FIVE YEARS OF INNOVATION
2021–2022
ANNUAL REPORT

tsai center for innovative thinking

Yale
During the 2021–2022 academic year, Tsai CITY welcomed students into our sparkling, light-filled new building. Returning to in-person programming after a long hiatus was truly a cause for celebration, with staff and students alike reconnecting with enthusiasm and energy. Contributing to the buzz of activity in the building during the fall semester was Joe Tsai (YC ’86, JD ’90) himself, who spent time at Tsai CITY as a visiting senior innovation fellow. Joe delivered several talks on sports and the world of digital innovation, interviewed recent graduates of Tsai CITY’s programs in our Pathways in Innovation series, and met with faculty, staff, and students active in the university innovation and entrepreneurship community.

This year also marked the launch of Tsai CITY’s Pathways model designed to help guide student innovators toward their unique, potential areas of interest. After substantial time last year consulting with our Student Advisory Board, staff and students together mapped five pathways with an aim to help students understand the diversity of options available to them as they embark on their innovation journeys. These five, non-mutually exclusive pathways are: Entrepreneur, Intrapreneur, Creative, Civic Innovator, and Explorer. This framework has now been integrated into our programs and initiatives, website, and office hours. It has become both an essential organizing framework as well as a tool to spark in-depth conversations.

As Tsai CITY entered its fifth year of activity since its launch in 2017, we were awarded Outstanding Emerging Entrepreneurship Center by the Global Consortium of Entrepreneurship Centers (GCEC), a remarkable accomplishment and important recognition for Tsai CITY. Tsai CITY has continued to be a leader in principles of diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging among university innovation centers. Our commitment to Tsai CITY’s mission—to inspire students from diverse backgrounds and disciplines to seek innovative ways to solve real-world problems—underlies everything we do and integrates into our decisions at every level. A practical example of this leadership is our recent collaboration with VentureWell on a publication and subsequent community conversations for their Advancing Equity series, Transforming Programs Through an Equity Lens.

While these representative accomplishments of the past year are significant, it is important to recognize that they are built upon the solid foundation and sturdy scaffolding of student curiosity and commitment, staff creativity and passion, and Yale University’s momentum in strengthening the innovation and entrepreneurship community. With the recent launch of Yale Ventures and a university-wide vision of a more unified and fully integrated set of resources and goals, Yale is at a point of incredible creativity and growth. Tsai CITY plays an important role in that vision and we look forward to the years to come.

Sincerely,
Clare Leinweber
Executive Director
Community Overview

Tsai CITY’s Student Body

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Tsai CITY</th>
<th>Yale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>23.00%</td>
<td>38.75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International</td>
<td>31.62%</td>
<td>21.11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>23.75%</td>
<td>16.24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic or Latino of Any Race</td>
<td>9.96%</td>
<td>10.62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black or African American</td>
<td>6.46%</td>
<td>6.53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two or more races</td>
<td>6.77%</td>
<td>6.93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>1.08%</td>
<td>1.45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American/Indian/Alaska Native</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0.25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native/Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0.52%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Over the past five years we’ve served approximately 1,100 students each year through programming, mentorship, funding, and student employment. We’ve taken critical steps to operationalize equity and accessibility across our offerings to allow for a greater representation of diverse backgrounds and disciplines. We’ve worked to create opportunities for interdisciplinary collaboration, community building, and belonging in ways that support a shared belief that true innovation requires diversity.

Student Advisory Board

Tsai CITY’s Student Advisory Board (SAB), composed of students from across Yale’s campus, plays a key role in shaping our work. Collectively representing a diversity of Yale experiences, these students offer insight and feedback on Tsai CITY programs, policies, and priorities.

TIMELINE

In September 2018, Tsai CITY Norms were established in collaboration with the Student Advisory Board to provide a guide to help us all create spaces of inclusive innovation in our daily activities. These norms reflect our core commitments to interdisciplinary collaboration, inclusivity across all dimensions of diversity, providing skills & practices of effective action, risk-taking, and resilience. These norms lay the foundation for all conversations and interactions at Tsai CITY and have been iterated on throughout the years.

