

APRIL 2020

ENTREPRENEURSHIP AT RUTGERS: STUDENT FOUNDER PANEL

Brought to you by Rutgers Women In Business



NEWSLETTER PANEL

In light of the COVID-19 outbreak, we have shifted this in-person panel to a newsletter format for all of our WIB members to enjoy. Hear from Sarah Pomeranz and Ria Soni and about their entrepreneurship journey!

MEET SARAH POMERANZ:

DESCRIBE YOUR BACKGROUND AND YOUR STARTUP.

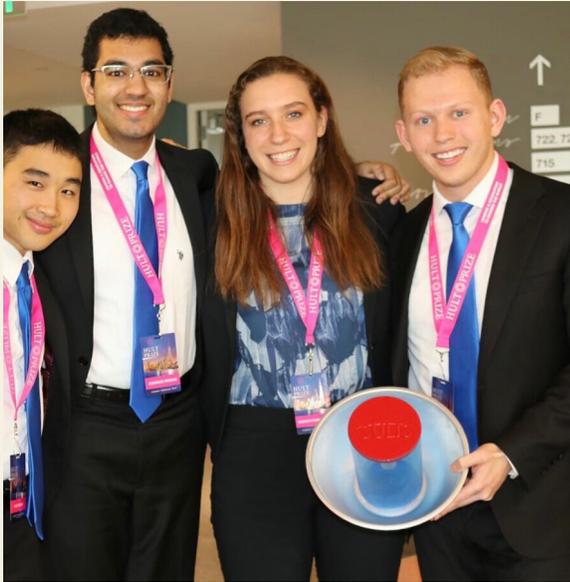
"I'm currently a senior (HC, RBS, DRC '20) majoring in Management with a concentration in Entrepreneurship, and minoring in Social Justice. Originally I am from Boston (out-of-state pride!) and have lived on College Ave all 4 years! I am the co-founder of Sulis, a social venture whose mission is to provide affordable and sustainable solar-powered water sanitation solutions to communities without access to clean water. I have had the honor of leading Sulis to the finals of the \$1 million Hult Prize Accelerator, spearheading a crowdfunding campaign to pilot our teams' technology. I have been selected twice as one of the Entrepreneur Organization's Top 25 American Student Entrepreneurs."



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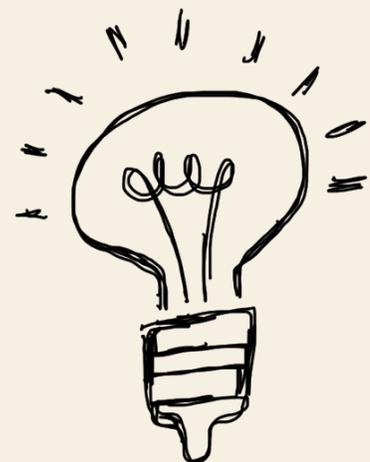
 Rutgers Undergraduate Women in Business



WHAT GOT YOU INTO ENTREPRENEURSHIP?

"Initially, I thought that the best way to start working towards a more equitable, healthier, and prosperous planet is to work on the issues closest to home, within my own community. I was amazed by the amount of impact I was able to have with the power of entrepreneurship, even on a small scale by founding student organizations, working for small, local nonprofits, and managing my highschool's soup kitchen. However, I could not help but wonder what could happen if I stepped outside of the expectations for a typical career working in public service, nonprofit, or advocacy. I prioritized traveling to develop an understanding of some of the larger global challenges of our time. When I started researching the scarcity of water around the world as well as the need for large-scale solutions, I was deeply moved. My principles of global equity compelled me to learn as much as I could about the subject and reach out to experts who could better help me explore solutions. Those efforts ultimately culminated in me co-founding Sulis to bring clean water to communities in need."

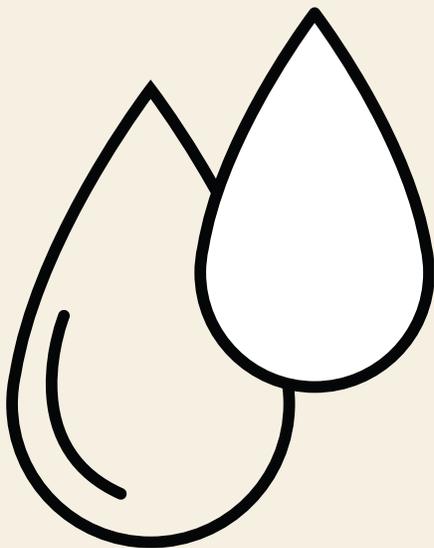
"I could not help but wonder what could happen if I stepped outside of the expectations for a typical career working in public service, nonprofit or advocacy."



WHAT/WHO HELPED YOU GET TO WHERE YOU ARE TODAY?



"If you ask for money, you will get advice. If you ask for advice, you will get money."



