

Exploring Social Venture Creation to Enhance Career ROI

With Real Career ROI Stories



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ABSTRACT

This article adds to the literature on entrepreneurship, social entrepreneurship, business education and career outcomes by formulating a Career Return on Investment (ROI) approach for identifying the benefits of student entrepreneur training and skillset building in terms of broad career outcomes. Beyond the direct effect of strengthening future entrepreneurs' abilities to launch and grow their own businesses, entrepreneurship programs, particularly those with impactful experiential content, provide valuable training for the broader career spectrum across industries in all types of organizations.

The paper builds on prior research that establishes how competencies developed in entrepreneurship programs can positively influence employability and career outcomes in a dynamic labor market. The methodology for this study infuses alumni narratives from different universities that utilize the GCSEN Social Impact curriculum within both undergraduate and master's level academic programs. Individual student stories and short and longer term career outcomes are explored to provide new evidence of the broad impacts of entrepreneurial training and competency development.

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION	3
CAREER ROI STORIES	3
Perspective of a Late-Career Professional	3
Perspectives of Mid-Career Professionals	3
Perspectives of Early-Career Professionals	3
Perspectives of Current MBA Students	4
Perspectives of Current Undergraduates	4
ROI Definitions and Formulas	5
College Investment ROI	5
College Entrepreneurship Program ROI	5
Scenario 1	6
Scenario 1 Tangible ROI	6
Scenario 1 Intangible ROI	7
Scenario 2	8
Scenario 2 Tangible ROI	8
Scenario 2 Intangible ROI	10
Scenario 3	10
Scenario 3 Tangible ROI	10
Scenario 3 Intangible ROI	12
New Career ROI Research Initiative	12
Career ROI Research Area: New Career Options	12
Hypotheses :	12
Career ROI Research Area: Career Mobility	13
Career ROI Research Area: Career Value	13
CONCLUSION	13
APPENDIX - FULL CONTEXT STORIES	14
Resources	16
Endnotes	16

INTRODUCTION

The Global Center for Social Entrepreneurship Network Foundation (GCSEN Foundation) is grateful for the opportunity to submit this paper to the 27th Annual IAJBS World Forum / 2022 CJBE Annual Meeting. The paper describes a Career Return on Investment (ROI) approach for college entrepreneurs, as they consider future career options. Many college students today still have a traditional mindset of entering the workforce with a large employer upon graduation. College entrepreneurs can break out of this traditional and limited mindset, by creating new career options that lead to an enhanced Return on Investment across their lifelong career.

CAREER ROI STORIES

The following short stories are presented at the front of this paper to provide context for the real career impact, “Career ROI”, that can result from a single experiential entrepreneurship course which prepares a student to launch a social venture designed around their unique talents, passion, purpose and values. Many of the excerpts refer to one specific program, GCSEN’s Social Venture Boot Camp. But these examples of career impact can also apply to other high impact entrepreneurship courses designed to be experiential and immersive. Some of these stories are excerpts taken from longer stories provided in the appendix of this paper.

Perspective of a Late-Career Professional

I support my family, and I had a career of 30-plus years as an environmental land use planner. I was doing Community Compost as a part-time business, so for me to come in full-time was scary financially and also risky. But I also knew that if I was interested in developing this business, I had to either jump all in, or get out. That’s really what I did—I decided to jump in, and I’ll

tell you that for the first nine months it was really scary. Just in the fall of last year things started to click!

- Eileen Banyra, Founder and CEO, Community Compost



Eileen Banyra



Perspectives of Mid-Career Professionals

GCSEN has made a life changing impact on The Reuben family. GCSEN gave us the framework and coaching to transform our 40+ year Family Jewelry Manufacturing Business into the future. Social responsibility

and impact are now a cornerstone of what we are doing. Feeling very blessed and grateful to the donors of GCSEN for making it possible. I felt like we were on a winning path forward but with the addition of GCSEN it amplified our path by 10x.

- Jason Reuben, Babson '07, Founder and CEO, [Meet the Jewelers](#) and [Baguette Atelier](#)

The Wheaton College Social Venture Boot Camp allowed me to re-frame my perspective on my business: there doesn’t need to be a conflict between doing well financially and doing good in the world. Fordham is filled with students of varying perspectives and interests, from fine arts and science to finance and entrepreneurship, but all students and alumni are charged with the Ignatian imperative to “Go forth and set the world on fire.” For a man like me, my business is how I can fulfill that mission and GCSEN is a willing advocate for my success. - Kevin Horan, Fordham

Perspectives of Early-Career Professionals

It was an incredible experience. While starting a nonprofit has been a long-term dream of mine, I often let fear hold me back from achieving my

dreams. During this Boot Camp, everything clicked. I believe in myself more, and with GCSEN's help, I have been taking action steps towards achieving my goals for this nonprofit. GCSEN has changed my life, and I have GCSEN to thank, from the bottom of my heart, for believing in and supporting me.