15 MEMBERS 5 SCHOOLS REPRESENTED

To foster a greater community across Yale’s entrepreneurial ecosystem, this year we engaged Yale College’s entrepreneurship & innovation related student groups in a monthly convening. Student leaders from these organizations came together to think about ways to collaborate and cross promote events and offerings—and to innovate ways Tsai CITY can more directly support their work.
WHERE ARE THEY NOW? Aspecta.ai

Amidst COVID-19, the rapid development of open-source culture has allowed for web talent data to experience exponential growth, meaning that the traditional method of discovering, understanding, and hiring talents solely based on resumes fails to satisfy the needs of the new age.
Community Events

Community events provide low-stakes entry points to Tsai CITY and spark connections among innovators of all kinds. Take a look at a few events we hosted this year.

**Art Exhibitions**
This year, we engaged with university students to contribute immersive art to occupy Tsai CITY’s studio space. These artists, Diego Ellis Soto (GRD ’22) and Lucas Yasunaga (ART ’22), also coordinated accompanying live performances.

**Innovator Teams**
These small group meetups—designed to provide support, inspiration, and accountability to like-minded innovators—convened weekly throughout the fall and spring semesters.

**On Memory, Memorial Mapping**
The On Memory project report underscores the city’s infrastructural history and how it led to COVID-19’s disproportionate effects on Black and Brown communities. The On Memory team, birthed from last year’s Hub & Spoke intensive, hosted two community events that served to report on the research and create transformational space that merged healing, community, and the arts.

**Orientations**
These one-hour events, offered regularly throughout the academic year, invite students from across Yale to learn about Tsai CITY resources and connect with fellow innovators.

**Pathways in Innovation**
Hundreds of audience members joined as Joe Tsai (YC ’86, JD ’90) interviewed program alumni across the various pathways. Each discussion offered insight on entrepreneurship, creating value, pivoting, and more.

**Pitch Slams**
Students pitched concepts of all kinds, including their most early-stage, unfeasible, or just plain weird ideas, to a supportive audience of peers.

**WE@Yale Women Innovators Series**
In this popular series, female innovators—from founders Mahima (Chawla Cocoon), Crystal Etienne (Ruby Love), and Rebecca Minkoff (Rebecca Minkoff and Female Founder Collective) to leaders in venture capital, activism, and other fields—shared lessons learned from their own journeys.

---

**2,337 ATTENDEES FOR COMMUNITY EVENTS AND WORKSHOPS**

**94 COMMUNITY EVENTS AND WORKSHOPS**

**9.5 NPS SCORE AVERAGE**

CLICK TO WATCH Pathways in Innovation series
Intensives offer hands-on learning experiences on specific themes and topics. This year, we refined our offerings—piloting several new programs & improving on existing ones—allowing diverse cohorts to explore topics from product development to climate innovation in multi-session programs.

Innovator’s Toolkit Series
This series brings experts from a wide range of industries to provide attendees with core innovation skills and tangible takeaways. All Innovator’s Toolkit workshops are free and open to the public. This year’s topics included venture funding, civic innovation, branding, and more.

Sports and the World of Digital Innovation
As Joe Tsai (YC ’86, JD ’90) joined the team as senior innovation fellow, he led the charge on hosting his own special set of workshops. Through three in-person talks, Joe Tsai explored how the evolving transformation of the digital landscape continues to provide growth opportunities for the sports industry.

Climate Solutions Generator
This collaboration with the Center for Business and the Environment at Yale (CBEY) allowed students from across campus to explore key challenges and opportunities for innovation in climate change.

Global Innovators Intensive
This program, piloted in fall 2021, included talks from guest speakers, movie screenings, panel discussions, and workshops to showcase global innovation, and discuss how to manage and lead global teams. The last module included an ideation session where students put their newly learned skills to practice to solve complex global problems.

Hub & Spoke
In this intensive students built upon the work of the first cohort by completing a community-centered data mapping project that underscores the city’s infrastructural history and its correlation to COVID-19’s disproportionate effects on Black and Brown communities. The report was presented to the community in two public exhibitions.

Product Development Intensive
This intensive—a partnership with L’Oréal, Yale’s Center for Engineering Innovation and Design (CEID), the Greenberg Engineering Teaching Concourse, and Tsai CITY—gave students an insiders look at innovation and developing consumer goods within large organizations.

Scientific Commercialization Intensive
This spring 2021 program facilitated collaboration between students and faculty innovators to explore early commercialization opportunities for research discoveries.

