



2023
2024
ANNUAL REPORT

**HERB KELLEHER
ENTREPRENEURSHIP
CENTER**

Making Entrepreneurship Accessible to All Longhorns



HKEC'S MISSION FOR INNOVATION

The Herb Kelleher Entrepreneurship Center is dedicated to fostering the growth of entrepreneurial skills and empowering Longhorns to apply this mindset to their careers, whether through starting their own businesses or driving innovation within established companies.

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OUR FOUNDER HERB KELLEHER



“ I endowed the Herb Kelleher Center as a devout believer in the excitements and in the rewards of entrepreneurship for job seekers and for America. ”

Founded in 2001, the Herb Kelleher Entrepreneurship Center serves as a valuable resource for those with an entrepreneurial spirit, promoting innovation and embodying the vision and passion of its namesake. Herb Kelleher’s unwavering dedication to positive change is reflected in both the center’s mission and spirit.

...

In 1967, Herb founded Southwest Airlines. Prior to this, flying was a luxury and only those that were wealthy or traveling for business used airplanes. With the start of Southwest Airlines, the industry changed. In 1968, competitors sued to keep Herb Kelleher’s new airline grounded. After a three-year court fight, the first plane took off from Dallas. Today Southwest Airlines operates over 4,000 flights a day.

OUR IMPACT BY THE NUMBERS

\$87,500 awarded to student entrepreneurs in 2023/2024



9 events hosted generated **1,575** RSVP’s



Ranked **#2** undergraduate school for Entrepreneurship

Princeton Review/Entrepreneur Magazine 2023



Ranked **#6** graduate school for Entrepreneurship

Princeton Review/Entrepreneur Magazine 2023





FAREWELL TO A LEGACY

Dr. Luis Martins, Professor of Management and Zlotnik Family Chair, has served as Faculty Director of the Herb Kelleher Entrepreneurship Center since 2016. In that time, Luis has been both an architect and orchestrator of transformative change in the HKEC. Let's take a moment to recognize and celebrate Luis for his efforts to elevate the mission of the HKEC.

Luis has engaged a thriving community of entrepreneurship scholars, aspiring Longhorn founders, and accomplished entrepreneurs and professionals across campus and in our broader community. Among his first initiatives as Faculty Director, Luis collaborated with Department of Management faculty to envision an Austin Technology and Entrepreneurship Conference (ATEC) that would bring together exceptional junior scholars to share their cutting-edge research. Since its inaugural launch in 2016, the HKEC has sponsored this annual conference which has become a highly visible and prestigious conference in the field of Management. Turning to our Longhorn founders, Luis crafted the Forty Acres Founders Pre-Accelerator Program to offer undergraduate and graduate students the opportunity to study potential customers, improve their product, establish product-market fit, and position their product for success within the marketplace. To further assist aspiring founders, Luis launched the annual DisrupTexas Undergraduate Pitch Competition – now known as the Freed Family Pitch Competition thanks to a generous gift from Billy Freed and his family. Moreover, Luis created the Ignite Startup Workshop series which is now a virtual repository of the mechanics of entrepreneurship that is offered to students – both to provide targeted assistance but also to showcase how the HKEC could be instrumental more broadly in helping move their ideas forward.



Luis also has helped to build a robust entrepreneurship community across campus in other ways. Notably, he created the Entrepreneurship Coordination Committee, which brings together monthly the senior leadership of all Entrepreneurship units on campus; the Intro to the UT and Austin Startup Ecosystem and Tradeshow, the HKEC's annual tabling event which draws dozens of entities from campus and Austin; and the Coffee Connect Series, which enables students to connect with potential co-founders and the HKEC to further connect with other entrepreneurship units on campus. To be sure, the entrepreneurship ecosystem on campus is complex and expansive and Luis has worked to build bridges that enable the HKEC to provide a critical concierge service to students.



Lastly and of special note, we recognize Luis' leadership in working with the HKEC advisory board to bring to fruition the entrepreneurship minor and the undergraduate institute for entrepreneurial studies. In collaboration with board members, Luis crafted the vision for the minor and institute, created strategic plans and funding models, secured space and staff for the minor and institute, and launched the minor and grew it to hundreds of students within just a couple of years. It was precisely because the minor was operational and witnessing exponential growth, and because the infrastructure for the institute was in place that it became an attractive opportunity for a donor seeking to have a substantive impact on McCombs. Thanks to a generous gift from the Harkey family, the Harkey Institute for Entrepreneurial Studies is a strong partner to the HKEC in pursuing shared goals of advancing entrepreneurship within McCombs and across campus.