- Heather Rotman, Wheaton '18



out that I do enjoy helping others and I have the determination to stick with something even if it gets difficult. I believe that this information can be used in my future careers. - S.S.

I never saw myself as a social entrepreneur or an entrepreneur at all for that matter. It just wasn't something I really thought about. After learning more about social entrepreneurship and being a part of something bigger than yourself, I can now say it is of more interest to me...this has opened my mindset to the possibility. - M.H.

My GCSEN experience assisted me in building confidence in pitching and actualizing my ideas, and helped me to become more comfortable with rocket pitches. For me, GCSEN shared the importance of focusing on my passion and the continuous growth of ideas, something I've tried to prioritize in my life post-graduation. - Gyana

Srivastava, Wheaton '21



I participated in the Fletcher D-Prize (The Fletcher School, Tufts University) competition and won the prize!

I have continued to pursue my entrepreneurial journey since GCSEN." - Wabei Saboi, Wheaton '19

Perspectives of Current MBA Students at Le Moyne College

I used to imagine myself as an individual that would graduate and secure a corporate job. However, as I expand my knowledge I am starting to realize that this plan does not align with who I am and why I am... The pressure I felt to pursue a corporate job has been lifted.- P.G.G.

Prior to taking this course I also used to be worried about what people would think of me starting my own butcher shop. Since taking this course I have realized that it is not about what people think of you but more about what you want for your life. - J.T.

I have not thought about myself becoming a social entrepreneur before this class. By looking at my core passions, strengths, and weaknesses... I figured

Perspectives of Current Undergraduates

Participating in the GCSEN program in January of 2021 boosted my career in a way that I would have never seen coming. I was never really interested in solar before, but working on this project, conducting market research and developing a business plan, has inspired me to pursue a career in the solar industry post-graduation. - Aiden Travis, Wheaton '22, #impaktWISE Ideation Award, Copenhagen Business School



At the time I entered this program as a junior, I was definitely unclear about what I wanted to do, and relatively unmotivated in my career development. After my experience with GCSEN, I found myself inspired, and very motivated to continue pursuing my interests developed through the program...My experience with GCSEN was very influential for my personal career goals. - Gabriel Childs Michael, Wheaton '22, #impaktWISE Ideation Award, Copenhagen Business School

GCSEN has helped me know what it means to run a business, and as someone who dreams of being and is a freelance filmmaker this has proved invaluable...GCSEN has done all this with a strong emphasis on social good, which has allowed me to find more purpose in my career! - Cole Paul, Wheaton '23



ROI Definitions and Formulas

Investopedia defines Return on Investment (ROI) as “a performance measure used to evaluate the efficiency or profitability of an investment.” ROI is a ratio of the profit, or return, on an investment relative to the original investment and is calculated as: Investment Profit / Investment Amount. A more helpful ratio is Annualized ROI which highlights the compounded return on investment on an annual basis. The purpose of ROI is to make it easier to judge the relative performance, or profitability, of one investment versus another, or class of other investments.

Personal Investment ROI

These formulas, and the ROI concept itself, is best understood in the context of simple personal investments. The benchmark, or baseline, for personal investment is often the S&P 500 which is an index that tracks the stock market performance of 500 large U.S. companies. The real value is in comparing long-term, buy and hold investments. The average ROI for S&P 500 Index over 50 years (1970-2020) = 10.83%. An investment in the S&P 500 is not without risk, as demonstrated by the negative annual returns in 2000-2002: -9.1%, -11.89%, -22.1%. If you invested \$100,000 in the S&P 500 index in 1999 and needed to withdraw your investment in 2003, you would have lost \$37,307 which would be very painful and potentially devastating for recent retirees depending on those funds. However, if you were able to leave your investment in place, it would have recovered to the long-term average of 10.83% average annual return. This long-term ROI compensates for short term risk. If you don't want to take any risk, you can invest your money in a savings account with a recent annual return of 0.06%.

