistance, help forming pitch/vision, etc.

Finally, guest speakers will be valuable for hosting events in which our SSII students can glean expert insight on creating startups, launching ideas, and seeking funding.

Financial Projections

Including the physical space, resources, staff, speaker stipends and marketing, the first-year operational costs are estimated at \$31,600.00. In addition to the financial needs for operating the SSII, we have also considered the monetary means for implementing student ideas/solutions. These include community fundraising, scholarships and grants.

Business Pitch

The Student Sustainability Initiative Incubator (SSII) is an idea space where students come together to connect and develop sustainable solutions for community problems.

Problem/Need:

Students are often moved by realities of environmental issues to develop their own solutions yet have no way to turn those ideas into realities.

As a college, we have a duty to nurture student drive and provide direction for their efforts.

We currently have no way to capture and carry enthusiasm from students presenting ideas and plans to solve problems they see in their community. Additionally, many students struggle to succeed in their goals in the absence of feeling as though they belong within the campus community.

Solution:

The Student Sustainability Initiative Incubator (SSII) seeks to create a space to grow ideas into action. Bring together entrepreneurial students in an incubator space which provides resources and tools to foster their ideas, encourage network building, and guide these students toward launching their own initiatives.

The student incubator space will not only bridge the gap between student's ideas and building them into reality but will also serve as a center in which students can build new friendships while going after their goals. Students will have a place to meet like-minded peers to deepen their connection to the campus community. This sense of belonging will, in turn, bolster their confidence and academic success.

Among the incubator's materials and activities to be available for students are a common workspace where we could hold workshops focused on developing pitches, business plans and funding proposals. The SSII would also offer weekly topical discussion prompts along with physical resources such as computers, reference texts, and calendar of relevant community events. On-campus events held by the SSII would include group gatherings such as meet and greets with guest speakers, topical film discussions, and founder's lunches.

Target Market

The primary market served by the SSII is the student population at College of the Canyons. These are students with the spark of ingenuity and are looking for the space, resources and community which will allow them to further substantiate their ideas into reality.

The secondary beneficiaries of the SSII are community members and companies for whom we are fostering future employees and partnerships. When the next generation of entrepreneurs is supported, we strengthen the futures of local businesses and organizations.

The tertiary entity to benefit from the SSII would be College of the Canyons itself as we seek to boost the rate of positive outcomes for our students. The positive outcomes here are two-fold. First, we will see higher rates of student retention and academic achievement among the students who feel a greater sense of community support while on campus and therefore are more confident and productive on the path to earning their degree or transferring to another higher-education institution. The second positive outcome is the possibility of career placement by way of community collaboration facilitated through the SSII.

Market Dimensions

The broad market is every student, former or future that will attend College of the Canyons. As a community college, we attract doers. Active, non-traditional students and those looking to get into the workforce quickly yet prepared securely for their chosen field or vocation. Specifically, the students that will be drawn into the SSII programs and events will be motivated and engaged, with a solution or identified problem that they want to actively solve. Other students may be drawn to SSII because they want to be a part of something – work on a “real world problem and find a real-time solution” to a community problem or issue. Due to COVID, many students have fallen away, and yet seek to be reignited – these students too are potential SSII participants.

Students are more apt to more fully participate in all classes when they are engaged in a student-centered project – giving gas to the drive to see their potential actualized.

College of the Canyons has 20,850 full and part-time students – more than twice the California state average for a community college. Community college is an incubator in and of itself, in that it is a real place and time for students to seek, try, risk and discover who they are, what they are capable of and how big they can grow their vision.

Participation SSII in programs and events is not limited to courses of study, particular majors or vocational all students are welcomed, all ideas can potentially be pursued and there is a role for every ability and experience level.

Competition

There are currently no similar programs at Moorpark, Antelope Valley, or Pierce so there is no immediately local competition among community colleges. Many local colleges have degrees or certificates in entrepreneurial/business pathways but do not provide a center which can guide students of any major, at any point in their education toward developing their ideas. While degrees and certifications have their strengths, students do not always have the time, need, or interest in completing a degree in business. We know that successful businesses do not necessarily require a business degree /certificate to be held by their founder(s).

