What Is The Consumer Innovation Collaborative?

The purpose of the collaborative is to build academic-corporate partnerships for training graduate students in creative, consumer-centric product and service development processes. Faculty are able to explore the market potential of their research; students learn rigorous research methods and how to turn collected data into persuasive narratives that drive innovation; companies gain an opportunity to participate in academic knowledge generation. Our goal is to speed the movement of academic research to industry contexts while providing advanced thinkers and designers access to contextualized problem-solving scenarios. We also:

- Provide the opportunity for partner companies and our MBA students to interact productively, letting businesses shape a component of their training and thus increasing graduates’ ability to respond to live problems and scenarios in applied business contexts
- Offer recruiting access to top talent for our partner companies
- Enable managers and academics to work together, engaging in academic research partnerships (customized problem-solving, shaping research questions, etc.) to investigate issues of mutual interest
- Extend to our partners a reputation-building forum to discuss innovation and emerging consumer issues with leaders from diverse industry sectors and interdisciplinary thinkers (from the business school, the humanities, design, and the sciences) across NC State University’s campus

Benefits to Students

Surveys show and public discourse affirms that education methods in the U.S. must change to meet the needs of a new marketplace and a new world. Increasing emphasis is being placed on the importance of (1) “hands on” engaged learning, (2) interdisciplinary interaction between business, design, the humanities, and science, and (3) new methods of problem solving, design, and communication.

Further, within the business world, companies are increasingly adopting consumer-centric practices to grow in a highly competitive marketplace. This focus on consumer behavior (including the psychology and sociology of choice and consumption) has driven many firms to add consumer-oriented positions (e.g., Director of Customer Insights) and to seek out consumer research specialists to help develop their strengths in this area. Special training and experience in this area can help set students apart from those in other, more generic, marketing programs.
The CIC thus offers students

- An engaged, hands-on research practicum in which they can apply their new consumer knowledge to real business challenges, better internalize their understanding of this knowledge, and so increase the value of their education investment.
- The opportunity to work with large, successful corporations on exciting new product design/research projects, and so the chance to gain insight into real world issues about consumer care and new product/service development.
- Preparation for consumer-centric management positions through customized training and experience.
- Immersion in cutting-edge marketing tools and knowledge that go beyond traditional “basics”.
- A chance to make real connections with corporate executives that can assist in post-graduation job searches through the demonstration of students’ skills in interactive projects.
- A point of focus for students interested in a marketing concentration that can help shape their time at the Poole College of Management.

Benefits to Partner Companies
As noted, companies are increasingly turning their attention to consumer-oriented strategic thinking, processes and research in order to successfully develop and bring to market new products and services. Whether firms sell elite technology products to multinational industrial buyers or cups of coffee to tired commuters, all must successfully identify how their consumer interacts with their product and brand beyond the obvious level. Successful innovation requires firms to see needs before they are articulated, integrate user involvement early into the new product development process, identify unspoken consumer “pain points” and foster creative solutions, introduce innovations in ways that increase consumer acceptance and learning, and take care to avoid the pitfalls of consumer choice in crowded competitive environments.

To this end, many companies are partnering with universities to better understand consumer behavior and to learn new, rigorous methods for gaining consumer insight. Because of the nature of academic research, a practical translation is needed of the rich and copious findings that are being published every day in academic journals. Busy managers need a way to cut through the clutter and to deliver actionable suggestions and insights in a way that is timely, convenient and clear.

Student Application Information
Graduate students must apply to participate in the CIC through the Consumer Innovation Practicum course. Graduate students are encouraged to apply both semesters in any year of graduate study; however, students must either have taken or be scheduled to concurrently take the prerequisite course, Consumer Behavior. Students from all concentrations and disciplines (supply chain, finance, design, anthropology, communication, etc.) are encouraged to apply.

To apply, please fill out the attached cover form, include your essay (as described below) and resume, and email your package to Colbey Reid at cereid@ncsu.edu by 5 p.m. on February 28, 2017. Please use the subject heading “CIP Application” in your email. You will be contacted to set up an interview shortly after your application is received. Those accepted will be notified via email and automatically enrolled in the Consumer Innovation Practicum course for fall semester 2017.

Application Essay
Please write a one-page single-spaced essay that discusses the unique insights and experience you will bring to the Consumer Innovation Practicum. Feel free to discuss nuances NOT covered within your resume.
Consumer Innovation Collaborative

**APPLICATION TO THE CONSUMER INNOVATION PRACTICUM | 2017**

**CHECKLIST:**

- [ ] APPLICATION COVER FORM
- [ ] APPLICATION ESSAY
- [ ] RESUME

Date:

Name:

Discipline (MBA, Design, CRDM, etc):

Part Time / Full Time (circle one):

1st year/ 2nd year/ Other (circle one):

Pre/Co-Requisite Status (“Consumer Behavior”—please indicate when you took/will take this course OR if you are an interdisciplinary—non-MBA—student unable to take it due to your home discipline’s restrictions):

Cell Phone Number:

Email:

Student Number:

Partner Company/Industry/Type of Project Preferences:

Your Top Two Strengths on a Team: