

2020 YEAR IN REVIEW



TULSA
INNOVATION LABS

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ABOUT TIL

Recognizing that the jobs of the future are rooted in a thriving innovation economy, Tulsa Innovation Labs LLC (TIL) was founded to develop a city-wide strategy that positions Tulsa as a tech hub and leader in the future of work.

Through a diverse coalition of public and private partners, led by the George Kaiser Family Foundation (GKFF), TIL is creating economic development initiatives that seek to make Tulsa the nation's most inclusive tech community.

TIL's start-up, academic innovation, and talent initiatives focus on catalyzing growth across five interconnected ecosystems, together called "Tulsa's Tech Niche": virtual health, energy tech, drones, cyber, and analytics.



Hi everyone,

I know 2020 has turned out far different than many of us had planned going into it, and I hope you and your loved ones are safe and healthy.

We launched Tulsa Innovation Labs in the midst of a global pandemic, and our mission of catalyzing inclusive growth in Tulsa's innovation economy is more important and urgent than when we first envisioned TIL in the fall of 2019.

Thanks to the hard work of the TIL team, the support of our founding partner, the George Kaiser Family Foundation, the passion of local champions, and the guidance of global experts, we have made tremendous progress.

The work officially began in January, and we launched as an LLC in March. Our first order of business was to establish a foundational strategy—a focused approach to tech-led economic development.

We soon released a study conducted in collaboration with McKinsey & Company, called "Tulsa's Tech Niche,"

which identified five high-growth opportunities: virtual health, energy tech, drones, cyber, and analytics. We reorganized ourselves around these areas and are now in the process of building new initiatives to support start-ups, academic innovation, and talent.

By June, *TechCrunch* and others were writing about the work we're doing for Tulsa, and by October, we were recognized by CyberTech as a finalist for their global innovation ecosystem award, the only U.S. city on the list.

As the new year gets under way, now is an appropriate time to reflect on the accomplishments of the past 12 months and to look ahead to what's next.

We have great momentum for the new initiatives we're developing and look forward to continuing our work together in 2021.

Happy New Year,

Nicholas J. Zalla
Co-Founder and Managing Director



2020 HIGHLIGHTS

From left to right:
Back row: Shawna Khouri,
Kastle Jones, Nicholas Lalla,
Joanna Jeffries
Front row: Precious Okoruwa,
Jennifer Hankins

TIL LAUNCHES WITH SUPPORT FROM GKFF

In March 2020, the George Kaiser Family Foundation launched Tulsa Innovation Labs LLC. This new company was created to lead tech-led economic and workforce development initiatives that position Tulsa as an inclusive innovation hub.

When asked about the importance of TIL, Ken Levit, executive director of GKFF, said, “Economic development is new terrain for GKFF. But we know that to provide long-term opportunities for Tulsa’s families, we need to invest in our local economy and prepare Tulsa for the jobs of the future. TIL is going to be instrumental in creating a thriving and inclusive innovation economy that creates new opportunities for Tulsans. This work is needed now more than ever.”

“TIL is going to be instrumental in creating a thriving and inclusive innovation economy that creates new opportunities for Tulsans.”

Ken Levit
Executive Director
of GKFF



TULSA DELEGATION VISITS TEAM8 IN ISRAEL

While TIL was being conceptualized, a delegation of Tulsa leaders visited Israel to explore business opportunities and to meet with our new partner, Team8. Team8 is a Tel Aviv-based cyber venture creation firm that saw the promise for top talent at the University of Tulsa's cyber program.

The city of Tulsa understands that in order to build a thriving ecosystem, Tulsa has to become a landing pad for international start-ups. TIL's coalition partner, Atento Capital, invests in both Israeli VCs and growth stage start-ups. Atento now has a full-time person in Israel sharing the Tulsa story in the Start-up Nation's ecosystem. The focus is on helping Israeli companies with U.S. market entry as well as helping them hire highly skilled remote workers in Tulsa.

From left to right: Ben Borodach, Noam Shaar, Tom Sela, David Charney, Nadav Zafrir, Tulsa Mayor GT Bynum, Ben Stewart, Nicholas Lalla, Phil Kaiser, Robert Thomas, and Stacey Schusterman

KEY LOCAL PARTNERSHIPS ESTABLISHED

Tech-led economic and workforce development is a collective effort in Tulsa, and TIL has built an exciting coalition of local partners who bring important expertise to our wider project and who are, themselves, leading impactful endeavors.