Let's look at a simple example of personal investment ROI to demonstrate the ROI calculation:

- Invest in 1000 shares of ABC Inc @ \$10 per share = \$10,000 investment on Jan 1, 2022
- Sell 1000 shares on December 31, 2023 (2 years later) @ \$13 per share = \$13,000

- Profit = \$13,000 - \$10,000 = \$3,000
- ROI = \$3,000 / \$10,000 = 0.3 x 100 = 30%
- Annualized ROI = 14.02% (3.19% higher than the 10.83% average ROI over 50 years)

College Investment ROI

With these fundamentals of ROI now understood, let's apply it to an investment in a college education. According to [Education Data Initiative](#), the current average annual cost of a four-year college degree is \$35,331. This includes tuition, room and board, and

The purpose of ROI is to make it easier to judge the relative performance, or profitability, of one investment versus another, or class of other investments.

books. This would require a four-year total investment of \$141,324. Now for the return – according to the [Social Security Administration](#), “Men with bachelor's degrees earn approximately \$900,000 more in median lifetime earnings than high school graduates. Women with bachelor's degrees earn \$630,000 more.” Lifetime earnings are calculated over a period of 50 years. According to our ROI formulas, the ROI (for men) would be \$900,000 / \$141,324 = 636.34%, and annualized ROI = 4.08% over 50 years.

College Entrepreneurship Program ROI

The scenario above is an average four-year college scenario. Let's look at the potential ROI for three different scenarios that help describe the ROI for a single high impact college course on entrepreneurship. We will look at the tangible and intangible ROI for each scenario. Tangible ROI is something that you can calculate. Intangible ROI covers non-monetary benefits from an investment. Both scenarios will be based on the impact of a GCSEN Social Venture Launch course which prepares a student to launch a social venture designed around

their unique talents, passion, purpose and values. The course is an example of immersive, experiential and applied learning. We call this approach “pracademic” since it puts the emphasis on practical preparation to launch a real social venture, yet based on solid academic principles and concepts.

Scenario 1 *College student who takes the single GCSEN entrepreneurship course and after graduation, the student takes a traditional corporate job.*

Scenario 1 Tangible ROI

Tangible ROI does apply in this scenario even though the student does not start a business. The student invested \$141,324 in a four-year degree which includes 40 semester-long courses. This one course in entrepreneurship is the equivalent of a \$3533 investment (4 year cost / 40 courses). There is no statistical evidence that taking one course in entrepreneurship translates into higher earnings over the course of someone’s career. However, there is anecdotal evidence.

A tangible ROI can be highlighted by the anecdotal evidence of Henry McKain, Wheaton College ‘21 who stated, “I am thrilled about the opportunity to work for BlackRock. Undoubtedly, having experience running my own business gave me the leg up over other applicants. GCSEN built up my confidence to speak about the business and articulate our vision at a much higher level. I would say that GCSEN and the accompanying business, Carousel, gave 25% value to the offer being extended.”

Henry leveraged that experience during his interview process and landed a job with BlackRock, one of the largest global investment managers. Henry mentioned that a common theme in his interviews was, “tell us about this GCSEN program.” He was able to share his social venture launch experience and was speaking with an “Impact CEO” mindset with the interviewer. The course was

Scenario 1: *College student who takes the single GCSEN entrepreneurship course and after graduation, the student takes a traditional corporate job.*

Scenario 2: *College student who takes the single GCSEN entrepreneurship course and launches their own entrepreneurial venture as a small business. They stay in this business for five years, then sell the business.*

Scenario 3: *College student who takes the single GCSEN entrepreneurship course and launches their own entrepreneurial venture as a small business. They stay in this business for three years and the business fails, and they then take a traditional corporate job.*

Each of these three scenarios are described in detail below.

only 1/40 of his overall college course experience, yet it delivered 25% of the impact of getting his job at BlackRock.

While this story is anecdotal and intangible, it is possible to translate into a tangible ROI. As per [Glassdoor](#), the average starting salary in 2022 for an Associate at Blackrock is \$119,231. As per [NACE](#) (National Association of Colleges and Employers), the average college graduate starting salary in 2022 is \$57,657 for Business Majors. The incremental 1st year salary is \$61,574. Considering this one year alone, the ROI on the one entrepreneurial course is 1642% on the investment of \$3533 for the one course. Conservatively, if this incremental salary margin was maintained for 50 years, that would translate into an incremental \$3,078,700 compensation, a 87,141% ROI on the original \$3533 investment.

Scenario 1 Intangible ROI

While one course might sound insignificant, the tangible ROI example above proves otherwise. And when you add to it, the significant intangible ROI, the case is even stronger for a significant overall ROI from this one course in entrepreneurship. The intangible ROI elements below were derived from a seven-year track record of student survey from the GCSEN course. The elements can be summarized in the seven different categories below. Collectively, we will refer to these seven categories as Impact CEO Mindset - a transformational new way of thinking with a supporting set of knowledge and skill to increase the odds for success in an entrepreneurial venture and value in application within more traditional corporate jobs as well. This is also commonly referred to as “intrapreneurship.”

