Six companies accepted into Happy Valley Launch Box, a business training program

Six local companies are establishing themselves as enterprises after they were accepted into Happy Valley Launch Box, a Penn State and State College community-funded initiative to assist local small businesses gain their footing.

Happy Valley Launch Box is a 10-week training program focused on informing new entrepreneurs about the ins and outs of starting a small business, from legal matters like intellectual property rights to venture capital funding and an endless supply of interns.

The companies are also provided access to the Penn State chapter of the Small Business Development Center and office space in the Penn State Incubator — all for free, Nena Koschny, head of marketing and communications, said.
The Penn State Incubator, a hallway of office spaces and laboratories at Innovation Park, is the home of an eclectic array of businesses, ranging from a team of lab techs making batteries and fuel cells to a company entirely devoted to testing whether or not thin material gets hot when electricity is run through it, Koschny said.

Technological innovators work beside communications experts and marketers. Any business idea can be accepted into Invent Penn State, provided the business plan has been fleshed out enough, Koschny said.

University Park is not the only Penn State campus to receive funding for Invent Penn State. Abington, Erie, Harrisburg, Lehigh Valley, New Kensington and Wilkes-Barre have all received $50,000 of seed money to fund small business incubators around the state.

“[SBDCs] are all county based. So colleges and universities usually house them,” Laurie Linton, educational programming coordinator for the Penn State Small Business Development Center, said.

Invent Penn State is part of a state-wide initiative by university president Eric Barron to bring together Penn State’s community services with the student body and public’s consciousness.
“No one knows just how big Penn State is,” Koschny said.

Invent Penn State at University Park is formally opening with a ribbon-cutting ceremony on March 30.

The six businesses will continue to have Invent Penn State’s support after the 10-week program has concluded.