

ENTREPRENEURSHIP AS A CAREER PATH WORKSHOP



FIRESIDE CHAT WITH AL SUBBLOIE

As founder and CEO of Budderfly, Al Subbloie has led the Energy-Efficiency-as-a-Service startup to become one of the fastest growing companies in the cleantech sector in the United States, as well as a national role model for firms seeking to leverage private sector practices to address issues of climate change. Under his leadership, Budderfly's revenue has grown at a CAGR of 250% since its founding in 2017 and has ranked on the Inc. 5000 Fastest Growing Private Companies list for three consecutive years. Subbloie was ranked in the 2021 Worthy 100 by Worth Magazine for his entrepreneurship around environmental benefit. Previously, Subbloie founded and served as CEO of Tangoe, an industry-leading telecommunications expense management solutions company. Between 1999-2015, Subbloie generated over \$200M in revenue and hired and managed over 2,000 employees.

Prior to Tangoe, Al co-founded Information Management Associates, which focused on modernizing the call center industry. He also co-founded Buyersedge.com, an internet-based reverse auction company, and Freefire, a customer interaction software company, which was acquired by Teletech Holdings. Al is often featured in leading national and global media publications including CNBC, Fortune, and WSJ, sharing his unique perspective and experience on various topics such as business challenges, leadership, and management approaches, and taking companies public.

PANEL DISCUSSIONS

Gain first-hand perspectives from startup founders navigating the challenges of entrepreneurship:

- **CLIMATE & ENERGY PANEL**

Entrepreneurs driving innovation in sustainability and energy solutions.

- **MANUFACTURING & AI PANEL**

Founders leveraging cutting-edge technology to shape the future of industry.

LEARN ABOUT ENTREPRENEURSHIP RESOURCES

CLIMATE HAVEN

A platform for startups building breakthrough solutions in energy and climate resilience.

UConn CCEI

The Connecticut Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation, est. 2007, was the first Center to support entrepreneurship activity at UConn.

UConn TCS/TIP

Expedite and facilitate the transformation of UConn discoveries into products and services that benefit patients, industry, and society, including through its Technology Incubation Program (TIP).

UConn COLLEGE OF ENGINEERING EHUB

The eHub was created as a space to promote the exchange of ideas, and facilitate collaborations and partnerships among UConn's Tech community. Our focus is on technological innovations and advancements in a range of sectors including HealthTech, GreenTech, Advanced Materials, Electronics, EdTech, Software, and AI. We support entrepreneurship, beginning from ideation and conceptualization to fully launching startups and scaling businesses.

We offer courses, programs, and activities that provide training and support in the skills, tools, and mindset of what it takes to be an entrepreneur. Our programs are open to anyone with a technology-based idea, and we provide support at all stages, from ideation to exit. We'll connect you to available resources, facilities, and business support services to help your startup excel and accelerate growth.

Available eHub courses:

- Technology innovation and Entrepreneurship I
- Technology innovation and Entrepreneurship II
- Innovation Entrepreneurship
- Startup Consulting
- Technology Entrepreneurship: Startup Strategy
- Entrepreneurial Skills
- Innovation for Defense

Apply to the Entrepreneurship Fellowship Program

This program is supported by a 3-year project, titled "Creating Bold STEM Leaders Through Graduate Entrepreneurial Training," grant #2325444 from the National Science Foundation (NSF) Innovations in Graduate Education (IGE) program.





George Bollas, UConn COE Associate Dean of Research, Director PW-IASE

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Dr. Bollas is the ADR for the College of Engineering and serves as the Pratt & Whitney Endowed Chair Professor in Advanced Systems Engineering (ASE) and the Director of the Pratt & Whitney Institute for ASE. He earned his BS and PhD in Chemical Engineering from Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, followed by a postdoctoral fellowship at MIT. His research spans energy technology, process systems, and model-based systems, focusing on optimizing cyber-physical systems crucial for the energy, chemical, and aerospace industries. Under his leadership, PW-IASE secured over \$60M in research funding and doubled industry partner participation, enhancing educational programs that blend academic rigor with practical applications. He has received an NSF CAREER and ACS PRF Doctoral New Investigator Award, and he was elected to CASE in 2020.



Casey Pickett, Managing Director of Incubation

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Casey is the Managing Director of Incubation at ClimateHaven. He recently served as the Yale Planetary Solutions Project Director and Director of the Yale Carbon Charge. Previously, he was Director of Innovation for the CT Economic Development Department, where he designed and developed CTNext, a public-private partnership to build networks, accelerate growth for innovative companies, and attract top talent to Connecticut's cities. Casey holds an MBA and a Master's of Environmental Mgmt. from Yale and BA from Oberlin. In graduate school, he co-founded a startup natural beverage company bottling maple sap to raise the value of healthy forests. Before that, he was a Sustainability Engineer for Turner Construction Company, a regional director for Dean for America, and co-founder of a sustainability think-and-do tank.