This is by no means an exhaustive accounting of Luis' impact on the HKEC. On behalf of the entire HKEC board, we thank Luis for eight years of dedicated service -- the center is considerably stronger as a result of his leadership. No doubt that Herb himself would be quite pleased with what Luis has done to be a good steward of his gift and to nurture entrepreneurial pursuits of all kinds at McCombs and across UT.

Caroline Bartel
Board Chair

WELCOME TO THE NEXT CHAPTER



STEVEN GRAY

*McCombs Management
Assistant Professor*

RESEARCH AREAS

- Founding Teams
- Co-Founder Selection
- Social Networks

Dr. Steven Gray, Assistant Professor of Management, earned his Ph.D. from Olin Business School at Washington University in St. Louis and joined the McCombs School in 2017. Steve was a Kauffman Foundation Dissertation Fellow and recipient of the Academy of Management's Entrepreneurship Division Dissertation Award. Entrepreneurship is a core focus of Steve's research; specifically, he examines cofounder selection processes and how the manner in which founding teams form has material consequences for their subsequent viability and effectiveness. Steve has published his research in premier management and applied psychology journals, including Academy of Management Journal, Journal of Applied Psychology, Organization Science, Personnel Psychology, and Strategic Organization. He currently serves on the Editorial Board of Strategic Entrepreneurship Journal. Steve is among the most highly-rated instructors in the department and school. He has taught and served as course coordinator for our undergraduate course in organizational behavior – a required course for all business students that carries leadership and ethics distinctions. Steve has also served on the McCombs School Undergraduate Programs Committee and the Canfield Business Honors Faculty Advisory Committee.

Q: Tell me a bit about yourself and what your career journey has looked like leading up to your new role as director.

SG: Before starting my career, I studied psychology. I then began my professional journey as a consultant at IBM. During my time there, I worked on a range of projects with major clients, tackling issues from mergers to process optimization to privatization. That experience took me all over the world and exposed me to many interesting problems, projects, and ideas. It provided a nice foundation for me to start understanding the business world, but consulting was never the end game as a career path. While I continue to draw heavily upon that experience, at a certain point, I was looking for a new career path, and that's what led me back into academia. It was something that I had always aspired to do, so I went back to school and pursued my doctoral degree at Washington University in St. Louis continuing my emphasis on psychology, but this time looking at it within the context of the workplace.

Not too long into my doctoral program, I became enamored with entrepreneurship as a focal area within which to study organizational life. The thing that really sparked my interest in entrepreneurship was actually going to events, competitions, hackathons, and getting on the ground and seeing people pitch their ideas. Seeing the passion, energy, and enthusiasm captured my interest and desire to better understand that journey – what factors enable entrepreneurship, but also, what are the barriers that can stand in the way? That's essentially the path that led me into conducting research on entrepreneurs. The focus of my research has primarily revolved around understanding how entrepreneurs find their cofounders, identifying the challenges associated with that vital process, and discovering how entrepreneurs can be more successful in navigating their search for cofounders. I became a part of the HKEC community through my research, which has now led me to this new role as Director.

Q: What trends do you see shaping the future of entrepreneurship education, and how do you plan to position the center to be at the forefront of these changes?

SG: A few things I want to remind myself of as I'm thinking about this question are: What is not going to change? What is the foundation? And then, what are some of the opportunities

on the horizon to reinforce and enhance that foundation? I believe that effective entrepreneurship education follows a model of "guided experience". Entrepreneurship is not something you can simply learn in the classroom – experiential learning is going to be an intrinsic part of entrepreneurship education. But that experience needs to be guided by those who have come before you. And so, it's about having mentors, faculty, staff, and peers available to provide advice, guidance, and support during your journey.

Guided experience has been and will continue to be the underlying foundation of entrepreneurial education. But, one new trend that I am hoping to embrace is the role of AI. Regardless of the exact nature of a venture, AI will be a necessary tool for founders, and as a result, the way in which we deliver the education side needs to prepare students for that. So, how can we incorporate AI as a learning tool that can aid entrepreneurship education? And, how can entrepreneurs, regardless of their industry, leverage AI to help develop their venture? These will be key questions at the forefront of our thinking as we evolve our approach to entrepreneurship education.

Q: Thinking about the future, what is your vision for the center? What does growth and evolution look like to you?

