2014 has proven productive for the Haile/US Bank College of Business Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship. Since the launch of the newly rebranded center, many new programs have begun their journeys to make a significant difference in students’ college careers. The year began with Chellgren Pathways to Entrepreneurship Speaker Series where Professor Catherine Neal spoke at NKU. INKUBIZ, the newly created program that allows students to work on real projects for real companies, is fully under way after its summer launch. August 8th, The INKUBATOR held its third annual Final Presentation Day at The Digitorium in Griffin Hall. CIE also hosted a very successful NKU Jumpstart weekend for high school students. The INKUREKA Program was launched; this program will give students the opportunity to bring their ideas to life as well as providing resources and knowledge to inspire student entrepreneurship.

Chellgren Pathways to Entrepreneurship

The year started by bringing students and business community leaders together through the Chellgren Pathways Entrepreneurship Speaker Series. Catherine Neal, a Northern Kentucky University associate professor of ethics and business law, spoke on the power of asking questions in the most recent Chellgren event.

Teaching about former Tyco International CEO Dennis Kozlowski, Neal felt pieces of his story were missing and there were more questions she had than answers. Writing a letter to Kozlowski, she posed her questions to the former CEO to which he unexpectedly responded. Agreeing to answer her questions from his prison cell in upstate New York; Neal’s one page letter turned into a well-researched book.

Neal showed the value of asking questions and pulled back the curtain for an unfiltered view of corporate America.
NKU Jumpstart

Entrepreneurially minded high students from 15 schools across northern Kentucky/Greater Cincinnati came together for a weekend long program on NKU’s campus to take a business idea and learn how to validate it. Students were given the opportunity to stay on campus and experience life as a college student. Throughout the weekend, students had several opportunities to connect and build relationships with not only their peers, but also NKU undergrads, alums, and leaders from the business community.

Students spent 72 hours working together on ideation, team building, customer validation, and their final presentations. “I was incredibly impressed by what a group of high school students (who had never met) were able to accomplish,” said Tim Metzner, an external mentor for NKU Jumpstart. “I walked in without much expectation but walked away thinking the future of our startup ecosystem is in great shape.”

Mentors weren’t the only ones impressed by the work accomplished; the judges also appreciated the impact shown by the scope of effort. “I’ve judged a number of startup events,” said Tarek Kamil, serial entrepreneur and founder of Cerkl, “and these high school students were as prepared and professional as the adults.”

Jumpstart also provided the opportunity for students to gain experience. Riley Meyerrattken, a participant in NKU Jumpstart said, “It was truly one of the most enriching and enlightening experiences I have ever had!”
Beginning summer 2014, the INKUBIZ program brought together a group of elite students from across campus and paired them up with NKU faculty and staff to work on multiple projects for small businesses and startup companies in the community.

The program gives students a unique opportunity to take on real projects with real companies, separating INKUBIZ from a part time job not linked to a student’s major or minor of study.

Many small businesses and startups do not have the time, skills, or expertise to properly train current or new employees. Wanting to give these students the opportunity to put themselves ahead of their peers after graduation and succeed not only in the classroom, but beyond NKU, the CIE works to impact both the campus and community.

Renae Crouch, a marketing student and copywriter with INKUBIZ, was one of the hand-selected students chosen for the program.

“INKUBIZ is a great chance for me to make myself stand out from everyone else once I graduate and look for a job,” Crouch says.

“I can say: ‘This is what I’ve done, these are the companies I’ve worked for, and this is why you should hire me instead of someone else’” stated Renae Crouch.
The **INKUBATOR** continues to grow and exceed expectations. In just its third year, the accelerator program was ranked internationally, students from every college on campus submitted applications, continual milestones/successes of INKUBATOR companies were reported, and the program graduated one of its strongest classes.

In March 2014, The INKUBATOR received applications from students whose majors/minors encompassed all of the colleges at NKU for the first time. Students from the Haile/US Bank College of Business, College of Informatics, College of Arts and Sciences, Chase College of Law, and College of Health Professions all submitted applications to The INKUBATOR in 2014. For the trans-disciplinary program open to all current or recently graduated students at NKU, this proved to be a great milestone.

