



AUBURN

HARBERT COLLEGE
OF BUSINESS

SOCIETAL IMPACT OF NEW VENTURE ACCELERATION

2021 SBAA Societal Impact Award Application

Auburn University
Harbert College of Business

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The Harbert College of Business seeks to inspire Auburn student entrepreneurs and innovators by providing the knowledge, training, support, and values required to become the next generation of entrepreneurs and leaders who will make a positive impact on society. Fostering entrepreneurship and economic development is consistent with Auburn's land grant mission which calls for improving the lives of the people of Alabama, the nation, and the world through forward-thinking education, life enhancing research, scholarship, innovation, and service. Through a comprehensive strategy, Harbert College's entrepreneurship programs and initiatives educate, encourage innovation and an entrepreneurial mindset across campus, and recognizes the fastest growing companies founded, owned, or led by Auburn University alumni around the world. This proposal focuses on the new venture acceleration initiative within this overall strategy. New venture acceleration is supported through a scaffolded approach of pitch competitions and accelerator residency in our New Venture Accelerator located in the university's Research Park. We seek to provide catalytic support for promising new business ventures and technology transfer that result from the innovative spirit and entrepreneurial mindset across all academic disciplines at Auburn University.

I. New Venture Acceleration Programs

Pitch Competitions. The Tiger Cage Business Idea Competition is Harbert College's premier competition held annually to identify and support high potential innovative early-stage product or service ideas created by Auburn University students. Teams of undergraduate or graduate students enter The Tiger Cage each fall to compete for a share of \$50,000 in startup capital. Historically, 40% of participants are business students, 40% are engineering students, and the remaining 20% come from across the remaining 10 academic colleges on campus. Teams are

comprised of undergraduate, masters, and doctoral students. Through a series of rounds from September to March, an independent panel of judges gradually narrows the competition to the top four teams who make their pitches in the final public competition.

During the competition period, teams participate in a series of mentoring and coaching sessions conducted by our Entrepreneurs in Residence. Mentoring focuses on business plan development and effectively presenting your business idea to potential investors. Teams also have access to the maker spaces in the Horton Hardgrave Hall Innovation Lab and the Harbert College of Business New Venture Accelerator located in the Auburn Research Park. Significant and specific education and coaching occurs throughout the competition.

New Venture Accelerator. The highest potential winners from the Tiger Cage competition have the opportunity to reside in the New Venture Accelerator, a full-service mixed-use business accelerator. The Accelerator, managed and funded by the Harbert College of Business, provides collaboration spaces, offices, equipment, and mentorship through Entrepreneurs in Residence, to further guide high potential startups on conducting market analysis, identifying investors, and developing pitch strategies. The Accelerator houses ventures by Auburn students (including past Tiger Cage winners), Auburn faculty and staff, and early-stage commercial startups. Entrepreneurs in Residence, the Entrepreneurship Advisory Board, and Entrepreneurship faculty serve as mentors and consultants to the venture teams.

The Accelerator strives to have an inclusive and diverse portfolio of startup residents from a variety of disciplines, and partners with the community, the Small Business Development Center, and Tuskegee University. It uses a graded leasing structure for the types of teams

(students, faculty, commercial), beginning with space provided free of charge to student ventures. The Accelerator currently serves as headquarters to 12 startup ventures, which are a mix of student ventures, faculty ventures, and commercial startup ventures.

II. Societal Impact of New Venture Acceleration Programs

The Harbert College of Business has identified Entrepreneurship and Business Innovation as a significant strategy for societal and economic impact, and as such, has made significant financial investments in related initiatives. Economic impact occurs through the success of new ventures supported by these programs. Leveraging their Accelerator training, student ventures in 2020-2021 received nearly \$500,000 in funding by winning additional business plan competitions. Others have received seven-figure acquisition offers, anticipate Series A funding, or have otherwise established themselves as sustainable fully operational businesses. Beyond economic impact, societal impact comes through the innovative products and services developed by these startup businesses, providing solutions for consumers and businesses across the world. Highlighted below are several New Venture Accelerator startups with high societal impact. Both student ventures were previous winners of the Tiger Cage competition.

Yellow Card. Created by an interdisciplinary pair of undergraduates—Finance and Engineering—Yellow Card was borne out of attempting to solve the problems of security around, and exorbitant fees for, sending money to family in less developed countries. Yellow Card is a cryptocurrency exchange on which one can buy, sell or transfer supported cryptocurrencies with local currency. Similar to PayPal or Venmo, cryptocurrencies can be sent and received between Yellow Card users and easily withdrawn in local currency. Yellow Card also provides significant user education on cryptocurrencies and other financial literacy topics through its Yellow Card Academy.

KultureXchange. Created by a Harbert College MBA student, KultureXchange was created to consult with business owners who are developing health and beauty products for

people of color. It also serves as an online bazaar to outsource minority-owned beauty and wellness products and services, with a goal of promoting growth in a need-based market while simultaneously prolonging the circulation of the black dollar within its own community. Having an array of skin tone variations and hair patterns creates the inclusivity at the heart of what Kulture stands for.

WELLBLOxS. Created by a School of Nursing faculty member to improve patient discharge results and reduce 30-day hospital readmission rates (which often require hospitals to provide free of charge), WELLBLOxS is a patient education platform designed to engage patients and care providers in the patient education process during hospitalization and through discharge. The primary goals of WELLBLOxS are to improve patient education, encourage lifestyle modifications to improve quality of life for patients living with chronic disease(s) or recovering from a procedure and/or acute illness, and reduce 30-day hospital readmission rates using gamification.

III. Applicability or Transferability to Other Institutions

The two primary elements of the new venture acceleration strategy—business pitch competitions and new venture accelerator—can be implemented separately or jointly and scaled to fit other business schools’ missions and financial circumstances. One of the greatest benefits to student participants at any stage of development is the mentorship from faculty and external partners with expertise in entrepreneurship. The initiatives achieve the educational mission of a College leveraging significant external engagement, another common aspect of business school missions. Further, it has been the Harbert College’s experience that new venture support is a meaningful way for individual and corporate donors to support the College. In sum, we believe these strategies are scalable and necessary for developing future business leaders and innovative products and services, with a lasting impact on business and society.