

ASU launches SPORTx, a new initiative to unite sports and entrepreneurship

New global collaboration between ASU, GoDaddy and LEAD Venture Corporation to use sport as a catalyst for innovation

By Pete Zrioka, ASU News
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Harnessing the unifying power of sports, Arizona State University today announced the launch of SPORTx, a new initiative designed to accelerate sports-related entrepreneurial ventures and empower student-athletes.

A universitywide initiative anchored by the [J. Orin Edson Entrepreneurship + Innovation Institute](#), SPORTx sits at the intersection of athletics and entrepreneurship — bringing together ASU's full spectrum of resources in partnership with the [Office of the Chief Operating Officer](#), [Sun Devil Athletics](#) and [ASU Enterprise Partners](#).

The initiative is also supported by industry collaborators including [GoDaddy](#) and [LEAD Venture Corporation](#), a premier sports and health tech venture corporation, further reinforcing ASU's position as a global leader in innovation and entrepreneurship.

"Arizona State University has long been committed to innovation in every field, and sport is no exception," said [Chris Howard](#), ASU executive vice president and chief operating officer. "SPORTx exemplifies our mission by fusing the excitement of athletics with entrepreneurial opportunity. By empowering our students and partners to create and scale new ventures, we're advancing the kind of forward-thinking ecosystem that defines ASU."

Two foundational pillars

Advance sports entrepreneurship with SPORTx

Whether you're a student-athlete, a donor or an existing startup — SPORTx wants to hear from you. [Get in touch to learn more.](#)

SPORTx operates through two primary functions: athlete engagement and venture development.

Athlete engagement is led through the new [Student-Athlete Venture Studio](#), a collaboration between the Edson E+I Institute and GoDaddy's global social impact program, [Empower by GoDaddy](#). This studio helps student-athletes navigate name, image and likeness opportunities while providing them with education, mentorship and digital branding tools — including an AI-powered experience known as GoDaddy Airo, to develop, launch and grow business ventures.

The studio's day-to-day engagement efforts are supported by former ASU beach volleyball player and sports entrepreneur Kate Fitzgerald, who brings firsthand experience to mentoring student-athletes on personal brand and entrepreneurial venture development.

"We have a responsibility to support our nearly 700 Sun Devil student-athletes beyond the game," said [Graham Rossini](#), ASU's athletics director. "SPORTx is a game-changer — it gives our athletes the education, mentorship and real-world experience to thrive as entrepreneurs.

"They're not just training to win on the field; they're learning to win in business and life after sports in one of the nation's fastest-growing cities at the most innovative university. Our opportunities are endless, and there is no ceiling for the educational opportunities here."

Venture development focuses on supporting emerging sport-related startups within the ASU community as well as external ventures seeking to engage with ASU's innovation ecosystem. Led by the Edson E+I Institute in collaboration with LEAD Venture Corporation, this track provides selected ventures with personalized mentorship, access to university research and facilities, and connections to investors and strategic partners.

"Partnering with ASU brings an invaluable pipeline of talent and innovation into the LEAD ecosystem," said Justin Driscoll, principal at LEAD Venture Corporation. "We look forward to supporting the next generation of sports technology entrepreneurs and helping them bring their ideas to market."

A home for sports innovation

SPORTx will be headquartered at Mountain America Stadium on the Tempe campus, within the SPORTx Collision Space — a collaborative workspace where student-athletes and startup founders can work side by side in the heart of Sun Devil Athletics.

The initiative's launch comes at a moment of explosive growth in the sports innovation sector. New technologies in athlete performance, fan engagement and NIL-related business models have created unprecedented opportunities for entrepreneurship in sports.

Founding SPORTx Director [Jeff Kunowski](#) believes ASU is uniquely positioned to lead this movement.

"The expertise of our partner institutions, our deep bench of entrepreneurial resources and the excellence of our athletics program add up to a winning combination," Kunowski said.

Kunowski collaborated on this initiative with Dan Burns, CEO of performance company Exos.

“SPORTx is about breaking down silos and creating an ecosystem where athletes and entrepreneurs can collaborate and thrive,” Burns said. “By uniting ASU’s entrepreneurial know-how, athletic talent and global partnerships under one roof, we’re positioning ASU as the epicenter of sports innovation. We can’t wait to see the game-changing startups and athlete-led ventures that will emerge from SPORTx and impact the sports world far beyond our campus.”

This story originally appeared on [ASU News](#).

Main image



SPORTx — new, universitywide initiative to accelerate sports-related entrepreneurial ventures and empower student-athletes — will be headquartered in the heart of Sun Devil Athletics at Mountain America Stadium in Tempe. Photo by Samantha Chow/ASU