



THE CORNELL TECH LL.M.:  
Cornell Law School's Own Startup  
on Roosevelt Island, NYC PAGE 4



**Cornell Law School**  
Lawyers in the Best Sense

**Spring 2017**

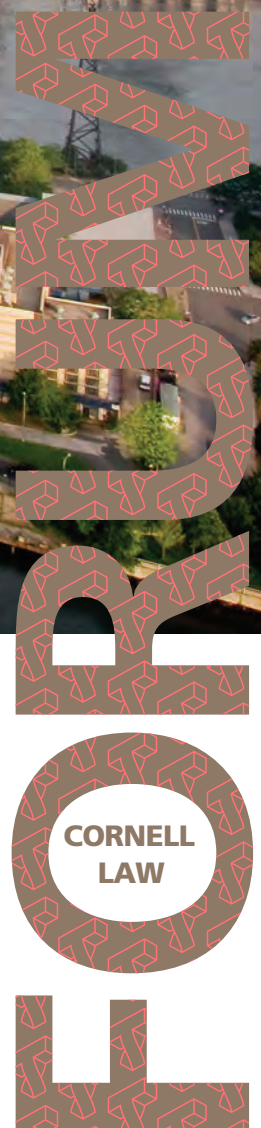
James Grimmelmann Straddles  
the Law-Tech Divide

Karen Comstock, the Law School's  
First Public Service Dean, Retires

Stanley Mailman '52:  
Immigration Law Loses a Pioneer

Launch of the Cornell Center  
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Law School Celebrates  
Allan R. Tessler's Birthday



# Cornell Law School's Own Startup: A New Degree in Law, Technology, and Entrepreneurship

by CHRISTOPHER BROUWER ■ PHOTOGRAPHY by LINDSAY FRANCE, JASON KOSKI, JEFF WEINER and ROBERT BARKER

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Three stories above the corner of 8th Ave. and W. 16th St., in the massive Google building in New York's Chelsea neighborhood, a revolution in legal education is underway.



It's January 26, 2017, the second day of spring-semester classes at the Cornell Tech campus. A low hum of energy turns to a steady buzz as graduate students spill out of their midafternoon classes into the sun-filled open area known as the Studio. Snippets of excited conversation cascade through the loft-like space. Reconnections are made after a long winter break. Surveying the scene, you might never know that among this throng of technologists, designers, engineers, and business students are the twelve pioneering members of Cornell Law School's and Cornell Tech's new Master of Laws (LLM) in Law, Technology, and Entrepreneurship.

These aspiring tech lawyers have come from the United States and around the world, from a diverse array of backgrounds, to form the inaugural class of this first-of-its-kind program. The Cornell Tech LLM, as it's known for short, was created for practicing attorneys or recent grads who want to acquire the cutting-edge lawyering skills they'll need to succeed in the fast-moving tech world. As the students, professors, and alumni who are involved in the program will tell you, the Cornell Tech LLM goes far beyond the boundaries of your typical law school experience. It's not just innovative; it's downright disruptive.

"The Tech LLM program teaches the law in a way that is just not taught in other law schools or other law programs," says



*Our law students work together with business-people and technologists as part of business and technology teams. They don't simply learn how to represent clients or work with clients, they actually become part of the client. We think that's a valuable way to understand client needs and pressures, particularly in the tech world.*

