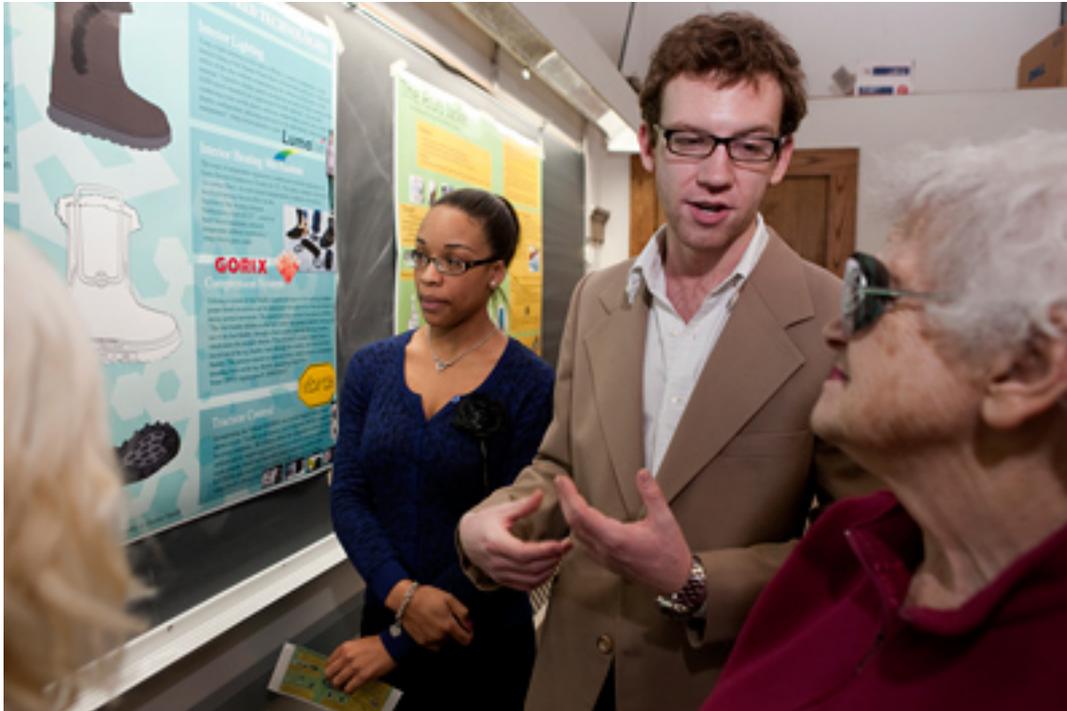


Textile projects designed to help the aging

Cornell University

By [Sheri Hall](#) [1]



Robert Barker/University Photography

Kellee Gaston '11 and Gordon Verrill '10 talk with an elderly community member about their design of a boot, intended to help senior citizens by improving circulation.

Winter boots that improve circulation and a jacket with built-in headphones designed for people in wheelchairs who struggle to put on outerwear are two of several new products that Cornell students have developed to enhance the lives of senior citizens and people with disabilities.

The projects were part of the course Textiles, Apparel and Innovation this fall, taught by Juan Hinestroza, assistant professor of fiber science and apparel design in the College of Human Ecology.

To help the students develop their concepts, local senior citizens and people with disabilities attended classes throughout the semester. This year's projects are so impressive that some of the design teams have filed invention disclosures, the first step to applying for a patent, Hinestroza said.

"The collaborations with community members really inspire the students to create products that help improve the lives of others while learning the fundamental topics of the course," Hinestroza said. The jacket for wheelchair users was inspired by

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Geoff Ellithorpe, a local teen with cerebral palsy who attended one of the classes. It features long zippers that run from the wrist, up to the armpit, and back down to the waist to make it easier to put on. The hood of the jacket includes mini speakers that can connect to an MP3 player.

"Being able to help someone that has a disorder is a really special feeling," design team member Jaclyn Foster '11 said. "We thought about Geoff and how to make his life easier in every element of the jacket."

Elizabeth Phelps '50, a community member who participated in the class has knee problems and uses a cane, was the inspiration for a set of winter boot projects that gives the wearer enhanced traction in the snow.

"To me, it's marvelous that this course invokes a focus on the elderly and other people who might need specialty products," she said. "I was impressed that two groups would consider boots as a critical part of seniors' attire."

The students also developed a pair of jeans designed for people who need assistance to dress and who experience incontinence problems.

Hinestroza has taught this class since his arrival at Cornell four years ago, working with the community to develop innovative products. Next semester, a new course will aim to create prototypes of some of these projects.

Sheri Hall is the assistant director of communication at the College of Human Ecology.

[SOURCE](#) [2]

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