

CORNELL
TECH

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JACOBS
INSTITUTE



PRODUCT STUDIO CHALLENGES @ CORNELL TECH

FALL 2022

OUR MISSION

Cornell Tech is building a diverse environment of academics and practitioners who excel at imagining, researching and building digitally-enabled products and services to directly address societal and commercial needs.

Cornell Tech is “Engineered to Matter.”

Cornell Tech’s Studio program is comprised of intensely immersive, multidisciplinary team experiences that provide all of our Master’s students with hands-on, real-world skills that challenge and expand their roles in their chosen fields.



PRODUCT STUDIO CHALLENGES

Every fall in the Studio, leading startups, companies, and organizations pose product challenges to Cornell Tech students. These challenges, in the form of a “How might we..?” question, go beyond a problem to solve or work to be done. Students across eight Master’s programs work in cross-disciplinary teams, conduct user research, create a product strategy, and develop and test prototypes of a new product or service that responds to the challenge.



IMAGINE NEW
PRODUCTS



SOLVE REAL-WORLD
PROBLEMS



DEVELOP NEW
TECHNOLOGIES



FOSTER
ENTREPRENEURSHIP



COLLABORATE IN
CROSS-DISCIPLINE
TEAMS

HOW IT WORKS

- 1** Companies submit a “How might we..?” challenge and identify a Company Advisor to work with the student team to ensure they have whatever access or information is required to respond to the challenge.
- 2** The **Studio team reviews** all challenges and works with companies to refine the challenge if needed.
- 3** **DreamTeam**, a matching algorithm created at Cornell Tech, is used to **form student teams and connect them to challenges**, optimizing for student interests and cross-disciplinary skills.
- 4** The student teams conduct user and industry research, pitch innovative ideas, de-risk their ideas through experimentation, and begin to build a new product. **The teams meet with their Company Advisor at least three times during the semester.**
- 5** Teams deliver a **final presentation and demo** to their companies.



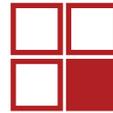
May 13th -
June 24th

Product Challenge
Submission Period



June-July

Product Challenges are reviewed
and companies are notified if
they are moving forward to the
student selection phase.



End of July

Student Selection



Early August

Companies are notified if they
matched with a student team.

Learn more about our curriculum <https://tech.cornell.edu/studio/curriculum/product-studio/>

Companies who participate in the Product Challenge have the opportunity to connect with talented students to explore solutions to challenges that are relevant to their businesses or represent new focus areas they are looking to explore.

Organizations that engaged with student teams in the past include:

Spotify • Bloomberg • Amazon • Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation • Estee Lauder Companies • Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center • MTA New York City Transit • Verizon • Twitter • Microsoft • Citi



CRAFTING YOUR “HOW MIGHT WE...?” CHALLENGE

6 TIPS FOR SUCCESS



PAST EXAMPLES

Citi asked...

“How might we eliminate corporate email phishing attacks, which lead to fraudulent vendor/supplier payments?”

MTA New York City Transit asked...

“How might we make train or bus service and stop announcements accessible to people with vision or hearing impairments?”

Twitter asked...

“How might we enable healthy conversation between people living in urban cities and public figures?”

1

Use the “How might we” design challenge format
Challenges not in this format will not be accepted. Submissions are limited to 300 characters.

2

Avoid challenges that are too specific or address your company’s specific business goals
If it is pre-defined work that an intern could do, it isn’t a good challenge.

Bad Examples:

“How might we apply {company x}’s award-winning solution to reduce the number of fraudulent bank transactions?”

“How might we engage with new customers between the ages of 18-24 to sign up for our platform?”

3

Avoid challenges that are too broad
If it requires months of research or has too many unknowns, it isn’t a good challenge; it should take no more than the first month of the semester for the team to come up with a product idea so they can spend the rest of the semester building and validating.

Bad Examples:

“How might we eliminate fake news / world hunger / poverty, etc.?”

“How might we improve user experience by predicting their needs?”

4

Address a specific audience
Teenagers, low-income wage earners, software developers, small businesses, sales teams, etc.

Good Examples:

“How might we help journalists detect “deep fakes” and other false information?”

“How might we enable pharmacists to better manage the health of patients?”

5

Frame the potential impact
What is the value to the audience.

Good Examples:

“How might we use ergonomics solutions to help digital screen users improve their posture?”

“How might we use technology to help people with disabilities with everyday tasks?”

6

Limit dependencies
Confidential datasets, access to internal company systems, etc. should be avoided. If dependencies exist, resources must be readily supplied.

To submit a Product Challenge, visit:
<http://cornelltech.io/pc22>

FAQ

What types of companies can submit challenges?

We encourage all leading startups, companies, and organizations from across the globe to submit a challenge. However, the selected Company Advisor should have enough bandwidth to engage with the students on a monthly basis.

How many challenges can a company submit?

We generally limit submissions to one per company. Large corporations can submit one challenge per business unit. Each submission must have a distinct Company Advisor.

Are challenges guaranteed to be selected?

No. After the submission deadline, each challenge is reviewed internally. Some challenges will not move past this review stage. Once all challenges are reviewed, a matching algorithm will connect students with challenges, optimizing for student interests.

Is there any cost to participate?

We ask companies who match for a \$5,000 donation to partially support the cost of operating Cornell Tech's unconventional Studio, which includes professional teamwork coaching support for students, new materials for projects such as the latest digital devices, training for practitioner teachers, events such as monthly Maker Days and practitioner Crits, and more. For nonprofits and early-stage startups, this fee may be waived.

Are there more examples of “How might we...?” challenges that matched with student teams from previous semesters?

Yes! To view examples of previous challenges, take a look at our Buildboard here:

<http://studio-fall-2019.cornelltech.io/>

Additional Questions?

Please contact **Leandra Elberger, Studio Director**, at leandra.elberger@cornell.edu. You can also visit <https://tech.cornell.edu/studio/curriculum/product-studio/>



What is the relationship between the companies and student teams?

Product Challenges are not work for hire or internships, but real-world learning opportunities for academic credit. Through iterative product development, student teams may pivot from an original idea to best address the challenge, or even reframe the challenge itself. The Company Advisors are not meant to influence product development, but rather serve as domain experts and mentors.

What is the IP agreement between the student teams and the company?

The primary purpose of the project is the education of the student. Organizations and students should define projects that are learning experiences and expose students to real-world challenges and opportunities within the organization. The ownership of any intellectual property (IP) that may be created during the project is **public domain**. The project is for educational purposes and any resulting intellectual property is openly shared for public benefit. IP, along with other legal matters, including confidentiality, pertaining to the project, are agreed upon at the outset of the project using the **Cornell Standard Project (CSP) agreement**. Please review this document prior to submitting a challenge. Companies that are matched with a team agree to use the CSP without modifications or revisions.