— Charles Whitehead





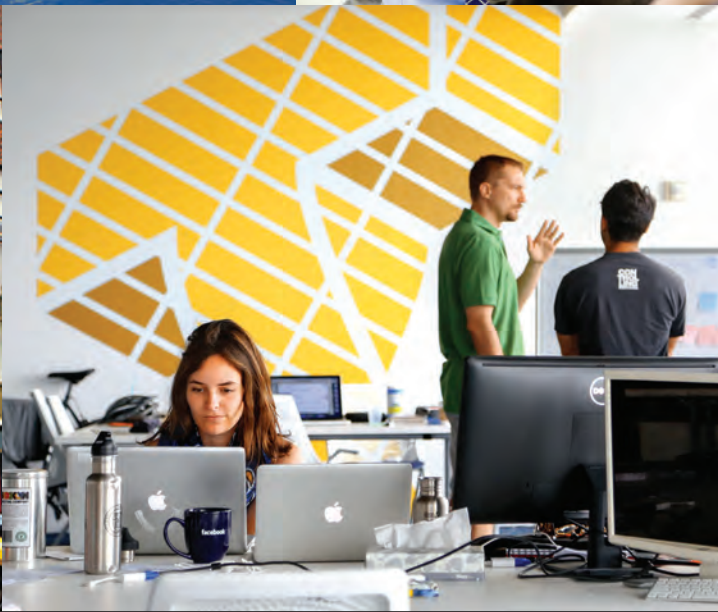




ABOVE AND BELOW: The temporary home of Cornell Tech at the Google building in New York City. CENTER: The southern tip of Roosevelt Island, permanent home of Cornell Tech.



Oskar Liivak





**Charles Whitehead**, the Myron C. Taylor Alumni Professor of Business Law and director of the Law, Technology, and Entrepreneurship Program at Cornell Tech. “We go a step further. Our law students work together with businesspeople and technologists as part of business and technology teams. They don’t simply learn how to represent clients or work with clients, they actually become part of the client. We think that’s a valuable way to understand client needs and pressures, particularly in the tech world.”

At the heart of the Cornell Tech curriculum is the Studio experience—Product Studio in the fall and Startup Studio in the spring semester—in which students gain first-hand, real-world experience in the product development process. Every student here participates in these intensive, collaborative, and empowering programs. Students work as part of cross-disciplinary project teams to solve real technology and business problems.

To **Leland Rechis**, who runs the Product Studio and who’s worked with tech companies from Google to Kickstarter, law students are an essential ingredient of the interdisciplinary brew. He’s been impressed by the leadership role of the new Tech Law students. “A large percentage of them have been leaders in the class and leaders in thinking and really understanding the creative solutions to “How might we ...?” questions and product development,” he says. “They’ve really been some of the most engaged students in the class.”

“I was in a [Product Studio] team with two engineers and an MBA student,” says **Matthew Stichinsky ’13**—the lone Cornell Law alum among the inaugural class. “It’s a great experience that you don’t get in law school at all,” he says. “Understanding more about the overall business and tech world, and not just practice in this bubble of law, is incredibly helpful.”

It’s the blending of the experiential and multidisciplinary into one curriculum that makes the Tech LLM so revolutionary, says **Eduardo M. Peñalver**, the Allan R. Tessler Dean and Professor of Law. “The reason I think it only exists at Cornell Law School is that no one else has something like Cornell Tech,” says Peñalver. “It enables groups of students from different disciplines to work together on an actual project. You have to have all those pieces, the business piece, the engineering or computer science piece, and the law piece to make it work.”

Whitehead agrees that, although a number of programs at other universities combine technology and the law, there was a real need for a program that could develop a new type of lawyer, with the legal expertise, business acumen and familiarity with technology necessary to lead and support tech companies.

*So, the critical value comes from the fact that we’re not providing legal advice from outside, we’re not providing advice that a general counsel would give, we are providing legal advice from the inside, in the form of the design of the architecture of products. This is unique.*

— *Johanan Ottensooser*



*...there really was no other program out there that is like this one.*

— *Max Peterson*



“What we are trying to do is take the students from being lawyers to being tech lawyers,” says James Grimmelmann, the first faculty hire for the Cornell Tech LLM program. For this to happen, notes Grimmelmann, we need to teach them “how to be a problem spotter in advance, how to work out creative solutions to complex problems with a lot of moving parts, and how to develop a comfort with open-ended environments. And it involves some very intensive legal, regulatory, and technological product knowledge.”





CLOCKWISE FROM BELOW: The Roosevelt Island Tramway, which connects Roosevelt Island to the Upper East Side of Manhattan; Tech Law students (L to R) LeMar Moore, Max Paterson, and Alex Felix; and Tech Law student Elizabeth Ragavanis.





