About the Program

The student challenge is an opportunity for diverse UT Austin student teams to address a community economic development issue, demonstrate the ability to apply research, creativity, and strategic thinking to a modern problem, and win cash prizes and community recognition.

Teams will identify basic information about selected communities in February and March. The top ten qualifying teams will deliver presentations on Saturday, March 28, after 40 hours of intense work on an issue related to economic development for their communities.

Requirements

Participating students must be members of 4-5 person teams.

Team criteria:

- At least 2 undergraduate students
- At least 2 upper-division or graduate students
- From at least 2 different colleges/schools
- Teams assembled by Feb 21

IC² will help match students to teams, upon request. The matching process will occur in January and early February for those students who do not already have committed teams.

To qualify to participate, teams must complete the following steps:

- Submit a team application with team and the team’s selected community information by Fri, Feb 21.
- Deliver to IC² leadership a 5-minute oral (no slides) team presentation with basic facts about their selected community. These brief presentations will be scheduled on Feb 27 and 28.
- Between Mar 6 and Mar 26, distribute a brief IC²-created survey on community Quality of Life to members of their selected community. At least 30 responses must be collected and submitted to IC² by Mar 26 (3pm).
- Between Mar 26 (4pm) and Mar 28 (8am), develop a 10-minute, 10-slide presentation addressing a unique economic development scenario, details of which were provided to teams by IC² on Mar 26 (4pm). Submit team’s PowerPoint file to IC² by 8am on Mar 28.
- On the morning of Mar 28, the top 10 teams will be notified that they are finalists. Finalist teams will deliver their presentations, with each team member taking part in delivery, on the afternoon of Mar 28. Finalist teams will also answer questions from the judging panel for 5 minutes following their presentations. Teams that do not qualify for the finals will be notified on the morning of Mar 28 and invited to attend finalist presentations. Non-finalist teams may request an appointment (in April) at the IC² Institute to receive feedback on their PowerPoint submissions.

The community selected by each team must be

- In Texas
- Outside of urban corridors (see map) and high-density cities
- Interested in economic development and engaged with a chamber of commerce or economic development officer

Preferred: At least one team member has a community connection (e.g., lived or worked in the community, has family or professional connections to the community, has identified an official in the community willing to cooperate with research, etc.).

The team must define the geographic boundaries of its selected community (e.g., city or county).
Rewards

$15,000 in cash prizes will be distributed between the top three performing teams.

All finalist teams will have the opportunity to impress a prestigious panel of expert judges. IC² can facilitate communication between students and judges who are professionally interested in high-achieving presenters.

Students How To:

Step 1: **Form a team**: Either self-form, attending to the criteria for team diversity, or request help from IC² before Feb 3 (but as soon as possible) to be matched with other interested students.

Step 2: With team members, **identify a Texas community** that will be the subject of your research and final presentation. Attend to the criteria for and map of acceptable communities.

Step 3: Complete the **team application form** and submit it by Feb 21.

Step 4: Before 3pm on **Feb 24 schedule a team presentation** (5-minutes, oral) on Feb 27 or 28.

Step 5: On **Feb 27 or 28**, deliver the preliminary team presentation and receive counsel or request for changes from IC² leadership. At this time, each team member should sign and submit a commitment letter.

Step 6: On **Mar 6 (5pm)**, **receive questions from IC² for a survey** to be distributed to members of your selected community. Utilize the Qualtrics Survey Tool (free to UT Austin students) to distribute your questions.

Step 7: Between **Mar 6 and Mar 26**, collect at least 30 survey responses from members of your selected community.

Step 8: Optionally, attend a **training session at IC² on Mar 12 (5pm)** for tips on evaluating and documenting your survey data.

Step 9: By **Mar 26 (4pm)** submit to IC² at least 30 Qualtrics responses to your survey.

Step 10: Check your email at **5pm on Mar 26 for this year’s challenge prompt**! All teams will receive the same prompt. The prompt will consist of about a page of information on a hypothetical opportunity for your community. At this time you will also receive more detailed instructions and expectations regarding team final presentations.

Step 11: Between **Mar 26 (4pm) and Mar 28 (8am)**, utilizing what you know about the community as well as further information you gather after reviewing the prompt, create a response to the prompt: both thoughtful analysis and concrete recommendations should be included in presentations.

How much time teams spend on creating and practicing their presentations is up to them! Some teams may be up all night and others may be able to plan and complete their preparation with a decent amount of sleep scheduled. Knowing a lot about your community and economic development challenges before March 26 should help you be productive and efficient during the 40-hour challenge period.

Step 12: **Before 8AM on Mar 28 submit your PowerPoint file** via email to IC². No other file types will be accepted.

Step 13: **Check your email at 11AM on Mar 28** to find out if your team is one of the top 10 teams invited to present and the time (randomly chosen between noon and 4PM) when you will present. If your team is not invited to present, you will be invited to attend the final competition.

Step 14: The top ten teams will present at the **final competition at noon on Mar 28**. Presentation order for teams will be determined randomly and presentations are expected to last through 5PM. All team members must participate in delivery of their presentation.

Step 15: Attend the **awards ceremony at 5:30 PM on Mar 28**.

Contact Us:

For questions or clarification, please email challenge at ic2 dot utexas dot edu.