



 optiMize

What is optiMize?

- As Michigan students in 2012, Jeff Sorensen and Tim Pituch recognized that they were surrounded by talented students who had the ability to drive **real world change**. They knew that if students were given opportunities to work on things they cared about, they could use entrepreneurship to solve big problems instead of just talking about them. So Jeff and Tim created optiMize as a platform for students to **take action**.
- optiMize has become a supportive community where students from different backgrounds come together to tackle social issues through the **Social Innovation Challenge**—a seven-month-long program that provides workshops, access to mentors and peers, and funding to **grow an idea into real impact**.
- More than 1000 students have come alive through optiMize, embracing the opportunity to **question the present and transform the future**. We've awarded over \$300,000 to help students create a more just and sustainable world through their non-profits, for-profits, and student organizations.



"Why not me?"



Michigan Urban Farming Initiative ('13)

"optiMize is all about pushing yourself further. When we joined in 2012, we hadn't planted a single vegetable or served a single meal. All we knew was the **soil on the vacant lot in Detroit was good for growing**. Today we've produced 60,000 pounds of fresh produce and provided meals for 200 families within one square mile from the farm. The money and support from optiMize really 'seeded' us!"



Blueprints for Pangaea ('14)

"Hospitals across the United States waste more than 6,000,000 tons of unused medical supplies every year. So far, we've **diverted more than \$2 million in supplies to hospitals in need**, and we're working toward \$7 million more. When we started with optiMize, we had lots of ideas but not much guidance. optiMize helped us turn our big ideas into a real organization that does serious work."



Leesta ('15)

"Growing up as Latina women, we never saw ourselves represented in our history textbooks. Plus most of the lessons were just boring! When we found optiMize, we were **inspired to create better ways to teach history**. With Leesta, we're building multimedia educational tools to teach engaging history lessons, all through the stories of women!"

The impact

50 teams funded to make real world impact

We believe that we learn the most when we pursue long-term, **action-based projects**. With the funding from optiMize to work on their projects full-time during the summer, students learn more than they can in a semester-long class.

1224 University of Michigan students

The three students who started optiMize shared a sense that, "We can't be the only ones who want this!" Four years later, it's clear they were onto something: 1224 students have joined to **turn their ideas into impact**.

103 mentors

Students have a lot of energy. And that energy can be directed most effectively with **guidance from experienced mentors**, including U-M alums. optiMize is a place where people from different backgrounds and generations can work together on challenges they are all passionate about tackling.

79 majors

We believe that that in order to address complex real-world challenges, we need to bring together a **wide variety of perspectives**. Almost every team in optiMize has at least two different majors, ranging from economics to theatre to engineering to biology!

Spend time with optiMizers!

We host private dinners and events for our supporters to spend time with our most inspiring student innovators

Together,

we can **support student innovators.**

we can **create the future of higher education.**

we can **change the world.**

optiMize

optiMize is a collaboration between student leaders and a small dedicated staff at the University of Michigan College of LSA, helping students turn their own ideas into impact. Contributions will support thousands of dedicated students as they become leaders on the cutting edge of social innovation and entrepreneurship.

Support a grant for a winning team from the Social Innovation Challenge

\$15,000 per team

These grants give student teams that excelled in the Social Innovation Challenge the opportunity to commit full-time for the summer, manage a budget, invest in their projects, and strategically expand their impact.

Support the optiMize Workshop Series

\$50,000 annually

As our primary instructional venue, monthly optiMize workshops bring in prominent thought leaders to lead action-based sessions that help students develop their entrepreneurial skills.

Support a student to spend the summer as an optiMize Fellow

\$5,000 per student

This stipend subsidizes a student's living expenses, allowing students from all economic backgrounds to pursue their projects full-time for the summer.

Support the optiMize Strategic Fund

Up to \$50,000 annually

This fund supports our strategic initiatives and helps us seize opportunities for growth and impact.

This year, we experienced the largest year-over-year growth since our founding in 2012 -- 50% more applications and 100% growth in participation. Your support will help us effectively manage our scaling, and will bring you into an ever-growing community of Michigan's most inspiring students and alumni.



Michigan Synthetic Biology Team Aptaper is a diagnostic technology to make tuberculosis testing more accurate and affordable in resource scarce settings **Kulisha** A company producing an insect-based fish feed to make fish farms more productive and sustainable in Nairobi, Kenya **Nu Lo** Music presentation with a purpose: providing opportunities for new artists while building a community of environmental stewards **Argo** A "friend date" app to help you expand your circles and broaden your perspective **Trapped Note** The first-ever "open world" virtual reality game for Google Cardboard **Simplify** Bridging the generational divide with a simple app for elderly people to connect with their families from a distance **Opportunities to Educate Children** A program for Michigan students to tutor "Little Victors" in the U-M Health System **StepFor** An app that turns your steps into charitable donations **Ditto** An app for people with chronic health challenges to meet up with others in their area who share their condition **ReDefine** A student organization using art as a medium to promote understanding and compassion in place of bigotry and fear-based stereotypes **RIME (Redefining Innovations in Medical Engineering)** A student-run medical consulting group seeking to optimize health care resources for uninsured patient populations in free health clinics around Metro Detroit **Detroit Entrepreneurship Network** Teaching high school students in Detroit the basic principles of turning an idea into a functional business **GatherIt** Building software to improve logistics for nonprofits **LiveZero** Building a movement of people who live zero waste in all around the world **Beyond Bounds** Creating a summer immersion program for college students that empowers participants to discover their passions and turn them into action **The Michigan Urban Farming Initiative** Transforming vacant land in Detroit into urban farms, converting a community liability into a community asset **Bounce** An app to help college students find other students to walk home with late at night **Leesta** a multimedia experience that inspires 8-11-year-olds by teaching American history through the stories of women **Ready Set Start** Increases arts accessibility by bringing myriad creative expression workshops to communities that lack access to the arts **ADAPT** Designing beautiful and comfortable products to help differently-abled people live more independent lives **Nomsy** a food lifestyle platform that connects individuals with dietary restrictions to relevant content, food products, and meals **Infusion Technologies** Building technologies for homeowners to store renewable energy on site **STARR Movement** Empowers Detroit high school students by providing youth development focused on the pillars of leadership, community/civic engagement and education/career pathways **Champions: Detroit** Connects relatable mentors with disadvantaged students to facilitate character building, strengthen academics, plan for the future, and give back to their communities **Universal Health Aid** Organizing doctors to host free comprehensive health clinics for residents in underserved areas **ReSource Fund** Connecting U-M college students with low-income residents of Washtenaw County to provide equitable financial coaching and credit-building service **Blueprints for Pangaea** a nonprofit organization that reallocates medical supplies from areas of surplus to areas in need **Miscellania** A student organization that holds open public workshops to teach different skills, providing resources to make individuals more personally and professionally diverse