Innovation from the Inside: Accelerators and Incubators
This intensive, focused on entrepreneurship, connected students to global leaders from incubator programs like Techstars, Y-Combinator, Mass Challenge, and more, to learn the mindsets and frameworks used by innovative thinkers and practitioners who develop new ventures through accelerators and incubators.

Intensives

6 INTENSIVES

167 PARTICIPANTS
Launch Pad

The Tsai CITY Launch Pad is designed to take early-stage founders to the next level with their ventures through asynchronous and synchronous programming.

VivòCare

VivòCare is the first virtual survivorship clinic providing whole-person care to survivors of critical illness, starting with cancer.

ACCFoAll
Melissa Lu (SOM '22)
ACCFoAll’s vision is to be an international B2C fine jewelry and accessories membership e-commerce platform.

Adaptive House
Janelle Schmidt (ARC '22)
Adaptive House plans to rebuild the structure of a home into both a new type of spatial configuration and structural system.

Arch Assets
Kevin Wang (SOM '23)
Arch Assets is a fintech venture that aims to democratize access to alternative investments for everyday people.

Birthway Family Consulting
Yushi Zhong (SPH '23)
Birthway Family Consulting provides consulting services for families around the birth years.

BrideMeetsGuide
Alek Solorzano (SOM '23), Josh Gluckman (YC '24)
BrideMeetsGuide is a website that helps couples pick the right venues and vendors for their wedding.

Carry
Ali Brocato (YC '23)
Carry is an on-demand, mobile marketplace that matches users with a network of nearby carriers, allowing consumers to find instantaneous help for transporting, retrieving, or sending goods.

Uplypht
David Mandelbaum (SPH '23)
Uplypht is a technology platform that applies comprehensive personalized psychology-based and social interventions to drive sustainable physical activity behavior change and positive mental and physical health outcomes.

CoffeChats
Diego Vega (SOM '23)
CoffeChats is a platform to democratize knowledge—domain experts get paid for sharing their time and knowledge.

DesMuse
Camillo Tossi (DRA '23), Mauro Tuffy (MUS '22), John Horzen (DRA '24)
DesMuse is the first space dedicated to the intersection of theatrical design and classical concerted music.

Dimension
Srikar Godilla (YC '24)
Dimension helps engineers design things by using augmented reality and provides easy-to-use CAD functionality at a fraction of the cost.

HITLAB Women’s Health Tech Initiative 2.0
Nicole Anderson (SPH '23)
HITLAB Women’s Health Tech Initiative 2.0 plans to expand the mission and vision of the existing HITLAB Women’s Health Tech Initiative, addressing unmet health needs of women globally and increasing gender equity in technology and venture capital.

Horace Forests
Brady Rowe (SPH '22)
Horace Forests is a real estate investing company that buys tax-delinquent land to sell under market value to underserved communities and individuals.

Hue
Noathan Mai (YC '25)
Hue is an app that lets you review, catalog, and share music reviews online, similar to Goodreads and Letterboxd, but for music.

Hyacinth Fitness
Savannah Bailey (SPH '23), Nick Krupowicz
Hyacinth Fitness introduces barbell strength training to those curious about its benefits in a safe, supportive, inclusive atmosphere helping members form exercise habits to build a healthier, happier life.

Kelp It On
Debbie Bloor (SPH '23), Wei-Ru Li (SOM '23)
Kelp It On wants to bring kelp into the western diet by designing kelp-based snacks and other food formats and introducing it to an under-developed market.

Luna
Elaine Lec (YSE '22), Venuu King (YSE '22)
Luna is a U.S.-based B2B supplier of lotus silk to luxury wear manufacturers and brands, and working to scale the production of this sustainable fabric through automation, industrial symbiosis, and supplier centralization.

Mea-Lynn Wong
Mea-Lynn Wong (SOM '23)
Mea-Lynn Wong’s vision is to create an application that will serve as a platform to validate future purchases, starting with fashion pieces.

Nia Health
Julian Love (SOM '23)
Nia Health is a website that provides people with herbal remedy information and products for their ailments or just for generally improving their health and wellbeing.

Nombox
Ethan Treiman (YC '22), Francis Kigowa (YC '22)
Nombox empowers its users to create, share, and stream multimedia walkthroughs of their favorite recipes.

