Mid-Atlantic I-Corps Syllabus

This course has two parts:

1. Mid-Atlantic I-Corps Prereq – A fully self-paced course
   - Learn the basic concepts of Lean Startup methodology
   - Prepare for I-Corps customer discovery
   - Complete at your own pace using the ELMS-Canvas Course website (listed below and in emails from the I-Corps team)

2. Mid-Atlantic I-Corps Customer Discovery Workshops - Live, instructor-led Zoom workshops (3-4 sessions)
   - Join a cohort of other technology entrepreneurs and researchers looking at the commercial potential of their innovations
   - Learn and practice customer discovery
   - Get feedback from – and be challenged by – your instructors, mentors, and other participants in your cohort

Completion of the Mid-Atlantic I-Corps Course comprises:
- Completing the Prereq and meeting with an instructor
- Completing the Customer Discovery Workshops, and conducting at least 10 interviews.
- To be nominated for NSF National I-Corps, you will have to conduct at least 20 interviews.

Course instructor and program manager bios are shared at the end of this syllabus, and more information about the I-Corps team is available at http://icorps.umd.edu/umd-i-corps-contact.html

Additional questions about the course: Contact David Steele, Mid-Atlantic I-Corps Hub Coordinator, at dsteele1@umd.edu or the teaching team at i-corps@umd.edu

Free Non-Credit Course: Non-credit courses and Continuing Education Units (CEUs) do not post to the University of Maryland transcript and do not count towards a student’s academic record. Neither a grade nor credit is earned. Students do not receive a University ID card and will not be granted access to university facilities such as recreation, transportation, and campus events.

Non-credit students may access UMD Libraries as Visitors; see https://www.lib.umd.edu/about/visitors.
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Mid-Atlantic I-Corps Prereq

Course Requirements and Schedule

- At least one member of your team must complete all the prereq work and attend office hours.
- Time commitment estimate: 4 - 6 hours

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These assignments will be completed at your own pace and can be done in half a day or spaced out as long as you need:

1. List 20 new target customers for potential customer discovery in your customer discovery tracking sheet accessible through Canvas.
2. I-Corps Videos (on Canvas): Videos #1-18 (Total view time ~1.5 hours):
   i. Complete the assignment videos and accompanying Workbook templates.
   ii. Read the additional material that accompanies the videos.

Prereq Technology Requirements

**Google Apps:** Google app links and documents will be embedded into ELMS-Canvas (See Instructions below). We will be using Google Drive to utilize shared worksheets and will include Google Slides, Docs, and Sheets to keep track of your customer discovery interviews.

**ELMS-Canvas:** ELMS-Canvas is learning management software offered by UMD. All course resources will be housed in Canvas, and you may need to sign up for Canvas to have access to all course content. The course schedule, assignments, and in-class materials will all be shared within ELMS-Canvas. Please see below on how to gain access to the I-Corps course.
Accessing ELMS-Canvas

For UMD Participants:
I. Assuming you already have access to ELMS-Canvas with your UMD email, you will be added to the course automatically within three business days of receiving your confirmation of enrollment.

For Non-UMD Participants
II. Non-UMD Participants must first create an associate account and sign into ELMS-Canvas once with that account before you are able to added to the course. If you have previously created an Associate account, you may still have access or may need to refresh your account:

1. Follow the link here to Create an Associate Account.
2. Complete the Associate Account Registration information, then click the "Submit" button.
3. On the next page, you will confirm your login ID. Change the Drop-down to "Yes" and then click "Accept."
   a. After you click "Accept," you will receive an email stating that you have created an Associate Account:
4. Click the link in the email to activate your account and to create a password
5. Create a password* according to the Password Requirements listed on the right side of the page, then click Update Password.
6. Log into elms.umd.edu using your new credentials and accept the terms of use to complete account creation.
7. You will be added to the course within three business days of receiving your e-mail confirmation of enrollment.

*NOTE: Passwords are valid for up to 180 days. Account holders will be notified via email to reset and update their password in order to prevent deletion of the account. A password reset generates a link emailed to the account that remains valid for 10 minutes. Accounts with expired passwords or with no activity after creation will be deleted and removed from the system after 180 days.

