Baltimore is quickly becoming a noted hot spot for entrepreneurial growth. On April 26 and 27, top-tier investors from around the country attended the second University Technology Showcase in coordination with local venture capital firm Greenspring Associates. At the showcase, investors had the opportunity to hear from and meet with startups founded on technologies developed at The Johns Hopkins University, the University of Pennsylvania and the University of Virginia.

Similarly, Baltimore is becoming an ideal place for young entrepreneurs, including newly minted Venture for America (VFA) fellows. VFA fellows spend two-year deployments, in Baltimore and in other emerging startup ecosystems, learning about and supporting their local innovation environment. One of this year’s fellows, Kasim Ahmad, is working with us to help our student startups make the connections they need to get off the ground. So far, all VFA fellows who have finished deployments in Baltimore have elected to remain in our city.

A new health care accelerator program that Johns Hopkins is developing with other local innovation partners received a $25,000 grant in March from VilCap Communities, a nonprofit organization that supports innovation and entrepreneurship around the world. Representatives of accelerators from other cities around the U.S. chose the Baltimore accelerator supported by Johns Hopkins Technology Ventures as one of two to receive these funds.

Read more about these and other exciting things going on at Johns Hopkins in this month’s issue of Johns Hopkins Technology Ventures’ newsletter.
With every Venture for America fellow deployed to Baltimore, the city gains another dedicated entrepreneur intent on making the world a better place through cutting-edge technology and economy-boosting new business.

The Venture for America program, now in its fifth year, recruits top college students to serve as fellows at startups and startup-supporting organizations for two years after they graduate. The organization places these fellows in startups located in emerging startup ecosystems like Baltimore, Detroit and New Orleans. Fellows are paid stipends, receive training during the summer following graduation, and learn the ins and outs of starting companies while supporting the innovation ecosystems of the cities to which they’ve been deployed.

In Baltimore, fellows have been assigned to work at and support young companies like ZeroFox, Cross Street Partners and Pegged Software, and at organizations like TEDCO and Johns Hopkins Technology Ventures.

All of the fellows who deployed to Baltimore in 2013 — the first year in which Baltimore hosted a cohort — liked Baltimore so much they decided to stay on after wrapping up their two-year assignments last year. Since 2013, Baltimore has been a popular deployment destination, with more and more Venture for America fellows requesting to be deployed to Baltimore every year. In 2014, the city welcomed 12 new fellows. Last year, 14 more — out of a national cohort of more than 100 — arrived in Charm City.

Kasim Ahmad is one of those 14. Assigned to Johns Hopkins Technology Ventures, Ahmad was the first fellow selected from his alma mater, the University of Cincinnati, where he majored in finance and founded a startup to commercialize Waygr, an app to track sports bets made among friends.

Venture for America connects with its fellows throughout their deployments through bi-weekly workshops, online webinars, quarterly reviews and a yearly Venture Weekend in each deployment city, during which Venture for America team members hold networking events and startup workshops.

Cohort members stay in close touch during deployment and beyond. “The peer support of the cohort is one of the best things about the program,” Ahmad says.

Being in Baltimore is another great perk. As a medium-sized city with close proximity to Washington, D.C., and New York City, “Baltimore gives companies the chance to stand out while taking advantage of all the great resources the city and region have to offer,” Ahmad says. “The more time I spend here, the more I appreciate it.”

Kasim Ahmad

At Johns Hopkins, Ahmad works closely with students — from freshmen to postdocs — looking to start or develop companies. Serving in a supporting capacity for startups complements his previous experience working with and running young companies, and allows him to relay the lessons he has learned, including what he might do differently if given another chance.

“Some of the students are getting ready to raise half a million dollars for their companies, while others have an idea for a startup but don’t know what steps to take next,” he says. “I can help them navigate through those next steps by connecting them with the right people and resources at the right time.”

Working with the students is one of the highlights of Ahmad’s deployment. Learning from colleagues at Johns Hopkins Technology Ventures is another.

“I really wanted to get a chance to work with mentors more experienced in the startup field than me,” he explains. “Every day, I get the opportunity to work with really great people at our office, with all kinds of experience. They’re an extremely supportive team.”

NEW JHTV Inventor Portal

Got an invention?

Submitting your invention disclosure is now easier than ever. Johns Hopkins Technology Ventures’ new user-friendly, simplified electronic portal includes fewer questions and forms, making invention disclosures less complex and time-consuming. Anyone with a JHED identification account can access the portal.