# James Grimmelmann Straddles the Law-Tech Divide

by IAN MCGULLAM



**Cornell hired James Grimmelmann as a law professor, but it got a translator in the bargain. When the first cohort of students in Cornell Tech and Cornell Law School's new joint LL.M. program arrived in class this fall, they found in Grimmelmann someone who could speak the language of both students who dream of becoming the Notorious RBG, and those whose idol looks more like Mark Zuckerberg.**

Grimmelmann studies the intersections between computers and the law, and what each side has to teach the other. A former Microsoft programmer, he's currently exploring ways of looking at copyright law through a computer science lens—in particular, figuring out how to quantify the expression in artistic work, and the similarities between different works. Grimmelmann says that tech-industry insiders already think about copyright this way: don't worry about the aesthetics, just compare the code. "I think it's helpful for the legal system to bring in the perspective of how people who are actually involved in implementing things work with it," he says. "This is a general principle for my work, which is that computer science is incredibly pragmatic. It's about getting computers to do things. That pragmatic approach to deep questions sidesteps the philosophical issues and just says, 'What can we do?'"

The new LL.M. in Law, Technology, and Entrepreneurship is a one-year interdisciplinary whirlwind that teaches lawyers how to navigate the digital economy. "Looking forward, we see tremendous interest and growth in the intersection of law and technology, both in legal practice on the business side and among current students and scholars," says Eduardo M. Peñalver, the Allan R. Tessler Dean

and Professor of Law. "The program really plants us very firmly in this emerging field in a really unique interdisciplinary environment at Cornell Tech that no one else can replicate." The joint LL.M. program is based on Cornell Tech's New York City campus, putting it at the epicenter of the U.S. law profession.

One facet of Grimmelmann's work involves teasing out an analogy between computer code and legal texts. "If you think about a statute that says don't speed, it's like a computer program—it's a piece of text that does something in the world," he says.

"Even incredibly complicated programs have definite determinate behaviors. That fact seems to suggest that there's a possibility of language that doesn't require on-the-spot discretion," Grimmelmann adds. "This is really interesting as a theoretical matter, about how should we think about judging and writing legal texts, but it also tells us something about which features of the legal system can be delegated to machines. Could you have automated enforcement of rules against market manipulation as simple as an algorithm to spot suspicious trades and automatically declare them illegal?"

Cornell Tech provides the perfect venue for someone wrestling with these liminal questions. "These are law students who are actually

deeply interested in technology," Grimmelmann says excitedly. "These are engineering students who are building things that are going to have massive policy implications. This is a really great moment for doing things that aren't held back by traditional boundaries."

"The basic premise of the Law Tech program is to look at the intersection of law, technology, and entrepreneurship, entrepreneurship defined broadly in terms of innovation and different business models, and that's precisely the area that Professor Grimmelmann focuses on," says Charles Whitehead, the Myron C. Taylor Alumni Professor of Business Law and director of the new program. "He spans multiple constituencies and he works in multiple spaces within the Cornell Tech platform. He does technology, he does the Internet, he does cybersecurity, and of course he's focused on the law. And those are all areas that play quite well not only in the law program, but also in the other nonlaw programs at Cornell Tech."

Law students without a strong technical background shouldn't be intimidated at the sight of computer code—Grimmelmann says they're already well equipped to get up to speed. "With lawyers, they learn new areas and new fact patterns all the time for cases," he says. "Learning tech is no different. It just requires the commitment to do it, and the humility to accept that you have to put in the work."



## *A Veteran Tech Lawyer Champions the Program*

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One of the biggest boosters for the Tech LLM is **David Schellhase '90**. Currently general counsel for Slack Technologies, Schellhase has worked at five other tech companies, most notably Salesforce.com and Groupon. He was a key figure with whom Whitehead, Peñalver, and others consulted while planning the new Tech Law program. And, as someone who has worked on technology-related issues his whole career, Schellhase says he is not aware of any other program where law, technology, and innovation intersect in this way. "When those come together," he says, "sparks fly."

On January 27, Schellhase got to share his enthusiasm with hundreds of Law School alumni. He was the speaker and moderator at an event devoted to the new Tech LLM at the Alumni Association's New York Annual Luncheon, this year the largest alumni turnout ever. The event featured ten of the twelve Tech Law students, who joined him on stage for an enlightening question-and-answer session. Schellhase told his audience there are three distinct properties that set the program far apart from anything else: energy, enthusiasm, and practicality.