Parlee
Archit Bagaria (SOM '23)
Parlee is a plant-based meat analog company. Their first product is a chicken replacement made of all-natural ingredients.

Parrot
Harry Jain (YC '23)
Parrot is a social media app and website for storing, sharing, and discovering quotes.

PreMind Health (FKA Nebula Care)
Xiangru (Tang) (GRD '22), Robert (Xiongrui) Tong (GRD '22)
PreMind Health provides a smart, preemptive and multilingual mental health platform that improves the efficiency of care for large organizations.

RDonCall (Registered Dietitian on Call)
Julian Fueyo Gonzalez (MUS '23)
RDonCall is initiating a telenutrition health platform that improves the efficiency of care for large organizations.

Read to Lead
Abraham Keita (YC '24), Dylan Baldwin (YC '25)
Read to Lead aims to transform education in Africa, with a focus on Liberia by raising books, computers, and educational resources that will provide quality education for Liberian children.

Sectus
Seun Omojide (YC '22)
Sectus builds the infrastructure for scalable computation and communication of data generated at the network edge.

SHEN
Clara Lee (YC '24)
SHEN is dedicated to making Chinese medicine more accessible by delivering benefits through a high-potency, easily consumable gummy.

Sillable
Aaron Daniel (YC '23), Em Tchorz (YC '23), Burton Lyng Olsen (YC '25)
Sillable is building a mobile application that allows retail consumers to search for products sold in local stores.

Swift Spot
Kevin Yip (YC '24), Philippe Hoffner (SOM '22), August Money, Harish Vernuri
Swift Spot is a digital marketplace for those looking to buy and sell parking spaces for live events.

Toomb
Julian Fueyo Gonzalez (MUS '23)
Toomb is a social media app designed to connect users in ‘hyper-social environments’.

VivòCare
Hill Moss (SOM, SPH '22)
VivòCare’s mission is to equip survivors of severe and critical illness with the tools they need to lead happier, healthier lives.

Reflected above are the fall ’21 participants.

51 TEAMS SUPPORTED
WHERE ARE THEY NOW? Midnight Oil Collective

“At every point in our development, Midnight Oil Collective has been supported by resources and networks through Tsai CITY. We very much recognize that our work would not have been possible without Margaret, Matt, Victor, Justin, and Clare, all who worked tirelessly with us as we took our first steps. Thank you, Tsai CITY for burning the midnight oil with us all along the way.”

— Frances Pollock (MUS ’25)
Tsai CITY’s Accelerator, which runs every fall and spring semester, guides students and teams with innovative ideas through the process of building effective organizations, projects, and ventures through workshops, mentorship, and funding. The Accelerator provides an enriching learning opportunity for students with innovative ideas.

Aspects.ai
Zongjian He (GRD ’22), Leo Song
Aspects.ai provides a revolutionary candidate assessment solution; powered by AI, Aspects.ai quantitatively evaluate candidates’ qualifications in thousands of skill aspects with big data from 40+ sources.

Catalogue
Dana Joseph (SPH ’22), Newlyn Joseph (YC ’19)
Catalogue is a medical technology that combines artificial intelligence and precision medicine to improve cancer diagnostics.

Cimu
Kaci Xie (YC ’24)
Cimu is a marketplace that rescues unwanted clothes from landfills by refashioning them through stylish, planet-saving alterations.

Dalmatian
Alex Holm (SOM ’24)
Dalmatian helps young adults fight acne with trendy, fashionable, and fun graphic pimple patches that are designed to be displayed.

Edwell
Nicola Fleischer (SOM ’22)
Edwell is a technology-enabled wellness platform to connect, empower, and support educators.

Environmental Justice Index LLC
Pari Kasotia (YSE ’22), Jessica Scott
Environmental Justice Index provides insights on a company’s environmental justice performance.

Hirect
Steven Zipei Zhu (GRD ’22)
Hirect is an online recruiting platform where recruiters and candidates can directly chat with each other.

Meego Inc
Jiamil Liu (SOM ’22)
Meego is an e-bike company that wants to build a modern aftersales service system to integrate existing resources in the industry.

Perkify
Matteo Carrabba (YC ’24)
Perkify provides the infrastructure for businesses and institutions to offer subscription services as a benefit to their employees or members.

