

OUR MENTORS



Nancy Benovich Gilby

Nancy brings over 30+ years of software startup experience to her advisory role. She previously founded and/or led products for 13 successful startups with 8 exits so far using a unique integrated approach to company and market development, including raising 12 rounds of venture funding. Nancy led Asurion Mobile Applications as VP of Engineering, serving 100+ million users of her team's mobile data cloud services. By the time she left, she led the team that supported Asurion mobile apps on every US carrier, every phone. Nancy's product development methodology has generated three case studies at the Harvard Business School. Her leadership in product strategy and development contributed to Firefly, the first online web community site, a spin-out of the MIT Media Laboratory, purchased by Microsoft; Wildfire, first voice-based personal, mobile, voice-based assistant, purchased by Orange; Component Software, as co-founder, was folded into Sun to become what is Java today; and On Technology, developers of the first group scheduling application, Meeting Maker as well as a successful public company, later purchased by Symantec. Nancy holds an M.S.E. and a B.S.E. Magna Cum Laude in Computer Engineering from the University of Michigan.



Tom Borg

Tom is founder and president of Tom Borg Consulting, LLC. Since 1996 he has worked with CEOs, presidents and their leadership teams in over 1300 companies and organizations. He works with his clients at the intersection of leadership, communication and culture. He does this through his consulting, mentoring, coaching, strategic work sessions, workshops, training and his assessment instruments.



Dennis Carmichael

Dennis is co-founder and President of Cimulus, Inc., a custom software company in Ann Arbor. With a BS in Electrical Engineering and Coherent Optics from Kettering University, the common thread across all of Mr. Carmichael's careers – which range from machinist, concert roadie, real estate investor, tech entrepreneur and more – is using software to solve problems in creative and efficient ways. Outside of work, he can be found climbing at Planet Rock, running on Michigan's many trails, or working on his home in Dexter.



Melanie de Vries

The Michigan SBDC Tech Team is proud to have Melanie de Vries as one of their Technology Business Consultants. Melanie has over 20 years' experience in driving growth strategy for early stage software, education technology, professional services, non-profit, alternative energy, manufacturing, and health services organizations. She has a history of success in developing marketing and sales programs that build and improve on the profitability of companies. Her recent experience includes serving as CEO and Co-Founder of PaymentScholar (an edtech start-up). She has worked in the entrepreneurial ecosystem as an independent consultant advising start-up organizations on strategic planning, market positioning, market analysis, brand development, and customer discovery. She has also served as the senior marketing officer for Deloitte & Touche/Deloitte Consulting, The Learning Care Group and ForeSee Results. In these roles, she oversaw the execution of business and marketing strategies to drive growth and increase market share. Melanie is a graduate of The University of Michigan.



Paul Henchey

Consultant to healthcare software companies with expertise in strategic product marketing, software product management, content marketing, software design and strategic product planning. Deep experience with healthcare analytics and business intelligence technologies. Management experience in both Fortune 20 companies and small start-ups. Successful track record in helping companies of all sizes launch new

software products and grow new revenue streams. Paul is currently the President of New Enterprise Forum, an Ann Arbor-based non-profit organization whose vision is to link entrepreneurs with management expertise, joint venture partners, business services, capital, and other critical resources.



Gary Hessenaur

Gary Hessenaur, President and owner of Hessenaur Associates, C.P.A., P.C.. The firm provides a full range of accounting, tax, consulting and part time CFO services. The firm focuses on small to mid-size businesses with a specialty in start ups and technology businesses. Start up business clients have been funded through owner funds, grants, angel and VC investors. Gary is board member and business coach for the New Enterprise Forum, helps counsel businesses through various other business organizations and regular speaker at SPARK business start up programs. He is very well networked in the startup and financing community.



Bob Honeyman

Robert Honeyman has spent the past several years working as CFO for several start up entities, including Wave Aircraft Corporation, and Advanced Predictive Analytics, Inc. He has provided consulting advice, including financial modeling and business plan writing, for various individuals considering launching new businesses. From 1999 to 2010, Mr. Honeyman was Corporate Controller and then CFO for DataCore Software Corporation, a \$30 million software developer located in Fort Lauderdale, FL. As Corporate Controller, he created the legal structure for DataCore's international presence, opening subsidiaries in Europe, Asia, and North America. As Vice President Finance, Mr. Honeyman negotiated receivables-based loan agreements that helped the company bridge and survive the tech crash of 2000-2003. As CFO, Mr. Honeyman was a member of the executive management with Board level responsibilities. Mr. Honeyman earned both a bachelor degree, with a concentration in Economics, and an MBA in Finance from the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, MI.



