

Empowering STUDENTS *in the Real World*

By Alex Mealey, WPS Entrepreneurial Studies Graduate

PASSION Uncovering Passion

I was a member of the original entrepreneurship class at Windermere Preparatory School in my sophomore year, and I remained a part of the class through my junior year. I enrolled in the course simply because it seemed like a unique opportunity I didn't want to pass me by.

10 minutes into the first class it was apparent this was going to be a course unlike any other. Rather than going through a syllabus or having everyone introduce themselves, Mr. Conroy got us to work immediately. The first thing I had to do was stand in front of the class and "market myself", which basically meant describe my life, for two minutes. This was a bit of a shock for me, since I had a fear of public speaking, and this was certainly not the last time this class would push me out of my comfort zone. For the first month, the pattern of the class went something like this: My team and I would present our business ideas for one class, and the next day we would spend the whole class answering questions and receiving feedback about our idea(s).

The rest of this semester wasn't much different. I spent the majority of my time researching businesses and business ideas, presenting to the class, or answering questions on my feet. This transformed me as a young man from someone who hated public speaking to someone who sought it out. This course showed me I have a passion for presenting and gave me the confidence to pursue public speaking opportunities. These opportunities included a campaigning speech for student body president, speaking at the state of the school address, giving a graduation speech, and now I use these skills as a tour guide for my school: Georgia Institute of Technology. My first semester of Entrepreneurship showed me my potential as a speaker and uncovered a passion I never knew I had.



SKILLS

Developing Skills

My second year of entrepreneurship continued to boost my confidence with public speaking and began to condition me to working with business men and women in the real world. That year we took regular class trips to consult with outside businesses and this made a world of difference for me. Understanding how to act in a business setting, whether it was something as small as how you dress, or as big as how to properly communicate with other professionals. These lessons I've used several times whether it was interviewing with different colleges or working with outside businesses to create events at my school. But the opportunity I feel entrepreneurship helped me with the most was my research position at Georgia Tech. I did research on safety in aviation through machine learning which was a project sponsored by Delta Airlines. While doing this I had to be able to market myself to get the position, I had to act professionally when working with the representatives from Delta, and I had to be able to think on my feet when working with the graduate students on the project. All of these are skills were granted to me by my time with Mr. Conroy and The Startup Studio.



OPPORTUNITY

New Opportunity

When I entered The Startup Studio in 10th grade I was timid, lacked confidence, and had no interest in business. After my years of this course I became exponentially more confident in myself, I became a powerful speaker, and I became interested in entrepreneurship. Now, as a second year Aerospace Engineering Student, I'm constantly searching for the opportunity to get in front of a crowd and I'm working towards creating my own startup company. I know, without a doubt, that I would not be in the same position I am now without enrolling in The Startup Studio.

AUTHOR

About the Author

Alex Mealey is a rising sophomore at the Georgia Institute of Technology. He is pursuing a degree in Aerospace Engineering, with a minor in Computer Science. At Georgia Tech, he did research with Delta Airlines into safety in aviation through machine learning. He is a graduate of Windermere Preparatory School, where he was enrolled in the entrepreneurial studies course for two years. Through his work in student organizations in both college and high school, He has experience with leadership, event organization, and public speaking. His hopes for the future include working in the space industry and pursuing his own startup.

