**About the Social Innovation Initiative**

A program of the Swearer Center for Public Service, the Social Innovation Initiative creates and connects students to meaningful experiences focused on action, identity, and social impact through the lenses of innovation and entrepreneurship.

Our work supports entrepreneurs and intrapreneurs who are exploring and developing social ventures; expands opportunities for students to explore social innovation through classes, campus activities, and careers; and sparks new relationships and ideas for social impact among students and alumni. We host several open events on campus every semester to grow and connect our community, and offer funded fellowships and internships to explore social innovation more deeply beyond Brown. All of our work is supported by a strong network of professionals and alumni changemakers who are building or contributing to innovative social change efforts around the world.

**Core Programming**

The Social Innovation Initiative provides opportunities for students to engage with social innovation through three main pathways:

* *Exploring and developing your own social impact venture:* For students who are developing an idea for a social impact venture, SII offers a range of resources, including funding, workshops, and intensive programming. These include Explore and Expand Grants, the Social Innovation Fellowship, and the Embark Post Graduate Fellowship, among others;
* *Working within an existing social impact venture*: For students who are interested in supporting existing organizations and helping them innovate and build capacity, SII offers programs such as Innovate Winter Break and Community Innovation Projects, and also partners with the CareerLAB to connect students to other internship and job opportunities in the space;
* *Learning about social innovation*: For students who want to study social innovation, they may take our course, Social Entrepreneurship and can consider concentrating in the Modes of Social Change track within Public Policy. Students can also learn about social innovation through several campus clubs, such as A Better World by Design, Design for America, and the Innovation Dojo.

**2016-17 Plans**

The Swearer Center’s ambitious strategic plan challenged SII to identify ways to expand the reach of social innovation programs beyond our Fellowship and to explore ways to engage the community more deeply in our work. Following is how SII plans to move towards realization of the goals and priorities outlined in the center’s `strategic plan.

*Supporting Social Innovation in Rhode Island*

The Social Innovation Initiative promotes Community-Based Social Innovation, an approach to explore and develop innovations that are grounded in communities’ needs, assets, and opportunities. For the first time ever, we are looking to actively partner with Rhode Island community organizations and leaders to support the development of innovations that are led by professionals in the community. In the 2016-17 academic year, we will be launching the following initiatives to support social innovation in Rhode Island:

* *Leveraging the Social Innovation Fellowship program for community-based projects*: Local Community Leaders who are working with student partners to develop new initiatives, programs, services, or other endeavors that addresses a social issue may now apply for the Social Innovation Fellowship. Accepted Community Leaders will attend fellowship programming, participate in our course, *Leading Social Ventures*, and work closely with the student partner throughout the year of the fellowship to develop the innovation. We will facilitate matches between Community Leaders and students through Community Innovation Projects (CIPs). Launching in the fall semester 2016, CIPs will support selected students to work with Community Leaders to research and design the innovation, and can choose to apply for the Social Innovation Fellowship.
* *Hosting Ocean State Innovate*: Ocean State Innovate will be an event on March 4-5, 2017 where we will invite community members and leaders as well as Rhode Island university students to come together to develop ideas for innovative ways to address local social issues. This highly interactive event will be facilitated by Frans Johannson, a Brown alum and Founder of The Medici Group.

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| **Connected Strategic Plan Priorities**Original ...Diversify engagement opportunities by approach, program, and topic area. (A3)Original ...Expand engagement opportunities (program calendar, geography, type of students served). (A3)Original ...Build an ecosystem approach to community partnerships through increasing our capacity for effective community collaboration that values community knowledge and community voice. (B) |

*Expand the Developmental Pathway for Students*

SII staff regularly coach and advise students with ideas for social innovations; we also award $500 Explore Grants to students who are developing these ideas. But until now, the only formal programming we offered for students working on specific projects was through the Social Innovation Fellowship. During the spring 2016 semester, we piloted a new program where we brought together a group of students who were all at the very stages of developing ideas for regular discussions and workshops, also pairing them with alumni mentors. In addition, while we have had more informal leadership roles for Social Innovation Fellows to grow into, we seek to expand and formalize these. Following are key initiatives we have planned for this year:

* *Launch “Mini SIF:”* In the coming year we plan to formalize the program for students with early-stage ideas into a 6-week workshop series to help students learn skills and approaches to exploring an idea. We will pilot the workshops during the fall semester and roll out the program in the spring.
* *Launch Senior Social Innovation Fellows*: We believe the best teachers of this content will be students who have been through the venture exploration phase themselves. For this reason, we will create a new role for previous Social Innovation Fellows, who will develop and facilitate the workshops for their peers. These facilitators will be trained in workshop facilitation and offered stipends to support their work training and coaching students in this idea development phase.
* *Revise co-curricular offerings*: In order to best equip Social Innovation Fellows to be leaders and innovators, we will begin to require Social Innovation Fellows to enroll in our course, *Leading Social Ventures,* which provides a curricular structure for students to design and develop their ventures. Requiring the course will allow us to alter some of the workshop content offered in our evening fellowship sessions and we plan to do so with a strong focus on leadership. This leadership curriculum will help fellows set personalized development goals and learn core skills to be reflective and effective leaders. After designing and piloting this content with the 2017 Fellows, we look forward to offering it more broadly to other students across the center.

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| **Connected Strategic Plan Priorities**Original ...Grow co-curricular capacity and expertise among students, partners, and staff (A2)Original ...Identify key competencies and design workshops around teaching those competencies. (A2)Original ...Develop and promote co-curricular pathways and systems that promote best practices. (A2)Original ...Design and promote multiple entry points for students. (A4)Original ...Develop a robust cohort of student leaders. (A4) |

**Below is a schematic for our updated model for sourcing/developing innovative projects:**