Innovation and entrepreneurship is a fast-growing mission for universities globally and one in which Trinity excels, both in terms of commercialising groundbreaking research and educating students to be creative and entrepreneurial.

Trinity generates a fifth of all spin-out companies in Ireland and interacts with 400+ industry partners annually, ranging from multinationals to Irish SMEs and startups. This year Trinity researchers won almost a third of all SFI/Enterprise Ireland Technology Innovation Awards (TIDAs) which fund the development of innovative projects with strong commercial potential.

For the fifth year running, Trinity has been ranked 1st in Europe for producing entrepreneurs, according to The Universities Report published every September by private equity and venture-focused research firm, Pitchbook. Between 2006 and 2019 Trinity graduates raised US $4.1 billion in funding across 228 companies. Trinity is the only European university in Pitchbook’s Top 50 for producing venture-backed entrepreneurs from its undergraduate programmes.

Trinity’s student accelerator, LaunchBox, has been very successful: since its inception in 2013, LaunchBox has created 81 startups that have gone on to raise over €9.5 million in funding and investment and 130 full-time jobs.

*RIGHT – Aimee-Louise Carton, co-founder with Will Ben Sims, of mental wellness app KeepAppy, participants in LaunchBox, Tangent’s Student Accelerator programme 2019*
Between 2006 and 2019, Trinity graduates raised US $4.1 billion in funding across 228 companies...
Trinity's Ideas Workspace: Tangent
This year Trinity integrated its innovation and entrepreneurship programmes and initiatives in a new cutting-edge innovation space. Tangent, Trinity’s Ideas Workspace, on the first floor of the new Trinity Business School, was officially launched by Minister of State for Trade, Employment, Business, EU Digital Single Market and Data Protection, Pat Breen, TD in September 2019.

Supported by the university’s Innovation Partner, Bank of Ireland, Tangent will invest €6 million in aspiring innovators and entrepreneurs by 2020. The new facility, which is open to students, staff, alumni, entrepreneurs and innovators, has been designed to foster the creation of ideas, with co-working flexible workspaces and event space.

Trinity's existing student accelerator and mentorship programmes, including LaunchBox, Blackstone LaunchPad, the Innovation Academy, and the Women Who Wow mentorship programme are now located in Tangent together with new ventures, Tangent Pioneers, an international accelerator, and Entrepreneurs in the Arts, a mentorship programme for Trinity’s Arts & Humanities students.

Tangent also co-locates Trinity’s EIT Knowledge Innovation Communities (KICs) – which are large-scale, Europe-wide innovation communities, funded by the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) to develop innovative products and services, launch new companies, and train new generations of entrepreneurs.

According to the Global Entrepreneurship Report, less than 50% of people in Ireland believe they have the skills and knowledge to start a business. To bridge this gap, Tangent, in partnership with HEA initiative, Springboard+, launched a new regional Postgraduate Certificate in Innovation and Enterprise Development in Waterford, Tipperary, Cavan and Longford.

Student innovation and entrepreneurship
Thirteen student-led start-up teams were selected for LaunchBox this year, receiving coaching, seed funding and access to incubator space and facilities. A number of these, including Bounce Insights and KeepAppy, have already moved to next-stage entrepreneur development programmes and are kick-starting operations with paying customers.

Bounce Insights is a platform enabling brands to get customer feedback from millennial customers by incentivising millennials to complete surveys. KeepAppy, a mental wellness app with over 3,000 downloads, offers a comprehensive toolkit for mental wellness, including a mood journal and period tracker. They have pitched at Web Summit and are currently Dogpatch Labs residents.

The inaugural Provost’s Innovation Challenge @ Tangent was a hackathon around Homelessness, as chosen by the College community. More than 100 students, working in multidisciplinary teams, participated, with ideation supports provided by Tangent in the form of workshops, mini-hackathons and light-touch 1:1 contact hours.
Blockchain and upcycling provided the inspiration for the winning teams: Aquahomes, which upcycles decommissioned rescue boats into homes for couples, and The Homeless Wallet, which enables cashless, transparent donations directly to individuals and charities via a blockchain digital wallet. Aquahomes became the first ever team from the Provost’s Innovation Challenge to be awarded a place on LaunchBox.

A 2018 Launchbox startup struck gold at the world’s biggest startup competition, the “Internet+” Innovation and Entrepreneurship Competition, organised by China’s Ministry of Education and hosted in Xiamen University in November 2018. Biological & Optical Prevention (BOP), founded by Trinity business, computer science and genetics students, offers a colour-change solution to healthcare infections. It emerged from an enormous field of 2,600,000 participants and 640,000 projects to win top honours in the International Track of the competition.

Blackstone LaunchPad, powered by Techstars campus entrepreneurship programme, connects student entrepreneurs with the startup ecosystem. Over 305 student startups have registered since LaunchPad opened in 2016, and more than 53 student startups have progressed to early-stage funding.

In January Trinity teamed up with NGO, Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) to host a 12-week hackathon for the inaugural Trinity Synergy Challenge. Researchers and students from the E3 schools - Engineering, Computer Science and Natural Sciences - were invited to develop solutions to some of the problems that MSF faces in delivering healthcare to patients around the world.

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