

# Business Innovation & Growth Center

 **Northeastern**  
ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

 **AACSB**  
ACCREDITED



# The BIG Advantage

Our mission at the Business Innovation & Growth (BIG) Center is to empower high-potential entrepreneurs to dream, create, and grow their business. The BIG Center offers space to create, strategize, test, and market new businesses among forward-thinking creators and doers.

At the BIG Center, housed within the College of Business and Technology, you will learn from entrepreneurial experts who bring field experience into the instruction, develop innovative solutions to alleviate economic and social challenges facing communities, expand your resources and support systems through 1:1 coaching and mentorship, network and connect with a thriving entrepreneurial ecosystem, and learn how to access diversified investment for your budding or growing venture.



# Meet a BIG Center Alum

Rose Guccione, an experienced opera singer, started her business, OperaGram.com®, a singing telegram service with an “operatic twist” more than 10 years ago.

“The BIG Center has shown me that OperaGram.com® can do what I want to do: leave a legacy of joy. I am ready to make it national and involve people who aspire or are veteran opera singers.”

**Rose Guccione (BM '14, MM '20)**

Founder of OperaGram.com

## Building Your Network

The BIG Center has significant reach into the Chicago area's diverse communities with priority relationships among trusted partners such as the Peterson Pulaski Business & Industrial Council, Chicago Innovation, TechChicago, and Illinois Science & Technology Coalition, as well as support from the NEIU's Alumni Association and Foundation, Community and Professional Education, and the College of Business and Technology faculty and Executive Council.



## BIG Success!

Inspired by a client who struggled to open a water bottle, Andrew developed a small tool that fits over standard bottle caps, enabling people with hand strength issues to open water bottles with ease.

**Now on sale at Chicago area retailers and the e-commerce marketplace, Amazon.com.**

### **Andrew Ziccardi**

Founder of Ergo Cap  
[ergobottlecaps.com](http://ergobottlecaps.com)



## Entrepreneurial Experts

Coursework, workshops and webinars are delivered by entrepreneurial experts in a variety of fields. They each bring a wealth of knowledge on the financial and management complexities of running a business, understanding the discipline and hardships of start-up and small business ownership, and a variety of business connections to leaders who believe in the BIG Center's mission.

**Interested in teaching or coaching?  
Reach out!**



# Become Your Own Boss

## Create a pitch-ready business plan at the BIG Center

Thinking about starting your own business or nonprofit? With a plan, your business is more likely to succeed. In this 12-week noncredit course, you will create a pitch-ready business plan.

Your course instructor will guide you through four main components: researching your industry and competitors; developing your marketing and sales plan; devising your income statement for an ideal year; and preparing your pitch so you are ready to become your own boss!

## Shaping and Scaling

The BIG Center supports businesses from pre-launch to exit with:

- Entrepreneurial mindset, ideation and proof of concept
- Commercialization and financing
- Rapid growth through new products and markets, sales and marketing channels with a focus on technology and digital marketing
- Scaling of operations
- Non-organic growth such as vertical integration, acquisitions and joint ventures.

NEIU's BIG Center also paves a path for students, alumni, and the area's local start-ups into Chicago's entrepreneurship pipelines, educational programs, and mentoring.

## Northeastern Illinois

Founded in 1867, Northeastern Illinois University prides itself on preparing business leaders who make a difference in Chicago. The University has three locations in city: the Jacob H. Carruthers Center for Inner City Studies in Bronzeville, El Centro in Avondale and the Main Campus in North Park. Northeastern offers more than 40 undergraduate degree and certificate programs and more than 50 graduate degree, certificate, licensure and endorsement programs.

**The BIG Center will have two campus locations opening 2023 and 2024!**





## CBT Mission & Vision

The College of Business and Technology delivers accessible, applied, market-driven business and technology education in an inclusive and supportive environment for diverse learners.

We endeavor to be a leading metropolitan College of Business and Technology, known for the quality of our academic programs, our graduates, and our community engagement within Chicago.

### BIG Center Strategic Advisors

The BIG Center works with strategic advisors to ensure that our founders are exposed, coached, and connected to the booming entrepreneurial ecosystem in Chicago and beyond. Offering consultancy and educational workshops, these devoted partners put expertise at your fingertips. **Interested in becoming a advisor? Reach out!**

### Support the BIG Center

Join the BIG Center Giving Network and become an investor who is driving innovation and business development in and beyond your community.

[neiu.edu/cbt-giving](http://neiu.edu/cbt-giving)

### Contact Us

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NEIU BIG Center newsletter



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NEIU College of Business and Technology



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