"If you go to the 'campus' right now in the Google building, you feel this crackle of energy the minute you walk in and during classes, and in the way people interact," says Schellhase. "It's actually fantastic."

Pioneering student **Elizabeth Ragavanis** exudes the enthusiasm that Schellhase highlighted. She is passionate about technology and about the program. To her, its most compelling feature is the diversity "in the people, ideas, and experiences we are getting."

A former transactional lawyer for small business owners, Ragavanis adds, "We are connected to the startup scene in a way that can only happen in New York. There is an energy about New York and it is dynamic in a way that being where we are is a huge advantage."

Classmate **Max Paterson** can vouch for the practicality of the program. It's a big reason he applied. A Canadian lawyer who did IP negotiations for the Canadian government, he wanted to transition from public service into the private sector. "Knowing I needed to network a bit more, and I needed an opportunity to work with a wide variety of people," he says, "there really was no other program out there that is like this one."

## *Building the Program*

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The story of how the Cornell Tech LLM came to fruition is one of convergence and synergy, dogged determination, and daring to try something different.

As Whitehead set out to build a new program and a new curriculum, he consulted with top tech lawyers from around the country. His mission was to find out what subjects would be most relevant to a lawyer practicing in the tech and entrepreneurship areas, including in a company or in a law firm specializing in technology and new businesses. From these early conversations he recruited a small army of some of the leading experts in the area. At this point, he's had over twenty lawyers from eleven different law firms lecture on a range of issues and documents relating to technology and high-growth corporate transactions. These lawyers also provide valuable mentoring to the student teams in the Product Studio and Startup Studio on legal issues related to their projects. Whitehead notes that roughly half of the adjuncts so far have some sort of Cornell connection.

And there was also a critical need to build-out the full-time IP and internet faculty on campus. "When I got the email from **Oskar Liivak** saying 'Hey, we're starting a Cornell Tech law program. Are you interested?' I just forwarded the email to my wife with nothing more than an exclamation point," says James Grimmelmann. The "Oskar" to whom he refers is Cornell Law Professor Oskar Liivak, who was part of the team—including Whitehead, Peñalver, and others—trying to build a world-class program at Cornell Tech. One of their priorities was to find a leader in tech law and convince that person to join the upstart program. Fortunately, they found a more-than-willing candidate in Grimmelmann.

When he began teaching a decade ago, says Grimmelmann, his dream job would have been halfway between law and computer science. The former Microsoft programmer notes that he's always had an interest in technology law, but with an equal emphasis on the technology side. "Unfortunately, such a job didn't exist when I started teaching," he says.

"It's huge," says Peñalver of having Grimmelmann on board. "He's a star in the field and one of the very few people who has as strong an understanding of the technology as he does of the law. James is absolutely comfortable in both worlds and is great at translating between those two worlds."

**LeMar Moore** made his way to Cornell Tech after taking "one look at the description of the program, the class schedule,



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— Elizabeth Ragavanis

*I thought this was the perfect place to bridge the gap between all of my interests. Then, of course, the Cornell name made it less of a risk in deciding to come to a brand-new program.*

— Jaimie Wolman

*If you go to the 'campus' right now in the Google building, you feel this crackle of energy the minute you walk in and during classes, and in the way people interact. It's actually fantastic.*

— David Schellhase '90



and some of the features and thinking “Wow, this is the perfect opportunity to be at the forefront of developments in law and tech.” His choice to attend wasn’t without slight trepidation. “It definitely took a leap of faith,” says the NYU Law grad of his career pivot after nearly five years practicing commercial litigation.

Matthew Stichinsky’s journey to Cornell Tech began in 2015, when a partner at his firm, Simpson Thacher, bought a table at the Alumni Association’s New York Annual Luncheon. It was there, listening to Dean Peñalver speak about plans for the new program, that Stichinsky had his “aha” moment. He admits to having a little anxiety when it came to applying. “Partly because it was brand new,” he says, “partly because practicing as a lawyer can give you a general sense of caution.” However, Whitehead put him in touch with David Schellhase and **Stephane Levy**, a partner at Cooley, who helped ease any doubts he had. “Having people like that go out of their way to support this program,” he says, “gave me a sense that this was something real.”