PlanMemorial.com
Xiaoteng Huang (SOM ’22), Kate Busatto (DIV ’23)
PlanMemorial.com is a website/mobile application that helps people to plan, organize, and execute memorial services of their loved ones who pass away.

The New Muses Project
Joe Lerangis (MUS ’25), Gloria Yin (MUS ’22), Rhianne Cockrell
The New Muses Project incentivizes musicians to perform, support, and research music by composers from historically marginalized backgrounds through a website that matches users’ interests with tailored suggestions, a series of recording and performance projects to amplify underrepresented voices, and a transcription project to bring archival material to the forefront of classical music.

The Palestinian Soap Store
Chris Hebdon (GRD ’22), Dina Omar (GRD ’22)
The Palestinian Soap Store seeks to be the first store in the USA to sell all of the historic brands of traditional soaps from Nablus.

Tutoring for Tomorrow
Preston Smith (YC ’23), Louis Moon (YC ’22)
Tutoring for Tomorrow is a nonprofit that provides students with academic assistance in order to support local communities.

---

As we welcomed our inaugural Associate Director of Student Programming, Sade Owoye, we saw changes to popular venture development programs Launch Pad and Accelerator. This year, in-person workshops called “discovery sessions” were introduced to the Launch Pad’s asynchronous format. These live sessions provided students with an experiential learning opportunity that was complementary to the asynchronous learning modules. For the Accelerator, students attended networking sessions that provided them with the chance to build relationships within the Yale ecosystem.

In addition, students were introduced to Circle, an all-in-one community platform that helped Accelerator and Launch Pad participants interact with each other and access program content. Each of these improvements aligned with a common goal for this year: build community, collaboration, and engagement amongst program participants. As we approach a new academic year, there will continue to be improvements and iterations to these popular offerings; among them include rolling admission to the Launch Pad program.
The Tsai CITY Summer Fellowship is a full-time accelerator designed for companies, nonprofits, and initiatives that have demonstrated traction and have developed sustainable models for their ventures. The fellowship provides a $15,000 grant for each team, along with a diverse array of workshops, mentoring resources, pitch opportunities, and more.

As the Summer Fellowship returned to an in-person experience, we worked to ensure a critical component of the program was re-introduced: the summer fellowship retreat. This year’s retreat took place at the Interlaken Inn in Lakeville, Connecticut and featured two days of community building, farm-to-table meals, and adventurous canoeing and kayaking experiences in Lake Wonoscopomuc. “The retreat built a strong sense of community and deepened the connection between the teams and our staff,” shared Jaclyn Dadio, Tsai CITY’s Associate Director of Operations and Events.

As the Summer Fellowship returned to an in-person experience, we worked to ensure a critical component of the program was re-introduced: the summer fellowship retreat. This year’s retreat took place at the Interlaken Inn in Lakeville, Connecticut and featured two days of community building, farm-to-table meals, and adventurous canoeing and kayaking experiences in Lake Wonoscopomuc. “The retreat built a strong sense of community and deepened the connection between the teams and our staff,” shared Jaclyn Dadio, Tsai CITY’s Associate Director of Operations and Events.

As the Summer Fellowship returned to an in-person experience, we worked to ensure a critical component of the program was re-introduced: the summer fellowship retreat. This year’s retreat took place at the Interlaken Inn in Lakeville, Connecticut and featured two days of community building, farm-to-table meals, and adventurous canoeing and kayaking experiences in Lake Wonoscopomuc. “The retreat built a strong sense of community and deepened the connection between the teams and our staff,” shared Jaclyn Dadio, Tsai CITY’s Associate Director of Operations and Events.

As the Summer Fellowship returned to an in-person experience, we worked to ensure a critical component of the program was re-introduced: the summer fellowship retreat. This year’s retreat took place at the Interlaken Inn in Lakeville, Connecticut and featured two days of community building, farm-to-table meals, and adventurous canoeing and kayaking experiences in Lake Wonoscopomuc. “The retreat built a strong sense of community and deepened the connection between the teams and our staff,” shared Jaclyn Dadio, Tsai CITY’s Associate Director of Operations and Events.

