

ELIZABETH ULANOVA

First-generation American. Ivy League and Oxbridge alumna. Founder of an ed-tech startup - scaled from idea to global traction. Cross-sector leader in venture operations. Multidisciplinary artist and designer. Building systems that convert untapped human potential into high-leverage innovation.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Founder and CEO, Girls In Research

April 2024–Present | Cambridge, USA, London, UK, and Remote

-Created the world's first global, virtual research and tech incubator for high school girls. Scaled from ideation to paying clients in 29 countries in under 6 months, bootstrapped with no external funding or press, growing organically through direct customer engagement.

- Built and launched product direct to market, entirely bootstrapped, with 1.5 team size, in just 3 weeks from ideation and drove exponential traction and growth in first 12 months
- Month 1: Pre-seed internal funding from a Y-Combinator alum and achieved 3-figure ARR from the enrollment of students in 7 countries
- Month 2: Achieved 4-figure ARR from enrolled students in 13 countries, including students paying full tuition (\$1,800/4-week, \$2,400/10-week) for original designed programs
- Month 6: Achieved 5-figure ARR; paying students in 29 countries, applicants from 50+ countries
- Month 12: Sustained full-time operations for 1 year with only \$10K initial capital and internal revenue; negotiated international acquisition deal and acquisition exit.
- Engineered a scalable people company that harnesses human ingenuity for real-world impact
- Built and led core business functions across operations, GTM, finance, and compliance (UK & US), while designing scalable systems for CRM, talent pipelines, and HR workflows
- Recruited and evaluated 800+ applicants and 100+ mentors globally; designed curriculum across 6 fields (150+ research subjects) for both cohort-based and individualized-bespoke programming
- Orchestrated multiple high-impact global virtual events, "Girls In Research Demo Days" with participants in 20+ timezones, totaling 4 research symposiums within 12 months
- Negotiated international acquisition deal and acquisition exit at company 12-month mark
- Recognitions: Harvard Innovation Lab (Women Founder Panelist), Cambridge Innovation Center (Spring 2025 Social Impact Accelerator), Volition Project (Entrepreneur-In-Residence), and Columbia University Tamer Fund (2025 Semi-Finalist)

EDUCATION

Harvard University Graduate School of Design

August 2021– January 2024 | Cambridge, USA

in Landscape Architecture Candidate, M.L.A., Dean's Merit Scholar

- Honors: Harvard GSD Fully Funded Dean's Merit Scholarship + Tier 1 Grant for top-ranked admission students that covers 100% tuition (2021-2025), Harvard Innovation Lab Spark Grant (Fall 2023, Summer 2023, Spring 2023), Harvard GSD ASLA 2023 Conference Travel Grant (Fall 2023), Harvard GSD Community Service Fellowship (Summer 2023), Harvard Joint Center for Housing Studies Fellow (Summer 2023)
- Independent Study 2: Fall 2023 Urban Design Research: "Not Just For Kids: An Inquiry Into The Foundations, Benefits, and Design Interventions Of Play Equity For Adults." Supervisor: Karen Janosky and Belinda Tato
- Independent Study 1: Fall 2022 Art, Architectural History Research and Visual Artistic Exhibition: "Alchemy: Between The Past and Magic" Supervisor: Ed Eigen, Reviewer: Gary Hilderbrand

University of Cambridge

October 2019– November 2020 | Cambridge, UK

Master of Philosophy, M.Phil in Sociology of Media and Culture

- Master's Thesis: "The Influence of Social Media on Modern Romantic Relationships" (Supervisor: Dr. Rikke Amundsen)
- Honors: Mr and Mrs Geoffrey Twining Egginton Prize, Downing Graduate Conference (Select Research Presenter), Downing College MCR-SCR Seminar (Select Research Presenter), Downing College Twining Egginton Exhibition (Select Art Exhibitor), Downing College Cedar Tree Exhibition (Select Art Exhibitor), Seton Cavendish Bequest Grant
- Initiated the first ever student art studio at Downing College - which is still in practice today

