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The University of Missouri-St. Louis launches Gateway Accelerate, first Midwest Program for International Entrepreneurs

The University of Missouri-St. Louis, in partnership with Civic Progress, the St. Louis Mosaic Project, Global EIR Coalition and Arch Grants, announces the launch of Gateway Accelerate, Powered by UMSL Accelerate.

The goal of Gateway Accelerate is to attract entrepreneurs from around the world to grow businesses in St. Louis and add new revenue streams and employment opportunities for our local economy, innovation ecosystem and native-born students. Selected international entrepreneurs will be based at UMSL and connected to key mentors and supporters for each business's needs.

They will advance the mission of UMSL by contributing to academic research, developing coursework, providing students with internship and employment opportunities, and/or serving as mentors.

Gateway Accelerator will assist selected entrepreneurs with cap-exempt H-1B visas applications, enrollment in a 12-week boot camp, discounted office space, network development, mentorship and access to capital.

This program will serve as a model for other universities in the region, with the potential to add hundreds of jobs to the St. Louis regional economy.

Applications will be accepted at www.gatewayaccelerate.com.

Considering the program, County Executive Stenger said, “It’s fitting that the University of Missouri-St. Louis (UMSL) will be the first university in the Midwest to launch this program, UMSL attracts talent from around the world and having international entrepreneurs located at the university will provide opportunities for student internships and research positions. Gateway Accelerate will create a bridge to new technology and jobs for our region.”

And, St. Louis Mayor Francis Slay said “Launching the first Midwest program for international entrepreneurs through University of Missouri-St. Louis will be critical to seeing this important program expand to other regional universities in the coming years. St. Louis seeks to become more global. As international entrepreneurial companies see that St. Louis offers entrepreneurial culture coupled with high quality of life and low cost of living, they will look to affiliate with our local universities and add job growth to St. Louis.

Betsy Cohen, executive director of St. Louis Mosaic Project, believes Gateway Accelerate will enrich the business culture in St. Louis. “The St. Louis region has 9,000 international students on an ongoing basis” she said. “This program is one way to foster innovation while retaining international talent that has been educated here, as some of these students have started successful businesses.”

“In addition, talented international students from around the U.S. as well as international entrepreneurs from around the world will learn that St. Louis has both the entrepreneurial ecosystem and a low cost of living that will allow startups more time to grow with a slower cash burn rate,” Cohen added.

Civic Progress also sees the value in UMSL Accelerate and contributed \$50,000. “Civic Progress sees the need to retain and attract international entrepreneurs to St. Louis. This contribution will act as a catalyst for the region, because UMSL can bring international awareness to the website and process for international entrepreneurs to come to St. Louis. Following UMSL’s first cohort group, we expect to be working with our other universities to bring them into the Gateway Accelerate model in the following years, allowing international entrepreneurs to access a visa through the entrepreneurial company’s contribution to the host university,” said Tom Irwin, executive director, Civic Progress.

Ginger Imster, executive director of Arch Grants says the group looks forward to their contribution to regional growth through this program. “Arch Grants has the expertise to assist Gateway Accelerate in the review and selection of the most promising international companies. We will help UMSL this first year and look forward to helping more local universities as they join the program in the following years.”

Craig Monturi, Executive Director of Global EIR Coalition, is excited by job growth in the region. “The Global EIR Coalition is proud to support this first Midwest program through UMSL,” he said. “This will create jobs for the St. Louis region and provide a way for us to recommend certain international entrepreneurs to utilize the highly regarded St. Louis innovation ecosystem and the lower cost of living for starting entrepreneurial companies. “

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