



Innovation at The University of Texas at Austin is transforming higher education

Some of the best learning happens outside the classroom. Students learn by doing. Combine practical experience with the lessons taught by world-class faculty and you'll have an educational experience that can't be matched.

The concept: Intellectual Entrepreneurship, where students learn by practical experience that helps the community. Intellectual Entrepreneurship pairs undergraduates with graduate student mentors, provides fellowships for students tackling community issues, and funds teams of faculty and students working to solve complex social problems. Intellectual Entrepreneurship aims to harness academic knowledge for the benefit of both the student and society. Students learn not only how to think but how they might use their knowledge for social good.

Currently 150-200 UT Austin students are engaged in Intellectual Entrepreneurship. The University is committed to offering this innovative learning program to more of its students — and deepening its level of service to the community — and is seeking private support in the amount of \$50 million.

What is Intellectual Entrepreneurship?

Intellectual Entrepreneurship (IE) is a consortium of the Colleges of Communication, Liberal Arts, Fine Arts, Natural Sciences, Law, Education, and Pharmacy and the Schools of Engineering, Information, Public Affairs, and Social Work. Part of the portfolio of the Vice President for Diversity and Community Engagement, IE spans disciplinary boundaries, promotes diversity in higher education, and embraces the notion that students learn best by being engaged, often outside the traditional classroom setting. Instead of sending newly minted graduates into the world with the admonition to make a difference, IE enables students to make a difference as part of their education. The aim of IE is to produce “citizen-scholars.”

The term “Intellectual Entrepreneurship” stems from the idea that entrepreneurship isn't limited to the world of business; it's an attitude for engaging the world. Intellectual entrepreneurs, both inside and outside universities, take risks and seize opportunities, discover and create knowledge, innovate, collaborate, and solve problems in any number of realms: corporate, nonprofit, government, and education.

“IE is breaking new ground in advanced education,” says Dr. Robert Weisbuch, former president of the Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation. IE's innovative mission “takes us a long way past the narcissistic old notion of professors using the Ph.D. to create clone-slaves,” Weisbuch says.

“Best, it is not an add-on, not a mere enhancement, but about helping students to discover their discipline and their value, about harnessing intellectual energy and talent, and creating connections between the academy and the public and private sectors. I think UT's Intellectual Entrepreneurship program is a great model of what you can do in doctoral education. They have done the best job in the country.”

“The University of Texas Intellectual Entrepreneurship program is a model for campuses across the country that seek to integrate civic engagement into arts and humanities education.”

— Mary Sue Coleman
President, University of Michigan



An undergraduate case study



Ana Lucia Hurtado and her son, Yianni.

One student's experience

illustrates how IE can reach out to minority and first-generation students and help them shape their own educational experiences while making a difference in their communities.

Ana Lucia Hurtado was 4 years old when she and her family emigrated from Peru. The youngest of three daughters, Hurtado thought she would follow her sisters' path and attend medical school, but it just didn't feel right.

A high school standout, Hurtado enrolled at The University of Texas at Austin, where she took part in the Intellectual Entrepreneurship pre-graduate school internship. She had always thought about going to law school but had dismissed it because of negative stereotypes about lawyers. She

decided to give legal studies a try and interned at the Children's Rights Clinic at the UT law school. She collaborated with faculty supervisors, a graduate student mentor, and two supervising attorneys. Functioning as an intellectual entrepreneur, Hurtado chose which aspects of legal practice she wanted to study; every week she picked from a menu of activities, deciding how she wanted to spend her time doing, learning, and observing.

Hurtado's supervising attorneys changed her negative view of lawyers, including the notion that she had to choose between law and being a good mother. Her supervising attorneys' dedication to social justice also showed her how she could help other people through a legal career. Hurtado calls her IE internship the most valuable educational experience of her college tenure.

“IE empowers students to make connections between their academic interests and real-world concerns — something especially important to first-generation and under-represented minority students who want to contribute to their communities,” Hurtado says.

She is preparing to attend Harvard Law School in the fall.



The graduate student experience

Graduate students are pillars of the IE experience, where they serve not only as mentors to pre-graduate interns but also as researchers and community servants.

Top-notch graduate students are also crucial to building an outstanding university. Graduate students teach undergraduates and assist faculty with research. Potential faculty consider the caliber of graduate students when considering job offers. To recruit the best graduate students the University must offer fellowships with strong financial packages that last throughout their years at UT — fellowships that empower them to take an entrepreneurial approach to their studies and challenge them to make connections between their research and the needs of society. By providing a distinctive and original approach to funding, IE fellowships, mentorships, and scholarships can give UT a competitive edge when future graduate students weigh offers from several institutions.

