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eLab helps nurture nine undergraduate student businesses

By Kathy Hovis

Student Agencies eLab, the nonprofit accelerator for undergraduate businesses, is helping nine student groups this semester develop and grow their business ideas.

The eLab, housed in the Student Agencies building at 409 College Ave., was developed in collaboration with Entrepreneurship@Cornell. It provides access to a network of successful alumni mentors and investors, physical office space and a suite of professional services, including legal and accounting support.

Directed by Dan Cohen, eLab’s Entrepreneur-in-Residence and a faculty member in the ILR School, eLab opened last April and worked with three teams of seniors last spring. One of those companies, wiggio.com, an online toolkit that makes it easy to work in groups, has secured $450,000 in seed-stage funding and is being used by 80,000 people at more than 500 colleges and 300 high schools.

“We’ve had a lot of activity at the eLab,” Cohen said. “It’s really starting to take root.”

The business incubator has been able to spread the word about its services in several ways. Its speaker series offers a monthly event, open houses have brought students to see the space, have pizza and talk to other student entrepreneurs, and word of mouth has been a great tool, Cohen said.

Two of eLab’s newest members are in the “tier one” stage, Cohen said, which is for students interested in entrepreneurship who don’t have a developed idea but want to explore business opportunities and ideas.

“Tier two” companies are ready to take their ideas to the next step or already are running a business. Those seven companies are:

- Ancillary -- developed by Jonathan Santomauro ’10 company, (formerly call Global Procurement Strategies Inc.). Ancillary helps health care, biotech and pharmaceutical companies make their procurement processes more efficient and cost-effective.
- Bernales & Goretti -- Angeline Stuma ’09 and Constanza Ontaneda ’09 have created a business to sell premium, custom-made women's clothing featuring fair trade Peruvian-inspired items. Ontaneda is a fiber science and apparel design major, while Stuma is an
applied economics and management major.

- HireCube -- Aniq Rahman '09, an engineering and computer science major, with partners Govind Nagubandi '09, Bobby Miller '08 and Jaydev Mahadevan '09, are creating a Web site that connects smaller companies to prospective interns and entry-level employees -- allowing companies to screen applicants and conduct real-time online video interviews.

- Scrimple Inc, Developed by Matt Ackerson '09, Scrimple includes scrimple.com that offers consumers the chance to print coupons for local businesses. The company also offers the S-card, at http://thescard.com/, a local discount card consumers purchase and show at businesses in order to receive exclusive deals.

- Getlin Marketing -- Ed Cravo '10 has created a business -- getlin.com -- that focuses on product placement through YouTube and other viral media. The company will connect established video producers who already generate lots of hits to companies who want to place products within their videos, to help generate revenue for YouTube producers.

- Kristin McClellan '12 is working to patent a new process in skin protection. McClellan was a runner-up in the Cornell Entrepreneur Organization's Elevator Pitch competition last fall and a semifinalist in this year's Big Idea Competition.

- TheOutletGuys.com -- Developed by Josh Rudin '09, the business would help premium-clothing outlet stores sell their end-of-season stock at better prices and give them an online presence.

All these students are receiving help from a team of 30 alumni mentors, who offer advice on everything from human resources and legal matters to marketing and accounting.

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| April story index | Cornell Chronicle Online Home Page |