As the Summer Fellowship returned to an in-person experience, we worked to ensure a critical component of the program was re-introduced: the summer fellowship retreat. This year’s retreat took place at the Interlaken Inn in Lakeville, Connecticut and featured two days of community building, farm-to-table meals, and adventurous canoeing and kayaking experiences in Lake Wonoscopomuc. “The retreat built a strong sense of community and deepened the connection between the teams and our staff,” shared Jaclyn Dadio, Tsai CITY’s Associate Director of Operations and Events.
Mentoring

Mentoring is a key resource for our students. We offer mentoring through two primary tracks: office hours—which invite any student to chat with our core team about new ideas, feedback, or whatever’s on their mind—and more structured connections between project teams and our robust mentor network.

Mentoring is an essential offering at Tsai CITY and has grown tremendously over the past five years. In 2017, Tsai CITY’s mentor network included 80 mentors who supported students in our Accelerator and Summer Fellowship programs. As we complete our fifth year, we have more than 540 mentors who offer opportunities (or ‘entry points’) to support students participating in a variety of programs—including the Launch Pad, mentor breakfasts, Startup Yale, and rolling mentorship—and with various needs including marketing, legal, fundraising operations and more.

“Every student innovator at Yale deserves a mentor.”
— Victor Padilla-Taylor, Director of Networks

Funding

We help students realize ideas through several funding streams, from small grants for early-stage concepts to major entrepreneurship awards.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fund</th>
<th>Awards</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student Ecosystem Fund</td>
<td>$3,125</td>
<td>New fund to offer funding for students doing work that supports and advances Yale’s entrepreneurship &amp; innovation ecosystem. Including funding for events, clubs, or any other creative initiative that helps students at Yale be part of innovation, students are eligible for up to $500 in matching funds.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Exploration Fund</td>
<td>$16,635</td>
<td>New fund to encourage students to build Yale’s innovation ecosystem. This includes planning events, starting clubs, or any other creative initiative that helps students contribute to innovation and entrepreneurship. Students received up to $500 in matching funds and gained access to a community of other innovators, entrepreneurs, and ecosystem builders.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Startup Yale Prizes</td>
<td>$68,000</td>
<td>Tsai CITY sponsored three prizes (the Miller Prize, the Yale Innovators’ Prize, and the newly added Manolo Sanchez Prize), including associated audience choice awards.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Milestone Fund</td>
<td>$55,690</td>
<td>An opportunity for students who have a prototype or operational proof of concept and are invested in the long-term success of their endeavor to apply for up to $2,000 to take their business, project, or intervention to the next level.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Exploration Fund</td>
<td>$16,635</td>
<td>A new fund to encourage students to build Yale’s innovation ecosystem. This includes planning events, starting clubs, or any other creative initiative that helps students contribute to innovation and entrepreneurship. Students received up to $500 in matching funds and gained access to a community of other innovators, entrepreneurs, and ecosystem builders.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Venture Development Funding</td>
<td>$228,000</td>
<td>Participants in our Accelerator and Summer Fellowship cohorts received grants as part of these programs.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“Every student innovator at Yale deserves a mentor.”
— Victor Padilla-Taylor, Director of Networks

TIMELINE

The last five years have seen a steady increase in both the number of students supported and the amount of funding available.

NEW FUND FOR ECOSYSTEM BUILDERS

This year, Tsai CITY introduced the Student Ecosystem Fund to Yale students. This fund encourages students to help build Yale’s innovation ecosystem. This includes planning events, starting clubs, or any other creative initiative that helps students contribute to innovation and entrepreneurship. Students received up to $500 in matching funds and gained access to a community of other innovators, entrepreneurs, and ecosystem builders.

Among this year’s recipients was SYNC—an initiative led by four International Yale students from South Korea, England, Hong Kong, and Singapore—who were displaced and working across time zones during the COVID lockdown. Their experience led them to explore the idea of instantaneity, seamlessness and interconnectivity. They proposed an exhibition that asks artists and students to re-imagine how we as innovators can be “sync” and meet with others while maintaining privacy and balance in our lives.

FACT

Tsai CITY awarded the most funding in its five-year history during the 2020–2021 academic year, totaling $466,731. During the pandemic, Tsai CITY repurposed resources that would have been used primarily for in-person programming to create more grants for student innovators pursuing projects of their own.
Startup Yale 2022 brought together hundreds of attendees in a series of conversations and pitch-offs, through virtual viewing and in-person watch parties. The event kicked off with virtual tours of physical landscapes and infrastructures launched by Yale startups. Later, students pitched for Yale’s biggest entrepreneurship awards—including a new prize for student-led startups helping the financially underserved.

