

## Changemaker Institute Spring 2018 Report

### About the Report

Seven Tulane students (five graduate students, one undergraduate and one recent graduate), representing five unique ventures, participated in the Changemaker Institute (CI+) in 2018. Upon completion, they all filled out an online assessment of their experience. The qualitative and quantitative findings of that survey are presented in this report.

This report is divided into two sections:

- I. Overall impressions and major areas of growth in the program
- II. Impressions of specific components of the program

### I. Overall Impressions and Major Areas of Growth

#### A. Short and long-term growth and development

**Summary:** Participants reported numerous benefits from and felt CI+ helped them grow in professional ways such as **business and project design**. They also reported **improving their personal/inter-personal skills such as communication, confidence and time management**. Several participants felt the program had provided them with a “**toolkit**” to help them with their ventures or other pursuits. Although all participants described benefits it is difficult to measure the extent of these gains and to tell whether they improved in areas of greatest need. **A more thorough pre-program survey can help CI+ better understand the needs of participants, ensure they are addressed in the curriculum and also to evaluate the impacts afterwards.**

*Participating in CI+ plus allowed me to really have a strong **understanding of the direction that I wanted my venture to take**. The sessions pushed me to think through various options that I did not even know I needed to consider... —Zuri Gracin, Master of Business Administration*

***Immediate:** I benefitted in that I was able to keep momentum and better prioritize tasks. I also was able to maximize my partnership with Vince and SGC with the help of the cohort and CI+ team. I also learned a TON in each workshop/reading/assignment. **Future:** The value here is immense. I was able to fully flex and develop my **entrepreneurial muscles** and not feel like an imposter in a space that welcomed bad or half-cooked ideas. I think a lot of people who would be incredible entrepreneurs are too afraid that they aren't worthy of the title or are too much perfectionists that they're afraid to make mistakes. CI+ helped mitigate those fears in me with consistent encouragement and guidance. I got a taste of what it's like to problem-solve on a massive scale, and the craving for more is such a gift moving forward. —Tucker Keatley, Master of Social Work*

*CI+ program exposed me to areas of business (legal structure, business model, etc.) that I did not have experience in, which **helped me to think about and make plans for our venture more realistically and practically**. —Weiwei Xu, Ph.D. candidate in biomedical sciences*

#### B. Positive working/learning environment

**Summary:** Participants appreciated the general atmosphere of the CI+ program and reported **positive interactions and relationships with other participants, CI+ staff, and invited speakers and mentors**. Several participants found that the **small size** of the cohort (five

ventures) was a **positive** aspect. This is significant as it was the program's first year with small cohorts (previous cohorts were much larger). Some helpful suggestions such as **alternative meeting spaces, accountability partners** and more time for **cohort bonding** will be considered. Further discussion with recent participants will help CI+ optimize the working/learning experience for future participants.

*The **cohort experience is one of the greatest assets** in my opinion. It was helpful that everyone had somewhat of a solid idea for their ventures because the topics seemed to be applicable to everyone. An idea that could possibly work for the future is to create accountability partners for single ventures to get feedback outside of meeting dates. In a way, we sometimes did this informally anyway. —Zuri Gracin, Master of Business Administration*

*My favorite thing about the CI program is that it was a **warm and friendly learning environment**... I could recall several times that I felt challenged and overwhelmed, but at the end of the day, I always pushed myself to learn and think more and of course I also received help and suggestions from CI and our cohort to solve the issue. Without this platform, I might not have moved my idea this far within such short amount of time. —Weiwei Xu, Ph.D. candidate in biomedical sciences*

*The **cohort being so small was great**. I thrive in smaller group experiences and felt I was able to think deeper about their ventures and really had the ability to offer valued advice because I was able to remember their venture details. —Erin Marrero-Savoie, Executive MBA in Management*

### C. Critical turning points

**Summary:** Several participants recalled **specific moments** such as **business modeling and pitch practice**, or **critical junctures moving through failure** that significantly altered their thinking and the direction of their ventures. The CI+ program guides students in a continual incremental learning process, but it is important to think about how we can also encourage and spark these breakthroughs.

