

# Lassonde for Life

Helping U  
alumni start  
and grow  
businesses

Lassonde for Life, provided by the Lassonde Entrepreneur Institute in partnership with the PIVOT Center and the Office of Alumni Relations, supports U alumni from every department and major who want to start or grow a business.

University of Utah alumni can participate in the program for free at any time and from anywhere in the world. The mostly online program is expected to keep alumni engaged and attract new students who want to obtain more than a degree from their university experience.

Members of the Lassonde for Life program receive many benefits and opportunities. In addition to workshops on topics like market research and prototyping, they get access to helpful content, mentors, networking opportunities, and more.

The PIVOT Center plays a vital role in the program by consulting, offering office hours and providing the same resources to Lassonde for Life members that it gives its licensees and startups. That means members have access to PIVOT’s connections and expertise in invention management, patent prosecution, licensing, startup formation and support, equity management and early-stage funding.

The Lassonde for Life partnership also means that U alumni looking to use the expertise and experiences they gained after graduation to give back to the university can use the PIVOT Center’s resources to facilitate these efforts. Whether they are looking to offer internships or mentorship opportunities to students or to be a networking resource for the U community, PIVOT’s role at the university makes these connections easier, benefiting more than just the participating alumni but also students, faculty, and U startups.

Lassonde for Life is expected to further the University of Utah’s long history of entrepreneurship and innovation. All across campus, many faculty, staff, and students are creating products, inventing new technologies, and launching companies. Now, alumni can be more engaged than ever and help grow this tradition.



Alumni can now be more engaged than ever and help grow the U’s tradition of entrepreneurship.

## Justin English

Do you know what Parkinson’s, schizophrenia, MS, gastrointestinal disorders, kidney and liver diseases and bone dysmorphias all have in common? According to University of Utah biochemistry professor Justin English, they are “all strongly driven by **dysregulation of G-protein coupled receptors**.”

These small receptors play a vital role in human health. On a cellular level, they detect what’s going on outside a cell and tell it how to respond accordingly. This means they assist in a human’s sense of smell and taste as well as mood and immune system regulation. Roughly 40% of all prescriptions filled in the United States target G-protein coupled receptors because of this relationship. That’s where English and his lab enter the picture. “Our goal is to both understand how they work and control their function pharmaceutically, so we can improve patient health.”

English has found that his research often involves slowing down rather than changing course completely. By slowing down, “you can make strong foundations for answering scientific questions or delivering on technologies that you think are the most impactful that you can generate.”

This “recollecting” ensures that English and his lab are able to continue forward on their projects by focusing on process and developing methodology and quality control. “When we pivot, we’re speeding along toward a particular project goal but then hit roadblocks where things aren’t progressing the way that we anticipate and we really need to switch gears to understand where it is that we’re coming up short.”

In the two years English has been at the U, he and his lab have made significant strides toward their goals. Along with the lab’s research into G-protein coupled receptors and directed evolution, they have collaborated with industry partners like Eli Lilly and started a company with the help of the PIVOT Center. With PIVOT, English is working to develop IP around applications in the startup. All this work helps English and his team progress toward their goal to develop new ways of treating patients with unmet needs or largely untreatable diseases.



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