For more information see:
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Discipline
Arts & Humanities
Built Environment

Engineering
Laws
Life & Medical Sciences
Mathematical & Physical Sciences
Social & Historical Sciences

Grand challenges
Global Health
Human Wellbeing
Intercultural Interaction
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Business Support
Consultancy
Placements
Licence
Partnerships
Public Outreach
Research Collaborations & Studentships
Spin-outs

Student Engagement
Subsidiary

Engineering solutions
After eight years as a chartered engineer, Alex Siljanovski knew that engineering was no longer for him. Instead, he set about carving his own path as an entrepreneur. “There are many things that I found frustrating with the industry when I was in it,” explained Alex. “So I took a year out. I went on sabbatical to join UCL on the MSc Technology Entrepreneurship programme – and they put me in touch with UCL Advances.”

But Alex didn’t abandon engineering entirely. In fact, the challenges he experienced inspired him. “I thought, ‘Well, I get frustrated with this industry for many reasons, so why not design a solution for it?”

Cloud Storage for Construction
One of Alex’s concerns with the construction industry was the drawing review process. Drawings are examined and updated by many architects and engineers before construction, but the process is inefficient and mostly paper-based. Alex set out to change this.

“BaseStone is a tablet and web-based collaboration tool for engineers and architects in the construction industry,” he explains. “It allows users to, inspect, snag, share and review anything, anywhere using cloud technology. Users always have access to the most up-to-date drawings and have the ability to associate information such as photos and issues gathered in the field with that drawing. With no repetitive work or paper necessary, BaseStone not only saves time, but also reduces the chance of costly abortive construction work from occurring.”

Advancing the business
Following advice from UCL Advances, Alex won a valuable award from UCL’s London Entrepreneurs’ Challenge 2013 with his business proposition. Using the funds to build a functioning prototype, he then secured investment from UCL Advances to improve the product and enter a closed-beta trial with a large-scale industry partner.

“It was clear to me that Alex would succeed with BaseStone from the start,” says Lillian Shapiro, Student Business Advisor at UCL Advances, UCL’s centre for entrepreneurship. “He is a natural entrepreneur, he understands the market of the problem he is solving, and he was not shy to take advantage of the abundant help and advice available at UCL Advances.”

Now, BaseStone is booming, and the future couldn’t look brighter. With an eight-strong team, it’s currently live on Crossrail and in Feb 2015, it secured a long-term contract with industry giants Costain and Skanska.

In 2014–15, BaseStone gained advice from Digital Business Labs, a UCL Advances service for start-ups, where they tested protocols and user experience, and experienced practical deployment scenarios. Through IDEALondon, a collaboration between UCL, Cisco and DC Thomson that supports digital innovation, they were also introduced to investors, received mentoring and advice on how to pitch, and won Best Start-up in the Dublin Web Summit pitch competition of November 2014.

Also through UCL, BaseStone won a contract with Maris, an architecture and interior design firm, to work on Cocoon, a major strategic partnership between UCL and Chinese investors to build a business accelerator in Shoreditch, which will be the largest of its kind in Europe. For Alex, working with UCL Advances has been key. “UCL Advances’ help has been extremely useful – I don’t think we could have got where we are without it.”
About UCL
UCL (University College London) was established in 1826 and is ranked as one of the world’s top ten universities. The university is a modern, outward-looking institution, with more than 4,000 academic and research staff committed to engaging with the major issues of our times. It has a global reach, with 34% of its students coming from outside the UK, from almost 140 countries.

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About UCL Advances
UCL Advances, UCL’s centre for entrepreneurship, helps anyone who wants to learn about, start or grow a business. Its primary role is to promote a culture of entrepreneurship on campus and engagement with entrepreneurs and small businesses beyond UCL’s boundaries. It works to support start-ups and small businesses across London by helping them to access the technical and business expertise of UCL’s staff and students through a series of programmes to help support ambitious young companies.

UCL Advances is affiliated with UCL Enterprise, which provides UCL’s structures for engaging with business for commercial and societal benefit.

www.ucl.ac.uk/advances
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About Business Support
UCL Advances provides direct business support for internal and external organisations through a variety of programmes and activities such as 1–1 advice, problem solving through student consultancy, student internships, training, mentoring and others.

• We help London-based businesses grow and develop by analyzing business needs and connecting them to relevant interventions such as industry mentors;
• Through pairing teams students with businesses we deliver short-term consultancy projects addressing specific organisation needs;
• We broker relationships and fund exchanges between new and aspiring entrepreneurs with experienced entrepreneurs in another member state of the European Union;
• Individual angel investors connected to UCL provide seed investment to SMEs engaged with UCL Advances programmes;
• We offer fully funded SME Internships where UCL students spend eight to twelve weeks in a London SME working alongside the director(s) to deliver real results and lasting impact in the host organisation whilst learning about enterprise;
• We offer a variety of training courses and workshops are available to help you learn about, start or grow your business – Boost your business learning with challenging courses at UCL!
• Through our Digital Business Labs programme we offer digital businesses user experience consultations, cross-device testing, and large-scale beta testing with detailed use analytics, enabling businesses to make decisions that are evidence based, customer focused and commercially rewarding.

www.ucl.ac.uk/advances/business/support

About Student Engagement
UCL does more to help students learn about, start or grow a business than any other UK university, giving them the critical skills to get a job or start their own venture. UCL Advances offers a whole programme of support – taking them through their entrepreneurial journey. This includes access to training, mentoring, one-to-one business advice from our in-house advisors, access to loans and grant funding, placements and the use of our Hatchery space.

A few of the activities are detailed below:

• The Student Business Advisers can provide students (undergraduate and postgraduate) and recent alumni with support to start, build and grow their businesses. Our advice is impartial, confidential and practical – we’re known for no nonsense, pragmatic guidance that fully takes their personal aspirations and goals into account.
• The London Entrepreneurs’ Challenge is a workshop programme and business plan competition open to all members of UCL, SOAS, Royal Veterinary College, Birkbeck, and the London Business School that aims to show participants the process of starting a business by helping them do it for themselves. The competition is part of a programme of events designed to enhance UCL’s reputation for entrepreneurship and build deeper relationships between UCL and partner institutions.

www.ucl.ac.uk/advances/students

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