



## Brief for the Members' Business S5M-0189: Supporting Women-led Business in Global Entrepreneur Week

Scotland's higher education institutions helping to understand the issue and overcome the obstacles. Scottish Higher Education Institutes (HEI) support women in entrepreneurial business, including their own students and women as business owners.

**Scottish university research is examining the problems**

Research from Scotland by Sara Carter, Eleanor Shaw (University of Strathclyde) & Fiona Wilson (University of Glasgow) has helped governments articulate an economic case for supporting women entrepreneurs.

Their research estimates that an additional 108,480 businesses would be created if women's business ownership rates equaled those of men, a 32% increase in Scotland's business base and an increase in GVA of £7.6 billion equivalent to 5.3% growth in the size of the Scottish economy.<sup>1</sup>

They have also investigated the question of why women use less finance than men when starting a business and the role of gender in securing business finance. Carter et al.'s research found that demand-side and supply-side factors interact to co-produce the lending decision; the aspirations and expectations of women business owners and the perceptions held by bank loan officers of women business-owners and 'female-type' businesses both affect the loan decision.<sup>2</sup>

The impact of this research can be seen at a national and regional level, with Alison Price, Chair of the Women's International Centre for Economic Development saying "this research has been absolutely crucial in the creation of WICED which is a global first in providing gender sensitive business incubation, business support, policy influencing and social entrepreneurship. We would particularly like to acknowledge the importance of your research in providing the empirical evidence required to help shape the WICED model."

**'Making It Happen' is making it happen**

Universities are working to improve the enterprise and entrepreneurial skills of our graduates via the sector wide '[Making it Happen](#)' action plan. We have set a 25% increase over three years for graduate start-up and we've already seen a 16% increase in year one.

A good example of this is the [award-winning](#) Title IX, a business which specializes in identifying and assisting young, talented athletes to pursue sports scholarship in the

<sup>1</sup> <http://strathprints.strath.ac.uk/47878/>

<sup>2</sup> <http://eprints.gla.ac.uk/34414/>

USA. Nicola Pitticas set up the business, supported by Glasgow Caledonian University's UHatch incubator. It has also been seen with [Kalitasha](#), a University of Edinburgh backed project that helps women have access to simple healthcare and hygiene solutions. With support from the University Liita-Iyaloo & Helen Fisher went on to win top prizes in the Converge Challenge and BioQuarter competitions.

**Scotland has a large female talent base**

There are currently 94,770 (FPE) female students studying in Scotland. This represents a large talent base for entrepreneurship and innovation in business. Research informing new approaches to encourage more women-led business married with Scottish HEIs actively encouraging their students to improve their entrepreneurial skills and numerous supporting agencies and organisations we believe universities are best placed to support innovation in the Scottish economy.

**Interface is connecting female entrepreneurs with researchers**

In their analysis of applications to the Innovation Voucher Scheme in 2015/16, Interface, the knowledge connection for business is a central hub connecting organisations from a wide variety of national and international industries to Scotland's 23 higher education and research institutes, found that 1 in 3 company applicants are women (31%). This compares favourably when benchmarked against similar schemes such as Innovate UK, where 1 in 7 are from females.

**Case studies: Interface, our universities and business**

**Interface is helping Sansooz create high visibility fashion**

Started by Susan 'Sooz' Chirino, Sansooz is a fashion apparel company keen to help the fashion conscious become more safety conscious, without having to compromise on style. Sansooz creates design-led reflective fashionable outdoor clothing and accessories for adults and particularly children. These will be seen normally during the day as part of the fashion garment design and then transform into highly reflective goods/garments upon darkness or poor visibility when a light source is applied i.e. car headlights.

With a background in textiles, Sooz knew the idea was feasible but needed to find out the best way to commercially incorporate the high visibility elements into clothing and, at the same time, create a designer collection that would appeal to her market.

Through her work with the University of Dundee, Sooz has been able to carry out research on her three main development areas; investigating the best way of incorporating high visibility elements into textiles, ensuring that these textiles remain waterproof and windproof, and creating designs that will appeal to her audience. With great initial feedback on this research and development, Sooz is confident that she will have her e-Commerce (online) collection ready for release in the near future. Having had the idea in development for the last few years, Sooz is excited that her idea is finally becoming a professionally executed reality.

**Jump Research & Edinburgh Napier work together to design research van**

Edinburgh-based research firm, Jump Research was set up by Louise Fraser in 2012 to bridge a gap between a full service market research agency and a consultancy.

Louise saw an opportunity to create a mobile research van which would allow her to extend her reach into remote areas and also to create a unique platform for gathering data for her clients – she approached Edinburgh Napier University to explore the idea further.

As a completely new idea, there was no prototype to follow so Jump Research, in partnership with Edinburgh Napier University, applied to Interface for a Scottish Funding Council Innovation Voucher which would be used to fund an academic to design the research van. The University also used it as a project with third year product design students, who delivered some innovative ideas, including colourful seating and storage cubes, which were incorporated into the final design.

Designed to enable public opinions and customer feedback to be gathered everywhere and anywhere, the 'Jump on the Street' van is now fully equipped with the latest technology to deliver quantitative surveys, qualitative in-depth interviews and vox-pop style video interviews.

**StEPS Podiatry -  
Pioneering  
motion analysis  
could help  
prolong football  
careers**

Established in 2011, StEPS Podiatry, run by Vicki Cameron, is an award winning private podiatrist clinic covering Ayrshire and Glasgow. More than 80% of sports injuries are caused by repetitive strain to muscles, bones, tendons and ligaments and there is a 70% chance of re-injury within this group, leading to significant health and cost implications for players and teams alike. Current treatments are aimed at limiting this strain through functional foot orthosis such as special insoles, but Vicki wanted to create a screening tool to catch symptoms early and so prevent injury development in the first instance.

Having worked with Strathclyde University in 2014, Vicki was well aware of the support and facilities available through Scotland's universities and after meeting Mari Findlay, Business Engagement Executive at Interface, at a local 1:1 Business Support Clinic, she was keen to work with academia again. Mari worked with Vicki to explore the project objectives and was able to identify a number of academic partners who would have the right expertise and the right facilities to conduct the research. Mari also identified a number of funding options which would help offset the costs of the project and allow Vicki to work with her chosen institution.

Vicki said "Working with Interface has enabled me to access the most innovative equipment at Strathclyde University. That's been a big innovation for us; really being able to use the most cutting edge technology with the most elite athletes, to do something that has never been done before in podiatry. I found the application process really easy, these pieces of equipment are normally housed in academia and so for a small business to get their hands on them is quite unique – Interface made that possible."

**ENDS**

**Further information:** Duncan McKay, Senior Public Affairs Officer, on 0131 225 0714 or [duncan@universities-scotland.ac.uk](mailto:duncan@universities-scotland.ac.uk)