### New Haven Civic Innovation Prize
The New Haven Civic Innovation Prize awards up to $10,000 to the best student- or community-led venture or project focused on benefiting New Haven.

Prize winners: Healing by Growing ($8,000), Inspire Centre for Infinite Learning ($2,000) Camila Guiza-Chavez, Ivette Ruiz, Yuka Matsubara; Dominiq Oti (ARC ’22)

The judges decided to split the prize between two teams. Healing by Growing Farms is an urban farm addressing food insecurity by and for disabled people and trauma survivors centering BIPOC, LGBTQ+ and other marginalized groups to reconnect to themselves and their communities by reconnecting to the land.

Inspire Centre for Infinite Learning aims to renovate its interior with the clear intent to transform the use of an existing interior space into a training centre for the Newhallville community. The space will have resources to support training such as: computers, study desks and flexible study areas for quiet reading and gathering.

Rita Wilson Prize Fund in Support of Innovation and Entrepreneurship
The Rita Wilson Prize Fund in Support of Innovation and Entrepreneurship is a $10,000 cash prize awarded by InnovateHealth Yale to the best student-led venture focused on creating a technological solution to address a health disparity in the United States.

Prize winner: Adiona Joshua Kim (YC ’23), Katherine Sylvester (YC ’23)

Using novel analytics that predict onset of key dementia symptoms from consumer-grade, wearable sensors, Adiona uses a mobile app to alleviate the 24/7 worry that comes with caregiving, providing caregivers peace of mind and tools to provide better care, while providing clinicians/researchers valuable information about disease presentation/progression.

Thorne Prize for Social Innovation in Public Health or Education
The Thorne Prize for Social Innovation in Health or Education is a $25,000 cash prize awarded to the best student-led venture focused on social innovation in health or education for underserved communities in the United States or low-resource countries.

Prize winner: The Educator Wellness Project Nicola Fleischer (SOM ’22)

The Educator Wellness Project supports wellbeing and retention in the teaching profession. It provides individualized wellness coaching, small group healing circles, and social-emotional learning resources to meet the mental health and wellness needs of teachers.

Miller Prize
The Miller Prize awards a $25,000 cash prize to a student-led venture working on innovative tech or tech-enabled solutions that has a definable go-to-market strategy.

Prize winner: Panluminate Inc Ons M’Saad (GRD ’22), Joerg Bewersdorf, Tom Friedlander

Panluminate Inc is a proprietary pan-Expansion Microscopy that will revolutionize biological research by enabling the average scientist to acquire high-end 3D images of their samples at a fraction of the time, cost, and difficulty of current state-of-the-art methods.

Sustainable Venture Prize
The Sustainable Venture Prize, managed by the Yale Center for Business and the Environment, awards $25,000 to a promising student business venture that advances environmental sustainability.

Prize winner: Aatma Leather Vidit Bhandarkar (GRD ’24), Jinali Mody (YSE ‘23), Georgia Hirsty (SOM ’22), Nicola Fleischer (SOM ‘22)

Aatma Leather manufactures mango leather from mango peel and core waste while ensuring comparable quality to animal hide and selling R2B to fashion houses for products like belts, shoes, bags and car manufacturers for seats in efforts to move towards more environmentally friendly, cruelty-free substitutes for clothing.

Manolo Sanchez Prize
The Manolo Sanchez Prize awards $25,000 to a for-profit or non-profit student-led startup with the potential to help improve the financial health of the financially underserved.

Prize winner: Midnight Oil Collective
Edwin Joseph MUS ’20, Frances Pollock MUS ’25, Sola Fadiran DRA ’22, Emily Roller

Midnight Oil Collective is a venture studio that invests in creative-economy based businesses and assets validated through our incubator and accelerator.

Yale Innovators Prize
The Yale Innovators Prize is a $15,000 cash prize awarded to the for-profit or non-profit startup that has the potential to produce the greatest impact (financially, socially, or otherwise).

The Yale Innovators’ Prize is open to any project, campaign, solution, venture, or non-profit led by a current Yale student(s).

