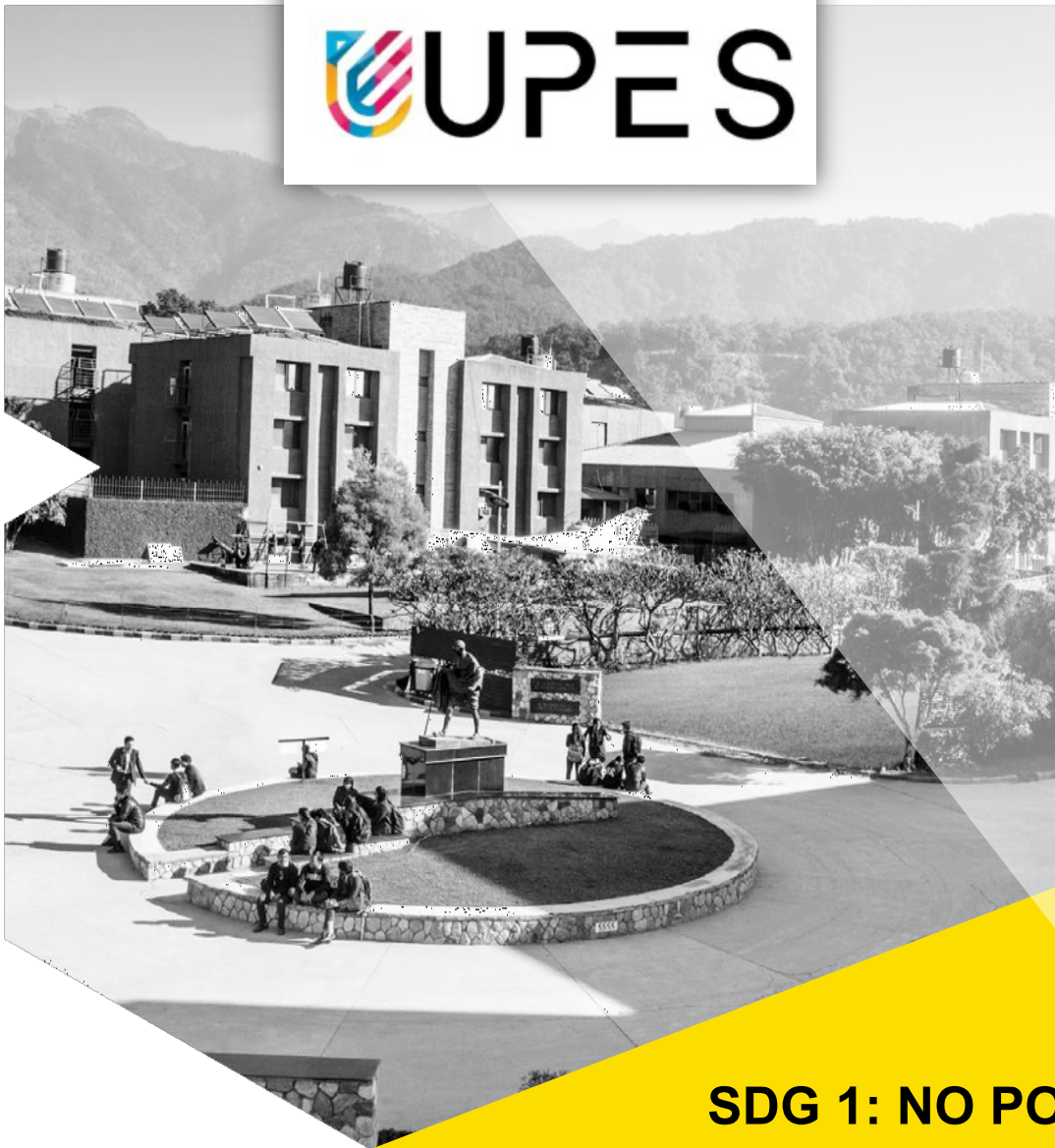




SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



SDG 1: NO POVERTY

2025

Table of Contents

1.4.1 Does your university as a body provide assistance in the local community assisting the start-up of sustainable businesses through relevant education or resources (e.g. mentorship programmes, training workshops, access to university facilities)?	4
UPES's Support for Sustainable Entrepreneurship and Local Start-ups	4
Formal Incubators and Entrepreneurship Programs at UPES	4
Runway Incubator	4
UPES Centre for Innovation and Entrepreneurship (UCIE)	4
DST Inclusive TBI (i-TBI)	5
Atal Community Innovation Centre (ACIC) at UPES	5
Rural Business Incubators	5
Mentorship, Training and Resource Support	6
Dedicated Mentorship	6
Entrepreneurial Training Programs	6
Workshops and Boot camps	6
Physical and Financial Resources	7
Networking and Industry Linkages	7
Community Outreach and Local Innovation Initiatives	7
Atal Community Innovation Centre (ACIC)	8
Startup Uttarakhand Collaboration	8
Techstars Startup Weekend & Hackathons	8
Entrepreneurship Awareness Drives	9
Entrepreneurial Events and Competitions	9
"The Pitch" – Start-up Funding Showcase	9
Innovation Challenges and Hackathons	10
Guest Lectures and Webinar Series	10
Student and Faculty-Led Start-ups Driving Local Impact	10
BluSmart (Electric Mobility)	11
UGreen Technologies (Climate Tech)	11
Envinova Smartech (Solar Solutions)	11
Agri Joy (Indoor Farming)	11
Homversity (Student Housing)	12
Cognecto (AI for Industry)	12
Other Cleantech Innovations	12
Conclusion: Driving Impact and Earning Recognition	13

References.....	14
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1.4.1 Does your university as a body provide assistance in the local community assisting the start-up of sustainable businesses through relevant education or resources (e.g. mentorship programmes, training workshops, access to university facilities)?

UPES's Support for Sustainable Entrepreneurship and Local Start-ups