III. To access your course in ELMS, click on the link in the email or search in your browser.
   a. If you are new to navigating the ELMS course space, check out the Orientation to ELMS for Students.
Prereq Assignment Details (Also listed in ELMS-Canvas)

- **Team Profile:** [https://docs.google.com/document/d/1875SwSmqcXVAZJeKtvBQS4AeKBq7Gl6/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1875SwSmqcXVAZJeKtvBQS4AeKBq7Gl6/edit?usp=sharing)
- **Customer Profile:** [https://docs.google.com/document/d/1gXAQwxp-aVpfTQLONchGFlgvaZiddZ/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1gXAQwxp-aVpfTQLONchGFlgvaZiddZ/edit?usp=sharing)
- **Ecosystem Hypothesis:** [https://docs.google.com/document/d/1ZXaAL6A6DcVa5m2FaWvaZ5EmFzMj5Xq/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1ZXaAL6A6DcVa5m2FaWvaZ5EmFzMj5Xq/edit?usp=sharing)
- **Customer Hypothesis:** [https://docs.google.com/document/d/1_4jIJoipRqMq_9FwtE78ld1ZHv9P3S/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1_4jIJoipRqMq_9FwtE78ld1ZHv9P3S/edit?usp=sharing)
- **Interview Goals:** [https://docs.google.com/document/d/1FJnMPWJ5YH5q6wBLWo4OpOM_jmsdz/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1FJnMPWJ5YH5q6wBLWo4OpOM_jmsdz/edit?usp=sharing)
- **Interview Script:** [https://docs.google.com/document/d/1uuP0EUdWNJ2NypdLpgGE87x9Tbha3SjL/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1uuP0EUdWNJ2NypdLpgGE87x9Tbha3SjL/edit?usp=sharing)
- **LinkedIn:** [https://docs.google.com/document/d/1ODbT6NkSUTb79F-IhQBIVL_fe-opno/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1ODbT6NkSUTb79F-IhQBIVL_fe-opno/edit?usp=sharing)

Additional Prereq Resources:

- **UMD I-Corps Vocabulary List:** [https://docs.google.com/document/d/14_rqek0e43z1DkKlsvjsGw1_1x3autjEk8CX2c0D_M/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/document/d/14_rqek0e43z1DkKlsvjsGw1_1x3autjEk8CX2c0D_M/edit?usp=sharing)
- **Drafting a Cold Email to Potential Interviewees Guide:** [https://docs.google.com/document/d/1djRE0e4ZuoD1ZXbeJu7zgciGN9Ltfm1/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1djRE0e4ZuoD1ZXbeJu7zgciGN9Ltfm1/edit?usp=sharing)
Mid-Atlantic I-Corps Customer Discovery Workshops

Course Description

Customer Discovery is an iterative, evidence-based process to help entrepreneurs understand their customers’ perspectives and pain points. One mantra we use is “get out of the building!” Desk research is important, but speaking to customers (in person or virtually) is paramount. Customer Discovery is centered on conversations – interviews – with potential customers or other people in their market ecosystem. Each interview is an experiment in which you test your own hypotheses about the market for your innovation. Each interview leads to real-world learnings and insights that validate or invalidate key components of your business model, often forcing you to change – “pivot” your approach.

Teams will be spending a significant amount of time “outside the building” talking to and learning from customers, partners, and competitors, learning how to deal with the chaos and uncertainty of commercializing innovations and creating ventures and testing their hypotheses. Class time will be spent on the teams’ key learnings from talking to customers, not what they already knew coming into the course. Teams are expected to conduct a total of at least 10 interviews by the end of the course, or at least 20 interviews if you want to be a candidate for the National I-Corps course.

At the opening session, we will explain how to conduct the interviews and more about the expectations. Teams/Startup in course cohorts are encouraged to research interview leads early, and should schedule potential customer discovery interviews as soon as possible, but we strongly recommend NOT conducting interviews prior to the Class 1 opening session.

