Tennessee Tech University

College of Business

iCube

Imagine + Inspire + Innovate

Kevin Liska, Executive Director, iCube
kliska@tntech.edu
(931) 372-3337

Tom Payne, Dean
tpayne@tntech.edu
(931) 372-3372

1105 N. Peachtree Avenue
Johnson Hall 101
Cookeville, TN 38505

The Tennessee Tech College of Business iCube

I.   Description of the Innovative Strategy or Program

Tennessee Tech's iCube is a College of Business (CoB) center where students and faculty *imagine, inspire,* and *innovate*. An integral part of the CoB Strategic Plan and central to its mission and vision, iCube supports each of the college's four primary strategic priorities: Education for Life, Innovation in All We Do, Exceptional Stewardship, and Engagement for Impact. Across its many societally-enhancing projects, iCube provides collaborative solutions for business, community, and economic development. Specific iCube projects (described in Section II) include child seat and traffic safety, small business development, diabetes prevention, opioid abuse, health visualization, and environmental education. These funded marketing, training, website development, public policy campaigns are facilitated through emerging technologies, students, faculty, and project teams.

The *innovativeness and uniqueness* of iCube are evidenced by its self-sustaining, incentive-based, and collaborative nature. iCube accounts for the majority of CoB, and 15% of total university, grant funding. As a financially self-sustaining unit of the CoB, iCube provides indirect funding and builds intellectual capacity across disciplinary units. The CoB, university, and iCube employees benefit from our proven professional development and incentive plans- resulting in several individuals advancing from student interns and project coordinators, to management positions. Our business model is also unique in that we don't limit ourselves to specific "content" categories; instead, we strategically select projects that align with our culture, state-of-the-art resources, and talent pools of student interns, iCube project leaders, contract specialists, and faculty. Our motto is "activity leads to activity," and we share and leverage technology discoveries to benefit a variety of internal and external stakeholders. Finally, iCube's collaborative culture and business model provide faculty and students from all disciplines an opportunity to engage in projects that both support their professional development and add value for society at large.

II.   Societal Impact of the Strategy or Program

During the past 20 years, iCube has evolved from a traditional Business Media Center to a dynamic, outward-facing, and service-oriented organization. As a testament to its sustainable growth and impact, iCube has generated $15 million in externally funded projects in the past six years alone. More importantly, it has become a recognized leader across Tennessee and the nation using emerging technology to solve complex public policy problems.

Working with students, faculty, and technical experts from various disciplines, our 12 project-funded staff apply their technological, marketing, and collaborative skills to design to provide VR, AR, website design, marketing campaigns, app development, and training solutions. These projects with government agencies, non-profits, and other organizations have strengthened the college's relationships with alumni and corporate, business, government, and community leaders. The strength of these relationships has facilitated the continuity and growth of operations during the pandemic. During the past year, iCube activated over $3 million in funded grants in traffic safety marketing, opioid abuse education, health visualization, and conservation education. This success is a testament to the longstanding responsiveness, professionalism, and quality of the iCube team and the importance of a clear strategic vision, cohesive culture, and effective financial incentive plan.

Evidence of Societal Impact – Project Metrics and Recognitions

The CoB's iCube Center received a National Safety Council Appreciation Award (as noted in the Congressional Record) to create a National Digital Check Form for all child passenger safety technicians across the country. As a result of its years of proven performance, iCube now hosts the Tennessee Occupant Protection Center, aiming to heighten its success and engage additional constituents to improve child passenger safety across Tennessee. Our Ollie Otter Booster Seat and Seat Belt Safety Program reached a major milestone of one million "high fives," which translates to one million kids having heard the life-saving messages to always buckle up and "Under 4'9, It's Booster Time!" Our TNTogether.com opioid education campaign reached all 95 Tennessee counties with 217 community events. Our "Tweeting Eel" at the Tennessee Aquarium, @EelectricMiguel, was recognized by over 100 news outlets

nationally and internationally (starting with The Associated Press and picked up by agencies including

ABC, MSN, and NBC News, NPR, and the BBC) for powering a Christmas tree. Exhibit I provides a

detailed description of current selected iCube projects.