UPES (University of Petroleum and Energy Studies) has developed a robust ecosystem to assist the local community in launching sustainable businesses. **This support ranges from formal incubator programs and funding schemes to workshops, mentorship networks, and community outreach events – all aimed at empowering entrepreneurs and promoting sustainable ventures.** These efforts align with UPES's goal of excelling in the Times Higher Education (THE) Impact Rankings by demonstrating strong contributions to innovation, industry, and community development.

Formal Incubators and Entrepreneurship Programs at UPES

UPES operates several incubators and innovation centers that provide comprehensive support to start-ups, both for its own students/faculty and for the broader community:

Runway Incubator

Launched in 2021 under the UPES School of Business, Runway is a flagship start-up incubator program designed to **mentor and nurture entrepreneurs from idea to market** [1]. It offers **structured mentorship, seed funding, legal aid, and co-working space** for start-ups, focusing on diverse sectors including ed-tech, healthcare, **social impact, and sustainability** [1]. Runway has incubated **over 250 start-ups** since its inception, reflecting UPES's commitment to turning students into **job creators rather than job seekers** [2] [1]. The incubator is **recognized by the Uttarakhand state government** as a nodal agency in the state's start-up ecosystem [1], underlining its regional importance in driving entrepreneurship and economic growth.

UPES Centre for Innovation and Entrepreneurship (UCIE)

UCIE is the university's entrepreneurship center that assists innovators from the **entire UPES community (students, alumni, faculty, and staff)** as well as **external entrepreneurs** in commercializing their ideas [3]. It serves as a business incubator focusing on technology-driven sectors relevant to Uttarakhand and the Delhi-NCR region. UCIE's mandate is to **accelerate economic growth** by supporting venture creation in areas like energy technology, transportation, e-commerce, and

green technology [3]. The center provides a **professional environment with resources** for aspiring entrepreneurs, including access to faculty expertise, industry networks, and R&D facilities. Notably, UCIE is a member of UBI Global (University Business Incubators network), enabling it to adopt **global best practices in incubation** and benchmark its impact [3] [4].