In the summer of 2014, The INKUBATOR received the results of a benchmark survey comprised by the University Business Incubator Index (UBI Index). UBI Index is the thought leader in performance analysis of business incubators around the world. They help business incubators become more efficient and competitive through a comprehensive benchmark where more than 300 incubators in over 60 countries participate. The INKUBATOR is very proud to report ranking among the top five internationally in the competency development category. Simply put, The INKUBATOR’s curriculum, guidance, and mentorship ranks top five in the world by all college accelerators/incubators.

The INKUBATOR graduated its third class of teams at the third annual Final Presentation day on August 8, 2014 in the Griffin Hall Digitorium. The Final Presentation Day consisted of six companies – TrepStyleMktg, Gamemaster.me, Identify-Eye, LighthousePage, Fateful Games, and Vegy Vida (to read more about each of these companies, visit inkubator.nku.edu). Each company presented where they started when they began the INKUBATOR, the work they conducted throughout the summer, how they developed their business models, and where they are now as the INKUBATOR came to an end. Their audience was a group of NKU faculty and staff, stakeholders, and various business professionals in the community.

Graduates of The INKUBATOR program continue to make great strides. The online platform for collectors, CompleteSet (completeset.com) a 2012 INKUBATOR graduate, received an investment of $650,000 in November 2014. Graduates from the first class have now raised over $1,000,000 in outside funding. This has led to 9 full time and 1 part time job created. Additionally, Vegy Vida anticipates launching their product in grocery stores in March 2015.

The INKUBATOR looks forward to another great year in 2015. The 12 week program will run from May 13 – August 5, 2015 this year.
EY Connect Day

On Friday, September 19, 2014, more than ten professionals from Ernst & Young (EY) LLP’s Cincinnati office visited NKU’s campus to work with an elite group of entrepreneurship students from the Haile/US Bank College of Business. The EY professionals were paired with three teams of students to see who could develop the best plan to increase financing for the Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship (CIE). Entrepreneurship student, Jared Young and his group of EY professionals won the EY Connect Day competition by presenting their ideas on the most effective way to increase cash flow within the CIE. Jared said, “I was ecstatic to have a chance to work with and learn from the EY representatives. Not only was it a tremendous learning experience, it was an honor to be able to work together to create a revenue model that helps the Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship. Especially since they have given so much to me.”

The professionals that visited NKU were part of more than 800 volunteers that donated their time across Greater Cincinnati. When asked why their company created EY Connect Day, Managing Partner Julia Poston stated, “…we’re committed to building a better working world. Our flexible culture and commitment to skills-based volunteering enables EY people to volunteer throughout the year, but EY Connect Day is an opportunity for the office to come together on a single day to strengthen our firm and our community.”

Region’s Entrepreneurs Experienced Intensive Startup Weekend at NKU

Startup Weekend, an event hosted by the Haile/US Bank College of Business Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship (CIE) and the Cincinnati Startup Weekend Chapter, took place November 21 – 23 and brought together entrepreneurs, designers, coders and people with business acumen to pitch their business ideas with the goal to develop an MVP, or minimum viable product, by the end of the weekend. NKU students from the COB, COI, Chase, and College of Arts and Sciences participated. UC, Miami, and Xavier also had students attend the event.

After pitching business ideas the first night, 17 teams formed and completed the weekend. The winning team, Crowdcost, had COI students as part of the team.

Judges and mentors included startup specialists: Avi Ram (ChoreMonster founder and CEO), Chris Bergman, (Ahalogy founder and CEO), Michael Wohlschlaeger (Differential co-founder), Gerard Sychay (Procter & Gamble Global Digital and Brand Assets service leader), Filippo Catalano (Allos Ventures director), Dov Rosenberg and Roadtrippers co-founder John Lauck.