I-Corps Course Culture

The instructors have limited time and they push, challenge, and question teams in each cohort the hope that they will learn quickly. Instructors are purposefully direct, open, and tough – just like the real world. Their comments aren’t personal, they are part of the learning process. Instructors expect teams to question them, challenge their point of view if they disagree, and engage in a real dialog with the teaching team. This approach may seem harsh, but it is our desire that teams learn to challenge themselves quickly and objectively, and to appreciate that as entrepreneurs, they need to learn and evolve faster than they may have ever imagined possible.

Workshop Technology Requirements

**Zoom**: We will be using Zoom for our Class sessions. We will likely be using some Zoom features to help facilitate cohort interactions. These are all easy to use and will potentially include Polling, Breakout Rooms, Renaming yourself, and Whiteboards. If you are not familiar with these features, please review these resources in advance:

- Renaming + Other Controls (Click on your browser/computer type)  
- Polling: [https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/213756303-Polling-for-meetings](https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/213756303-Polling-for-meetings)
Breakout Rooms: [https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/115005769646-Participating-in-breakout-rooms](https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/115005769646-Participating-in-breakout-rooms)
Whiteboards: [https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/115005706806](https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/115005706806)

**Security:** *Do not share the links for our meetings beyond your teammates that are participating in the I-Corps program. If you wish to include any additional observers or participants in our meetings, please ask the Teaching Team first. The links for the meeting will include an automatic password embedded in the link.

When joining a meeting, you will be placed in a waiting room first. Please wait for the Host to let you in.

*For every session, please rename yourself to be (“Team # _ First Name”). Team numbers will be listed in Canvas.*

**Mid-Atlantic I-Corps Workshop Schedule and Requirements**
Detailed schedule emailed out once you have completed the Prereq and signed up for your workshop dates.

At least one member of your team must:
- Attend all workshops
- Complete all assigned worksheets and assignments in syllabus and Canvas
- Attend mandatory office hours
- Conduct minimum required number of interviews

Time commitment estimate: 10+ hours per week, two weeks total

<table>
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<th>Topic</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Interviews Due</th>
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<tr>
<td>Class 1</td>
<td>Intros; Finding Your Customers; Speaking to Your Customers</td>
<td>Weekly Schedule follows <a href="https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/115005706806">online Workshop dates</a> &amp; emails</td>
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<tr>
<td>Required Office Hour</td>
<td>Getting &amp; Interpreting Early Interviews</td>
<td>Flexible before Class 2 meets</td>
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<td>Class 2</td>
<td>Lessons Learned Report Out; Interviewing Workshop</td>
<td>Weekly Schedule follows <a href="https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/115005706806">online Workshop dates &amp; emails</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Required Office Hour</td>
<td>General Guidance; Q&amp;A</td>
<td>Flexible before Class 3 meets</td>
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<tr>
<td>Class 3</td>
<td>Final Report Out; Intro to Business Model Canvas; What’s Next</td>
<td>Weekly Schedule follows online Workshop dates &amp; emails</td>
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Optional Resources

1) These short videos from Steve Blank provide helpful tips and examples for preparing for your customer interviews:

2) For a more detailed explanation of Customer Development and the Lean Startup, here are some short videos of Steve Blank from the Kaufmann Founders School.

3) Optional Textbooks

* **Value Proposition Design**
  Alexander Osterwalder, Yves Pigneur, Greg Pernarda & Alan Smith
  - A free download of the first chapter of the book is available at: [https://strategyzer.com/value-proposition-design?_ga=1.152090042.2059273423.1389715841](https://strategyzer.com/value-proposition-design?_ga=1.152090042.2059273423.1389715841)

* **Talking to Humans**
  Giff Constable
  - A free download of the book is available at
http://www.talkingtohumans.com/

Business Model Generation – pages 14-51
Alexander Osterwalder & Yves Pigneur
  ● A free download of the first chapter of the book is available at
    http://businessmodelgeneration.com/book

The Startup Owner’s Manual – pages 195-199
Steve Blank & Bob Dorf

12 Tips for Early Customer Development Interviews
Giff Constable
  ● A free download is available at:
    http://giffconstable.com/2010/07/12-tips-for-early-customer-development-interviews

4) Register for the free Udacity online course “How to Build a Startup” at
   (https://www.udacity.com/course/ep175) and watch the following lectures:

