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Shocker Startup

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Photo: Lainie Rusco

LaRissa Lawrie, left, Wesley Alexis and Hannah Hund are three of the founders of Shocker Startup, an on-campus group that provides support to entrepreneurial and innovative students.


Student-led entrepreneurship group breaks down barriers, brings new ideas


Friday, October 23, 2015

By Lainie Rusco

This past spring, three Wichita State University students had what they refer to as a "creative collision." Hannah Hund and Wesley Alexis were hanging out in the Rhatigan Student Center Fast Break coffee shop discussing their desire to create an environment where entrepreneurial-minded students could gather, exchange ideas and have a strong support system.

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In walks LaRissa Lawrie, Hund's old high school friend. Lawrie was trying to revive WSU's Association of Collegiate Entrepreneurs group at the time, and it took only a few minutes before the three realized they had similar goals.

"We noticed there was a gap on the student level in innovation involvement, and we all were kind of like, 'Why don't we join forces?'" Lawrie says.

By May, Alexis, Hund and Lawrie had formed Shocker Startup, an on-campus organization that seeks to support entrepreneurial and innovative students and engage them in ongoing creative collisions with other students, faculty and mentors from a variety of university disciplines.

“My goal through Shocker Startup is to prepare students for a world in which they can work for themselves and create new innovations,” Lawrie says.

They want students from all majors to feel included.

“We identified on campus that there are a lot of disciplines that aren’t communicating, so we really wanted to break down that barrier of separated colleges,” Hund says.

An interdisciplinary approach

One of the top missions for Shocker Startup is for students to have the opportunity to brainstorm and work on projects together with people they don’t normally interact with.

The three co-founders are a good example of that diversity. Alexis is a mathematics and psychology major; Hund is a biomedical engineering and violin performance major; and Lawrie is a communication major.

“I think a big part of innovation is interdisciplinary,” Hund says. “You need some different viewpoints to make different ideas.”

If you’re an engineering student and you don’t understand business, for instance, Shocker Startup will make sure someone from the business school can help.

Another goal of the organization includes teaching students about how intellectual property, patent law and nondisclosure agreements work. WSU’s Office of Technology Transfer is working in conjunction with Shocker Startup to educate students on these areas.

Mentorship will also be a key focus of the group. Shocker Startup will connect students to each other and with various faculty members to provide that support.

So far, Shocker Startup has organized three types of ongoing events that help bring its members together.

Connect ICT: In these meetings, people from WSU and the community are invited to present ideas on an organic, communication-centric environment. It’s a way to connect people’s ideas with other people’s skills.

Shocker Startup Impact: This speaker series brings in people who can provide information and inspiration on how to be entrepreneurial in today’s world.

Shocker Startup Saturday: During these events, students are given a “problem” and are tasked with pitching their solution to faculty members, who act as investors. This is a way to help prepare students for events such as WSU’s [Shocker New Venture Competition](#).

For more information on Shocker Startup, check them out @ShockerStartup on Twitter and Facebook.

[This story has been tagged Students, College of Engineering, College of Fine Arts, Psychology, Center for Entrepreneurship, Rhatigan Student Center, Elliott School of Communication, Fairmount College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, Tech Transfer, Innovation. See all RSS feeds here](#)

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Wichita State University | 1845 Fairmount St. Wichita, Kansas 67260 | (316) 978-3456