The takeaways and lessons from the business model canvas were very relevant, given my past experience with entrepreneurship. My first real attempt at entrepreneurship occurred between my first and second semester of my freshman year. I had just won the demo day of Scotty Labs' moonshot project Labrador Committee by using semantic search to surface high quality natural language course recommendations. I was frankly a little bit disappointed with my group, given that I contributed the entirety of the functional codebase. However, I was enamored with the concept and really amazed by the performance of the system. This led me to create my own semantic natural language course catalog over the winter break, with the thesis that most universities had very low quality, hard to use course catalogs. I spent weeks learning javascript and working on the user interface of the product. The product would occasionally crash and wasn't the easiest to build, leading to me spending more time on the user interface than the actual experience powered by the backend. Despite having a functional demo of a "cool tech" project, I had no business plan, insight into the market, or even any validation that a business case existed for my product/solution. Fortunately, I learned about Project Olympus's Customer Discovery Kickstart program (also through Scotty Labs, initially) and decided to join their program. I have to admit that I was skeptical towards completing customer discovery. After all my bias towards building and executing, led to me having a functional demo product, something that many people with only an idea can't get to. I was naive though to think that I was fully executing, I didn't have a business plan or execution strategy on that front. After completing some initial customer discovery interviews, I realized how important it was. I gained insights into the market that I had never considered before. Including about who would purchase a product like mine and why they would care to do so. I also got to talk to a diverse set of end users for my catalog application and understand the challenges that they faced first hand. Through these informative interview experiences, I was able to understand what was important to the purchaser and the end user. I also was able to validate that a problem existed, that there was a potential market, and that administrators would pay for a product.

The only problem that I now faced was that I had built my product before properly understanding the problem that I was solving. This left me with a demo product that was impressive for Show and Tell (https://drive.google.com/file/d/1sw8gkmY5AC8AInDtEus4Jn2UUuMVysZl/view?usp=sharing) purposes, but not feature complete business ready software that could be readily sold, deployed, and maintained. This realization led me into my largest pivot thus far, executing on product design given the stakeholders directly in mind. I realized that the product would have to be easy to use for administrators with easy access to updating the catalog as needed and reorganizing information. Additionally, I realized that the product needs to work well on student's phones and desktops. Furthermore, I realized that in order for my product to be differentiated and create value I would have to create a super intuitive user experience and deploy AI solutions that weren't previously available. This led me to completely rebuilding my product from scratch over the summer with these thoughts in mind. I redefined my software stack and backend software architecture to account for creating a quality web-based application that could also be improved and maintained easily. The new Velroi Catalog, includes features and design cues based on my customer discovery feedback and exploration (https://demo.velroi.com). Given that I decided to be a team of one, thus far, I have failed to reach the business execution stage where I go out, market, and sell the product.

My failure to reach this stage is a direct result of me not working with a team. I believe with a team to help I can more easily advance progress on this venture by starting to sell the product and get real customer feedback from these sales calls. Additionally, the technology development would have gone a bit faster. However, I want to make sure that I develop the right team, starting small with only the most quality co-founders.

In this entrepreneurship class, I want to make sure that whatever idea my team and I explore for the pitch is properly done with high quality customer discovery. Additionally, I want to work with a team who is just as motivated as me to understand a problem, validate it, and propose a high quality solution.