   ● Lesson 1: What we Now Know
   ● Lesson 1.5A: Business Models
   ● Lesson 1.5B: Customer Development
   ● Lesson 2: Value Proposition
   ● Lesson 3: Customer Segments

5) Additional Video Content from other I-Corps programs:
   University of Minnesota
   ● Value Proposition Design: https://mincorps.umn.edu/resources/value-proposition-design
   ● Customer Discovery and Market Assessment: https://mincorps.umn.edu/resources/customer-discovery-market-assessment
Teaching Team

Instructors

Dan Kunitz
UMD Venture Strategy and Development Director
Mid-Atlantic I-Corps Hub Director
Maryland Innovation Extension Director
NSF I-Corps Instructor
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Dan Kunitz is a media and technology executive and entrepreneur who has been involved in the creation and management of several successful web and media start-ups. He recently joined the University of Maryland as the Director of Venture Strategy and Development at the Maryland Technology Enterprise Institute, and as Executive Director of the DC I-Corps Node. Dan is also an angel investor and a NextGen Venture Partner.

Before joining UMD in 2019, Dan was Director of I-Corps programs at The George Washington University. He also served as Chairman of the Washington DC Economic Partnership’s AccelerateDC program, and as a Senior Advisor at Venture Well to NSF’s National Innovation Network. Dan is a nationally-certified instructor in NSF’s I-Corps Teams program. He has championed, instructed, and/or managed many international I-Corps and lean startup initiatives in developed and developing countries all around the world.

Prior to joining the DC I-Corps team at GW, Dan was an entrepreneur, founder, and executive for several startups in the web, new media, and education sectors. As Co-Founder and COO of Irides, LLC, a Virginia-based managed services provider, Dan oversaw all aspects of the company’s strategy and operations, and negotiated six acquisitions. Dan was on the founding team of Politico, a Virginia-based new media venture covering politics, Capitol Hill, and lobbying. As Associate Publisher and Managing Editor of politico.com, Dan was responsible for all aspects of the online strategy, built and managed a team of developers, designers, and content producers, and negotiated numerous strategic partnerships. Politico grew to over 100 employees and had 5 million monthly unique visitors in its first year. Dan was involved in two other new media start-ups in the Washington region: Local Point TV, an innovative short-form entertainment-based digital spectrum sub-channel, and NewsIT, a mobile platform for crowd-sourced news. Dan’s career also includes two education ventures. At MBA Center, Dan directed all aspects of the company’s communication, marketing, media, and editorial activities for Europe’s largest test prep provider with 12 locations throughout Europe, North Africa, and the Middle East. Dan subsequently co-founded Professional Prime, a strategic advisory and consulting company headquartered in Paris and London, with offices throughout Europe and education clients worldwide.

Dan has a BA from Wesleyan University, and an MBA in International Business from Ecole des Ponts.
Jainaba Ceesay  
UMD I-Corps Instructor & Program Manager  
jceesay1@umd.edu

Jainaba Ceesay is an accomplished banking executive & finance professional with over 20 years of proven success in strategy, management, collaboration, business development and entrepreneurship. She has successfully led, mentored, lectured, and coached teams within the banking and finance industries and higher education. She launched her Global Consultancy upon successfully completing her MBA at the University of Maryland, Robert H, Smith School of Business at the University of Maryland, College Park, Maryland.

Michael Leifman  
UMD I-Corps Instructor & Program Manager  
leifman@umd.edu

Michael Leifman is an instructor in the UMD I-Corps program. He has worked with and for startups through the Maryland Energy Innovation Accelerator, Bethesda Green’s Innovation Lab, George Washington University’s I-Corp Accelerate-DC program, and as an independent consultant. Michael co-hosts a podcast on technology startups and the economy called “Macro Micro Michael Marco & Startups at the Edge” (M4Edge). Michael is the founder of Tenley Consulting, a firm offering advisory and strategic planning services to corporations, start-ups, multilateral banks, foundations and NGOs on wide landscape of complex issues, including energy & environmental policy and economics, forecasting, technology innovation and business innovation.

