

# SOCIAL INNOVATION FELLOWS

Discover. Design. Do Good!

**Calling all students who want to make meaningful change in the world!**

## Overview

The Social Innovation Fellows at NC State will offer students from every discipline a dynamic, yearlong team experience to learn adaptive leadership skills to become successful social entrepreneurs and innovators, and technical skills to create and launch an enterprises or projects that seek to achieve social impact. September of 2017 will usher in the inaugural cohort of NC State Social Innovation Fellows. Social challenges relating to food and/or water will be the organizing theme.

Using concepts from design thinking, sustainability, business methods, and nonprofit models, students will step *outside* their disciplinary silos and *into* a learning experience that blends and integrates diverse knowledge, perspectives, and best practice. Bridging the skills and knowledge of STEM, Humanities, and other disciplines, carefully curated topics and a diverse team experience will offer students an interdisciplinary and highly engaged learning experience.

Our big, audacious goal – empower students to find their passion, engage deeply in understanding a social issue, and become innovative problem solvers to address the grand challenges of our state and the world!

Social Innovation Fellows will be entirely co-curricular but *intentionally coordinated* with other campus curricular and scholar program options and requirements. In addition to the opportunity

to work with their peers from other colleges, Fellows will have access to a network of local entrepreneurs, business, and social sector leaders and receive a cord at graduation. Each team will receive a micro-investment of \$1,000 to help them leverage other resources with the hope they can continue their work through the summer months. A peer mentoring opportunity will be available to students who “graduate” from the program.

Monthly Innovation Labs and team mentoring will anchor the student experience. Through a process of self and team exploration, students will learn ways of knowing, thinking, interacting, and being to understand how to become effective change makers. A “Brain Trust” of campus and community leaders and entrepreneurs with diverse expertise will provide ongoing mentoring.

In addition to monthly Innovation Labs, Fellows will participate in energetic and interactive activities to understand theory of change models and learn how to become adaptive leaders. Technical skill development will enable them to assess the viability of a social venture, policy, project, or product. Teams will receive guidance on all of the steps involved in moving from concept to implementation, gaining knowledge and skills to participate in campus and community pitch competitions and other avenues to promote their solution. Many opportunities for interaction with other student teams and campus offerings will further enrich the Fellow experience. Activities will take place on campus, at our community partner site, Loading Dock Raleigh, and other sites in Raleigh and RTP.

## **Participant Pipeline and Logistics**

Social Innovation Fellows will include undergraduate and graduate students from all corners of campus who are interested in becoming change makers – social entrepreneurs, innovators, and visionaries who have a dream to change the world – and who are developing new methods to solve society’s greatest challenges. The program will be an inclusive model that celebrates the exchange of diverse knowledge and ideas.

Social Innovation Fellows is for students who:

- have a passion for changing the world and want to explore deeply a great social challenge related to food and/or water;
- have a social impact idea but don't know where to go to develop this idea;
- are currently working on a social venture, product, or project solo or with a team; and/or
- may want to join an existing venture team.

Social Innovation Fellows aims to build from a rich array of existing campus assets, complementing coursework for students enrolled in entrepreneurship offerings by providing a cohesive co-curricular learning pathway. Students in CSLEPS leadership programs, Entrepreneurship Initiative, Eco and Impact Leadership Village, Net Impact Chapters, E-games, Sustainability Stewards and Make-a-thon, IEI Discovery Forums (to name just a few!), will be specifically recruited, as well as those recommended by faculty as having a strong social venture interest. The program is approved as a community engagement experience for Park Scholars, can offer a service learning experience for Caldwell Fellows, or serve as an in depth follow-on to the first year project work of the Goodnight Scholars. It can also offer a supportive framework for students in business, design, engineering, and textiles to continue exploration of market-based ventures and prototyping that have social impact. We also seek students who may not envision themselves as innovators but are interested in learning about social impact work and how to apply their skills and discipline knowledge to creating social value.

