More than ever before, this is the year to learn and apply entrepreneurial thinking as we all work through new challenges in our changed environments. To learn about the support Cornell offers budding entrepreneurs and to kick-off your personal entrepreneurship journey, join us on Sept. 9th! Learn more and register for this online event.

Zachary Shulman ’87, JD ’90, Director, Entrepreneurship at Cornell
GETTING OPERATIONS AND EMPLOYEES WORKING SAFELY AGAIN

DIGITIZING HUMAN MOTION INTO DATA-DRIVEN INSIGHTS

Iterate Labs, founded in 2016 by three Cornell graduate students, has developed the first AI-powered IOT platform that digitizes human motion into precise, actionable, data-driven insights to manage workforces at scale and in real-time to improve productivity and safety.

“Over the last several months our team at Iterate Labs has worked diligently to provide a social distancing and contact tracing platform for manufacturing companies, universities, senior care facilities and any other location where people gather or work.

As a company that has its roots in the industrial safety space, we were well suited and ready to take on the challenge that Covid-19 presented for manufacturing companies and every other essential worker category,” said Iterate Labs CEO Jason Guss ’16, PhD ’18, Biomedical Engineering.

The new wearable product is designed to measure, enforce and alert social distancing of workers within a facility. Iterate Labs software tracks and reports on prior personal contacts—valuable information particularly during the pandemic.

“The support from the Cornell entrepreneurship community has been fantastic. We have two terrific Cornell interns - Yunyun Wang ’20 who is a Kessler Fellow and Ambikaa Jaggi ’21 - working for us. They did an amazing job as we developed the automated contact tracing software,” said Iterate Labs CTO Aproova Kiran, ’16, PhD ’18, Mechanical Engineering.
Emmanuel Giannelis, the Walter R. Reed Professor of Engineering, is also an early supporter willing to do a small scale pilot test of the device. Historically, his lab served about a dozen or so graduate and post-doc researchers as well as a few undergraduates each semester. For the fall semester, all university labs are working within a de-densification plan which allows students to work in shifts comprised of only two or three people.

“As a faculty member, I thought it would be useful to pilot this technology at a very small scale in my lab because everything we do needs to be re-choreographed. In the past, student researchers could move freely from the scale to the hood to the spectrometers etcetera, without a second thought. But now all these movements require planning. None of us have been trained to conduct research in the current environment of COVID-19 restrictions. This device will allow us to train ourselves to be mindful of our movements within the lab and may give both the students and me extra confidence that we are keeping ourselves and each other safe through appropriate distancing as well as adhering to new lab use policies,” said Giannelis.

Guss, Kiran and Matt Kempler MBA ’02 who is now the VP of Business Development, co-founded the company while they were completing their graduate programs at Cornell. Iterate Labs was originally named OrthoFit Ergonomic Solutions. Their first product was a proprietary analytics software platform and Smart Glove wearable which provides insights into likely indicators of strain and repetitive motion injuries. A key value proposition is increasing worker safety through more effective training which results in increased productivity.

“Our solution empowers the workforce to be more engaged. When the devices are put on workers, they receive machine driven feedback on their body motions. For one of the pilots we conducted absenteeism dropped from 20% to 0%, not because someone was monitoring them, but because the workers felt more engaged, they felt more empowered. We demonstrated to the managers as well as the union representatives that using AI as the driving force for feedback you create a win-win situation for everyone,” said Kiran.

In addition to some of the world’s largest meat processors using their core platform, Iterate Labs has begun working with sanitation companies and is making inroads with metal fabrication companies and automotive parts companies.

“Our location and contact tracing solution can help manufacturers, business and universities to get their operations and employees working safely again,” said the Iterate Labs founders.
The Clinton Global University Initiative launched the COVID-19 Student Action Fund on April 18, 2020 at the CGI U At Home virtual event hosted by President Bill Clinton and Chelsea Clinton. After completing a rigorous application process, three Cornell students were accepted into the program and each will receive a $1,000 grant from the Entrepreneurship at Cornell office to continue with their projects.

In addition, the students’ work will be featured in a GoFundMe campaign, hosted by CGIU, which is running from August 10 – August 28. Within the campaign web site, you may watch short videos describing each student project.

Camir Ricketts, PhD ’20 (candidate) at Weill Cornell Medicine is the founding director of MindsOf Initiative, a mentorship platform launched in 2019 to help Caribbean students get access to career opportunities.

Already well respected among the Caribbean social enterprise community – Ricketts was a recipient of the Prime Minister’s Youth Award in 2018 and the 2019 Ignite Caribbean 30 under 30 Change Makers Award – he is now looking for connections to people in the telecommunications and data sector.

Ricketts hopes to leverage this recent cash award, as well as the recognition by the Clinton Foundation, to boost donations to his organization which he will use to deliver mobile devices to students in the Caribbean who are missing school because they cannot connect to the internet during the pandemic.

Karina Popovich ’23, majoring in business administration, has been using 3D printers since high school. “After being sent home mid-semester [due to the pandemic closing Cornell campus], I couldn’t sit idly through the devastation. I had to do something to help my community and I did just that in the way I knew best by 3D printing. I started Makers for COVID-19, an organization that in two months of operation grew to over 320 organizations, 17 student organizers with the capacity to produce over 26,000 units of Personal Protective Equipment every week,” she stated on her application.