Leila Daneshmandi, Director at the E-Hub

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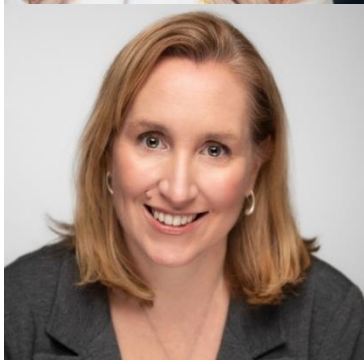
Leila is a College of Engineering Assistant Professor in Residence in Innovation and Entrepreneurship and the Biomedical Engineering Department, and Head of Entrepreneurship Initiatives. She teaches experiential entrepreneurship courses that help launch technology startups at UConn and runs the [Master of Engineering in Global Entrepreneurship](#) and [Third Bridge Grant](#), programs offered to student entrepreneurs working on technology-based startups. Leila has a UConn Ph.D. in Biomedical Engineering and Master's in Global Entrepreneurship. Leila co-founded Encapsulate, a healthtech startup in cancer precision diagnostics (\$1.4M+ raise to date) which has received international recognition, including The International Space Station U.S. National Lab and Boeing, the NSF, and the Luxembourg Chamber of Commerce and Enterprise Europe Network.



Jennifer Mathieu, Executive Director, CCEI

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Jennifer supports economic development by fostering initiatives for startups and small businesses at UConn, across CT and to alumni worldwide. She has helped to launch and grow hundreds of startups and several new programs and initiatives to support entrepreneurs, while teaching courses and programs to support entrepreneurs. In addition, she is a mentor within community organizations, and founded Elizabeth Design Studio, an inspirational carded jewelry company, which has partnered with brands and subscription box services distributed on a national level. Her products are available online and in over 130 retail locations across the US. Jennifer earned a B.A. in Psychology from UConn, an M.Ed. in Higher Education Administration from Springfield College and an Executive MBA from UConn.



Michelle Cote, Lead Instructor & Director of Launc[H], CCEI

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At CCEI, Michelle teaches courses that help students and faculty build skills critical for entrepreneurship and innovation and supports them in forming and bringing new ventures to market. Michelle holds both a B.A. International Environmental Policy and an MBA with concentrations in Marketing & Organizational Management from the UConn. Michelle's other professional experience includes providing coaching and technical assistance to entrepreneurs in South America and Afghanistan; founding and leading a social enterprise called The Purpose Project; and designing and launching an accelerator, focused on social enterprise, in Hartford.



Soroush Vahedi, PhD Student at UConn Engineering

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Soroush is currently a Ph.D. Candidate in the Electrical and Computer Engineering of University of Connecticut. He is excited to develop and scale his startup idea for an innovative energy trading platform, PowerBid, as a Fellow at the Engr. Entrepreneurship Hub. This platform aims to revolutionize the energy market by enabling seamless energy trading between consumers and prosumers, fostering grid sustainability, and empowering renewable energy adoption. He is enhancing his entrepreneurial skills, connecting with industry leaders, and working towards building a resilient, efficient, and inclusive energy ecosystem.



Alaa Selim, PhD Student at UConn Engineering <https://www.linkedin.com/in/alaamad1/>

Alaa is a Professional Engineer with over five years of experience in automation and control engr. and certified in AVEVA and Schneider software. He has an Electrical power engineering and energy engineering MS and is a Ph.D. candidate in Electrical and Computer Engineering (ECE) at UConn (2025 graduation). Guided by his ECE advisor, Alaa has been pushing the boundaries of power systems and cybersecurity, with research focused on optimizing control strategies for distributed energy resources and fortifying power grids against cyber threats, ensuring a more resilient and secure future for energy systems. He is eager to continue his research with a startup focused on innovative solutions for sustainable practices.



Yidan Zhang, Co-founder of SeaSol, PhD Student at UConn CAHNR

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Yidan is the co-founder of SeaSol and is developing advanced materials from seaweed. CCEI helped SeaSol to develop concise and effective communication about the company, establish a go-to-market strategy, refine its business model, and connect with many mentors in the business community. The UConn venture stands out by offering a healthy, PFAS-free, microplastic-free food packaging solution made from seaweed that is organic, plentiful, inexpensive, and sustainable. Backed by deep expertise in polymer chemistry and seaweed refinery, the team is confident in scaling the technology and bringing sustainable alternatives to the food packaging market.



Laron Burrows, Founder & CEO of Andros, UConn PhD Alum (2024)

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Laron is passionate about sustainable chemical manufacturing. His passion has led to the creation of a company called Andros, that is trying to disrupt one of the dirtiest chemical processes in the world: ammonia production. Before his UConn Ph.D., Laron Burrows worked as an engineer in the renewable energy industry. Now, he leverages his industrial experience and PhD in Chemical Engineering, committed to making this vision a reality.