Exhibit I

Current Selected Projects and Descriptions

TN TOGETHER: ($175,000) iCube created an opioid educational campaign for the Tennessee Department of Health to educate the public, decrease stigmas, and empower individuals and communities to fight the epidemic. Currently, the system has 138 activities for individuals, coalitions, communities, and professionals to complete and 217 submitted success stories. (TNTogether.com)

FIND HELP NOW: ($175,000) iCube is responsible for onboarding all drug treatment providers across Tennessee, providing real-time results for individuals seeking services. Onboarding begins in Fall 2021. (findhelpnowtn.org)

2BBETR APP: ($50,000) Partnered with the TN Office of the Inspector General to create a web app (2bbetr.app) that encourages students to be aware of their tendencies for making decisions to empower them with self-awareness in possible scenarios involving the choice to use drugs. (2bbetr.app)

NATIONAL DIGITAL CARSEAT CHECK FORM: ($125,000) Partnering with National Safety Council, iCube developed an online platform with a dashboard for over 50,000 technicians to store their car seat checks digitally; thereby providing real-time access to national data and information to better inform the engineering of car seats and vehicles. (cpsboard.org/ndcf)

DIABETES IN YOUR BODY APP: ($50,000) iCube launched a diabetes virtual reality simulation and a diabetes education app in partnership with Cookeville Regional Medical Center and the Tennessee Institute of Public Health. See *Diabetes In Your Body* at the APP store.

TURTLE EXHIBIT: ($5,000) iCube has partnered with the Tennessee Aquarium on projects including the Tennessee Aquarium Visitor's App, the Tweeting Eel (@eelectricmiguel), the Secret Reef App, and a VR simulation on environmental conservation. This year, iCube is assisting Aquarium by designing a habitat game to show what it takes to be a "Turtle Hero" by making positive choices at home to save turtle ecosystems.

TN AQUARIUM CONSERVATION INSTITUTE: iCube launched the Freshwater Information Network. A 5-year project that conserves native aquatic environments through scientific research, ecosystem restoration, education programs, and public outreach. (tnacifin.com) See national press about this amazing facebook for fish project.

TRAFFIC SAFETY MEDIA: ($5,000,000) iCube is the only Business College in the nation to manage their state's traffic safety marketing - including creative direction, media buying, and campaign management. These messages include drunk driving prevention, seat belt use, motorcycle awareness, distracted driving prevention, and pedestrian safety. We saved THSO over $500,000 while increasing paid media impressions by over 160%. This year, we have generated 88 million social media impressions and 19,000 TV and radio spots. (tntrafficsafety.org/microsites)

OCCUPANT PROTECTION CENTER: ($1,000,000) Launched Tennessee Occupant Protection, a program of strategies to improve the safety of passenger vehicle occupants. To help reduce misuse of safety seats, groups across the country offer safety seat check-up inspection or fitting stations where technicians offer hands-on training based on the age and size of parent or caregiver's child passengers. (tntrafficsafety.org/cps)

Tennessee Department of Agriculture TRAINING: ($95,000) iCube developed online training for Tennessee Soil Conservation Districts across the state. Nation's first statewide system training over 400 county board members.

Tennessee Department of Transportation (TDOT) TRAINING: ($115,000) iCube worked with the training division at TDOT to develop and implement modules for the agency's Learning Network Curriculum.

III. Applicability or Transferability to Other Institutions

While serving society, iCube has also enhanced the impact and reputation of the college and university, provided students across all disciplines with internships and teamwork experience, and provided faculty with an opportunity to engage in discipline-related funded research. While the importance of an entrepreneurial and adaptive culture, strategy-focused leadership, and environment supportive of innovation cannot be overstated, the iCube model is *applicable and transferable* to other institutions. In addition, institutional incentives for developing units such as iCube will increase with the need to provide interdisciplinary experiential learning opportunities, engage in application-oriented research, secure external funding, and advance societal benefits.

We regularly evaluate and modify our best practices and strategic focus areas to remain a pioneer in merging business technology and innovation in traffic safety, public health, conservation, and technical training. This, while keeping our central educational mission in focus by directly involving students and faculty. As content delivery systems and technological capabilities evolve, our students and recent graduates will continue to be highly valuable resources. iCube will continue to attract the brightest minds, invite eager students to join new projects, and build extraordinary interdisciplinary teams to solve complex problems advance public policy initiatives and benefit society through local, statewide, and national programs. We will continue to *Imagine*, *Inspire* and *Innovate*, and look forward to the new projects and challenges ahead. We welcome other universities to visit us in person or virtually, discover how we forge and train interdisciplinary teams, and join us in tackling complex public policy challenges. iCube is a model for and a testament to business colleges' ability to partner with external organizations, solve public policy problems, and meet societal challenges in sustainable, high-impact, and reputationally enhancing ways.