

# X-FACTOR

WINTER 2021

Transforming Northwestern student founders into the creators and leaders of tomorrow.



## Ana Cornell / McCormick '22

Ana is the founder and CEO of Acorn Genetics, a startup dedicated to privacy in genetic testing. Originally from Glenview, Illinois, she spent her summers working in the Field Museum's DNA discovery center, where she further developed her passion for genetics. After manually extracting DNA and sequencing thousands of lichen specimens, she became intensely curious in her own genetic code, and looked for a way to privately test her own. She is now in her junior year at Northwestern, and Acorn is on its way to be the first completely at home DNA testing company.



## Anya Kothari / McCormick '21

Anya is a senior studying Industrial Engineering. In the past, she was a Business Analyst for City Health Tech, a Garage-grown startup working to build healthier, smarter communities, through which she participated in The Garage's Pre-Accelerator program, Jumpstart. Anya also participated in The Garage's Propel program for women in entrepreneurship, where she founded BuddyBook, a social scheduling app to solve the problem of scheduling for friend groups. She has also worked in business intelligence for an e-commerce company, and is currently looking to engineer sustainable supply chain initiatives in the e-commerce sector. Outside of school and work, Anya enjoys reading and watching standup comedy.



## Brian McEuen / Kellogg '21

Brian is a second year student at Northwestern's Kellogg School of Management. Originally from Northern California, Brian spent the last five years before coming to business school in merchandising at Banana Republic where he oversaw a few men's categories. Brian is now working on his own startup, On Brand, the newest online shopping platform that aggregates your favorite brands and products in one, easy-to-shop from interface, and recommends new ones based on how you shop.



## Elam Blackwell / SoC + Weinberg '22

Elam is a junior at Northwestern studying Physics and Theatre as a double major. He is currently working on Mark IV Games, a startup that he created in 2019. Mark IV Games is focused on designing and publishing board games. He is also a Resident of The Garage, and he's excited to continue to grow his startup and skills as an entrepreneur.

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## Drew Wandzilak / McCormick + SESP '22

Drew is a junior studying Learning and Organizational Change and Entrepreneurship from Charlotte, North Carolina. He was a co-founder of RollCall, a platform for voters in the 2020 election to build and manage their plan to vote. During his time at Northwestern, Drew has led EPIC's Sprout program, an entrepreneurial immersion program in San Francisco, and was the Head of Partnerships at LEND, a local microfinance organization serving minority business owners in Evanston. He is passionate about increasing civic engagement, lowering barriers to education, and promoting diversity within tech and entrepreneurship.



## Kate Conner / Weinberg '22

Kate Conner is the Chief Technical Officer of Acorn Genetics, a startup dedicated to privacy in genetic testing. Originally from Chappaqua, New York, Kate grew up with a strong passion for science and wanted to dedicate her life to the betterment of the world. After transferring to Northwestern in her sophomore year, Kate met Ana Cornell and heard about Acorn, which at that time was a small three person team building a PCR machine. After learning about the challenge of building a genetic sequencer, Kate immediately grew interested in solving the problem. She now leads a team of four in the engineering department, and has created the design for a completely novel graphene based genetic sequencer.



## Linus Okoth / McCormick '23

Linus is a sophomore from Nairobi, Kenya, studying Computer Science and Computer Engineering. He is the co-founder of Explore which aims to make international volunteering feel more at home, bringing more meaning, success and comfort to life-changing international volunteering opportunities. Linus is passionate about Human Computer Interactions and research on using Artificial Intelligence to better the experience. Outside class, Linus is part of the African Student Association and the Northwestern Chapter of the National Society of Black Engineers.



## Riva Akolawala / SoC '22

Riva is a junior studying Communication Studies, Integrated Marketing Communications, Business Institutions, and Religious Studies. She spent her freshman year at Boston University, and transferred to Northwestern in 2019. Riva participated in The Garage's Pre-Accelerator program, Jumpstart, as a Digital Marketing Intern for Alva Fine Jewelry, winning third place at Demo Day. Riva has previously interned with 1871, and she is passionate about entrepreneurship, branding, marketing, and sales. She holds leadership positions within Form & Function Marketing Agency, THUNK A Cappella, and The Sunrise Movement.