



Boston University - Innovate@BU Proposal for Outstanding Emerging Entrepreneurship Center

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Overview & Purpose

After a one-year in-depth benchmarking study led by faculty and staff, Innovate@BU was launched by Boston University (BU) in February 2018 with a mandate to give students practical, experience-based learning in innovation and entrepreneurial thinking. Untethered to a single school or college, Innovate@BU seeks to instill in students a keen understanding of business innovation, cultural engagement, and social entrepreneurship so that no matter their field of study, they graduate knowing what it takes to convert an idea into something concrete and impactful and become drivers of innovation in their own lives, careers, and communities.

We envision a world where all BU Terriers are equipped with innovation skills and an entrepreneurial mindset, and are prepared to create meaningful impact in their lives, careers, and communities.

Boston University's community is made up of over 35,000 students, 10,000 faculty and staff, and 17 schools and colleges across three campuses. While being part of a large community provides many benefits, it also created our core challenges: designing a program that is relevant and addresses the unmet needs of students from all schools and colleges, and convincing the entire Boston University community of that relevance. Because of the University's size and breadth, it was also crucial that the vision of Innovate@BU nurtured, supported, unified, and amplified existing relevant programs on campus, including start-up clinics at the School of Law, experiential learning programs at the Hariri Institute for Computing, our 15,000 square-foot university makerspace, and other efforts in areas ranging from sustainability to arts innovation.

To provide a physical home for these existing and new programs, we built a brand-new home for Innovate@BU: the 7,000 square-foot BUild Lab: IDG Capital Student Innovation Center, located in the center of our main campus.

In the short two and a half years since we launched Innovate@BU and opened the BUild Lab, we have earned strong support from students, the University, and our community. We have successfully created a university-wide program that has meaningfully impacted both our students and faculty. In this past academic year (AY) alone, undergraduate and graduate students from all 17 schools and colleges at the university participated in our programs, over 6,300 visited the BUild Lab before the suspension of on-campus learning, and 230 student teams were working with us on innovation ideas that ranged from tech start-ups to non-profits to entrepreneurial projects that impact BU students. When the university transitioned to remote learning this March, we quickly and successfully transitioned our programs to virtual. We held 197 in-person and virtual programs and events combined in AY 2019-20, and our program participation and engagement are continuing to grow.

We have also established meaningful partnerships with existing relevant programs on-campus that we mentioned above, resulting in synergy and more innovation at BU. For example, we have established a pipeline process for students from the experiential learning programs at the Hariri Institute for Computing to enter our incubator program, while enabling BUild Lab student teams who need software development consultation to leverage help from programs at the Hariri Institute. Another example is the Start-Up Law Clinic and the Technology Law Clinic operated by the BU School of Law, where law students provide pro-bono legal expertise and services to help BUild Lab students teams.

Our success has been the result of intentional efforts. To emphasize the importance of social impact in our mission and programming, we hired a Program Director of Social Innovation from the beginning and placed the role on equal footing with the Program Director of Business Ventures role. We also created both the social impact track and the business venture track for all of our signature programs. We also have a faculty member who teaches entrepreneurship and plays the Director of Entrepreneurship Partnership role to both gauge innovation needs of different schools and populations and to promote Innovate@BU to faculty members and relevant existing programs. Additionally, we established a Faculty Innovation Network to further help us understand the BU community's innovation needs and to spread our message to more faculty, students, and administrators. These efforts, combined with the breadth and quality of our programs, have helped convince deans, students, faculty, and existing relevant programs across the university of the relevance of Innovate@BU.

Our success is also reflected in the support from our wider community. To-date, donors have committed more than \$20M over 10 years to supercharge the Innovate@BU effort. We have established a strong Mentorship Innovation Network, made up of over 270 alumni and community members with highly relevant expertise that support our students' innovation and entrepreneurial endeavors. And, our annual IDEA Conference held in Spring 2020, which provides an opportunity for college students in New England to explore innovation and entrepreneurship of all forms, drew students from across BU and more than 20 universities and colleges in the region.

Goals

Our goal is to enable students and alumni to become drivers of innovation in their own lives, careers, and communities by:

- Providing experiential learning programs that foster an entrepreneurial mindset by teaching innovation, communication, and collaboration skills through the BUild Lab IDG Capital Student Innovation Center, enabling students and alumni to address local and global challenges.
- Creating a University minor in Innovation and Entrepreneurship available to undergraduates at any school at BU to embed the principles in our curricula, which is critical to preparing students to craft their own future opportunities.
- Engaging faculty in focused research to identify best practices that can support the Boston innovation and entrepreneurship ecosystem and establish the University as a thought-leader in these fields.
- Nurturing, growing, and amplifying the innovation and entrepreneurial activities happening across the University.
- Becoming a responsible and contributing member of the Boston innovation and entrepreneurship community.