SG: One of the things that is special about the HKEC is that it has long been at the forefront of entrepreneurial activity, not just in McCombs, but also across the University, which positions the Center to be a hub of connections for student entrepreneurs across and beyond the 40 Acres. We're in this incredibly resource-rich environment, not only at UT, but Austin more broadly, which is very exciting, but also overwhelming for many students. I hope that we can be a tour guide for students to help them find the right place within this robust ecosystem.

To be even more concrete about one specific example of how that might look, my research has highlighted the importance of finding the right cofounder. And, one of the biggest challenges in finding the right cofounder involves establishing a close connection between business talent and technical talent. Thus, one of our new priorities, in addition to investing into our existing programs, will be to explore new ways to build even stronger ties between McCombs entrepreneurs and UT's expansive technical talent.

HKEC MISSION: BUILDING A TEXAS ENTREPRENEUR

Initiate real world experience through accelerators, incubators, pitch competitions and other programs in a low-risk environment.

EMPOWER

ENCOURAGE

Enable discovery of university-wide entrepreneurship and start up resources

**TEXAS
ENTREPRENEUR**

EDUCATE

ENGAGE

Build a community of Longhorn leaders that embody the entrepreneurial mind-set and skillset.

Grow knowledge and skill through innovative curriculum and mentoring by entrepreneurial leaders.



The background image shows a group of people at what appears to be a startup event or conference. In the foreground, two men are prominent. The man on the left is a Black man with a beard, wearing a light blue polo shirt with a logo that says "NUCLEAR & APPLIED ROBOTICS GROUP". He has his arms crossed and a serious expression. The man on the right is a white man with a mustache, wearing a light grey polo shirt with the same "NUCLEAR & APPLIED ROBOTICS GROUP" logo. He is smiling and looking down at a white tote bag he is holding. The tote bag has "Texas Momentum" printed on it in red. In the background, other people are visible, including a woman with long dark hair and a man with short dark hair who is smiling. The overall lighting is warm and orange-toned. A large white text overlay is positioned in the center-left of the image.

GOAL 1:

ENCOURAGE

EXPLORATION OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP

OFFERING PROGRAMS THAT SERVE AS AN ENTRY POINT FOR OUR COMMUNITY INTO THE UT AUSTIN CAMPUS STARTUP ECOSYSTEM

STARTUP ECOSYSTEM TRADESHOW

With all the resources available to UT Austin student entrepreneurs, both on and around campus, students often feel overwhelmed when trying to navigate the robust entrepreneurial ecosystem. On Monday, September 25, 2023 the Herb Kelleher Entrepreneurship Center hosted their 8th annual Startup Ecosystem Tradeshow, providing a gateway to explore the vibrant UT & Austin startup community.

The event brought together 20 organizations from within UT and the Austin area, all dedicated to empowering young founders and innovators. The event offered over 350 attendees the opportunity to immerse themselves in all things entrepreneurship and get informed on the resources at their disposal. Whether interests lie in learning more about entrepreneurship, validating an idea, launching a startup, getting funded, or innovating within established firms, the university has resources for students on every step of their entrepreneurial journeys.

The event successfully helped the attendees learn about the Austin startup ecosystem and fostered excellent entrepreneurship engagement. Encouraged by the amazing turnout of this event, HKEC looks forward to many years of continuing to host this beneficial events for all Longhorn entrepreneurs.



MAKING ENTREPRENEURSHIP ACCESSIBLE TO ALL LONGHORNS.



TRADESHOW REPRESENTATION



15

UT Austin Partners



5

ATX Partners & Startups

EVENT HIGHLIGHTS

376

People registered in 2023

9529

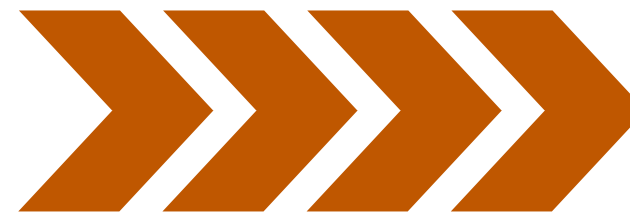
Media impressions were made across event materials



ECOSYSTEM BY THE NUMBERS

“ It’s no surprise to us that Austin Ranks #1 for Entrepreneurs in the US! Texas McCombs is at the heart of this entrepreneurial success. Together, we’re not just educating the next generation of business leaders - we’re actively shaping Austin’s thriving startup scene and economic future. ”

- Lillian Mills, Dean of McCombs School of Business



UT Austin is home to **50+** entrepreneurship initiatives and **130+** startup resources.



