

13 INNOVATION SHOWCASE HANDBOOK



TABLE OF CONTENTS

About.....	3
Eligibility.....	4
How it Works.....	5
Timelines.....	7
General Guidelines- Presentations.....	8
General Guidelines- Posters.....	10
Category Descriptions.....	12
Category FAQs.....	17
Resources.....	19

About

The first i3 Innovation Showcase was held in April 2017, the first full semester that the Russell and Martha Wehrle Innovation Center was open. The event was developed to encourage and celebrate innovation across all programs at the University of Charleston. Innovation has become a hallmark of the educational experience at UC, and every academic program includes elements of innovation education.

2026 marks the 10th annual occurrence of the i3 Innovation Showcase. Both students and staff members have delivered hundreds of innovative presentations over the past 10 years, and many i3 projects have sparked real businesses, community service projects, and artistic creations.

Innovation programs continue to grow and evolve at UC. Since its inception, the i3 Showcase has been one of the largest collegiate innovation competitions in the state. Additionally, the Innovation Minor will launch in the fall 2026 semester, further cementing UC as a leader in the innovation education space.



Eligibility

Nearly every UC student, faculty member, staff member, and administrator is eligible to participate in i3. Only the university president and full-time employees of the innovation department are excluded from participating.


i3 projects can be brand new proposals or previous non-winning i3 submissions. It is acceptable to update and resubmit projects that did not win in previous years. Projects that won 1st place in the past are not eligible for resubmission.

We welcome class projects as i3 submissions, even when it is not a required assignment. Projects from other competitions and showcases, such as the Undergraduate Research Day at the Capitol, are also eligible for i3 submission.

There is no limit to the number of submissions a person can make to i3 in a particular year. Multiple submissions are encouraged, but keep in mind that more submissions require more preparation.



How it Works



All i3 projects consist of two major components- a live presentation and a poster design. The live presentation will be delivered to a panel of independent judges in mid-April. A poster design that summarizes the project in an aesthetically pleasing way is due approximately one month before the live presentations.

The topic of the project can be nearly anything, so long as it is related to one of the category descriptions (see page 12). The common thread throughout all i3 presentations is the degree of innovation/originality involved in the project.

Registration for i3 begins about halfway through the fall semester and closes in early February. If you are interested in presenting, even if you aren't sure about all the details of the potential project, you should register. You can change the details of your project after registering (such as the category) but you cannot register a project after the deadline.

How it Works

(cont.)

There are two overall divisions for i3- students and faculty/staff. The categories for both groups are the same. There is also a special joint division for students and faculty in the research category.

For all student categories (including student/faculty research) there is a 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place prize*. 1st place will receive \$800, 2nd will receive \$400, and 3rd will receive \$200.

For all faculty categories, there will be a 1st place prize of \$800 and a 2nd place prize of \$400*. There is also a School of Study Prize awarded to the school with the highest percentage of faculty & staff participation. The winning school will receive \$1500 to be used at the Dean's discretion.

**Please note that for team submissions, prize money will be split evenly between team members.*

Timelines

2026

- **December 10 (2025)** - Registration Open
 - Registration link:
<https://forms.office.com/r/c5vb3XmPUV>
- **February 15**- Registration Closes
- **March 15**- Poster Designs due
 - Poster upload link:
<https://forms.office.com/r/xkpSFug1KE>
- **April 6**- Research abstracts and case study synopses due
 - Abstract & synopsis upload link:
<https://forms.office.com/r/3d5RNLHDAQ>
- **April 14-16**- i3 Presentations*
- **April 16**- Award ceremony during Eagle Fest

**Note- The i3 presentation schedule will be determined approximately two weeks after registration closes.*

General Guidelines

Presentations

- Presentations will be delivered live to a panel of external judges consisting of local leaders and professionals. The judges are independent and not currently employed by UC, although some may be alumni or former employees.
- Charleston campus students and employees must deliver their presentations in person. Online students and employees will have a virtual option. Beckley students and employees are encouraged to come to Charleston to present but can choose the virtual option.
- Presentations must be 10 minutes or less. There will be a timer in every room who will cut off presenters who exceed 10 minutes.
- Judges will have up to three minutes after the presentation to ask questions.
- Visual aids are strongly encouraged but not required. Presenters will have access to a computer and display screen. **If using Powerpoint or other presentation software, presenters MUST bring their presentation on a USB flash drive or bring a laptop with an HDMI connection.**

General Guidelines

Presentations (cont.)

