

Catalyze CU seeks startups to expand portfolio of successful ventures

April 3, 2018

Article from <https://www.colorado.edu/today/2018/04/03/catalyze-cu-seeks-startups-expand-portfolio-successful-ventures>



Catalyze CU is celebrating its fifth year of helping university-affiliated new ventures move further toward success and sustainability. University students, faculty and staff can still submit applications for the 10-week intensive summer program through April 8.

[Catalyze CU](#) is the startup accelerator for the most promising ideas and technologies at the university. The program runs from May 21 through July 27 and provides world-class mentorship, equity-free funding and dedicated workspace for students, faculty and staff who are working to get a business off the ground.

In addition to founding successful companies, Catalyze CU participants have

If you apply

Who: Students, faculty, and staff
What: Catalyze CU 2018 startup accelerator
When: Runs May 21 to July 27
Where: [Idea Forge](#) ([Fleming Building](#))

Apply by April 8

used their entrepreneurial skills and mindsets to find success with professional roles at entities such as Techstars, Uncharted (formerly known as the Unreasonable Institute), the Foundry Group, Sphero and at other startups. Many of our participants report their Catalyze CU experience helps them make a difference and serve as leaders in their current professional roles, regardless of the industry.

Past startup successes

Starting with its first cohort of companies in the summer of 2014, Catalyze CU has developed a track record of launching successful ventures in a diverse array of industries.

Environmentally friendly resin technology

The inaugural Catalyze CU class of 2014 featured two companies that set the bar for future participants. Joining Catalyze CU after winning the campus [New Venture Challenge](#), [Mallinda](#), founded by Philip Taynton (PhD, biology) and Chris Kaffer (MBA) created a new, environmentally friendly resin technology that can be easily molded and remolded to make various products. Winners of three NSF Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) grants, Mallinda has also participated in the Cyclotron Road Technology Incubator at Lawrence Berkeley National Lab.

Clothing provider for theme, costume parties

Also from 2014 is [Shinesty](#), which provides outrageous clothing for occasions like theme parties and costume parties. Founded by Chris White (MBA) and Jens Nicolaysen (BS, business administration), Shinesty has been going strong since its Catalyze CU summer, evolving from searching for vintage clothing to designing and selling their own apparel. Topping over \$5 million in sales annually, this Boulder company has outfitted professional sports teams like the Chicago Cubs and starred as the subject of an MTV series in 2017.

On-the-go law consulting

Catalyze CU's class of 2015 featured several more CU companies that have achieved notable success. Congo, combining "consultation" and "on the go," provides the means for people to connect with attorneys using a simple online platform. Founded by Willy Ogorzaly and Tyler Cox (BS, marketing), the team landed \$125,000 in angel investment immediately after Catalyze CU Demo Day. The team moved to the Capital Factory accelerator in Austin, Texas, and their product, under the name [JustLegal](#), was acquired by DigitalTown in late 2017.



Catalyze CU participant ReForm presents at Demo Day.

DIY kits for makers, tinkerers, STEM enthusiasts, more

Also from 2015, [Kitables](#), founded by Ariann DeFazio (former campus research scientist), taps into the growing maker movement to provide project kits for individuals and organizations, providing the supplies and instructions to help anyone build fun projects like their popular [Mini Lego Drone](#). Veterans of several successful Kickstarter campaigns and winners of a \$125,000 investment after Catalyze CU Demo Day, Kitables remains a staple of the Boulder startup community.

Smart beehives

Hive Tech Solutions joined Catalyze CU in 2016, just after their New Venture Challenge 8 victory. Their team, made up of Environmental Design faculty members Kimberly Drennan and Justin Bellucci, created “smart” beehives with the goal of improving bee health and sustaining agriculture. Their beehive hardware paired with the resulting data (temperature, humidity and more) has earned a National Science Foundation Small Business Innovation Research grant to continue to improve their technology and build their business.

Revolutionary computer networking

Also from 2016, [Stateless](#) has made a strong impact on the campus and community entrepreneurial scene. Stemming from a CU Boulder Electrical, Computer and Energy Engineering lab, the company revolutionizes computer networking to meet users' "as a service" needs by allowing quick and highly automated network functionality. Founded by Murad Kablan (PhD, electrical and computer engineering) and his faculty advisor Eric Keller, Stateless was welcomed into the spring 2017 class of Boulder Techstars and closed their first round of funding at \$1.4 million in December.

App-connected ring that turns colors into sounds

The 2017 Catalyze CU cohort, similarly, did not disappoint. Founded by Steven Dourmashkin, doctoral student in aerospace engineering, [Specdrums](#) created a fun, portable musical tool and toy. Specdrums rings allow users to tap on different colors to play musical tones, effectively changing anything into a drum set or musical instrument. After Catalyze CU, the team went on to launch a hugely successful Kickstarter campaign, raising almost \$190,000. They are on track to fulfill the orders in the next couple of months. They also won the Red Bull Launchpad competition in 2017.