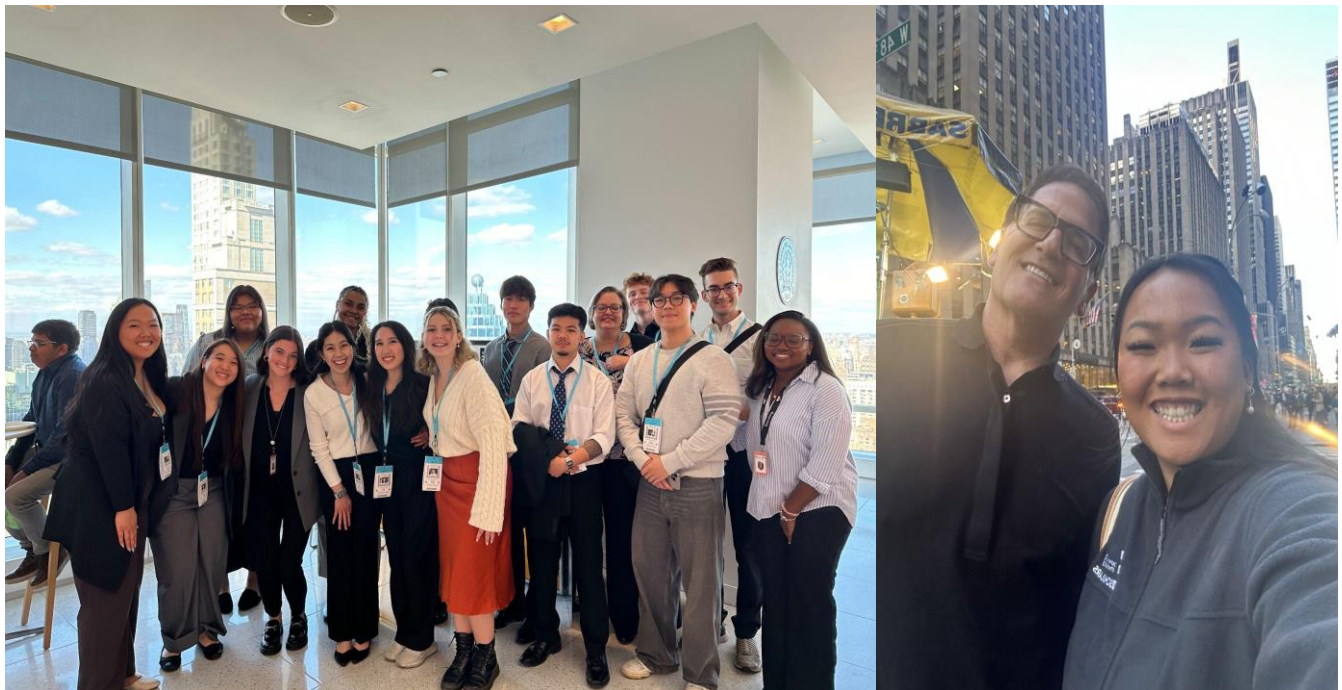


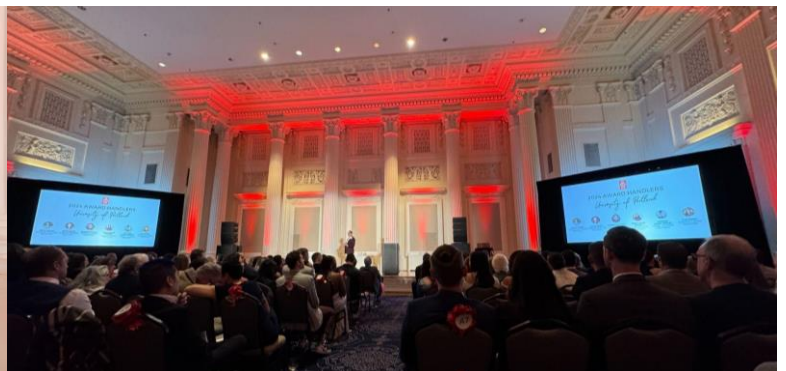
E-Scholars 2024-2025 Program Highlights

2024–2025 marked an exciting new chapter for the E-Scholars program. Jon Down returned to lead the program—having previously directed it from 2007 to 2013—and now serves as the Director of the Franz Center of Entrepreneurship and the E-Scholars Program. This year’s revitalization focused on deepening the student experience by emphasizing the journey of discovering, developing, and refining their venture ideas, while also leveraging our extraordinary network of E-Scholar alumni and supporters. A special note of appreciation goes to Lisa Reed, who co-taught the program alongside Jon and brought invaluable insight, energy, and mentorship to our students. The E-Scholars program would not be possible without the generous support of our donors, whose commitment empowers us to deliver a transformative entrepreneurial experience for our students. We are also grateful to Ryan Dalton, Alec Kauffman, Mike DeVaughn, and many others whose ongoing contributions help sustain and grow this vital initiative. As we continue working to expand innovation and entrepreneurship across campus, we’re excited to share some of this year’s highlights.