Makers for COVID-19 have produced and donated tens of thousands of face shields to hospitals, private practices, nursing homes and dentist office across the United States. A large part of their donations have also gone to the Navajo Nation.

All of the makers are volunteers and have been printing the PPE at their own expense. Popovich will use the cash award to help with reimbursement of
materials and to further develop the outreach platforms used to facilitate networking between the makers and the medical providers in need of PPE.

“There is a lot of waste in the production of face shields and masks,” Popovich said during a recent interview. “I’m starting my sophomore year at Cornell and would like to explore starting a business aimed at reducing and recycling waste generated during 3D printing.”

Another successful grantee is Longsha Liu ’20, CEO of Vita Innovations, since this startup was featured in the May issue of this newsletter, Liu and his team have participated in the NSF- iCorps summer short course and are currently part of the CNY Biotech Accelerator MDIC cohort. To date, the team has conducted more than 95 interviews with medical practitioners and administrators to fine-tune the design of their MVP. They have just begun printing the first prototype of their smart respiratory mask which features alarm-monitored data collection of patients’ heart-rate waveform, saturated oxygen levels, body temperature, and breathing rate. They will soon begin pre-clinical validation of VitalMask prototype with interested emergency department physicians at several leading medical schools.

In addition to receiving the cash award from Cornell, the three students have received acceptance into the CGI U 2020-2021 student program, including an invitation to attend the annual global conference which is scheduled to be held at the University of Edinburgh in Scotland from April 9 – 11, 2021.

For more information about the Clinton Global Initiative University program visit: https://www.clintonfoundation.org/clinton-global-initiative
LEVERAGING ENTREPRENEURSHIP SKILLS

SUNA FOUNDERS TRANSITION

When two Dyson students first started Suna in 2017, the goal was not to make money. Rather, they wanted a chance to apply the skills they were exposed to in the classroom to experiential learning in a startup setting.

“At the start, we knew that building a business is a really hard thing to do. We spent a lot of time ideating. We wanted to come up with a concept that would allow us to learn as many aspects of a business as possible — developing a tech stack, designing an app, working with different stakeholders, operationally-intensive logistics, sales and marketing - the kind of things we knew very little about” said Christophe Gerlach ‘20.

They decided on Suna, a campus food delivery service which uses a proprietary algorithm to manage the online pre-ordering system, then passes the order to food production services and ultimately manages the scheduling of drivers who deliver to student dormitories and residences.

“In a startup, you get a challenge and then have to adapt to multiple fast-moving environments,” said Pedro Bobrow ‘19, MPS ‘20.

“One skill set we rapidly improved was how to express value propositions to different stakeholders. We learned how to set and manage the expectations of the various groups involved,” continued Gerlach.

“I really wanted a chance to apply systems thinking. For example, when discussing a marketing discount to generate additional sales, we had to look at the impact it would have on operations as well as revenue,” said Phil Garbarini ’20 who joined the team as Suna’s COO.

During their tenure at Cornell, the co-founders participated in a number of eship programs including acceptance into the eLab 2018-19 cohort and working with the Cornell Entrepreneurship Law Clinic, Blackstone LaunchPad, several student marketing groups, Life Changing Labs summer program, and competing in regional and national business competitions. At one point, they were accepted into the Techstars accelerator program which offered a $120,000 investment for a minority stake in the business. Gerlach and Bobrow, however, turned down the offer to pursue their summer internships and to graduate on time.
As they neared graduation, each founder leveraged their Suna experience as a great story to tell during job interviews with recruiters.

“I went through a lengthy job search process interviewing with a wide variety of companies for career opportunities. I realized that the skillset that I had developed while doing a startup is different from those of students who go to classes and join clubs. I think that being able to talk about Suna helped set me apart from other candidates. I was more prepared for performing well in an interview and hopefully it was a more exciting exchange for the interviewer,” said Bobrow who is going to work at Lyft (John Zimmer ’06, co-founder) as a product manager.

Garbarini, who is now working for Deloitte Consulting, said, “The hiring manager was a bit skeptical when I told him how Suna’s operations worked. However, following the interview, he went online and placed an order which was promptly delivered...I ended up receiving a job offer!”

Gerlach also landed well. He is now a technology investor at General Atlantic, a leading global growth equity firm.

What happened to Suna you wonder?

After graduating in May, the majority of the 20 member Suna team spent the summer working on trying to sell the business. They found a home for it with StartupTree, founded in 2015 by Cornell alum Peter Cortle, which sells software products into universities.

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LCL Summer Pitch Results

SIX TEAMS WIN CASH AWARDS

All participating students were members of a summer incubator hosted by Life Changing Labs and Student Agencies Foundation and sponsored by Entrepreneurship at Cornell

- QBuddy and YayNay each awarded $1250
- Veggie Cup, Polici, Trameter each awarded $500
- All You Can Eat awarded $250

You are receiving this monthly newsletter because you have opted-in to the Entrepreneurship at Cornell listserv. Submit story ideas and general feedback to doe5@cornell.edu