We see that entrepreneurial efforts are held as important by other community colleges in the area as we see entrepreneur summer camps held for high schoolers via Rio Hondo. Santa Monica college has previously offered scholarships for entrepreneurs and hosted guest speakers on the subject. Long Beach City College has a partnership with a local entrepreneurial center but lacks the on-campus center to immediately meet students where they are. Mission College has provided a training series in the form of a 2-day workshop offered twice in the summer of 2019 but does not have a space to house these services in an on-going basis other than a website that aggregates some of the resources related to the training series. Mt. Sac has offered webinars featuring guest speakers on an array of business topics, but the focus was more on accounting, supply chain and management rather than on start-ups.

The most similar services found at another community college in our county is at Los Angeles Southwest College (LASC) which has a Virtual Entrepreneur Networking Alliance (VENA). VENA provides is a webpage that mentions a guest speaker webinar event with discussion and breakout rooms to guide students to develop business solutions. When exploring the webpage however, one finds that the most recent webinar was in December of 2020 and there do not appear to be any further scheduled event nor do the clickable links for resources and networking appear to be substantive or maintained.

Many local colleges have seen the value in attempting to foster entrepreneurial energy in students but there is not yet a physical space to make business solution resources and networking available to students throughout the school year.

As there is no comparable service at other community colleges in our region and as there are many similar centers/services offered at UCs and CSUs, rather than see our center as having competition, it is more accurate to see our center as providing equity in service to students seeking to get a solution off the ground in their first few years of college. This center will help keep community college students on par with their peers who started at a 4-year. Additionally, we provide a steppingstone so once our students get to their transfer institution, if that is their path, they can resume their goals instead of having to wait to get started.

In short, SSII will help COC outpace other community colleges, while raising our student services/resources to the standard of many UC/CSUs. SSII will capture the fresh ambition for our

students allowing the equitable chance to get their ideas/solutions off the ground regardless of if they start at a 4-year or a community college.

Marketing/ Growth Strategy

Our initial strategy for market entry and growth comprises of leveraging colleges existing resources. We will explore availability of office space and engage the ASG club membership through student emails, campus announcements and messaging for interest. The SSII center will partner with the Civic Engagement and Santa Clarita Environmental Education Consortium efforts on and off campus to jointly advertise and coordinate events. We will also engage the entrepreneur centers at COC, SBDC resources, and educational programs to provide a synergy of service. This will provide an opportunity for joint marketing through social media advertisement for both current/prospective students, and the community at large. Media post can incorporate short video clips, invitation to events and highlighting success stories.

To engage student participation, the SSII center will focus on bringing relevant and interesting speakers to aid in project design; “TED talk” type of knowledge sharing; mentor day on specific topics to formulate their ideas; and a forum to pitch their idea/concern to the community for possible funding. In addition, challenges can be brought from the community to the SSII center for solutions. Other college resources will be deployed such as e-portfolio Pebble Pad, Jobspeaker, and LinkedIn Learning for idea fruition.

The SSII model for success is to study and utilize the already identified accomplished student business incubators across the nation as a resource. The center will attract and recruit a motivated advisory and volunteers with different areas of expertise. It will start small and grow through managed expectations. The approach is not unique however, successful projects that fosters the student and serves the community is the objective. We are joining the standard set by UCs/CSUs and top tier schools. Student solution presentations at the Valley Industry Association (VIA) and/or the Chamber will generate continued community support.

A potential identified barrier is resistance among students regarding deeper campus engagement. How do we inclusively draw them in and meaningfully engage students regardless of background and academic progress? Awareness of the opportunity without restriction marketed through clubs, faculty and provide information for Student and Career Services about the SSII center.

Proposed Staffing/Center Team

Phase 1, required **Title** front desk/technician **Employment Type** short-term or permanent part-time **Roles/Value** Is the face of the on-campus SSII center. Will serve to maintain resources within the space (equipment, supplies, ordering to replace or add to materials on hand). Answers

emails and phone calls directed to SSII. Seeks out and arranges guest speakers and events.
Background No required degrees for minimum qualifications, could aim for someone with related experience or some previous coursework in business/marketing.