**Jaimie Wolman** joined the Tech Law program directly from Cardozo Law School in order “to build greater expertise and to distinguish herself as a technology lawyer.” Having developed an interest in fashion and technology—specifically wearable tech—in law school, Wolman was especially drawn to the interdisciplinary offerings of the program.

“I thought this was the perfect place to bridge the gap between all of my interests,” she says. “Then, of course, the Cornell name made it a less of a risk in deciding to come to a brand-new program.”

“Whenever you introduce a new degree, like the Tech LLM, into an existing program, like Cornell Tech, you become a little concerned,” says Whitehead. “Will it integrate well? Will the new students work well with existing students and existing programs? Ours has been as seamless as it possibly could be.”





CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:  
Student teams in a Product  
Studio class; Charles Whitehead,  
director of the Law, Technology,  
and Entrepreneurship Program;  
Leland Rechis, head of  
Product Studio; and Tech Law  
student Philipp Fontaine.





# How an Art Lawyer Found a Home at Cornell Tech



**It was exactly 10:30 a.m. on January 21, 2016, when Liz Weber opened an e-mail that would change the course of her life. The note wasn't from a long-lost friend or a family member she hadn't heard from in years. Instead, it was a LinkedIn message about Cornell Tech's new Master of Laws in Law, Technology, and Entrepreneurship program, slated to start in August.**

The e-mail couldn't have come at a better time. At that very moment, she was sitting in her Brooklyn apartment trying to figure out the next step in her life.

"It felt like kismet," she said.

## The Road to Cornell Tech

Weber moved to Brooklyn from her hometown of Miami in July 2015 to pursue a dream of working in art law. A Colorado College art history graduate, she'd spent time after school working in San Francisco at a firm focused on law public relations, linking lawyers and reporters to speak on specialized topics. It was there that she decided she wanted to be a lawyer herself.

"You'd never think a background in art history would lend itself to law, but it does," she said. "In law, there is always room for interpretation, just like in art."

She moved home to Florida and enrolled at the University of Florida's Fredric G. Levin College of Law. During school, she interned in the legal department of a museum, and then at a fitness company, but ultimately "realized that if I wanted to be serious about art law,

I had to be in New York City—one of the art capitals of the world."

So, after graduating, she took the New York bar exam and moved to Brooklyn with the goal of joining a boutique art law firm. When that proved a difficult world to break into, she started writing for the Center for Art Law as part of a postgraduate fellowship.

## A Focus on Tech

The fellowship brought to Weber's attention the challenges that artists and gallery owners regularly confront in the realm of technology. For example, artists who work with new media often struggle to copyright their work—and some contend with major intellectual property issues. Meanwhile, brick-and-mortar galleries that want to break into the online space grapple with how to go about it.

While the lens of technology interested Weber, she wasn't sure how it applied to her background—that is, not until she received the LinkedIn message from Cornell Tech, advertising a tech-centric program for lawyers.

"It was pretty crazy," she says. "I felt like my background up to that point was pushing me there."

## Jumping into School

Weber contemplated Cornell Tech for only a few days before applying. Part of the interview process required her to come up with an idea for a start-up that solves a real-life issue. She had just twenty-four hours to prepare.

"I came up with an idea for an online copyright registration and enforcement platform," she explained. "It can be hard for emerging artists to understand intellectual property and know how to protect themselves. I pitched a company that would help them."

"It was so much fun to pitch [director of Cornell Tech's LL.M. program] Chuck Whitehead. I felt like joy was flowing out of me."

Weber was accepted into the program and is now a full-time student. She says she's deeply impressed with the caliber of students involved, the career opportunities presented, and the depth of the material covered so far.

What's next? Weber isn't sure yet.

"I'm trying to focus on my courses and meeting people on campus, then I'll go from there. Honestly, sometimes I look around campus and I have to pinch myself because I'm so glad I found this place."



