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AI Retail Innovation Lab Opens at UH College of Technology

**Students, Faculty and Industry to Study, Research and Create
Innovative Solutions to Optimize the Shopping Experience**

HOUSTON, November 10, 2021 – It's no secret that shopper behavior and needs have changed drastically during the past year. With the confluence of technological advancement, social media proliferation and the utility of mobile phones and other smart devices, consumers were already becoming more digitally engaged before COVID-19 hit. The pandemic, however, drove exponentially faster adoption of technology-based shopping and far higher expectations for personalization as part of the shopper experience. Recent studies cite an acceleration in e-commerce trial by five years, with U.S. consumers reaching levels of adoption in 2020 that were originally projected for 2025.

With a goal of delivering innovative solutions that optimize the shopper journey through more personalized and curated digital interactions across all forms of digital engagement and commerce, while also aligning with real-world, workforce insights, the University of Houston College of Technology and Relationship have launched a new cloud-based data center and innovation laboratory.

The AI Retail Innovation Lab will allow students, faculty and industry professionals from across the country to create solutions by connecting, analyzing and correlating in-store and online shopper data from the shelf and point of sale to mobile and web. By leveraging its cloud data center, the program allows seamless and secure multiple location access to data with command center governance located at the College of Technology building in Sugar Land, Texas.

“This academic and commercial partnership with Relationship accelerates the understanding and advancement of applied technology to keep pace with the unparalleled growth of digital retail as a result of COVID,” said Anthony Ambler, dean of the UH College of Technology. “We are excited about working with the Relationship team to explore and develop the next generation in retail technology curriculums and industry capabilities.”

Relationship is a leading provider of digital engagement and shopper loyalty solutions, and an emerging pioneer in the application of Artificial Intelligence to enhance personalization capabilities in the retail industry. Their digital experience platform is built on a shopper-centric framework to deliver a seamlessly integrated and hyper-personalized experience across all points of shopper interaction—online, in app and in store. Their clients include Albertsons, United Supermarkets, Save On Foods, Market Street, Big Y Foods and other retail chains.

“We are thrilled to have the opportunity to partner with the UH College of Technology and their AI and Consumer Sciences practices,” said Randy Crimmins, president of Relationship. “We look forward to working alongside their faculty and data sciences teams to advance the application of big data and AI in retail. We see this partnership as a perfect blending of our strengths, with great synergy in the incredible work they are doing in academia, and our key areas of focus and experience in the retail marketplace.”

The AI lab, part of the College of Technology’s Advanced Technology Innovation & Research Center, will also be a hub for industry training, standardization and sandbox cloud-based solution advancements. Initiatives will focus on industry research grants, undergraduate and graduate studies, including early-stage product development of AI for retail.

Lab activities will align with the AI Innovation Consortium, a think tank of IT and advanced technology thought leaders, that includes the UH College of Technology, Penn State, LSU and University of Louisville.

About the University of Houston

The University of Houston is a Carnegie-designated Tier One public research university recognized with a Phi Beta Kappa chapter for excellence in undergraduate education. UH serves the globally competitive Houston and Gulf Coast Region by providing world-class faculty, experiential learning and strategic industry partnerships. Located in the nation's fourth-largest city and one of the most ethnically and culturally diverse regions in the country, UH is a federally designated Hispanic- and Asian-American-Serving institution with enrollment of more than 47,000 students.

About University of Houston College of Technology

The College of Technology is among the fastest growing colleges at the University of Houston, with diverse academic programs that inspire future leaders to apply the power of technology and innovation toward solving real-world challenges. Since 1941, the University of Houston College of Technology has been committed to workforce development, community enrichment, and corporate progress.

About Relationship®

Relationship is a leading provider of digital shopper engagement and commerce solutions for retail. Our experienced team is passionate about helping retailers increase sales and grow customer loyalty through connected digital experiences and 1:1 personalization. DXP, Relationship's® white-label digital experience platform built for high-velocity, omni-channel retailers, first launched in 2011, and is now in its fifth generation. For more information visit www.relationship.com.