For questions or support, contact Tina Preston at 410-516-4561.
A new partnership between Johns Hopkins and other local partners, including the Abell Foundation, will support innovation and entrepreneurship through the creation of a four-month accelerator program that will foster emerging health technology startups as they develop innovations, attract investors and put down roots in Baltimore — all while building up the city’s innovation ecosystem.

Johns Hopkins Technology Ventures is taking the lead on developing the new accelerator in Baltimore and is actively looking to partner with other Baltimore organizations — including the Baltimore Development Corporation, Betamore, the Economic Alliance of Greater Baltimore, the Maryland Department of Commerce, TEDCO, the University System of Maryland and others — that support the creation of a permanent startup culture in the city.

Baltimore’s new accelerator will be one of 16 to participate in the inaugural VilCap Communities program, launched to give promising startups in cities usually overlooked by investors a fighting chance and, in the process, to reinvigorate those cities’ economies. The other 15 accelerators will be located across the U.S., from Portland, Maine, to Honolulu, Hawaii.

VilCap Communities will be providing the Baltimore accelerator with resources, guidance, a curriculum and access to its national network of partners in other cities and communities around the country. VilCap Communities is a nonprofit organization formed in 2014 to foster the development of innovative companies around the world and is supported by organizations such as Village Capital, Revolution LLC (an investment firm co-founded by Steve Case in 2005), Google for Entrepreneurs and the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation, among others.

The Baltimore accelerator will start working with its first cohort next year. A call for applications will go out later this year. Selected startup teams not already located in or near Baltimore will move to the city for four months to further develop disruptive technologies in the health information and related connected fitness fields.

“We want to focus the program on health care technology — an area in which Baltimore can differentiate itself from other markets,” says Brian Stansky, FastForward’s director of business initiatives. “With this program, we hope to attract entrepreneurs to our region and keep them here, alongside startups already in Baltimore.”

“We’ve had a lot of success keeping startups that went through the DreamIt Health Baltimore accelerator in Maryland,” Stansky says. Baltimore’s new VilCap accelerator will be a logical follow-up to both DreamIt and Baltimore’s inclusion in Steve Case’s fall 2015 Rise of the Rest tour, he explains.

The signature element of the program is Village Capital’s ongoing peer review model. At the end of the four-month program, participating entrepreneurial teams will nominate two teams in their cohort to receive one $25,000-plus seed grant each. Entrepreneurs will defend their decisions in front of cohort members to ensure transparency and give entrepreneurs a chance to think as investors.

It will also help women and underrepresented minorities overcome traditional investment biases. Worldwide, only 8 percent of venture funding is invested in women. Village Capital has done its part to close that gap, investing 38 percent of its funding in women, according to the Female Founders Fund.

“By providing startups with business fundamentals through the four-month accelerator program and then implementing the Village Capital peer selection model for investment at the end of the cohort cycle, VilCap Communities will break down some of the barriers and biases that accompany the traditional investment dynamic,” says Christy Wyskiel, senior advisor to the president of The Johns Hopkins University and director of Johns Hopkins Technology Ventures.

“The program promotes what you know instead of who you know,” Wyskiel adds.

Representatives of the 16 inaugural VilCap Communities accelerators gathered in Salt Lake City last March to discuss strategies for building up their programs and their cities’ innovation ecosystems. They also selected the Baltimore accelerator program as one of two represented at the event to receive a special $25,000 grant to use for operating funds.

Bringing the broader Baltimore innovation community on board will “make this a program truly unique to and all about the future of this region,” adds Wyskiel, who, along with Demian Costa from Sagamore Ventures, represented the new Baltimore accelerator at the VilCap Communities meeting in Salt Lake City.

“This is going to be a true community accelerator,” Wyskiel says.

These are just some of the ideas that this year’s Social Innovation Lab (SIL) cohort members developed over the past seven months and presented at SIL’s annual Impact+Innovation Forum on April 21.

More than 150 people attended the forum to learn how the three dozen SIL participants were making life better for people living in Baltimore and in other parts of the world. Some of the local work included the development of a healthy teaching kitchen, a health improvement initiative, a school supply swap for teachers and a way to help students raise money for their academic activities. An example of an initiative to improve daily life for people all over the world included the reimagining of the production process for orthotic devices to reduce waste from manufacturing and increase accessibility.

Johns Hopkins University President Ronald J. Daniels delivered the keynote address at the forum, in which Sheilah Kast, a host for Baltimore NPR news station WYPR-FM, and Sheila Herring, the Case Foundation’s senior vice president for social innovation, also participated.