- I. **Social Entrepreneurship Fundamentals**
- II. **Business Knowledge and Skills**
- III. **Financial Skills**
- IV. **Business Acumen**
- V. **Communication Skills**
- VI. **“Soft” Skills**
- VII. **Behavioral Transformation**

Each of these seven Impact CEO Mindset categories are covered in more detail below.

Social Entrepreneurship Fundamentals:

These fundamentals help students understand entrepreneurship fundamentals that are foundational for social entrepreneurship, and innovation fundamentals that are foundational for social innovation.

Incremental Business Knowledge and Skills:

Practical, cutting edge, and actionable knowledge resulting in awareness and understanding of 500+ keywords encompassing entrepreneurship, social entrepreneurship and traditional business fundamentals, with a focus on the initial stages of business growth such as marketing fundamentals and early product development (i.e., prototyping). We have gotten feedback from senior undergraduates and MBA students that the GCSEN course is a “capstone” that incorporates all aspects of their business undergraduate and MBA level learning.

Increased Financial Skills: Through a heavy dose of “Business Math” that includes: personal budget & cash flow, economics of one unit, five-year pro-forma Profit & Loss spreadsheet model, business cash flow, ROI from a founder and investor perspective.

Increased Business Acumen: Business acumen, defined by Wikipedia is “business savviness, business sense, keenness and quickness in understanding and dealing with a business situation (risks and opportunities) in a manner that is likely to lead to a good outcome.”

Improved Communication Skills: Real life communication skills applied to delivering an effective investor pitch including: commanding the floor, attitude, connecting with your audience, visual positioning, first impressions, dress for success, visual distractions, resilience, scanning the audience, posture, breathing performance, inflection & intimation.

“Soft” Skills: Including introspection and reflection on individual uniqueness, being coachable, innovation, problem solving, team building, collaboration, leadership, and EIQ.

Behavioral Transformation: These new behaviors can increase career and business success, and include:

- Increased confidence: self-confidence, interpersonal confidence, communication confidence, professional / career confidence.
- Expanded mindsets: from an employee mindset to Impact CEO mindset, collaborator (giver) mindset, innovator mindset (problems = opportunities), grit mindset, change is good mindset (e.g., they learn how to pivot), adaptability and change readiness.

Jordan Stout, Wheaton ‘21 stated his interview differentiation as follows: “I’ve just accepted a job at a tech venture capital firm in Silicon Valley and I attribute it all to my work in GCSEN. Not only did [GCSEN] spark my passion for entrepreneurship but also taught me things that most undergraduates don’t know and I was able to cite that in my interviews.” Jordan’s point about knowing things (about business and entrepreneurship) that most undergraduates don’t know, is a significant insight into why this entrepreneurial course experience is playing an outsize role in interview differentiation. This highlights how the extensive set of knowledge and skills outlined above can be a significant interview differentiator.

Additional insights are provided by Kyle McNicoll, Wheaton ‘17 who states “GCSEN provides a 100 percent value to students such as myself who have followed a more traditional career path in both the ability to get hired, and perform at a high level. Six years out of GCSEN and I still talk about my experience during every job interview. GCSEN’s Boot Camp helps students see through a business structure to its actual ‘why’ and allows graduates to understand

the core mission of any business during those critical introductory steps. Once hired, GCSEN’s graduates quickly rise to leadership positions due to the fact they can apply intrapreneurial skills to better assist the company’s overall mission with the provided resources at hand.” Key insights here include: the ROI continues for many years after their entrepreneurial course, ability to focus on and understand the “why” of an organization is a differentiator, and career upward mobility is accelerated because of their intrapreneurial skills and mindset.

Scenario 2
College student who takes the single GCSEN entrepreneurship course and launches their own entrepreneurial venture as a small business. They stay in this business for five years, then sell the business and take a traditional corporate job.

Scenario 2 Tangible ROI

In this scenario, the tangible ROI comes from increasing the value of the social venture as an asset. There are two types of tangible ROI. One is actual and realized annually as the founder draws compensation from the social venture they have invested in. The other is a potential ROI based on a “paper” or tentative business valuation that is only realized when the business is sold. We will provide an example of both below using a spreadsheet based on a student Pro-Forma P&L and student ROI analysis.

