

2026 COMMUNITY COLLEGE INNOVATION CHALLENGE

Advancing Student Innovation & Impact



Customer Discovery Coaches



SAMPSON ADDO is an innovation strategist and program manager with more than two decades of cross-continental experience across academia, consulting, research development, and international development. At George Mason University, he manages and supports high-impact innovation and commercialization initiatives, including Mason I-Corps, Mid-South REACH, the Commonwealth of Virginia Cybersecurity Initiative + Accelerator (CCI+A), and the MIX Student Innovators Launchpad. Sampson helps faculty, researchers, and student innovators apply customer discovery, evidence-

based entrepreneurship, and commercialization strategies to move promising ideas from research and discovery toward market-ready solutions. His previous decade-long tenure as a Research Development Officer at the University of Ghana strengthened his expertise in technology development and transfer, grant management, donor-funded project design, and institutional capacity building. He has also served as a consultant with two firms, advising organizations on strategic business development and organizational transformation. Sampson brings a global perspective to innovation education, combining academic rigor, practical coaching experience, and commercialization insight to help build entrepreneurial ecosystems that create economic and societal value across the United States and Africa.



JAINABA CEESAY is the Project Director of the TEDCO SSBCI Credit to Capital Program at the Maryland Small Business Development Center (SBDC), University of Maryland. In this role, she leads the development and implementation of programs aligned with the credit, financial literacy, and capital readiness needs of small business clients across Maryland. She also oversees sub-

awards and collaborates with regional partners, including the Washington and Virginia Small Business Development Centers, to strengthen funding capacity throughout the Maryland small business network. Prior to this role, Jainaba served as a National Science Foundation Regional Instructor at the University of Maryland, College Park, the lead institution for the Mid-Atlantic I-Corps Hub. She is a member of the Hub's Community Partnerships Committee. Jainaba also managed the Maryland Innovation Extension, an Economic Development Administration (EDA) University Center initiative. Before joining the University of Maryland in 2022, Jainaba built a strong record of leadership in strategic management, business development, collaboration, and entrepreneurship. Since 2005, she has led, mentored, lectured, and coached teams across the banking and finance industries as well as in higher education. In 2017, after earning her MBA from the Robert H. Smith School of Business at the University of Maryland, College Park. Jainaba has also supported startups in her native Gambia, West Africa, through collaborations with Startup Grind Banjul, the YMCA, and the Youth Empowerment Project (YEP), sponsored by the International Trade Centre. Using the Lean Startup methodology, she has helped young entrepreneurs identify viable niches and build sustainable ventures within emerging and small-market economies.



EDMUND PENDLETON is a nationally recognized innovation strategist, educator, and entrepreneur with more than 15 years of experience helping researchers, startups, corporations, and government agencies bring new ideas to market. As President of Perspective Innovation and a lead instructor for NSF I-Corps™, NIH I-Corps™, and the Mid-Atlantic I-Corps Hub, he has trained more than 5,000 innovation teams and over 10,000 participants worldwide. A founding instructor and faculty

director for both NSF and NIH I-Corps programs, Edmund is among the most experienced I-Corps instructors in the nation, having trained more than 800 teams. He helped establish one of the first NSF I-Corps Hubs and currently serves as Lead Instructor and Faculty Director for the Mid-Atlantic I-Corps Hub, a partnership of 12

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universities spanning from Pittsburgh to Raleigh. His work has supported innovators from NSF, NIH, the Department of Defense, Department of Energy, NASA, and the Department of Homeland Security. In addition to his work with federal innovation programs, Edmund has advised Fortune 500 companies including W.L. Gore & Associates, DuPont, Bekaert, and Hexion, helping organizations identify new market opportunities, accelerate product development, and commercialize emerging technologies. His innovation programs have contributed to the creation of more than 280 companies, generated over \$650 million in follow-on startup funding, and produced an estimated \$1.75 billion in economic impact. Edmund holds dual master's degrees from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT)—an M.S. in Management from the MIT Sloan School of Management and an M.S. in Civil Engineering—as well as a B.S. in Physics and Mathematics from the College of William & Mary. He was also a Rotary Foundation Scholar in Astrophysics at the University of Canterbury in New Zealand.



TYROME (TY) SMITH has more than 25 years of experience in consulting and leading executives and their teams by helping them understand human and organizational dynamics. As part of his work, Ty developed an innovative education program for the DoD; including coaching and mentoring product development teams engaged in an internal incubator. In addition, he has provided support to several organizations either as faculty or entrepreneur-in-residence; including Bowie State University, University of Maryland Innovation Extension Program, StreetCode

Academy, and Digital Undivided.



QYANA M. STEWART is a technology entrepreneur, social justice advocate, educator, mentor, and award-winning philanthropist with more than 25 years of combined experience across the nonprofit and for-profit sectors. Trained as a certified senior software developer, product manager, and project manager, she is passionate about designing technologies that address complex social challenges. Her entrepreneurial and academic leadership includes roles as an educational consultant for the Johns Hopkins University Whiting School of Engineering, Executive in Residence

for the Johns Hopkins University and School of Medicine's Ward Infinity Accelerator, and National Science Foundation I-Corps instructor and mentor at both regional and national levels. As a social technology scientist, her research examines prominent Black women academics and entrepreneurs of the 18th and 19th centuries, illuminating how their legacies have shaped contemporary pathways for Black women transitioning into technology entrepreneurship. She is the first scholar to investigate these phenomena. Her work has earned numerous honors, including the 2023 Senior Teaching Fellowship through the Women in Public Policy Program at the Harvard Kennedy School and the 2024 Center for Black Entrepreneurship Research Fellowship at Spelman and Morehouse Colleges. She also received the prestigious Fulbright Specialist Award (Ethiopia) from the U.S. Department of State and, in 2025, was inducted into the Howard University Chapter of the Edward Alexander Bouchet Graduate Honor Society. Qyana holds a Doctor of Philosophy in Higher Education Leadership and Policy Studies and a Bachelor of Science in Psychology from Howard University, as well as a Master of Science in Information Technology and a Graduate Certificate in Project Management from the University of Maryland University College.