Phase 2, non-essential but nice to have- **Title** volunteer guides/mentors **Employment Type** Volunteer, possibly a student worker **Roles/Value** serve as guides or tutors to provide business plan assistance, help forming pitch/vision, etc. **Background** current COC student with related interest or coursework

Phase 3, supplemental to enhance SSII services: **Title** Guest Speakers **Employment Type** N/A, one time basis **Roles/Value** Give expert insight on creating startups, launching ideas, and seeking funding. Could be part of workshops/seminars **Background** Current in-career entrepreneur, would be great to have COC alumni

Financial Projections

Resources	Cost	Total Cost (Launch & 1st year operation)
Space (use existing)	none	0
Computer	\$500	\$500.00
Office Supplies	\$250	250.00
Support Staff:	25% time, hourly staff @ \$22/hour* 30 weeks	\$6,600.00
Memberships**	\$500/year	500.00
Faculty Lead	10 Hours a week. * \$80/ hour* 30 weeks	\$24,000.00
Guest Speakers	\$500	500.00
Marketing (shirts, brochures, mailings)	\$500	\$500.00
Total Cost:		\$31,600.00

**Memberships refers to subscriptions to newsletters, services and attendance to conferences that would support students/staff in the SSII

Supporting Costs Associated with Students Projects:

There will be additional costs associated with the specific ideas the students propose. It is hard to estimate those until we have some ideas to work with. However, there are many avenues for students to solicit funds to support their projects, including but not limited to:

1. Fund raising, crowdfunding, friends and family
2. Grants from multiple sources including HERFE, The COC Foundation, ASG, and other sources
3. Sponsorships from the local business community

Supplementary Materials

Table of Current Similar Centers

School	Similar Center	Guest Speakers	Mentors	Workshops
Harvard	Innovation Labs	x	x	x
Georgia Tech	Create-X	x	x	x
Penn State	Venture Lab	x	x	x
USC	Marshall/Greif Incubator	x	x	x
UC Davis	Student Startup Center	x	x	x
UC Irvine	ANTrepreneur Center	x	x	x
UCLA	Startup-in-a-Box	x		x
UC Merced	Venture Lab	x	x	x
UC Santa Barbara	CNSI Incubator	x	x	
UC Riverside	ExCITE		x	
UC Berkeley	SkyDeck		x	x
UC Santa Cruz	Startup Sandbox		x	x
UC San Diego	StartR	x	x	x
UCSF	Catalyst Program		x	
Multiple UCs	Citrus Foundry	x	x	x
Multiple UCs	Launch Accelerator	x	x	x
San Diego State	ZIP Launchpad	x	x	x
CSU Fullerton	Startup Incubator	x	x	x
CSUN	Innovation Incubator	x	x	x

Table of examples of student incubators and accelerators available at UCs, CSUs, and other schools. The x indicates whether the listed service was mentioned on the center's website. The service columns were chosen to reflect the most commonly offered services. Centers in the table include both those with physical spaces and those that are simply an aggregate of services available with no set meeting space.

Logo, Description and Logo Rationale



Our logo is a stylized version of the acronym “SSII” for Student Sustainability Initiative Incubator. The logo has 5 key elements each conveying a specific aspect. The letters “SSII” are the first and most important aspect in that it directly initiates the name of the center. Second is the emphasis of the center two letters to guide the reader/viewer to the preferred acronym pronunciation to sound like “Si” which is the Spanish word for “Yes” and serves to convey the can-do attitude we hope to inspire in our students. A third key element is the stylized dot on the first “I” to look like both a leaf and the accent mark in “Si”. The leaf shape combined with element 4 which is the color, work in tandem to illustrate the focus on sustainability. Lastly, the design choice of nesting the two “I’s” together with a white outline after the first results in the illusion of a silhouette of three figures. This artistic element was selected to convey the collaborative teamwork we wish to see in students with the SSII center.