This year was the first since the Social Innovation Lab was founded in 2011 in which teams from the Baltimore community joined the cohort alongside teams comprising members of the Johns Hopkins community. During the program, each team developed a nonprofit or mission-driven, for-profit venture to support economic opportunity, health, or youth and education.

SIL supported the teams by providing funding, office space and workshops, as well as intensive, one-on-one support through staff members and mentors that helped the teams meet their goals and transform their ideas into thriving ventures with measurable impact.

Social Innovation Lab 2015–2016 teams presenting at the Impact+Innovation Forum:

**Baltimore Healthy Teaching Kitchen**: Engaging the community in lifelong healthy eating habits through hands-on cooking lessons that show how to prepare nutritious, accessible and practical meals. **Team members**: Paul Akre, Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine research fellow; Helen Knight, Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine medical student; and Shannon Wongvibulsin, Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine Ph.D. and medical student

**Baltimore Teacher Supply Swap**: Collecting donations of educational materials no longer being used and distributing them to teachers, schools and educational programs in need. **Team member**: Melissa Badeker, community member

**Bright Energy Africa**: Bringing sustainable, cost-efficient fuel solutions to Tanzania while providing local citizens with employment, training and entrepreneurial opportunities. **Team members**: Miguel Dias, Yadel Okorie and Yu “Samantha” Wang, Whiting School of Engineering undergraduate students; and Ryan Johnston, Whiting School of Engineering graduate student

**Fusiform**: Working to reimagine how orthotic devices are made to reduce waste and increase the accessibility of these devices. **Team members**: Thomas Brazelton, Jenny Park and Param Shah, Krieger School of Arts and Sciences undergraduate students; Andrew Colombo, Thomas Keady and Alex Matthews, Whiting School of Engineering undergraduate students; and Yunus Sevimi, Whiting School of Engineering graduate student

**Greater Baltimore Health Improvement Initiative**: Developing and implementing culturally adapted, health outcome-focused programs for targeted areas in the greater Baltimore region. **Team members**: Sharone Brinkley-Parker, Tammitha Lewis-McIntyre, Stephanie Maddin, Brian Sims, Edward Walters, Angela Wells-Sims and Ashanti Woods, community members

**Hero Lab**: Using an original curriculum in resilience training and positive psychology to nurture school and community change-makers among Baltimore youth. **Team members**: Adil Qureshi, Carey School of Business M.B.A. student, and Siddhi Sundar, Krieger School of Arts and Sciences post-baccalaureate student

**#popscope**: Providing free public astronomy nights for Baltimore neighborhoods to promote community building through science outreach in public spaces. **Team members**: Audrey Buckland, Bloomberg School of Public Health alumna; Viva Dadwal, Johns Hopkins University Systems Institute visiting scholar; Rachel Fabi, Bloomberg School of Public Health graduate student; Seth Franz, Anel Hicks and Joseph Long, community members, Isaac Lief, Bloomberg School of Public Health staff member; and Julien Xuereb, Peabody Institute alumnus

**SOAR**: Digitally empowering students in Baltimore through an online platform that showcases and funds their academic needs, interests and passions. **Team members**: Derek Durivage and Laurel Nilon, community members, and Bobby Moore, school of education alumnus
‘Rising’ Campaign Visits San Francisco for Evening of Innovation and Entrepreneurship

More than 150 members of the Johns Hopkins community gathered at the Ritz-Carlton in San Francisco on April 28 to engage in lively conversation about the roles that innovation and entrepreneurship play on Johns Hopkins campuses and in our communities.

It was one of a series of events held as part of the Rising to the Challenge $5 billion campaign, which supports faculty members, students and clinicians across Johns Hopkins and the work they do to make life better for people across the globe.

In addition to the attendees at the Ritz-Carlton, more than 150 participants from across the country and around the world joined the event by tuning in to an online broadcast.

Johns Hopkins Technology Ventures, which plays an important part in encouraging innovation and entrepreneurship in the Johns Hopkins community, helped organize the event, which featured a panel of entrepreneurial faculty members and students, including Christy Wyskiel, senior adviser to the president of The Johns Hopkins University and head of Johns Hopkins Technology Ventures.

"The role of Technology Ventures is to create as fertile a soil as possible so that the many seeds of innovation that fall can have the ability to grow," Wyskiel said at the event.

Other panelists included:

- Sharon Gerecht, associate professor of chemical and biomolecular engineering at the Whiting School of Engineering and inventor of the initial technology for Gemstone Biotherapeutics
- Isaac Kinde, recipient of an M.D. and a Ph.D. in cellular and molecular medicine from The Johns Hopkins University and chief scientific officer of PapGene
- Neil Rens, a biomedical engineering undergraduate student at the Whiting School of Engineering and design engineer for Aezon
- John Toscano, vice dean for natural sciences at the Krieger School of Arts and Sciences and a co-founder of Cardioxyl Pharmaceuticals

Christy Wyskiel addresses event attendees in San Francisco.