Three to five teams will be created – of three to five members each – to tackle a very broadly defined social challenge around the topic of food and/or water. The challenge may be global in scale or regionally relevant to offer teams the opportunity to work on a local solution or venture. Students may apply to become a Fellow individually or as a team. Monthly Innovation Labs will be open to all NC State students to encourage peer-to-peer learning and serve as a pipeline for future applicants.

## Content, Expectations and Learning Outcomes

The Social Innovation Fellows will combine an emphasis on learning both *adaptive skills* to become successful social entrepreneurs and innovators and *technical skills* to ideate and eventually launch a social project, product or enterprise. Fellows will be required to meet at least once per month with their team and, in addition, participate in a skills-based Innovation Lab with other teams and students. Select readings and resources will accompany the monthly topic. Site visits, focus groups, and tools such as life mapping, appreciative inquiry, and case studies will enhance the Fellow experience. Brain Trust members will be on hand to provide ongoing mentoring and team coaching. Fellows' work will culminate in a celebratory networking and pitch event to win additional seed funding. Students completing the program may become peer mentors for future cohorts.

Monthly innovation lab topics will include the following:

- Discover your passion and path to change the world!
- Understand social problems and creation of social impact (change theory, human centered design thinking, knowledge exchange across disciplines).
- Create social value: operational and funding models (for-profit, nonprofit, B Corp, hybrids), articulate and measure impact, challenges of building social enterprises.
- Learn adaptive leadership skills: Leading with self, others, and community.
- Understand changing philanthropic landscape: funding mechanisms for social enterprises (charitable, crowdsourcing, impact investing).
- Refine your pitch.
- Product and prototyping to create social value: What lessons can we learn from social entrepreneurs?
- Understand branding and marketing.
- Launch your enterprise.

Student learning outcomes are organized around three competency areas: leading with *self* in the Discover phase; leading with *others* in the Design phase; and leading with *community* in the Do phase. Evaluative protocols to monitor success are under development.

### Leading with self – DISCOVER Your Passion!

- Cultivate a deep understanding of a social problem from multiple perspectives.
- Develop an enhanced sense of purpose and motivation to take action.

### Leading with others – DESIGN Your Solution!

- Grow in confidence and resilience.
- Build an inclusive and insightful team.

### Leading with community – DO It!

- Create a viable solution to a social problem.
- Engage a network of supportive stakeholders.

A unique yearlong engaged learning experience, Social Innovation Fellows will enable our young social entrepreneurs and innovators building the next generation of technologies, inventions, and ventures to consider more fully impact on humanity and our planet. They will explore issues of ethics and sustainability at the intersection of social sector and responsible business practice. Fellows will grow in understanding of themselves and the positive impact they can make in their communities and the world. Importantly they will grow in confidence, become keen thinkers and problem solvers sensitive to knowledge and cultural differences and better prepared to leave NC State as engaged and responsible global citizens.

## Options for Stakeholders to Engage

### Brain Trust

As a member of the Brain Trust, we will call on you to offer support in your areas of expertise. This may include a phone call or meeting with a student (or team) to help problem solve or work through a specific task, host an Innovation Lab around a specific area of topical expertise, or just be “on hand” for informal support. Brain Trust members will be invited to participate in pitch

competitions, networking events, and capstone celebrations. Time commitment is dependent on interest and availability.

Brain Trust members will help inform development of the Fellows program, especially in the pilot year. Campus members will help identify campus connections and resources, offer insights and feedback, and serve as a pipeline to potential student participants. External members will be the primary networking group for our teams. We will encourage the Fellows to engage with these members as an extension of our campus community.

### Team Mentor

Each of our student teams will be carefully matched with a community mentor to help steward their project throughout the year. While the Institute will provide core support, mentors will offer “real world” perspectives and engage in a deeper relationship with a team.

This is an opportunity to truly impact the trajectory of a venture and engage more actively and regularly with students. No specific area of expertise is required but rather a commitment to helping students find connections and resources, and be a sounding board for ideas and development. Mentors will provide important feedback to Institute staff on how teams are progressing and help to anticipate problems. At minimum, a monthly face-to-face check in is required. Additional time commitment can be negotiated with individual students and teams.