UT alumni-founded companies have raised a cumulative **\$14.7 Billion** in capital investments.



The city of Austin is the **#1** U.S. city for new businesses.



ATX based startups are proudly **19%** minority-owned and **37%** female-owned.



GOAL 2:

ENGAGE

WITH THE STARTUP ECOSYSTEM

CREATING OPPORTUNITIES THAT FOSTER AN INNOVATIVE SPIRIT AND IGNITE A PASSION FOR ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN ALL UT STUDENTS



STARTUP COFFEE CONNECT

Startup Coffee Connect is a casual networking event for Longhorn entrepreneurs and innovators. Held monthly during active semesters, the event provides a platform for student entrepreneurs to share their visions and experiences, network with fellow founders from across campus, and find potential collaborators for their next venture, all while enjoy complimentary coffee and breakfast tacos. With a relaxed atmosphere and a diverse group of attendees, students have the chance to make meaningful connections, expand their professional network, and stay plugged in to the upcoming opportunities within the ecosystem.



EVENT HIGHLIGHT

764

People registered in
23/24

6

Events hosted in
23/24



BRIDGING THE COMMUNITY

ENTREPRENEUR IN RESIDENCE

Through our Entrepreneur-in-Residence program, we offer students the chance to gain invaluable insights, guidance, and support to drive their ventures forward by providing free, 30-minute mentor sessions. Quoc Tran (p. 36-39) served as the HKEC's resident throughout the 2023 - 2024 academic year. As a seasoned entrepreneur and McCombs MBA graduate, Tran is an invaluable asset to small businesses and startups seeking to navigate the complexities of growth and sustainability.



IMPACT METRICS

82

Individual Sessions

53

Unique Students Served

ENTREPRENEURSHIP COORDINATION COMMITTEE

Since 2016, the HKEC has led the Entrepreneurship Coordination Committee, which serves as a bridge between the organizations within UT's vast entrepreneurship ecosystem.

Representing organizations from 13 of UT's colleges, schools, and units, the group is committed to fostering a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship across the Forty Acres. The committee serves as a dynamic and collaborative community of Faculty and Staff, dedicated to connecting and empowering aspiring entrepreneurs, innovators, and problem-solvers from diverse disciplines.

The committee's mission is to inspire, educate, and support the next generation of entrepreneurial-minded leaders by facilitating cross-disciplinary collaboration, sharing access to resources, and fostering a vibrant ecosystem that encourages creativity, problem-solving, and student growth.



COMMITTEE
BY THE NUMBERS

9

Meetings held
in 23/24

63

Individual Committee
Members

32

Organizations
Represented

13

UT Colleges/Schools/
Units Represented

A photograph of students in a classroom or workshop setting. In the foreground, a young man in a light blue t-shirt and a young woman in a red hoodie are smiling and looking towards the right. In the background, other students are seated at desks with laptops, some looking at their screens. The scene is lit with warm, orange-toned light, suggesting an indoor environment with large windows or a bright light source. The overall atmosphere is collaborative and focused.

GOAL 3:

EDUCATE

THROUGH EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

CO-CURRICULAR PROGRAMMING FOR STUDENTS TO LEARN
ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND INNOVATION IN AN
IMMERSIVE AND HANDS-ON ENVIRONMENT

FORTY ACRES FOUNDERS

PRE-ACCELERATOR PROGRAM

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

20

Forty Acres Founders

7

Endowed Excellence Seats

9

Graduate Assistants
(supported the 20 founders)

19

Community Mentors
(supported the 20 founders)

GET TO KNOW THE PROGRAM

90% of all startups fail, and the biggest reason for failure is a mismatch between the product and market demand. The Forty Acres Founders Pre-Accelerator Program is designed to help student founders establish product-market fit for their ideas and launch businesses from a position of strength, thus increasing the number of successful and scalable businesses launched from The University of Texas at Austin. This semester-long program educates student founders on the skills needed to vet an idea, understand market demand, and develop a product that addresses validated market needs.

This program educates student founders on the skills needed to vet an idea, understand market demand, and develop a product that addresses validated market needs. The program includes:

- Weekly seminars led by program staff, community partners, and University faculty.
- A Student Assistant, hired to work with each founder for 5 hours/week to provide support on conducting market research or technical needs.
- An expert Business Mentor, providing founders with the benefits of their experience as entrepreneurs and innovators.
- \$1,000 in grant funding, towards founding costs, market research, or product enhancements.
- Competitive funding to advance their startup at the end of the program.

