

Returning to a “New Normal”

Emory Global Health Institute and Georgia Tech Hack Covid-19 with back to work and school solutions

Feb. 3, 2021 ATLANTA — This week, 130 Emory University and Georgia Tech students on 29 teams competed to develop products that help schools and businesses safely reopen. Top prize went to Rotations, a digital platform to allow schools and businesses to quickly create safe seating charts and schedules to minimize exposure to Covid-19. The 2021 Emory Global Health Institute (EGHI) and Georgia Tech [HACK COVID-19 hackathon competition](#) awarded a total of \$21,000 to the top teams, with the winning team receiving a \$3,500 cash prize and enrollment in the CREATE-X [Startup Launch](#) program, Georgia Tech’s accelerator that helps students turn project ideas into startups.

“Innovative solutions like Rotations help solve real considerations around seating and scheduling to maximize use of our facilities while reducing risk of exposure,” said Lindsey Jalil, managing director operations and COVID-19 testing for Delta Air Lines and hackathon judge. “Delta’s number one priority is safety. Our operations never stopped during the pandemic, and the health and safety of our customers and employees is being protected through several measures.”

The EGHI/GT HACK Covid-19 hackathon was created in 2020 by the Emory Global Health Institute in partnership with CREATE-X, and the Coulter Department of Biomedical Engineering at Georgia Tech to encourage multidisciplinary student teams from both universities to address the pandemic. Last year’s winning team designed a web platform to feed Covid-19 testing results from pop-up facilities into hospital and provider databases.

“Our hackathons with Emory allow students from both schools to engage, develop ideas and create solutions that can later be commercialized through a startup incubator like CREATE-X,” said Raghupathy “Siva” Sivakumar, founding director of CREATE-X and interim chief commercialization officer at Georgia Tech. “Most importantly, these students want to contribute to helping solve what’s arguably the greatest public health crisis of our lifetime. Fostering an entrepreneurial spirit in our students helps them believe that they too can contribute to finding solutions to complex problems, even ones as difficult as Covid-19.”

To review the idea pitches, 45 judges were selected based on their expertise in public health, business, technology and operations. The finalist judges who reviewed the top 10 projects were: Stephen Chininis, Professor of Practice at the School of Industrial

Design, Georgia Tech; Amir St. Clair, Emory University's associate vice president and executive director of COVID-19; Lindsey Jalil, Delta Air Lines managing director of operations and COVID-19 testing; John Avery, director of Advanced Technology Development Center; and Jodie Guest, vice chair of Department of Epidemiology at the Rollins School of Public Health at Emory University.

Additional winners of the 2021 HACK COVID-19 competition included:

- **2nd place** - COVERED, a portable wallet that stores and keeps masks sanitary.
- **3rd place** - nonose, a new face mask designed to increase comfort and prevent misuse.

Seven teams received honorable mentions for their solutions. Descriptions of their projects and their video presentations are [available here](#).

About Emory Global Health Institute

Founded in 2006 with a mission of advancing Emory University's efforts to improve health around the world, the Emory Global Health Institute (EGHI) has supported Emory faculty and student global health projects in close to 100 countries. The EGHI also leads externally funded programs designed to improve the health of the world's most vulnerable populations. For more information about EGHI, visit globalhealth.emory.edu.

About CREATE-X

CREATE-X is a faculty-led, student-focused initiative to instill entrepreneurial confidence in Georgia Tech's students. The broader goal of CREATE-X is to provide the knowledge, skills, abilities and experiences that will give Georgia Tech graduates the confidence to pursue entrepreneurial opportunities and create their own future. Learn more at create-x.gatech.edu.