

Empowering Leadership in Entrepreneurship Education: Lessons from DePaul University



“The CLA Program provided me with the tools, connections, and confidence to take my leadership to the next level. It’s an invaluable experience for anyone looking to grow their impact in entrepreneurship education and grow their center.”

Kathia Hernandez
Associate Director – Coleman Entrepreneurship Center
DePaul University

Background:

Kathia serves as the Associate Director of The Coleman Entrepreneurship Center at DePaul University. The center supports entrepreneurial students and aims to foster innovative thinking across disciplines. As Kathia looked to develop a long-term strategic plan for her role and the center’s growth, she sought guidance from leaders in entrepreneurship education. She joined the program to gain insights from other institutions, share best practices, and understand how successful programs are structured and sustained.

Why Join the Program:

Kathia’s decision to join the program was driven by her desire to build a strong network and improve the center’s strategic direction. *“I wanted to connect with other leaders in entrepreneurship centers to share ideas and best practices,”* she explains. Additionally, Kathia was looking for ways to create a long-term growth plan and ensure that the center’s initiatives were scalable and sustainable. *“I also wanted to learn how other institutions structure their programs and implement innovative initiatives.”*

Key Learnings:

During the program, Kathia gained valuable insights into the operation of entrepreneurship centers and best practices for scaling their impact. *“I learned effective strategies for engaging different stakeholders, including students, faculty, and external partners,”* she notes. Leadership skills played a crucial role in her development, helping her navigate challenges and drive impactful initiatives at DePaul’s Coleman Entrepreneurship Center. She also benefited from learning about leadership practices and how to create a thriving and inclusive ecosystem.



“The program helped me refine my leadership style and become more confident in decision-making.”

One of the most impactful experiences was the diversity of perspectives among the participants, which Kathia found refreshing. *“I appreciated the mix of experience levels—it created a dynamic learning environment where everyone brought unique insights to the table.”* The guest speaker sessions and group work were particularly influential, leading to deep discussions and valuable takeaways.

Impact on Career:

The program has had a lasting impact on Kathia’s career and the operations of the Coleman Entrepreneurship Center. Armed with new strategies, she implemented changes that significantly improved the center’s programming and student engagement. *“I’ve been able to implement new strategies that have positively impacted our center’s programming and student engagement,”* she explains. Kathia also credits the program for enhancing her confidence as a leader. She continues to build on the relationships forged during the program, collaborating with peers in similar roles. *“I built strong relationships with peers in similar roles, which has led to ongoing collaborations and knowledge-sharing.”*

Looking Ahead:

Kathia is committed to ensuring that the Coleman Entrepreneurship Center continues to thrive. Her experience in the program has encouraged her to foster innovation, not only within her institution but across the broader entrepreneurship community. *“The connections I made through this program have been invaluable, making it easier to expand my network and collaborate with other leaders in the field.”*

She has stayed actively engaged with her network, frequently attending GCEC events and maintaining contact with her cohort. In fact, she has even presented at GCEC alongside one of her fellow cohort members. *“I stay engaged through GCEC events and discussions,”* she adds.

To anyone considering the program, Kathia offers this advice: *“This program is a great opportunity to gain valuable insights from experienced leaders in the field. You’ll walk away with practical strategies that can immediately be applied to strengthen your center. The network you build is just as valuable as the content—you’ll gain a group of peers who can support and inspire you.”*

Standout Moment:

DEPAUL
UNIVERSITY



CENTER LEADER
ACADEMY

One standout moment for Kathia was witnessing the final presentations of her cohort members. *“Seeing everyone’s final presentations was a highlight. It was inspiring to witness how each participant applied the lessons learned throughout the program and the different approaches they took.”*

Kathia also highlights the significance of her personal coaching relationship with Gups, her mentor. *“What made the experience even more meaningful was the relationships I built, particularly with my coach, Gups. These connections have been invaluable.”*