DST Inclusive TBI (i-TBI)

In 2024, UPES's Runway Incubator secured a **₹4.9 crore grant under the Department of Science & Technology's NIDHI scheme** to establish an Inclusive Technology Business Incubator [1]. This **DST-iTBI** focuses on deep-tech and sustainable innovations – specifically supporting start-ups in **artificial intelligence (AI), machine learning (ML), agritech, and sustainability/clean-tech domains** [1]. UPES co-invests in this initiative (contributing ₹1.02 crore alongside DST's ₹3.88 crore) to provide startups with advanced facilities, seed funding, and specialized mentorship. The i-TBI is expected to support at least **30 new startups** and aligns with national missions like *Atmanirbhar Bharat* by promoting self-reliance through innovation [1]. By integrating government support with UPES's ecosystem, the DST-iTBI aims to **drive job creation and societal impact** through technological innovation [5].

Atal Community Innovation Centre (ACIC) at UPES

UPES is also establishing an ACIC under NITI Aayog's Atal Innovation Mission to empower local communities in Uttarakhand. The ACIC will provide a platform for grassroots innovators and entrepreneurs to tackle regional challenges with sustainable solutions [6]. It focuses on issues like agricultural productivity, water scarcity, rural healthcare, and clean energy – areas crucial to the local populace [6]. Through the ACIC, individuals from remote and underserved areas will receive mentoring, access to UPES's infrastructure, and funding support to develop their ideas into impactful solutions [6]. This initiative explicitly aims at accelerating innovation at the grassroots level and ensuring that youth and women in the community are active participants in entrepreneurship [6]. By nurturing local start-ups, the ACIC is projected to contribute to sustainable economic growth in the region – creating jobs, curbing rural-urban migration, and promoting self-sufficiency in hill communities [7].

Rural Business Incubators

As part of the state's start-up policy, two Rural Business Incubators have been set up in Uttarakhand to support innovators in rural and hilly areas. UPES, being a recognized incubator in the state, plays a role in these efforts by **guiding and mentoring grassroots innovators** and helping channel **seed funding** to viable rural start-up ideas [6]. With its broad faculty expertise, UPES provides technical mentorship at different stages of development and helps organize entrepreneurship programs in remote regions, ensuring that even village-level innovations receive support. This outreach aligns with the government's "vocal for local" approach, leveraging UPES's resources to turn community problems into business opportunities.

Mentorship, Training and Resource Support

A cornerstone of UPES's entrepreneurship support is the extensive **mentorship and training** it provides to budding ventures. Rather than leaving entrepreneurs to fend for themselves, UPES offers structured guidance through experienced mentors and tailored educational programs:

Dedicated Mentorship

Every start-up incubated through UPES is paired with experienced mentors – which include UPES faculty members, successful alumni entrepreneurs, industry experts, and investors. Mentors meet regularly with the start-up teams for one-on-one coaching, group review sessions, and targeted feedback [2] [1]. This approach ensures advice is **customized to each startup's needs and stage of development**, whether it's refining a business model, overcoming technical hurdles, or strategizing market entry. Mentors remain accessible even **beyond the formal incubation period**, providing ongoing guidance as the ventures scale [6]. Such close mentorship has been a key factor in UPES incubator's success, as it **"goes beyond the conventional classroom"** to handhold entrepreneurs through real-world challenges [1].

Entrepreneurial Training Programs

UPES provides a structured curriculum and workshops to impart critical entrepreneurial skills. Start-ups in the Runway incubator go through an **8–10 week blended incubation program** covering fundamentals like ideation, market research, business model development, financial planning, and prototype development [6]. Training modules include sessions on company incorporation and compliance, product design and testing, marketing strategies, and investor pitching. For example, participants receive coaching in **pitch preparation and communication** to effectively present to investors, culminating in a Demo Day where they showcase their refined business ideas [6]. UPES also organizes broader short-term courses and webinars on entrepreneurship: in one academic year, the university integrated basic entrepreneurship courses into the curriculum for thousands of students across engineering, business, law, and design programs [6]. This ensures that even those not directly in the incubator gain entrepreneurial literacy.

