



NAASS Member: University of Virginia

Initiative Title: UVA Launchpad: Eight Weeks, Six Credits, Two Real-World Projects, One Life-Enriching Summer

Award Category: COVID Challenges & Solutions

Description:

For many undergraduates, summer is the time to earn some extra academic credits or to get a head start on preparing for the world of work with an internship or job-skills training. As the global coronavirus pandemic persisted through the spring and summer of 2020 – making many of those options impossible or unsafe to pursue – the University of Virginia unveiled a new program that offers students a practical alternative.

UVA Launchpad, an intensive, eight-week University of Virginia program was custom-built to prepare students for the world of work by combining liberal arts coursework, technical “boot-camp” style training, and career-focused projects. During these difficult times, this program provided over 130 students an opportunity to grow academically and prepare for careers while staying safe and healthy at home. A three-way partnership between the University's College of Arts and Sciences, School of Continuing and Professional Studies, and Summer & Special Academic Programs, UVA Launchpad combined courses, technical boot-camps, and career-focused projects and workshops. Participating students chose from courses such as The Art and Science of Persuasive Statistics, Media Ethics, and Creating a Sustainable World Through Positive Change. Boot-camp instructors led students to understand the intricacies of topics such as data analytics, multimedia production, and creating brand identity, using these skills as a foundation to participate in real-world projects. Students connected these experiences through a series of career workshops to maximize opportunities and plan for the future.

The program attracted more students than could be accommodated and was very popular among the ones who had the opportunity to participate. Given this success, the three University of Virginia organizations are considering revising the program for what is hoped to be a post-pandemic Summer Session 2021.

For more information about this initiative, contact:

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