- Presenters may use their poster as a visual aid. It is the responsibility of the presenter to pick up their poster from the poster gallery in the UC Commons and return it after their presentation.
- For **case study presentations** (secondary research category) please provide a brief synopsis of your case (200 words or less) for the judges at least one week before your presentation.
- For those in the **primary research category**, please submit an abstract using the template on the website (see page 19) at least one week before your presentation.
- Professional attire is required. Remember that you are presenting to community leaders and representing yourself and the university. Casual clothing like jeans, t-shirts, or athletic wear will result in score reductions. Please note that exceptions are made for any performing arts that require costumes or alternative attire.

General Guidelines

Posters

- Every i3 entry must include a poster that summarizes the project. Posters will be on display in the UC Commons during the entire week of i3 presentations in April. Failure to submit a poster will disqualify the participant from any i3 prizes.
- We will print the poster for you free of charge. You only need to submit your design.
- All posters will be 24" x 36". It does not matter whether your poster is in landscape or portrait format.
- Posters can be submitted in pdf, jpg, or png format. If it is not in one of those formats, please convert your file before submitting.
- You can use any software program to create your poster as long as it is in one of the file formats listed above. One user-friendly option is to create a single powerpoint slide and download in pdf format. Canva is another easy-to-use alternative.
- If you decide to use AI to help create your poster, you should carefully inspect and proofread the design. We've had AI posters submitted in the past with numerous spelling errors and strange graphics that looked out of place.

General Guidelines

Posters (cont.)

- There is no format or template that we prefer. However, people should be able to understand your project by looking at the poster. The poster should include the issue or research question that you are trying to solve, the proposed method or approach to solving the issue, the solution to the problem, and how/why the solution works.
- You **should** use pictures and graphics, but only ones that help explain your project. The best posters have a nice balance of text and graphics.
- If you are doing a research project, you can use the traditional research poster format that thoroughly explains the research question, the methodology, the results, and conclusions. However, you are not limited to that format.
- If you are doing the undergraduate research day at the capitol, you can reuse your poster design for i3, but please submit your design to us for printing. The poster size requirements are different for that event.

Category Descriptions

Innovation is a broad concept that can be applied in virtually every aspect of life. UC has integrated aspects of innovation education across all academic programs. As such, the categories of i3 represent a wide range of project opportunities. The “Innovative Solutions” categories encompass the three tenets of the mission of the university- Productive Work, Enlightened Living, and Community Involvement. We also have categories for research projects and artistic creations.


Some projects could fit more than one category. If you are unsure which category fits your project best, please see the FAQs on page 17.

Innovative Solutions- Productive Work


The Productive Work category is for projects that focus on economic and marketplace innovations. This might include business ideas, new product ideas, or process improvement ideas that help organizations become more efficient. It is important in this category to do some research and make sure that your idea does not exist in the marketplace yet.



Category Descriptions



Many business and product ideas that we believe are original have already been tried by others. It is ok to submit a project that improves upon a current product or business. Just make sure that your idea is different enough to be recognized as something new by customers.



Profitability is an important factor within the Productive Work category. Is your product/business actually capable of achieving the sales necessary to reach profitability? If your idea is to build a hotel on the moon in the next decade, that's not a feasible project. Think big, but make sure you have a plan to achieve your goal.



Innovative Solutions- Community Involvement

This category encompasses community service projects and nonprofit ideas. Your idea may be a short term service project, or it may be to create an entirely new nonprofit organization. Just like with the Productive Work category, you need to do research

Category Descriptions

and make sure that your idea does not already exist. For example, it would not be prudent to propose the “National Heart Association.” We already have the American Heart Association.

Also like the Productive Work category, your project needs to be feasible. While profit maximization is not a factor in the Community Involvement category, you still need to make sure your idea isn’t exorbitantly expensive. How will you attract donors and funds? How many people will you impact with your project?

Innovative Solutions- Enlightened Living

The Enlightened Living category is for projects with the primary purpose of educating and informing. Perhaps you want to bring awareness to a particular cause or issue. If so, this is the appropriate category to enter. Think of the Enlightened Living category as creative and innovative public service announcements.

The subjects of Enlightened Living projects can be virtually anything that positively impact society- health and nutrition, financial well-being, social justice, civic awareness, etc.



