THE iSCHOOL RESEARCH INSTITUTE FOR STORYARC EXPLORATION (iRISE)

A RESEARCH & LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

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https://sites.utexas.edu/ischool-rldp/storyarc-research-institute/

HERE AT THE iSCHOOL...

WE EXPLORE SOME OF THE WORLD'S MOST COMPLEX PROBLEMS

It's hard to think of a problem in today's world that doesn't include people, information, and technology. Learning at the intersection of the three, iSchool students are uniquely positioned to explore and address these complex issues.

OUR RESEARCH HAS REAL WORLD IMPLICATIONS

Informatics research provides insights that are relevant to folks from all walks of life. What we learn can empower designers, developers, policymakers, K-12 educators, parents and teens, librarians and archivists, community organizers, and more to make the world a better and fairer place.

BUT SILOS CAN BE A REAL BARRIER TO IMPACT

Silos, groups who work in isolation from one another, can limit our ability to create change. Organizations struggle to meet their goals when sales, engineering, IT, marketing, and finance teams operate separately with little alignment between them. In the same way, society can struggle to create positive change when academia, industry, government, and communities are so siloed.

HOW DO WE CONNECT RESEARCH INSIGHTS WITH THE LARGER WORLD?

Silos are a challenge at the heart of the intersection of people, information, and technology, which means Informatics students can be uniquely positioned to dismantle and build connections across them! But how?

UNLOCKING THE POWER OF LEADERSHIP & STORYTELLING

Learning to adapt how we reach, connect, collaborate, and communicate with our intended stakeholders based on their priorities, needs, and values can help us break down silos for real world impact. Skilled leaders have been transforming complex ideas into stories to build connection, generate buy-in, and motivate collective action for centuries.

iRISE takes students along this journey from inquiry to impact, empowering them to be the next generation of information leaders leveraging research, leadership, and storytelling for public good.

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What is iRISE?

Program Overview

The iSchool Research Institute for StoryArc Exploration (iRISE) is a **yearlong research and leadership development program.** Throughout the year, collaborative teams of undergraduates, PhD students, and faculty re-imagine how we **conduct, communicate, and amplify the impact of information research** through the stories we tell. **Spanning fall semester, spring semester, and a paid May institute**, each team designs and conducts a study at the intersection of people, information, and technology and **transforms the results into both an academic and public impact deliverable**. Throughout the process, students are immersed in hands-on **professional development curriculum** to emerge as an empowered next generation of information leaders.

Research as a Vehicle for Leadership Development & Social Impact
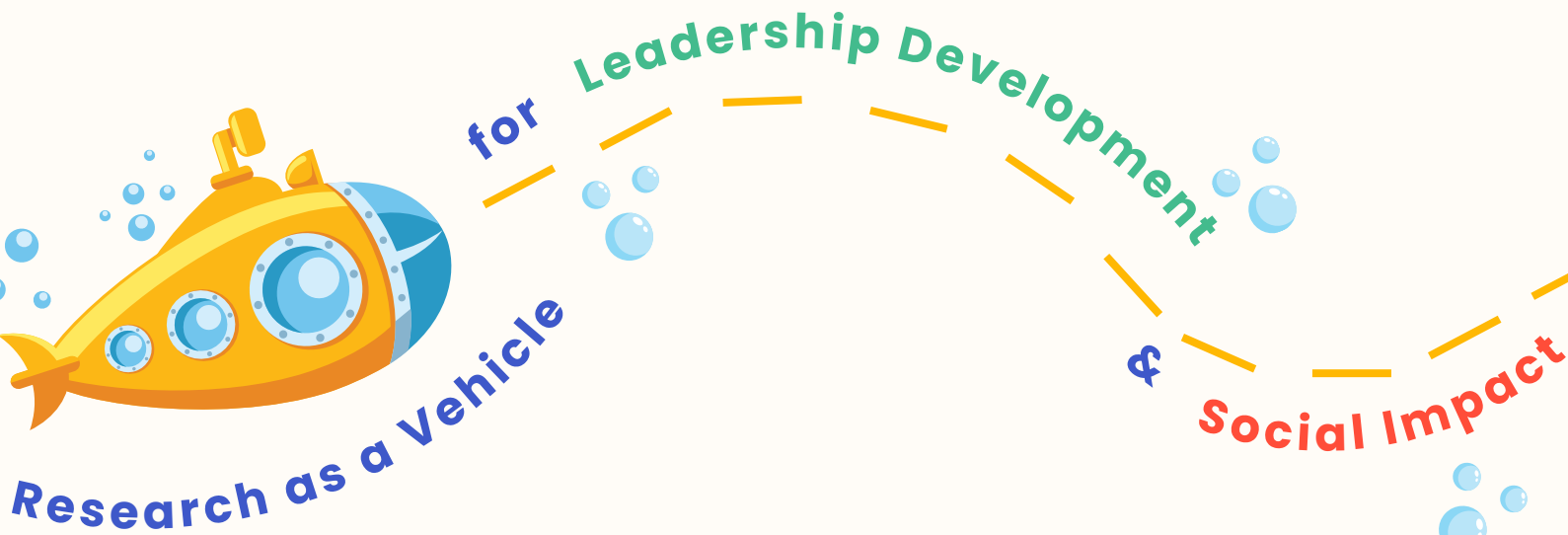
PROGRAM PILLARS