The actual or realized founder ROI is calculated as: Cumulative Owner’s Draw minus the Cumulative Founder Cash Investment divided by the Cumulative Founder Cash Investment. This is realized/actual ROI since it is based on actual cash invested and actual cash pulled out of the business. By the end of the five-year period, the owner has invested \$7000 and

Scenario 2 Spreadsheet	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Net income	150	15,175	102,175	203,975	418,550
External Founder Cash Invested	3,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000
Cumulative Founder Investment	3,000	4,000	5,000	6,000	7,000
External Investor Cash Investors	0	0	0	0	0
Total External Cash Invested	3,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000
Owner's Draw	2,000	0	60,000	120,000	180,000
Cumulative Owner's Draw	2,000	2,000	62,000	182,000	362,000
Cash balance	1,150	16,175	43,175	84,925	239,550
Cumulative Cash Balance	1,150	17,325	60,500	145,425	384,975
Small Business Valuation	7,150	17,325	240,500	505,425	924,975
Actual or Realized ROI	-33%	-50%	1140%	2933%	5071%
ROI Based on "Paper" Business Valuation	138%	333%	4170%	8324%	13,114%

drawn out through owner's compensation \$362,000. The ROI on that investment in year five is 5071%, or approximately 119% annualized, which is significantly more than the S&P average return of 10.83%.

The small business valuation method used is based on an accepted rule of thumb from a community bank that supports many small businesses. The "paper" valuation = 3 times owner's draw plus cumulative cash balance. The founder ROI is then calculated as: Valuation minus Cumulative Founder Investment divided by Cumulative Founder Investment. By the end of the five-year period, the paper valuation is \$924,975 and based on the founder investment of \$7000, the ROI on that investment in year five is 13,114%, or approximately 165% annualized, which is significantly more than the S&P average return of 10.83%. This calculation assumes the founder owns 100% of the business. If external investment was accepted, the founder ownership share would be less than 100%, but the assumption would be faster revenue growth from the infusion of external capital. For simplicity's sake, this scenario also assumes no transaction costs upon exit.

Based on our scenario, the small business is actually sold at the end of five-years, so this becomes a realized ROI. It is in addition to the realized ROI calculated

above. The total founder cash generated in this scenario is \$1,286,975. This scenario demonstrates the significant value of building a business asset by the founder and their team.

To be complete, we can subtract the opportunity cost to calculate the true incremental ROI. Assuming this same person entered the workforce after graduation at the average salary for a business major indicated above = \$57,657 and assuming a 5% raise each year, this would have generated \$318,591 over that same five-year period. Subtracting that from the \$1,286,975 equals an incremental cash return of \$968,384 for the founder in Scenario 1.

Now for some very realistic caveats. The scenario above assumes a successful venture growth over five years. A recent article in Entrepreneur Magazine, [The True Failure Rate of Small Businesses](#), highlighted the following, "According to data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, as reported by Fundera, approximately 20 percent of small businesses fail within the first year. By the end of the second year, 30 percent of businesses will have failed. By the end of the fifth year, about half will have failed. And by the end of the decade, only 30 percent of businesses will remain — a 70 percent failure rate." While we are assuming a very successful small business after

five years, in reality, 50% will have failed by then, according to the data above. However, the pessimistic failure rates above likely do not include intensive, experiential entrepreneurial education described above regarding the GCSEN course, which should have a meaningful positive impact on these general failure rates.

Another practical caveat, if the social venture is formed as a non-profit, the founder does not have an ability to accrue personal gain from the sale of the non-profit. Selling of a non-profit entity is possible, but rare.

One last caveat, notice the realized founder's ROI is negative in the first two years with a total founder cash investment = \$4000 and only \$2000 in owner's draw. While the five-year founder's ROI is awesome, the first two years are extremely difficult. The founder must find other ways to cover their monthly personal living expenses, perhaps by living at home or taking a part time job. The time they invest in the business with only \$2000 in compensation is called "sweat equity." This requires grit! A grit mindset was mentioned as an intangible benefit of Scenario 1, learned from the entrepreneurship course. Now that grit mindset is put to use and real grit is learned through the challenges of the initial years.

Scenario 2 Intangible ROI

The tangible ROI is so significant, it almost doesn't matter what the intangible ROI is. But let's consider two intangible ROI's. Assuming the small business is a social venture, one intangible ROI is the 4P Impact realized. The 4P's are People, Profit, Planet and Place. The Net Income line in the spreadsheet above highlights the Profit impact, and that is tangible. But social ventures are designed to have a social impact. Those People, Planet, and Place impacts are often intangible, but in some cases can be quantified. This is not a direct founder ROI, however, the founder's intangible ROI is the satisfaction and meaning they derive from making such impacts, potentially to the point of leaving a lasting legacy.

A second intangible ROI for the founder is the future career options opened up through their five-year "investment" as a successful social entrepreneur. Some of these options include: becoming a serial entrepreneur by starting another business, going to work for another startup or small business, potentially as the CEO. As the CEO of their own successful social venture, they will have developed a CEO Impact mindset, that would prepare them well for another CEO position in a small business or startup, or potentially even a mid-market firm wanting to become more entrepreneurial.

