The Texas Student Challenge (TSC) is a business plan competition held to encourage entrepreneurship and technological innovation among students in the State of Texas. As a part of the Texas Rural Challenge (TRC), hosted by the Office of the Governor and UTSA’s Institute for Economic Development—SBDC Rural Business Program, the TSC aims to foster high-quality business ventures and innovative technologies that will benefit rural communities through community and economic development. The competition is open to undergraduate and graduate students, of any major, attending a Texas college or university.

**COMPETITION DESCRIPTION**

TSC participants must compose a business plan and presentation for a sustainable, *for-profit venture* that will benefit rural communities. The business plan should demonstrate the venture’s feasibility, the resources around which the business will be developed, and the rural market(s) for the products and/or services provided. Rural impact must be a central component to the business venture and will be considered a competitive advantage. Rural impact may take any form—from the construction of an office in a rural community, to the direct employment of rural residents, to the marketing of a rural community, or to rural communities/residents as clients or customers. In the end, the winning participants will be those that can provide and articulate to potential investors the business’ impact on rural economic development, innovation, and broader community impacts.

Competitors will submit their Executive Summary directly to the Texas Student Challenge Committee via email by April 28, 2017 for consideration. The TSC Committee will notify applicants by May 10, 2017 if they are selected to compete at the Texas Rural Challenge Conference in Waco, Texas. At that time, completed business plans may be submitted but they are due no later than 11:59 p.m. on May 22, 2017.
All submissions must be in PDF (.pdf) format and will be submitted via email. The Texas Student Challenge Committee will select those applicants who best demonstrate the TSC’s goals and vision. Those selected to attend the Texas Rural Challenge will present their business plan to the TSC Judges on June 29, 2017. The results will be announced during an evening reception on the same day. The first prize winner will present their research and business plan during a keynote address at the Texas Rural Challenge.

ELIGIBILITY TO COMPETE

Competition teams for the TSC may be composed of one or more members. To be eligible to compete, it is required that at least one team member who holds a chief management position and owns or has significant equity potential in the venture be a student attending a Texas college or university. This student may be an undergraduate or graduate student of any academic major. The student competitor may be a part-time or full-time student but must be enrolled for the Fall 2016 term. If selected to compete in Waco, one student competitor per team must attend the 2017 Texas Rural Challenge; registration fees will be waived but all other expenses are the responsibility of the competitor(s). However if you are selected as a finalist, then a stipend will be provided to help cover travel costs.

Non-student competitors may participate in planning the venture and the preparation of materials turned into the TSC Committee. It is recommended that no more than three team members take part in the competition presentation at the Texas Rural Challenge, but there is no restriction on the total size of the venture's founding team.

Eligible TSC business ventures must be a new, independent, for profit venture in the seed, start-up, or early growth stages. Generally excluded from competition are the following: expansions of existing companies, real estate syndications, franchises, licensing of existing companies that involved distribution in new geographical areas, spin-offs from existing companies or buy-outs. Licensing technologies from universities or research labs are not excluded and are in fact encouraged assuming that the technologies have not been previously commercialized for the specific field of use developed by the venture and that it can be demonstrated that a licensing agreement between the university and the venture is likely.

All written planning materials and presentations are to be submitted to the TSC Committee as PDFs. Printed copies of the submitted business plan must be made available by the competing team at the Texas Rural Challenge. These business plans may be retained by the TSC Committee and TSC Judges during competition, but will be returned following the announcement of the TSC winners. Judges will not be asked to sign a non-disclosure agreement but will be cautioned not to discuss the contents of any business plan with anyone not associated with the TSC.
Participants will also be asked to participate in a short 1-2 minute video pitch where they will provide information about their business and interest/experiences with the Texas Student Challenge.

GUIDELINES FOR VIDEO PITCH: 1) Remain close to microphone for best audio quality. 2) For best results make sure there is light on face and not behind you facing camera otherwise the camera can shut down illumination.

