UIC Innovation Spark Series: Demo Day
Official Participant Guidelines

Introduction

Welcome to the UIC Innovation Spark Series and Blaze Venture Challenge, a student entrepreneurial program run by UIC Innovation in partnership with UIC Business. Our goal is to build an **inclusive entrepreneurial community** where all students have **access** to the support and resources they need to succeed as entrepreneurs.

About the Spark Series and Blaze Venture Challenge

The Spark Series is a semester long program in the fall designed to help students from colleges across UIC accelerate their idea through mentoring, resources, and the chance to win cash prizes for startup funding. It consists of a series of workshops followed by a demo day where students showcase their startup ideas by creating posters and table displays and speaking with audience members who will vote for their favorite idea.

During the spring semester, the Blaze Venture Challenge offers students access to a network of mentors and workshops to build upon skills gained during the Spark Series to prepare them to turn their ideas into a profitable business. Students develop 5-minute pitch videos to deliver during the Blaze Venture Challenge semi-finals. The top eight teams from the semi-final round move onto an in-person finals event where students pitch their ideas to a panel of judges comprised of industry experts to compete for cash prizes.

We encourage **all UIC students** to participate; we welcome both **part-time** and **full-time**, **undergraduate**, and **graduate** students of **all backgrounds and interests**. Participants will learn valuable entrepreneurial skills, build their personal networks, and help build a collaborative, supportive UIC student innovation community.

This document outlines guidelines for the **UIC Innovation Spark Series: Demo Day**. For specific information regarding the schedule and deadlines, please refer to the UIC Spark Series website. You will also find information about the Spark Series and Blaze Venture Challenge on BlackBoard. If you need to be added to the BlackBoard group, **please email Elaine Harvey** at echarvey@uic.edu.

The **Demo Day** event will be held on **Wednesday, November 8, 2023**, from **5pm to 7pm** at **Student Services Building** – 1200 Harrison Street, on UIC's campus. Each team will be assigned to a table where you will display your venture concept, conversationally pitch the concept to attendees, and respond to questions / receive feedback on your concept from attendees. This presentation session will run from **5:25PM-6:45PM** during which attendees will vote on their favorite idea via a QR code.

Eligibility

UIC Innovation Spark Series: Demo Day Eligibility

The UIC Demo Day is for new, independent ventures in the pre-seed through growth stages. Any UIC student can present an idea and is welcome to participate in the Demo Day event. For the sake of the Demo Day and Blaze Venture Challenge, "venture" refers to a proposed business, nonprofit organization, or hybrid organization that is being developed, even at the conceptual level, by one or more members of the UIC student community.

Eligibility for participation may be impacted by levels of revenue and/or capital raised. If students have established concepts and already have revenues exceeding $50,000 in a prior academic year (excluding Phase I SBIR/STTR grants) or have raised equity capital above $50,000 from individuals other than team members or family/friends, please let the UIC Innovation team know as soon as possible to determine that venture's eligibility for entry.

Team Member or Individual Eligibility & Participation

- All UIC students are eligible to participate as a member of a team for the Demo Day event.
- Students may participate as a member of a team or as an individual.
- There is no maximum or minimum number of people who may be on a team.
- Teams may include non-UIC students, but at least 50% of the team must be current UIC students and at least one UIC student must be present at the Demo Day table during the event.
- Students may be on more than one team and should coordinate among team members to ensure one person is always present at their assigned table during the Demo Day event.
- Students participating as an individual may only register with one idea to present at the event.

Student Responsibilities

The Spark Series: Demo Day is an opportunity for you to showcase your venture idea and informally pitch this idea to attendees using a visual aid. Demo Day attendees will include members of participating teams, the UIC community (e.g., students, faculty, and staff), and the broader Chicago startup and business community. Each team will be assigned to a table where you will display your venture concept, conversationally pitch the concept to attendees, and respond to questions / receive feedback on your concept from attendees.