Options would also include traditional positions in the corporate world, but likely at a higher level than someone else with five-years of corporate experience. Again, this could be due to their Impact CEO mindset. Also, their perceived value is likely higher because they have had to "wear" so many diverse hats as the founder of a small business: product development, marketing, sales, operations, to name a few. These diverse experiences create diverse perspectives that often lead to greater competencies in problem solving, innovation, and leadership.

Scenario 3
College student who takes the single GCSEN entrepreneurship course and launches their own entrepreneurial venture as a small business. They stay in this business for three years and the business fails, and they then take a traditional corporate job.

Scenario 3 Tangible ROI

With a total owner's draw of \$48,000 over three years, the business is not generating enough Net Income to compensate the founder for a full-time job and to cover their monthly personal budget. So they decided

Scenario 3 Spreadsheet	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Net income	1,000	10,000	15,000
External Founder Cash Invested	3,000	1,000	1,000
Cumulative Founder Investment	3,000	4,000	5,000
External Investor Cash Investors	0	0	0
Total External Cash Invested	3,000	1,000	1,000
Owner's Draw	4,000	8,000	20,000
Cumulative Owner's Draw	4,000	12,000	32,000
Cash balance	1,650	950	875
Cumulative Cash Balance	1,650	2,600	3,475
Small Business Valuation	13,650	26,600	63,475
Actual or Realized ROI	33%	200%	540%
ROI Based on "Paper" Business Valuation	355%	565%	1170%

to shut down their business and find a traditional corporate job.

The actual / realized founder ROI is 540% based on the \$32,000 owner's draw relative to the small founder investment of \$5000. 540% sounds pretty good. But now let's factor in opportunity cost. Those same three years they could have made a total of \$181,764 based on the \$57,657 average starting salary for a business major with 5% raises after year one and two. So the founder gave up \$181,764 to make \$32,000, a "loss" of potential salary of \$149,764 resulting in a significant negative founder's ROI. That sounds like a real bust!

But now let's factor in another tangible ROI. A 2016 Harvard Business Review article, [The Best Part of Entrepreneurship? Giving Up and Getting a Job](#), by Walter Frick highlights a positive impact in earnings when returning to the workforce.

Key findings, noted below, are based on research completed by Gustavo Manso at the University of California, Berkeley.

- **Individuals who attempt to be entrepreneurs but abandon entrepreneurship in less than two years are not punished, achieving approximately the same earnings as similar individuals who have not attempted to be entrepreneurs.**
- **Individuals self-employed longer than two years, make substantially more than similar salaried workers. They earn approximately 10% more than salaried workers with similar characteristics.**

Using this 10% number, we can calculate a tangible ROI as follows. Work as an employee for 40 years, assuming the \$57,657 starting salary for a business major, with annual 5% raises, results in lifetime earnings (over 40 years) of \$6,964,953. Now consider the entrepreneur above, re-entering the traditional workforce after three years running their own business. They earn 10% more each year than the traditional 40 year employee. The lifetime earnings over the next 37 years is \$7,461,508. So even assuming zero salary for the three years of their

business, their lifetime earnings are still \$496,555 higher than the traditional employee with no entrepreneurship experience.

Now let's combine the tangible ROI's over the 40 years, first three years as a social entrepreneur, and the next 37 years as a traditional employee. Adding the \$32,000 owner's draw in the first three years to the incremental earnings above of \$528,555 on a \$5000 founder investment. This results in a tangible ROI of 10,371% or 12.33% annualized over 40 years, which beats the S&P 500 average annualized ROI of 10.83% (over 50 years). Not too shabby! And certainly much better than the "bust" when only looking at the loss in earnings the first three years \$149,764. It wasn't a bust after all!

Scenario 3 Intangible ROI

With three years of actual entrepreneurial experience, intangible ROI is similar but different from the intangible ROI for scenario 2 with five years of experience and a successful business and exit. Again, assuming the small business is a social venture, one intangible ROI is the 4P Impact realized (People, Profit, Planet and Place). In this case, it is likely minimal due to the lack of profit. As Mother Theresa is often credited as saying, "no margin, no mission." And in this case, the cumulative margin (Net Income) was only \$26,000 over three years. This was not enough to sustain the business and therefore could not sustain any possible People, Planet, Place impact.

The other intangible ROI for the founder is the future career options opened up through their experience as a social entrepreneur. There is nothing that would prevent this person from shutting down this one social venture and beginning another. They likely have some valuable, and painful, lessons learned that could be applied to the new business. So yes, they also could be a serial entrepreneur. And the other options are possible as well: going to work for another startup or small business (unlikely though as the CEO), and traditional positions in the corporate world (as in this scenario).