Major Achievements Since Opening

1. **We are building a vibrant, diverse, and inclusive innovation community at BU with a robust set of programs that provide opportunities for all of our students to develop a wide variety of new venture or project ideas.** Since opening, our staff and supporters have worked hard to spread the message that students from all majors, programs, disciplines, and backgrounds are encouraged and welcomed. And, we have intentionally established programs to reach and serve under-served populations and populations that often assume innovation and entrepreneurship are only for engineering or business students. Key examples of these efforts include:
 - The First-Year Innovation Fellowship provides a group of first-year students, particularly students from diverse backgrounds, with small cash grants to work on and launch new ideas, as well as a supportive community and coaching
 - Social Impact Ideas track added to our New Venture Competition and Summer Accelerator
 - An incubator program, the Innovation Pathway, encouraging and nurturing action-oriented projects that create impact for BU and beyond but are not intended to become non-profit or for-profit entities
 - Idea Cup, a competition that awards and encourages continuation of innovative ideas or projects from any class and any school or college at BU
 - Community Transportation Challenge in collaboration with Massachusetts Association for the Blind & Visually Impaired
 - Seed grants for College of Fine Arts and sustainability focused student projects

Overall, our students have formed a wide variety of ventures and taken on numerous projects. Our programs have attracted students from **all 17 of BU's schools and colleges**. These schools and colleges range from the expected—the College of Engineering, the Questrom School of Business, and the College of Arts and Sciences—to the pleasantly unexpected—the Schools of Theology and Public Health.

2. **We are fostering and supporting all forms of innovation by students with a structured incubator program, the Innovation Pathway.** The Innovation Pathway is the centerpiece of our programming during the academic year. It is applicable to both nonprofit and for-profit ventures, as well as action-oriented projects. During AY 2019-20, **230 teams of undergraduate and graduate students from across the university worked on for-profit and nonprofit ventures and projects** in the Innovation Pathway, an **87% increase from the 123 teams in AY 2018-19**. Examples of these ventures and projects include a platform that connects privately-owned parking spaces with parking space seekers, an electronic medical record for healthcare in Pakistan, training and advocacy to holistically address sex trafficking, and a New England cross-university public health conference.

The Innovation Pathway consists of four stages, and teams progress through stages based upon the achievement of milestones. Later milestones include presentations to outside experts, where teams receive constructive feedback. Each team would also receive up to \$3,000 to advance their enterprises or projects if they successfully achieved the later milestones. Teams learn best practices through our educational programming, gain peer and expert feedback through our Idea Open-mic Night and competitions, and receive ongoing coaching, guidance, and support from our in-house staff and mentor network.

3. **We have created the annual IDEA Conference and Innovation Week that celebrate and inspire innovation at BU and beyond.** Our annual IDEA Conference is a one-day event for Boston and New England area students to explore innovation of every kind. Whether it's through technology, social impact, or arts and culture, the conferences encourage students to embrace their passions and use them to create meaningful impact. Past keynote speakers have included retail founder Johnny Cupcakes, alumni, author, and entrepreneur Anjali Kumar, and sustainability advocate and environmental nonprofit leader Annie Leonard. In addition to inspirational talks from alumni and community members, attendees are offered hands-on workshops ranging in topics from Funding My For-profit & Non-profit, How to Build a Team, and The Artist as Entrepreneur. In 2020, students from across BU and 20 other universities attended our third annual IDEA Conference.

We also organize an annual university-wide Innovation Week. During the 2019 Innovation Week, more than 40 events took place across the university, including sustainable food tastings, research presentations, cooking demos, a startup career fair, a student arts festival, and a panel with BU women founders. While Innovation Week was cancelled in 2020 due to Covid, we will resume Innovation Week in 2021, in an in-person, hybrid, or virtual format.

