

## Episode 4: Scaling New Heights at Rutgers and Beyond

Release Date: May 10, 2017

[ANNOUNCER, MUSIC UNDER]

*“This program is a production the Rutgers Centers for Global Advancement and International Affairs.”*

[MUSIC UP FULL]

[OPEN MONTAGE OF SOTS FROM TV SHOW, MUSIC UNDER]

*“Rutgers’ vision//globalized world//international learning//unique opportunities//global health//study abroad//expand my horizons.”*

[MUSIC UP FULL]

[HOST PRITA SINHA, MUSIC UNDER]

*“This is... Rutgers Around the World— a finger on the pulse of all things global at Rutgers.”*

[MUSIC STINGS]

**HOST:** Hi I’m Prita Sinha, Rutgers senior and host of the podcast, *Rutgers Around the World*. Welcome! Successful entrepreneur, pro golfer, life coach, aspiring journalist, renaissance student ...these are just some words that have been used to describe our next guest. Rutgers senior Kayla Jackson is a journalism and media studies major and co-founder of PeduL, a higher education crowdfunding platform. In fact, Kayla was recently named regional winner in a global student entrepreneur competition for PeduL. She joins us today in the GAIA Centers studio. Kayla...thank you so much for being here and congratulations!

**KAYLA JACKSON:** Thanks for having me!

**HOST:** It’s been a busy few months for you. You recently won the regional Global Student Entrepreneur Awards for your business PeduL and you even competed at the national level of the competition. So first off, what is PeduL?

**KAYLA JACKSON:** PeduL is a platform, a crowdfunding platform that helps students fundraise money for college. And we uniquely optimize campaigns in ways that other crowdfunding sites don’t like Go Fund Me and Kickstarter, Indiegogo, by partnering with corporations and scholarship providers and we award their scholarships and endowments directly to qualified students with active campaigns—and then we actually transfer all of those funds directly to their university so there’s complete donor transparency, you know exactly where the money is going.

**HOST:** What makes PeduL different from other crowdfunding sites out there?

**KAYLA JACKSON:** Unfortunately, crowdfunding can be very elitist because it makes the students—at least student who are raising money for tuition—it makes them very dependent on their own personal networks. They have to tap into the personal networks to access that capital and, unfortunately, not everyone has that. I don’t have an option to hit up my aunt and uncle for \$100, and that’s just the reality, not everyone has that.

So, one of the reasons we even created PeduL and the features that we have is to dismantle that to break down that barrier. For us, the reason why we even call it PeduL: “e-d-u” is at the center of everything we do, and it bridges the gap between purpose and life. So, this program is more than just about the money. For corporations specifically, this is about them cultivating and nurturing future talent, diversifying their workforce. We’re trying to build a community.

**HOST:** What were you scored on at the regional Global Student Entrepreneur Awards?

**KAYLA JACKSON:** Yeah. We were actually I guess they measured what our personal journeys were as student entrepreneurs and what that process is like as well as the business concept and the viability of the concept.

**HOST:** What kind of prizes did you win for this?

**KAYLA JACKSON:** We won actually \$51,000 worth of cash prizes, as well as consultation services for anything from financial statements to legal to accounting to brand strategy.

**HOST:** Okay, so let’s just take it back a second here. A lot of students think that this kind of thing is out of reach, right, something that you’ve clearly disproven. Where did you get the idea for PeduL? How did you get it off the ground?

**KAYLA JACKSON:** I will not take any of the credit (*laughs*). My co-founder Chisa Egblu, he graduated last year, journalism and media studies major, and he actually had a friend freshman year who left Rutgers to go pursue his dream in music at Berklee College in Massachusetts—and then found out that he’s be about \$40,000 in debt per year if he ended it up going.

So, he basically had to give up his dreams and go back on to his very safe traditional “quote unquote” path of computer science. And although that has been a lucrative path for him, it wasn’t his passion, and he had to give that up.

He actually said to Chisa one day, “You know, I wish there was a kickstarter for college.”

And Chisa was like, “Why not? Let’s do it!”

So, he sat on the idea for about a year and then he brought me on to the team in January of last year, and we’ve been going strong since then.

**HOST:** What’s next for PeduL? Any plans for you guys to go international?

**KAYLA JACKSON:** We’re launching in a few weeks, so that’s really exciting. We are working with our first 20 fellows. We got over 500 applicants for the fellowship program. We are going to be using them as model campaigns. We are doing a lot within this country first. Obviously, we are online so we can go global. But something we really do see us making an impact in terms of, I guess, international reach is through our institution page program.

So, for our institution pages, Rutgers University for example could have a page completely unaffiliated with the actual institution, and over a period of 30 days there’s these accumulated tax deductible donations that are evenly distributed to students on our platform that have proven they have financial

need and that they actually do go to Rutgers. So that's something that we could implement internationally.

**HOST:** Going off that a little bit, as a student here at Rutgers, you had the opportunity to study abroad. Where did you go and did that experience contribute to the establishment of your business ventures? Or, has it helped you make other decisions about your career path in general?

**KAYLA JACKSON:** Yeah, I actually studied abroad in London and Paris last year. It was an embedded program for journalism, which I am a huge advocate for. I've been asked about it a million times and I always say it's one of the, I think it's one of the best programs that you can have especially for students who one don't have the time to go away for a whole semester, or just don't have the funds to do so. So, I went for about a week. I did half London, half Paris, and that was absolutely amazing. I would argue that it gave me a wider scope into the impact we can have outside of the U.S.

**HOST:** You're a journalism and media studies student and an active member of the entrepreneurial community, how has that helped you here?

**KAYLA JACKSON:** So every time someone asks me how am I a journalism major and then ended up in tech (*laugh*), I say that I have no lane, I don't know how to think outside of the box because I've never put myself in the box. So that is one. Two, I think that journalism is one of the best areas of study that anyone can take. I think the skills that you are equipped with leaving with that degree transcend any industry. And regardless of what you become, you will be a productive employee, an entrepreneur; you have so many opportunities to create value for the organization that you're with. And then, obviously, just being totally engulfed in the entrepreneurial community, I've been able to make connections with different professors and faculty and staff, my classmates who are interested in this process—and I think that that support system is very important especially as a student entrepreneur, because you're really trying to navigate life, you're trying to navigate your academic career, and you're trying to navigate how to build a business which no one is ever prepared for.

**HOST:** And just lastly tell us, what's next for Kayla Jackson?

**KAYLA JACKSON:** What's next for Kayla Jackson? That's a wild question. I never know. I honestly don't know. I am definitely going to be doing PeduL full time when I graduate. As long as I get to, one work with young people and two make an impact and three create amazing things, I'll be set.

**HOST:** Well Kayla we wish you a lot of luck as you get ready to graduate and leave your mark on the world. Thank you for joining us.

**KAYLA JACKSON:** Thank you! Really appreciate it.

**HOST:** That was Kayla Jackson, a Rutgers senior majoring in journalism and media studies and co-founder of the higher education crowdfunding platform, PeduL

That's all for this episode of Rutgers Around the World. Join us next time as we discuss all things global with members of the Rutgers community. Thanks for listening!

*[MUSIC STINGS]*