Even with just three years of entrepreneurial experience, the founder would have developed a lifetime competency for launching and running a business. This increases their career agility significantly should the workforce change for the worse, since they could always start another business. Their odds of success would be higher given their three years of prior experience with an Impact CEO mindset, and having learned from their mistakes.

Based on the tangible ROI for Scenario 3, their entrepreneurial experience must have had some value since it translated into 10% more earnings. Similar to Scenario 2, their perceived value is likely higher because of the diverse roles they have played: product development, marketing, sales, operations, resulting in diverse perspectives that often lead to greater competencies in problem solving, innovation, and leadership.

New Career ROI Research Initiative

The scenarios above provide an opportunity to derive deeper insights through additional qualitative and quantitative research. We are in the early stages of formulating such research, as described at a high level below. There are three distinct areas of Career ROI research we are pursuing. The initial study size will be small, including those who have completed the GCSEN course described above and comparing Career ROI to baseline students without that experience. Much of the initial data collection will be based on publicly available career data on LinkedIn. This initial pilot study can then lead to a broader based research project.

Career ROI Research Area: New Career Options

Hypotheses :

- Most undergraduate college students pursue traditional career paths after graduation.
- Those students who completed the GCSEN social venture course are more likely to pursue entrepreneurial career paths.

Data collection:

- Traditional Employment types: large company, mid-size, large non-profit, government
- Entrepreneurial Employment types: high growth startups, small business, small non-profit, family business, social ventures, self-employment (i.e., solopreneur or free agent), or a Portfolio Career (full-time employee with entrepreneurial side gig, or part time employee and part time entrepreneurial venture)

Career ROI Research Area: Career Mobility

It is important to study career mobility which is the movement between different careers and jobs. Increased career mobility leads to more diverse experiences, which leads to diverse perspectives, which leads to greater leadership competencies such as innovation, problem solving, more diverse networks, and the ability to bridge between different parts of an organization. These leadership competencies are well documented in leadership competency models of many F500 firms.

- Hypothesis:
 - Students completing the GCSEN program have greater career mobility.
- Data Collection (for each person studied, capture the number of...):
 - Career area changes (e.g., Marketing)
 - Occupational area changes (e.g., Market Research)
 - Job changes (e.g., different job title and job description)
 - Company changes (e.g., work for a different company)
 - Employment vs. self-employment changes

Career ROI Research Area: Career Value

We may conduct additional research to capture career ROI value not included in the two areas above. This will need to go beyond LinkedIn data and will require surveys and 1:1 interviews.

- Annual compensation levels
- Job levels (this is a measure of vertical mobility) (e.g., Manager, Assistant Director, Director, VP, etc.). These will differ by career areas.
- Subjective Career ROI insights and anecdotal stories
- Career Satisfaction Level - can be measured overall and measure factors such as:
 - Ability to make an impact
 - Autonomy
 - Work-Life Balance

CONCLUSION

Many college students today still have a traditional mindset of entering the workforce with a large employer upon graduation. College entrepreneurs can break out of this traditional and limited mindset, surprisingly, with the experience of just one high impact entrepreneurial college course. This one course can be a life changing experience by creating many new career options that can lead to an enhanced Return on Investment across their career. The tangible ROI of a successful entrepreneurial venture is not guaranteed. Yet, just three years of experience, even with a failed business, can lead to 10% more in lifetime earnings due to the value of that entrepreneurial experience - a significant tangible ROI. And the intangible ROI, often from the new mindsets and competencies developed, are a sure bet.

When it comes to ROI as a general concept, the expected return often justifies the investment. In this paper, we make the case that expected returns from an investment in just one high impact entrepreneurial course, justify the investment by the student. Even better if they invest in launching their own social venture, as the potential tangible and intangible returns are significant. It is notable that the ROI potential extends to adult learners of all ages, who can make a transition out of the corporate world to social entrepreneurship through the help of one high impact course, as described above.

APPENDIX - FULL CONTEXT STORIES

Stories that were provided in full in the main text of this paper are not repeated here. For these stories, some additional information is provided in the list below (e.g., college major).