MEET THE 2024 FORTY ACRES FOUNDERS

50%

Non-Business Majors



15%

1st-Gen College Students



50%

Female Founders



78%

Female Grad Assistants



10%

Grad Level Founders



IMPACT METRICS

\$40k

Awarded to Students
Each Year

1,000

Hours of Graduate
Assistant Support per
Cohort

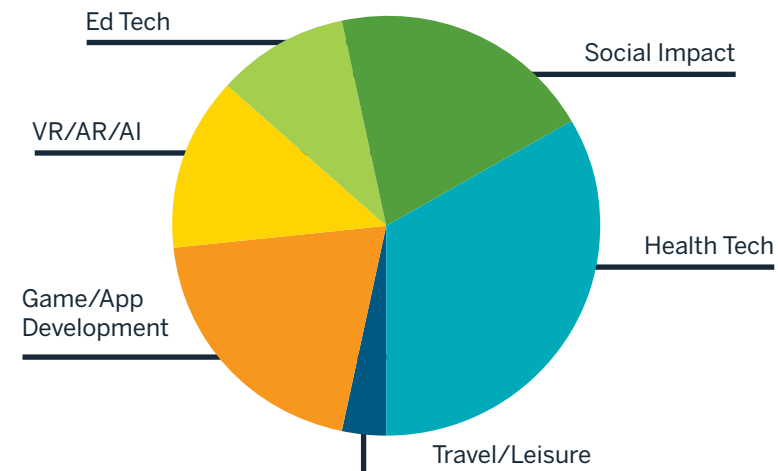
200

Hours of Mentorship
Provided to Each
Cohort

1,500

Founder-Conducted
Customer Interviews
per Cohort

AREAS OF INDUSTRY



13

MAJORS IN
THE COHORT

3.54

AVERAGE
GPA

23

COMPETITION
JUDGES

10

GUEST
SPEAKERS



FORTY ACRES FOUNDERS PITCH COMPETITION

On Thursday, April 18th, 2024, four students of The University of Texas at Austin took the stage to pitch their startups to an elite panel of judges in competition for funding. Each of the students is a participating member of the 5th annual Forty Acres Founders Program cohort.

This semester-long program educates student founders on the skills needed to vet an idea, understand market demand, and develop a product that addresses validated market needs. Throughout the semester, students learn to articulate the story behind their startups and demonstrate for potential investors and customers the need for a proposed service or product and its ability to add value to customers.

After an intense semester of honing their concepts, founders submit their pitch to earn a spot in the Forty Acres Founders Pitch Competition to compete for \$20,000 in non-dilutive funding. During the competition, students have the opportunity to hone their business strategy, get professional feedback

on their pitches, and form lasting relationships with mentors in the Texas entrepreneurial ecosystem.

This year's pitch competition was deliberated by a prominent judge's panel consisting of Nick Arab, Co-Founder and CEO of Pattern Bioscience; Jim McAlister, Founder and CEO of Rockspring; Hema Reddy, Founder and CEO of Crafty Counter; Mark Roesler, CEO and Chairman of CMG Worldwide; Kalyan Banerjee, Co-Founder and CGO of Lumenci; and Kurt Wilkin, Co-Founder of HireBetter.

First to pitch their concept was Brandon Doan with E-Cap, a medical diagnostic tool focused on reducing the time and cost of preparing an EEG brain wave test.

Next, Phillip Baek represented BoBo, a mobile app that's revolutionizing roommate living by turning chore management into a fun, competitive game with a community spirit.

Next up to pitch their startup was Ruthvik Jonna with Bloom Technologies, an online platform for all businesses to upload relevant data/documents, track sustainability metrics, and utilize their trained AI model, which provides context-specific reports about the client's climate performance and potential ESG recommendations.

Lastly, Aakriti Kamal pitched her startup, CURA, an AI-powered solution designed to alleviate the immense challenges faced by family caregivers of mentally ill patients. CURA empowers caregivers to

navigate the complexities of care management, ensuring both patients and their families receive the support they deserve.

Following the four finalists' pitches, the hard work of the rest of the cohort was shown off during an Elevator Pitch Competition, where each founder delivered live, two-minute pitches to judges. During this time, audience members got the chance to vote for their favorite concept to receive a \$500 Audience Choice Award. This prize was earned by Patty Chow with her concept, QuickLook, a centralized platform that supports international workers with tax filings. Judges selected Daniel Kim's startup, Active Prophylaxis, a pressure distribution medical device, as the winner of the \$1,000 Elevator Pitch Award.

