



2026 Cozad New Venture Challenge

TRADITION OF INNOVATION

At the University of Illinois, innovation is more than a buzzword — it's a part of our legacy.

From pioneering the first MRI to helping launch platforms like YouTube, Illinois has consistently led breakthroughs that drive transformative change.

Grand Prize Winner \$100K Sponsored by TechNexus Venture Collaborative

Archean Sciences grows real human neurons on a chip, transforming drug development and powering AI at a fraction of the energy cost of conventional silicon. In the months since Cozad, the startup has attracted investment from Illinois Ventures and Origin Ventures.

[READ THE STORY](https://go.illinois.edu/cozad-2026)

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Contributing to Illinois' Economy

Over its 26 years, Cozad teams have attracted significant investments. This financial support helps their ventures grow and offer attractive job opportunities, fostering a skilled workforce in Illinois — benefitting our overall economy.

\$1.3B

FUNDS RAISED BY
COZAD WINNERS
SINCE 2000

5,500

STUDENTS HAVE PARTICIPATED
SINCE 2000



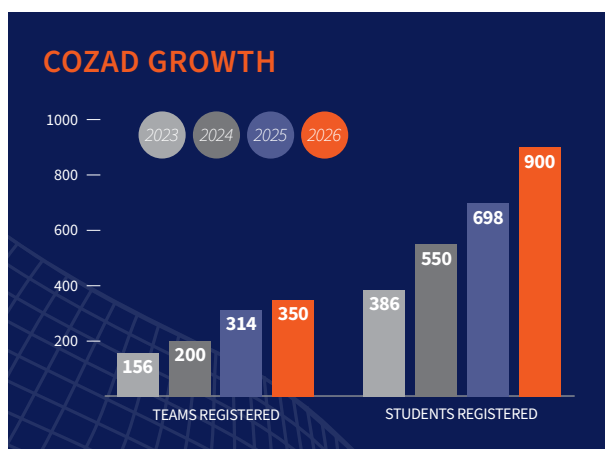
SEVERAL COZAD PARTICIPANTS
COLLABORATED WITH ILLINOIS
AND NATIONAL INSTITUTIONS
TO DEEPEN THEIR SHARED
COMMITMENT TO INNOVATION
ROOTED IN ILLINOIS.



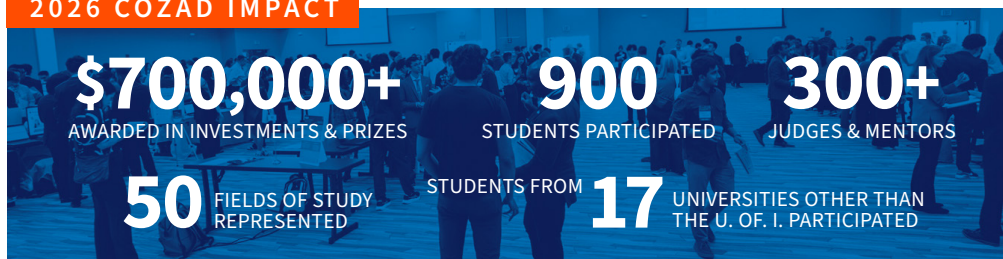
Supporting student startups

COZAD SEES EXPONENTIAL GROWTH

In its 26th year, Illinois' largest venture creation program witnessed exponential growth, doubling the number of teams and students registered since 2023. Since its founding in 2000, Cozad has awarded more than **\$5 million** in funding and prizes and helped launch some of Illinois' most groundbreaking startups. More than 5,500 students have participated in the program since its inception.



2026 COZAD IMPACT



Tandem co-founders Hetarth Chopra and Mankeerat Sidhu at the 2025 Cozad New Venture Challenge Demo Day.

From Cozad Winner to Rising Startup

Tandem's Cozad win proved to be a launchpad. The 2025 champion, which unites idle GPUs bit-torrent-style into an on-demand compute network, secured **\$1.7 million in seed funding** led by Jackson Square Ventures, with ShaktiVC participating. The startup also joined accelerators Afore FiRU and LeapYear and launched its first product at HackMIT 2025, putting its technology in front of its earliest users.

COLLABORATION

University Partners

- Grainger Engineering
- Carle Illinois College of Medicine
- Gies Business
- Office of the Vice Chancellor for Research and Innovation
- College of Education
- Illinois Ventures

THANK YOU!

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VENTURE COLLABORATIVE

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2026 SPONSOR STATS

11
VCs

31
SPONSORS

23
DONORS

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