Pfizer to Present on Collaboration Opportunity for Researchers

Looking to move an idea or scientific breakthrough from lab to clinic? A collaboration with Pfizer’s Centers for Therapeutic Innovation (CTI) will help Johns Hopkins University researchers turn fledgling scientific discoveries into new medicines through funding and access to Pfizer’s drug development expertise.

The recently announced collaboration with CTI, which already has a network of 25 academic institutions, four patient foundations and the National Institutes of Health, will provide selected researchers funding of between $100,000 and $250,000 per year, with about four times that amount invested internally at Pfizer.

A steering committee comprising Johns Hopkins and Pfizer representatives will determine which projects are most likely to fulfill the initiative’s aim. The chosen collaborators will have identified disease-related pathways or mechanisms as potential therapeutic targets that culminate in phase I clinical trials to demonstrate proof of mechanism.

CTI’s therapeutic areas of interest include oncology, inflammation and immune disorders, cardiovascular and metabolic diseases, neuroscience, and rare monogenic genetic diseases. Typically, CTI does not work with therapeutics related to radiotherapy, nanoparticle delivery systems or vaccines.

The committee will consider funding projects regardless of stage, selecting anything from early research project concepts to those with a developed therapeutic candidate.

For more information about this new program, attend an informational session on June 27 or July 25 in room 490 of the John G. Rangos Sr. Building (855 N. Wolfe St.). Both sessions will begin at 2 p.m. and will include a one-hour overview presentation by Pfizer, followed by informal discussions and light refreshments until 5 p.m.
Good news continues to roll in from across the innovation ecosystem at Johns Hopkins. Here’s what’s happened lately:

On the list of finalists for EY’s 2016 Maryland Entrepreneur of the Year Award are Johns Hopkins oncologists Luis Diaz and Victor Velculescu, co-founders of Personal Genome Diagnostics. PGDx, which is revolutionizing cancer medicine with innovative genomic technologies that precisely identify and characterize unique genomic alterations in tumors, is headquartered in Baltimore’s Canton neighborhood. In the past five years, PDGx has expanded from a one-person lab to an outfit employing more than 60 people.

Two promising startups affiliated with Johns Hopkins took home awards at TEDCO’s annual Innovation, Corporate Excellence and Entrepreneur Awards on May 17. DreamIt Health Baltimore alum Sisu Global Health, which won Steve Case’s live pitch competition last September during his Rise of the Rest tour, received one of three innovation awards. Immunomic Therapeutics Inc. received the entrepreneur award.

Johns Hopkins startup PathoVax was recently named one of 10 finalists — out of more than 750 entrants from around the world — for the OneStart competition, a global life sciences and health care startup accelerator program organized by Oxbridge Biotech Roundtable and SR One, the corporate venture arm of GlaxoSmithKline. PathoVax was founded by graduate students Nicholas Calcaterra, Weijie Poh and Joshua Wang, who met while attending the JHU Bootcamp for Technology Entrepreneurs, to commercialize their patented, broad-spectrum HPV vaccine.

Pharmaceutical company Graybug Vision recently closed a $44.5 million Series B funding round. The company’s co-founders — Peter McDonnell, director of the Wilmer Eye Institute at Johns Hopkins; Justin Hanes, director of the Center for Nanomedicine at the Wilmer Eye Institute; and Peter Campochiaro, professor of ophthalmology at the school of medicine — developed the technology to treat age-related macular degeneration (AMD) and glaucoma through the delivery of compounds to the eye up to twice per year.

The proceeds of the funding round will be used to advance the selection and development of lead molecules designed to modify the pathobiology of fibrotic diseases. The funding round was led by Deerfield Management Company and included new investors Pfizer Venture Investments, Novartis Institutes for Biomedical Research and Bristol-Myers Squibb.

Business Insider recently named Baltimore one of nine “hot startup cities that aren’t San Francisco or New York City,” citing Charm City’s strong ed-tech startup industry. “The city regularly hosts events to connect entrepreneurs with educators; a recent Baltimore Tech for Schools event drew 1,100 teachers and school administrators to check out product demos,” Business Insider reports.

Johns Hopkins startup Blade Therapeutics recently closed a $45 million Series B funding round. The company was founded on visionary science from the laboratory of Harry Dietz and the late Victor McKusick, Howard Hughes Medical Institute investigators.