*The business model session by Rob and pitch session talk by Desiree gave me a shock. Firstly Rob said "**do not fall love with solution, keep finding better solutions to your problem.**" At this point I realized the idea we had before wasn't good enough. Desiree gave me an idea on how to express the core idea to others, and how to build presentations that will not lose our audiences. At about halfway through the CI+ training, we realized our initial idea is too big and too vague, so we narrowed it down to the New Orleans area only. —Zuanming Zhang, Ph.D. candidate in biomedical sciences*

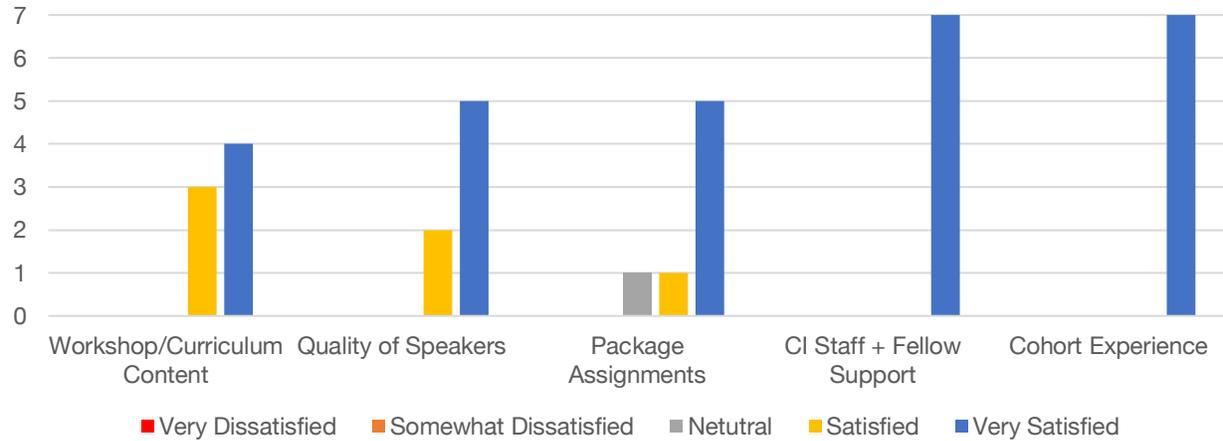
*A great turning point was coming to the realization that **change doesn't equate to failure**. That it is okay to make changes and adjustments and just be real with yourself about them and honest... —Erin Marrero-Savoie, Executive MBA in Management*

**II. Assessing Program Components**

Participants were asked to rate their level of satisfaction with the different parts of the program. Overall the responses were positive with most reporting they were “satisfied” or “very satisfied.”

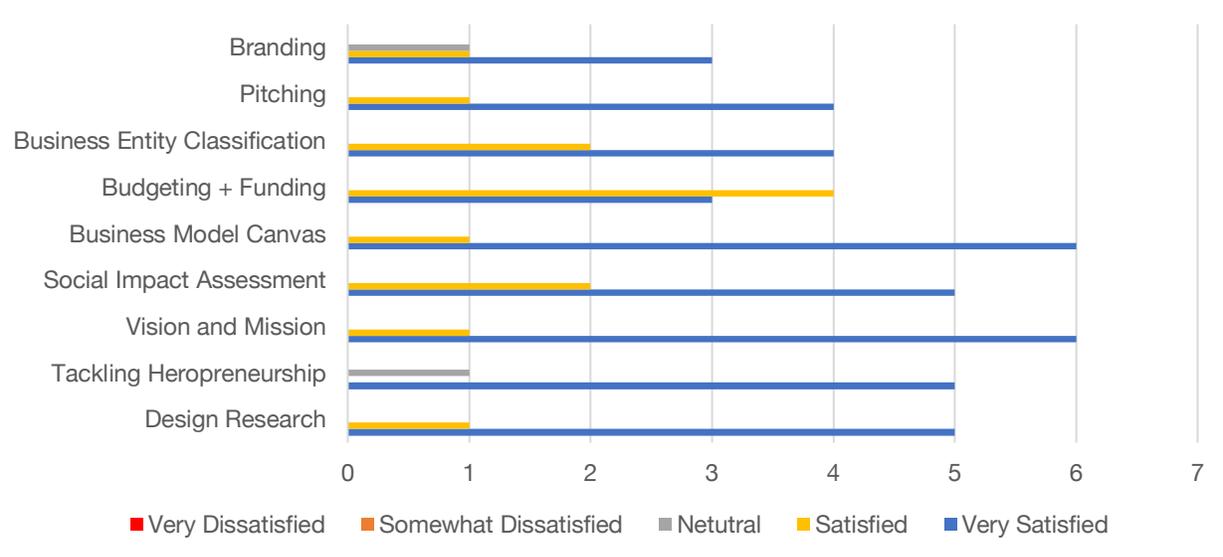
**A. Satisfaction with program components**

