



The 2024-2025 student staff of the L-DubHub

First Student-Run Business Launched at Lutheran West

In August 2024, Lutheran West's Senney Enterprises Business & Entrepreneurship Academy launched the **L-DubHub**, the school's first business venture envisioned, implemented, and run by students.

With the completion of the *Forward in Faith* building expansion, the spaces that had been the school's main offices for many decades transformed into the home of The Senney Enterprises Business & Entrepreneurship Academy (SEBEA), a Center of Excellence program spearheaded by Mr. Wally Senney '73 and his Cleveland-based company, Senney Enterprises, along with detailed planning and execution by Dean of the Business Academy, Mr. Jim Heal.

During the 2022-2023 school year, students taking business courses, particularly the Senior Capstone class within the Academy, began imagining the possibilities for student-run businesses.

"We knew that the first business we took from ideation to reality had to meet a few key requirements. It had to be a physical business location housed on campus. It had to be a business model that required the involvement and teamwork of many students. It also had to fulfill an existing need that was being experienced by our school community. And finally, it had to have the capacity to be successful and profitable within a relatively short period of time," says Heal.

"A ton of great ideas were proposed. But in the end, it was apparent to our entire team of students that a school store was the clear winner. It fulfilled all of the requirements set forth, and the kids were excited about it. Spiritwear and dress code apparel had been a frustration for our community for years, especially since the supply chain issues spurred by the pandemic years."

Seniors taking the Capstone in the spring semester of 2024 were charged with creating the business plan and laying crucial groundwork for the store. “Their hard work and imagining of what could be was something spectacular to witness,” remarks Heal, “and the store as it exists today is because of those students’ vision.”

JJ Hughes ’25, current senior (pictured 1st row, 4th from right in group photo on opposite page), is the General Manager of the L-DubHub. “It’s funny how God works,” says JJ, “because as of early May 2024, I wasn’t even considering pursuing business, let alone leading and managing one. I was recruited by the Business Academy team, and I immediately embraced the vision and business plan that was in motion. I realized at the beginning of the summer that it would be up to me and a handful of returning students to take the reins of everything that the just-graduated seniors had begun.”

During the summer of 2024, JJ and a team of fellow students voluntarily spent nearly 500 collective hours at school—planning, preparing, ordering initial inventory, assembling the store’s merchandising fixtures, setting pricing, training themselves on the store’s POS (point of sale) system, and more. They met with school departmental leadership in facilities, marketing, finance, technology, and general administration to determine their course of action for implementation of their plan and integration of the store into the school’s pre-existing operations.

“The Grand Opening event on August 4 was approaching so quickly,” says JJ, “but our team came together to make certain that the L-DubHub would open on schedule.”

Not only are students managing the store’s day-to-day operations, but they are in classroom sessions during their school day in which they learn business concepts and best practices behind what they’re putting into action with the L-DubHub. Recognizing a need after the store opened, they even conceptualized the L-DubHub Mobile store, which is a large transportable cart that can be stocked and rolled out to the athletic fields or parking lot when needed for merchandise sales at events.

“We talk about it all,” says Heal. “We’re learning about business operations, business plans and strategy, marketing, merchandising, inventory management and supplier relations, customer service, management, and anything else that impacts their business.”

That’s the key word, Heal says—*their* business. “It’s truly their own, and I’m just here to teach, guide, and manage the big picture of the Academy’s trajectory.”



“We did it all, by ourselves, and made mistakes along the way,” says JJ. “We’re constantly learning as we go, and we’re blessed to have the opportunity to learn through real experience, whether that’s in the form of successes or mistakes. The student team we’ve built—we all believe in that idea.”

In fact, when the students worked with the school’s marketing department to design the logo and branding for the L-DubHub, they made certain it included a tagline they came up with: *For Us. By Us.*

Heal notes that the store’s business model is set up so that each year, certain students will be managers and leaders of various teams within the business. Then, when managers and leaders graduate, others who have been learning the ropes as ‘associates’ will assume those managerial roles.

Heal also shares that recent research has determined that many young adults in “Gen Z” are lacking in crucial professional skills that previous generations had. According to an article published on [Intelligent.com](https://www.intelligent.com) in September 2024, “Many recent college graduates may struggle with entering the workforce for the first time as it can be a huge contrast from what they are used to throughout their education journey. They are often unprepared for a less structured environment, workplace cultural dynamics, and the expectation of autonomous work. Although they may have some theoretical knowledge from college, they

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- Mr. Jim Heal, Dean

often lack the practical, real-world experience and soft skills required to succeed in the work environment. These factors, combined with the expectations of seasoned workers, can create challenges for both recent grads and the companies they work for.”

In the conceptual planning of the Senney Enterprises Business & Entrepreneurship Academy and its structure, this sentiment was strongly considered.

“It’s our job as educators to not only impart knowledge, but also to impart preparation for life,” says Heal. “The Academy is designed to provide the real-world experience

that will give Lutheran West graduates an edge over their Gen Z counterparts who are lacking in the areas being identified by employers.”

The same Intelligent.com article cites that over half of hiring managers interviewed say that recent college graduates are ‘unprepared’ for the workforce.

The L-DubHub is the only business enterprise in Northeast Ohio that is entirely created and run by students at a high school. The only other similar model in the state of Ohio can be found in the Cincinnati area, at Cincinnati Hills Christian Academy’s entrepreneurship program. The future of The Senney Enterprises Business & Entrepreneurship Academy is bright. The hope is that the L-DubHub will be just one of several student-run businesses that come out of the Academy’s curriculum.

But more importantly, the future of the students who go through the Academy is bright. They’ll graduate from Lutheran West not only having received a top-notch business education, but also having had practical, real-world business experience that is unparalleled, even for most college business graduates.

In the years to come, we can’t wait to share with you not only the incredible business ventures of the Academy, but also the incredible things our SEBEA graduates have gone on to do in their lives as young professionals.



Want to shop the L-DubHub?

The store plans to introduce online ordering within the next year, but for now, you can visit the store in person during specified hours and events, which can be found at LutheranWest.com/Spiritwear and/or on the L-DubHub Instagram page (@l_dubhub). Lutheran West merchandise makes a great Christmas gift!