Hands-On Research Experience

This program re-imagines both the undergraduate research experience and the PhD student teaching and mentoring experience. Rather than working on a small piece of a pre-existing project, undergraduate and PhD students collaborate in teams to co-design and conduct their research from beginning to end, gaining hands-on experience across each phase of the research process (research problem, literature review, developing research questions, data collection, data analysis, and dissemination). For PhD students, this program provides hands-on teaching and mentoring experience, while simultaneously being immersed in a pedagogical and professional development environment where time is specifically carved to receive individualized feedback.

Immersive Leadership Development

As students conduct their research projects, they're immersed in curriculum that maps each phase of the research process to transferable professional skills they'll need to thrive post-graduation (e.g., project management, leadership styles, communication, time management, conflict resolution). This experience leverages hands-on research experience as a vehicle to develop professional skills and critical competencies (e.g., ethical and critical thinking) that are essential for the next generation of information leaders.

Communicating the "So What?"

Stories that change the world speak to multiple audiences. This program prioritizes learning how to communicate across silos (essential for Informatics graduates!). Throughout the year, students will learn how to structure narratives and practice communicating the "so what?" of each phase of their research to audiences and stakeholders with varying backgrounds, priorities, worldviews, degrees of technical skills, and knowledge bases. The program culminates with each team producing two deliverables:

- A conference paper to submit for peer-review to ensure rigor and publication for academic audiences.

- A Public Impact Deliverable (project-dependent) that transforms results and communicates the "so what?" to relevant stakeholders beyond academia (e.g., a social media campaign, policy one-sheet, school/community workshops, a graphic novel or zine).

COOL, BUT WHAT DOES THIS PROGRAM ACTUALLY LOOK LIKE FOR PHD STUDENTS?

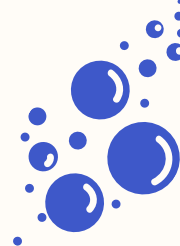## Fall 2025: 3 Credit, In-Person Class

Focus: Project Management & Research Design
Time: Wednesdays, 3:30-6:30pm
Summary: PhD students will present their potential projects. Undergraduates will self-select select into teams. Together, teams and their advisors will compile a project management plan, design their study, identify intended audience beyond academia, and potential impact deliverable to communicate results.
Note: There are funds available for paying research participants.

Spring 2026: 3 Credit, In-Person Class

Focus: Data Collection & Analysis
Summary: Once they receive university IRB approval to ensure their research meets ethics requirements, teams will begin and complete data collection and analysis. They'll end with finalized results (i.e. answers to their research questions)!