Prize winner: Froality Myths
Georgia Eady Herry (SOM ’23), Erin Carter

Froality Myths is a different kind of diversity, equity, and inclusion consultancy that uses the power of practice, community leadership, and experiential learning to transform workplace culture and advance justice.
Five Years of Innovation

Where it Began
In 2017, with a generous donation from the Joe and Clara Tsai Foundation, Tsai CITY began its journey as Yale University’s student hub for creativity and innovation. Over the next five years, the center would flourish into a space where students from all backgrounds and disciplines could come together and access programs, funding, and mentorship. From our first mentor session in 2017 to completing 1,000 events a year later, every year has been one of learning, growing, and continuously working to build a new kind of innovation center, rooted in inclusivity.

Striving for a New Kind of Innovation Center
Building a new kind of innovation center has been possible through a mix of strong partnerships, diverse leadership and a constant growth mindset. Collaborations with partners like the Center for Business and the Environment (CBEY), the Center for Collaborative Media and Arts (CCAM), and the L’Oréal Groupe—among many others—have allowed us to offer an array of programs that meet the needs of students across the full spectrum of innovation.

The Past Year
In Fall 2021, Tsai CITY welcomed students to its new building in the heart of Becton Plaza. While the pandemic expanded what innovation rooted in inclusivity and access looks like—allowing us to find creative ways to produce digital content that can be accessed on-demand, offering hybrid options for programming, and various online community building opportunities—we also spent time identifying ways to cultivate a robust in-person community in our new space. The past year has been one of many victories. Not only were we able to reopen our doors, but we received the GCEC award for Outstanding Emerging Entrepreneurship Center and ranked in the top 10 university innovation centers for our work in DEI&A (Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility) by VentureWell (2020). Tsai CITY also welcomed Joe Tsai (YC ’86, JD ’90) back to campus as a visiting senior innovation fellow. As we continue to grow and learn, we’re committed to recognizing the work our program alumni, partners, staff, and mentors have done to make Tsai CITY a national model for student entrepreneurship and innovation.

A Bold Vision Ahead

Prioritizing Impact
Moving forward with innovation in mind is a vision not just at Tsai CITY but across Yale’s ecosystem. To further this vision, Josh Geballe (YC ’97, MBA ’02)—Yale’s inaugural senior associate provost for entrepreneurship and innovation—hopes to nurture an already robust innovation and entrepreneurship ecosystem at Yale and in Greater New Haven through the launch of Yale Ventures. Yale Ventures will serve as a resource to help drive economic growth and create opportunity in our communities for students, faculty, staff and residents of New Haven. As we look ahead to this work, as members of Yale Ventures, it is important for us to continue to develop diverse and inclusive, interdisciplinary collaborations that expand beyond the walls of our campus and into the broader community.

Up and Coming
For the first time in two years, we’ve launched our in-person Summer Fellowship and are preparing for more in-person programming, networking and mentoring opportunities in the fall. Moving forward, our Launch Pad program will have rolling enrollment—reducing the barrier for entry—we will be hard at work building stronger connections with student groups doing innovation and entrepreneurship work across campus—both at the undergraduate and graduate level. We’re exploring ways to make our new space more lively and engaging with furniture experiments and community building activities. And, we’re preparing to commemorate Tsai CITY’s fifth year with a birthday celebration. As we ease back into in-person events, we’re hoping that the center remains at the forefront of student ideation and innovation. We truly cannot wait to witness and support all the creativity that lies ahead.
WHERE ARE THEY NOW?  

Firoz Academy

Wazhma Sadat (YC ’14, JD ’19) is the first Afghan woman to graduate from Yale College and Yale Law School. After college, Sadat co-founded Firoz Academy, an online academy with the mission to provide educational and virtual employment opportunities for underserved communities in Afghanistan.

Firoz Academy

Firoz Academy was one of the first ventures to participate in Tsai CITY’s Summer Fellowship in 2018. Over the course of the 8-week boot camp, 15 teams worked to move from early stages to launch with the help of intensive workshops, mentorships, and pitch opportunities. Firoz Academy received $15,000 to test, develop, and scale its existing business model. Firoz Academy continues to provide world-class instruction in math, English, and technology to help students in Afghanistan prosper in the global services economy.