Typically, expectations to achieve during freshman year of college are low. It’s all about the small victories of meeting your new friends, successfully finding your classes, passing that first exam, and making it to the end of the year. But if you throw in navigating a hurricane evacuation in the fall and a global pandemic in the spring, it is a victory for students to even finish out the year in the midst of such trials!

However, despite the usual challenges of freshman year and the unprecedented challenges from COVID-19, the students in the ELLC Cohort persevered and accomplished an incredible amount during their first year.
Students in the ELLC blew away the competition in multiple pitch contests—often beating out upperclassmen. Take for example Jody Bell who pitched Femme Financials in the Gender Equity Pitch Contest. Her compelling storytelling ability stuck out to the judge who awarded her with $1000 for a one minute pitch. Or consider Caty Greer, who beat out the competition in the Center for Entrepreneurship’s Universal Design Pitch Contest.

Beyond quick one minute pitches, students competed in the ImpactX business accelerator where the charter of each business is to make a profit while making a difference, based on the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

ELLC students Troy Brennan, Isaiah Kahn, and Jack Koch worked together to create BuzzOff LLC which aims to slow down the vaping epidemic by providing users with a way to monitor and adjust their vape usage. On virtual Demo Day, judges were so impressed that they gave BuzzOff first place.
Other ELLC students founded startups in ImpactX as well. Rex Bingham and Lacey Colon worked together to create FoodProof, Jack Bartlett and Gabrielle Coble created VeriThreads, and Jody Bell and Caty Greer founded Codely.

Beyond College of Charleston, these students also excelled in Startup Weekend Charleston where they worked with other local aspiring entrepreneurs and professionals to create startups. ELLC students stood out during the award ceremony, being members of the top three groups. Beyond creating startups, Startup weekend provided students a chance to network with those outside of College of Charleston and learn to take risks.
The College Today Stories Featuring ELLC Students:

Jody Bell: Honors College Student’s Website Helps Children of Immigrant Parents

Rex Bingham: Freshman’s Goal: Meet Someone New Every Hour

Troy Brennan: Model Students: Meet Six Freshmen from the Class of 2023

Connor Cozad: Summer Research Grants Fund a Variety of Student Projects
Although participating in (and winning!) pitch contests are a natural pathway for someone interested in entrepreneurship, students excelled in many areas beyond the startup world. This year the ELLC produced leaders in SGA and Charleston 40 (Jack Bartlett), Market Process Scholars (Caty Greer), and the Stuart Williams Impact Scholars program (Jody Bell and Caty Greer). Jody Bell also showcased her public speaking abilities by winning the Strucken Oratorical Competition and being invited to be a TedX Charleston speaker! On the STEAM side of things, Terrance Carey placed 6th at the Raymond James Cybersecurity Capture the Flag event and was awarded an SSM Summer Research Grant to do research on Sparse Autoencoder-based Matrix Completion. Connor Cozad was awarded a SURF grant to research flooding in Charleston and build a Charleston Flood App.

Despite their own busy schedules, one thing that stands out about ELLC students is their desire to give back, which they have seen modeled by Professor Affonso since the first day in the ELLC. Students like Callie Wilks gave back by tutoring three REACH students in her cybersecurity class, while Olivia Yalden gave back by serving as the Captain of the Morale Committee for Charleston Miracle.
Another way students give back directly to the ELLC is by mentoring incoming students. This year's cohort answered the call enthusiastically with six students serving as mentors. The ELLC is excited to welcome Olivia Yalden as the Student Director, Rex Bingham as the ImpactX Student Director, Connor Cozad as the STEAM Student Director, Jack Bartlett as the Social Media Student Mentor, Caty Greer as the Consequential Learning Student Mentor, and Troy Brennan as the Computer Science Student Mentor. Under their leadership, there is no doubt that the ELLC will once again produce high caliber students who are passionate about giving back.