Summer 2026: Paid 20 Hour/Week GRA

Focus: Communicating Research, Transforming Results, & Preparing the Next Cohort
Summary: PhD students will guide their team through the May Institute to transform results into deliverables. June - August, they will finalize their team's iConference submission, as well as work w/ the Director on admissions for the next cohort.

WHAT'S THE BENEFIT OF DOING THIS PROGRAM? (PHD VERSION)

Your time is valuable—and so is your professional growth! This program is designed to give you the leadership, mentoring, and research experience that will benefit you no matter if you pursue academia or industry. Below are the key benefits - only you can decide if these are aligned for you!

1

Lead a Research Project From Start to Finish

Design and lead a research project in your area of interest, guiding it from early-stage idea to final deliverables. To do so, you'll collaborate with undergraduate students and the Program Director for a full year. You'll practice leading a cross-functional team, turning research into tangible academic and public-facing deliverables.

2

Translate Research for Real World Impact

You'll identify external stakeholders and develop a communications plan that extends your research beyond academia. By learning to frame your work for broader audiences, you'll grow as a communicator and collaborator. You will practice translating research findings from "academese" into clear, compelling language tailored for diverse audiences to maximize real-world impact.

3

Mentor and Teach in Real Time

Through leading your own research team, you'll gain hands-on mentoring experience—whether your path leads to academia or elsewhere. Throughout the program, you'll benefit from mentorship, feedback, and guidance from the Program Director, as well as peer exchange with fellow Graduate Research Advisors. For those considering teaching, you'll also practice foundational pedagogy in a dynamic, real-world environment.

4

Build Project and People Management Skills

You will develop/grow project management skills needed for roles in academia, industry, government, and nonprofit sectors. From planning timelines to facilitating team dynamics, you'll get experience managing real teams and deliverables. You'll strengthen your ability to lead through conflict and communicate across skill sets and roles.

5

Create Concrete, Career-Ready Outputs

In addition to course credits and a 20 hr/week Summer GRA position, this program offers dedicated support and resources to craft, polish, and present both academic and public-facing research outputs that showcase your expertise and amplify your impact:
- Co-authoring a peer-reviewed conference paper (iConference) with team members
- Receiving comprehensive guidance and feedback for paper development, presentation design, and conference preparation
- Developing a high-impact, public-facing deliverable to showcase the broader significance of your research

7

❝ Okay, But How Do These Projects Actually Work? (PhD Student Version)

This program is designed to promote a win-win environment that encourages all parties to be actively engaged and benefit in ways that align with their goals. That includes how the research projects are developed.

As part of your Graduate Research Advisor (GRA) application, you'll submit 2-3 research project ideas that you would be interested in developing with an undergraduate research team. You'll want to write this with undergraduates as the intended readers (students in the program will be sophomores, juniors, and seniors majoring/minoring in Informatics here in the iSchool). See these examples of successful project proposals from a similar program.

As a GRA, you're guiding and collaborating with undergraduate students, but you're also setting the parameters. What are the boundaries? What is flexible? Think about the project topics (people, information, and technology) and methods.

This process ensures that the research aligns with your areas of expertise and goals, AND that your team can have some ownership in shaping the details of the project (students need to be interested in the work to stay engaged for a year!).

Proposed Project Example: Navigating Boundaries & Flexibility

Let's say your research interests include mental health, mobile tech, and marginalized populations' information behavior. You may say you're flexible in mobile tech type (social media platforms, self-tracking apps, etc.) and specific user population demographics, but the projects need to stay within the topical bounds of anxiety and depression and use qualitative methods.

Okay, so how does the project play out over the course of a year?

Late August: You'll work with the Program Director (and advisor, if applicable) during Orientation to help you scope your research to projects that are doable with undergraduate students within the yearlong program.

