



COLLEGE
OF BUSINESS

iLabs – The University of Michigan-Dearborn’s Center for Innovation Research
College of Business
University of Michigan-Dearborn

Program Overview

[iLabs](#) – the University of Michigan-Dearborn’s Center for Innovation Research – is dedicated to advancing the understanding of cooperate, entrepreneurial, and institutional innovation and its impact on economic development. Housed in the College of Business, iLabs supports UM-Dearborn’s Metropolitan Vision by engaging faculty and students in applied research studies for corporate and regional partners. These efforts are helping shape strategic decisions and planning efforts for promoting economic development and encouraging entrepreneurial growth across Southeast Michigan.

Faculty and Student Engagement in Applied Research and Outreach

Since 2006, more than 15 faculty and 100 student researchers from the College of Business have participated in iLabs research and outreach projects, including:

- [eCities](#) is an annual research study examining the best practices of local communities – cities, townships, and villages – to encourage entrepreneurship, economic development, and job growth. Each spring, researchers work with communities collecting data on local efforts and strategies. Through the process, local governments are provided with benchmarking reports that show how those communities are performing on key indicators. The project concludes each year with an event recognizing the successes of communities and a luncheon where best practices are shared with leaders from government, business, and academia.
- iLabs produces the [UM-Dearborn Innovation Index](#). This study tracks quarterly changes in economic innovation in the State of Michigan. The Index gives an easy to understand snapshot of increases or decreases of six key indicators of growth of innovation spending and employment in the state.
- The [Technology Climate Survey](#) is an annual project, in cooperation with regional business associations, which asks the views of the state’s technology executives to better understand how Michigan’s business climate impacts the growth of technology-led companies. The responses from these executives help identify opportunities to assist organizations and strengthen the state’s technology cluster.

- Funded by the Workforce Innovation for Regional Economic Development (WIRED) program. iLabs researchers recently conducted a [study of 25-34 year olds](#) in southeast Michigan who have some college, but have not completed their degree. Through this study, we now have a better understanding of the desires, motivations, and barriers that this key demographic faces as they consider returning to college. These findings will be used to shape strategies to increase the number of adults in the state with college degrees which will better-prepare the state’s workforce for jobs and opportunities in the changing economy.
- iLabs conducted Economic Impact Studies for [Detroit Metropolitan Airport](#) and [Willow Run Airport](#). These two airports are crucial for the Southeast Michigan region, with the study showing that the airports support more than \$7.8 billion in demand annually and more than 72,000 jobs in the state.
- Ford Motor Company and the UAW collaborated with iLabs to understand motivations for employees to take buyout packages that provided educational assistance or workforce training opportunities. Using the results of this study, Ford was successful in negotiating special retirement offerings for its workforce while helping the company in difficult economic times.
- The Product Realization and Technology Commercialization Program ([PRTC](#)) provides technology entrepreneurs with a road map for future growth and development. PRTC consists of five two-day modules presented by a team of noted academics, experts, and successful entrepreneurs with experience and knowledge in the management of high technology products. The outcome of the program is a detailed business plan aimed to advance the commercialization participating firms’ chosen technology.

Through these and other projects, iLabs provides experiential learning opportunities for students while creating a “front door” for regional and corporate partners to access the University’s resources. Central to that are faculty researchers, whose knowledge and expertise are ready to assist organizations and provide business-based solutions to create value and opportunities for growth.

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