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## Introducing xLab—where Case Western Reserve students help shape digital strategies for established companies

MAY 22, 2019 × [BUSINESS, LAW & POLITICS \(HTTPS://THEDAILY.CASE.EDU/CATEGORY/RESEARCH/BUSINESS-LAW-POLITICS/\)](https://thedaily.case.edu/category/research/business-law-politics/) × [FEATURED \(HTTPS://THEDAILY.CASE.EDU/CATEGORY/FEATURES/FEATURED/\)](https://thedaily.case.edu/category/features/featured/)

xLab (<https://weatherhead.case.edu/centers/xlab/>), a new [Case Western Reserve University \(http://www.case.edu/\)](http://www.case.edu/)-based initiative, aims to pair tech-savvy student talent with some of Northeast Ohio's largest corporations to help the businesses understand and implement new digital-first strategies and opportunities for growth.

"We're creating a pipeline of talent for established companies in our region," said [Youngjin Yoo](https://weatherhead.case.edu/faculty/youngjin-yoo) (<https://weatherhead.case.edu/faculty/youngjin-yoo>), founder of xLab and the Elizabeth M. and William C. Treuhaft Professor in Entrepreneurship at the [Weatherhead School of Management \(https://weatherhead.case.edu/\)](https://weatherhead.case.edu/) at Case Western Reserve.



Youngjin Yoo

xLab is a way to respond to "a new economic reality, requiring swift and foundational shifts in thinking and investment," said Yoo, also a professor of design and innovation at the Weatherhead School. "This challenge is also a wonderful opportunity for students to gain experience solving real-world problems to help corporations thrive in a new economy."

Yoo likens the initiative to relationships of research universities and regions of economic growth, such as Silicon Valley and Stanford University, Pittsburgh and Carnegie Mellon University, and North Carolina's Research Triangle Park and Duke University.

### Keeping talent local

xLab is working with [Larry Sears and Sally Zlotnick Sears think\[box\]](http://engineering.case.edu/sears-thinkbox) (<http://engineering.case.edu/sears-thinkbox>)—Case Western Reserve's innovation space—and the [Institute for Smart Secure and Connected Systems \(https://engineering.case.edu/research/institutes/smart-secure-connected-systems\)](https://engineering.case.edu/research/institutes/smart-secure-connected-systems) (ISSACS), which grew out of the [Case School of Engineering \(https://engineering.case.edu/\)](https://engineering.case.edu/), to engage teams of CWRU students and faculty to assist companies in tackling specific digital challenges, such as how to better use data analytics to create new experiences for customers.

"It's critical to prepare students with experience in the digital economy," said ISSACS Executive Director [Nick Barendt](https://engineering.case.edu/about/school-directory/nick-barendt) (<https://engineering.case.edu/about/school-directory/nick-barendt>), "and the multidisciplinary approach that xLab is taking is an important part of that experience."

“We’ve reached a point where most devices and machinery incorporate digital technology,” said [Tiffany McNamara](https://engineering.case.edu/about/school-directory/tiffany-mcnamara) (<https://engineering.case.edu/about/school-directory/tiffany-mcnamara>), senior director of strategic partnerships and business development at Sears think[box]. “Partnering with xLab helps incorporate that digital layer to the physical devices being developed in think[box].”

xLab will limit membership to 10 to 15 corporations; among the benefits to those that join:

- The completion of an experiential learning project that results in two to three prototypes for digital innovation built on consumer insights, market strength, product expertise and revenue potential;
- A quarterly one-day roundtable that groups cohorts around themes, such as healthy living, manufacturing and experiences;
- “Digital First” employee training, which Yoo created to aid existing employees in gaining new skills and create a culture of embracing technological changes.

Students from the Weatherhead School’s Master of Business Administration elective class “Digital Innovation by Design” and from the Case School of Engineering will participate in xLab activities in fall semester 2019.

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*This article was originally published May 7, 2019.*

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