Preliminary Q&A: 2015 UNC Social Entrepreneurship Conference

What’s different for the 2015 Social Entrepreneurship Conference?

- Both graduate and undergraduate teams will be taking on the same challenge: identifying a social problem facing their community and outlining an implementation and financial strategy to effectively address it.
- On presentation day, teams will have 4 minutes to present their ideas in the preliminary rounds; they will then have 4 minutes of questions by judges about their plan.
- SBTDC will play an even more important role, assisting student teams as needed throughout the process in preparing business plans.
- And the conference will be preceded by a statewide conference focusing on helping communities come together around social innovations. This conference will be hosted by Forward Communities, a North Carolina nonprofit, the day before the conference.

How many teams per campus?
Each campus may have up to two undergraduate teams and up to two graduate teams. Teams may have members of the community as a part of their team, but undergraduate team presentations must be made by undergraduate students; graduate team presentations must be made by graduate students. Teams should have no more than ten members.

What should undergraduate and graduate teams do to participate?
Teams should begin meeting in the fall to outline preliminary ideas. They should work with relevant faculty and administrative resources at their campus, interfacing with their local SBTDC representative, consulting with community stakeholders (to ensure they are not duplicating an already-addressed challenge and are taking full advantage of existing community resources). Rethink, refine, then submit a final written version of their plan by January 23, 2015, so judges can review it, then be ready to present at the conference. Then, following the conference, take the ideas home and make them real.

What “market” should the proposed business serve?
Teams should reach out to local stakeholders to determine those needs, gaps in service, etc. For purposes of this project, “local” may be defined as a campus’ immediate community, economic development region or North Carolina, though the business may eventually serve needs beyond that geography.

Does the idea have to create something new?
The form the plan takes could be a new nonprofit or for-profit organization, but may also be an idea that builds off of an existing platform or extends an existing service offered by another organization (building off of an existing organization can leverage expertise and lower startup costs). Whatever form it takes, the proposal should clearly analyze market need and how implementation will be financed.

How should we develop ideas and plans?
Graduate school teams should be led by graduate students and should have no more than ten members. Undergraduate teams should be led by undergraduate students and should have no more than ten members. All plans must be based on a clearly-defined social problem or social
issue. Plan submissions for the competition should follow the official format and length guidelines. Nonstudents may be part of teams, but students must lead the teams and each presentation will be made by no more than two UNC-enrolled students.

**Can our team partner with students from other UNC campuses or present together at the conference?**
Yes. Interinstitutional collaboration is welcome, but not required.

**When do we need to get our team names to you?**
So that we can begin allocating rooms and get the correct number of judges, we will start asking you for team names beginning late November 2014. We ask that you get us your final team names for the program by January 5.

**How can we most effectively take advantage of the assistance offered by SBTDC?**
The Small Business Technology Development Center has offices on each of your campuses, with staff highly skilled at helping entrepreneurs and small business owners develop and refine their business plans. They have generously made themselves available to teams participating in this competition. The most effective way to connect would be to have team members make an initial contact early on to outline their ideas by October 3. On November 10, SBTDC will host a webinar on “how to prepare a business plan.” On January 12, teams may give their revised business plans to SBTDC for a final review.

**How will the competition work?**
Teams should prepare two different presentations:
- In the preliminary round, selected teams from each campus will have four minutes to submit their proposals to a panel of judges in a smaller room, followed by up to four minutes of questions; judges will then select finalists. Note that there is a built-in Q&A section this year. Members of each team’s delegation will be allowed in for that team’s presentation only if they wish to see it.
- In the final round, finalists will have three minutes to present to a second group of judges in front of everyone, followed by up to three minutes of questions from judges.

Three teams will be selected in both the undergraduate and graduate school categories and prizes will be awarded for 1st, 2nd and 3rd place. Campuses may choose to further recognize, encourage or support the teams from their individual campuses independent of the competition.

**What will the room set up be for presentations?**
Judges will be sitting on the front row during both the first round and final presentations, with audience members behind them. In the first round, presentations will be done in classrooms in front of an audience made up of only judges and spectators from the campus delegation. In the final round, presentations will be made in front of the entire audience (about 500 people). Up to two student speakers may present the team plan. There will be a lectern. No powerpoint; each team may have a visual aid no larger than 3’x5’ and sturdy enough to be mounted on an easel (might want to mount it on a foam board). The oral presentation and Q&A will enable teams to “sell” the concept (and get experience “selling” face-to-face) and will assist judges in clarifying any points they were unclear about.
Who will the judges be?
Judges will have a wide range of expertise in all sectors. We have entrepreneurs, philanthropists, venture capitalists, business owners, journalists, nonprofit leaders. Their common link is deep experience listening to, evaluating and implementing ideas that show promise and a long-term interest in making North Carolina a better place to live and work.