**Summary:** Participants were almost entirely satisfied or very satisfied with all aspects of the program. Appreciation seems greatest for the Cohort experience and CI Staff and Fellow Support.



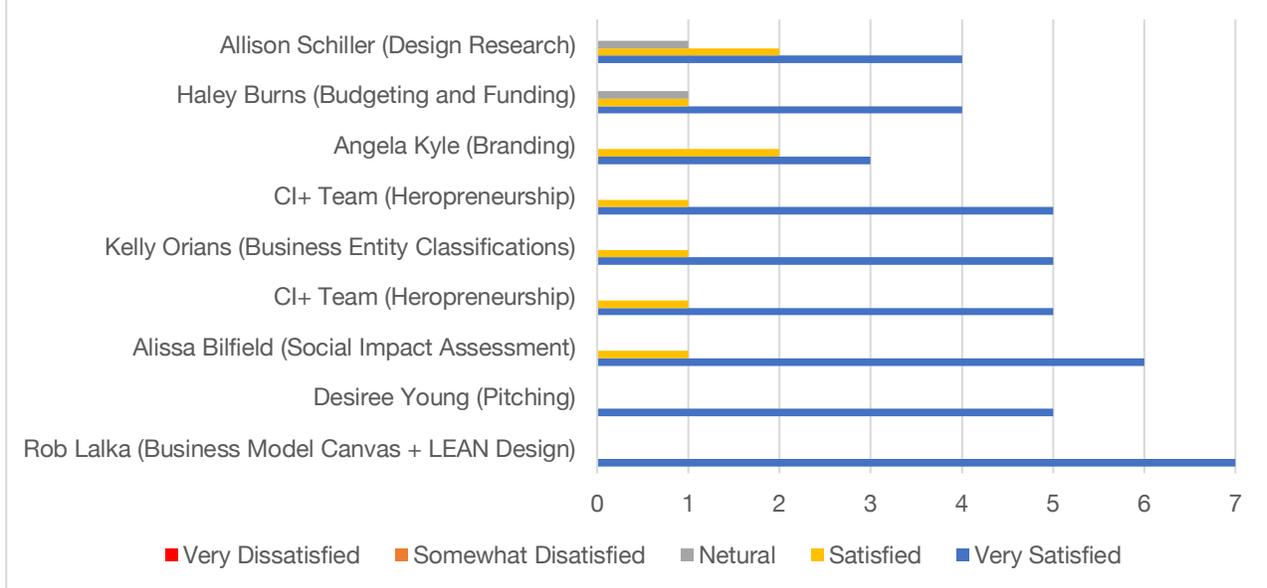
**B. Satisfaction with workshop topics**

**Summary:** Participants were generally satisfied or very satisfied with workshop topics. Only two topics received neutral responses and there were no dissatisfied responses. Participants were asked to only comment on sessions they attended so not all totals are the same. We can **consider ways** to make topics such as **Budgeting/Funding and Branding more engaging** to participants. However, with such a small sample size, survey results such as these should not be overinterpreted.



