

CIT GAP Funds Invests in Student Opportunity Center to Strengthen College-To-Career Pathways

SaaS platform enables higher education institutions to centralize, manage and deliver experimental learning opportunities to students

Herndon, VA – Nov. 27, 2018 – The Center for Innovative Technology ([CIT](#)) announced today that CIT GAP Funds has invested in [Student Opportunity Center](#) (SOC), a software as a service (SaaS) platform founded in 2014 for colleges and universities to connect students to and verify participation in real-world, experiential learning. Career-readiness is a global issue in today's job market, and SOC plans to use this investment from CIT GAP Funds to expand their offering to the nearly 17,500 western institutions of higher education.

Experiential learning, meaning “outside-the-class” learning experiences such as internships, volunteer, study abroad, conferences, and undergraduate research, is increasingly critical for the college-to-career pathway. Employers seek candidates who have participated in experiential learning, and while new opportunities for real-world, and high-impact learning have increased in the United States since the late 2000s, most students are unaware of these opportunities and how to find them. As a result, higher education is scrambling to provide these opportunities at scale and, with 48 percent of recent graduates underemployed, SOC was founded to help students find undergraduate-research related opportunities.

“Student Opportunity Center was founded when a group of students at The Florida State University noticed that many of their classmates wanted to do more to better themselves, but simply didn't know where to start,” said Chris Freire, CEO of Student Opportunity Center. “What started as a student project at FSU has become the nation's leading platform for helping students and universities capitalize on experiential learning. We are grateful for the support of CIT, both through their investment which will allow us to add several key hires for expanding sales efforts in 2019, but also for access to their vast network of innovators and advisors.”

SOC provides institutions with a platform to centralize opportunities, match students to these opportunities, manage programming, and track student participation and learning outcomes. SOC has two SaaS product offerings for universities. The first, called SOC ‘Connect,’ is a simple database tool for colleges and universities to share undergraduate-research related opportunities with students. The second, called SOC ‘Enterprise,’ is an institution-wide platform for colleges and universities to manage the full life-cycle of experiential participation, including opportunity curation, student placement, programming, and outcome tracking.

“An increasingly competitive career market means that real world learning experiences are required for success,” said Thomas Weithman, Managing Director of CIT GAP Funds and Chief Investment Officer at MACH37. “The main indicator of success after graduation, including career placement and general post-grad life satisfaction, is participation in experiential & high-impact learning opportunities. Chris Freire and his team at Student Opportunity Center have proven to be truly innovative entrepreneurs, and are building a platform we are proud to

support. We look forward to being part of their mission to bring more students together with opportunities for education beyond the classroom.”

CIT GAP Funds, a family of funds placing equity investments in Virginia-based technology, life science, and cleantech companies, has invested in over 200 high-potential, early-stage companies likely to achieve rapid growth and generate significant economic return. Since its 2005 formation, CIT GAP Funds has infused an additional \$600M+ of private placements onto the balance sheets of portfolio companies. Funds have come from over 900 different investment sources, with 80 percent including out-of-state and blue-chip funding sources from across the U.S. For more information, please visit <https://www.cit.org/>.

About Student Opportunity Center

The Student Opportunity Center (SOC) was built as the for student, by student solution to this problem. Our mission is to build a national network of students, employers, and institutions where students can discover, connect to, and build on their interests through the relevant experiences they have and create. The community of student experiential learning opportunities and high-impact practices is growing exponentially. It is our mission at the Student Opportunity Center to make sure that every student, institution, and employer is connected to that community. For more information, please visit <https://studentopportunitycenter.com/>.

About CIT GAP Funds

CIT GAP Funds makes seed-stage equity investments in Virginia-based technology, clean tech and life science companies with a high potential for achieving rapid growth and generating significant economic return for entrepreneurs, co-investors and the Commonwealth of Virginia. CIT GAP Funds’ investments are overseen by the CIT GAP Funds Investment Advisory Board (IAB). This independent, third-party panel consists of leading regional entrepreneurs, angel and strategic investors, and venture capital firms such as New Enterprise Associates, Grotech Ventures, Valhalla Partners, Harbert Venture Partners HIG Ventures, Edison Ventures, In-Q-Tel, Intersouth Partners, SJF Ventures, Carilion Health Systems, Johnson & Johnson, General Electric, and Alpha Natural Resources. For more information, please visit www.citgapfunds.org.