

ENTREPRENEURIAL APPROACHES

An Alternative Way to Pay for Tech Education

Look ahead – not back. That’s the philosophy at new tech apprenticeship school Kenzie Academy, where income share agreements (ISAs) enable students to graduate without a traditional form of debt.

The alternative model, one that Purdue University helped pioneer, requires students to pay a percentage of their future income for a set timeframe.

“With the ISA, it’s forward looking,” asserts Kenzie co-founder and CEO Chok Ooi. “It doesn’t matter what your past (credit history) is like. It’s whether you have the right attitude and you have the right aptitude for the program.”

In 2017, Ooi relocated from San Francisco, where Kenzie is headquartered, to open a campus in downtown Indianapolis that launched earlier this year.

“Marion County alone currently has about 4,000 unfilled tech jobs,” he points out. “Our (the state’s) problem is we cannot train people fast enough to fill the jobs.”

Kenzie has 50-plus students across three cohorts. All are part of the software engineer program, which is comprised of three elements: six-month front-end web development; six-month full stack web development; and year two, which is the software engineering component.

In July, the inaugural class graduated from the first six months of the program.

“We were initially expecting some of them to go out and get jobs, but they liked it so much that actually everybody decided to expand and continue to the second six

months of the program,” Ooi recounts.

“Students that eventually pass all of the competency requirements of year one, we’d hire them as an apprentice into Kenzie Studio, which is our consulting arm.” The paid apprenticeship program will expose students to consulting projects with companies in Indiana, Silicon Valley, New York and around the world.

Graduates will receive a joint Kenzie Academy and Butler Executive Education certificate upon completion.

Kenzie is fully devoted to student outcomes. “We don’t get paid if our students don’t

have a good, successful outcome out of the program,” Ooi remarks. “Within a period of time after they complete the program, if they never make more than \$40,000 a year, they can walk away and we have failed in delivering an outcome. We absorb the loss.

“On the flip side, if our students do very well and get a good job, they pay it forward. They contribute a percentage of their income for a certain amount of time and those funds will allow us to continue supporting future students after that.”

This fall, Kenzie will launch user experience, designer and digital marketer programs.



Kenzie Academy co-founder and CEO Chok Ooi (not pictured) anticipates enrollment to grow to 100 by the end of this year and reach 400 to 500 students in 2019.

RESOURCE: Chok Ooi, Kenzie Academy, at www.kenzie.academy

Crafting Critical Connections

Dr. Paul Szotek knows firsthand the frustrations of a failed business venture.

“We were there at the cusp of what’s going to probably be the future, but we weren’t able to convert that (innovative technology idea) into a business. We didn’t have the tools to understand what team to put together, what kind of legal advice to get and how do we hire software developers and not get hosed,” he recalls.

Today, Szotek is CEO of Indiana Hernia Center (a web-based multidisciplinary practice model) and co-founder of the Society of Physician Entrepreneurs Indiana Chapter (SoPE INDIANA). Membership is open to medical professionals and other stakeholders in health care.

“Our goal is to provide a platform where actual physicians who are in the trenches, who are working on the ground and who have



SoPE INDIANA members mingle at a group event. An upcoming gathering will revolve around the investor perspective of life sciences funding.

ideas can bring those successfully to market,” he comments.

Todd Saxton, associate professor of strategy and entrepreneurship at the IU Kelley School of Business, is SoPE INDIANA’s other co-founder.

“One of the challenges in this space are the disconnects between people who understand technology, people who understand venturing or entrepreneurship, and people who understand life sciences – and particularly the clinical application of innovation, if you will, because they tend to operate in fairly different spheres. . . . When you have these three different groups, it kind of comes down to individuals who are able to bridge between them and make connections. And that can

be a very long and hard process.”

Founded earlier this year, SoPE INDIANA is helping to bridge the gap. Its inaugural educational/networking event in June drew more than 100 attendees and featured entrepreneurial panelists (clinicians and non-clinicians) at different stages of launch and growth.

“There’s a lot of entrepreneurial energy around life sciences – whether that’s device, health IT or molecules and new drugs,” Saxton contends. “We’ve got a lot of thought leadership in those areas and a lot of really good people, so it’s just fun to get them together and sit back and watch what happens, honestly. It’s really cool!”

RESOURCES: SoPE INDIANA at www.sopein.com | Paul Szotek, Indiana Hernia Center, at www.indianahernia.com | Todd Saxton, IU Kelly School of Business, at www.kelley.iu.edu

An Early Entry Into Entrepreneurism

Ethan White exudes energy.

The 20-year-old finance major is slated to graduate from Indiana University in December (earning his degree in two years). He’s also planning to serve up a new way to dine in Bloomington with a popular restaurant franchise.

Founded in 2004, Colorado-based Rush Bowls serves meals in bowls full of fruits and vegetables, granola and honey, and blended with protein, vitamins and other nutritious ingredients. Among options are a beach bowl, yoga bowl, berry fresh bowl, apple pie (à la mode) bowl, chocolate-covered strawberry bowl and Chai’s mystique.

“Food represents – it gives you a chance to have a team and have energy in the workplace. That’s definitely something I was looking for,” White reflects.

One unique characteristic of Rush Bowls is that “it’s healthy and it’s on the go. If you have 15 minutes for your lunch rush, you have time to get something that’s not a cheeseburger. That’s really something that’s not available in a lot of markets and that has an impact on people’s lives.”

During the past year alone, White completed 87 college credit hours to allow him to be able to graduate sooner and dedicate himself to launching and growing Rush Bowls Bloomington (ideally opening in November) as well as two additional locations (potentially near Purdue University in West Lafayette and Indianapolis).



Indiana diners will soon have a chance to scoop up one (or more) of Rush Bowl’s 40-plus signature meals-in-a-bowl. Twenty-year-old Ethan White is bringing the franchise to Indiana.

“I think that shows how excited I am about Rush Bowls, to try to set aside my full focus for them,” he emphasizes.

Meals are fully customizable, something White – who has a variety of food allergies – appreciates.

“When you come in and ask for anything, we’ll take care of it for you. That’s something I really look forward to: the ability to give people with allergies or restrictions by choice the ability to go somewhere and know they can walk out and feel good about what they had.”

He’s been interested in entrepreneurship since age 16.

“That was about the time I started to notice that people were really dissatisfied with their jobs. And I had this idea of, ‘How many people could you take and have them work in an organization with you or for you where they didn’t dread coming to work every day?’ They could either look forward to their day or at least come home and still have some energy to spend with their family.”

RESOURCE: Ethan White, Rush Bowls, at www.rushbowls.com