4. **In fall 2019, we launched a campus-wide Innovation & Entrepreneurship (I&E) minor that embeds innovation and entrepreneurial principles into our curricula.** We believe this is critical to preparing students to craft their own future opportunities. The minor is available to all undergraduate students. It consists of five required courses, including its new core course, Ideas2Impact, which focuses on the principals of ideating and problem-solving. So far, **245 students have taken or are enrolled in this course and 51 students have declared the minor.** The BUild Lab also offers two co-curricular courses, "Launching a Project" and "Starting a Startup", that partially fulfill a general education requirement at BU.
5. **We have formed active stakeholder groups to advise us and spread the message on campus.** These include a Student Leadership Council, a Dean's Advisory Board, a Faculty Innovation Network, and an 14-member External Advisory Board made up mostly of alumni. These stakeholder groups have been essential in addressing our core challenges and convincing a wide constituency across campus of the relevance of Innovate@BU to all students.

Key Metrics: Academic Year 2019-20 (second full year of operation)

- 3,096 participants in BUild Lab programs (in-person and virtual combined)
- 197 events and programs held
- 230 student teams participated in the Innovation Pathway
- 97 student teams entered the 2020 New Venture Competition
- \$216,000 awarded to student and recent alumni ventures and projects
- 6,334 visitors to the BUild Lab before the university transitioned to virtual learning in March 2020

What's Next

We are very proud of our accomplishments, and we are excited about how much more we will continue to create and grow. Initiatives we will focus on in AY 2020-21 are:

- **Embedding diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in our programming.** In addition to ensuring that we continue to create a diverse and inclusive innovation community, we will be embedding DEI principles into our educational content and creating more programming that champions DEI in innovation.
- **Delivering innovation skills and entrepreneurial mindset training through bootcamps.** Having observed the strong desire of students to participate in intensive innovation training and the need to not only help students develop innovation skills but to grow as an individual and as a team leader, we will start offering bootcamps that focus on these development areas.
- **Providing more opportunities for students to innovate and solve problems in the local community.** We created the Community Transportation Challenge in partnership with the Massachusetts Association for the Blind & Visually Impaired in 2020. We plan to continue developing partnerships with the local community that provide students with experiential learning opportunities while also solving problems for specific communities.
- **Increasing alumni engagement.** Word of our impact on campus has spread and alumni demand for our programming has continued to increase. We will be rolling out programming to engage and support this important stakeholder group.
- **Supporting university-wide research in innovation and entrepreneurship, primarily through seed funding.** We aim to provide research findings that can support and be utilized by the Boston innovation and entrepreneurship ecosystem.

Innovate@BU Milestones

2018 1H

- Innovate@BU & BUild Lab officially launched
- ~\$20M donation committed over ten years
- Held our first Innovation Week and IDEA Conference
- Solidified New Venture Competition (NVC) & Summer Accelerator as signature programs

2018 2H

- Recruited first Student Leadership Council, consisting of 11 students from 6 different schools and colleges
- Launched our first Seed Grant program, in partnership with the College of Fine Arts

2019 1H

- Launched the Innovation Pathway incubator program
- Established a formal mentoring program
- Launched innovation and entrepreneurship co-curricular courses
- Hosted the Global Impact Challenge, a hackathon focused on health and human rights
- Launched the Idea Cup to award and highlight innovative ideas/projects from any university class