Workshops and Boot camps

Through UCIE and student clubs (like the Entrepreneurship Cell), UPES frequently hosts **workshops, boot camps and hackathons** open to students and local youth. These practical sessions, often led by faculty and industry professionals, cover topics such as *market research, feasibility studies, product design, financial forecasting*, and business strategy [8]. The workshops are designed to give aspiring entrepreneurs a realistic understanding of what it takes to commercialize an idea and thrive in the market, blending academic knowledge with **real-life case studies and personal experiences shared by entrepreneurs** [8]. For instance, UCIE has run workshops on **industry trend analysis and innovation**, and even hosted conferences where young entrepreneurs can learn about emerging

opportunities and network with experts [9]. These events often involve interactive activities and competitions that simulate the start-up journey, thereby building participants' skills and confidence in a short time frame.

Physical and Financial Resources

UPES lowers the entry barriers for start-ups by providing access to university facilities and funding opportunities. Incubated teams can use state-of-the-art labs, equipment like 3D printers, licensed software, and collaborative workspaces on campus for research and product development [10]. This access is crucial for prototyping and innovation, especially for deep-tech or hardware-oriented start-ups that would otherwise face high costs. The university also offers seed funding support: top ventures from each Runway cohort receive an ignition grant (e.g. ₹1 lakh) to kick-start their business [6], and many go on to raise larger *follow-on funding* through UPES's network of angel investors and government schemes. UPES's partnerships with government bodies have unlocked significant grant funding – for example, grants of ₹4 crore each from DST and BIRAC for supporting AI/ML, agritech, clean-tech and health-tech startups, and ₹2.5 crore from Atal Innovation Mission for community innovation initiatives [6]. These funds are channeled into start-ups as seed investments, prototype development grants, or competition prizes. In addition, corporate partners like HDFC Bank and Zoho have provided grant support and technology credits to UPES-incubated companies [6]. By connecting entrepreneurs to such resources, UPES helps them overcome financial constraints and scale their ventures faster.

Networking and Industry Linkages

The university places strong emphasis on networking as a resource. Through UCIE and Runway, start-ups get plugged into a larger ecosystem of industry and government partners. UPES has formalized collaborations with organizations like **Indian Angel Network (IAN)** for investor connections, **TiE Dehradun** for mentorship and networking, and industry bodies like CII, FICCI, and the state Startup Council to open doors for the entrepreneurs [6] [3]. Regular **networking events, mentor meet-ups, and alumni entrepreneur talks** are organized on campus. For example, successful founders (including UPES alumni) are invited to deliver guest lectures and share insights. In one instance, alumnus **Kuldeep Parashar, founder of PensionBox, spoke to 80+ startups at a UPES event**, sharing his learnings as a fintech entrepreneur [1]. Such interactions not only inspire the next generation but often lead to mentorship or investment opportunities. Overall, by fostering a community of practice around entrepreneurship, UPES ensures that novice entrepreneurs can learn directly from seasoned professionals and build relationships that help their start-ups survive and grow.

Community Outreach and Local Innovation Initiatives

Beyond supporting its campus members, UPES extends its entrepreneurship resources to the **wider local community in Uttarakhand**, thus directly contributing to regional development and the UN Sustainable Development Goals:

UPES is launching an Atal Community Innovation Centre to accelerate grassroots innovation in Uttarakhand, focusing on sustainable solutions for local challenges [6].

Atal Community Innovation Centre (ACIC)

As discussed, UPES's upcoming ACIC is explicitly geared towards **empowering innovators in remote and rural areas**. It will serve as a **hub for local problem-solvers**, tackling issues like hill agriculture, water management, rural healthcare delivery, and clean energy access [6]. By providing a venue in Dehradun for community members to experiment and receive guidance, the ACIC bridges the gap between urban resources and rural talent. The center plans to run **training programs, hands-on workshops, and skill-building sessions for the local population** to cultivate an innovation mindset at the grassroots [11]. Notably, the ACIC emphasizes **inclusive participation** – encouraging **women, youth, and underrepresented groups** to take part in entrepreneurship, thereby broadening the socio-economic impact [6]. The expected outcomes include innovative solutions tailored to Uttarakhand's unique challenges (such as mountainous terrain and dispersed settlements) and **sustainable enterprises that create local employment** [12]. By nurturing community-driven startups, UPES is helping ensure that economic growth in the region is inclusive and environmentally sustainable.