*We are able to work hand in hand with engineers and students in the MBA program and thus, are able to gain unique insight into the different obstacles a startup can face. More important, we're able to experience first hand how our legal background can help resolve so many of these issues.*

*Everyone else is realizing how important lawyers are in this ecosystem.*

— Jayna Patel



*In addition to working with engineers and business students with different backgrounds, everybody here brings a different perspective. In every class someone different is raising their hand and taking the class in a different great direction by what they can add to it.*

— David Eklund



## Looking Forward

The launch of the new LLM at Cornell Tech is both groundbreaking and a profound opportunity. Now, for the first time, the Law School has a physical presence in New York City, a winning trifecta that places it at the nexus of a burgeoning tech scene, in the middle of the highest concentration of Law School alumni, and at the center of the legal universe. The possibility of harnessing the synergy of these different forces is what has many in the alumni community excited for the future. After all, Cornell Tech is still in its infancy and has a lot of growing yet to do.

Soon the campus will move from its temporary Chelsea location to its permanent home on Roosevelt Island. From this thin strip of land in the East River, an ultramodern, open-architecture campus is slowly rising to face the skyline of East Manhattan. When it opens in the summer of 2017, there will be new public

space, buildings comprising approximately 710,000 square feet, and an academic community that is expected to grow over time to nearly 600 people.

With this rapid growth, notes former **Dean Stewart Schwab**, part of the challenge will be managing expectations. "If we do this right, this will be the premiere place in the country to combine law, tech, and entrepreneurship," says Schwab, who was part of the early planning for Cornell Tech and teaches in the Tech LLM program. "There is a gigantic buzz. A lot of people see how exciting this is. And they're right. But, people need to remember, it's still just beginning. You don't build a whole campus overnight."

As Cornell Tech moves into this next phase, plans are in the works to expand the Law School's offerings by allowing JD students to take courses at the new campus. On March 24, the Law School announced the launch of a Program in Information and Tech-



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— Eduardo M. Peñalver



nology Law at Cornell Tech. Beginning in the spring semester of 2018, up to twenty Cornell Law School JD students will be able to spend a semester taking courses related to technology law at the Roosevelt Island campus in New York City.

According to Grimmelmann, a semester at Cornell Tech could give a big boost to JD students thinking of becoming tech lawyers. “You start them in that socialization to becoming tech lawyers before they start off down other paths. You get them introduced early to the professional demands and the needs of their clients. It moves at a different pace. You are really getting them comfortable with how the tech community thinks.”

Peñalver sees Cornell Tech as a model for how law can be taught in other areas. “I definitely think that this experiential, interdisciplinary model is one that has broad advantages. We are exploring ways to do more of it, and I think it is likely to grow.” ■

## The Studio

When Studio classes kick off in the fall, the open space at Cornell Tech transforms into a churning sea of activity. Techno jargon flies as multidisciplinary student teams—equipped with sticky notes, colored stickers, markers and pens—huddle around whiteboards.

This hive of activity is set in motion by business challenges that have been posed by leading startups, companies, and organizations in New York City.

In the fall semester’s Product Studio, students develop and present new products, services, and strategies that respond to the company challenges. These challenges always take the form of “How might we?” questions. For example, LLM student Adam Felix’s team took up a challenge posed by Merck: How might we use blockchain technology to overcome our data-sharing bottleneck in healthcare?

“Over the course of the semester,” says Felix, “we were able to develop our own blockchain network and were able to share medical records on demand, under full control of the patient, and fully compliant with HIPAA and other laws regulating the healthcare sector. It was pretty challenging, but it was a great thing to do.”

In Startup Studio in the spring, students learn how to self-organize into startup teams, identify and refine a good product idea, pitch it to investors, and bring it to market.

According to Rechis, the Studio experience encourages students to “embrace ambiguity and then out of the ambiguity have a point of view that they can validate with other people and then iterate on. This has worked really well with the LLM students. They’ve completely embraced that system. They are dealing with so much information they have to figure out how to form an argument around all this information. I think that bodes very well for what we are teaching in the class.”





# Cornell Law School

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