After the deliberation period, Dr. Luis Martins, Director of HKEC, spoke briefly about the Forty Acres Founders program before revealing the judges' decisions. Dr. Martins extended a heartfelt thank you to all donors, mentors, judges, and graduate assistants who helped make the program such a valuable asset for student founders navigating the startup landscape.

It was then announced that after careful consideration, Aakriti Kamal with CURA would take home the 1st place title with \$10,000. Kamal also won an additional \$500 Audience Choice Award. Ruthvik Jonna with Bloom Technologies came in 2nd place with \$5,000, Phillip Baek with BoBo placed 3rd with \$3,000 and Brandon Doan with E-Cap ranked 4th place, earning \$2,000.

EVENT HIGHLIGHTS

267

RSVPs to the pitch competition event

88,510

Promotional Material Media Impressions

4

Founders advanced as Finalists

13

Founders pitched in the Elevator Pitch Competition



1st Place + Audience Choice CURA

CURA, an AI-powered solution designed to alleviate the immense challenges faced by family caregivers of mentally ill patients. CURA empowers caregivers to navigate the complexities of care management, ensuring both patients and their families receive the support they deserve.

2nd Place Bloom Technologies

Bloom Technologies is an online platform for all businesses to upload relevant data/documents, track sustainability metrics, and utilize their trained AI model, which provides context-specific reports about the client's climate performance and potential ESG recommendations.



3rd Place BoBo

BoBo is a mobile app that's revolutionizing roommate living by turning chore management into a fun, competitive game with a community spirit. By leveraging machine learning, BoBo understands users' habits, offering personalized suggestions and rewards and offers an advertising avenue to businesses targeting the college demographic.

4th Place E-Cap

E-Cap is reimagining the prep-tech of an electroencephalogram (EEG) brain wave test. The current test preparation takes 45-90 minutes and requires extensive training. By reducing the prep time and technician training required, E-Cap is bringing on a new era of brain wave testing accessibility.

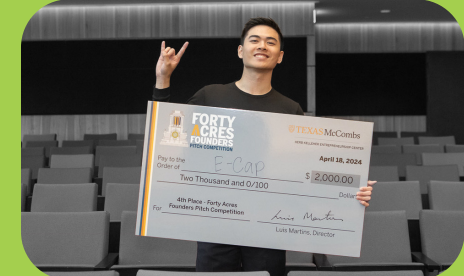


Elevator Pitch Award Active Prophylaxis

Active Prophylaxis helps patients at risk for pressure ulcers with real-time pressure mitigation via a dynamically adjustable mattress system.

Audience Choice Elevator Pitch QuickLook

QuickLook revolutionizes code reviews with unparalleled speed and developer-centric design. Using QuickLook, software engineers can easily prioritize, visualize, and compare edits, enabling more informed decisions and clarity in the review process.





GOAL 4:

EMPOWER

THE NEXT INNOVATORS

GRANTING RESOURCES THAT SUPPORT THE CONTINUED
GROWTH AND SUCCESS OF STUDENT STARTUPS AND
PROVIDING CRITICAL FEEDBACK AND INSIGHT

FREED FAMILY PITCH COMPETITION

The Freed Family Pitch Competition is UT Austin's largest and most prestigious undergraduate pitch competition. Hosted by the Herb Kelleher Entrepreneurship Center, this event offers a one-of-a-kind opportunity for experiential learning, where student teams can pitch their startups in a high-stakes environment, competing for \$65k in cash and prizes. Beyond the financial rewards, participants gain invaluable insights from seasoned entrepreneurs, receive personalized feedback on their business strategies, and build lasting connections within the Texas entrepreneurial ecosystem. The competition not only recognizes groundbreaking ideas but also empowers the next generation of innovators to turn their visions into reality.

SPRING 2023 RECAP



A \$1 MILLION BOOST TO UT'S VENTURE CULTURE

San Antonio entrepreneur and investor Billy Freed and family donate to support students' business efforts at Texas McCombs.



PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

72

Teams applied in 2023

16

Teams competed in Semi-Finals

\$60k

In cash and prizes awarded to Finalists

17

Semi-Finals & Finals Judges



EVENT HIGHLIGHTS

168

RSVPs to the Finals Event

35,816

Promotional Material Media Impressions

FREED FAMILY COMPETITION FINALS 2023

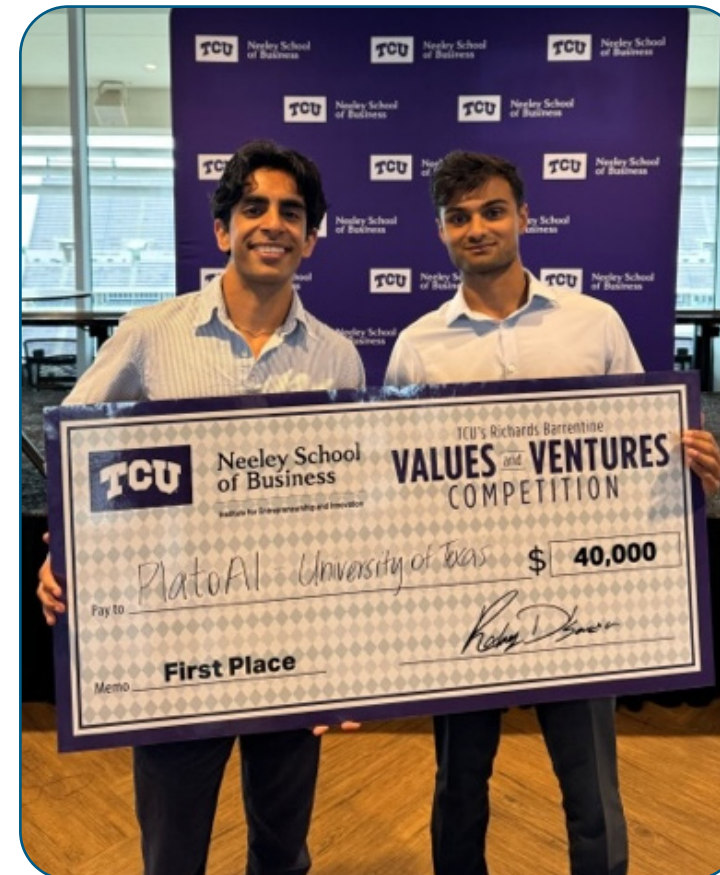
On Thursday, October 26th, 2023, four student founded startup teams from The University of Texas at Austin pitched their business concepts to a panel of judges in competition for \$60,000 in cash and prizes at the 2023 Freed Family Pitch Competition Finals.

This competition seeks to create a legacy of successful student entrepreneurs and empowers the leaders of tomorrow to innovate and attain their full potential. During the competition, students have the opportunity to hone their business strategy, get professional feedback on their pitches, and form lasting relationships with mentors in the Texas entrepreneurial ecosystem.

The evening began with HKEC Director Luis Martins giving the welcome address to kick start the 2023 Finals. Deliberating this year's competition was a prominent judge's panel consisting of Kalyan Banerjee, Co-Founder and CGO of Lumenci; Toni Jacaruso, President of Jacaruso Enterprises; David J. Neff, Operational Partner of Ecliptic Capital; Athena Simpson, Founder and Investor of UNRESTRICTED VENTURES; and Quoc Tran, CFO of FarBridge.

First up to pitch were Phillip Baek and Ashauntee Fairley with BoBo, a mobile app that's revolutionizing roommate living by turning chore management into a fun, competitive game with a community spirit.. Next, Sam Preston and Srikar Sadu pitched their concept, Sensibed Tech, a medical innovation that tracks the formation of pressure ulcers and alerts nurses when they form. Angelica Sharma represented STEMkidz, a series of computer science and robotics boot camps for kids. The last team to pitch was Melogy Geiger, Joseph Horak, and Will Sords with their startup, Merge Conflict Studio, a minority-led game development studio that focuses on centering marginalized perspectives and empowering players.

After a difficult deliberation period, HKEC Director Dr. Luis Martins revealed the judges' decisions. He announced that after careful consideration, Angelica Sharma with STEMkidz would take home the 1st place title with \$20,000. Baek and Fairley with BoBo came in 2nd place with \$10,000, Geiger, Horak, and Sords with Merge Conflict in 3rd place with \$5,000, and Preston and Sadhu with Sensibed Tech in 4th place with \$5,000. The Audience Choice Award went to Sensibed Tech, earning Preston and Sadhu an extra \$100 for their venture.



TRAVEL GRANTS

From San Francisco to Paris, HKEC-funded travel grants allow undergraduate and graduate students to participate in national and international business startup competitions to share their vision with the world.

8

Students awarded travel funds in 23/24

\$7,500

In travel grants awarded during 23/24

\$27,000

Funding won during HKEC-funded travels

A woman in a white blazer is smiling and talking to another woman in a dark blazer. They are in a modern office hallway with other people in the background. The scene is lit with warm, orange-toned lights.