Startup Uttarakhand Collaboration

UPES is an active partner in the Government of Uttarakhand's Startup Uttarakhand initiative, which aims to develop the state into a startup hub. Recognized as one of 15 **"Incubators/Nodal Agencies" in the state**, UPES contributes by providing **mentoring, technical support and event organization** under this program [13]. For example, UPES frequently hosts or co-hosts **entrepreneurial bootcamps and grand challenge competitions** sponsored by Startup Uttarakhand [6]. In 2021, the UPES Council for Innovation & Entrepreneurship (UCIE), along with the UPES E-Cell, organized a **Startup Uttarakhand Virtual Bootcamp** that trained students and local aspiring entrepreneurs in business basics and idea validation. Such bootcamps (often held in different districts of Uttarakhand) enhance and empower grassroots innovators by providing them exposure to entrepreneurship concepts and one-on-one idea mentoring. UPES faculty and industry experts serve as speakers and judges in these events, ensuring participants receive quality guidance. By **bringing startup education to the community** through single and multi-day programs, UPES helps build an entrepreneurial culture beyond its campuses.

Techstars Startup Weekend & Hackathons

UPES, through its student Entrepreneurship Cell, has hosted global programs like **Techstars Startup Weekend in Dehradun**. These are intensive 54-hour events where participants from the region form teams, brainstorm sustainable business ideas, develop prototypes, and pitch to judges – all within one weekend. For instance, in September 2024 UPES's E-Cell and Runway Incubator jointly organized **Techstars Startup Weekend Dehradun**, drawing students and young professionals from across India to the UPES campus [14] [15]. Mentors from UPES and the Techstars network guided teams on lean startup methods and business model design. The event culminated in pitches that often revolve

around social or environmental challenges, aligning with UPES's focus on impactful innovation. By hosting such hackathons and contests, UPES provides local youth with a *pre-accelerator experience* – an opportunity to test and refine ideas in a supportive, fast-paced environment. Many teams emerging from these weekends go on to join formal incubation programs or win seed grants, thereby feeding into the region's startup pipeline.

Entrepreneurship Awareness Drives

To ensure broad awareness, UPES conducts outreach in nearby communities and colleges about entrepreneurship opportunities. UCIE has noted objectives of creating an entrepreneurial mindset among the youth of Uttarakhand, which involves **roadshows, awareness seminars in local institutions, and networking meets** with stakeholders across the state [3]. By partnering with local NGOs, industry chambers, and government departments, UPES spreads information about incubation facilities, startup policies, and success stories. These efforts encourage more people in the local economy to consider starting their own sustainable businesses, knowing that support structures like UPES exist.

Entrepreneurial Events and Competitions

UPES regularly organizes high-profile events that encourage innovation and provide platforms for entrepreneurs to secure funding, mentorship, and recognition. These events, often publicized on social media and news, demonstrate the university's active role in the startup ecosystem:

Winners of “The Pitch” startup competition at UPES, holding a ₹25 lakh funding cheque in 2025 (Runway Incubator and UPES event).

“The Pitch” – Start-up Funding Showcase

The Pitch is a Shark Tank-style annual competition hosted by UPES and Runway Incubator that brings together early-stage startups from across India to vie for venture funding. For example, in July 2025, The Pitch event at UPES's Dehradun campus featured **12 start-ups from prestigious institutions (IITs, BITS, NUS, and UPES itself)** pitching their ideas to a panel of investors and industry leaders [16]. The ideas spanned critical sectors like **renewable energy, health tech, education, and AI-driven security**, reflecting a strong emphasis on sustainability and social impact [16]. UPES provided a platform and an audience of potential financiers, and the top ventures received substantial funding commitments. In 2025, winners included **Envinova Smartech (a solar energy solution startup)** and **Genetico Research (rare disease diagnostics)**, among others, who secured funding cheques to accelerate their projects [16]. The judging criteria centered on innovation, scalability, and impact. In total, UPES disbursed about **₹3 crore of startup funding** to the winners in that edition [17], demonstrating a tangible investment in young innovators. *The Pitch* exemplifies UPES's mission to integrate entrepreneurship into higher education – it not only gives student founders a chance to get funded, but also instills a

competitive, real-world pitching experience [16]. Such events are widely promoted on social media and celebrated as success stories, enhancing UPES's reputation as a "*Startup University*."