Fall Semester (Weeks 1 & 2): You'll present potential projects. Undergraduates self-select into teams of 3-5. to the undergraduate students in the program, explain what is flexible and what is not, and answer their questions. The Program Director will work with the undergraduates to help them self-select into teams. From there, you and your team will select and scope the project and (with the support of the Director) develop a project management plan and team contract.

Fall will be dedicated to guiding students to through the literature review process, research question development, study design, and submission to the IRB. The Director will work with you on mentorship strategies, pedagogy, project management, and teaching research to undergrads.

We're striking a balance between encouraging you to build your research independence and leadership skills, but with guardrails since leading a team of students like this may be a new experience for you! The Director (and your advisor, if applicable) will be there to support and guide you throughout the process.

THE RESEARCH PROJECTS

❝ Okay, But How Do These Projects Actually Work? (PhD Student Version, Continued)

Spring Semester: Dedicated to data collection and analysis. Teams will end the semester with written results. Don't worry if things go awry in this process (delays in IRB approval, struggles with recruitment, etc.). Instead, anticipate that unexpected challenges will arise and the Director will help you and your team problem solve. Learning how to adjust and keep the team morale high is a deeply valuable skill whether you want to go into academia, industry, government, etc.

Summer: In May, you'll work with your team to develop an iConference paper draft and the Public Impact Deliverable (see later sections for more details). In June – August, you'll work on editing your team's iConference submission with the Director and your advisor (if applicable) as part of your 20 hour/week iSchool Summer GRA responsibilities.

May Institute Structure

Time	Activity
10:00 AM - 11:30 AM	**Professional Development Workshop**
11:30 AM - 1:00 PM	**Working Block**
1:00 PM - 2:00 PM	**Lunch**
2:00 - 5:00 PM	**Working Block**

These responsibilities also include helping shape the program experience for the next cohort of iRISE Graduate Research Advisors and undergraduate students (ex: curriculum updates, applications/admissions for next cohort of undergraduate students & GRAs, onboarding new Graduate Research Advisors, etc.).

Okay, so how does the project play out over the course of a year?

Fall & Spring Semesters: For PhD Students, this is an in-person Directed Research course taught by Dr. Booth in the fall and spring (3 credits each). Please note that the times listed on the left are for fall. For spring, the structure will remain the same, but the day/times may change. We will do our absolute best to schedule around other iSchool courses so no one has to forego a class they really want to take.

May: In-person, 4 week working institute, not a class (no enrollment, no tuition, no class credit). This is part of your GRA, so you will be paid to attend and participate. Please note that the Summer GRA is only 20 hours/week, so while undergraduates will be there for the full day, Graduate Research Advisors will only be there for part of the day (which you'll select with your teams). One group meal will be provided each work day.

June-August: Continuation of the GRA, but all work can be done remotely.

Fall & Spring Class Structure

Time	Monday	Wednesday
3:30pm		**Block B: PhD Students Only**
4:00pm		
4:30pm		
5:00pm	**Block A: Undergraduate Students Only**	**Block C: Undergraduate & PhD Students Together**
5:30pm		
6:00pm		
6:30pm		

Note: This is the class time for fall semester. The days/times may change for spring semester. We will schedule to avoid overlap with other iSchool courses.

Eligibility (PhD Students)

Have Completed Their First Year

Have completed their first year of the Information Studies PhD program at time of application

Have Committee Approval to Apply

Have approval from their faculty advisor(s) and committee members to apply

Enrolled as a Full Time Student

Enrolled full time for '25–'26 academic year (no December '25 grads)

Trying to decide if this program is right for you? Take a look at both eligibility and fit. We want students who participate in this program to enjoy it! Here's who will thrive in this program:

Want to communicate complex ideas outside of academia

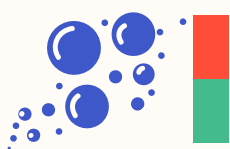**Value collaboration with students**

Seeking professional development

Eager for hands-on experience managing a team

Curious about developing their mentorship skills

Want to strengthen their teaching statement

PhD Student Applications

Application Form

Open the application form, which includes a few multiple choice/short answer questions. Upload your short essay responses, Research Interests & Potential Projects Document, & Advisor Agreement Form. Instructions here.