BACK THE LATEST

RESEARCH

ELEVATING McCOMBS FACULTY AND SUPPORTING THEIR PURSUIT OF CUTTING-EDGE RESEARCH ON ENTREPRENEURSHIP, INNOVATION, AND TECH STRATEGY

2024 AUSTIN TECHNOLOGY & ENTREPRENEURSHIP CONFERENCE

Every spring, the Austin Technology and Entrepreneurship Conference (ATEC) convenes a small group of outstanding early-career scholars studying technology, innovation, and entrepreneurship. Started in 2016, the conference provides an intimate, workshop environment to discuss ongoing, unpublished research, as well as build community and launch new collaborations. ATEC continues to draw the brightest junior researchers in entrepreneurship, technology, and innovation from around the globe, further establishing UT as a beacon of entrepreneurship research and education.

UT AUSTIN'S RESEARCH MISSION

Nearly 140 years ago, The University of Texas at Austin opened with one building, eight professors, and 221 students. Today, UT ranks among the top 30 research institutes in the world. It is both a community — more than 51,000 students in 18 colleges and schools, their teachers, researchers, and staff — and a nation, Longhorn Nation, with a global network of nearly half a million alumni.

What starts here changes the world. Like the state it calls home, The University of Texas at Austin is a bold, ambitious leader. As a public university, we take seriously our charge to serve the great state of Texas that supports us — and with billions of dollars in added state income every year, not to mention

countless other benefits to local and statewide communities, The University of Texas at Austin provides an exceptional return on investment. An enduring symbol of the spirit of Texas, we drive economic and social progress, all while serving our city, state and nation as a leading center of knowledge and creativity.

Here, tradition and innovation blend seamlessly to provide students with a robust collegiate experience. Amid the backdrop of Austin, Texas, a city recognized for its creative and entrepreneurial spirit, the university provides a place to explore countless opportunities for tomorrow's artists, scientists, doctors, entrepreneurs and engineers.

McCOMBS RESEARCH IMPACT

The McCombs School of Business Management Department boasts an award-winning faculty. Our professors regularly publish cutting-edge research about entrepreneurship, organizational behavior, organization theory, and strategic management in the best management journals. The McCombs undergraduate program is ranked #6 globally, marking the 26th consecutive year for it to make the top 10.

“McCombs boasts some formidable advantages. Its career services team ranks among the best. The school's curriculum ranks among the 20 best in nearly every specialization. Last year, the program achieved a STEM certification in 14 of its 22 concentrations.”

POETS & QUANTS, 2020



Ranked **#13** in Global Business School Research

University of Texas at Dallas (2023)



Ranked **#23** in Doctoral Graduates Produced in the world

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FACULTY RESEARCHER

Subrina Shen
Assistant Professor,
Department of Management,
McCombs

RESEARCH HIGHLIGHT

Serendipity and Conflict: How Cross-Departmental Goal Interdependencies Affect Department-Level Product Innovation Search

Subrina Shen is an assistant professor of management in the McCombs School of Business at The University of Texas at Austin. She teaches entrepreneurship and innovation at the University. She has also taught in the business and sociology departments at Cornell University. Her research examines the creation and evaluation of innovative ideas in contexts with high uncertainty, such as when multiple goals/evaluation criteria exist, and/or when there are multiple paths of development (e.g., in nascent technology sectors). In studying these issues, Shen examines both the evolutionary process and the underlying social interaction that drives idea generation and selection. Shen has been published in *Organization Science* and *Strategic Management Journal*. Her research has won several awards, including the 2021 Conference Theme Best Paper Award from the International Association of Chinese Management Research and the Best Paper Award from the 2018 International Conference on Innovation Studies. She holds a Ph.D. in management and organization and an M.A. in sociology, both from Cornell University. Shen also has a M.Ph. degree in sociology from the Chinese University of Hong Kong and a B.A. in journalism and communication from Tsinghua University in Beijing.



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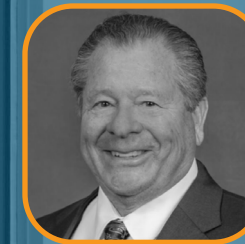
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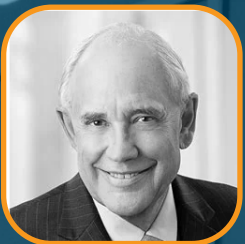
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