

ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Serial entrepreneur's path leads to JMU

Mobile media pioneer now focused on preparing the next generation

BY KAREN DOSS BOWMAN

The new executive director of the Center for Entrepreneurship at JMU, Patrick T. McQuown, started his first company in 1996, working out of his dorm room at The George Washington University.

"I was kind of a computer dork, and the internet was an emerging technology," says McQuown, who started Proteus with \$1,000 and no outside funding. "I thought there was really something there."

McQuown left his job as a federal investigator within the Division of Enforcement at the Commodities Futures Trading Commission to focus on Proteus full time. The company grew into a mobile media industry leader and was the first in the world to create an application that allowed users to send short text messages from a website to a handset. Among other accomplishments, McQuown and Proteus created text polling for the highly acclaimed television show *American Idol*.

"Before that, you basically couldn't text," says McQuown, who sold Proteus to Japanese carrier SoftBank after eight years. "That's what started it all."

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McQuown's second startup, SinglePoint, raised \$50 million in venture capital. The company deployed the two largest-ever messaging campaigns: one for the 2008 Summer Olympics and one for the Obama for America campaign. SinglePoint was subsequently sold to the European mobile company Ericsson.

Most recently, McQuown was a principal and co-founder of Silca Partners, a company that partners with select venture capital firms to conduct due diligence for possible investments. He also was an adjunct professor at Brown University and Providence College.

At Brown, McQuown led students in a case study to determine whether Uber drivers are entrepreneurs. McQuown became an Uber driver for the summer, logging more than 500 rides, and guided students through interviews with 110 active Uber drivers. They concluded that "the entrepreneurial aspects the company touts ... don't hold true

for the vast majority of Uber drivers."

McQuown, who also has taught at Georgetown University and was entrepreneur-in-residence for the Yale Entrepreneurial Institute, is passionate about guiding budding entrepreneurs to realize their dreams. He sees his role at JMU as his newest venture.

"I want students and faculty to know that if they are able to identify their passions and build out ventures that will solve problems based on those passions, the Center for Entrepreneurship and I will support them," says McQuown, an avid cyclist who has participated in bike races at Massanutten and on the Skyline Drive. "We will believe in them and give them the tools, the mentorship and the structure to assist in that journey. There's almost nothing more rewarding, careerwise, than doing that. I can attest firsthand that [being an entrepreneur] is unlike any other career endeavor."



Connor Feroce (left) and Patrick McQuown savor a job well done after Feroce won first place in the University of Virginia's College Cup venture competition in April. Feroce, Timothy Mulligan and Andrew Balitsky co-founded BeatGig, a technology platform that provides musicians access to a global marketplace of buyers.

