



## STARTUP Programs

**CONTACT:** Cassandra Rigsby  
OU Startup Programs Director  
[crigsby@ou.edu](mailto:crigsby@ou.edu)  
[ou.edu/innovationhub/startups](http://ou.edu/innovationhub/startups)

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
March 22, 2020

### **Startup Innovation Fund Announces Grant Recipients** *Students and Community Members Receive Initial Funds for Testing*

NORMAN, March 22, 2020—Startup Innovation Fund recently selected 10 finalists to receive grants for business concept testing and development.

Formerly Sooner Innovation Fund, Startup Innovation Fund (SIF) is a 10-week program that provides non-equity grants of up to \$5,000 to test the feasibility and marketability of new or early-stage startup ideas.

While only students remain eligible for these grants, SIF has created new paths for community businesses and university research projects to access funding.

This year, SIF launched a legacy program that enables community businesses and university researchers to apply for funding, so long as the primary applicant is a student with a threshold equity percentage in the business or who holds a certain percentage of control over the project.

“Sometimes the best ideas get to us late or take a bit more time to really find their market,” said Drew Hendricks, OU Startup Programs Lead. “Through the legacy company program, we can give some companies another chance to take advantage of this testing opportunity.”

This funding season marks the first time these types of projects have been able to access SIF grants, creating new testing and prototyping opportunities for early-stage or developing startups.

“We have a number of startups in our Startup Incubator and Start-Hub programs that are either student led or have student members, so participation in SIF testing is the natural next step,” said Cassandra Rigsby, OU Startup Programs Director. “This round of SIF grant recipients perfectly exemplifies what we were hoping to build with the Startup Programs pipeline.”

SIF finalists for this funding season are:

1. Company/Project: Barter  
Name: Saesun Kim, College of Arts & Sciences  
Executive Summary: Current online trading platforms for used items are too complex and have failed to attract a new generation of consumers. Our platform integrates core features that create a simple but engaging service that appeals to younger consumers.
2. Company/Project: GBAS System

Name: Jaxon Taylor, Gallogly College of Engineering

Executive Summary: The aeronautics industry's reliance on old technology creates unnecessary risk for passengers and flight crews when landing. Our technology will make landing easier and safer no matter how perilous the runway or situation.

3. Company/Project: Organ Transplant Innovation

Name: Sam Ton, College of Arts & Sciences

Executive Summary: Nearly 12,000 people in the United States are awaiting a liver transplant, but current pathology testing methods have increased surgical rejection rates of potentially viable livers. Our technology will change the face of pathology testing, increasing the number of viable livers and saving more lives.

4. Company/Project: Overlook

Name: Will Riney, Michael F. Price College of Business

Executive Summary: Covid-19 has wrecked our education systems, leading to a rise in virtual learning. However, many learning management systems (LMS) have overwhelmed parents and teachers, creating too much noise and offering too little support. Overlook presents a new supportive platform that centralizes content from other LMS, making virtual education easier for parents, teachers and students.

5. Company/Project: Raven 3D

Name: Blake Herren, Gallogly College of Engineering

Executive Summary: Current direct ink write 3D printers are expensive and inaccessible for the average consumer. We are developing a less costly alternative that will offer consumers both a better product and experience.

6. Company/Project: Roam

Name: Logan Rust, Michael F. Price College of Business

Executive Summary: Despite Oklahoma's wide-open lands, many hunters struggle to find good hunting grounds because of the poor quality, cost and inconvenience of accessing public options. Roam strives to expand private land access to hunters through private partnerships and strong landowner protections.

7. Company/Project: Safer Veress Needle

Name: Avery Ladymon, Gallogly College of Engineering

Executive Summary: Despite our advancements in medical technology, certain procedures still rely on old methods, but none more so than Veress needle placement. Surgeons lack guidance about where to and how far to insert Veress needles, often leading to laparoscopic injuries. Our technology would change the way surgeons perform this procedure, decreasing the likelihood of these types of injuries.

8. Company/Project: Steadispoon

Name: Jacob Nichols, Gallogly College of Engineering

Executive Summary: More than 10 million people are living with Parkinson's disease worldwide. Many of whom experience tremors that make simple tasks like feeding themselves nearly impossible. Current tremor-correcting utensils in the market are costly

for consumers, but our technology utilizes inexpensive components to provide an affordable alternative. We believe our product could improve the quality of life for millions.

9. Company/Project: STEM FORCE

Name: Sa'Cha Sells, Gallogly College of Engineering

Executive Summary: Low-income and minority students often struggle to access STEM fields because they have fewer educational and hands-on programming opportunities.

STEM FORCE is a nonprofit that manufactures STEM kits to provide K-12 students an experiential learning opportunity that connects classroom education to industry. Our kits offer a more accessible, less costly alternative to current STEM programming, hopefully leading to greater low-income and minority representation in STEM fields.

10. Company/Project: Waterworks

Name: Opal Fraser, Michael F. Price College of Business

Executive Summary: We all need water to survive, but drinking the right amount or even remembering to take a sip is a challenge we have all experienced. Waterworks creates an eco-friendly solution by providing you with water enriched with minerals in the amounts you need every day. We provide designer water designed for you.

###

In November 2020, the Tom Love Innovation Hub launched OU Startup Programs, a collection of programs designed to foster and grow entrepreneurial development at the University of Oklahoma. Purposed with creating good companies and exceptional founders, OU Startup Programs creates a pipeline for startup ventures by connecting University community members to supportive programming that will carry their ventures through the early but critical stages of development. OU Startup Programs comprises four core programs: Start-Hub, Startup Innovation Fund, Startup Accelerator and Startup Incubator.

OU Startup Programs is funded by the U.S. Economic Development Administration, and its programming is supported by the Tom Love Innovation Hub, the Norman Economic Development Coalition and Startup 405. For more information about OU Startup Programs and potential partnership opportunities, contact Cassandra Rigsby at [crigsby@ou.edu](mailto:crigsby@ou.edu).