Innovation Challenges and Hackathons

UPES also partners in organizing themed innovation challenges. For instance, under Startup Uttarakhand, the university has helped run **state-level Grand Challenge competitions**, where participants propose solutions to regional problems (like disaster management, rural fintech, clean water etc.). Finalists often receive mentorship from UPES experts to refine their proposals, and winners get seed grants or incubation offers. UPES's schools occasionally host hackathons aligned with their domain – e.g., a **Clean Energy Hackathon** by the School of Engineering or a **Social Innovation Challenge** by the School of Business. These short events engage dozens of teams from UPES and other local colleges in developing prototypes within 24–48 hours. The best ideas are given further support for implementation. Through such competitive events, UPES keeps the entrepreneurial momentum high and continuously scouts for promising sustainable business ideas to support.

Guest Lectures and Webinar Series

As part of its entrepreneurship culture, UPES frequently invites entrepreneurs, venture capitalists, and industry mentors for **guest lectures, webinars, and panel discussions** open to students and local start-up enthusiasts. These range from large events like an *Entrepreneurship Summit* (with keynote speakers from successful start-ups) to smaller expert talks on topics like "*Sustainable Business Models*" or "*How to Scale a Social Enterprise*." For example, UPES's social media highlights sessions where founders of notable start-ups (including some of its own alumni) share their journey and tips. Such events, often one-day or even hour-long sessions, serve as informal yet invaluable learning opportunities. They also allow would-be entrepreneurs from the community to engage with role models and ask questions, thereby fostering an atmosphere of inspiration and knowledge-exchange around sustainable entrepreneurship.

Student and Faculty-Led Start-ups Driving Local Impact

One of the strongest indicators of UPES's assistance to the local community is the track record of start-ups founded by its students, alumni, and faculty that are achieving sustainable impact and benefiting the local economy.

Many ventures that germinated at UPES are now addressing real-world problems, creating jobs, and serving as proof of the university's entrepreneurial support:

BluSmart (Electric Mobility)

Co-founded by UPES alumnus Anmol Jaggi, BluSmart is India's first all-electric ride-hailing service. The company operates in major cities like Delhi NCR and Bangalore, providing a clean and efficient alternative to traditional petrol/diesel taxis [1]. By deploying electric vehicles at scale, BluSmart directly addresses urban air pollution and carbon emissions from transportation. The start-up's success (backed by significant venture funding) showcases how UPES alumni are contributing to sustainable urban solutions. It also exemplifies the kind of future-focused entrepreneurship UPES encourages – Jaggi's education and experience were instrumental in building a venture that aligns with SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities) and SDG 13 (Climate Action). BluSmart's growth has a ripple effect on the local economy by creating green jobs (EV drivers, charging infrastructure technicians, etc.) and reducing environmental health costs in the community [1].

UGreen Technologies (Climate Tech)

UGreen is a start-up incubated at UPES that was founded by Gaurav Dwivedi, focusing on carbon capture and decarbonization solutions for hard-to-abate industries [18]. This venture aims to combat climate change by developing technology to capture CO₂ emissions from industrial processes, helping local factories and plants reduce their carbon footprint. UGreen gained recognition and financial support – it secured a grant from the Ministry of Education's Innovation Cell and AICTE given its potential impact [1]. Such funding underscores the innovative work being done and its alignment with national sustainability goals. As UGreen grows, it can collaborate with regional industries in Uttarakhand (and beyond) to implement greener practices, thereby contributing to environmental sustainability and creating specialized technical jobs in the region.