Short Essays

In the application form, please upload a single document with your responses to the two essay questions listed. Please limit your responses to 400 words per question.

Proposed Projects

In the application form, please upload your Research Interests & Proposed Projects Document (see website for instructions).

Advisor Agreement Form

In the application form, please upload your signed Advisor Agreement Form (see website for instructions).

Due August 6th by 11:59pm CT

Two Deliverables: Moving From Inquiry to Impact

It's May. You've been working on your research project all year. And now you finally have results from your study (i.e. answers to your research questions!). Cool cool cool, but <u>so what?</u> Now it's time to put the pieces together to really understand what you did, what you found, and why it matters.

Does this new knowledge matter in the world beyond the classroom? How will you identify relevant stakeholders, appropriate mediums, and communicate to folks with a wide array of backgrounds, priorities, worldviews, degrees of technical skills, and knowledge bases? How will you adjust the story you're telling to different audiences?

These are skills every information professional - from UX Designers to Data Analysts to Product Managers to Librarians, to Archivists and beyond - should build to set themselves apart!

You and your team will practice these skills by transforming your research into two deliverables for dramatically different audiences.

Deliverable 1: A Research Paper You'll Submit for Peer-Reviewed Publication

You and your team will learn how to write and frame your research for an academic audience. If accepted, the team will have the opportunity to present at an international conference.

Deliverable 2: Public Impact Deliverable

Informatics research is relevant to so many - what about stakeholders beyond academia? How can we connect what happens here with designers, developers, educators, librarians, community organizers, parents, teens, etc.?
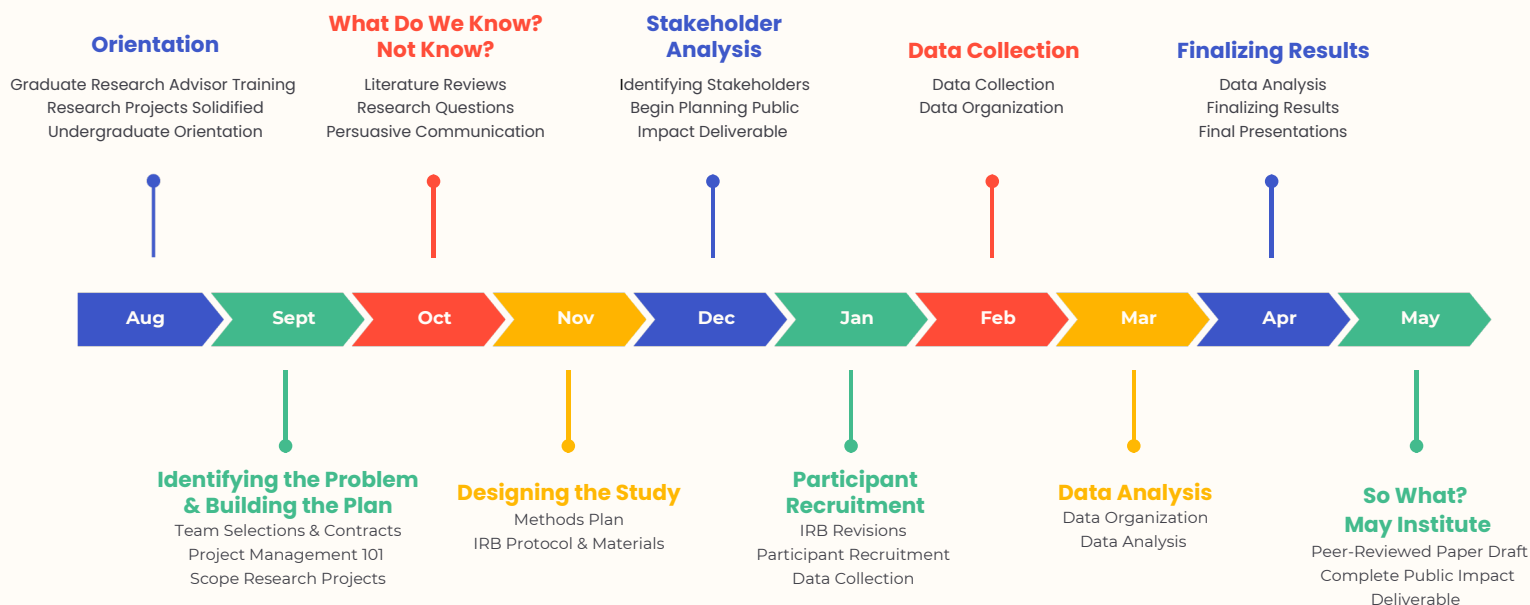
Public Impact Deliverable Options