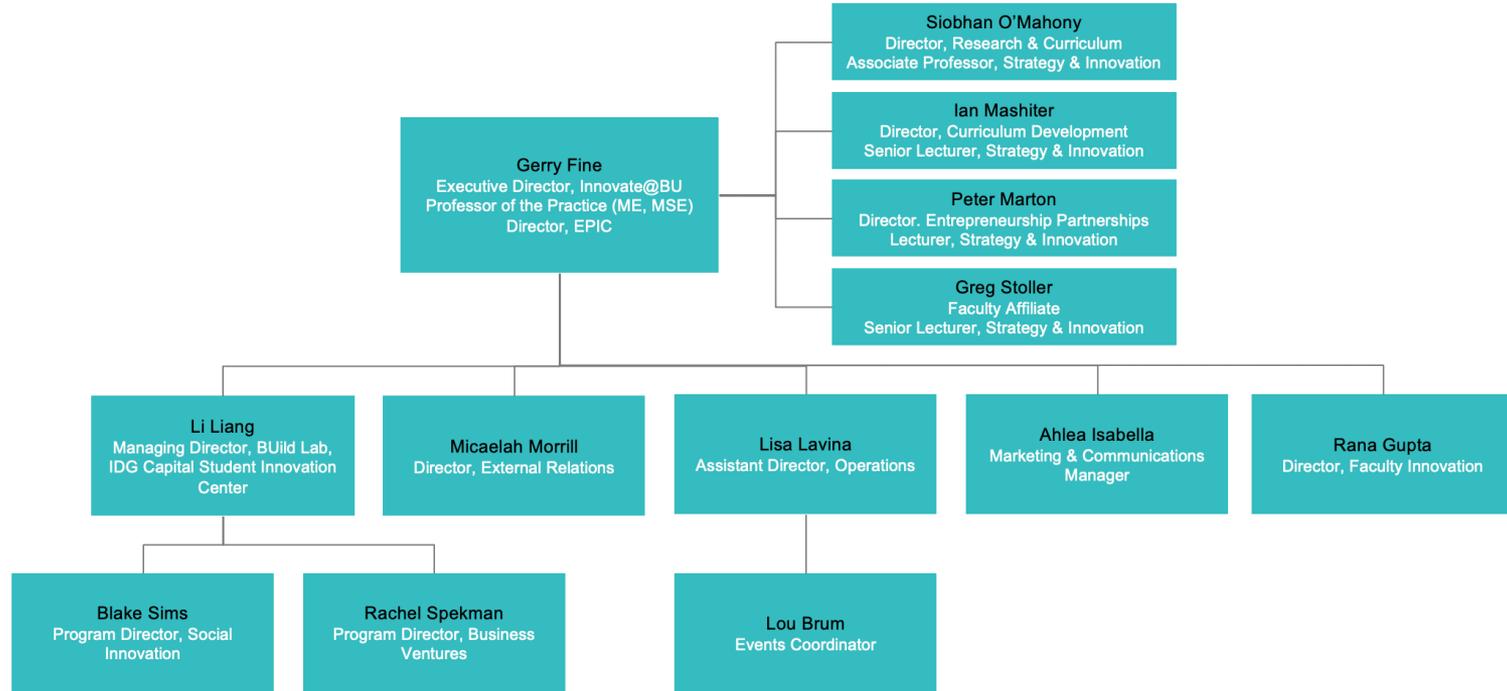
2019 2H

- Established Innovation & Entrepreneurship minor
- Launched First-Year Innovation Fellowship
- Expanded Innovation Pathway to include a projects track
- Launched programs to support postdocs & doctoral students
- Created the Community Transportation Challenge with the Massachusetts Association for the Blind & Visually Impaired

2020 1H

- Hosted a record setting 360 students from 20 colleges at our annual IDEA Conference
- Held NVC Finale with 350 attendees in 16 countries – our first major virtual event in remote learning due to Covid
- Achieved 87% year-on-year growth in # of teams on Innovation Pathway
- Created The New Normal Challenge for transitioning back to university in AY 2020-21

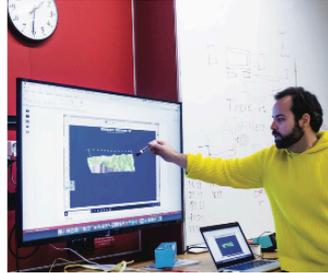
Organizational chart of Innovate@BU staff



Our university partners



**ENGINEERING PRODUCT
INNOVATION CENTER (EPIC)**



BU ARTS INITIATIVE



BU SUSTAINABILITY



BU LAW CLINICS



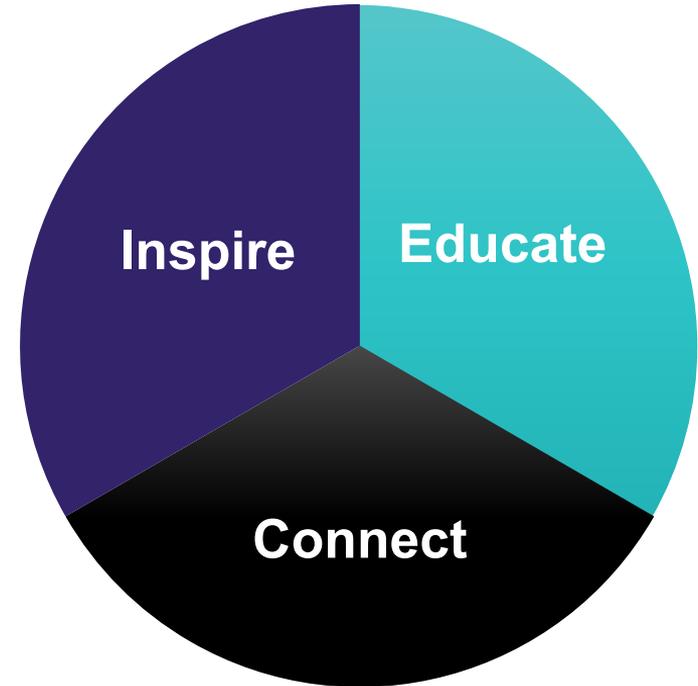
BU SPARK!