Our coalition partners are 36 Degrees North, an entrepreneurial support organization and co-working space; Atento Capital, an early-stage investment firm; the City of Tulsa's Office of Economic Development; the Tulsa Regional Chamber; and Tulsa Remote, a future of work initiative that recruits remote workers to Tulsa.

We work together by coordinating our strategies and collaborating on initiatives that advance shared goals.

Devon Laney



TULSA'S TECH NICHE STRATEGY RELEASED

In June, we released our foundational strategy: Tulsa's Tech Niche. This report and the action plan it provides highlights the areas in which there is the most potential for growth in Tulsa.

Through rigorous analysis conducted by McKinsey & Company, we identified five key areas in which to invest and launch new initiatives: virtual health, operational technology for energy, drones, cyber, and analytics.



Drones



Energy Tech



Analytics





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Virtual Health



Cyber



“As Tulsa strives to build a tech-enabled economy, we must do so with a diverse workforce!”

Libby Ediger
Executive Director,
Holberton School,
Tulsa

HOLBERTON SCHOOL OPENS

The first initiative to sit on the TIL platform was the Holberton School, a software engineering academy. Holberton launched its third U.S. campus in Tulsa in January and had a ribbon-cutting ceremony shortly thereafter.

Holberton is a key driver of TIL’s goal of building diverse tech talent in Tulsa, and at scale, the school will graduate 500 software engineers each year.

“Having diverse backgrounds and experiences in the workplace makes for better business decisions, more responsive products, and a more inclusive ecosystem,” said Libby Ediger, executive director of the Holberton School, Tulsa. “As Tulsa strives to build a tech-enabled economy, we must do so with a diverse workforce!”





WORKSHOPS HELD WITH UNIVERSITY LEADERS

“OSU-Tulsa is excited about TIL’s focus on the future of aerospace as it relates to drone testing and operations, and we’re eager to work together to grow this industry in Tulsa.”

Pam Fry
President, OSU-Tulsa

For Tulsa to become the tech hub it aspires to be, our universities must be anchors in the innovation economy.

Much of TIL’s work will focus on supporting academic innovation at our local higher ed institutions.

Throughout the summer, TIL convened with the leadership teams of OSU-Tulsa, OU-Tulsa, the University of Tulsa, and Tulsa Community College to explore areas of opportunity. Many concrete ideas surfaced and mutual goals were identified.

For example, TIL met with Dr. Pam Fry, president of OSU-Tulsa, her leadership team, and leaders from OSU’s aerospace engineering department. OSU-Tulsa has been a key partner to Tulsa’s burgeoning aerospace industry, and we explored how we may work together to create a center of excellence in drone technologies and operations.



From left to right:
Tulsa Mayor GT Bynum,
Undersecretary for
Science Paul M. Dabbar,
Nicholas Lalla

UNDERSECRETARY FOR SCIENCE VISITS TULSA

Known historically as an oil and gas hub, Tulsa's energy industry has been working hard to innovate itself and invest more in operational technologies and renewable forms of energy.

Recent efforts attracted the attention of the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE). TIL was honored to host a delegation from Washington, D.C.,

led by the Undersecretary for Science, Deputy Undersecretary, and Chief Commercialization Officer of DOE.

TIL convened a roundtable discussion between DOE and local corporate leaders to explore the importance of research and development, long-term planning, and leveraging federal resources to drive innovation.



Nadav Zafrif

TU-TEAM8 CYBER FELLOWS START

Another initiative that's part of the TIL platform is the University of Tulsa-Team8 Cyber Fellow initiative. TIL and GKFF partnered with TU to bring Team8, a leading cyber venture creation company, to Tulsa.

Founded in Tel Aviv, with a large New York City office, Team8 collaborates with 10 PhD students each year to create cyber-related companies from their research projects. The fellowship provides incentives for fellows to stay in Tulsa upon graduation and pursue their entrepreneurial ambitions. The fellows started the program this year.

"This type of partnership, between TU, Tulsa Innovation Labs, and Team8 represents a new model for commercializing innovation and spurring economic growth."