Who should come from our campus to the conference?
UNC General Administration will support teams of 25 for each campus during their time at the conference. We would like to see five-person teams of administrators (chancellor, provost, three faculty/staff) from each campus, substantial student delegations and some community members. We want to see a strong delegation from each campus! We ask that campus reps access the A&T website to register their entire delegation.

What if we have more people?
Contact Kelley Gregory (kelleyg@northcarolina.edu) and let her know if you would like to include more than 25 in your delegation. If we have excess space, we would love to accommodate more guests. We do ask that teams carpool as much as possible to ease the parking burden on NCATSU and reduce our carbon footprint.

What about people who aren’t part of our delegation? Where should we send them?
Send them to the A&T registration website. We will let you know in January when the site is ready to begin accepting registrants. We will not charge a registration fee this year, but we ask that those attending register in advance so that we can order the correct amount of food.

What about registration for the North Carolina Forward summit?
This will be handled separately. We encourage representatives from each of our campuses to join local delegations attending the conference.
Conference Day-Of Logistics:

Registration: Will open in January. We ask each campus’ designated campus representative to register delegations using a specially-created web portal. We will send out later a step-by-step outline to help you through that process.

Carpooling: NCA&T has freed up an impressive number of parking spaces, but we can’t afford to have 600 cars there. Carpooling/vans, etc. will enable you to feed off each other’s energy for the event and reduce your carbon footprint. We will send out directions for where to park prior to the event and there will be good signage on the A&T campus. Please carpool!

Food and food for thought: For those not participating directly in the preliminary round of presentations, we will have a delightful lunch and a series of interesting panels on social entrepreneurship in North Carolina.

Presentations: During the first round of business plan presentations, only members of the presenting campus delegation will be allowed in the room, and only two students will be able to present. We’d encourage you not to try to squeegee your entire delegation into the room – we need to do a one minute turnaround between each presentation and the more people trying to get in and out of the room, the more tricky it will be logistically. Presentations by the selected finalists will be done in open session.

Theme grouping: At the event, we anticipate having 5-6 groups of judges evaluating the first round of presentations. To the extent possible, we will group teams thematically based on the broad “problem area” your proposals are addressing (i.e. health-related proposals), and attempt to align expertise of judges with that. A separate group of judges will evaluate the undergraduate and graduate finalists.

Media/buzz: The work over the next few months will be on getting teams together and plans ready. Following that, in addition to the work on the presentations, there should be time to get the word out about your great ideas. We encourage you to talk the conference up in your hometown before you leave and after you get back. Regardless of the results your teams have, folks will be interested in the ideas, may provide some support for them, and it will generate some positive buzz about engagement by your campus on community challenges. You could….

- Get the team on a campus talk show or a local radio or TV station.
- Invite a local reporter to travel with your delegation to the conference
- Put your teams on the front page of your website
- Encourage alumni communication vehicles (magazines, email pushouts) to feature the ideas, or let your development folks know about it
- Use this exercise as an excuse to open up deeper dialogue between your “social entrepreneurship” side and your “regular entrepreneurship” side, or between your “public service/community engagement” side and your “economic development/business school” side.
- Recognize winning teams during an athletic contest
• Have one of your teams replicate its presentation at a future meeting of your next board of trustees meeting
• Help the team organize a campus event to raise awareness or gather resources or kickstart fundraising to move the idea along
• Ask your chancellor or someone to write an oped describing the team’s ideas, perhaps linking it to larger community-minded or entrepreneurship work you are doing
• Visit the Rotary or Kiwanis club (yes, they still exist) or Chamber or a local adult fraternity or sorority meeting to talk about the competition
• Get one of the community groups working in the same topic space as your team to bring in your students to talk with their board
• Make sure your chancellor/provost has a pithy description of the ideas your teams came up with to drop in to speeches as examples of the kinds of thinking students at your school do
• Use the idea as a starting point of a discussion for how the community might address a big challenge, and use that to launch a “XXX and Big Community Challenges” series.

Bottom line: there are some not-too-difficult ways to showcase your students’ energy and ingenuity that could help, not just with their specific ideas, but in reminding people about your school’s innovation or entrepreneurship or public service orientation.