If Executive Summary is selected to compete in the TSC, these videos will be submitted to UTSA’s Development office and will be published on UTSA’s GO FUND me webpage in an effort to raise funds to cover the costs of travel and lodging for student participants.

COMPETITION STRUCTURE

Application: Each team must submit a PDF of their TSC Executive Summary by 11:59 p.m. Friday, April 28, 2017. This PDF must be a single file. TSC Executive Summaries submitted after the deadline will not be considered. All TSC Executive Summaries will be screened for their adherence to the vision and goals of the TSC. Materials will be judged by the TSC Committee.

Finalist will be notified by May 10, 2017 of their inclusion in the 2017 Texas Rural Challenge.

Submissions must be emailed to the TSC Committee at texasstudentchallenge@gmail.com. See page 5 of this document for a sample business plan and Executive Summary outline.

Competition: Those competitors selected from the judging process above will be invited to present their business plan at the 2017 Texas Rural Challenge on June 29, 2017 in Waco, Texas. Complete Business Plan must be submitted by 11:59 p.m. on May 22, 2017.

If selected as a finalist you will be assigned a coach upon arrival at the TRC on June 28, 2017. The coaches are there to assist you in preparation for the fast pitch presentation to a panel of mentors/coaches between 5:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m. (times subject to change) so as to get feedback on your presentation. This is merely a “coaching” opportunity which will be available to all finalists so as to get better prepared for the final pitch competition.

On June 29, 2017, the 1st day of the TRC each team will participate in a 1 – 2 minute fast pitch in front of a general audience and will ultimately be judged by the TSC judges, who will have read each competitor’s written Executive Summary prior to the presentation. Each team will have a total of five (5) minutes to present their business using a PowerPoint presentation. Competitors are asked to bring at least enough hard copies of their complete business plans for each of the judges. Judges will follow the presentation with questions and comments. Judges will complete their score card and comment sheets.
for both the presentation and the other materials submitted by the competitor. Judges’ comments will be returned to the competitor following the conclusion of the competition. Following all presentations, each judge will present score cards to the TSC Committee with their recommendation. Final selections will be made by the TSC Committee and will be announced during the evening reception on June 29, 2017. All decisions are final. For more information on judging criteria, see the attached judging rubric on page 7.

**Awards:** In addition to 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Place cash prizes, all finalists will receive in-kind services from the Small Business Development Center Network. Prizes will be awarded to the business plan that best articulates to potential investors the business’ impact on rural economic development, innovation, and the broader community. The winner will be announced on the first day of the Texas Rural Challenge, June 29, 2017.

***dates and times previously listed in regards to the TSC are subject to change***

**THE TEXAS RURAL CHALLENGE**

The Texas Rural Challenge (TRC) is a statewide conference hosted by the Office of the Governor, the Texas Department of Agriculture, USDA—Rural Development, and UTSA’s Institute for Economic Development—SBDC Rural Business Program. In addition, a large number of state and federal agencies, along with private sector partners, host and participate in this event; the largest of its kind to focus on the challenges facing rural Texans. The TRC highlights topics and best practices in business and economic development, community development, and rural statewide issues. The TRC provides the platform for rural Texans and communities to engage in innovative and interactive sessions, gain valuable knowledge and insight into multi-county collaboration best practices, and discuss how to actively pursue and participate in the booming business around the state. The 2016 TRC keynote addresses and breakout sessions spoke on relevant issues pertaining to rural communities ranging from innovation, entrepreneurship, energy, jobs, and preserving the quality of life of rural Texas; and were phenomenal. The 2017 Texas Rural Challenge will be held in Waco, Texas on June 29-30, 2017.

**THE SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CENTER NETWORK—RURAL BUSINESS PROGRAM**

The UTSA SBDC Rural Business Program’s (RBP) mission is to support small business growth and community development in economically distressed rural areas throughout the South-West Texas Border Network. The Rural Business Program offers advisory services, research, community plans, strategic planning, and business and resource development for communities, local governments, economic development corporations, and business owners. The program partners with the UTSA College of Architecture and the UTSA College of Public Policy to develop vision plans and provide
municipal training to community leaders and provide community assessment, research, capacity building, planning goals, and implementation plans that can be successfully employed to create sustainable economic development.

