The Greyhound Blueprint: Hacking Your College Years to Build an Empire
By Cameron Grant

The Blueprint for Your Empire

Scanning through your social media feed, you likely encounter a deluge of "day in the life" vlogs and side-hustle influencers promising a shortcut to success. While getting caught up in that digital daydream seems easy, real-world dividends require a different mindset: "The way to get started: quit talking and begin doing." Walt Disney, the co-founder of The Walt Disney Company, built a global empire on that exact philosophy. Those words serve as the ultimate blueprint for your next four years. Welcome to Loyola University Maryland, Class of 2030! Your degree signifies more than a four-year receipt for a future job; it provides the seed money for an empire you start the moment you step onto the Quad—provided you synthesize academic rigor with entrepreneurial audacity.

Massive amounts of time and capital find their way into your degree starting now. Because it feels safe, you might find temptation in treating college like a passive streaming subscription—sinking into the soft seats of a lecture hall and comfortably consuming content while staying safely inside the lines. Let's speak bluntly: if your plan involves drifting through four years like a passenger on a cruise ship, you effectively set fire to your own tuition. Quit lounging. Hit pause on passive listening and hit play on active building. Instead of merely passing classes, treat this experience as an elite startup incubator.

Low Risk, High Reward: Your Four-Year Window

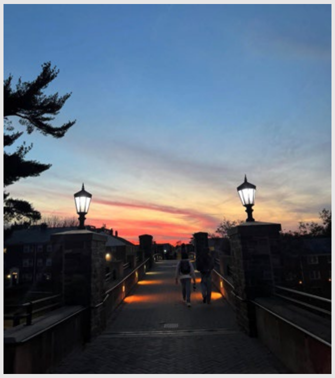
Logically, right now represents the most advantageous time to take calculated risks because your personal risk profile remains razor-thin. Unburdened by crushing corporate overhead, towering mortgages, or dependents, you possess the ultimate freedom to fail forward. Time remains your only major liability. If a venture tanks, financial ruin stays out of the picture; instead, you earn a masterclass in how to maneuver differently next time. Pathos drives the entrepreneurial spirit, but reason dictates that calculated risks find their best home when the safety net stretches this wide. By stepping outside your comfort zone now, you cultivate the resilience required for high-stakes business environments later.

Your Campus Cheat Code: The Simon Center Ecosystem

Scaffolding for your ambition already exists deep within the heart of campus. Loyola functions to help student entrepreneurs scale through the Simon Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship. Perhaps you worry your idea is too unpolished to bring to the experts. Stop that line of thinking immediately. As Prof. Jon Weinstein, Director of the Simon Center, emphasizes: "The earlier you connect with our team the more we can do to help guide you on the right path and link you to key resources and people, on and off campus." Whether you bake cookies, design custom clothing, or develop high-tech apps, the Simon Center wants to see you on day one.

Your entry point into this ecosystem often begins at the Greyhound Pitch Competition. This event functions as an immersive, two-day intensive workshop where you learn to navigate complex problem-solving and master the art of the professional pitch. It acts as a low-risk launchpad, connecting your earliest ideas with expert mentors and the potential for significant grant funding. Ethos finds its footing through proven results, and the success of ACC Industries, consisting of several students, proves that first-year students lead the charge. Three freshmen entered the pitch competition with nothing more than a raw idea for electric vehicle batteries. By engaging the Simon Center immediately, they linked to international EV data executives and secured $55,000 in grants by their sophomore year.

From Syllabus to Scale: Turning Midterms into Milestones



Launching a venture during these years allows your coursework to morph into a vibrant operational playbook. Midterms signify more than hurdles to jump; they represent the source of vital tools used to scale a business. Stop looking at that accounting exam as a boring math test; it functions as a survival guide that teaches you how to keep your future business from bleeding cash. That marketing project represents the DNA of your future brand’s voice. Every time you master a concept in the classroom, you "level up" the operating system of your company. For those pursuing specific niches like real estate, the classroom acts as a high-powered laboratory for market analysis:

"The real estate class I take right now shifted my perspective, especially regarding property development. Since I usually deal directly with buyers and sellers, I hadn't focused on the development side—specifically retail development, which now definitely sits on my horizon. The class also gave me practical tools for evaluating properties and estimating renovation needs. Overall, these business classes directly equip me for future entrepreneurial ventures." – Sebastian Zelaya (Class of 2028)

Entrepreneurship does not require a business degree, but it demands a business mindset. Whether you study Biology to patent a new lab tool or Fine Arts to open a gallery, you represent an entrepreneur. While you do not need "Business" on your diploma to start, possessing a basic understanding of finances acts as the armor that protects your creative vision. One might possess the talent of a world-class artist, but without understanding the business of art, the venture never scales.

The Alumni Algorithm: Tapping into the Greyhound Network

Loyola alumni stand fiercely loyal and genuinely want to see fellow Greyhounds cross the finish line. Seasoned guides wait for your message through digital hubs like Loyola Connect and the Rizzo Career Center. Consider the story of one Disney alum who landed her dream role by ditching the standard application process. She used her Loyola connections to find a mentor within the Disney parks. By asking for insight rather than a job, she built a relationship that eventually led to a personal recommendation. That network already wants you to win.

Beyond digital platforms, Loyola facilitates real-world connections through hands-on academic treks. Consider the Customer Experience Management (CXM) course, which culminates in a study tour to Walt Disney World in Orlando, the global heavyweight champion of the field. Backstage access to operations allows students to absorb wisdom directly from Disney professionals. During this trip, Loyola student Eliana Pearce connected with an alum making magic at the company. Reflecting on how the course shattered her career horizons, she noted that "hearing the perspective of someone in an entertaining yet business-focused environment like Disney inspired me and shifted my view on where a degree leads."

The Entrepreneurial Edge: Mastering the "Tax Glitch"

Steering your own ship also harbors a massive financial upside that most students ignore: strategic tax advantages. Logically, when operating a legitimate business, necessary and ordinary expenses find their way into deductions from your overall revenue at year-end. While it does not make expenses magically vanish, it acts like a financial "glitch" that aggressively shrinks your taxable income. Mastering this terrain empowers founders to lower their liability and inject those savings straight back into the veins of their growing venture.

The First Rep: Connecting to Create Waves

Your mission over these four years: connect and create waves. Surrounded by world-class faculty and shielded by innovation centers, you possess an army eager to invest in your potential. Sparks of inspiration often come from peers who walked in your shoes. Stepping into the arena gets easier with practice, as one current first-year student, Connor Baucom explained: "In terms of networking, at first I hesitated because I thought I might slip up and not know what to say. But starting and getting more reps help. My advice: express your true self, because it flows much easier, and people can tell when you try to act like someone else."

Find a friction point. Build a solution. Unleash the Greyhound network to scale it. Do not sit in the stands waiting for the future to happen. As Walt Disney said: Quit talking and begin doing. True financial freedom signifies more than hoarding pennies; it represents building value from the ground up.