

Accelerating Success

Prestigious startup program propels venture led by quartet of alums

Tuesday, September 20, 2022



It was less than four months ago that Eric Ciarla '22 and Caleb Peffer '22 were shaking hands with UNH President Jim Dean as they collected their diplomas at commencement. Now they and their fellow founders of SideGuide, Nicolas Silberstein Camara '21 and Garrett Frohman '21, are routinely shaking hands with some of the giants in the tech industry.

SideGuide, a platform helping tech companies speed up product implementation that was created by a quartet representing three colleges at UNH, has achieved some significant milestones in the

SUBSCRIBE
TO THE UNH
TODAY
NEWSLETTER

SUBSCRIBE
TO UNH TODAY
RSS

few short months since its final two founders departed Durham, most notably earning entrance into Y Combinator, one of the most prestigious startup accelerators in the country that brings with it a deep network of connections and a seed investment of \$500,000.

So just like that, the SideGuide creators have found themselves in regular networking meetings, virtual or in-person, with the likes of the CEO of Coinbase and the founders of enterprises like Airbnb and Twitch, developing rapport with some titans of the industry as their own venture takes flight.

“Even more than money, Y Combinator gives you some of the best connections in the tech world,” Ciarla says. “It’s like we were playing college football and we just got drafted into the NFL. It’s the real deal now – we’re playing pro.”

The founders of SideGuide credit UNH, and the [Peter T. Paul Entrepreneurship Center](#) (ECenter) in particular, for providing the critical practice that paved that path to turning pro. The center’s coaching and mentoring helped stoke their entrepreneurial fire and provided a place for them to explore and develop several business ideas – many of which never took off or were discarded – and UNH’s annual [Paul J. Holloway Prize Competition](#) was instrumental in further sharpening their focus.

“One of the UNH Entrepreneurship Center’s mantras is to help students ‘launch your dream,’” Ian Grant, executive director of the ECenter, says. “The SideGuide team certainly did that. But the road to success is a story of relentless determination, failure and an ability to learn and apply those lessons. I am proud of their efforts, which reinforce the fact that each journey, whether a success or failure, sets you up for the next great idea.”

SideGuide is indeed the result of a journey through several “next” ideas. Peffer is the first UNH student to be a finalist in the Holloway Competition

**"One of the UNH
Entrepreneurship**

four years in a row, beginning freshman year when he and Silberstein Camara brainstormed an idea called Grocery Optimizer, which helped people optimize their grocery lists for health and cost. The pair later built a campus life app called Hallhub and brought in Frohman, reaching the Holloway finals with the idea two years in a row.

The trio soon moved into the developer tools space with Flutterbricks, which helped developers increase coding efficiency, achieving a first taste of success with 5,000 users in 120 countries, and added Ciarla to help with operations and sales.

The Flutterbricks experience led the team to create SlideGuide, which took second place in the 2022 Holloway Competition.

“The meetings with Ian and the mentorship we got there really motivated us to pursue this,” Peffer says. “For all four of us, the ECenter kept us in touch with that entrepreneurial spirit we all had in ourselves and propelled us to this opportunity.”

The SideGuide team also benefitted from the opportunity UNH’s structure presented for students to collaborate across colleges, as the team features representation from the [Peter T. Paul College of Business and Economics](#), the [College of Liberal Arts](#) and the [College of Engineering and Physical Sciences](#).

The team also includes a diversity of backgrounds, with representatives hailing from New Hampshire, Utah and São

Center's mantras is to help students 'launch your dream.' The SideGuide team certainly did that. I am proud of their efforts, which reinforce the fact that each journey, whether a success or failure, sets you up for the next great idea."

Paulo, Brazil.

“It’s very important,” Silberstein Camara says of the blend of different perspectives. “Diverse teams give you new insights you have not thought of before, leading to more successful outcomes.”

That success is officially underway, jumpstarted by SideGuide’s acceptance as one of 250 companies (out of more than 20,000 applicants) to join the Y Combinator program this summer in Silicon Valley. SideGuide is the first ever ECenter company selected by Y Combinator.

SideGuide is a platform designed to help tech companies reduce customer implementation times. Companies typically spend months implementing tech products, but the SideGuide platform aims to reduce this time to days with guided live coding “sandboxes.”

The product was originally conceived as a consumer-focused coding platform built into a coding editor, which is the idea that earned acceptance into Y Combinator. But during the program the team saw it could fill a need and pivoted the product to help tech companies teach and onboard developers to their platforms.

Throughout the program the SideGuide team lived together in a rented house in San Francisco – “We were living the whole hacker-house lifestyle, we had a bunch of white boards and sticky notes everywhere,” Frohman quips – as the members continued to develop their product and refine their business pitch.

The seed money from Y Combinator will allow the founders to invest in tools for additional development and hopefully expand the team. SideGuide currently has 10 paid pilots, with interest ranging from seed stage to public companies.

The focus now shifts to raising a seed round, which requires connecting with potential investors, with an ultimate goal of securing a Series A investment in the next year or so.

“We just want to continue building a bigger and better product,”
Peffer says.

WRITTEN [Keith Testa](#) | Communications and Public Affairs

BY:

BUSINESS

RELATED ARTICLES



December 14, 2021 | COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS

Off and Running



November 9, 2021 | BUSINESS

Building an Idea into a Business



December 3, 2020 | PAUL POST

Q&A with Geno Miller '17



University of New Hampshire

UNH Today is produced for the UNH community and for friends of UNH.

The stories are written by the staff of **UNH Communications and Public Affairs**.

Email us: unhtoday.editor@unh.edu.

MANAGE YOUR SUBSCRIPTION **CONTACT US**



UNH Today • UNH Main Directory: 603-862-1234
Copyright © 2022 • TTY Users: 7-1-1 or 800-735-2964 (Relay NH)

[USNH Privacy Policies](#) • [USNH Terms of Use](#) • [ADA Acknowledgement](#)

