

Diary of a student entrepreneur 2021: Part 1

Every summer [LaunchBox](#), Trinity's student accelerator, offers 10 start-ups €10,000 in equity-free funding and a place on the three-month programme. Follow how these fledgling start-ups get on here.

[LaunchBox](#), in partnership with [Bank of Ireland](#), and managed by experts in Tangent, Trinity's Ideas Workspace at Trinity College Dublin, provides mentorship, funding, access to alumni and investors, and the ideal collaborative environment to launch new start-up ventures.

This is the ninth year of LaunchBox, and the second year that the programme is running online.

Heather Bruton, co-founder, [UniPeer](#)

To me, being an entrepreneur means identifying a problem and setting out in pursuit of a solution. It is about imagination, courage, and perseverance.

However, it is also about resources and mentorship, which is why being a part of the LaunchBox 2021 cohort is an unparalleled opportunity for my start-up, UniPeer.

UniPeer is a platform for university students experiencing loneliness. The Covid-19 pandemic has significantly exacerbated the issue of student loneliness, meaning there is a need to find new ways for students to connect. UniPeer is the solution. It is a college-wide platform that facilitates peer-to-peer support, acting as a support group for university students.

Although the pandemic has amplified feelings of isolation, student loneliness is not a new issue. Having lived in Switzerland for most of my life, only moving back to Dublin for university, I know first-hand what it is like to arrive in a new and unfamiliar place. Making friends and connecting with students who have shared experiences and interests can be difficult, especially in a large university community like Trinity.

I am passionate about the mental health of students, but currently I lack business knowledge, which is one of the key areas I will be looking to LaunchBox for guidance. I have just finished my undergraduate degree in English Literature and History at Trinity, and I will be starting an MPhil in Modern and Contemporary Literary Studies from September. This combined with my experiences working with Trinity's student counselling services and Peer Support programme have been crucial to the creation of UniPeer.

Going forward, the strong support system and mentorship that LaunchBox and the Irish ecosystem provides are exactly what UniPeer needs to flourish from the ground up. The start date is just around the corner and I am eager to get stuck in and see where this experience takes me.

Diarmuid McGonagle, co-founder, [Fonz Music](#)

Although LaunchBox hasn't even begun, it's already given me the firepower I've needed to get started breaking into the Irish start-up ecosystem. Being the typical start-up founder, I am a jack of all trades, master of none. However, if I am skilled at anything, I tend to think I am a master at networking.

I've connected with business lawyers, potential investors, and other motivated entrepreneurs. Especially during 2020, where meeting new people was few and far between, LaunchBox has been instrumental in making introductions.

Networking has always run in my veins. When I was embarking on my gap year after graduating high school in Boston, I was deliberate about securing an apprenticeship that would push my career forward. As the school year was winding down, I purposefully built a relationship with an entrepreneur I was familiar with. I introduced myself when he spoke at my school, made a conscious effort to reconnect with him at my graduation, then kept in contact with him over the summer. When he launched his next start-up, an IT staffing firm, he asked me to join him.

LaunchBox will continue to connect me with the people who will take Fonz Music to the next level. Fonz Music, our start-up, seeks to allow guests to make song requests to the host's Spotify, just like a jukebox. Our Fonz Coaster is a portal into the host's Spotify, where guests can see the active song and add to the queue.

My two favorite activities are problem-solving and meeting new people. Entrepreneurship makes these into a career, where challenges are ever changing and networking gives you access to the individuals who will take you to the next level.

Evan Mcgloughlin, co-founder, [Diglot](#)

Ever since I was a child I have been obsessed with the brain. How a 500 gram lump of fatty tissue could learn, remember and simulate every other facet of human behaviour was simply astounding to me and it quickly developed into a passion for education.

An essential aspect of entrepreneurship is the initiative to seek out problems in the world that matter to you and leveraging innovation, technology and hard work to make a change. The problem I saw in the world was an overall disillusionment towards education, ambivalence to reading and no strong desire for people to educate themselves beyond general schooling. Being stuck in a second lockdown and only a short few months from graduating with a degree in neuroscience, my co-founder Cian and I, thought it was the perfect time to start Diglot.

Diglot utilises 50 years of neuropsychological research on how people learn languages by taking classic novels like Sherlock Holmes and Pride and Prejudice and weaving foreign words into the English sentences. As you get further into your novel more and more words are added creating a uniquely enjoyable, efficient and seamless language learning experience as you lose yourself in the worlds of Oz, West Egg, or Wonderland.

The response has been incredible, but now after 10 months in business we have the amazing opportunity to take our start-up to the next level with Tangent's Launchbox Accelerator Program. Having a scientific background is amazing and provides myriad benefits on how to analyse and problem solve, but this does leave me lacking in some core business concepts.

The most exciting aspect of Launchbox for me is the opportunity to learn these business concepts from real industry leaders covering topics from hiring, funding, pitching and many many more, I really couldn't be more excited to get started.

Published: 8 June 2021