Nadav Zafrif
Founder and Chief Executive Officer, Team8

"The University of Tulsa is known for its excellence in cyber," says Nadav Zafrif, founder and chief executive officer of Team8. "Taking academic research and leveraging that to create new businesses will feed Tulsa's burgeoning innovation economy. This type of partnership, between the university, Tulsa Innovation Labs, and Team8 represents a new model for commercializing innovation and spurring economic growth."



Shawna Khouri

VIRTUAL HEALTH HIGHLIGHTED AT NWA TECH SUMMIT

Our lead for virtual health, Shawna Khouri, presented on innovation in the Heartland at the Northwest Arkansas Tech Summit.

Khouri's presentation made the case for virtual health in the Heartland. She shared a little about what virtual health is, why our region is uniquely positioned to emerge as a leader in this field, and some of the strategies TIL is employing to achieve this goal.

Virtual and remote care solutions are particularly important to underserved and rural communities, such as those in Oklahoma, and are critical options during public health emergencies, such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

TIL is working to transform Tulsa into a virtual health hub for the South with best-in-class tools developed at local research centers and in partnership with the business community and is looking forward to collaborating across the region on this important work.

TULSA NAMED FINALIST FOR GLOBAL ECOSYSTEM AWARD

TIL was honored to be among a short list of ecosystems – and the only one in the United States – to be a finalist for the CyberTech InnoVision Ecosystem Award. The award honors cities, municipalities, and regional ecosystems for their achievements related to ecosystem building

and innovation. You can find our pitch video on our website, tulsainnovationlabs.com. And although Helsinki Business Hub ultimately won, TIL was grateful to be among such a diverse and highly regarded group. The recognition signaled that Tulsa is beginning to have global reach.





Executive
Council



Virtual Health
Council



T 75

TIL Leadership Council



Energy Tech &
Drones Council



Cyber & Analytics
Council

TIL'S LEADERSHIP COUNCIL FORMS

To ensure our work is industry driven, TIL formed T75, a leadership council to guide us in our work. The Leadership Council is composed of 75 leaders from across sectors and geographies, who offer guidance and expertise and work to help extend TIL's impact, all on a volunteer basis.

Council members include Tulsa chief executives, the former mayor of Pittsburgh, former White House officials, Big Tech leaders, start-up founders, venture capitalists, cyber practitioners, data scientists, innovative physicians, economic developers, workforce experts, diversity and inclusion advocates, a Rhodes Scholar, renowned professors, and others.

"I joined the Council to further TIL's vision of creating an inclusive and productive innovation economy in Tulsa. TIL has tremendous potential to impact the lives of all Tulsans, particularly in the realm of virtual health, and I can't wait to see what's next."

Simeon Sessley
CEO and Founding Partner,
Advisory Trail

LOOKING AHEAD

The TIL team is hard at working developing phase one initiatives:



University Incubator for Virtual Health Innovation

University-based incubation program that will identify the most commercially viable innovations and provide them with critical translational grant funding and expert product development mentorship to accelerate their transition from research to start-up.



Energy Tech Accelerator and Venture Fund

Early-stage energy tech start-up accelerator and venture fund focused on operational technology, digitalization, decarbonization, and energy transition. The accelerator will attract top energy tech start-ups to Tulsa and integrate them into a strong network of corporate partners, while the fund will provide capital for promising energy tech start-ups to scale operations in Tulsa.



Applied Research Center for Drones

Academic center that leverages the expertise of OSU's Unmanned Systems Research Institute, Native American tribes, and industry partners to commercialize drone technologies and position Tulsa as a global leader in the unmanned aerospace industry.



Cyber and Analytics Skills Center

Center at Tulsa Community College for developing cyber and data analytics talent in Tulsa. The Center will train students and provide pathways for jobs and bachelor's degrees.



Cyber Innovation Institute

An institute that will expand, promote, and commercialize cyber-related research at the University of Tulsa by pioneering partnerships with the federal government, private industries, and other universities.

JOIN US

Building an inclusive tech community requires broad-based support, and we want to work with all who are interested in our mission. There will be many ways for both individuals and companies to participate.

For more information, visit:
tulsainnovationlabs.com



FOUNDING PARTNER

GEORGE KAISER
FAMILY FOUNDATION

A supporting organization of Tulsa Community Foundation

INITIATIVE PARTNERS

Holberton



COALITION PARTNERS



Atento Capital



tulsa
remote