**BIOENGINEERING TECHNOLOGY
& ENTREPRENEURSHIP CENTER**

Our signature programs

- **Innovation Pathway**
- **New Venture Competition**
- **Summer Accelerator**
- **Mentorship office hours**
- **Design challenges**
- **Monthly Idea Open Mic Night**
- **IDEA Conference and Innovation Week**
- **Co-curricular courses**



Appendix – Innovation Pathway Program

INNOVATION PATHWAY

The Innovation Pathway is a self-paced program with two tracks that fosters and supports all forms of innovation created by current Boston University students.

The Project track is for an action-oriented idea aimed at creating a positive impact on campus and beyond (ex: policy, advocacy, event, media campaign, creative content, etc.).

The Venture track is for an idea supported by a sustainable and scalable business model, including for-profit, tech, social impact, nonprofit, creative and cultural.

				
	Get Inspired	Walk	Run	Fly
Primary Goal	Verify you are working on a problem that needs to be solved.	Verify that your solution solves the problem.	Verify that your idea is ready for scaling.	Verify that your idea is strategically scaling and creates sustained impact.
How to Verify Progress	To validate your problem/solution, you can demonstrate that you: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Understand the problem and stakeholders ▪ Identified existing models/solutions ▪ Started to grow your team with relevant skills 	To launch this solution, you can demonstrate that you: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Have begun growing your team ▪ Validated that the idea is desirable, feasible, viable, and equitable ▪ Created a viable financial plan 	To show that your idea is ready to scale, you can demonstrate that you: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Have grown your team ▪ Implemented a financial plan ▪ Ventures: Have paying customers ▪ Projects: Have a target audience 	To show that your idea is ready for further scaling, you: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ventures: Have a repeatable and scalable business model (customers, funding, etc.) ▪ Projects: Execute and evaluate the project; submit an Action Report
Coaching Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Startup Manager ▪ Project Manager ▪ Get Inspired Coaches 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Walk Staff Coaches 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Mentor Innovation Network 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Mentor Innovation Network
Supporting BUild Lab Events and Programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Industry BYO Lunches ▪ Idea Open-mic Nights ▪ Weekly Friday Workshops 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Terrier Tells Weekly Workshops ▪ Launching a Project Workshops ▪ Expert Office Hours 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ New Venture Competition ▪ Summer Accelerator ▪ Global Impact Challenge 	
How to Move to the Next Stage	<p>Ventures & Projects: Present progress to peers at a bi-monthly Feedback Forum</p> <p>Apply: bit.ly/FeedbackForumApp</p>	<p>Ventures: Pitch to Investment Panel; offered monthly</p> <p>Projects: Pitch to Project Panel; scheduled as needed</p> <p>Apply: bit.ly/InvestmentPanelApp bit.ly/ProjectPanelApp</p>	<p>Ventures: Pitch to Investment Panel; offered monthly</p> <p>Projects: Review final proposal and milestones with Program Director of Social Innovation</p> <p>Apply: bit.ly/InvestmentPanelApp</p>	<p>Ventures & Projects: Leverage community resources (ex: apply to accelerators or for community grants)</p>
Funding Incentives		<p>Ventures: \$1,000 and move to Run Stage</p> <p>Projects: Receive 25 % of budget request and move to Run stage</p>	<p>Ventures: \$2,000 and move to Fly Stage</p> <p>Projects: Receive 50% of budget request</p>	<p>Projects: Receive 25% of budget request after Action Report is submitted</p>

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BOSTON
UNIVERSITY

**EMBRACE
YOUR
IMPACT.**

*Ines Andrade (BU'18)
Cofounder, Bendada Music Festival*

Boston University Innovate@BU

IDEA CONFERENCE 2020

**Saturday, February 15, 2020
Boston University**

**Tickets on sale December 3
Students \$15 / Community \$20**

Learn more: bit.ly/buideacon

The **IDEA Conference** is a one-day event for college students across New England to explore innovation and entrepreneurship.

- Connect with **world-class innovators**.
- Learn to **approach any opportunity or challenge like an entrepreneur**.
- Leave inspired to **embrace your passions** and use them to **make meaningful impact**.

AT IDEA CONFERENCE 2020 WE'RE PAYING SPECIAL ATTENTION TO OUR ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT



- Reusable utensil sets for each attendee
- Reusable, recyclable, or compostable serve-ware
- Attendee notebooks made from recycled materials and organic inks
- An event mobile event to cut down on printing
- Spare-It will be on-site to measure our efforts