- **Fall Break New York City Trip:** During this experience, students immerse themselves in industries, from finance to tech startups, and engage in meetings with established entrepreneurs, venture capitalists, and industry leaders that the students set up. They gain invaluable insights into market dynamics, trend analysis, and the unique challenges and opportunities within a major metropolitan entrepreneurial ecosystem, refining their ability to assess new ideas and validate their own venture hypotheses. On this trip, in addition to the students’ meetings, students toured Bloomberg, met with UP alums and entrepreneurs, and Amanda Leung even found Mark Cuban!



- **OEN Awards:** In November 2024, E-Scholar students, along with Graduate Entrepreneurship students, had the unique opportunity to attend the Oregon Entrepreneurship Network (OEN) Awards. This annual event, celebrating its 30th anniversary, recognizes outstanding entrepreneurs and innovative companies across Oregon and Southwest Washington in various categories, including Early, Development, and Growth Stage awards, as well as Trailblazer and Entrepreneurial Achievement. Attending this "Tradition Meets Innovation"-themed ceremony at The Sentinel Hotel provided students with invaluable networking opportunities, allowing them to connect with regional entrepreneur ecosystem members, gather inspiration from leading innovators, and witness firsthand the vibrant entrepreneurial landscape they aspire to join. Six of the UP students were Award Handlers for the event, and at the event, there was even a shout out to the UP Entrepreneurship Program.



- **Denver Pitch Competition:** In the spring semester, E-Scholars participated in a focused weekend trip to Denver. In addition to the two virtual pitches they do during the Fall Semester, this component provides a crucial opportunity for students to connect in person with the E-scholars from the College of Saint Benedict and Saint John's University. In addition to the pitch competition, students also engage in collaborative venture building and workshops to refine their ideas.



- **Student Venture Spotlight:** This year, we saw a variety of student ventures, from the future of university textbooks from Taj O'Maley with Uncover Learning to custom shoe designs from Willow Pfahl with Campus Kicks. Below, see Taj and Willow giving their pitches at OEN's February Pub-Talk. In this event, established entrepreneurs give their pitches to find investment and other opportunities to help advance their ventures. They both did a phenomenal job and wowed the crowd with pitches that sounded like seasoned entrepreneurs delivered them! Later in the year, Lucy Wu and presented PureGuard as a finalist at Invent Oregon, that was held on the University of Portland campus in late June.



- **International Immersion Trip:** Taking the experience of the New York Trip to the next level, in the spring the E-Scholars embark on their international trip. This year the students traveled to Santiago and Valparaíso in Chile, where students arrange business meetings with international entrepreneurs, incubators, and established companies to learn about their venture in a new market and with global context. This immersive experience allows students to deeply understand how new businesses are conceived, developed, and scaled across global economies and cultural contexts. They confront international market nuances, cross-cultural business practices, and global supply chains, critically enhancing their global entrepreneurial mindset and networking capabilities. In addition to the meeting that the students arranged, we also visited Start-Up Chile, where we learned about the Entrepreneurial ecosystem of Chile, met with Chilean founders, and they various ways they support entrepreneurship. This was a great way for students to break down barriers and find the commonalities of international entrepreneurs.



- **Pilot Venture Challenge:** The culmination of the year-long program is the University of Portland's annual Pilot Venture Challenge. This premier, "Shark Tank"-style competition sees E-Scholars, alongside other promising UP student ventures, present their fully developed business plans and refined pitches to a panel of expert judges, including alumni, investors, and business professionals. Students prepare a business plan and present for up to 10 minutes, followed by up to 10 minutes of Q&A from the judges. The top three pitches in the group are recognized below. This is a great opportunity for students as they not only compete for the prize money but also network with those who may offer initial funding or support services to launch their ventures, marking the tangible outcome of their intensive year of entrepreneurial learning and hard work.

2025 Pilot Venture Challenge Winners

Group A

1. **Uncover Learning**, Founder: Taj O'Malley '26
2. **Momentum**, Founder: Hayden Chave '26
3. **Innit**, Founder: Noah Nguyen '25

Group B

1. **PureGuard**, Founder: Lucy Wu '25
2. **Clique**, Founder: Ying Zhen '25
3. **Campus Kicks**, Founder: Willow Pfahl '26

Group C

1. **ARFÜD**, Founder: Rigby Wolff '25, Nico Mesa '25
2. **Girls Gym**, Founder: Amanda Leung '25
3. **Inclusive Solutions**, Founder: Ella Wiener '26





In the spirit of entrepreneurship and continuous improvement, we're always looking for ways to enhance the E-Scholars program. If you have feedback or ideas to help us make next year even better, please don't hesitate to reach out to Jon Down at down@up.edu. We're looking ahead to an exciting 2025-2026 year with 14 new E-Scholars in the incoming class and plan to share updates like this regularly to keep you connected to the remarkable work our students are doing.