Support program for entrepreneurial students at UAS

FIRST VENTURES
From Student to spin-off Founder

With “First Ventures” Gebert Rüf Stiftung promotes bachelor’s and master’s students of universities of applied sciences UAS who are developing an innovative business idea as their thesis topic. The support includes a financial contribution up to CHF 150,000 as well as an individually tailored coaching program which will smooth the way to launching a startup. For this focus program funds of CHF 2 million p.a. will be made available.

Cultivating young Talents
“First Ventures” focuses on entrepreneurial UAS students such as Remo Waser and Simon Maranda (HSLU, First Ventures 2018-2020) who want to pursue their innovation projects immediately after graduation. The project contributions of a maximum of CHF 150,000 pave the way for the establishment of their own spin-off. For the duration of the First Ventures project, the project managers are employed by the University of Applied Sciences and have full budget autonomy. The Impact Clips show what the previous First Ventures winners have achieved.

Strengthening Entrepreneurship
Gebert Rüf Stiftung encourages talented Bachelor’s and Master’s students not only to contemplate obtaining a degree, but also to embrace the idea of launching a startup. The financial stimulus gives the UAS graduates the chance to turn their own ideas into new products and services. The goal is to promote a culture of science entrepreneurship among students and strengthen business potential at universities of applied sciences.

Innovation at universities of applied sciences
Since 1997 Gebert Rüf Stiftung has been promoting selected research and development projects as exemplary drivers of Switzerland’s universities of applied sciences since 1997. The focus is on creating a bridge between science, business and society. It is at this interface that universities of applied sciences can develop innovative solutions.

Accompanying Program
The “First Ventures” program not only provides financial support, but also individually tailored business training and coaching sessions designed to equip the potential company founders to successfully put their business idea into practice. The curriculum will include training in entrepreneurial practice, reviewing the business idea, concrete guidelines for setting up and running startup companies, as well as needs-led coaching from experienced experts in the respective sector. The training program will be geared to the specific requirements of the selected project managers and is intended to give them access to a broad startup network.
Essential Requirements

— Applications are open to Bachelor’s and Master’s students of all departments and disciplines and to graduates of universities of applied sciences up to six months after graduation. Graduates of continuing education master’s degree courses are not considered.

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— The ideal time to apply is while working on the bachelor’s or master’s thesis.

— Project teams are welcome, formally, only one person can be project manager.

— Project leaders and any members of the project team are employed by the university of applied sciences for the duration of the project. They are explicitly involved in the project. An appropriate letter of support must be enclosed with the application.

— The duration of the project is between one and a maximum of two years, the budget is between CHF 50,000 and a maximum of CHF 150,000. Additional course offerings and coaching services amounting to CHF 5,000 can be claimed per project.

— The support provided by the tutors at the university of applied sciences can be suitably reimbursed through the project budget.

— Funding will be used primarily for the salaries of the project managers and project team members employed by the UAS. The use of university funds is welcomed. Infrastructure, equipment and material should in any case be provided by the university.

— Projects can also be co-sponsored by third parties (e.g. federal government, cantons, foundations, business). However, the object of this program is not to plug funding gaps.

— Concrete plans regarding financing after expiry of the grant funding period should also be submitted.

Content-related Support Criteria

We are looking for projects with high innovation potential for business and society that offer concrete solutions to problems and at the same time meet the quality standards of the respective research and development area. The applicants are distinguished by their professional expertise, willingness to take risks and personal commitment.

Submission of project applications

Before submitting a proposal, applicants interested in participating are requested to contact the First Ventures program management.

Projects can be submitted to Gebert Rüf Stiftung by one of the quarterly deadlines (1 February, 1 May, 1 September, 1 December) in accordance with the guidelines for submitting an First Ventures proposal. Please use our web portal for your first stage application and upload all the required documents there (project proposal form «First Ventures», support letter of UAS and elevator pitch).

After the first selection round the preselected applicants are invited to present their project to the board of trustees. The project applicants selected for the final round can complete a pitch training.

Project evaluation and monitoring

Decisions on the award of grants will be announced within 1-3 days after the presentation. A support agreement will be concluded with the project managers whose applications are approved. All copyrights will be retained by the projects.

Program management

Dr. Marco Vencato, Deputy Director Gebert Rüf Stiftung, St. Alban-Vorstadt 5, 4052 Basel
marco.vencato@grstiftung.ch, tel. +41 61 270 88 20.