- You are responsible for registering for the Demo Day event by **October 13, 2023**, using the Qualtrics link available [here].
- Submissions are collected via BlackBoard no later than Friday**, October 27, 2023**. If you need to be added to the BlackBoard group, please **email Elaine Harvey** at **echarvey@uic.edu.**
- You are responsible for arriving between **3:30pm and 4:00pm** CT to check in and set up.
- You are responsible for planning and creating your own Demo Day display. If you have accessibility needs at your table or are in need of a power supply during the showcase for your display, please contact UIC Innovation as soon as possible. *Wall outlets LIMITED*

Demo Day Display and Event Details

Schedule:

- Check-in for students: 3:30pm to 4:00pm
- Welcome: 5:00 to 5:10pm
- Keynote Speaker: 5:10pm to 5:25pm
- Demo Day Presentations (audience members visit students at tables): 5:25 to 6:45pm
- Awards: 6:45pm to 6:55pm (favorite presentations announced and awards distributed)
- Conclusion: 6:55pm to 7:00pm

Table dimensions and displays:

- Please plan to share a standard 6' table with one other team, providing you with 3' of display space. However, we will share final table dimensions one week after the registration deadline.
- A white table linen will be provided to you.
- You can include anything from signage (e.g., tri-fold displays, posters), to demos, to product samples at your table. Here is a reference photo from displays at a similar event held at another university.
- You are encouraged to be creative in how you use your table space to effectively convey your venture idea and why it is needed!

Figure 1. UIC alumnus, Hamza Ali representing Buddie Up at the 2023 Pitch Madness event held at DePaul University

Judging

This presentation session will run from **5:25PM-6:45PM**. During this time, attendees will vote on their favorite idea via a QR code, and the teams that get the most votes will be awarded with cash prizes. Audience members will vote using the following guidelines:

- **Market Need**: Does the display convey a compelling need that is unmet for a clearly defined target market? Has the team done their homework to convey the size and scope of this need? Does the display compellingly communicate why the idea/innovation is necessary?
- **Idea/Concept**: Is the idea innovative and interesting? Is it presented clearly? Is there compelling evidence of the idea's ability to effectively address the identified market need? What evidence does the team present for traction with their idea? Has the team shown why their idea has value and that their innovation is the best suited for solving the market need?
- **Feasibility:** Has the team shown that their idea/innovation can simply be implemented/used by their target consumer? Do they have a clear and compelling initial strategy for go-to-market? Does the team convey a basic but convincing understanding of the infrastructure (e.g., most important resources and operational activities) needed to operate this venture?
- **Sustainability:** Is the team able to provide a basic but convincing argument for how their venture would generate revenue and the most important costs associated with their venture? Are they able to explain how the venture would sustain itself financially to achieve its mission?
- **Passion and Presentation:** Did the team confidently and enthusiastically deliver a clear, concise message, presented in a professional manner? Did they respond thoughtfully to questions/feedback?

Mentors

UIC Innovation is actively recruiting and supporting a pool of volunteer mentors from the broader startup and business ecosystem to support you in your concept development journey. Mentors play an integral part in the entrepreneurial process by providing advice to help you explore and refine your business idea and achieve your goals.

Mentoring is set up using a pool system where you will review mentors' areas of expertise and schedule time during their identified office hours. **Mentor reservations are first come first serve!** It is important to do your due diligence and research mentors that are of interest to you and reserve time in advance. The mentor bios and office hours are included in the **Student Participant Resources** folder available in BlackBoard. The pool system allows participants to decide whether they want to meet regularly with a mentor or just need occasional technical assistance or specific questions answered.

Please plan on scheduled mentoring sessions ranging from **15 to 30 minutes each**. As a reminder, it is important to keep appointments that you have scheduled with mentors. If you must cancel a mentoring session, please alert the mentor as soon as possible. If you encounter issues scheduling office hours with mentors, please let the UIC Innovation team know.

Funding, Prizes, and Awards

Participants are eligible to receive cash prizes for first, second, and third places. The exact amount of prize money will vary from year-to-year. Please visit the UIC Innovation website for current information.

Rules and Guidelines

Challenge Commitment
Each participant should adhere to the UIC Spark Series and Blaze Venture Challenge Guidelines and the UIC Community Standards throughout the Challenge, which are available at https://dos.uic.edu/community-standards/. Each participant is expected to follow these guidelines, and exemplify the community standard values of integrity, accountability, and respect.

Non-Confidentiality
All events and presentations are accessible to the public, and some presentations may be recorded. Information or data presented during events by participants may be made public. Participants should not share proprietary information; they should identify a problem and present an idea that addresses the problem using knowledge and experienced gained over the course of the semester.

Copyrights & Permissions
Participants must obtain permission or authorization in advance from the owners of any copyrighted materials and/or images used in presentation materials and cite this information. Learn more about citation resources by clicking here.

Note: The UIC Innovation team reserves the right to grant exceptions on a case-by-case basis and discretion to modify the Rules and Regulations document as needed.

Questions? Please contact the UIC Innovation Team at innovation@uic.edu or visit our website at
https://innovation.uic.edu/spark-innovation-hub/entrepreneurial-pathways/