Columbia University in the City of New York

September 2016– May 2019 | New York City, USA

Bachelor of Arts - B.A, Visual Arts, Film, and History, Magna Cum Laude

- Senior Thesis: "Clashings of Art, Culture, and Technology in a Digital Anthropological World" (Advisors: Matthew Buckingham, Nicola Lopez, Serra Victoria Fels, Sondra Perry)
- Honors: Magna Cum Laude (High Honors), Dean's List, Leadership Service Award, Senior Thesis Stipend Award, Senior Thesis Studio, Independent Study: Advanced Video (Department Chair, Matthew Buckingham), Tuition Scholarship, Junior Marshall Selectee, Spectator Senior Profile, Columbia Alumni Magazine (2021 Owl Feature), First Generation Student Advisory Board, Orientation Leader, Ivy League Student Council (Ivy Council National President)

SKILLS

Mandarin Chinese (Certified HSK Level 5) | Global Experience Living in Asia, Europe, USA, and Visiting North Africa, Oceania, Asia, Europe, North America | Strategic Leadership & Operations | Global Talent & Stakeholder Management | Product Development & Go-To-Market Strategy | Customer Relationship Management | Data-Driven Decision Making & Analytics | Project & Workflow Management | Payment Systems & Financial Operations | Education & Digital Learning Platforms | Virtual Team Management & Remote Work Pipeline | Digital: Photoshop, Illustrator, Final Cut Pro X | Curriculum Design and Teaching | Arts: Painting, Sculpting, Film, Installation, Lasercut, 3D Printing |

ADDITIONAL PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE, RESIDENCES, AND FELLOWSHIPS

Entrepreneur In Residence, The Volition Project

April 2024–Present | Cambridge MA, and Remote

-Won Harvard- Lab mentor match competition to be paired with Volition's CEO Drake Pusey. -Became first-ever entrepreneur-in-residence. Applied advanced business frameworks and insights gained to optimize GIR's revenue model, user acquisition, program expansion, and stakeholder management

Visiting Fellow, Telos House

March 2025–April 2025 | London, UK

-Invitation-only talent incubator in central London, stayed in residence to develop a global female innovation ecosystem via Girls In Research. Received an acquisition offer for Girls In Research following residency at Telos House; later decided to pursue an independent growth strategy for G.I.R.

Social Impact Accelerator Program Fellow, Cambridge Innovation Center

January 2025–February 2025 | Cambridge, USA

-Girls In Research was selected as one of the top startups to participate in the social impact startup accelerator program. Engaged in growth strategy sessions to advance Girls In Research's operational

scalability. Transitioned mid-program to pursue Telos fellowship opportunity in London for G.I.R

Founder of Recess and Venture Fellow, Harvard Innovation Lab

May 2023–April 2024 | Cambridge, USA

- Selected for the I-Lab Venture Incubation cohort to develop and launch Recess, a social startup tackling adult social isolation through structured childhood play as solo founder
- Successfully designed and executed a pilot series of pop-up “Recess Games” events in Boston during Summer 2023, and led all phases of R&D, product design, event coordination, and community outreach
- Secured 4k in Harvard Innovation Lab Spark Grants across three terms (Spring, Summer, Fall 2023) to fund development, marketing, and event execution.

Artist In Residence, Industry Lab

June 2023–September 2023 | Cambridge, USA

- Completed inaugural solo artist residency, developing a cohesive body of work
- Curated and presented month-long solo exhibition, *Fluid Memory*, from August 18 to September 15, 2023, attracting a diverse audience of 300+ through exhibit, opening, and closing reception
- Engaged with local startup community at Industry Lab through artist talks and workshops

Community Designer & Harvard Community Service Program Fellow, CultureHouse

June 2023–September 2023 | Boston, USA

- Urban design studio focused on improving livability by transforming underutilized spaces
- Selected as a Harvard GSD Community Service Fellow, fully funded through a competitive summer fellowship that supports research-informed design initiatives.
- Contributed to placemaking and community engagement to activate public spaces across Boston.