Impact Deliverable Type	Description	Informatics Examples
Research Remix	Transforming research into creative output. Think zines, graphic short story, short film, social media campaign, etc. (Great for broader stakeholder groups like "teens on TikTok")	Dr. Eileen Trauth (Penn State) transformed her research about the underrepresentation of women in tech into a play for high school students Dr. Joe Sanchez (Queens College) designed a social media campaign and TikTok account to communicate the "so what?" of his research about BIPOC youth and manga to non-academic audiences
Practical Product	Transforming findings into useful products or tools. Think a policy one-sheet, best practices infographic, K-12 curriculum activities, etc. (Great for specific stakeholder groups who have established expectations/norms for how they receive and interact with information)	Dr. Andrea Tapia (Penn State) transformed her research on barriers in technical crisis coordination for natural disaster relief into best practices and principles for over 300 Humanitarian Information Managers worldwide (The United Nations Office of Coordination for Humanitarian Affairs adopted these best practices in their Information Management policies!) Dr. Kayla Booth (UT Austin) works with high schools around the country to develop health class curriculum (lesson plans, class activities, workshops, etc.) based on her research about teens, mental health, fitness, and social media
Engagement Artifact	Creating something physical or virtual for people to interact with. Think games, simulations, virtual experiences, etc. (Great for teaching the general public or training employees/ volunteers)	Dr. Ricardo Gomez (University of Washington) co-designed a card game with and for humanitarian organizations and libraries to train employees on information practices that better protect the privacy of migrants and vulnerable populations they serve Undergraduate students in the iSchool Inclusion Institute (a program like this!) adapted their research to co-design an interactive trivia game for *The Great Inka Road: Engineering an Empire* exhibit at the National Museum of the American Indian in Washington D.C.

Program Timeline (2025-2026)

Orientation
Graduate Research Advisor Training
Research Projects Solidified
Undergraduate Orientation

What Do We Know? Not Know?
Literature Reviews
Research Questions
Persuasive Communication

Stakeholder Analysis
Identifying Stakeholders
Begin Planning Public
Impact Deliverable

Data Collection
Data Collection
Data Organization

Finalizing Results
Data Analysis
Finalizing Results
Final Presentations

Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May

Identifying the Problem & Building the Plan
Team Selections & Contracts
Project Management 101
Scope Research Projects

Designing the Study
Methods Plan
IRB Protocol & Materials

Participant Recruitment
IRB Revisions
Participant Recruitment
Data Collection

Data Analysis
Data Organization
Data Analysis

So What? May Institute
Peer-Reviewed Paper Draft
Complete Public Impact
Deliverable

Anticipated Questions (PhD Student Version)

What if I've never taught or led a team before?

That's what this program is designed for - to give you hands-on experience leading a research team in an environment where you'll get weekly guidance and feedback from the Program Director.

Wait, what am I seeing about a May stipend vs. a Summer 20 hr/week GRA position?

The undergraduate students' only summer participation happens in May, so they earn a stipend. Graduate Research Advisors (you!) are participating and paid throughout the summer via a 20 hr/week GRA position in the iSchool.

QUESTIONS?

Reach out to Dr. Booth!

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