Dietz, a professor of genetics and pediatrics at the school of medicine, treats patients with a relatively rare inherited disorder, Marfan syndrome, in which life-threatening aortic aneurysms are common. He is regarded as the pre-eminent expert on this disorder. His investigations into the causes of Marfan and stiff skin syndromes have helped elucidate novel biological pathways that contribute to tissue fibrosis and dysfunction.

The proceeds of the funding round will be used to advance the selection and development of lead molecules designed to modify the pathobiology of fibrotic diseases. The funding round was led by Deerfield Management Company and included new investors Pfizer Venture Investments, Novartis Institutes for Biomedical Research and Bristol-Myers Squibb.
make sure all of the companies were prepared for their presentations.

“It was also an opportunity for investors from outside Baltimore to see what the city has in store for young startups and what those startups are capable of coming up with,” Aquino adds.

Joining the Johns Hopkins companies were startups from the University of Pennsylvania and the University of Virginia. That was a change from the first iteration of the event, in December 2014, which lasted just one day and featured only startups from Johns Hopkins. The next Digital Healthcare and University Showcase Technology Days event is slated for late 2017.

This year’s event enabled attendees to see what some of the best universities in the mid-Atlantic region are working on. It also gave participating entrepreneurs an opportunity to connect with peers working at nearby universities, opening up possibilities for teamwork down the road.

During the event, company presentations alternated with speaker panels, such as “How Big Data Influences Hospital Decision-Making and Treatment Protocols,” “How Big Data Improves Health Through Constant Customer Engagement” and “The Future of Neuro.” Panelists included neuroscience professors, executives for pharmaceutical and medical device companies, and Peter Greene, chief medical information officer for Johns Hopkins Medicine.

To make the event as effective in forming company-investor relationships as possible, Aquino and his colleagues carefully selected and invited key venture capital investors from across the country to attend, and they built time into the schedule for startups and investors to meet informally.

“I think my favorite thing about the event is that it gives us a chance to bring in a group of investors actively looking for opportunities to invest money in startups, and we present them with fresh opportunities coming out of Johns Hopkins and other mid-Atlantic universities,” Aquino says.

“It also shows that our innovation ecosystem is alive and well here in Baltimore,” he adds. “We have the basics for a very healthy and vibrant entrepreneurial community here in Baltimore, and I think that Johns Hopkins can be a leader in that respect.”

Baltimore Startup Showcase...

Celgene Provides Johns Hopkins with $12.5 Million to Revolutionize Cancer Care

Johns Hopkins Technology Ventures closed its largest corporate collaboration to date in April. The multiyear, multiinstitutional agreement with Celgene Corporation provides Johns Hopkins with $12.5 million in upfront funding and has the potential to revolutionize cancer care.

The deal with the global biopharmaceutical company followed the formation of a research consortium between the Johns Hopkins Kimmel Cancer Center and three other National Cancer Institute cancer centers — the Abramson Cancer Center at the University of Pennsylvania, the Herbert Irving Comprehensive Cancer Center at Columbia University Medical Center and the Tisch Cancer Institute at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai. Each of the four members received $12.5 million, an even split of Celgene’s initial $50 million commitment.

This is the first time that Johns Hopkins has entered into a multiinstitutional industry collaboration. The Cancer Trust, a nonprofit that creates multiyear collaborations among elite scientists to discover, develop and commercialize novel cancer diagnostic and therapeutic products, brought together the four institutions. A third party, T.R. Winston & Company, facilitated the negotiations between the Cancer Trust, the four cancer centers and Celgene.

Over the next decade, the consortium, which collectively cares for more than 30,000 new cancer patients each year, will present Celgene with research programs that could be developed into lifesaving cancer therapeutics. Celgene has the option to enter into agreements to develop and commercialize any novel cancer therapeutics that arise from these efforts.

“This is a paradigm-shifting collaboration that further strengthens our innovative ecosystem,” says Celgene Executive Chairman Bob Hugin. “We remain firmly committed to driving critical advances in cancer and believe the tremendous expertise of our collaboration partner institutions will be invaluable in identifying new therapies for cancer patients.”

Innovation is essential to our culture at Johns Hopkins. Across our campuses, faculty members and students are eager to develop their ideas and discoveries and put them to use in benefit to society – here in Baltimore and around the world.

We welcome gifts of any size. We would be happy to discuss our range of giving opportunities and other giving options.

For more info, please visit
http://ventures.jhu.edu/support-our-mission/