**Samples Business Plan Outline**

Your outline should have, at *minimum*: one cover letter, one executive summary (minimum 2 pages), one company outline (2 pages recommended), one market outline (3 pages recommended), and one outline of the business’s financials (2 year minimum projection, 3 pages recommended). This is a recommended outline for your business plan; it is not mandatory.

1. Cover letter (1p)
2. Title page (1p)
3. Table of contents (1p)
4. Executive summary (2pg)
   a. Company name, address, and phone number
   b. Name(s), addresses, and phone number(s) of all key people
   c. Brief description of the managerial and technical experience of key people
   d. Brief description of the business, its products and services, and the customer problems they address
   e. Brief overview of the market for your products and services
   f. Brief overview of the strategies that will make your firm a success
   g. Brief statement of the financial request and how the money will be used
   h. Charts or tables showing highlights of financial forecasts
5. The company (2 pages)
   a. Company description
      i. Vision statement
      ii. Mission statement
      iii. Objectives
      iv. Company background
   b. The organization
      i. Legal and organizational structures
      ii. Key personnel
      iii. Related service providers
      iv. Location
   c. Product/service industry
      i. Product/service description
      ii. Industry description
6. The market (3 pages)
   a. Market and target customer
   b. Competition and competitive advantage
c. Marketing strategy
   i. Overall strategy
   ii. Sales plan
   iii. Competitive plan
   iv. Research and development or growth plan

7. The financials (3 pages)
   a. Critical risks
   b. Start-up costs
   c. Income statement
   d. Cash flow: 2 year projection minimum
   e. Balance sheet
   f. Assumptions

8. Appendices
   a. Owners’/founders’ resumes
   b. Examples of other popular appendices: product or service pictures or specifications; customer/investor contacts; marketing studies or pilot sales efforts; industry reports; price lists; floor plans; advertising copy; customer or spokesperson testimonials; letters of opinion
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Weaker</th>
<th>Stronger</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Situation Analysis</td>
<td>Demonstrated knowledge of business space. Performed and presented research analysis of industry landscape. Team has proven they know what they are getting into.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Market Opportunity</td>
<td>Market and target customer identified. Offering addresses a clearly identified pain/need in a compelling way. Market would welcome this company.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Model</td>
<td>Company showed clear and effective means of making money. Model is sustainable; attractive margins, cash flow and value creation. Critical risks have been identified and addressed.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competition</td>
<td>Competitors clearly identified. Company is distinctive/ offering is unique. Competitive advantage identified and is sustainable/defendable.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Go to Market Strategy</td>
<td>Sales and marketing strategy is developed, believed to be effective. Distribution channels identified. Plans for getting product/service into customers’ hands made clear</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team</td>
<td>Team was knowledgeable (operations, industry, key issues, etc.) Team seemed capable of executing their presented plans/strategies. Team showed confidence, passion, enthusiasm and professionalism.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financials</td>
<td>Financial plan presented, including projected income statement. Team demonstrated clear understanding of finances and key metrics. Assumptions were presented and were reasonable and substantiated.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investment Potential</td>
<td>Risk/reward ratio is attractive. Scalability potential is high. Reasonable likelihood of success, including good return on investment.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effectiveness of Q&amp;A Answers</td>
<td>Content of answers was satisfactory. Answers directly addressed the questions asked. Team was able to think on their feet.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall Presentation Effectiveness</td>
<td>Presentation included all necessary topics. All topics were clearly explained; presentation was sharp and persuasive. Story was compelling.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Contact Information

For more information about the competition, please contact:
Paul Herrera, M.P.A.
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210.458.3064 | texasstudentchallenge@gmail.com

And visit us on the web:
texasruralchallenge.org
https://www.facebook.com/TexasRuralChallenge