Graduate Teaching Assistant, Harvard University Graduate School of Design

August 2022–September 2022 | Cambridge, USA

- Fall 2022: Histories of Landscape Architecture I: Textuality and the Practice of Landscape Architecture (HIS-4141). Graduate-Level Harvard Course by Professor Eigen, Department of Landscape Architecture
- Provided academic support, including giving guest lecture on Chinese Culture

Head of U.S Expansion, Project Access International

September 2018–August 2019 | New York, USA, London UK, Vienna, Austria, and Remote

- A global London-based non-profit, tech-enabled startup focused on education with 20+ international country teams and partnered with top universities and companies (ex: Cambridge, Oxford, McKinsey, etc)
- Co-led the U.S. expansion of Project Access, transforming a globally successful social startup into a U.S.-based operation by directing strategy, partnerships, product development, tech, and marketing
- Key achievements: Launched Project Access USA from Rockefeller Center, Co-founded 5 Ivy League campus teams and established a national research task force, Secured partnership with Wharton’s Global Research & Consulting Group, trained students in Vienna for the Austrian team.

National President Emeritus, Ivy League Student Council (Ivy Council National)

January 2017–May 2019 | New York, USA, and Remote

- Former National President (2018), National Vice President of Technology (2017-2018), Columbia Head Delegate (2017), and IPC Director of Technology (2017). Elected from regional conference director to national president in 1.5 years.
- Led executive efforts for Ivy Council that oversaw all 8 Ivy League chapters, annual conferences (Ivy Policy Conference, Ivy Leadership Summit, IVC-NYC Speaker Series, IVC-NYC Retreat, etc), philanthropy, publication, and international ventures including 30 officers and 1,300 members.
- Created first-ever streamlined online and digital presence, brokered strategic partnerships (Eastern Economic Forum, etc), implemented national marketing, operational campaigns, and policy. Led

Columbia IVC's highest enrollment year, oversaw IVC's shift to a leadership organization

Entrepreneur In Residence and Founder of Penpairs.org, Richi Childhood Cancer Foundation

March 2016–August 2016 | Boston, USA

- First-ever Entrepreneur-in-Residence at Richi, a global nonprofit supporting pediatric cancer initiatives and social innovation. Selected as the youngest and first American team member.
- Founded PenPairs.org, a digital platform connecting individuals experiencing social isolation with virtual penpals globally, including hospital patients and caregivers that was awarded residency at Richi following a successful demo presented to Richi's CEO during early ideation phase.
- Collaborated with Richi's President and Executive Board on program development for Richi Social Entrepreneurs and Richi Summer Immersion, a social impact incubator.
- Supported 15 startups in the 2016 Immersion portfolio across sectors including ed-tech, digital health, and media—offering mentorship in strategy, market research, and pitch design

Educator and Overseas Consultant (Fellowship), New Oriental Education & Tech Group

June 2014–May 2015 | Chongqing, China

- China's largest private education company and the first to be listed on the NYSE.
- Delivered corporate training, English seminars, and VIP one-on-one consultations through the Elite Business and Oral English departments.
- Lectured across all levels using U.S. collegiate-style immersion methods; co-developed and taught the branch's first-ever team-based learning (TBL) courses.
- Appointed the youngest corporate trainer in the branch's history; received consistently top performance evaluations among all foreign teaching staff.

SELECT ARTISTIC EXHIBITIONS AND PERFORMANCES

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- 2024 - "Boston Arts and Culture: Fay Chandler Emerging Art Exhibition", Boston City Hall Galleries, November 18 to December 27, 2024. Curator: City Of Boston, Mayor's Office
 - 2024 - "In Celebration Of AAPI Heritage Month", CultureHouse Union Square, Somerville, MA, May 8th - June 9th, 2024, Curator: Stephanie Irigoyen
 - 2024 - "Boston Voices", The Napkin Poetry Review + Soho House Boston, Laisun Keane Gallery, Boston, MA, April 25th, 2024, Curators: Caroline King and Courtney Jacobovits
 - 2024 - "In Pursuit of Well Being", Industry Lab, Cambridge, Massachusetts, March 29 - Friday, April 12, 2024, Curator: Zoe Zoë Kustritz
 - 2024 - "March Outspoken Saturdays" Boston GBH BPL TV Filming Studio - Poetry & Spoken Word. Curator: Amanda Shea
 - 2024 - "Boston Voices", The Napkin Poetry Review , Abigail Ogilvy Gallery, Boston, MA, Jan 25th, 2024, Curators: Caroline King and Courtney Jacobovits
 - 2023 - "Swan Song", Sidewalk Video Gallery, Fountain Street Fine Art, November 2-29, 2023. Curator: Marie Craig
 - 2023 - "New Language: Contemporary Abstraction", National Juried Exhibition, Gallery 263, Cambridge, Massachusetts, October 12 -November 4, 2023. Jury and Curator: Daniela Rivera
 - 2023 - "Fluid Memory," Solo Artist Residency Exhibition, Industry Lab, Cambridge, Massachusetts, August 18 - September 15, 2023. Curator: Justice McDaniel
 - 2023 - "Harvard University Graduate School of Design Studios & Seminars Spring 2023" (For STU1112), Druker Design Gallery, Cambridge, Massachusetts. April 2023.
 - 2022 - "Alchemy: Between the Past and Magic," Solo Independent Study Exhibition (For ADV9201), Gund Hall, Harvard University Graduate School of Design, Cambridge, Massachusetts. December 2022. Reviewers: Gary Hilderbrand and Ed Eigen
 - 2021 - "Design Award 2021 Exhibition" A + D Architecture and Design Museum, Los Angeles,