- Jason Reuben, Babson '07, Major: Entrepreneurship, Strategy, Data Mining, and Founder and CEO, Meet the Jewelers and Baguette Atelier
- Kyle McNicoll, Wheaton '17, Major: Business and Management
- Heather Rotman, Wheaton '18, Major: Psychology
- Wabei Saboi, Wheaton '19, Major: Economics
- Henry McKain, Wheaton '21, Majors: Business and Management, Political Science
- Jordan Stout, Wheaton '21, Majors: Physics, Computer Science
- Gyana Srivastava, Wheaton '21, Majors: Economics, Psychology, and Smith Draper USA Collegiate Women Entrepreneurs Finalist
- Gabriel Childs Michael, Wheaton '22, Major: Economics, and #impaktWISE Ideation Award, Copenhagen Business School
- Aiden Travis, Wheaton '22, Major: Business and Management, and #impaktWISE Ideation Award, Copenhagen Business School

Perspectives of Late-Career Professionals:

Eileen Banyra, Rutgers, Masters in City and Regional Planning (MCRP), Founder and President, Community Compost:

“I came from the mindset of a social entrepreneur. I’m an environmental land use planner, and I have always wanted to do good by People and Planet, so coming into this Social Venture program to me was natural and an easy segue. The program actually refined my feelings about entrepreneurship. It really broadened my skill-set and really developed me more into understanding how I could use business in a positive way and develop that business to support my other feelings. I thought it was a very supportive environment.

I support my family, and I had a career of 30-plus years as an environmental land use planner. I was doing Community Compost as a part-time business, so for me to come in full-time was scary financially and also risky. But I also knew that if I was interested in developing this business, I had to either jump all in, or get out. That’s really what I did—I decided to jump in, and I’ll tell you that for the first nine months it was really scary. Just in the fall of last year things started to click! So it’s really turned around, where we’re really seeing some new opportunities.”

Perspectives of Mid-Career Professionals

Kevin Horan, Fordham, Major: Business (CPA)

“My experience with GCSEN as a Social Venture Entrepreneur in Residence in my role as mentor and fellow student refining a new business model during the Wheaton College Social Venture Boot Camp, allowed me to re-frame my perspective on my business: there doesn’t need to be a conflict between doing well financially and doing good in the world. Even more importantly, there are opportunities to build relationships with other like minded people.

GCSEN has proved it is uniquely positioned to create a community of alumni who are united by a common perspective. Without that action, we all stand to lose more than we can possibly predict. Entrepreneurship is fading in my generation. The obstacles are large, the outcomes uncertain. Providing students with access to mentors and peers who are willing to bear the brunt of these challenges together is invaluable to the students of today and the leaders of tomorrow.

Fordham is filled with students of varying perspectives and interests, from fine arts and science to finance and entrepreneurship, but all students and alumni are charged with the Ignatian imperative to ‘Go forth and set the world on fire.’ For a man like me, my business is how I can fulfill that mission and GCSEN is a willing advocate for my success.”

Perspectives of Current MBA Students at Le Moyne College

“I used to imagine myself as an individual that would graduate and secure a corporate job. However, as I expand my knowledge I am starting to realize that this plan does not align with who I am and why I am. The one thing I have been sure of since youth is that whatever venture I pursue I want to make a difference... The pressure I felt to pursue a corporate job has been lifted. However, this course has [to] lead me to believe that I can gain professional experience and start my own business venture on the side until I am ready to commit more time... I am confident that I want to become a social entrepreneur.” - P.G.G.

“Prior to taking this course I used to be worried about what people would think of me starting my own butcher shop. Since taking this course I have realized that it is not about what people think of you but more about what you want for your life. If you have a passion for something no-one’s opinion should ever matter to you. You should go for what you believe in even if sometimes it may seem like a big leap.” - J.T.

“I have not thought about myself becoming a social entrepreneur before this class. By looking at my core passions, strengths, and weaknesses... I believe that this information can be used in my future careers.” - S.S.

“I never saw myself as a social entrepreneur or an entrepreneur at all for that matter. It just wasn’t something I really thought about. Social entrepreneurship encompasses the idea of innovation that can change the world and I am excited to continue in this thought process... Although I have never thought about being an entrepreneur, this has opened my mindset to the possibility...Having focus on your passion and understanding your why will not only lead to your success but will impact your overall happiness.” - M.H.

Perspectives of Current Undergraduates

Cole Paul, Wheaton ‘23, Majors: Business and Management, Film and New Media:

“GCSEN has helped me know what it means to run a business, and as someone who dreams of being and is a freelance filmmaker this has proved invaluable. The knowledge and entrepreneurship skills I got from the GCSEN Boot Camp not only helped me to better my business, but has also allowed me to gain a better understanding of my clients, since I usually am creating content for other businesses. GCSEN has also greatly boosted my career by providing real work opportunities and connections for me after the Boot Camp. Lastly, GCSEN has done all this with a strong emphasis on social good, which has allowed me to find more purpose in my career!”

Resources

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Endnotes

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