



**“Our strong belief is that if we can equip students with that ability to think and act like entrepreneurs, regardless of what they end up doing, they’re going to be more valuable and in demand.”**

— GRAHAM HENSHAW  
executive director of the Alan B. Miller  
Entrepreneurship Center at the Raymond A. Mason  
School of Business at William & Mary

The new Launchpad & Entrepreneurship Center at William & Mary housed at the W&M Entrepreneurship Hub in Downtown Williamsburg is a collaborative regional economic development effort with the following mission: to develop a world-class business incubator that fosters a successful entrepreneurial community by providing the facilities, advisory services, and amenities that will allow businesses to start, grow, and reach their highest potential to benefit the Greater Williamsburg communities.

The innovative Launchpad structure includes the following partners:



Each participant collectively funds this incubator, and if a business graduates from the incubator and locates in one of the three participating localities, tax revenue will be shared equally among the local participants. The Launchpad plans to engineer and manufacture “collisions” between students and entrepreneurs, hoping to blur the lines between the two in the “Hub,” the main center of activity for the venture.

Start Peninsula is a regional initiative started in 2012 to encourage: **Inventors, Students, Designers, Programmers, Engineers, Sales People, Marketing People, Business People, Investors or anyone else who has a passion or curiosity for technology, creativity and business.**

Six localities on the Peninsula – the Cities of Williamsburg, Newport News, Hampton and Poquoson and the Counties of James City and York – established a formal MOU to fund and rotate hosting responsibilities for this annual event held the first weekend in November. This effort includes year-round programming to help businesses perfect their business pitches, and it all culminates in one weekend-long pitching competition where participants have access to trainings and mentors relevant to early-stage business startups.

The 2019 event was held at Hampton University where 30 people pitched their business ideas to a panel of judges and competed for three prizes of \$5,000 each. The top winners were:

1. **Atlas Quick-Clip:** an attachment that makes it easier and faster to reload ammunition into the magazine of a firearm;
2. **French Slide:** a patio door that both slides left and right and also opens like a French door for a wide entryway; and
3. **Vestalyze:** an investment tracking and analytics software company and platform that allows individual investors to optimize their portfolio.



**The goal of this innovative event is to stimulate entrepreneurial growth in the local community by connecting early stage businesses to validation, opportunities and resources.**