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Pitt and CMU Students, Scientists, Local Professionals and Surgeons Unite for 2nd IACT Innovation Forum

Where do graduate students in business, medicine and engineering sit down with Pittsburgh's most talented and experienced professionals to develop game changing solutions to Pittsburgh's healthcare needs? They do so at IACT – Industry Academics Clinicians Together – an organization led by Pitt and CMU graduate students whose mission is to spur technology innovation within healthcare and improve the region's economy. On Thursday, February 10th, over 50 professionals and graduate students from more than 40 different companies and academic departments from local universities gathered for the evening at the University of Pittsburgh's William Pitt Union. Local companies in attendance included ALung Technologies, Cohera Medical, and ClearCount Medical Solutions.

The theme for the night was "The Future of Surgical Innovation." The evening began with a keynote address from Pete DeComo, CEO of ALung Technologies and Chairman of Pittsburgh LifeSciences Greenhouse, a biotechnology initiative that provides resources and tools to entrepreneurial life sciences enterprises in Pittsburgh.

"The diversity of professionals present tonight is striking. This is an excellent opportunity to collaborate and network. Together the IACT community is a powerful force. Rest assured that the next major medical startup company to form in Pittsburgh, the next ALung, Cohera, or ClearCount will come out of IACT," said James Fisher, an MD/PhD student and one of IACT's student leaders.

The keynoted was followed by a panel discussion on effective collaboration from Eric Beckman, PhD, CSO of Cohera Medical; Robert Kormos, MD, Director of UPMC's Artificial Heart Program and Co-Director of Heart Transplantation at UPMC; and Steven Fleck, Cofounder and CTO of ClearCount Medical Solutions.

Attendee's then divided into teams and participated in student-moderated breakout sessions. Each group tackled pressing issues that patients and clinicians face in the OR such as postoperative telemonitoring, quality improvement in surgical care, and smarter instrumentation. During the sessions they identified potential technology solutions and determined the next steps to actualize them in Pittsburgh. This culminated with participants sharing their solutions in a one-minute elevator-pitch to all attendees.

"The mission of IACT perfectly aligns with my goals and aspirations as a medical scientist. I'm still relatively new to Pittsburgh so the contacts that I make at these events are invaluable. I really like the breakouts sessions as well. It's fun to interact with professionals and students with very different backgrounds to brainstorm ideas –

they are definitely the reason I will be at all future IACT events,” said Paul Johnson, a second year medical student at the University of Pittsburgh.

This event was sponsored by the University of Pittsburgh’s Office of Enterprise Development and CMU’s Donald H. Jones Center for Entrepreneurship. A student competition to develop the solutions from this event is planned for early April. This summer IACT will begin its Summer Innovation Blitz, which will provide student-led teams with funding and resources to develop prototypes for commercialization. Stay engaged at www.iactpgh.com.

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