



# **Texas Civic Impact Council Update**

## **2020-2021 Project: Small Business Initiative**

The Texas Civic Impact Council (TCIC) launched in the Fall of 2020 to lead UT student collaboration between 8 colleges on issues of community and city importance. Our mission is to embrace UT's diversity by connecting all colleges on campus to create nuanced solutions at the intersection of the arts, sciences, and humanities for Austin's social issues. We ultimately aim to serve as a hub for UT students to collaborate on projects shaping all facets of UT Austin and the city's future. Given the backdrop for much of the past 12 months has been COVID-19, we decided to focus the council's inaugural year on a COVID-19 response.

The Fall of 2020 was focused on researching communities in Austin negatively affected by COVID-19. After much deliberation, we decided to focus on serving Austin's small business community, specifically those struggling to make the virtual transition demanded by the pandemic. We mobilized quickly and launched our Small Business Initiative (SBI) in the Spring of 2021. Below is a description of the program along with updates of how it has progressed this semester.

**Project Description:** The SBI is a student-led consulting group serving small business owners in the Austin area by connecting them with student tech talent. UT students work with small business owners to strengthen their business's online presence through a variety of services such as website creation and social media marketing. Sustainability is a key pillar of the SBI and business owners will leave the program with tangible technology skills.

**Mission:** To create a more resilient Austin small business community in an increasingly digital world by teaching business owners how to leverage technology to run their business.

### **Our progress in numbers:**

17 students currently enrolled

15 businesses currently enrolled

14 active business pairings

8 frameworks (contract, surveys, working plans, etc.) developed to maintain quality

35 student + business meetings completed



5 colleges (UT included) represented by our student consultants

The council has done a great job of getting our project off the ground and building the controls necessary for us to improve and keep track of progress. This first phase was handled internally within the council, which drove our efficiency. The phase we are now entering focuses heavily on management of our external parties (students and businesses) and supporting the achievement of their individual goals. This phase, expectedly, has caused us difficulty in three key areas: communication, accountability, and allocation of student consultants. We understand that there are growing pains in the initial launch of any project and are focused on working out these kinks while keeping our process simple.

We plan to continue this project throughout the summer by bolstering our student recruitment as the school year wraps up. We have noticed that business recruitment happens more organically as business owners share this program with their communities. We ultimately aim to serve 100 small businesses by the end of the summer of 2021.

I have included more links with information about our project below. Thank you for joining and supporting us throughout our journey. We look forward to championing Austin's small businesses and celebrating our small successes with you along the way.

Website: <https://www.peacusa.org/utaustin>

1 page description sent to City of Austin: [here](#)

Small Business Initiative Important links: [here](#)

Best,  
Vaishnav Kuruvanka  
Founder of the Texas Civic Impact Council