Before founding Tenley, Michael was the Senior Strategist for GE’s Business Innovations group, where he focused on the power business, artificial intelligence and the future of work, startup businesses within GE, and the economies of China and India. He was previously the Principal Strategist for GE Power, where he was responsible for injecting strategic thinking across the business. Michael joined GE in 2008, and for many years was the Director of Forecasting & Analytics for GE Power & Water, as well as the Director of the Modeling Center of Excellence for GE Energy. Prior to GE, Michael worked for the US federal government, as the lead analyst in US DOE’s Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy, and as a climate policy and economics analyst at US EPA. Michael also worked for an environmental policy consulting firm, analyzing a diverse set of issues, from chicken waste to the Kyoto Protocol. He holds master’s degrees from Johns Hopkins and Carnegie Mellon, and a bachelor’s degree from The University of Chicago. He lives in Washington, DC with his wife and two sons.
Edmund Pendleton
Mid-Atlantic I-Corps Hub Lead Instructor
NSF & NIH I-Corps Lead Instructor
edmund@umd.edu

Technology entrepreneur, innovation coach/consultant, and startup investor. Experienced I-Corps instructor for NSF and NIH I-Corps programs. Active in SBIR programs for NSF and NIH (and other agencies), specifically focused on commercialization training. Corporate innovation coach and consultant. Has taught over 3,000 teams over the past ten years. Prior to these roles, co-founded technology company (university spinout and SBIR grantee) with successful commercial exit. B.S. degree in Physics from William and Mary, and two master’s degrees from MIT in Engineering and Management.

Glen Hellman
UMD I-Corps Instructor & Program Manager
Executive Coach
ghellman@umd.edu

Hellman has been involved in the Technology Business for over 40 years. Hellman’s been a salesman, product manager, marketing VP, and GM for the Telco Software Division of a Fortune 500 company. In 2012, he was named by Tech Cocktail as the #1 Angel Investor in the United States. He served as an on-camera Business Strategy Analyst for the NBC station in DC. He spent a decade working as a hired-gun turn-around CEO for Private Equity Investors. Glen is formerly trained as an executive leadership coach and has coached over 100 CEOs in the last 15 years. He is a former board member at the University of Maryland Dingman Center for Entrepreneurship and an Executive in Residence at the University of Maryland Ventures.
Staff

David Steele
Program Manager, UMD I-Corps
Mid-Atlantic I-Corps Hub, Hub Coordinator
dsteele1@umd.edu

David has been serving as the Program Manager for UMD I-Corps since February 2020. He is a current MBA candidate at the Smith School of Business, a Graduate Innovation Fellow, and teaches a Design Thinking course to Freshman.

He created his own major at the University of Maryland in Innovation & Entrepreneurship and graduated with a Bachelor’s of Science in 2018. Directly following school, he interned for two DC Startups, one in the food incubator space, and the other in software application consulting. He has worked in and around the restaurant industry. Previously, he served as a Teaching Assistant for BMGT461- Entrepreneurship, in the UMD Smith School, advising student entrepreneurs on how to utilize the BMC (Business Model Canvas) and grow their start-ups.

While on campus he was a member of the Hinman CEOs Living Learning program focused on technology entrepreneurship. He participated in the Innovo Scholars program, through which he consulted with two UMD professors on how to improve the educational impact of BMGT495- Management, a required Smith Business school course. He was also a food tour guide in Georgetown, DC for over two years and has written numerous articles on how to get the most financially out of credit cards.

Eric Marshall
Program Operations Data/Analyst, NSF I-Corps Mid Atlantic Region
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LinkedIn Profile
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Eric is serving as the Program Data and Operations Analyst for UMD I-Corps since May 2022, and is also the Program Operations Analyst for the Mid Atlantic Veterans Business Outreach Center (VBOC). He obtained his Bachelors of Science in Psychology, and Masters of Science in Applied Behavioral Analysis. Certifications include: SHRM-CP, Project Management Professional (PMP), Diversity Equity & Inclusion, and Strategic Planning.

Prior to accepting his appointment at UMD, with over 20 year’s experience helping veterans, he served as a Project Manager at the Maryland Department of Labor Veterans Program where he was instrumental in helping transitioning service members, spouses, and veterans eliminates significant barriers to employment, and gain meaningful employment. He is also a career US Army Officer, West Point Military Academy Instructor, and Human Resources Manager with three tours of combat in Iraq, and Afghanistan.