Category Descriptions

There are similarities between Enlightened Living and Community Involvement, and there may be some projects that could fit either category. However, remember that the **primary** focus of enlightened living is to educate and inform. If you want to create an awareness campaign to encourage more people to vote, it's probably an Enlightened Living project. If you want to form a new nonprofit organization to increase civic involvement among college students, it's probably a Community Involvement project.

Innovative Works of Art, Performance, and Design

This category includes all kinds of artistic expressions—paintings, graphic art designs, poetry, songs, theatrical performances, sculptures, or anything else that falls into the artistic realm. When presenting your work of art, you should explain what inspired the work, how you developed your creation, what techniques were used, and what makes your piece truly unique. While craftsmanship and quality is a factor in the evaluation, it is only one part of the rubric. Remember that originality/innovativeness is the most important



Category Descriptions

factor in judging all the i3 projects.


In most cases, you will present the entire finished work of art or performance for the judges before discussing all the factors mentioned in the previous paragraph. However, if your piece is too long to perform, you should consider presenting an excerpt of your creative work for the judges.

Research- Primary


The primary research category is for projects where you collect the data, analyze that data, and draw conclusions. You need to include your research question or hypothesis, the literature review/background information, the methodology of your study, and the conclusion and results. Be sure to articulate why your study is different from other studies that have been conducted in the past. Or, if your study aims to replicate results of a prior study, let the judges know why the original study was innovative and why you need to retest those original assumptions.



Category Descriptions




We understand that research projects can take a long time to complete, so you don't need to be completely finished with your study to present it at i3. However, you need to be able to draw some basic conclusions from your data analysis. Projects with “expected results” or “expected conclusions” are not eligible for i3 prizes.



Primary research projects should also include an abstract (see resources on page 19). We are compiling all the i3 research abstracts into booklet that will reside on UC's website to demonstrate the research activity of UC's students and staff.



Research- Secondary



This category includes any research projects in which you do not collect the data yourself. This encompasses case studies, meta-reviews, literature reviews, or any other analysis that does not involve the primary collection of data. By nature, these projects are less “original” because they focus on the synthesis of existing information. However, you still need to explain



Category Descriptions

to the judges how your research could lead to innovative ideas or solutions.

If you choose to do a case study, you need to provide a brief synopsis of the case for the judges a week before your presentation. An upload link is provided on page 7.

Research- Joint Student & Faculty

Since research projects often involve significant participation from both teachers and students, we have created a joint category to recognize the unique research projects that do not neatly fall into the student or faculty divisions. It is expected that joint student/faculty research will be primary in nature. If you have a project in which a student and a faculty member are both actively participating in a secondary research project, we ask that you enter the “Research-Secondary” category in the faculty division.

A research abstract is required for participants in this category. Please use the upload link on page 7 to submit your abstract one week before your presentation.

Category FAQs

I am unsure which category to choose! My project could fit into more than one.

Innovation, by its very nature, involves the development of new ideas and concepts. Because of that, your idea may not fit neatly into a specific box. Carefully read the category descriptions and rubrics to determine which one best captures the spirit and mission of your project. You can't really choose the "wrong" category, and you can change your category after registration as long as you do so before the schedule is determined (about a month before the event).

Both teachers and students were involved in the project. Which category do I choose?

If teachers and students are working together on primary research projects, they will simply enter the joint student/faculty research category. For all other kinds of projects, it can be a little confusing. If a teacher is playing an advisory role in which they don't really contribute to the project outside of general advice, you should enter the student division. If teachers are contributing to the project in a material way (they are writing parts of the presentation or spending a significant amount of time developing the project), you should enter

Category FAQs

the faculty division.

It is acceptable to include students on the teams of faculty projects, but not vice-versa as it may create the appearance of an unfair advantage.

I want to enter a project that I created more than one year ago. Is that acceptable?

Yes, as long as the project has not previously won 1st place in a previous i3 competition.



Resources

The rubrics for each category, along with the template for the research abstract, can be found at <https://www.ucwv.edu/innovation/center/ideas-innovation-invention-i3/i3-day-competition/>

If you have any questions about the i3 Innovation Showcase, or if you'd like feedback on your ideas or project proposal, please contact Dr. Travis Kahle, Director of the Innovation Center, at laurenkahle@ucwv.edu.

Good luck!