IE offers a variety of ways to enhance the graduate student experience, including Follow the Knowledge Fellowships, Citizen Scholarships, and Action Seminars.

Follow the Knowledge Fellowships

Follow the Knowledge Fellowships serve two purposes: recruiting top graduate students and answering questions that are important to the community. The fellowships are designed to last throughout a graduate student's years at the University and will typically run five years and pay \$20,000 to \$40,000 per year. Follow the Knowledge fellows will gain expertise spanning multiple academic disciplines in such arenas as health, environmental studies, multiculturalism and diversity, gerontology, dispute resolution, and nanoscience and nanotechnology.

A Follow the Knowledge Fellowship in gerontology, for example, could promote “aging in place” for older adults living in the community. Fellows could work to improve the quality of life for older adults while working to keep them in their home environments.

Citizen Scholarships

Undergraduate and graduate students can apply for one-year Citizen Scholarships to work on specific projects. For example, Citizen Scholarships in community sustainability could be awarded to teams of students to investigate problems such as an apartment complex's waste recycling or reduction of a business's carbon footprint.

Action Seminars

Town and gown work together through Action Seminars, in which community groups contract with the University to study specific social issues. Action Seminars will bring community groups to the University to study specific social issues. Action Seminars could produce public-policy proposals, corporate strategies and partnerships, funded and published research, and new ways of discovering and communicating knowledge.

One Action Seminar, for example, could promote racial understanding in Austin K-12 schools. Students and faculty from The University of Texas could explore effective ways to increase cultural awareness and sensitivity between pupils of diverse races and ethnicities. The Action Seminar could target specific schools and include AISD faculty.

Other ways to invest in IE include: pre-graduate internships, mentorships, entrepreneurship, instructional incubators, endowed IE chairs and professorships, and a naming opportunity for the IE consortium.

Promoting diversity

Graduate schools across the country are facing critically low minority enrollment. Blacks and Latinos constitute 32 percent of doctoral-age U.S. citizens but only 7 percent of doctoral recipients, according to a 2005 study by the Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation.

The IE program shows promise in closing that gap. The numbers speak to its success: 40 to 50 percent of IE pre-graduate interns are under-represented minorities and first-generation students.

Of that 40 to 50 percent, 50 to 75 percent are Latino. In turn, more than half of IE Latino and African-American interns go on to graduate school, a fact that has won notice from U.S. News and World Report, The Journal of Hispanic Higher Education, College & University Journal, University Business, Black Issues in Higher Education, Texas Innovator, the Association of American Colleges and Universities, and Change Magazine, as well as numerous newspapers around the nation.

A proven investment

Intellectual Entrepreneurship was born in 1997 in the Office of Graduate Studies, the brainchild of then-Associate Dean Dr. Rick Cherwitz. In 2003 IE became an intercollegial effort, and the IE pre-graduate program was piloted.

At first IE averaged about 20 students a semester; by spring 2007, 70 students representing every UT school or college were enrolled. In 2006-2007 more than 60 faculty members and more than 80 graduate student mentors — from 11 colleges and schools and more than 50 academic disciplines — worked with IE pre-graduate interns. About half of the pre-graduate interns who earned bachelor's degrees have since entered graduate school.

As the founder of Intellectual Entrepreneurship, Cherwitz leads the University's IE consortium as its director. IE has won national acclaim, including recognition by the Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation, Fast Company Magazine, the Council of Graduate Schools, and the New England Resource Center for Higher Education — and has been the focus of more than 100 newspaper, magazine, and scholarly articles.

Changing the world

A public university is obligated not just to its students but also to society. Intellectual Entrepreneurship fulfills both those duties at once. IE takes the traditional missions of higher education — advancing the frontiers of knowledge and preparing future leaders — and adds economic, social, political, and cultural development.

IE rewrites the college experience. Students may gain knowledge during traditional classes, but often that knowledge is used only after they have graduated. IE engages students immediately in their communities. Further, IE work is uniquely shaped by what matters most to students: their passions and professional and personal visions for the future. IE will play a key role in UT's quest to become one of the top public research universities in the country by empowering students to discover, own, and be accountable for their education.

Donors, too, have the opportunity to shape the IE experience according to their passions and dreams, to join the University in changing the world.



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