Angeline Lawrence

Angeline is an urban planner with a business background. Her experience in land use and community planning enables her to understand the importance of place and building neighborhoods. Her experience spans over 25 years in both the private and public sectors. Angeline has run her own consulting firm where she provides marketing, administration and business development services to small and startup firms.

During her time at the Detroit City Planning Commission, she reviewed and recommended the approval of major commercial and residential redevelopment projects. Angeline has also developed a micro loan program on behalf of the Detroit City Council that provided capital for existing and start-up companies. Angeline coordinated the City Council's first Micro-lending Fair in the same year that taught entrepreneurs how to become bankable and obtain small business loans. In her spare time she enjoys writing, editing, social media and digital publishing.



David Maas

David Maas is recognized as a brand smart marketing leader and a street smart general manager with his 20-plus years at the J. Walter Thompson advertising agency and five years at Federal-Mogul Motorparts. Presently, teaching as a mentor and learning as an intern, he is helping to position, build and grow early-stage businesses for rapid scale-up and equity financing in the startup communities around Detroit and Ann Arbor. David has won eight EFFIE Awards in recognition of business-building ideas that work in the marketplace and a team that works together. He has been an EFFIE judge and EFFIE moderator for both Round One and Final Round judging.



Evan Marsh

Evan is the Managing Partner and leads business development for WynHouse. The firm works with mid-market and enterprise organizations on their innovation strategy. The team has developed new technology for Subaru, Ford, Mercy Health and other notable brands.

As an avid strategist, he has a large board game collection with over 40 unique copies of Monopoly



Joseph (Joe) Morrison

Joseph Morrison is an attorney at Bodman Law. Morrison represents high-growth companies in an outside general counsel capacity. He focuses on emerging companies that leverage technology to build their business and brand. He also represents venture capital firms and high net worth individuals that invest in high-growth companies. His business and technology background gives him the ability to deftly advise ambitious entrepreneurs facing legal and business challenges.

Before joining Bodman, Joe worked for Accenture as an information technology consultant in Washington, D.C. He also served as corporate counsel and consulting manager for a Michigan-based IT startup, where he helped scale the company to 50+ employees and \$3 million in revenue.



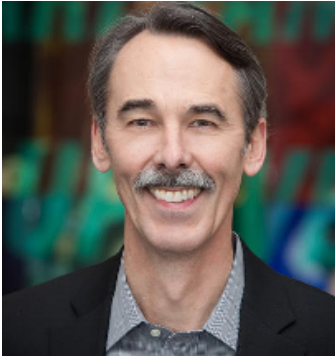
Kristine Nash-Wong

As the director of entrepreneurial services at the SPARK East Innovation Center in Ypsilanti, Kristine helps early stage startups accelerate their growth by providing strategic consulting and marketing services. A strategic planner with more than 25 years of marketing experience, Kristine specializes in helping technology companies gain and grow market share. She is passionate about helping mission-driven companies deliver scalable, sustainable solutions. Before joining SPARK, Kristine founded the consulting firm Health Sapience which provided specialized consultancy helping health service and technology providers successfully scale. In this role, Kristine honed her expertise in strategic planning, marketing communication, business development, and design services. Kristine's previous experience in the Ann Arbor/ Ypsilanti SmartZone includes serving as marketing director for HealthMedia, an Ann Arbor-based healthcare startup that was acquired by Johnson & Johnson. She has also previously served as a judge for the Acceleration Michigan Innovation Competition and the Blue Ocean Strategy High School business competition.



Ravi Nigam

Ravi is the owner of the Law Offices of Ravi K. Nigam. He is a legal adviser and counselor for startups and small businesses assisting with company formation, business law, contracts, data privacy and security issues, immigration and business planning.



Clay Phillips

Clay Phillips is an experienced executive in the fields of open innovation, intelligence, business development, and strategy. Since 2014 he has been an innovation and growth strategy advisor for numerous startups, large companies and non-profits. He has worked with clients in the automotive, mobility, energy, IT, health care, materials, financial services, and specialty chemicals industries. Since 2018 he has served as the Mobility Technology Lead for the Michigan Small Business Development Center where he supports Michigan's entrepreneur ecosystem and advises early-stage startups in the mobility sector. He has been an instructor for the NSF's Midwest Innovation Corps program, mentor for GAMIC and TechStars-Detroit, and other mobility focused accelerator programs. He also serves as an Executive Advisor to SRI International.