The event was sponsored by CincyTech USA, Cintrifuse, the NKU Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship, the NKU College of Informatics, the Kentucky Innovation Network, UpTech, Northern Kentucky eZone, Taft, and OPM Financial.
NKU Entrepreneurs Win Big

Northern Kentucky University students Jared and Josh Young were awarded prizes in two separate Kentucky business plan competitions. The team of brothers won second place in the business concept division of Idea State U, presented by the Kentucky Cabinet for Economic Development. They also won first place against eight other competitors at the University of Pikeville Startup Challenge. NKU and the CIE are proud of the Young brothers’ accomplishments thus far.

CIE Brings Home Big Accolades at National CEO Competition

Jared Young, an ENTP Major in the COB, competed against students from 57 schools to take first in the Elevator Pitch Competition at the National Collegiate Organization (CEO) Conference last weekend. Among his competition was a student who had won the competition in 2012 and then went on to ABC’s Shark Tank landing a deal with Shark Lori Greiner.

Other winners include Garth Whitaker, president of NKU’s CEO Student Group. Garth, who is also a musician and entrepreneur, was offered a position working for an Artist Manager. An aspiring artist himself, Garth will now have the opportunity for free access to studio time in Orlando.
A pair of startups that have completed the Northern Kentucky University Haile/US Bank College of Business INKUBATOR program took first and second place in the fifth annual 5 Across Finals business pitch competition in Lexington yesterday.

The championship and $4,000 grand prize was won by Gary Darna and Jaime Rump, both NKU graduates, for their presentation of CompleteSet, the company they founded in 2012. CompleteSet is a web and mobile marketplace that helps collectors find the items they want the most. It provides a collector-curated archive of products from fans’ favorite brands. Avid collectors test their knowledge as fans, contributing detailed information about collectibles inspired by popular culture. Members use the archives to catalog their collections and hunt for their next prized possession.

Second place was won by Vegy Vida, a company founded by NKU alumnus Josh Young and his brother, entrepreneurship senior Jared Young. Vegy Vida is a patent-pending all-natural, low-fat veggie dip that encourages children to eat their vegetables by helping to block their bitter taste. The FDA-approved dip comes in a variety of flavors ranging from ranch to pepperoni pizza.

Each 5 Across event features presentations from area entrepreneurs who pitch their ideas to a panel of judges. Each company is given 5 minutes to pitch for the chance to win a cash prize. 5 Across is presented by Awesome Inc. five times per year with a sixth and final competition held in December. The 5 Across Finals event pits previous winners against each other as they compete for a $4,000 grand prize and the title 5 Across champions.

**Overview**

2014 has shown great success and promises more. With new programs like JUMPSTART and INKUREKA taking off, the continued success of The INKUBATOR, and INKUBIZ, the Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship gives students every opportunity to ignite their entrepreneurial and innovative spirit.

**About the CIE**

The Haile/US Bank College of Business Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship at NKU is a driver of educational and professional development opportunities to all NKU students. The center seeks to advance the university’s strategy by fostering cross-campus applied learning and embedding innovative thinking more deeply in the university culture. Built on the belief that students from colleges across campus can all learn from one another, the CIE fosters trans-disciplinary opportunities for applied learning to occur so students can become well-rounded, innovative, and creative thinkers.
2015 CIE Goals

In addition to continuing our existing programs in 2015, here are some of the programs we plan on undertaking:

**INKUGATOR** – incorporates components of both the popular TV series Shark Tank and The Voice, but with a twist specific to our region. INKUGATOR is two events: The first event is where our “celebrity” coaches will select a start-up to coach. The next event will take place after the coaches have had time to work with the companies. The companies will present to representatives (i.e. the gators) of local business accelerators who will offer the companies a spot in their accelerator’s upcoming class.

**Commercialization Makers Space** – Working with partners in Northern Kentucky, the space would help provide a knowledge and resources to enable local makers commercialize their products.

**Bridge Fund** – This program will help support INKUBATOR grads through their funding gap period so that they can continue to build their startup.

**LinkedIn** – Continue to build upon our current and future relationships so that we can communicate to our students, alumni, and entrepreneurial community.

**Health Informatics focused INKUBATOR** – Working with area partners, we will assess the viability of a Health Informatics focused INKUBATOR on NKU’s campus. The program would help commercialize ideas and research that comes out of the health informatics initiative.