John Toribio, Co-founder & CEO of Zemi, PhD Candidate at UConn CLAS

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John completed a BS double major in Physics and ACS Chemistry from Iona College (New York) and is currently pursuing PhD studies in Polymer Chemistry with the Sotzing Research Group at the University of Connecticut. His research areas include cannabinoid chemistry, bio-based thermoplastics, electrochromic materials, and wearable electronic devices for health monitoring and other applications. Through his work with Zemi, he is developing a smart-clothing platform for comprehensive health and fitness tracking. He has received awards for Innovation Quest (2024), CCEI Summer Fellowship (2024), Bobbitt-Chou Graduate Summer Research Fellowship (2023), and the 100Plus Scholarship Award in (2021).



Jeremy Bronen, Founder & CEO of SedMed, UConn Alum (2020)

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Jeremy Bronen is using his mechanical engineering degree and entrepreneurial spirit to help the elderly and disabled with the launch of the patented toilet lift assist through the company SedMed, formed in 2021. Using his engineering knowledge and background skills in problem solving and product design and development, Jeremy took on the role of project lead and worked to finalizing the product concept and shop it around in gambit of entrepreneurship programs and competitions throughout Connecticut. Gaining a strong network from the programs, he was able to launch the company into its current fundraising and manufacturing phase.



Jake Winter, Co-founder & CTO of PatentPlus AI, UConn Alum (2023)

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Jake specializes in building and scaling high-impact AI products, most notably through PatentPlusAI, which he founded at UConn in 2021. PatentPlusAI's flagship product, AutoPat, is the world's first autonomous patent research system. Like a human search consultant, AutoPat conducts in-depth research for hours on end to complete the most difficult patent search tasks—but delivers results in a fraction of the time, at a fraction of the cost, all without human intervention. PatentPlusAI is backed by legendary Silicon Valley investor Tim Draper, an early backer of companies like Tesla, Skype, and Coinbase. During his time at UConn, Jake earned multiple awards and grants, including the Third Bridge Grant (2022), Innovation Quest (2022), Summer Fellowship (2021), KPMG Ideation Challenge (2019), Get Seeded (2019), Werth Innovator Scholarship (2019), CTC College Tech Challenge (2018), and UNH IQ (2018). He recently returned to the Wolff New Venture Competition to present PatentPlusAI as a featured company in the startup showcase.



Dr. Amy Thompson, CT Center for Advanced Technology, Chief Talent and Training Officer

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Amy leads the development and implementation of CCAT's technical training programs and courses, supporting small and medium-sized manufacturers (SMMs) throughout the CT and Northeast region. Prior to joining CCAT in 2023, Dr. Thompson was an Associate Professor-In-Residence of Systems Engineering and the Associate Director for the Pratt & Whitney Institute for Advanced Systems Engineering at UConn. She earned a B.S. in Industrial Engineering, an M.S. in Manufacturing Engineering, and a Ph.D. in Industrial and Systems Engineering from the University of Rhode Island. Her technical expertise includes model-based systems engineering (MBSE), the design and operation of smart, connected, and energy-efficient manufacturing and building systems, supply chain design, and engineering education.



Michael Invernale, Senior Licensing Manager

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Michael is responsible for assessing engineering and physical science related invention disclosures for patentability and market potential. He supports UConn inventors through management of intellectual property, the creation of invention-tailored marketing plans and outreach, and agreement negotiation and management. He holds a BS in Chemistry from Boston College, a PhD in Chemistry from UConn, and was a postdoctoral associate in the Langer Lab at MIT. While at MIT, a UConn start-up company, Alphachromics, which was co-founded by Michael and his PhD advisor, Gregory A. Sotzing, gained traction and attracted him back to Storrs. Throughout his graduate and entrepreneurial work, Michael engaged with Tech Transfer, intellectual property, and marketing of nascent technologies.



Nadine Boudissa, International Advisor, CISS

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In August 2017, Nadine joined ISSS again as an International Adviser. Prior to rejoining UConn ISSS, she was an Assistant Director at the International Center for Students and Scholars, University of Bridgeport, International Adviser for the UConn Regional Campuses and SEVIS Coordinator at the International Services Office, University of New Haven. Nadine holds a B.A. in Spanish and French, Minor in International Studies from the University of Connecticut and a M.S. in Elementary Education from the University of Bridgeport.



Steve Criss, Administrator, TCS Technology Incubation Program (TIP)-Storrs

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Steve manages day-to-day operations at the Storrs incubator and leads the program's marketing and communications efforts. He has a background in senior-level marketing and public relations management experience. He also has experience in public policy and administration as well as nonprofit management which resulted in the founding of several award-winning organizations. Steve came to UConn as the marketing director for the University's Office of Economic Development where he helped support the TIP program, Technology Exchange Portal, and TCS and helped launch the CT Small Business Development Center, the Fraunhofer Center for Energy Innovation, and developed the initial marketing for UConn's Tech Park and the Innovation Partnership Building. He previously worked at UConn's Office of University Communications and most recently served as the Senior Marketing Project Administrator at UConn Health's Office of Health Marketing.



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