Prior to 2014 Clay was an executive at General Motors R&D where he held leadership positions in corporate intelligence and strategy, alliance management, and innovation commercialization. He was a founding member and VP of GM's corporate venture capital arm, GM Ventures, and led commercialization due diligence for the R&D Center's open innovation and internal startup program. Earlier in his career he managed international product and portfolio planning and new business development initiatives.

Clay holds a BA from Trinity College and an MBA from Columbia University. In between degrees he served as an intelligence officer with the U.S. Navy. For fun, he plays guitar in a band, composes and records, and enjoys sailing whenever possible.



Alain Piette

Mr. Piette is the MI-SBTDC Technology Team manager. In his most recent assignment, Alain was president of an advanced manufacturing company. The company was a technology spinout from a large automotive supplier. Alain has also worked in Europe, Southern Africa, Central and South America for international corporations such as DuPont, Sherwin Williams and Kongsberg Automotive. He has also been involved with turn-around, startup and M&A activities. Alain brings his extensive experience in organizational development, manufacturing, R&D, market development, technology transfer and international expansion to the team.

Mr. Piette is also an avid farmer. He is passionate about agronomy and entrepreneurship in the agricultural field. He has taken a very visible position at the Michigan State University Agricultural Incubators and evaluates agricultural translational research projects which can be supported by MTRAC which is funded by the State of Michigan. He is also involved with AcreAGTech, an emerging independent business accelerator in the State of Michigan by providing strategic reflection and leadership guidance.

Alain earned and BSBA and MBA from Wayne State University.



Arcadio (Kayo) Ramirez

Throughout his more than 20-year professional career, Arcadio Ramirez has been extensively involved with early stage companies. As an attorney with Wilson, Sonsini, Goodrich & Rosti, he advised startup companies with financing, commercial, corporate governance and intellectual property issues. In financings alone, he directed projects exceeding \$15M. From the practice of law, Arcadio transitioned into entrepreneurial ventures, organizing, securing financing, operating and selling two companies, including one of the first venture-funded transaction-based Internet sites, Do It Sports. Arcadio has also served on the management team and acted as a business consultant to numerous early-stage companies. In addition, Arcadio has been engaged as a management consultant by a number of Fortune 50 companies, including AT&T, Intel and Ford Motor Company. Engagements included new product development strategy, customer segmentation and restructuring, financial process re-engineering and private marketplace strategy projects. These projects saved/earned clients millions of dollars.

Arcadio received his business education at the University of Michigan Business School. He earned his Juris Doctorate from Stanford Law School and his B.A. with highest honors from the University of Michigan. Arcadio resides in Ann Arbor, Michigan, has two children and is an internationally competitive triathlete.



Soosmita Sinha

Founder and President of the Health Law Institute (HLI), Geneva, Switzerland; Board member of the International Network for Health Workforce Educators (INHWE), Cyprus; Board member at New Enterprise Forum (NEF), Michigan, USA.

Soosmita's professional experience spans public, private and non-profit sectors in different geographical locations – Nigeria, United States and the Switzerland (United Nations organizations in Geneva). She holds a Pharmacy degree from Ahmadu Bello University (Zaria, Nigeria) and a JD from University of Michigan, (Ann Arbor, USA) and is currently licensed as both a pharmacist and lawyer in Michigan, USA.

Her passion for advancing universal access to healthcare and advocating for health worker rights led her to found the Health Law Institute (HLI), Geneva, Switzerland in December 2018. She is also a board member of the International Network for Health Workforce Educators (INHWE) to help inform about the need for legal awareness and literacy of health workers.

She has been a lifelong entrepreneur but her interest in scalable startup entrepreneurship started during her law school at the Entrepreneurship Clinic and later as coach for the New Enterprise Forum (NEF). She is currently a board member at NEF and has been privileged to coach several startups.

Creative interests go hand in hand with her more analytical endeavors and her current top three interests include painting, photography and dancing Argentine tango [Soosmita.com]



Linda Smith

A 1991 EMU accounting grad, Linda Smith has 35 plus years of personal entrepreneurial experience in farming, real estate and life science ventures. Linda co-founded Michigan Innovation Headquarters with her husband in 2015. Serial entrepreneurs, they launched MI-HQ, a collaborative business incubator accelerator campus which has grown to 170,000 sq. ft. of flex office, wet lab and manufacturing space as a start up venture.

