



BLAZE

UIC Blaze Venture Challenge Official Mentor Guidelines



INTRODUCTION

Our goal at UIC is to build an inclusive entrepreneurial community where all students have access to the support and resources they need to learn, grow, and succeed as entrepreneurs. The UIC Innovation Spark Series supports students in their journey as they learn and prepare to showcase their startup ideas at the Blaze Venture Challenge where they will deliver a 5 minute pitch to a panel of judges for a chance to win startup funding.

MENTORING OVERVIEW

We need your help to provide guidance and inspire our students along the way! In a recent focus group, UIC students rated mentorship as a **key** aspect of their entrepreneurial journey. As a mentor, you will play an important part in the process by being an advocate and resource who is available to provide advice to help UIC students explore and refine their business idea. With your support, students will feel empowered to grow their idea and achieve their goals.

Mentoring is set up using a pool system where students will review your areas of expertise and schedule time with you during your identified office hours. Some participants may want to meet regularly whereas as others may just need occasional technical assistance or have specific questions they need addressed. Please let us know if you find that students are not keeping appointments.

MENTOR EXPECTATIONS

- Commit to holding office hours for at least 30 minutes per week between **March 3 to April 16.**
- Participants will reach out directly to schedule time; these meetings can take place virtually or in-person.
- Approach mentoring with empathy and openness; students have varying levels of experience.
- Listen, learn, assess, ask questions, provide feedback, and help students set realistic milestones and goals.
- Share resources and help to connect students with extra assistance as needed.

TIMELINE

- Commit to being a mentor for the UIC Spark Series: Blaze Venture Challenge by **Tuesday, February 18.**
- Attend the Welcome Mentor Virtual Gathering on **Friday, February 28 at 12:00pm** CT (not required for participation).
- Start to hold office hours the week of **March 3.**
- The UIC Blaze Venture Challenge will take place in-person on **April 16**, we would love for you to attend!

FAQs

- Mentors may participate virtually if they do not live in the Chicago area.
- Mentors may meet with teams outside of business hours at their own discretion.
- We understand that things come up; if your commitment level changes, you can still participate. We just ask that you are available to hold office hours for most weeks between March 3 and April 16
- If you have questions or concerns as you're mentoring, the UIC team is here to help! You can also email us at innovation@uic.edu.

THANK YOU!