- California (In Collaboration with Anna Stevens as writer for Steven's "Palka" exhibit).
- 2020 - "Twining Egginton 2020 Exhibition" Heong Gallery, Cambridge, England (Covid Canceled). Jury and Curator: Vicky Ambery Smith
- 2020 - "Twining Egginton 2020 Exhibition" Downing College, University of Cambridge, Cambridge, England (Virtual Exhibit). Jury and Curator: Vicky Ambery Smith
- 2020 - "Cedar Tree Exhibition" Battcock Lodge, Downing College, University of Cambridge, Cambridge, England. Jury and Curator: Vicky Ambery Smith
- 2018 - "Fall 2018 Senior Thesis Presentation", Leroy Neiman Gallery, Columbia University, Manhattan, New York. Curator: Nicola Lopez and Serra Fels

SELECT PRESENTATIONS, LECTURES, AND PRESS

- 2025 - "Girls In Research: Demo Day", A Global Research Symposium: From Transcriptomic Analysis of Dysregulated Beta-Cells to Stock Market Volatility During Natural Disasters"
- 2025 - "Girls In Research: Demo Hour", A Global Research Symposium: From Corporate Oil Accountability to Emotional Recognition in Education Software"
- 2024 - "Girls In Research: Demo Day", A Global Research Symposium: From From Multimodal Deep Learning Models to Replicating Lotus Hydrophobicity"
- 2024 - "Girls In Research: Demo Day", A Global Research Symposium: From Nutrition Dense Food Powders to The Impacts of Quantum Physics on Morality,
- 2024 - "Women Founders Entrepreneurship Panel for Dana Hall Summer Entrepreneurship Program, Harvard Innovation Lab, June 17, 2024,
- 2024 - Lecture, "Play Equity Beyond Childhood: Designing for Adult Well-Being in Urban Environments", Design Research Forum, Harvard Graduate School of Design,
- 2023 - Press, Summer 2023 Fellows, Harvard Joint Center For Housing Studies
- 2023 - Lecture: Artist Show and Tell: Elizabeth Ulanova, Industry Lab, Cambridge, Massachusetts
- 2022 - Lecture: "On Zhang DaQian and Alchemy: Between the Past and Magic", Independent Study Exhibition, Harvard University Graduate School of Design, Cambridge, Massachusetts.
- 2022 - Guest Lecture, "On Chinese Cultural Implementation, Desecration, and Exportation", HIS 4141: Histories of Landscape Architecture I: Textuality and the Practice of Landscape Architecture, Harvard University Graduate School of Design
- 2021 - Press, Notable Alumni, Alumni Notes, The Owl Magazine, Columbia University
- 2020 - Lecture, "The Influence of Social Media on Modern Romantic Relationships", Downing Graduate Conference, Downing College, University of Cambridge
- 2020 - Lecture, "Social Intimacy In An Age of Technology Inspired Culture", MCR Seminar, Downing College, University of Cambridge
- 2019 - Press, "Elizabeth Ulanova Is Where Art Meets Technology Meets Axe Throwing", The Eye Feature, Columbia Daily Spectator, Columbia University