At 80 companies and growing, MI-HQ fosters Life sciences, Alternative Energy, Medical Device, Waste to Energy, Corporate Development and Micro Electronics together in a community environment. MI-HQ was awarded Ann Arbor Spark Project of the Year in 2020. Over 25 years working with early stage companies has provided Linda with a unique insight into what makes a successful start up. She enjoys helping other entrepreneurs succeed.



Dan Stewart

Dan Stewart is a Detroit-based business development professional specializing in relationship building using a personal face-to-face approach, currently working as a Relationship Manager at Automation Alley. Prior to that, Dan ran a staffing firm as the Senior VP Operations. Having spent decades working in automotive engineering and manufacturing operations, Dan understands the values that drive successful business development. He writes a frivolous blog, publishes a weekly newsletter, has numerous articles published in trade journals including SIA – The Staffing Stream, and has authored and published “Managing The MSP” – a book centered on the proposition of building successful relationships with Managed Service Providers in the contingent labor space. In addition to his extensive business development acumen, Dan is an accomplished public speaker. Dan holds a bachelor’s degree in business administration from Northwood University in Midland, MI.



Chao Sun

Chao’s financial expertise will be counted on to support CapStone Holdings, Inc. and its affiliates and subsidiaries with setting strategic goals, directing operational activities for continued growth, evaluating investment opportunities and risk analysis, as well as portfolio management. Chao will also have responsibilities for entrepreneurial

initiatives in Southeast Michigan, including developing strategic partnerships and alliances with local innovation hubs, universities, and venture groups.

Prior to joining CapStone, Chao was an organizational development consultant at Sensei Change Associates and the co-founder and chief financial officer of The Back Office Studio, a co-working space in Ypsilanti. As a first-generation immigrant, he came to the United States from China for his master's degree in Human Resources Management and Organizational Development in 2010. A graduate of Eastern Michigan University, Chao is a part-time lecturer at the College of Business and gives back to the community through being the board member of the Neighborhood Theater Group and other efforts.



Stefan Sysko

Stefan Sysko is an entrepreneur with a diverse background and 20+ years of experience, much of which has been spent advising small business owners on developing strategy and on executing at a high level. His career includes broad experience in strategic marketing planning, market development, new product and business development, and training.

Sysko has been a consultant, advisor and mentor to dozens of start-ups and hundreds of small businesses. He advises startups, emerging, and turnaround companies with launch, growth, and rebuilding strategies. He helps founders discover and effectively tell their story, develop their value proposition, identify and avoid – or tear down – roadblocks, and turn their ideas into focused, viable business plans. Through a strategic partnership with metro Detroit-based Poco Labs, Sysko helps companies with concept development, consumer research and product design. He is a board member, past-president, and coach at New Enterprise Forum.

Sysko holds a Bachelor of Business Administration from Wayne State University and an MBA from Eastern Michigan University.



Scott Taylor

Scott offers an in-the-trenches business, technical, and entrepreneurial background to our SBDC Tech Team. Most recently, as one of two founders of Soloshot Inc, he served as president while the company scaled from an idea conceived on the beach to a global brand with two product line generations, worldwide distribution, in-house production, in-house sales/marketing/R&D teams, and multiple issued patents. Scott holds a master's degree in chemical engineering and a bachelor's degree in naval architecture and marine engineering, both from the University of Michigan.



Wendy Thomas

Wendy Thomas is the Southeast Region Director for the Michigan Small Business Development Center which services Wayne, Oakland, and Macomb Counties. Her extensive and rewarding career, spanning over 20 years, has led her to incredible professional growth opportunities.

Wendy has received recognition for Outstanding Volunteer for the CEED Detroit Loan Program, Michigan Small Business Center of Excellence and Innovation Award, and SBA Small Business Consultant of the Year. Wendy is also certified as a Small Business Consultant and a Small Business Administration Export Trade Specialist.

Wendy holds a Bachelor of Arts in Communications from Michigan State University, Master of Business Administration with a specialization in Entrepreneurship, and a Master of Science in Integrated Marketing Communications from Eastern Michigan University. Wendy is a member of the Beta Gamma Sigma and Phi Kappa Phi Honor Societies. She also complimented her academic achievements with studying business practices abroad in Asia and Europe including China, England and France.