"As college students, we are lucky to have everyone rooting for you to succeed and that will change as you enter the workforce, so we made sure to take advantage of all the incredible resources and people at our University. Our primary advisor, Mukesh Patel, has hands down, done the most for Sulis as a business from identifying accelerators, competitions, and conferences for us, to help us write our business plan and organizing our pilot partnerships. He is the head of the Honors College Innovation Lab at Rutgers, where Sulis was born, and so we had him in our corner since the very beginning. From there, we built a board of advisors that consisted of industry professionals that we met at the conferences we were attending to research professors at our University and everything in between. That board of advisors is critical for young ventures to have, especially for students, because it adds a level of validation and legitimizes your venture. Develop an idea, work on your pitch, then get it out there in front of people again and again and never be afraid to ask for advice. A mentor once told us, "If you ask for money, you will get advice. If you ask for advice, you will get money." Most universities also have an underground entrepreneurial ecosystem that you can tap into for resources if you keep your eye out for entrepreneurship events and then go to network. Some other Rutgers specific organizations to look into are Hult Prize, Rutgers Entrepreneurial Society, TAMID, and Enactus."

DO YOU HAVE ANY ADVICE FOR ASPIRING STUDENT ENTREPRENEURS?

"I would tell any student who wants to become an entrepreneur that the best way to open up your schedule is to cut-out Netflix. That alone gave me about 10-20 extra hours a week to work on building a new venture, and it should be the first thing to go, definitely before your social life and your health. Secondly, I would say take advantage of every opportunity to pitch your business as possible, it's how you can refine the focus of the business, build the brand, and it will be a never-ending sequence of doors opening for you. The more you pitch, the more you will win, and the more you win, the more you can invest back into the business and earn the trust of others. Lastly, build diverse teams- this cannot be understated. Your business is only as strong as your team, and the more diverse your team is, the better you will be able to address the needs of diverse markets today. Diversity should be a must-have, not something that would be nice to have."



***Check out Sarah's very
own Tedx Talk at Rutgers,
"How Not to Ruin the
World with Your Good
Intentions" on YouTube!***

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IrVwmngjOIo>

CONTACT SARAH

If you have any questions or comments, do not hesitate to reach out to Sarah at sarah.pomeranz@rutgers.edu or add her on LinkedIn.

TED^x Rutgers

MEET RIA SONI:

DESCRIBE YOUR BACKGROUND AND YOUR STARTUP.

"I am currently a second year student in the School of Arts and Sciences studying Cell Biology and Neuroscience with a minor in Psychology. I am also the Co-Founder of the nonprofit organization Project Stree. Project Stree aims to empower Indian women by increasing awareness about hygiene habits and challenging the stigma surrounding women's health. We hold engaging and informative workshops in schools in Gujarat, India to educate girls about proper hygiene, disease risks, and how to use sanitary products. This past January, we traveled to a school called Vadadla Primary School in which we held multiple sessions for over 150 girls and donated almost 3000 pads."



WHAT GOT YOU INTO ENTREPRENEURSHIP?

"Interestingly, I took a class at RBS called Intro to Marketing for Entrepreneurship my freshman year, thinking that I would minor in Entrepreneurship. Although it was a cool class, I decided that business wasn't for me and decided to switch my minor to Psychology. However, that summer, my friend from Boston came to visit and we found out that we both had a passion for menstrual health and female empowerment in general. We were both also going to India that December, so we decided to plan a small event in India relating to menstrual hygiene. However, once we started planning, we realized that we both became increasingly interested in starting a larger, ongoing organization rather than just a one time event. Thus, Project Stree was born. During the process of the creation of Project Stree, from starting up our social media, to creating our website, I actually found myself using some of the strategies and skills I learned from the entrepreneurship class I took the past semester."





WHO/WHAT HELPED YOU GET TO WHERE YOU ARE TODAY?

"When we started planning our first workshops in India, we researched some other nonprofit organizations in the country that had similar goals to ours reached out to them. They helped to guide us in the right direction in terms of who could benefit the most from our workshops, how to structure them, and what to provide them with."



DO YOU HAVE ANY ADVICE FOR ASPIRING STUDENT ENTREPRENEURS?

"Personally, I thought that once school would start back up again, I wouldn't have enough time to dedicate to Project Stree. However, I realized that because it was something I was so invested in, I found myself making time, whether that be through staying up late or finding small bits of time throughout the day. So I think that leads me to say that the most important advice I can give is to let your passion drive your pursuits; if you're truly enthusiastic about something, then no matter the circumstances, you'll definitely find yourself dedicated and working towards that initiative."

*"Let your
passion drive
your pursuits."*

CONTACT RIA

If you have any questions or comments, do not hesitate to reach out to Ria at riasoni4@gmail.com

To learn more about Project Stree and how you can get involved check out www.projectstree.org and follow them on IG @projstree.