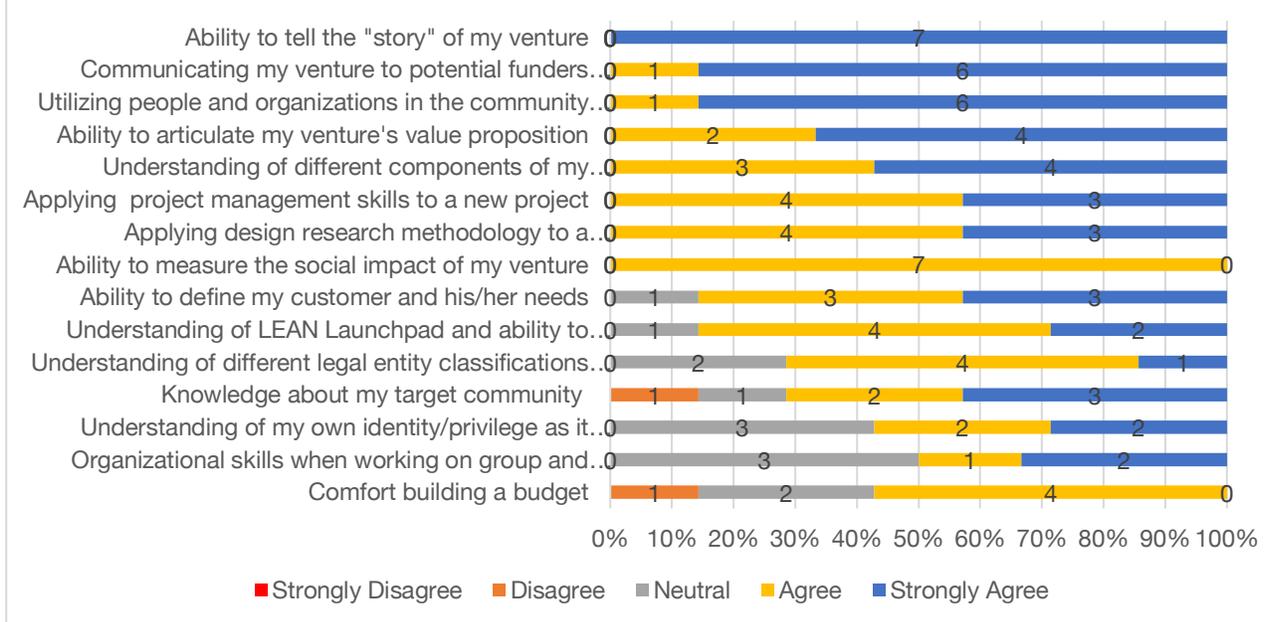
**C. Satisfaction with workshop speakers**

**Summary:** Participants were for the most part **satisfied or very satisfied with workshop speakers** themselves. Two speakers received unanimously very satisfied responses and only two neutral responses were given. These responses alone are not significant enough to seriously affect our decisions about which speakers to invite. However, they provide insights into which topics and presentation style are resonating most with participants.



**D. Areas of improvement**

**Summary:** Participants generally **recognized numerous benefits** from participation in CI+. **Participants felt they improved significantly in areas of communication** but **less improvement** was noted in **organizational skills and budgeting**. We can think about how to strengthen the existing program features for these aspects or add new ones.



### Constructive Criticism and Suggestions

In our ongoing effort to improve CI+ we asked participants for constructive criticism or feedback about aspects of the program that can be improved. Below are some suggestions we will consider moving forward:

- **Lengthen weekly meetings to 1.15-1.5 hours**
- **Revisit matching ventures 1:1 with a mentor.** Ventures should additionally be “nudged” to initiate contact with other mentors from the mentor database.
- The CI GA should **direct marketing efforts to graduate** programs by **directly contacting targeted graduate departments** across all campuses.
- Consider **shortening Saturday sessions** and **hosting them in different spaces.**
- **Add a session** about **building and managing a team.**
- Create **more cohort time together** including **informal opportunities** to interact and connect as a group.