Envinova Smartech (Solar Solutions)

Envinova is a start-up nurtured through UPES Runway that builds **sustainable, solar-powered infrastructure "Smart Solar Huts."** These are essentially solar-enabled units that can serve as information centers, charging stations, or micro-offices in off-grid or rural areas. Envinova's innovation earned it a place among *India's Top 10 Solar Startups*, and it has scaled to over **30+ installations in high-profile locations** [19]. The venture also attracted over ₹43 lakhs in funding during incubation [19]. By harnessing Uttarakhand's abundant sunlight, such solar huts can provide clean energy solutions to remote communities (for lighting, internet, etc.), thus improving local quality of life and enabling small businesses to operate sustainably. UPES's support was crucial in developing Envinova's prototype and business model, illustrating how the university's resources help translate student ideas into tangible social impact projects.

Agri Joy (Indoor Farming)

Founded by UPES alumni as **Agri Joy LLP**, this start-up is innovating in the agritech sector with a focus on **hydroponic indoor farming** [1]. Agri Joy is building automated indoor farms that can grow exotic

leafy greens and microgreens in controlled, hygienic environments [1]. This is particularly relevant to urban areas and hilly regions of Uttarakhand where arable land is scarce. By making indoor farming commercially viable, Agri Joy addresses local food security and reduces dependence on distant supply chains. The venture was highlighted as a promising start-up from UPES, indicating the institutional support it received in early stages. If widely adopted, Agri Joy's model can help local farmers and entrepreneurs set up sustainable farming units, diversifying the local economy with modern agricultural practices.

Homversity (Student Housing)

Homversity, founded by UPES alumnus Saurav Kumar Sinha, tackled a very local issue – the difficulty students face in finding safe and affordable housing near campuses [1]. This start-up created a platform to connect students with reliable accommodations. By solving a community problem in Dehradun (which has many educational institutions), Homversity not only turned a profit but also improved living conditions for student residents, indirectly benefiting local homeowners and the rental market. UPES takes pride in such ventures that improve the social infrastructure of the surrounding community. Homversity's success has drawn attention to how a problem observed by students can be turned into a business solution through the mentorship and support structure provided by the university [1].

Cognecto (AI for Industry)

Founded by UPES alumni Divyani Singh and Anshul Saxena, Cognecto is a start-up providing AI-powered analytics for the mining and construction industries [1]. While not explicitly an environmental venture, Cognecto's solutions help heavy industries optimize operations, which can lead to more efficient fuel use and reduced waste (aligning with responsible consumption/production). The company secured ₹4 crore in funding, highlighting the viability of deep-tech startups emerging from UPES [1]. Cognecto's growth contributes to the local economy by creating high-tech jobs and by improving the competitiveness of industries that operate in regions like Uttarakhand. It exemplifies UPES's strength in fostering technology entrepreneurs who can modernize traditional sectors.

Other Cleantech Innovations

Since as early as 2015, UPES has incubated numerous student projects in clean technology and sustainable engineering. For example, past incubated ventures included prototypes for vertical farming systems, converting organic waste to coal, small-scale wind turbines, smart traffic management, and solid waste management solutions [3]. Several of these were developed as student/faculty research projects and then nurtured by UCIE. One such project, *Neelam Chullah* (by a UPES professor), was an improved low-smoke stove for rural households [3], demonstrating faculty-led innovation aimed at community wellbeing. These projects show a consistent trend of UPES focusing on sustainability-oriented entrepreneurship. Even if not all become full-fledged companies,

they often continue as social ventures or inspire new startups, thereby feeding a cycle of innovation beneficial to the local environment and society.

Each of the above success stories was supported in its formative stages by UPES's ecosystem – through mentoring, lab access, pilot opportunities, or seed funding. The impact of these startups is twofold: economic (creating jobs, attracting investments to the region, offering services to local customers) and social/environmental (addressing community needs, reducing carbon footprints, improving quality of life).

Conclusion: Driving Impact and Earning Recognition

In summary, **UPES as an institution provides extensive assistance to the local community for starting sustainable businesses** through a combination of formal programs (incubators, accelerators, innovation centers), educational resources (training workshops, courses, etc).

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