

Snoop Dogg Shares Wisdom with Marshall Students, Wins Entrepreneur of the Year

The renowned rapper, actor, and entrepreneur spoke to Professor Albert Napoli's class about his entrepreneurial mindset and his positive approach to relationships.



Snoop Dogg spoke with Professor Albert Napoli's class and other Marshall students in the TCC Ballroom. [USC Photos / Grayson Adler]

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12.06.24

On November 19, hundreds of USC Marshall students were treated to a guest like none other: Snoop Dogg. The world-famous musician, actor, producer, and media personality joined Albert Napoli, senior lecturer of clinical entrepreneurship, for a discussion titled, “The Entrepreneur as a Brand” in the Tutor Campus Center Ballroom.

“We feel so privileged to have Snoop Dogg as a speaker for our Greif Center students. In sharing his knowledge and wide-ranging experience as a founder across so many industries — including music, food, beverage, sports, and entertainment — he inspires and motivates others

to believe in themselves and pursue their entrepreneurial dreams,” said Elissa Grossman, Orfalea Director’s Chair in Entrepreneurship and director of the Lloyd Greif Center for Entrepreneurial Studies.

The event was part of Napoli’s course BAEP 452: Feasibility Analysis, in which students develop, analyze, and validate entrepreneurial concepts. The discussion included questions from Napoli himself and his students, culminating in a performance by the USC Trojan Marching Band and the presentation of the Lloyd Greif Center for Entrepreneurial Studies Entrepreneur of the Year Award by the Center’s founder Lloyd Greif.

“Snoop Dogg is the ‘Dogg-father of Cool,’” Napoli said. “He’s also a passionate and highly successful entrepreneur with a recognizable brand that speaks to a diverse range of demographics. We are so excited to welcome him to speak to BAEP 452 students about the importance of brand, resilience, and authentic relationships.”

The class kicked off with a discussion between Napoli and Get Engaged Media executives Cam Fordham (partner/co-founder), Ben Hiott (partner/co-founder), and Jason Zerden (CSO), who discussed their company’s creation and growth, plus their work at the intersection between branding and entertainment. Thereafter, Snoop joined the conversation.



[L to R] Albert Napoli, Elissa Grossman, Lloyd Greif, Snoop Dogg, Cam Fordham, Ben Hiott, Jason Zerden, and Matt Leinart. [USC Photo / Sarah M. Golonka]

Snoop is a prolific and highly successful entrepreneur, owning companies in film (Death Row Pictures Films), alcohol (Gin & Juice, Death Row x Happy Dad, 19 Crimes), music (Death Row Records), food (Dr. Bombay ice cream), and numerous other industries. Snoop also carefully aligns himself with leaders in other sectors including the online gambling platform Roobet and through his recent work with T-Mobile and Skechers. During his discussion with Napoli, Snoop offered advice to students on growing brands, choosing investments, and nurturing relationships.

“A lot of these branding deals is about relationships ... How are we going to start this relationship and how we want to end this relationship? Do we start it with a bang, or do we end this in court? Do we end this mad or frustrated or do we end this saying ‘I never thought this business could be this big,’” Snoop said. “Relationships are the most important key to this business, the relationship that you have with people.”

Students submitted questions for Snoop, with topics ranging from entrepreneurial mindset to brand control. One asked him to name the most important quality in an entrepreneur; Snoop’s answer addressed resilience in the face of rejection.



It was a packed house for Snoop Dogg.
[USC Photo / Sarah M. Golonka]

“I would say the ability to accept ‘no’ for an answer because you’ll receive more nos than yeses. You have the ability to accept that ‘no’ as an answer and use it to go get

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— SNOOP DOGG

that answer turned into a yes,” Snoop said. “A ‘no’ is not that bad, especially if you know why they said ‘no.’ Then you can go fix that and tweak that and come back and get that answer flipped into your favor.”

Snoop emphasized to students the significance of having power over one’s career.

“My brand is probably the most important thing to me right now because I control it,” Snoop said.

As the “commissioner” of his own life, Snoop is forging entrepreneurial paths, of which there are many. Snoop’s portfolio is diverse with wide-ranging investments in cannabis, jewelry, entertainment, food, and more.

He’s also been featured in dozens of advertising campaigns with top brands such as T-Mobile and Skechers. Snoop shared lessons in personal brand ownership, saying that each partnership is a deliberate decision based not solely on finances, but also on relationships, strategy, and authenticity.

“The money is not the key,” Snoop said. “The brands that I’m associated with right now, I feel good about because they understand me, and they allow me to put my spin and my twist on things ... I’m able to have my creative team take an idea and make it more ‘Snoop-oriented.’”

As an entrepreneur, Snoop also spoke to the importance of partnership deal structures.

“Now that I’m far in my career now, the brand deals must require equity first, because I recognize what I bring to your brand as far as making your brand become a household name,” Snoop explained. “There are certain situations where I don’t do deals with brands: if I feel like I could create my own brand.”



Lloyd Greif presents Snoop with the Entrepreneur of the Year Award.
[USC Photos / Grayson Adler]

The music icon is using his fame and success to give back. One of his philanthropic efforts is the Snoop Youth Football League (SYFL), a nonprofit organization that provides inner-city children with the opportunity to play youth football for a fraction of the usual league price. The league remains a passion for the rapper to this day.

“I started coaching my sons, and then I started coaching kids that wasn’t my kids, and I fell in love with them like they were my sons. I understood what the mission was — the mission was to give back because this is what you great at: give an opportunity,” Snoop said, before reflecting on his passion for mentoring kids. “I love that more than anything. I love giving information because I remember being that kid. I think that I’m probably the biggest kid in the room whenever I’m in the room, because I keep that inside of me.”

Snoop reflected on some of his own mentors as well: Muhammad Ali, James Brown, and Quincy Jones. Today, he sees himself following in their paths, guiding the musicians, actors, entrepreneurs, and students who will look up to him.

“I’m going to show the next generation how to put your legacy together, how to protect your legacy, and how to make sure that it’s a beautiful thing to talk about when you’re here and when you go,” Snoop said.

As the class ended, Lloyd Greif presented Snoop with the 2024 Lloyd Greif Center for Entrepreneurial Studies Entrepreneur of the Year award — the most prestigious honor bestowed by the Center and given previously to such entrepreneurs as Steve Jobs (Apple), Howard Schultz (Starbucks), Ray Kroc (McDonalds), Robert Greenberg (Skechers), George Rathmann (Amgen), and Marc Benioff '86 (Salesforce).

“What we have in front of us today is the rarest species of business person in the world — a serial entrepreneur,” Greif said in his presentation of the award. “Snoop is the quintessential example of a ‘rags-to-riches’ entrepreneur — a true role model for generations to come.”

Another special guest in the audience, Heisman trophy winner and USC National Champion Matt Leinart '05, joined Snoop on stage for the award ceremony.

Following the discussion and the bestowment of the Entrepreneur of the Year Award, Snoop was surprised with a performance by the Trojan Marching Band, led by Dr. Jacob Vogel. As they marched through the crowd, they played some of the rapper’s greatest hits. With the Trojan sword aloft and clad in his cardinal and gold jumpsuit, Snoop conducted the famed band and danced to the music.



Snoop Dogg dances with the USC Marching Band.
[USC Photo / Grayson Adler]